

Covid holiday hunger: feeding Leicester's children



A report on the Reaching
People project summer 2020

Funding was provided by the Government's Coronavirus Community Support Fund,

Covid holiday hunger: feeding Leicester's children

A report on the Reaching People project summer 2020

Contents

Project concept.....	2
Project delivery	2
Staff and volunteers.....	4
Project funding.....	4
Project outcomes.....	4
Success factors.....	7
Improving lives during the pandemic	8
Activity packs helping households	11
Barriers to seeking help	12
Eligibility and avoiding dependency	13
Uncertainty, flexibility and change	15
Profile of a project: E2	16
Number of children fed in a typical week.....	16
Products in food parcel in a typical week.....	16
Estimate of volunteer hours over summer project	16
Estimate of staff hours and costs over summer project.....	16
Notes from organiser	16
Planning for the future.....	17
Unreliable funding is risky.....	17
Strategic planning was missed.....	17
Building families' resilience through additional support	18
Piggybacking proves social value	18
Staff and volunteers need support	18
Appendices.....	19
Initial project publicity sheet	19
Covid Holiday hunger - feeding Leicester's children.....	20
Weekly data collection form.....	22
Final week 8 evaluation form.....	23
Credits.....	244

Project concept

The application by Reaching People to the Government's Coronavirus Community Support Fund was routed through the National Lottery Community Fund. Initially developed in May 2020, the bid was focused on meeting needs stemming from the economic impact of Covid-19 on families in Leicester—particularly on additional food support for children. Rising unemployment identified through figures from the Department for Work & Pensions indicated there could be a doubling of demand on holiday hunger programmes. Demand was likely to increase further due to furlough of workers, self-employment coming to an end and further unemployment or loss of income during the summer.

The bid was reviewed and amended mid-stage in light of summer holiday food vouchers being made available, following a successful campaign by footballer Marcus Rashford in mid-June. Our revised estimation was that the economic impact of Covid-19 would be continuous over the summer and that families who had not been assessed for free school meal vouchers would struggle as a consequence once school holidays started. We also intended to support pre-school children in families and children up to the age of 18.

We aimed to respond to the broader economic impact of Covid-19 on families, not just in relieving hunger. The Covid-19 lockdown had, for many months, deprived children of formal education, association with friends, play and exploration. We saw providing and enabling activities during the summer as vital to children's health and wellbeing. So we planned for a regular distribution of activity packs or similar, to go alongside the food distribution. We budgeted for £10.00 per family for the provision of age appropriate activities. It was hoped that delivery organisations may be able to top this up with other activity sources.

Again, because we were focused on additional costs following on from the pandemic, there was an element in each of the delivery project budgets for Covid-19-related personal protective equipment (PPE) and additional volunteers expenses.

From the start the project was designed to be flexible and responsive. There was scope to rejig the start, according to demand, which was much needed as some projects extended into an eighth week at the start of the autumn term. We were also able to increase some projects from week six to assist with demand.

It was always critical to the success that our partners, including FareShare Midlands, would provide additional food through other funding.

Project delivery

Building on the experience of previous holiday hunger programmes and evaluations we planned for up to 18 delivery organisations—nine community-run adventure playgrounds and nine local community foodbanks. Our estimate was for an average of 60 bags of food a week. Each bag would contain ingredients for 5 healthy meals.

We knew the delivery would run alongside any other funding from Leicester City Council for general poverty-related needs and would also depend on other funding from a range of sources for staffing and any additional demands.

The funding was awarded just five days before the start of the school holidays. It is credit to the preparedness and flexibility of the projects that we were able to agree delivery with 14 organisations who were able to respond immediately.

All organisations submitted a Covid-19 risk assessment and action plan.

All organisations were asked to record ages of children, numbers of families, and basic demographic information on data capture forms which were provided. Case studies and photographs were also requested as evidence of reach.



The proposal was for bags of food, seen as a good way to provide food in a way that would be less time intensive and easier to deliver in a Covid-19 secure way. This was in contrast with previous years, where sandwiches were made and eaten by children at the projects. It was expected that projects would organise collection once or twice a week.

The projects involved in the programme were:

Belgrave Playhouse/ Shree Sanatan Mandir and community centre

Braunstone Adventure Playground

E2 - Empowering Through Education, with Christ The King Church Food Bank for some supplies

Eyres Monsell Club for Young People

Goldhill Adventure Playground

Highfields Adventure Playground

Home-Start Horizons

Mowmacre Playground

New Parks Adventure Playground

Northfields Playbarn

St. Andrews Play Association

St Matthews Childrens Action Group (The What Cabin), with St Matthews Big Local for week 8

Woodgate Adventure Playground

Zinthiya Trust

Staff and volunteers

Following previous experience, the model for this project was to piggyback on existing staff and volunteer capacity. The range of sources for funding was varied, according to the history and background of individual projects. They included other National Lottery Community Fund grants, other charitable sources of funding and Leicester City Council grants and funding directly to the playgrounds. Volunteers came from established projects, Covid-19 volunteers organised through Voluntary Action LeicesterShire and De Montfort University students.

Project funding

The funding streams that helped deliver the programmes were complex and various. Brought together at very short notice, each element contributed to the whole, thanks to the determination, flexibility and creativity of the projects.

A grant of £97,280 from the Coronavirus Community Support Fund run by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) was awarded to Reaching People through the distributing body, the National Lottery Community Fund. This contributed to administration, evaluation, PPE, volunteer expenses and activity packs as well as food. The majority was spent on food with FareShare Midlands directly, with four projects opting to make their own food arrangements locally.

Reaching People's Moneywise Plus project provided free re-useable bags for the food, along with details of local sources of help, including digital and financial support relating to unemployment and finding work or training. Information also included materials from Leicester City Council's Covid project to refer for parents to other services. Moneywise Plus is an established project funded by the National Lottery Community Fund matched by European Social Fund grants.

Delivery projects were able to draw on local suppliers for additional activity pack goods. Some had access through the city council's link with Leicester-Shire and Rutland Sport for its Sports Organisation Support Covid-19 Fund.

FareShare Midlands, which used £47,000 of the Covid-specific Reaching People grant to provide food, also contributed funds from other sources to top up the food substantially. This included fresh produce, including fruit, and activity packs from Central England Co-operative. Similar supplies were purchased with funds from Leicester City Council, Feeding Britain and Meals & More. Some delivery organisations were able to source their own supplies with links with local shops for produce.

Project outcomes

The right hand column in the grid below shows how the project achievements surpassed the bid targets. Although the percentages are dramatic, they probably understate the actual achievements

of the projects, as some projects found the demand affected their ability to keep data and recordings.

Key metric	Initial target in bid	Achieved	Percentage of target achieved
Average number of bags of five meals distributed per week per project	60	159	265%
Number of families supported	1,200	1,390	116%
Total number of meals provided	37,800	88,985	235%
Total number of children provided with food	1,800	2,716	151%
Total number of families provided with activity kits	800	1,390	174%
Total number of activity kits provided	No target	3,442	

As well as a considerable increase over initial expectations this also comfortably exceeded previous holiday hunger schemes. In 2019, 20 groups provided 32,199 meals for children under the Holiday Food Provision scheme—compared with 88,985 meals from just 14 groups in 2020

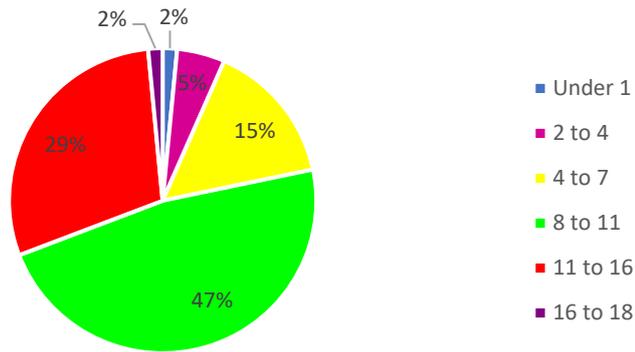
Projects were innovative in provision of activity kits and some managed to gain additional resources to increase the kits available and spread out activities over the holidays.

The bags of food were seen as an efficient and safe way to manage the provision. Some projects worked on weekly collections of five meals per bag. Others provided twice-weekly collections to avoid queues and spread the access by providing smaller quantities more regularly.

The data presented below provides an indication of the extent of demand on the project and the range of families and children the project reached.

The ages of the children in families accessing the Covid Holiday Hunger project is given in the chart below. This mirrors the access of families and children through adventure playgrounds and the focus of the play grounds and Council promotion of the project through primary schools. Other older children are likely to be siblings of younger children. Our work with Homestart Horizons brought in additional families with babies and pre-school children. Children aged 4 were included in the 2-4 age if they hadn't started school and the 4-7 if they had already started primary school.

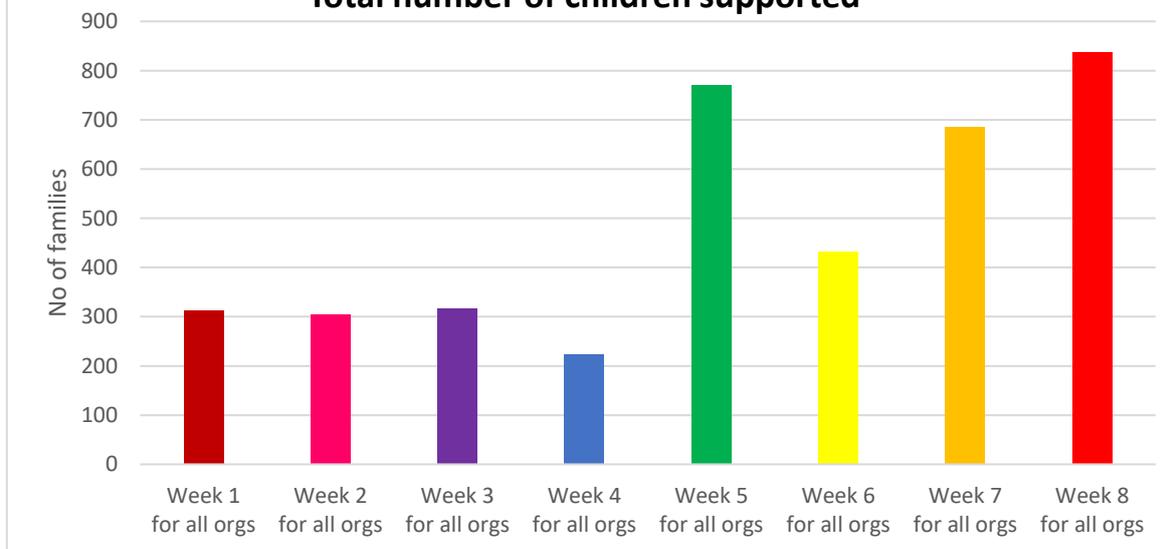
Ages of children supported across the project



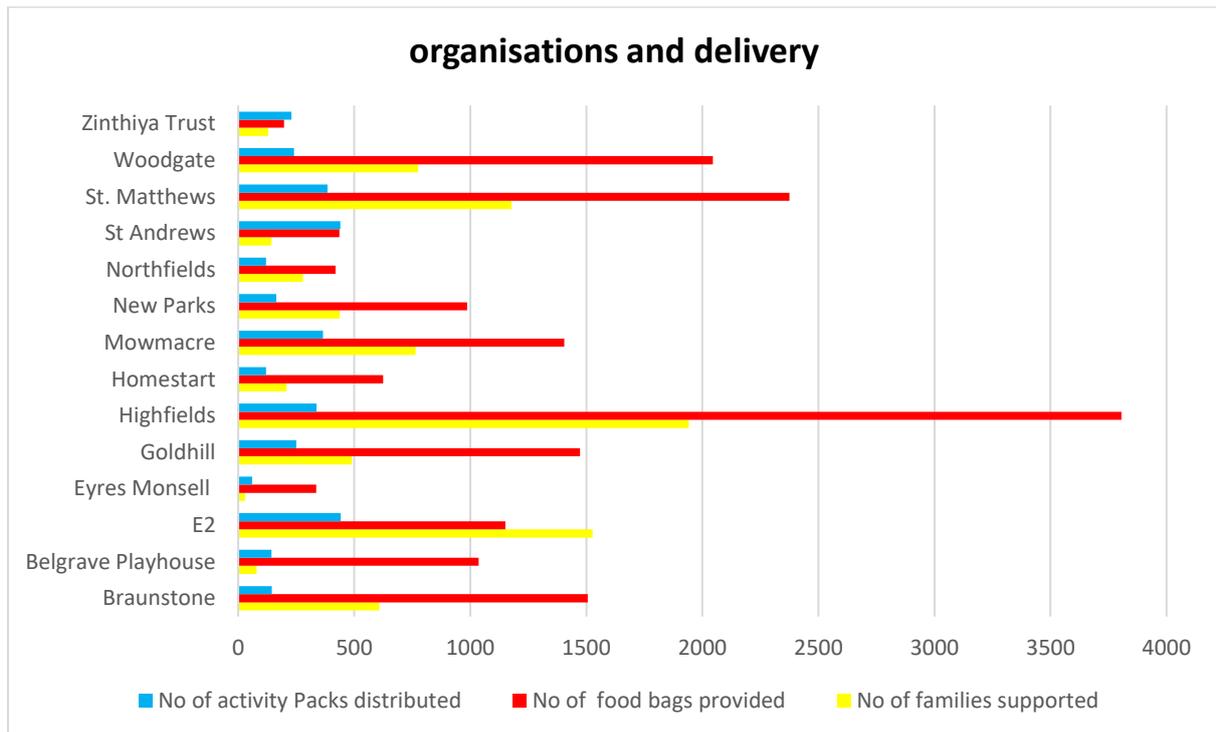
The project got off to a fast start at the beginning of the holiday with delivery organisations moving very quickly. Reasons for the apparent drop in take-up in week 4 are not entirely clear, but may be due to the difficulties projects had in meeting demand and also keeping on top of the reporting paperwork. The subsequent rise in week 5 is likely to have been caused by a combination of increased awareness spread by word-of-mouth and the increasing difficulties families were finding in coping with the loss of income due to Covid. Whatever the reasons, it seems clear that people found it increasingly hard to manage over the summer and demand for the project increased.

We took time in the middle of the project to re-profile provision, increasing where we could and where needs were demonstrated. We also extended the programme by an additional week to enable children and families to settle back into school and for assessments of free school meal entitlements to take place.

Total number of children supported



The chart below shows the volume of delivery in total by the different providers across all the weeks and gives an indication of how the projects were spread across the City with a focus on neighbourhoods with highest levels of poverty. We were aware from the outset of very high demand in Highfields and thankful to FareShare for the provision of additional food. Through the data capture it is clear that some delivery projects were able to operate a more rigorous targeting and monitoring of the provision than others where demand and queue management during the pandemic had to take a focus above recording. Language impact on access was also cited very strongly as an issue in some areas of the City and with no additional support for administration and translation the delivery teams provided an amazingly efficient and intensive service in a short time.



Success factors

A number of factors contributed to the success of the project:

- > It was built around existing, long-standing and respected voluntary sector projects, which were able to respond rapidly and flexibly.
- > They were located around the City and easily accessible in areas close to families in most need.
- > It combined funding from various sources. The single source of funds that made this happen was the National Lottery Community Fund Covid-19 fund disbursed by Reaching People. But that would not have made the impact it did without individual projects' own existing and Covid-linked funding.

- > The purposes for which the money could be used were clear, simple and broad. This meant spending decisions were made on the ground by projects that were close to the families they supported.
- > There was fast and informal co-ordination at all levels, with funders, food providers, public health, at delivery and organisational levels. Problems could be addressed quickly and successes shared and built on.
- > Feedback systems and evaluation practices ensured families were getting support in the form that was most useful and valuable to them, and enabled adjustments to be made when it wasn't.
- > There was close attention to Covid-secure guidelines and the avoidance of transmission of infection, which could have jeopardised entire projects.

As a new and complex operation there were, naturally, things that worked well and also frustrations. The remainder of this report is intended as a quick guide to what happened, and the learnings from it.



Improving lives during the pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic scuppered plans for the usual summer activities in adventure playgrounds and other projects for children and young people across the city. One immediate consequence would have been bored and unoccupied children. This would put strain on families, especially on those who were already struggling financially, made worse by the pandemic. Where household budgets were under strain, the children risked being hungry as well as bored. Those in deprived areas of the city faced a bleak and stressful summer following months of anxiety and financial insecurity.

In previous years various stakeholders across Leicester have held planning meetings during the run-up to the summer break. The city council's public health team, Feeding Leicester, FareShare Midlands, and community groups and faith centres would have developed a co-ordinated response to the need in the city. That could not happen this year in the same way. The adventure playgrounds

knew that they could not run their normal programme of activities, the risk of transmitting infection being too great. But there were other aspects of their programmes, including packed lunches for children, that they could offer in some form.

"When we do healthy eating normally, every child gets it. There's no stigma. We found the behaviour on the playground is better because the kids are eating better food more regularly." —**St Andrews Play Association**

Providing food matched the city council's agenda and its draft anti-poverty strategy. This had been a key area considered and actioned by the Feeding Leicester partnership over a number of years previously. Local provision had been proven to work in past years. It saved families travel costs and built on mutual trust between families and community providers in their localities.

Projects also addressed other aspects of the Covid restrictions that were affecting the lives of children in disadvantaged areas of the city. This included providing activity packs with arts, crafts, toys and games, books and fun puzzles for children to work on and engage with at home.

The take-up exceeded expectations, massively so in some projects. No general publicity was done centrally. The word was spread through schools, primary care networks and informal word of mouth. Concerns about raising expectations that could not be met were alleviated by the stakeholders.

"At Highfields our numbers just increased and increased. There were some worries that we might run out of food at some point and lead to a panic among those queuing. FareShare made a commitment early on to say they wouldn't let that happen." —**Highfields Adventure Playground**

There was no doubt that Covid-19 was having a major impact on families. Loss of income, leading to debt and unpaid bills, was common.

"When lockdown was announced dad was furloughed and mum could not work from home anymore and did not qualify for any government help. This family have not been able to make ends meet and fell behind on bills. Mum, dad, and grandfather have all been missing out on meals to make sure the children could eat."

"We told them they could have a food parcel and they have been coming to our setting on a weekly basis to collect one. They have told us it's made a huge difference to their family and really lessened the stress knowing that everyone has been able to have a decent meal." —**Braunstone Adventure Playground**

The furlough payments of 80 per cent of earnings pushed many people on low income from just about coping to being unable to make ends meet.

Both parents have been furloughed which has resulted in a significant reduction in income over the last 5 months. The family are now struggling to cover all day-to-day essentials and have accumulated debts on all bills. — Home-Start

Horizons

For many families loss of income was accompanied by increased costs, a double whammy that the projects were very conscious of and tried to alleviate. The food bags made a very significant difference.

"The lunch bags are seriously saving me so much money throughout the holidays. My children pick the food that they want each day and they love it, especially the yoghurts. I have seven children, and the money that I can save on food, I'm spending on new school uniforms. It really is amazing what you guys do, it is really helping my family out." —Eyres Monsell Club for Young People

The quality and variety of the food was also appreciated.

"It helped with providing food for children that there is a wide variety. Children feel special. The lockdown has meant low income and there is also another baby on the way." —Belgrave Playhouse/ Shree Sanatan Mandir

As well as helping with household budgets, the programmes were seen as contributing positively to emotional wellbeing.

"I would just like to say it's been a really big help throughout the last few weeks. It's made a big difference to us not having to worry about how to feed the children as my wages have been dropped significantly due to the virus. Thank you for all your hard work. Volunteers are always so helpful and friendly." —Eyres Monsell Club for Young People (parent of 10 year old)

Some families were coping with increased household costs, and increased anxiety, associated with the Covid-19 illness itself.

"During lockdown grandfather was undergoing treatment and caught COVID-19 whilst attending hospital. This made the situation even worse with all the expense of having a loved one in hospital." —**Braunstone Adventure Playground**

Other medical conditions were also putting a strain on family finances.

"Daughter is allergic to milk which means that are dietary requirements cost more and in particular her baby food/milk. She has outgrown all her clothes, and mum and dad struggling to keep up with the cost of everything including nappies." —**Home-Start Horizons**

Poor mental health could also be a barrier to other sources of help.

"One parent who was receiving benefits had issues with mental health and increased pressure and stress through lockdown. She was not able to receive food from a local foodbank as she was not able to carry a food parcel and the foodbank do not allow others to collect." —**Zinthyia Trust**

Activity packs helping households

Being on a tight household budget can mean play and activity materials are scarce. For that reason, projects included activity packs as well as food parcels. These were highly valued by recipients.

"WOW! Thank you so much for the art box—it was amazing. Kids loved it, full of lots of things. My two year old loved the modelling clay, loads of activities to do. My 11 year old loved the painting, full of lots of stuff to do, Thanks so much, what a lovely raft." —**E2 - Empowering through Education**

As with the food parcels, there was great variety in the activity packs, designed around the families in a particular community. One week a project sent out a golf set, inflatable ball, Rubik's cube, dominoes, bat & ball set and cards. Later they provided 91 packs that included drawing/colouring books, pencils, felt pens, skipping ropes, art materials, books, beads, balls and rackets.

Another project provided activity packs which had a hula hoop, chalk, frisbee, felt tips, drawing book, wooden egg and spoon and a bean bag.

"The activity packs were an essential way to reach some of our hard-to-reach children who were stuck indoor for lengthy periods of time. When they came and

received their bags they lit up." —**St Matthews Children's Action Group (The What Cabin)**

The aim was to take the pressure off household budgets and reduce stress, at the same time stimulating creativity, imagination and fun. The project staff and volunteers also used their own creativity and imagination in devising and sourcing content for the packs. One project sourced sports equipment from Loughborough University. Others solicited donations using existing networks and contacts with commercial suppliers.

Timing was important, with one project thinking about the costs of returning to school.

We thought outside the box, and provided our activity packs at the end of the project. We know that stationery can add up to quite an expensive bill. Therefore, we created pencil cases for all the children, ready for their return to school. We also gave out colouring books and wordsearch books. All were brought from Amazon prime, and distributed by our volunteers. —**Eyres Monsell Club for Young People**

Barriers to seeking help

Nearly all recipients of food bags expressed gratitude for the support from projects, many going out of their way to do so. But there is an understandable embarrassment factor for many people in seeking help. Staff have been reluctant to probe. Instead they reassure.

"A man came for the first time and said he felt embarrassed that he had to come for food. He explained that he had been employed for many years but had lost his job a few weeks ago due to the current situation. He said he felt ashamed that he was struggling to feed his family after never needing any help before. Once I explained how it worked he said he didn't feel so bad now and that he would come back. Thankfully he did." —**New Parks Adventure Playground**

Fear of rejection is also a barrier for some people.

"A lady with a young family had been to local foodbanks and was told they could not help her because she was not receiving any benefits. She explained that she had been furloughed and really needed help. They still refused. She saw a Facebook post about the playgrounds giving out food and thought we may also turn her away. She said that it's hard enough to ask for help, but being turned away makes it even more difficult. She was worried in case we did the same." —**New Parks Adventure Playground**

Among the reasons why people are cautious about seeking help is the fear of drawing official attention to what might be viewed as a failure to provide for children. St. Andrews Play Association was able to reassure one regular recipient that she did not have to seek a referral from another agency, which she was concerned might trigger a safeguarding response.

For another family, a child protection plan had been put in place in the hope that extra support would help to keep the family together and the five young children safe. Discovering that the school's usual playscheme would not be held came after many weeks of difficult time due to Covid testing and isolation.

"With mounting debt and a change in income they began to struggle financially. The project provided the family with staple food on a regular basis to support them through this period and while they waited for their new Universal Credit application to be processed. The extra vouchers helped to buy new school uniform for the children when term resumed in September." —**Home-Start Horizons**

In order to take advantage of a service, people have to know about it. For some, the extent of their isolation was such that they did not know what was available. One playground project knew of a family in need but who were not responding to approaches.

"We eventually made contact and asked if they needed any help. They told us the phones had been cut off, dad was now on furlough and mum had lost her job and they were struggling to make ends meet. They had got behind on rent, bills, gas and electric and still not heard about their universal credit claim. We told them they could have a food parcel and they have been coming to our setting on a weekly basis to collect one. They told us it made a huge difference to their family and really lessened the stress, knowing that everyone has been able to have a decent meal." —**Braunstone Adventure Playground**

One project, not an adventure playground but one focused on education and community engagement, had an ambitious, volunteer-led programme of finding isolated people

"We had a team of people who knocked on every single household in Beaumont Leys. From the 13,000 interactions, we identified 30 people who had no access to the internet, didn't know about our services or the support they could receive. They were vulnerable and isolated, stuck at home. They really needed the support." —**E2 - Empowering Through Education**

Eligibility and avoiding dependency

There was no doubt about the need in the communities for the food parcels.

"The other week, on a day it rained heavily all afternoon, we had families queuing down the road and round the corner. They were there with kids, for an hour and a half in a queue before we even opened. Some say people are just in a for a freebie. Some people are. But I just can't imagine how many people would stand there for an hour and a half with their kids, getting absolutely drenched before we even opened." —**Highfields Adventure Playground**

But there is always some risk of people misusing the system. There is also a danger that families come to rely on the regular parcels, absorbing them into their budgeting, and so becoming dependent on something which is only a temporary, emergency provision.

On the misuse, it helped that the programmes were long-standing, operated at community level and were part of a network.

"We've challenged people who we think have come more than once. Because of the network of the playgrounds we managed to work out that some people may have been touring the city in a car, visiting more than one project. We said it's a case of one parcel a week from one project." —**Secretary of Playfair**

One project, which in normal times operates food distribution to people in need, had to switch its eligibility criteria to focus on Covid-19-related need.

"People who accessed our foodbanks in the past included people who are unemployed, low-waged, who don't have a lot of money coming in or have a payment gap because they've just applied for Universal Credit. Those sort of people will not be eligible right now. They can go shopping, they're not isolated. This project was a Covid-related emergency food response." —**E2 - Empowering through Education**

Again, because of the network, this project was able to arrange to refer clients to a nearby project that was continuing general foodbank provision. It also put a lot of effort into developing eligibility criteria and assessments to reduce the risk of dependency.

"At the beginning, we asked just the basic questions—are you vulnerable, are you isolated, can you do your own shopping? Then we realised we had to be stricter. We worked with Action Homeless, the city council and other organisations to produce eligibility criteria, which are now fully in swing. To make that happen we needed another team of people ready to make calls, a team of volunteers headed up by a paid member of staff. They did initial assessments and ongoing assessments, so we can be sure we're not creating a dependency among families." —**E2 - Empowering through Education**

A crucial part of avoiding the creation of dependency is to make links with advice agencies that can ensure families have access to their entitlements and to sound budgeting and money management skills development.

Uncertainty, flexibility and change

The holiday programmes were set up very rapidly, and staff needed to respond quickly when feedback suggested things could be improved or resources were being used in ways that were not valued by recipients. Crucially, each project had to figure this out. Imposing a city-wide blueprint from the centre would not have worked. There were, though, opportunities for sharing solutions and seeking advice through the network.

"From the nine playgrounds that we know of, everything evolved during the summer. Some was about the best way to reach those families most in need. Each playground had a different model, different opening times, things to do with their site, their premises, when staff are available. And it was all changing. Luckily the nine playgrounds could liaise with each other. If someone said this has worked, we can pass that on. Or if they've had a problem, it can be shared and discussed."

—Secretary of Playfair

The need for independent responses was clear simply from the food choices. In some parts of the city, people quickly expressed a preference for basic ingredients, from which they could make their own meals. They did not want ready meals. This was particularly true in communities that use traditional spices for their foods. Spices for an African-Caribbean diet are different from Asian ones. Elsewhere, there were families that either did not have the cash to buy supplementary ingredients or lacked cooking facilities. They wanted ready meals, reporting too much waste and frustration with bags of ingredients. Because of good communication systems with FareShare and other food providers, projects were able to adjust in the first couple of weeks and supply appropriate and valued food.

One of the major uncertainties that projects had to deal with was the question of reopening during the summer as a playground, as in previous years. In the end, that did not happen as Leicester remained effectively in lockdown. But if it had, it would have caused major practical problems, as buildings had been converted to store and prepare food. Maintaining Covid-19 secure guidelines while providing play activities for children and young people along with distributing food would have been a significant challenge.

"All through the summer we were expecting to revert to being a playscheme. Because it kept getting put back and put back, we concentrated on providing food. It would have caused us problems if we'd opened because all our buildings were literally full of tins and packets, But the playgrounds made a commitment at the start to give out food at this period." — **St. Andrews Play Association**

Profile of a project: E2

What exactly happened in the projects that were part of the Covid-19 funded programme? As is clear from the previous sections, there was no standard or even typical project. All were different. The following profile describes one of the larger, well-established projects, E2 - Empowering through Education, in Beaumont Leys.

The project has distributed over 8,000 emergency food parcels to home in Beaumont Leys and Abbey Ward. It continues to prepare fresh meals in the project's kitchens which go out in food parcels and shared elsewhere across the city.

Number of children fed in a typical week

178

Products in food parcel in a typical week

2 courgettes, red onions, 10 eggs, bag of rice, 3 strawberry yogurts, vanilla yogurt, mangos, tuna chunks in brine, tin tomatoes, tin beans, pack of chicken cup-a-soup, broccoli, sweetheart cabbage, grapes, tuna and sweetcorn pasta, mince steak, frozen ready cooked meals, potatoes, coleslaw, bag of sugar, pack of sausages, tub of soft cheese, snack bars.

E2 continued to use their own kitchen to make ready meals to help the food they had in the foodbank go further. They also worked in partnership with Christ the King foodbank in the preparation of the childrens food packs.

Estimate of volunteer hours over summer project

70 volunteers for 6,400 hours over 40 days

Estimate of staff hours and costs over summer project

2,000 staff hours over 40 days. Approximately £16,913 PAYE, not including oncosts

Notes from organiser

We tried to manage people's expectations and ensure that nobody on our radar is turned away or put on a waiting list. We don't have any spare capacity but are just managing the little resources we have to the best of our ability.

People in our localities are well aware of us and the food parcel delivery services. We generate a lot of mileage from our campaign strategy that is direct and specific to our identified target people. We are able to generate public awareness through direct marketing, flyers marketing, word of mouth, online presence, and telephone marketing.

"Our greatest sense of satisfaction is that we are able to satisfy the need of the people. One can see joy and satisfaction clearly written on their faces. It was obvious to us that we are able to relieve them of stress and anxiety induced for lack of food."

Some have phoned in and others have expressed their thanks and satisfaction verbally for the great job that we are doing and have asked us to express their gratitude to the funders for their support. Other people have written to us expressing express their thanks and appreciation to E2 and would like the project to continue even after the COVID 19 Pandemic season. Another sense of satisfaction

is to see some people who have lost hope and are down with one ailment or another full of hope and aspiration just because of the prompt intervention by our organisation.

Planning for the future

The coronavirus pandemic came out of nowhere. It was sudden and unexpected, at least to most people who are not disaster and emergency planners. Providing food for families in Leicester struggling financially because of it did not, however, arise from nowhere. Some of the funding streams were new and hastily put together. But the mechanisms for delivery, the grassroots projects and the organisational infrastructure had been established and developed for a long time. Projects were deep-rooted in their communities. Consortiums were experienced in working together, communicating and sharing information and resources. Those projects and their traditions, as much as the funding, were essential in helping reduce the suffering and hardship of local children.

The immediate crisis is not over. Financial pressure on household budgets will grow, as winter fuel bills combine with reduced income from the closure of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme at the end of October, shorter working or redundancy. Many families have already used up their personal resources and savings and are experiencing high levels of anxiety and stress. They are not well placed to withstand further shocks, whether from further lockdowns, mental or physical illness, or price rises or food shortages related to leaving the European Union.

In assessing how the voluntary sector can prepare itself to respond, the following are potentially useful lessons from the summer's project.

Unreliable funding is risky

All the funding streams outlined in the report contributed to the support provided for local families. Without them, none of the projects could have achieved everything they did. In some cases there may have been no support at all. While credit is due to everyone who contributed and made it all happen, there needs to be an awareness of the precarity of the funding, its ad hoc nature and the very short time scales involved. It could well have not happened. Given the critical nature of the support being provided, it was, as one organiser put it, "uncomfortably close to the wire".

Efforts have already being made to secure continuation funding, with some success. But this is measured in weeks, lasting until December 2020. That is only the start of winter. Securing more reliable funding is essential.

Strategic planning was missed

The programme was assembled rapidly and delivered locally and flexibly. The creativity and autonomy of grassroots projects was undoubtedly a strength, especially as the focus of council and public health was necessarily on test and trace and dealing with the daily demands of the local lockdown.

Even with those demands, support from Leicester City Council was highly valued. But was there duplication, inefficiencies or missed opportunities to work alongside others or share functions and resources? Probably. At the height of the summer, and leading up to it, it was difficult to know who across the city was doing what, who had bid for what, and how different provision interlocked or

didn't. It would be helpful to think through mechanisms that might assist in strengthening the input at strategic level.

Building families' resilience through additional support

No one thinks providing food bags is a permanent solution. It is, or can be, an opportunity to begin to help families who are in immediate distress to gain access to longer term support and reduce their vulnerability. Various practical things are needed for this to be a success:

- > Vulnerable local people in the community need to have confidence in the community provision and to trust official organisations. If, as some of the delivery programmes report, parents are fearful that children who are hungry will be taken into care, they will be reluctant to engage.
- > The projects themselves do not have the time, skills or premises to provide the necessary advice and support services. Instead, advice services need to be able to work closely with playgrounds and community organisations. Although there are clusters of excellent work in Leicester, there is generally a huge gap in this provision.
- > At a minimum, families need online assistance designed around their circumstances and that points them to current services in their locality. This should be holistic and person-oriented, centred around whatever kind of support an individual family might lack, whether it is peer group support, advice, activities or just fun. For as long as workers and volunteers in playgrounds and community organisations are unable to point people in a trustworthy direction for more on-going support, opportunities for building resilience are missed.

Piggybacking proves social value

As this report notes, the delivery of the programme relied on existing staff and volunteers. Playworkers who in a normal year would have been staffing adventure playgrounds were diverted to planning, packing and relating sympathetically to anxious families. So were other staff in other types of community project. In one sense this provides a standout example of social value. If the city council and other public bodies had not supported and contracted with voluntary organisations over time, there would have been no one to deliver the emergency response at a time of acute need.

Assessing the value of this contribution of time across the city is not easy, given that the projects were so overwhelming busy. Recording the contributions was not a priority. However, if the figures provided by E2 above were simply scaled up across 14 projects, it would suggest 28,000 worker hours at a cost, excluding oncosts, approaching £240,000. Volunteer hours would be approaching 90,000. This is not meant to be an accurate estimate, simply a pointer to the scale of contribution that was possible because of funding and support from other routes.

The true extent of the value of co-operative working and collaboration on many levels, including financial, between the public sector, the food industry and the voluntary sector is incalculable.

Staff and volunteers need support

This report has not dwelt on the contributions made by staff and volunteers on the projects. But it is critical that they are not taken for granted. The job they did was at times heroic, and the difference they made to people's lives was significant. They achieved this at a time when they too were facing the challenges of the pandemic in their own lives. At least one project organiser was shielding due to her health conditions. Initially she organised what she could from home, and only later came in to work on-site. Working in a Covid-secure way had to become a way of life, and everyone experienced

the anxieties and uncertainties of the pandemic. Some were unsure of their jobs, juggling their own family and other commitments. Some were at times shocked and distressed by the levels of need evident in their communities.

One signifier of the contribution made by staff and volunteers and the climate they operated in is that there was not much appetite for celebration at the end of the summer. In ordinary years, a successful holiday scheme would be rounded off with some way of marking what was achieved—perhaps based on the learning, the fun, the personal development and the mutual help and growth that comes when children and communities interact. This year it was doubtful that such celebrations would be appropriate. Providing basic food to desperate families is not life-enhancing in the same way. Knowing that families were still struggling, and possibly had worse challenges yet to come, would cast a shadow on any celebration.

In such circumstances, support and recognition for staff and volunteers should be built into future programmes.

Appendices

Initial project publicity sheet

Reaching People



Commitment to
Lasting Change



Supported by Leicester  City Council

Covid Holiday hunger - feeding Leicester's children

Reaching People are pleased to announce the provision of extra bags of food to ensure children and young people are fed during the summer. This food is for families where Covid and the lockdown has significantly reduced the family income meaning children are hungry.

You will be able to access this service through local delivery partners from 13 July 2020. Here are our current delivery partners:

St. Andrews Play Association, 111 Walnut Street, LE2 7LA

0116 2916006 sapa.playbuilding@hotmail.co.uk

Highfields Adventure Playground, Mere Rd, LE5 5GQ

0116 2624592 kevin@highfieldsadventureplayground.com

Northfields Playbarn, Gipsy Lane, LE5 0TB

0116 2763720 playbarn@btconnect.com

Goldhill Adventure Playground, Windley Road, LE2 6QX 0116 2836350

info@goldhilladventureplayground.org

Woodgate Adventure Playground, Bonchurch St, LE3 5EG

0116 2624253 therally@btinternet.com

The What Cabin, Willow Street, LE1 2HR

0116 2626551 whatcabin@yahoo.co.uk

Braunstone Adventure Playground, 8 Cort Cres, LE3 1QZ

0116 2919700 thevench@btconnect.com

Mowmacre Playground, Bewcastle Gr, LE4 2JY

0116 2355668 mowmacreplayground@mac.com

New Parks Adventure Playground, "the venny", Glenfield Rd, LE3 6DN

0116 2878239 newparks-thevenny@live.co.uk

Reaching People



Commitment to
Lasting Change



Supported by Leicester  City Council

E2 - Empowering Through Education, Registered Office – E2 Community

Hub, 2-4 Home Farm Square, LE4 0RU, Telephone: 0116 2359481 / 0116

2128491, Email: me2@e2online.co.uk

Belgrave Playhouse/ Shree Sanatan Mandir and community centre, 84 Weymouth St, Leicester LE4
6FQ, Telephone: 0116 266 1402

Home Start Horizons - Tel: 01162 795062,

Email: info@homestarthorizons.org.uk – current clients only

Zinhiya Trust - 12 Bishop Street, Leicester, LE1 6AF. Tel: 0116 2545168, email:
Zinhiya.trust@gmail.com



Weekly data collection form



**Covid related holiday hunger
Evaluation and data for delivery of weekly meal bags for children for 7
weeks over the summer of 2020.**

Evaluation and data collection weekly reporting summary for delivery projects

Name of project: Covid related holiday hunger

Week Number: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Ages of children (provide the number of children in each of the age categories fed this week)

Under1
2-4
4-7
8-11
11 – 16
16-18

Gender

Male
Female
Prefer not to say
Other

Ethnicity

White: (British/Irish/Traveller/Polish/other:
Asian: (Indian/Bangladeshi/Pakistani/Chinese/other
Black: (African/Caribbean/Somali/other
Mixed: (White & Caribbean/African/Asian/ Other mixed
Other: (Arab/European/other

1. Activity packs provided this week
Content was

2. Type of meals generally provided this week
3. Case study attached/ feedback/ photo
4. Number of families supported this week in total
5. Number of new families joining this week
6. Number of families leaving this week.
7. Any other info?

Registered Charity Number: 1072595 Company Limited by Guarantee 357678
Reaching People is the trading name of Leicestershire Voluntary Sector Resource Agency

Final week 8 evaluation form

Reaching People



Additional data requested in Final Evaluation and data collection Week 8

1. Number of volunteers and volunteer hours supporting this project – rough estimate fine
 2. Number of staff and staff hours spent on the project and how they were paid (very conscious this project had no time allocation for staffing so interested to reflect on the additional input)
 3. What are your thoughts on demand for the food? Were you able to provide something for everyone, or were some people turned away or put on a waiting list? Or, if you had spare capacity, why do you think that was? Might people have not known about it, or been reluctant to come forward? Why?
 4. What was your greatest sense of satisfaction in the project?
 5. And what was your biggest frustration?
 6. Were you able to get extra things for the activity packs how did you do this? Who supplied them and what financial value where they?
 7. Did the project work in the way you were expecting?
 8. What messages would you like to give to organisers and planners of future holiday projects?
 9. If we are successful in getting an extension to this project is your organisation wanting to continue delivery for a period up to Christmas 2020 Y/ N
- If Yes how many covid related families will you support?
- How do you feel about asking people more information about the reasons people they need

the project relating to covid– for example zero hours contract, furlough ending, unemployment? Debt due to furlough, shielding, family members shielding, covid in the family, death of family member due to covid?

10. Please add anything else that might be useful for the evaluation report.

Credits

This report was commissioned by Reaching People. It was written by PJ White with Jenny Hand and data by Shafinaz Patel. It is based on the work of staff and volunteers of local delivery projects. Many thanks to all.

Funding was provided by the Government’s Coronavirus Community Support Fund,