



Health Improvement and Nutrition Policy

Developing the holiday activities and food programme, aka Healthy Holiday in Sheffield, for better health, diet and nutrition

By Evie Crowe

Produced in collaboration with the University of Sheffield, Regather and ShefFood



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The Institute for Sustainable Food at the University of Sheffield finds dynamic solutions to the challenges of food security and sustainability. Our innovative research draws on the fields of science, engineering, social sciences, and arts and humanities.



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Regather

Regather is a co-operative of local people working to improve food and build community in Sheffield. We run an organic farm, veg box scheme, and many other community projects.



ShefFood

ShefFood is a cross-sector partnership of organisations across the city formed of local public agencies, businesses, individuals, academic and community organisations committed to working together to create a more sustainable food system for Sheffield.



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Foreword

With food systems responsible for around one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions (Nature Food 2021) and with agriculture recognised as the biggest threat to the estimated 86% of plant and animal species at risk of extinction (Chatham House 2021), it is now clear that the way we produce our food urgently needs to change.

Despite this knowledge, government continues to fail at every level, from global to local, to establish the appropriate policy frameworks for food system transformation. For example, COP27 was billed as 'the food systems COP', but focused narrowly on supply side agriculture issues dominated by global agri-food corporations, and failed to adopt a holistic food systems approach to include issues such as food waste and loss, nutrition, sustainable diets and resilient supply chains. The UK Government's dismal response to Dimpleby's National Food Strategy report represents another missed opportunity, greeted with dismay and disappointment, failing to give the challenges of food security and sustainability the urgent response that is required if we are to provide affordable, safe and nutritious food for all while living within planetary limits.

The many examples of government failure, at home and abroad, reinforce the importance of local action and innovation if we are to make our food systems sustainable and fair. To achieve food security, "when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO 2009), we all urgently need to reflect on what we can do as individuals and communities to lessen the impact of the food that we eat on the natural world, to allow us to exist within the constraints defined by our Planet's limited resources. The COVID-19 crisis revealed the vulnerability of our food system, plunging people who never imagined that it would affect them into food insecurity, almost overnight. The global supply chains on which our current food system is based are fragile and this realisation has highlighted the need to develop our local and regional food production capacity to help mitigate these risks.

In 2022, Regather teamed up with the University of Sheffield's Institute for Sustainable Food to create a 'Local Food Systems Policy Accelerator' to develop evidence-based food system policy change in Sheffield. As part of the project, eight students were recruited to conduct original research into food system issues affecting Sheffield. The student researchers were asked to identify the mechanisms or 'levers for change' that can hasten the development of more sustainable food systems and infrastructure throughout Sheffield. They were given access to the assessment frameworks created



by Sustainable Food Places (SFP), to provide them with an insight into the multi-faceted world of food systems. SFP has previously granted Sheffield a Bronze Award, recognising the standards already achieved with the city. The work to achieve a Silver Award is underway, supported by the creation of Working Groups on specific subject areas within ShefFood, Sheffield's food partnership, and the creation of a Food Action Plan for Sheffield. This important work has in various ways been informed by the research undertaken and the evidence collected by the 'Local Food System Policy Accelerator' team.

We hope you find this report interesting and informative, and that you will join us in commending the student researchers responsible for making their time and effort available, and for contributing their skills and intellectual resources to tackling the critically important challenge of food system transformation.

Gareth Roberts, Co-Founder & Director of Regather

Professor Peter Jackson, Director of the Institute for Sustainable Food at the University of Sheffield



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1.0 Executive Summary

It has never been a more critical time for the government, local authorities, and communities to help shape healthy and just food environments in the places where we live, work, and play. A better local food environment and system works to prevent and reduce the negative health consequences associated with poor diet and low levels of physical activities, in addition to addressing associated justice and equality issues such as food insecurity and child poverty. To address these issues, the current government funded 'Holiday Activities and Food' programme provides funding for local authorities to support free school meal eligible children and their families during the Easter, Summer, and Christmas holidays. Multiple local providers offer a wide range of free physical and enriching activities during the holidays, and provide healthy meals and nutritional education to help encourage healthy, active, and social lifestyles.

An evidence review of the upcoming Easter 2022 HAF programme, Sheffield's previous 'Healthy Holidays' scheme, and programmes in other local authorities, highlighted the importance of this government scheme. The programme is essential in supporting financially disadvantaged families and young people over the holiday periods, especially in areas where deprivation, percentage of children eligible for FSM, and childhood obesity rates are at critical levels. In order to further improve and ensure the inclusivity, success, and outreach of the programme, multiple areas of development within the programme were identified. This included to:

- Increase the capacity for the programme to provide nutritional education to children and providers.
- Improve the sustainable credentials of the food offer.
- Implement more food-growing activities specifically in schools.
- Connect and form partnerships with more socially-minded local businesses.

The future direction of the programme as it continues its funding from 2022-2024 is also discussed. It is concluded that the scheme will need consistent and ongoing evaluation from local authorities and the government to ensure it remains effective at a time of huge uncertainty with rising living costs and greater risks of food insecurity and poverty.

2.0 Introduction & Background

2.1 Obesity: A National Public Health Concern

The World Health Organisation (WHO) describes obesity as one of the most serious global public health challenges in the 21st century (WHO, 2021). In the UK, the second highest risk factor for ill health is being overweight or obese, a consequence of poor diet and low levels of physical activity. A well-balanced healthy and nutritious diet, in addition to an active lifestyle, is therefore essential for our health and wellbeing - helping to prevent more serious physical and mental health issues.

In Sheffield, approximately 300,000 adults, almost two thirds of the adult population, are overweight or obese (Sheffield City Council, 2018). The most deprived communities and those from more disadvantaged socio-economic groups in the city are more likely to have unhealthy diets, and as a result, are experiencing associated negative health consequences. Additionally, childhood obesity imposes serious physical and mental health issues, with young people having a significantly increased risk of obesity into adulthood. In Sheffield, more than 1 in 5 children are overweight when they start school (ages 4-5), increasing to 1 in 3 by the time they reach Year 6 (ages 10-11). From 2016-2019, a 13.6% inequality gap in overweight and obesity prevalence between the most and least deprived children in Sheffield was also identified (NCMP, 2018).

The collaborative and coordinated actions of the government, local authorities, and community groups play a critical role in creating healthy environments that work to prevent and mitigate against the negative health consequences associated with low physical activity and unhealthy diets. Wider and more complex issues surrounding food justice and intergenerational inequalities should also be addressed, in addition to facilitating a positive whole system change in the local food environment. This can include raising awareness of what a healthy diet can look like, and providing individuals and families with the skills, resources, and support needed to access and feed themselves affordable and nutritious food and drink.

2.2 Healthy Food for All: Sustainable Food Places

The Sustainable Food Places (SFP) partnership programme and social movement aims to drive a positive food-system change across all UK cities and city-regions, encouraging best practice on healthy and sustainable food. Through an awards framework, urban areas who are taking measurable action and a more holistic approach to food, such as forming food partnerships and transitioning to a more healthy, sustainable, and equitable food system, are rewarded with either a Bronze, Silver, or Gold award. In 2021, Sheffield was awarded a Bronze award for its efforts in all 6 key issues (Sustainable Food Places, 2022).

Key issue 3, known as 'Healthy Food for All', works towards tackling food poverty and promoting healthy eating, based on the belief that everyone should have an equal opportunity to eat affordable, nutritious, and healthy food, no matter their background. To promote healthy eating, SFP encourages food partnerships to "promote the adoption of holistic healthy food culture transformation programmes in a range of settings". This includes providing and promoting healthy eating, drinking, and weight campaigns, support services, and initiatives. Working towards preventing the proliferation of unhealthy food outlets should also be worked towards, and ensuring people can access affordable healthy and nutritious food and drink where they live, work, and play (Sustainable Food Places, 2022).

2.3 Health Improvement and Nutrition in Sheffield

2.3.1 Policy and Initiatives in Sheffield

Currently, Sheffield has a programme of city-wide initiatives and policy that are promoting the strategies described within Key Issue 3 - 'Healthy Food for All'. This is supported and delivered by Sheffield's cross-sector food partnership ShefFood. ShefFood consists of multiple local agencies, businesses, academic, and community organisations that are committed to creating a more sustainable and resilient food system and network for the Sheffield City Region (ShefFood, 2022).

Sheffield Joint Health and Wellbeing Board delivers Sheffield's 'Food and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-24' which encompasses the city's main strategies, with its main objective to improve the diet and health of the population in order to reduce the notable gap in healthy life expectancies and other associated health-inequalities. This is in addition to objectives that work to increase the resilience of food supply networks, improve social cohesion and wellbeing, and reduce food poverty. The strategy also encompasses food sustainability, and how steps can be made to reduce carbon emissions associated with the food network (Sheffield Health and Wellbeing Board, 2019).

National health improvement and nutrition policies, largely from Public Health England, also operate at the local authority level in Sheffield. For example, the recent sugary drinks levy and the tightening of restrictions on the advertising and promotion of 'junk food' are aimed at addressing, preventing, and reducing childhood obesity. These schemes and others are outlined in the Government's Childhood Obesity Plan (Gov.uk, 2017) and are essential in making it easier and more accessible for children, young people, and families to make healthier choices surrounding food and exercise.

There are multiple Sheffield organisations, charities, and businesses operating within these local and national frameworks, producing programmes that aim to transform the local food network. For example, the Eat Smart Sheffield programme works specifically with primary and secondary schools in the 20% most deprived areas of Sheffield to provide tools and resources that encourage schools to make long term changes to their food culture. This includes lessons and guidance on how to cook, grow, and enjoy good quality, sustainable, and affordable food (Eat Smart Sheffield, 2019). Other healthy food culture and weight support programmes operating within Sheffield include; Start well Sheffield, Healthy Early years, Bags Of Taste, Move More, People Keeping well in their Community, Change4Life, An Even Better Arbourthorne, and Sheffield Healthy Holidays.



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2.3.2 Sheffield Holiday Activities and Food Programme

The UK Government's Holidays Activities and Food programme (HAF) is funded by the Department of Education, where local authorities receive funding to support children eligible for free school meals (FSM) during the Easter, Summer, and Christmas school holidays. The government is investing over £200 million per year for the next three years (2022-2024) for the HAF programme to be rolled out in 152 local authorities (DFE, 2021). Sheffield operates a large HAF programme, delivered by 7 key local providers and multiple partners and volunteers across the city. Currently, ~25,450 children in the Sheffield local authority are eligible for FSMs and to be involved in the programme.

Funding is put towards a specific framework that provides a free holiday club to eligible children, offering consistent and easily accessible enriching and physical activities, healthy food, and nutritional resources over the holidays. The programme aims to ensure children are having fun and eating well over the holidays, supporting families from more disadvantaged backgrounds during a financially challenging and socially demanding time.

3.0 Methods

This report will conduct an in-depth literature review to research, collate, and evaluate evidence of the upcoming Sheffield HAF programme that will roll out over the Easter holidays in 2022. The report will also review and evaluate the previous government funded Healthy Holidays scheme in Sheffield, that ran from 2019-2021 and followed a similar framework. The report will specifically review how the programme operates within Sheffield, the framework it follows, and who is involved. It will also evaluate the importance of the programme, and how it can be potentially developed. To identify these areas of potential development, case-studies of how the HAF programme operates in other local authorities were also researched, specifically within the Yorkshire and Humber region and other city-regions that are SFP members. Lastly, the report will critically review the future direction of the programme, such as evaluating where the programme is heading over the duration of its set funding until 2024.

Relevant academic literature, grey literature and policy documents were primarily found through the Google search engine using appropriate key-words, and filtered by time in order to easily find the most relevant and up-to-date documents. The SFP website, specifically the Healthy Food for All page, the Sheffield City Council website, and Public Health England website, were also useful resources to find relevant local policy and literature for the review and evaluation.

4.0 Outline of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme in Sheffield

4.1 HAF programme framework

The HAF programme in Sheffield annually receives approximately £2.5 million to fund activities, food, and education for at least 4 hours for 4 days a week across the Easter, Summer, and Christmas school holidays. Families with children eligible for FSM are written to and given the opportunity to sign up to the programme using an online-booking system. Approximately 25,450 children in the Sheffield local authority are currently eligible for FSMs and to be involved in the programme (SSC, 2021). There is also an additional 15% of funding available and allocated to other vulnerable children not in receipt of FSM benefits. This is only available if the requirement of ensuring all FSM children are successfully reached out to across the target area, is met (DFE, 2021).

The HAF programme focuses its outreach within 7 school localities that are located in the most deprived areas of Sheffield (Figure 1) (Table 1). 7 HAF coordinators, either organisations, charities, or community groups then form a partnership with the 7 school localities. Coordinators work to provide, support, and promote a wide range of enriching and physical activities, healthy food, and educational resources for families and children over the holidays - that all encourage an active lifestyle and healthy and sustainable eating. Connecting with local schools is a key stage to the success of the programme, as schools often play critical roles in deprived urban areas through their ability to engage with the community and the education they provide. All primary and secondary schools in Sheffield are written to via the Director of Education and the school improvement body to ask if they are willing to deliver HAF within their school, or use their school as a venue for the programme. A total of 10 schools delivered the Healthy Holidays programme in 2021.

Ward Localities and Wards

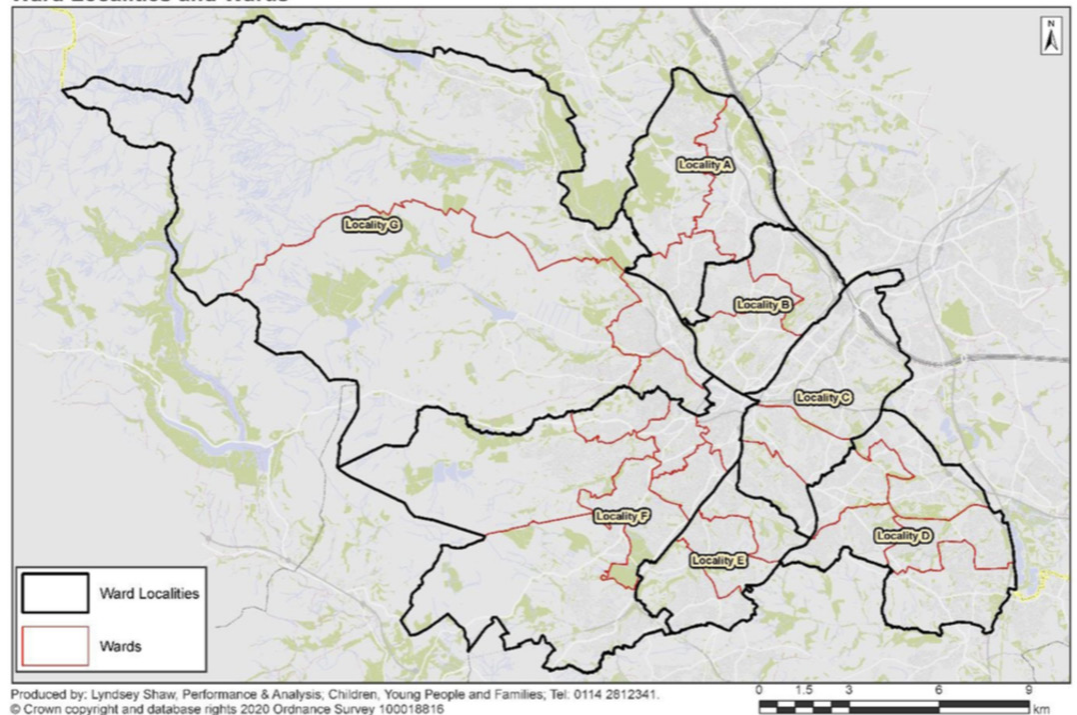


Figure 1: Map of Sheffield outlining the 7 ward localities (A-G), and the 28 Sheffield Ward boundaries (SCC, 2021).

School Locality	Areas covered	% of FSM of the FSM cohort
A	Chapelton to Southey	13
B	Firth Park	25
B	Firvale and Burngreave	25
C	Manor, Arbourthorne, Darnall, Tinsley	18
D	Handsworth down to Southeast (Westfield, Woodhouse, Hackenthorpe etc)	14
E	Beauchief, Gleadless Valley, Lowedges, Batemoor, and Jordanthorpe	11
F	Sharrow down to Dore and up to Crosspool	13
G	Hillsborough up to Stocksbridge	6

Table 1: Information of the 7 school localities (A-G) associated with the upcoming 2022 HAF programme (SCC, 2021).

4.2 The Importance of the HAF Programme

A 'holidays experience gap' describes how children from more disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to access out-of-school activities, as increased costs and reduced incomes over the holidays for families are making holiday clubs less affordable. Additionally, low-income families are more likely to struggle to afford healthy food during the school holidays, resorting to cheaper and less healthy options, in addition to serving smaller portions, skipping meals, and accessing food banks. Children are therefore more likely to experience 'unhealthy holidays' through poor nutrition, a lack of physical activity, and greater social isolation. According to the 2020 Family Resources Survey, approximately 5.7 million adults in the UK (10.8% of the population) and over 2.5 million children experienced food insecurity between August 2021 and January 2022. The likelihood of food insecurity is also greater for black led households, disabled households and households with 3 or more children (DWP., 2021).

Food insecurity and poverty has been recorded as rising, with cuts to local authority budgets, the welfare safety net, and rising fuel, food, and housing costs. Additionally, food insecurity can also be triggered by job losses, changes in housing, delays in receiving Universal Credit, and unexpected expenses - with food budgets often cut to accommodate for other living costs such as rent and fuel (Sustain, 2022). For example, the recent surge in fuel prices causing a significant increase in energy bills, is meaning that some families are choosing between heating their homes or eating, with one family stating they have had to stop buying fresh fruit (BBC., 2022).

Food insecurity has cumulative and diverse consequences throughout a child's development. Research has proven that good food and a healthy lifestyle is essential not only for children's physical health, but also for their educational attainment, productivity, and social well-being (Jyoti et al., 2005). Missing out on these key development stages has significant knock-on effects throughout a child's life, perpetuating the cycle of socio-economic disadvantages that the family experiences and leading to a vicious cycle of unmet intergenerational needs (WHO, 2020).

In response, free holiday-club programmes that target children who are eligible for FSMs have been studied and shown to improve children's dietary behaviours during the school holidays (Crilley et al., 2021). These school holiday interventions also have significant potential for reducing socio-economic inequalities surrounding young people's mental health and wellbeing when they return to school. This is through clubs increasing opportunities for social interaction, eating nutritious foods, and physical exercise (Morgan et al., 2019). It is also the case, however, that access to holiday club provision does not prevent low-income families from experiencing food-insecurity over the holidays, highlighting the significance and extent of this deep-rooted issue (Defeyter and Shinwell, 2021).

Regardless, without government funding available to be able to provide holiday activities and food provision for disadvantaged children, local authorities are left with an even greater pressure and lack of resources needed to support families that are experiencing significant levels of food insecurity and financial pressure.

4.3 Deprivation in Sheffield

To ensure the programme is successfully coordinated and accessible to all vulnerable children, an understanding of the spatial complexities of deprivation across Sheffield is essential. Out of all 7 school localities, referred to from A-G, school locality B contains the highest percentage of children eligible for FSM (25%) out of the entire FSM cohort (~25,456). Locality B encompasses Firth Park and Burngreave wards, which are the second most deprived wards across Sheffield’s 28 wards. Childhood obesity is also much greater in these wards, with 26.4% of Firth Park’s population aged 10-11 classed as obese - 5.1% greater than Sheffield’s average, and the highest percentage across all Sheffield wards. Additionally, 35.7% and 28.1% of children receive FSM in Burngreave and Firth Park respectively (Figure 2). Burngreave also has a much higher BME population at 63.5% of its population (Sheffield City Council., 2017).

Locality C, encompassing Arbourthorne, Manor Castle, and Darnall wards, contains the second highest proportion of children eligible for FSM at 18%. Manor Castle is the most deprived ward in Sheffield and has the greatest percentage of children eligible for FSM (36.7%), and has the second highest number of 10-11 year olds classed as obese - at 25.9%. (Sheffield City Council. 2017) (Appendix A).

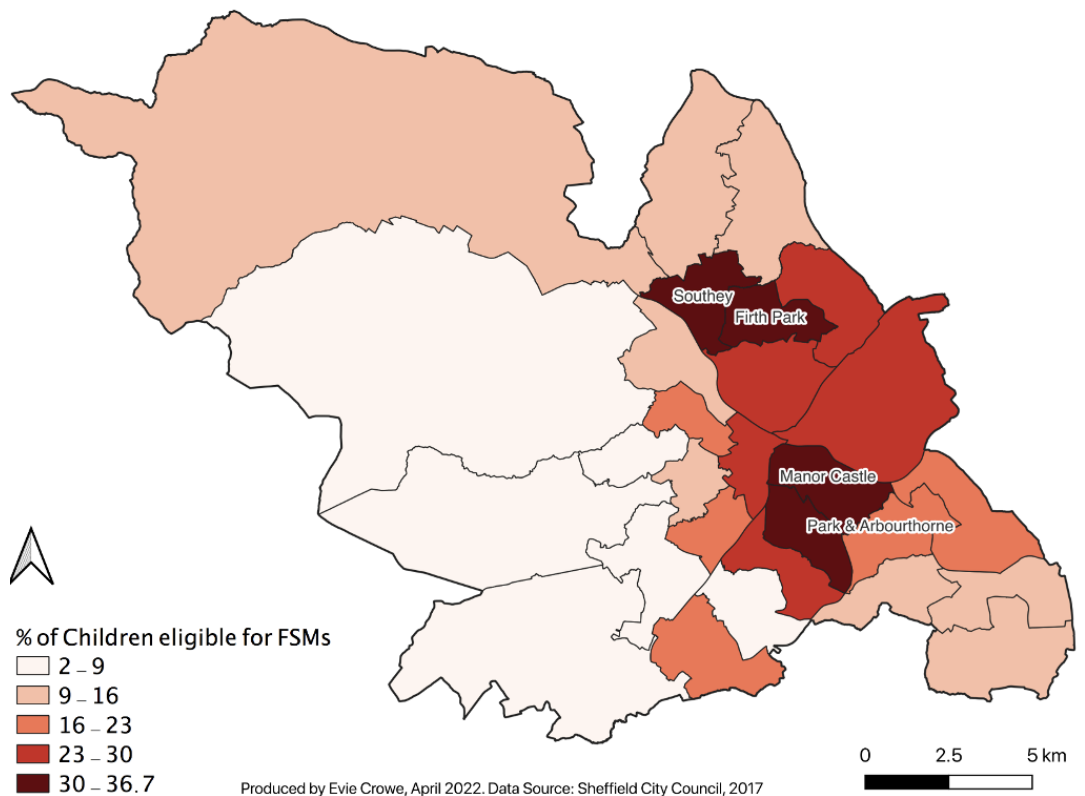


Table 2: Map of Sheffield displaying the percentage (%) of children in each ward that are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM).

5.0 Holiday Activities and Food Programme provision in Sheffield

5.1 Local Providers: Delivery and Support of the Programme

The 7 local providers responsible for coordinating the programme must meet the framework of standards regarding what they are expected to provide. For example, they are responsible for; developing an in-depth plan for the food and activity provision in the local authority, awarding funding to providers, drawing in local support e.g. from schools and charities, and ensuring regions and communities of greatest need are supported. The 7 local providers within the 2022 programme are outlined in Table 2. Table 3 outlines any other organisations that are involved in the planning and provision of the programme. The providers who are involved are all charities and organisations with a health and wellbeing focus and are located across the city, with some in partnership with each other. They originate from a variety of ethnically diverse backgrounds and cultural approaches - ensuring the inclusivity of the provision. For example, the Saalik Youth project works with Reach Up Youth and provides services and support to young people from ethnically diverse, specifically Muslim, backgrounds and origins.

Table 2: Information on the 7 local providers that are coordinating and running the 2022 HAF programme in Sheffield.

Organisation Name	About	Contact
SOAR	Community regeneration charity that provides services to improve North Sheffield resident’s health, well-being, and employability.	https://www.soarcommunity.org.uk/contact-3
ZEST	A community-led initiative that is centre for community wellbeing. Aims to bring people together, improve lives, and increase access to health, education, leisure, and recreational facilities for all sections of the community.	https://www.zestcommunity.co.uk/get-in-touch/
Sharrow Community Forum	Community development trust which works to strengthen communities in the Sharrow area of Sheffield.	https://sharrowcf.org.uk/contact/

Organisation Name	About	Contact
Heeley City farm (in partnership with the Terminus)	Urban farm and environmental visitor centre in Heeley with community events and activities.	https://www.heeleyfarm.org.uk/ContactUs
The Terminus	Registered charity working in partnership with Heeley City Farm to meet the needs of communities in the deprived areas of Lowedges, Batemoor & Jordanthorpe.	https://www.sheffieldmentalhealth.co.uk/services/terminus-initiative
Sheffield Wednesday Community Foundation	Football club's charitable arm, supports the development of cohesive communities and residents around South Yorkshire, working across four key themes; Participation, NCS, health, and education.	https://swfccp.co.uk/contact-us/
Reach up Youth (in partnership with Saalik Youth)	Organisation based in Burngreave, engaging at-risk young people from diverse community backgrounds in sport and physical activity and reducing the risk of them becoming involved in crime.	
Saalik Youth	Non-profit voluntary organisation based in Sheffield. Educating and Inspiring through Islamic Courses, Youth and Community Events.	https://www.facebook.com/saalik.org/
Manor Castle Development Trust (in partnership with Darnall Wellbeing and Manor After School Kids Klub)	Manor and Castle Development Trust works in partnership with NHS Sheffield to deliver a programme of activities to improve community health and fitness.	https://manorandcastle.org.uk/contact/
Darnall Wellbeing	Darnall Well Being is a local, not-for-profit, community health organisation working to help the people of Darnall, Tinsley and neighbouring areas stay healthy.	https://darnallwellbeing.org.uk/contact-us/
Manor After School Kids Klub (MASKK)	Local charity that provides a range of activities and services for children and families in the Manor and Castle area of Sheffield including affordable childcare, kids clubs, family activities, short breaks for children with disabilities, and events and volunteering opportunities.	https://www.maskk.org.uk/#Contact

Table 3: Information on the other key organisations, partnerships, and charities working on coordinating the upcoming 2022 programme.

Organisation Name	About	Contact
ShefFood	Sheffield’s Food Partnership consists of a wide range of individuals and organisations working to develop a sustainable food system for the Sheffield city region.	https://sheffield.org.uk/contact/
Regather	Co-operative of a community of local people working to improve food for Sheffield.	https://regather.net/contact-us/
FoodHall Project	Community kitchen that uses exclusively ingredients rescued as food surplus in order to combat food waste and food insecurity.	https://www.foodhallproject.org/contact

5.2 Enriching and physical activities

A wide range of engaging and enriching activities are delivered to encourage children to be more active, improve their wider educational attainment, and to support the development of their resilience, character, and wellbeing (DFE., 2021). Excluding school based activities, only 22% of children aged between 5-15 meet the physical activity guidelines of being at least moderately active for at least 60 minutes every day. This percentage is even lower from those in lower-income households (PHE, 2018). Clubs and local providers must coordinate and run activities which meet the physical activity guidelines on a daily basis, in addition to providing opportunities to develop new skills, knowledge, and experiences. Activities are not limited to, but suggested to fall within the following categories:

- After school activities e.g. sports, dance
- Indoor and outdoor physical activities with providers e.g. swimming, trampolining, bowling
- Cultural trips e.g. museums, art galleries
- Food growing and gardening
- Provision of activity packs and games
- Cook and eat sessions

5.3 Food and Nutritional Education

All activities provided must include a healthy main meal, either breakfast, lunch, or dinner. It is estimated that the majority of UK children (~91%) do not eat the recommended minimum of 5 portions of fruit and veg per day (PHE., 2018). Additionally, children's consumption of added and processed sugars significantly exceeds the maximum recommended level (PHE, 2018). Food provided must meet school food standards, legal requirements surrounding allergens and food hygiene, and when possible the majority of food is expected to be hot (DFE., 2021). To improve the inclusivity of the programme, food provided must meet dietary requirements and preferences, be culturally appropriate, and also age appropriate - as the food offered to secondary school age ranges (11+) is expected to be different to food provided to primary school children. Lastly, when possible, the origin of the food should be as sustainable as possible, fitting criteria such as reduced carbon footprints and plastic packaging.

Nutritional education is also expected to be embedded within the daily activities in order to further integrate the concept of 'food literacy' into the programme. This involves discussing nutrition, physical health and wellbeing, and the provenance of food including themes of agriculture, sustainability, ecology, and the environment. Nutrition education should also encourage conversations about the importance of the social aspect of food and the skills, resources, and abilities needed for food growing, preparing, and eating. Nutritional education can be delivered via an activity (such as gardening and food growing), or provided through additional resources. Food education should also be delivered for families and carers, with clubs to provide engaging training and advice sessions on how to source, prepare, and cook nutritious and low-cost food. This aims to give families more confidence and independence to cook healthy yet affordable meals at home.

5.4 Signposting and referrals

Educational resources and signposting are expected to be provided as part of the HAF programme, in order to direct families towards other sources of information, programmes, and schemes. This is to provide further food education and support to families and children outside of the HAF programme provision, and also works to connect the programme with existing healthy culture strategies and schemes operating within Sheffield.

Lastly, as some families and children still may not be able to attend some, or all, face-to-face provision, there are opportunities for food boxes and activity packs to be delivered by volunteers to family homes or available for collection. This was a successful approach during the 2021 HAF scheme due to strict Covid-19 restrictions, but still remains a potential approach to ensure eligible families can equally access and benefit from the scheme.

5.5 Co-benefits & successes

The HAF programme in Sheffield also aims to seek a range of co-benefits. For example, the structure of the programme and the funding it receives presents the opportunity to provide skills and employment opportunities to local people and increase the capacity to build and form partnerships with the voluntary and community sector. Additionally, a decentralised food provision strategy is implemented through the funding and supporting of local food suppliers (e.g. local caterers, stores, markets, and food cooperatives). This leads to a community-level food production approach that ensures the local distribution of socio-economic benefits, and fosters relationships between local providers while preventing the extraction of profit by larger corporations.

It is therefore important for the funding received to be invested locally where possible. This is an example of community economic development, a local economic development approach that is driven by a community's social, environmental, and economic priorities. It is shaped by those who live, work, and run businesses and public services within that community and works to form an inclusive economy with socially-minded providers at the forefront of the programme.

During the 2021 'Sheffield Healthy Holidays' programme, 11,000 unique children and 130 providers were involved over the Summer holiday activities. Feedback from this programme from parents was extremely positive, specifically regarding how the programme alleviates financial pressure and child-caring responsibilities faced over the holidays, and how parents have noted their children thoroughly enjoying the activities and the food provided to them. An evaluation of the 2021 HAF Programme in Yorkshire, also received similar positive feedback from parents (Food Foundation., 2021). Examples of feedback received are as follows:

"This is a lifeline for me in the school holidays"

"As a single parent I find it hard to do things like this - a fantastic day out!"

"They talk, they smile, they exercise, it just ticks all the boxes".

"By not being in a high-income bracket, it is a lifeline for me being able to work and to have them in childcare so I can actually work in school holidays as well."

"Normally he doesn't eat healthily at all but since he has come over here, the food, he is eating a lot healthier at home as well so I am kind of really glad and happy about that, he loves it."

6.0 Case-studies

6.1 Food Growing Activities

As part of the York Edible Schools scheme, schools are provided with resources and activity ideas that support and encourage staff and children to grow their own food in plots and allotments. Gardening activities have now been taken up in many schools, and as it is a useful learning tool, it has been successfully integrated within multiple school subjects such as science, art, and maths (Edible York, 2022). Bradford's Growbag scheme uses a similar approach to encourage year-round food growing in schools, providing a 'practitioner' who will help deliver gardening sessions and staff training (Bradford Schools Online, 2021). A holistic approach across the whole year is important to ensure that food grown is effectively looked after and harvested, in addition to ensuring schools with existing gardens are getting the maximum benefit. While these activities are not directly involved in the HAF programme, the resources and facilities it provides presents opportunities for HAF programmes to partner with these schools and provide food-growing activities that use these established foodscapes.

Food growing activities do not necessarily require an allotment or garden space. For example, a school holiday club in Bristol is looking to run herb-planting activities, whereby children can plant a range of seeds in used milk bottles (Feeding Bristol, 2021). This approach increases the accessibility of food-growing activities as fewer resources and skills are needed, and also is a useful approach in teaching children about sustainability - such as how everyday items can be reused in multiple ways to grow food.



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6.2 Northampton HAF review

In 2020, Northampton ran a review and evaluation of their HAF programme which details a variety of significant insights into issues and challenges with the programme that were often highlighted by parents (Bayes et al., 2021). Certain challenges with the food offer were identified, including the lack of choice that some vegetarian children experienced and how there was often a lack of healthy and nutritious food on offer. Food that is not considered as 'kid friendly' or appropriate for younger school children was also identified as a problem - as children found it harder to eat and enjoy.

Considering this feedback, Northampton HAF providers highlighted the issue of food provision often not being as well planned and implemented as they would have liked due to time constraints. This had knock-on effects of reducing the inclusivity of the food offer, thus highlighting the importance of providing age appropriate food, and a variety of food that children with dietary requirements and/or allergens would enjoy eating. Additionally, it emphasises the compromise that providers had to make, whereby the healthiest options were not always available, but ensuring that the children were fed was their highest priority.



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7.0 Areas of Development

7.1 Overview

Reviewing the previous HAF programme in Sheffield and the current plans for the upcoming Easter 2022 programme highlights potential gaps and areas of development within the programme. Four key areas are suggested to be developed in order to improve the activity and food provision for children and young people, transform the sustainability of the programme, and partner with more local businesses and schools. A summary of these four areas are provided below and are further explored within the following section:

- **Nutritional education** - As a key part of the programme's provision framework, the capacity for the programme to provide nutritional education to children and providers needs to be expanded. This includes opportunity for more activities such as cook-and-eat sessions, and ensuring entertainment venues can supply nutritious and healthy food.
- **Sustainable food** - Improving the sustainability credentials of the food offer is not only important for the planet, but will also encourage children and providers to learn more about where their food comes from and the importance of this.
- **Food growing activities** - Implementing more food-growing activities specifically in schools, provides an opportunity to improve multiple aspects of the HAF provision including providing an enriching activity, the healthy food offer, and nutritional education.
- **Socially-minded businesses** - Connecting and forming partnerships with more socially-minded local businesses is key in developing all identified gaps within the programme and to increase ethical and green investment into the city.

7.2 Nutritional Education

A difficulty noted with multiple HAF programmes, including in Sheffield, is the ability to implement nutritional education to not only the children and their families, but also to the providers themselves (DFE, 2021). While healthy meals and physical activities are delivered more widely, nutritional education provision was noted as an area of improvement in Sheffield's programme framework.

To ensure providers have the ability to incorporate nutritional education into activities they are delivering, it is essential to offer training opportunities to these individuals in order to increase the programme's capacity to deliver nutritional education and cooking as part of the sessions. Having at least one trained provider in each locality can ensure cook and eat sessions, and associated nutritional education, can be delivered across the 3 annual holidays to the children (and parents) involved. It is also important for food providers of the programme to have the appropriate knowledge and resources to supply food that meets the nutritional requirements. It is therefore vital to better understand why certain providers lack this knowledge and what HAF partners and volunteers can do to support them.

For example, it is hard to ensure with certain entertainment venues e.g. swimming, bowling and ice skating that they can provide good quality, healthy, and nutritious food. Currently, these food venues offer lower-quality and more processed foods, with one Irish study finding that only 55% of social and activity centres for children offer fruit or vegetable pieces, compared to 82% who sold chocolate bars (Safefood, 2021). This disconnect that exists between who can provide healthy food and who can provide activities is a specific issue within the programme. To overcome this, it needs to be ensured that if entertainment venues agree to provide activities for the HAF programme, they must also be encouraged to follow a healthy and nutritious food framework. Support should be given alongside this, possibly including general resource packages to providers, or encouraging them to engage in sessions where they can learn what healthy and nutritious meals they can provide.

7.3 Sustainable Food

Currently, the minimum requirement of the food offer is that it has to meet School Food Standards, with no regulations surrounding sustainability requirements and with little direction given from the government. The food supplied and consumed within the programme's session, however, should have as minimal environmental impact as possible. This was mentioned as an area of improvement from Sheffield's Healthy Holidays programme in 2021. This includes when possible:

- Seasonal food
- Reduced plastic waste
- Reduced food waste
- Local and shorter supply chains
- Low carbon and water footprint

A plant-based approach to the food-offer is a great opportunity to increase the sustainability of the food-offer, as plant-based foods such as fruits, vegetables, and legumes often have lower carbon footprints and are less water intensive compared to meat and dairy (Sabate and Soret, 2014). The importance of adopting more sustainable lifestyles has never been more important, with the latest IPCC stating that dietary changes, especially eating less meat, will be needed to prevent an overshooting of global heating above 1.5°C (IPCC, 2022). When possible, plant-based foods should also be eaten seasonally and locally, in order to shorten supply chains and support local businesses. Additionally, eating a greater percentage of plant-based food also approaches the food offer more inclusively, as it is more likely to suit those with dietary requirements (e.g. vegetarians and vegans), allergens (e.g. lactose intolerance), and cultural requirements (e.g. Muslim and Hindu diets avoiding certain meat). A plant-based approach can also be used as a tool to teach about environmental sustainability as a part of the nutritional education offer.

It is also important to engage with young people on the type of food that interests them (i.e. what they like and what they do not), and consider how more 'fussy' children may react to certain foods. This is in addition to understanding any potential negative perceptions towards 'eating healthier' and how this can be overcome. This will ensure that the food offer is appropriate and will help prevent food from being wasted during the programme. An approved local food provider list would be a useful resource for providers of the programme to know where food that meets certain sustainability standards can be sourced. A resource where ideas, recipes, menus, and inspiration for more sustainable meals can be found could also be useful to circulate for those providing food for the scheme.

7.4 School venues & food growing

There is opportunity within Sheffield's HAF programme for participating school venues and other providers to include community-growing sites such as plots and allotments within the activity provision. The use of gardens and allotments, also referred to as foodscapes, in food growing activities are effective learning environments where children can encounter, produce, consume, and learn about food (Surman and Hamilton, 2019), with one study finding that participants involved in gardening programmes were more likely to try new food and eat more nutritious food (Lautenschlager and Smith, 2007). There is also strong evidence for the benefits gardening and community food growing have on individuals physical and mental health (Schmutz et al., 2014).

Existing school allotments and gardens have issues with produce grown over term-time not being used (such as community-growing sites managed by Heeley City Farm) meaning there are opportunities for the HAF programme to support these plots, not only for the schools but for the children participating in the programme's activities. Similar to York's Edible Schools project, these foodscapes provide an opportunity to supply local, seasonal, and lower carbon-footprint food to the school and the HAF programme, in addition to offering gardening and food growing activities for HAF - predominantly over the Easter and Summer holidays. It would also work to encourage more schools to engage with food-growing activities and to become more involved within the HAF programme.

7.5 Socially-minded Businesses

There are also opportunities and a need for the programme to connect with more socially-minded businesses and 'good food' suppliers that can partner with or support the HAF programme. This not only ensures that a greater percentage of HAF funding is invested locally, but critically increases the capacity for the programme to be able to train other providers in key areas such as nutrition, sustainability, and cooking skills. There are multiple other ways in which socially-minded businesses can help support the HAF programme including:

- Provide training, employment, and volunteering opportunities to local people
- Provide skills and knowledge through food preparation and nutrition based HAF activities
- Able to provide sustainable food to the programme.
- Able to successfully engage with young people
- Use of their venue (e.g. kitchen) for HAF activities
- Donation of any profits to help expand HAF to other vulnerable children

As a result, this will work to ensure that organisations who want to provide activities for the HAF programme can easily access support they may need and will help them to develop key skills allowing them to deliver the criteria of the HAF programme framework and evolve their business. Networking with existing socially-minded businesses already involved in the programme and other businesses who are looking to be involved, is also an essential element in increasing the success of the programme. This involves encouraging positive conversations where organisations work together to tackle challenges, develop the programme, and learn what works best based on valuable previous experience providers may have. It is important, however, to ensure that businesses and organisations who are involved in the programme are distributed equally by ethnicity, as a recent study found that holiday clubs operated by voluntary organisations are more likely to be situated and coordinated in areas that are disproportionately white compared to ethnic minorities (Mann et al., 2018). Working against this will ensure all minority groups are effectively represented and have a good quality of access.

There are multiple socially-minded businesses already working within the Sheffield HAF programme. For example, Food Hall Sheffield is a community kitchen that uses exclusively ingredients rescued as food surplus in order to combat food waste and food insecurity. There are multiple opportunities for them to supply food to the HAF programme, provide nutritional education, and use their community kitchen facilities for activities and/or to prepare food. Additionally, Regather is a co-operative with a 15-acre site in Moss Valley Sheffield that grows organically certified fresh and seasonal produce, and Heeley City Farm grows local organic food over 20 local food growing sites throughout Sheffield including in some schools. These organisations have the opportunity to provide training and volunteering opportunities, gardening activities, nutritional education, and local food to the programme.

In addition to specific areas where the Sheffield HAF programme can be developed, there are also more general discussions to be had regarding where the HAF programme is heading more generally, and how this can be improved.

8.0 Programme Evaluation

8.1 How successful is the HAF programme?

The HAF programme aims to provide a diverse range of enriching and physical activities, healthy food, and educational resources for disadvantaged children of all backgrounds over the school holidays. It additionally supports families who may be experiencing financial and other socio-economic pressures over the holiday period, such as struggling to balance other costs of living with healthy food and holiday club expenses - with 49% of parents with children on FSM worried about feeding their children over the 2021 summer (Food Foundation, 2021). It also works to invest in the future health and prosperity of our societies, through supporting children to reach their full potential during their critical development years (WHO, 2020). Through this, the programme reflects the aims of SFP's 'Healthy Food for All' key issue and framework.

Sheffield wards in East Sheffield, such as Firth Park, Burngreave, and Manor Castle experience the highest levels of deprivation, childhood obesity rates, and percentage of children on FSMs within Sheffield. With the risks of families falling into poverty and food insecurity on the rise due to recent increases in living costs, these communities are at even greater risk. Without the funding to annually run the HAF programme, these vulnerable families and children would not be receiving enough support during the holidays, and would likely only further dramatically increase the rates of social exclusion, obesity, and poverty across Sheffield. The funding is therefore vital to support these at risk families and children during school holidays.

Through the review and analysis of the Sheffield HAF programme (and others), it has been discussed how the programme can evolve and adapt as it continues to be funded until 2024. This includes implementing development areas as previously discussed, such as providing more nutritional education and sustainability opportunities, connecting with more socially-minded providers, and introducing more types of activities such as food-growing and gardening. A well funded, planned, and effectively implemented programme is essential for its success. The feeling of security and trust within the programme is also essential, in addition to ensuring signing up to the programme has as few barriers as possible, so it always remains accessible to the people who need it the most. These families from less financially secure backgrounds can begin to rely on the scheme, knowing that their children have a safe, friendly, and healthy environment to go to over the holidays.

8.2 Future directions

In addition to specific areas where the Sheffield HAF programme can be developed, there are also more general discussions to be had regarding where the HAF programme is heading more generally, and how this can be improved.

There is a need for the government to assess the ability for funding to be more available for children who are not eligible for FSM to participate in the HAF programme. There are many families who fall just outside FSM eligibility but are still financially struggling, in addition to other vulnerable children in need. Although 15% of extra funding is available for children not in receipt of benefits, further increasing the inclusivity and outreach of the programme would allow a wider group of children to reap the positive benefits and also reduce potential stigma issues families may face. This could involve, for example, using another way of measuring children in need, other than, or as well as FSM criteria. This is while ensuring that FSM children are indistinguishable from non-FSM children during the programme. Stigma issues involve families who may be less inclined to sign up to the programme as they do not want other people to know their children are eligible for FSM and free holiday clubs. This issue was identified through Food Foundation's evaluation of the HAF programme in Yorkshire (Food Foundation, 2021):

"I do know quite a few mums who have a sense of shame that these things are on offer - you want to come to them but you don't at the same time- [there's a] whole stigma attached to it..." - Parent

Forming meaningful partnerships with schools is a big key to the success of the HAF programme, as schools help link families to the programme, with a governmental review of the 2019 programme finding that parents and carers were more likely to have heard of HAF via teachers or school staff (DFE., 2020). The Sheffield programme should continue to outreach and connect with as many local schools as possible, to help ensure all eligible families and children hear about the programme and have equal opportunities to sign up. This should be approached in a sensitive and inclusive manner to avoid potential stigma issues as discussed, language barriers, and digital exclusion.

As the programme continues to run each year from 2022-2024, a continuous evaluation of the Sheffield programme should be in place in order to effectively measure and quantify the outreach it is having. This could include measuring levels of involvement of FSM eligible children in each ward, how many individual activities and clubs were successfully run each holiday, how many meals were offered, and how many organisations, providers, and volunteers engaged in the programme. It is also important to receive feedback from parents and children, in order to further understand if the programme is effectively reaching out, and is helpful, to the most vulnerable and in need. This could be in the format of small interviews during the programme activities, or encouraging parents to fill in an online feedback form. This data will build understanding of how successful the programme is and identifying where areas of strengths and potential weaknesses are.



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Lastly, before the programme's funding is expected to end in 2024, the Government should commit to a longer-term funding of the HAF programme or of a similar scheme, to continue the support free holiday clubs provide. Holiday clubs are clearly in demand, with 85% of school aged children believing that the government should provide holiday clubs (Food Foundation, 2021). It is also essential for the rates of national food insecurity, poverty, and childhood obesity to be consistently evaluated, to ensure the programme is still available and accessible to everyone who needs it. This has never been more important, when the country is seeing more and more low-income families sacrificing nutritionally balanced meals, and meals in their entirety, in order to cope with the increasing costs of food, rent, and energy. While holiday clubs as a policy mechanism for addressing food insecurity is not enough to adequately feed all the country's children, it is undeniably an essential part of the solution that is needed to solve the UK's failures in protecting the most vulnerable in society.

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10. Appendix

10.1 Appendix A: Deprivation, FSM eligibility, and childhood obesity statistics in 28 Sheffield Wards

Ward	Deprivation Rank	% of children FSM eligible	% obese (ages 4-5)	% obese (ages 10-11)
Beauchief and Greenhill	9	19.4	7.8	19.6
Beighton	20	10.3	6.7	17.6
Birley	14	12.8	7.5	18.4
Broomhill and Sharrow Vale	23	14.1	6.8	12.7
Burngreave	2	28.1	9.9	23
City	10	27	8.9	19.1
Crookes And Crosspool	25	2.7	4.4	9.7
Darnall	6	26.2	11.5	25.1
Dore And Totley	26	3	3.7	10
East Ecclesfield	17	9.2	7	19.7
Ecclesall	28	2	4.3	9.7
Firth Park	2	35.7	9.9	26.4
Fulwood	27	2.2	6	7.6
Gleadless Valley	8	29.7	6.9	18.2
Graves Park	24	6.3	5.9	16.1
Hillsborough	16	13	7.7	17.3
Manor Castle	1	36.7	14.1	25.9
Mosborough	15	14.1	7.7	18.5

Nether Edge and Sharrow	22	17.9	7.6	18.8
Park and Arbourthorne	4	32.1	9.8	24.8
Richmond	9	18.9	9.3	22.1
Shiregreen And Brightside	6	28.2	10.7	22.9
Southey	5	32.5	11.2	23.1
Stannington	21	8.7	7.4	16.4
Stocksbridge And Upper Don	20	10.2	6.5	16.5
Walkley	13	22.2	7.1	20.6
West Ecclesfield	18	13.6	7.5	16.6
Woodhouse	12	18.6	10.4	22

