
APPG on Hunger Inquiry into the
Extent of Hunger Amongst
Children During the School
Holidays, As Well As the Impact
It Has on Their Life Chances

The Trussell Trust Submission

17.03.2017



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Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to read the submission from the Trussell Trust that reflects an important and evolving part of the 'More than Food' work of this charity.

As members of the All-Party Group on Hunger may know, The Trussell Trust coordinates a national programme called Holiday Clubs as part of its More than Food programme to alleviate the hunger and social isolation that many families in the UK face during the school holidays.

Approximately 40 foodbanks in The Trussell Trust network offered extra holiday provisions¹ in the summer of 2016, including Holiday Clubs. During our research over the summer holidays we found a number of issues highlighting the absolute need for food in the school holiday.

"I didn't have to worry about those two meals a week." (Parent)

"I didn't have to spend my rent money to keep [the children] entertained." (Parent)

"My son is more confident and me as well, socialising." (Parent)

"Money has been a major factor this summer and the Holiday Club has been a godsend." (Parent)

No agency or organisation is currently measuring the number of children helped by lunch clubs nationally, and our data represents a fraction of the cases of holiday hunger nationwide, so the full extent of holiday hunger is not yet known.

We are very pleased to have the opportunity to provide this submission to the All Party Group on Hunger and hope that it will be useful to the inquiry as it progresses.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'D'. Below the signature is a long, horizontal, slightly curved line that serves as a flourish or underline.

David McAuley, Trussell Trust CEO

¹ More Than Food survey data, 2017, The Trussell Trust.

Inquiry

1. To understand the extent and geographical spread of hunger amongst children during school holidays.

Everyone who comes to a Trussell Trust foodbank is referred by a frontline professional, who identifies the reason for their referral to a foodbank. 1,137 referrals were made to Trussell Trust foodbanks specifically because people needed extra food to feed themselves and their children between the last week in July and first week in September 2015. During the same period in 2016 2,109² referrals had the primary reason listed as 'child holiday meals' and 783 referrals labelled child holiday meals as secondary reason.

This data is likely to underrepresent the actual number of people that were being helped because of the increased demand on family finances during the summer holidays. While holiday hunger may not be recorded as the primary referral reason, it may be an underlying issue.

In addition to the 16 foodbanks already running holiday provisions through our Holiday Clubs project, another 21 foodbanks have expressed an interest and are looking to develop their own provision in 2017. Outside of the Holiday Clubs project another 27 foodbanks across the UK are providing alternative, or additional, services to families facing hunger over the school holidays. In 2015, The Trussell Trust saw 5,000 more emergency food supplies given to children by foodbanks in July and August last year compared to the previous two months.³

Foodbanks increasingly also prepare for increased holiday demand by working with their referral agencies locally to create pre-packed food boxes that agencies can distribute to families in need of help during the summer. For example, in 2016, alongside Holiday Clubs, Salisbury Foodbank delivered and prepared summer food boxes for a number of agencies to give out to their clients to help support them over the long summer break. These summer boxes provided food to over 80 children and over 60 adults.

2. To investigate the underlying causes of hunger amongst children during school holidays.

Our research shows that the majority of families that attended a Holiday Club this summer were receiving Free School Meals, were in receipt of benefits or were not currently in employment. This indicates that the Holiday Clubs programme is reaching families that have a higher risk of struggling during the school holidays.

It also shows a need for the programme in areas where a foodbank exists. The majority of families attending Holiday Clubs had never used a foodbank before, which demonstrates that Holiday Clubs are reaching a new demographic to the foodbank.⁴ Analysis also found that families were suffering from holiday hunger, social isolation and financial pressures⁵:

"Yes, holidays are either expensive or boring in our household." (Parent)

4. To understand the extent, cost, nature and organisation of school holiday meal schemes in this country.

A Trussell Trust Holiday Club gives children and families the chance to have fun and make new friends while realising they are not the only family finding it hard during the holidays.

² Trussell Trust central data collection system, 2017.

³ The Trussell Trust, 2016. <https://www.trusselltrust.org/2016/07/25/press-release-1-in-5-parents-will-skip-a-meal-this-summer/>

⁴ Holiday Clubs Evaluation, 2016, The Trussell Trust.

⁵ ibid

Parents and children are invited by a foodbank referral agency, for example a local school or children's centre. Whilst the children play, volunteers talk to parents and will signpost parents onto other local projects or organisations that will help to address underlying reasons of why they are struggling.

The benefits of running a Holiday Club (such as the positive outcomes for families) outweigh the challenges, however there is a large amount of work required to run a successful Holiday Club. There is a desire to do more but funding and capacity can be significant challenges. To run a successful Holiday Club planning and preparation must take place ahead of the school holidays.

There were 15 clubs totalling 94 sessions over the 6-8 weeks summer holiday period. 193 families, 206 adults and 422 children (aged 0-14) were supported throughout the summer holidays in 2016, totalling 628 unique individuals⁶. 2,031 meals were served over the summer holiday period.

"It is a big commitment to run the club – both finding activities etc. and enough volunteers to be able to run but is definitely worth it for the feedback from the families." (Foodbank Manager)

5. To discover the food choices and other forms of support available to children and families helped by school holiday meal schemes.

The Trussell Trust Holiday Clubs project provides sample menus and signposts to websites for healthy recipes. Participating foodbanks are trained to use NHS 'Eatwell' guide and for all meals to follow government nutritional guidance.

Holiday Clubs are increasingly undertaking cooking activities with the families who attend and The Trussell Trust is working to incorporate its Eat Well spend Less programme and other cooking programmes with Holiday Clubs.

The enrichment activities offered at Holiday Clubs, e.g. arts and crafts, sports, dancing, outdoor games, quizzes, increase skills amongst children and their parents/guardians.

In accordance with The Trussell Trust foodbank model, Holiday Clubs signpost parents to additional services and help provide services onsite, for example supporting parents to use the Turn2us benefits calculator, highlighting eligibility for Free School Meals, and teaching people to cook basic meals.

"Kids trying different foods, and ask me to make it at home." (Parent)

6. To investigate the source of school holiday meal schemes' food.

The non-perishable food comes from foodbank stocks that are largely donated by local people. The fresh food sources vary; depending on the foodbanks local relationship with retailers and supermarkets. Some food is donated, some is 'surplus' food, and some is bought to supplement other food provided by the Holiday Club.

7. To consider the effectiveness of school holiday meal schemes in meeting immediate and long-term needs, and the possibility of these schemes becoming permanent features of children and young people's services.

⁶ ibid

The Holiday Clubs summer 2016 evaluation highlighted the main outcomes of the Clubs to be: providing food to struggling families; and reducing the social isolation that is sometimes faced during the school holidays.

- 76% of parents/guardians said that coming to the Holiday Club had made a difference to what they and their children eat during the school holidays.
- 85% (56) of them said that coming to the Holiday Club has made a difference to what they and their children do during the school holidays.
- 77% (51) of parents/guardians claimed that coming to the Holiday Club had an impact on their family over the summer.
- When parents were asked how much the Holiday Club had increased their confidence, helped them meet new people and helped them gain new skills, they rated 7.4, 8.2, and 7.4 out of 10. (For more stats see pages 5 and 6)

Data from Trussell Trust Holiday Clubs shows that children's centres are the primary referral agency, although primary schools were also used alongside referrals directly from the foodbank itself⁷.

We would recommend that Holiday Clubs are not seen as an alternative to properly functioning public services for children. Holiday Clubs should complement existing children's services, where there is a need for them and should aim to reduce the need for their services in the long-term. Charity service provision, such as Trussell Trust Holiday Clubs, should not become permanent features of children's services. Working with other agencies and organisations is therefore important when planning and running a Holiday Club.

9. To consider approaches to improving children's food intake and physical and mental development during the school holidays.

Other outcomes were highlighted in the evaluation including: reducing the financial pressures some families face, increasing the time families spend together, family bonding, introducing parents/guardians and children to new foods and healthy eating options, preparing children for going to school and increasing their confidence, skills and social development.

Holiday hunger is an issue we are looking at more widely with the UK Food Poverty Alliance and End Hunger UK.

⁷ Holiday Clubs evaluation 2016

Context: Trussell Trust Holiday Clubs

Background

Holiday Clubs in The Trussell Trust Easter pilot 2016 were evaluated by a PhD researcher from Northumbria University, who examined the short term impact of attending the Holiday Club on families and their children and sets out recommendations for future Holiday Clubs⁸.

The Holiday Clubs provided families with a variety of free activities during the school holidays in a safe environment. The Holiday Club was viewed by parents and staff as a valuable service in communities which lacked affordable activities for children and where families relied upon public transport.

Staff and parents identified three main challenges of the school holidays:

1. Parents mentioned the challenges of accessing affordable activities in their communities with many families reliant on public transport.
2. Holidays were viewed by staff and parents as stressful periods with increased pressure on household budgets.
3. For some parents, the school holidays are isolating periods.

A range of outcomes were identified by staff and parents attending the Holiday Clubs.

- The Holiday Clubs provided financial support to the parents with the provision of activities and food free of charge
- Parents' observed that their children had the opportunity to socialise with other children and have fun; it also gave parents the opportunity to socialise.
- Parents and staff mentioned that the Holiday Clubs gave parents the opportunity to relax and enjoy time with their children.
- Parents of children with Additional Support Needs mentioned the challenges of the school holidays including managing their child's behaviour and the challenge of finding appropriate activities. Parents mentioned that Holiday Clubs provided a safe and familiar environment where children were able to overcome barriers.
- The provision of lunch at the Holiday Club was viewed by parents as 'helpful'. They enjoyed the variety of food offered and the opportunity for families to sit together and socialise.
- Some of the staff and volunteers cited personal benefits of taking part in the Holiday Club such as the opportunity to develop new skills.

Holiday Clubs now

The Holiday Clubs project runs within the existing Trussell Trust foodbank network using a flexible model to allow foodbanks, whatever their size and capacity, to plan and run a successful Holiday Club for families in their community.

There were 15 clubs totalling 94 sessions over the 6-8 weeks summer holiday period. 193 families, 206 adults and 422 children (aged 0-14) were supported throughout the summer holidays in 2016, totalling 628 unique individuals⁹. 2,031 meals were served over the summer holiday period.

The high number of participants indicates there is a need for this Holiday Clubs in areas where foodbanks exists. This need could be for food, social isolation or both. Data shows that out of 183 families 63% were

⁸ Evaluation of The Trussell Trust Holiday Club Pilot – internal report

⁹ Holiday Clubs evaluation 2016

receiving Free School Meals¹⁰, which suggests that families may rely on Free School Meals during term-time to get by. 32% of families who attended a Holiday Club were receiving welfare benefits, were not in employment and were receiving Free School Meals.

Not all of those receiving welfare benefits were receiving Free School Meals. 23% of families who attended a Holiday Club were not receiving Free School Meals. This lower percentage may indicate that some families are above the income threshold and therefore not eligible to receive Free School Meals. Some families that are just above the eligibility threshold may still be struggling during the school holidays due to the extra cost of having their children home during the holidays.

18% (33) of families who attended a Holiday Club were not receiving benefits and were in employment, however only 4% (7) of these were receiving Free School Meals. This indicates that holiday hunger and food poverty may not be the only reason families come to a Holiday Club. Some families may not be living in food poverty but may be socially isolated and may be struggling financially during the school holidays.

The evaluation also showed that not only has coming to the Holiday Club supported families with food and reduced social isolation during the school holidays, it has also assisted families financially, showing that some families do suffer financially during the school holidays¹¹.

Impact of attending a Trussell Trust Holiday Club

Evaluation of the 2016 Holiday Clubs run by foodbanks in The Trussell Trust Network showed that a high percentage of parents/guardians (76%) said that coming to the Holiday Club had made a difference to what they and their children eat during the school holidays¹². Alongside the main outcome of providing a hot meal to families who may struggle during the school holidays, Holiday Clubs has also achieved other food related outcomes such as introducing families to new foods, healthier meals and preparing children for school. These extra outcomes have also been found in other holiday provision evaluations¹³.

85% (56) of participants said that coming to the Holiday Club has made a difference to what they and their children do during the school holidays.

77% (51) of parents/guardians claimed that coming to the Holiday Club had a positive impact on their family over the summer. Some comments from parents/guardians show that coming to the Holiday Club also aided family bonding and allowed them to spend more time together.

Holiday Clubs were valued by parents, with parents rating highly the clubs' role in increasing their confidence (7.4), helping them meet new people (8.2) and gain new skills (7.4 out of 10).

Additional outcomes from Holiday Clubs included confidence building, social development and increasing soft skills. 70% of children said that they learnt something new at the Holiday Club¹⁴.

¹⁰ ibid

¹¹ Holiday Clubs evaluation 2016

¹² ibid

¹³ Graham, P, L., Crilley, E., Stretesky, P, B., Long, M, A., Palmer, K, J., Steinbock, E., Defeyter, M, A (2016) 'School Holiday Food Provision in the UK: A Qualitative Investigation of Needs, Benefits, and Potential for Development', *Frontiers in Public Health*, (4) 172

¹⁴ Holiday Clubs evaluation 2016

Recommendations for addressing Holiday Hunger

Evaluations have shown that current child poverty policies such as Free School Meals, school fruit and veg, and breakfast clubs already help to reduce child poverty. These provisions stop during the school holidays. If these programmes could be extended to cover the school holiday it could help prevent holiday hunger.

However, ways to improve current holiday provisions also need to be addressed. For example, a national Quality Assurance mark for holiday provision is already being developed by service providers, including The Trussell Trust, and stakeholders.

Other recommendations would be:

1. *Coordinated, in-depth and thorough research into the scale and impact of child hunger during the school term and the school holidays.*

Conducting independent qualitative and quantitative research in schools via educational staff and academics would reach the desired target population. This could be locally led but centrally co-ordinated by relevant government departments and would support policy addressing holiday hunger and child poverty to be designed on a thorough evidence base that identifies the needs of people affected by holiday hunger and the number of people affected (including their demographics). Future policy development, at all levels, needs to address the impact that poverty and holiday hunger have on children's diets, nutrition, learning and attainment as well as their social, mental and physical development.

2. *Evaluation and extension of current child food poverty policy and benefits.*

Government should give consideration to assessing if and how to extend current provisions during the school holiday e.g. Healthy Start Vouchers, Free School Meals, School Fruit and Vegetables Scheme and School Breakfast Clubs. If local authorities could have additional funding made available over the summer to people who receive child tax credits, it could help prevent holiday hunger.

3. *Increased evaluations of current school holiday food provisions.*

Coordinated independent, or local authority-led, evaluations to assess the uptake and impact of current provision would help third and public sector providers develop practice advice and monitoring guidance.

Research evaluating services is currently only being provided on a small scale by academics¹⁵, however more coordinated research would help ensure the continuity and maximum impact of all provisions.

4. *Create an official forum for stakeholders e.g. education sector, academics, the third sector, public services, and policy makers/advisors.*

A face-to-face group would facilitate active engagement and collaboration among providers, researchers and policy-makers to ensure that policy change reflects the experiences and thoughts of those involved. It would also help to develop and disseminate national good practice guidelines as well as monitoring and evaluation frameworks that could help ensure that provisions all meet the same high standards.

5. *Funding for Holiday provisions*

As with school breakfast clubs, funding could be made available for each local authority to ensure that Holiday Provisions are available for families in their area. Currently, holiday provisions are sporadic and appear where the funding and capacity exists rather than where the need exists. There are many families in areas of the UK that would benefit from holiday provisions if they were made available. We welcome the Food Cardiff and the Welsh Local Governments Association 'Food and Fun' initiative in this area, which is run in schools and employs teaching assistants and kitchen staff.

¹⁵ Defeyter, A, M., Graham, L, P., Prince, K. (2015) 'A qualitative evaluation of holiday breakfast clubs in the UK: views of adult attendees, children, and staff', *Frontiers in Public Health*, 3 (199) 1-15. Available from: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4534775/pdf/fpubh-03-00199.pdf> [Accessed 09 April 2016]