

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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| COMMITTEE | Education Operational Delivery Committee |
| DATE | 3 June 2021 |
| EXEMPT | No |
| CONFIDENTIAL | No |
| REPORT TITLE | Aberdeen Summer of Play Programme 2021/2022 |
| REPORT NUMBER | OPE/21/129 |
| DIRECTOR | Rob Polkinghorne |
| CHIEF OFFICER | Eleanor Sheppard |
| REPORT AUTHOR | Eleanor Sheppard |
| TERMS OF REFERENCE | 1.1.1 |

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for a proposed summer programme to support the wellbeing of children and young people across Aberdeen City who have been most impacted by the pandemic.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- 2.1 notes the consultation undertaken to help inform the Summer of Play programme as contained in Appendix A;
- 2.2 approves the skeletal Summer of Play programme outlined in Appendix B and notes that the full grant awarded by Scottish Government will be used to fund the programme;
- 2.3 notes that the Scottish Government is to fund free school meal vouchers during the summer holidays;
- 2.4 instructs the Chief Social Work Officer and Chief Education Officer to develop and implement an awareness raising campaign across all partners involved in the Summer of Play programme, designed to, 'make every contact count' in order to further safeguard children and young people;
- 2.5 seeks approval to establish and launch a Children's Giving Appeal across the city in order to ensure that children can access the Summer of Play programme;
- 2.6 instruct the Chief Officer Early Intervention and Community Empowerment to work with the Fairer Aberdeen Board to manage the distribution of monies to community groups; and
- 2.7 instructs the Chief Education Officer to finalise, publicise and implement a programme in keeping with the skeletal Summer of Play programme and

provide a service update to members of the Education Operational Delivery Committee (EODC) on the impact of the programme on the health and well-being of those children who participated in the programme.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Aberdeen City Council has received a grant of £418,000 to help improve the wellbeing of children and young people over the summer holiday period.
- 3.2 Local authorities are encouraged to work with local and national partners to coordinate and deliver holiday activities and experiences, integrating food and wider family support where needed, and targeted at low-income families and those particularly adversely affected by the pandemic.
- 3.3 The priorities for access to the programme are those with the most significant negative impacts associated with extended periods of isolation and lack of participation in normal activities during the pandemic.
- 3.4 The national guidance states that the key focus should be:
- Providing **opportunities to (re)connect** with friends, peers, wider community and the outdoors, as well as with trusted adults.
 - Providing **opportunities** for children and young people to **play, be active and enjoy themselves**. Activities should be as wide ranging and inclusive as possible to cover all interests, backgrounds and circumstances and shaped around a theme of fun and play with a view to providing positive experiences. Activities may include: sports; expressive arts; crafts; outdoor learning; trips and visits. Time outdoors should be optimised.
 - **Equity** - Activities should be accessible to target families and barriers to participation such as transport should be mitigated as far as possible. Consideration should be given to how to meet wider needs, including through the integration of food, childcare, financial inclusion, family support and referral on to wider services where needed.
 - **Engagement** – It will be important to build on existing trusted relationships and communication methods so that children and families know about the offer and are encouraged to engage with it.
- 3.5 In addition, the national guidance outlines a set of guiding principles to underpin the planning of summer programmes. These are:
- co-creation with children, young people, and families;
 - building on existing services, assets and knowledge of what works; and
 - partnership working and coordination.
- 3.6 Travel costs and small capital costs could be funded through the grant although this will limit the number of opportunities available to children and young people. It is expected that most spend will be on the delivery of activities and provision for children and young people. Careful consideration of how to fund transport will be required.

IDENTIFYING THE PRIORITIES

- 3.7 The national guidance identifies a number of groups of children and young people who could have been adversely impacted by the pandemic. Health, Children's Social Work, colleagues in Early Intervention and Community Empowerment and the Education Service reviewed a range of data to help identify groups thought to require prioritisation to help shape early planning. Initial priorities were thought to be:
- those living in priority areas (with particular consideration given to those in need of care and protection, those in kinship care arrangements, Young Carers and large families/single parent households);
 - those impacted by disability with a particular focus on Autism Spectrum Condition; and
 - those shielding or sharing homes with family members who are shielding.
- 3.8 In May a survey of children, young people and families was undertaken in order to finalise the target group and better understand the activities and experiences thought to be most helpful. The survey also asked questions about barriers to participation in summer activities so that the programme could be as inclusive as possible.
- 3.9 Existing services running over the holiday period were mapped as the survey ran so that Officers from across the Council could ensure that duplication was avoided. Contact was also made with the range of valued community assets sitting within the heart of communities to seek the support of funded community projects, organisations and partners and to understand any supports required that may enable them to develop their planned summer offer further. Undertaking this mapping at an early stage was essential to maximise the impact of the grant and ensure that the range of services (including those offered by local partners, Council funding ALEOs, Council teams, the Fit Like Hubs and community projects) complement each other. This process also helped identify potential gaps in provision as Officers awaited the survey responses.
- 3.10 Given the timescales from notification of the allocation of the Grant (on 30th April) to the summer holiday period, a number of approaches were made to local partners to allow them time to explore options for consideration and links where made with Environmental Services, Corporate Landlord and Facilities to explore venues and the use of parks and gardens.

WHAT DID FAMILIES TELL US?

- 3.11 692 children and young people responded to the survey along with 1160 parents and carers. Although the question stems were similar for both groups of stakeholders, parents and carers were asked to identify groups of children they felt had been most negatively impacted by the pandemic. This branching question was designed to help the service triangulate data held by Health, Children and Family Services, Health and Early Intervention and Community Empowerment colleagues to ensure that the programme is designed around the groups most likely to benefit.

- 3.12 The feedback from parents and carers is broadly in line with the priority groups identified prior to the issue of the survey. All parents who responded felt that opportunities for children and young people to socialise were important and that the lack of group activity had impacted their child adversely. This widespread feedback informed the development of a universal offer which enhances the offer usual made with existing resources.
- 3.13 It is clear from the survey responses that those impacted by poverty, those with disabilities (particularly Autism Spectrum Condition) and those impacted by shielding (either shielding themselves or living with someone who has been shielding) seem to have been most disproportionately affected by the pandemic. These groups would benefit from a more intensive programme of activity to support their wellbeing over the summer holiday period. In some cases this offer can be fairly wide ranging and community based but other needs will require the commissioning of more bespoke arrangements.
- 3.14 A wealth of rich data was gleaned from parents and carers to help shape the Aberdeen Summer of Play. Very young children were seen to have been disproportionately impacted with one parent stating that, 'my child has spent more than a third of their life in 'pandemic mode' and it will be important to provide activities for the under 5 group.
- 3.15 A common theme in responses from parents and carers was an acknowledgement that the restrictions have impacted on their child's general demeanour, 'Isolation has made him quite lonely/quiet and painfully shy'. Another noted, 'My son is now nervous and anxious around people and I feel that the pandemic has impacted his mental health'. One parent described her child as being, 'more needy' and not willing to leave the house without her.
- 3.16 Comments about the lack of opportunity to play where green space is more limited were frequent as well as reference to families living in flatted accommodation facing significant challenges of the last 15 months. This highlights a need to make offers community based in our priority areas.
- 3.17 Children with additional support needs (particularly Autism Spectrum Condition) were frequently noted as most significantly impacted by the pandemic. Families impacted by disability also noted the impact on siblings given the high level of care required. Some families noted that their child has continued to have to shield and had no contact with the outside world since March 2020. Young Carers of those shielding were also raised as a group in need of support as well as consideration for those who have been bereaved.
- 3.18 A high number of responses from parents and carers highlighted concerns around mental health but a large number of responses also relayed concerns about the lack of physical activity and an evident regression in physical skills.
- 3.19 The vast majority of parents and carers noted that they would feel most comfortable with outdoor activities that enabled groups of known children to come together and play and many families referenced that children at points of transition would benefit.

WHAT DID CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TELL US?

- 3.20 Children and young people have a clear sense of the activities they would like to engage in with feedback from different communities very similar in nature. Activities requested include:
- swimming
 - football
 - running clubs
 - more adventurous activity including outdoor park events/treasure hunts/den building/loose parts play/orienteering
 - art activities
 - science activities
- 3.21 A small number of children and young people stated that they would be keen to access coding, although in general the appetite for a digital offer was very low by children and young people which is understandable. Around 100 returns note that they would require equipment to access an on-line offer. Interestingly however, some parents and carers are keen to receive support remotely in order to feel more connected to their community.
- 3.22 Some families seek activities that will bring families and communities together and some suggest offering opportunities for young people to volunteer in their communities. This was mirrored in a few responses from children and young people.

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

- 3.23 One of the main barriers to participation was noted (by 88 families) as being travel costs and arrangements. Requests were made for free bus travel for children over the holiday period and this can be explored when bookings begin to be made. Travel will require to be carefully considered to ensure that those being targeted can access the activities available. This could be mitigated by running programmes in communities wherever possible and considering how best to support community assets with transport costs.
- 3.24 A mix of times were requested to enable working families to support their child's attendance in the Summer of Play.
- 3.25 Several references were also made about the accessibility of activities for wheelchair users.

FAMILIES IMPACTED BY POVERTY

- 3.26 Looking at responses from those who note that access to food over the holiday period is an issue has helped gather some further insight into how families impacted by poverty would like services to operate. One parent summarises the responses of many with the request for, "[Just some fun clubs so all the children can try and be happy as they were before](#)".
- 3.27 A high number of responses indicate a need for '[free and local](#)' opportunities to be available and some seek opportunities for community activities to help parents and carers reconnect with others too. Days out were identified by

some families as helpful and many noted that cost would be a barrier to participation.

- 3.28 There are many references to needing to feel part of the community again and a number of families asked for a digital offer to be available. Further analysis suggest that this is also due to concerns about working from home during the summer holiday period.
- 3.29 A number of parents are concerned about how to balance their remaining annual leave with the 7 weeks of the summer holiday period. They request that low-cost childcare be made available locally.

FAMILIES IMPACTED BY DISABILITY

- 3.30 The spectrum of need associated with Autism Spectrum Condition is possibly a factor in the inability to draw many themes from the data. Families note that children have been disproportionately impacted by the restrictions and some seek accessible mainstream activities as the Summer of Play programme is developed. Other families seek more specialist support for children with Autism with other families facing similar challenges. The Education Service continues to link with members of the community to understand the most helpful approach to inform planning.
- 3.31 The siblings of those with Autism were often highlighted as a group who had been adversely impacted.
- 3.32 Those who have been shielding were noted as being a group who have been unable to leave the home for over 15 months now. Concerns were also raised about Young Carers who have faced increased restrictions in order to protect their family.

THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME

- 3.33 The skeletal programme attached in Appendix B has been developed in response to the feedback from children and families and officers continue to review suggestions from partners. There may be a need to be responsive to local circumstances (such as a local outbreak of COVID-19 or demand data from different communities) and adjustments may be required in order to maximise the reach of the grant during the implementation phase. Amendments may also be required to take account of the national offer which is as yet unknown.
- 3.34 It is proposed that Officers and Community Planning Partners deliver a Summer of Play programme in keeping with the skeletal programme in Appendix B and take care to ensure that the programme further enhances that already available through Council funded ALEOs and other partners. The Family Information Service will ensure that the full offer is available on-line (including paid for offers from ALEOs and partners) and work with the Council Communications team to develop a range of promotional materials. Colleagues in Customer Experience will help to establish a booking system for the programme and close collaboration with Facilities teams will remain on-going to support the safe operation of the programme.

CHILDREN'S GIVING APPEAL

- 3.35 The scale of need across the city is considerable and there is a need to maximise opportunities for our children and young people by ideally using all of the grant to support the delivery of a high quality programme. Activities will be delivered in the three priority areas to limit the need for transport and this will help to mitigate the risk of children living in priority areas not being able to participate. Transport may continue to be a barrier for some. In some cases, providers and community groups may be able to support but more bespoke arrangements may be required for some families.
- 3.36 Until the children have opted into activities the scale of demand for transport is hard to determine. It is proposed that a Children's Giving Appeal be established in order to fund raise to support groups to access funding for transport. This would allow the full Grant to be utilised for delivery of the programme whilst ensuring that travel is not a barrier to participation.
- 3.37 With Elected Member approval a fund will be established and publicised to help meet the transport costs of children attending the summer programme. As far as possible this funding would be managed by Fairer Aberdeen fund and would essentially act as an enabling fund for the programme.
- 3.38 Free school meal vouchers and £100 hardship payments will be made for those in receipt of free school meals. Services will continue to work in partnership with key partners including CFine to ensure that families are well supported over the holiday period.

MAKING EVERY CONTACT COUNT

- 3.36 The focus of the Summer of Play is to support the wellbeing of all children and young people across the city as part of restoring the social and physical development of children. It is of critical importance that we make every contact with children and young people count and that we use all opportunities to help mitigate against the impact of the last 15 months.
- 3.37 It is proposed that the Chief Social Work Officer and Chief Education Officer work in collaboration to ensure that all partners are aware of when to escalate any concerns to ensure that the wellbeing of children and young people can be supported at the earliest opportunity.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The costs of the Summer of Play programme will be met from existing Council budgets and resources and through the summer programme grant.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

| Category | Risk | Low (L) Medium (M) High (H) | Mitigation |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Strategic Risk | Not putting in place a summer programme will not help recovery of some vulnerable children and young people and impact on the Council's strategic objectives and outcomes. | L | Implementation of the programme outlined in Appendix B |
| Compliance | Not complying with COVID-19 guidance to reduce risk | L | All aspects of the Summer of Play programme will be carefully risk assessed to mitigate risk in keeping with national guidance. |
| Operational | Risk of those delivering the programme being overwhelmed with attendees | L | The programme will be well advertised and arrangements will be in place to limit attendees to safe levels. |
| Financial | N/A | | |
| Reputational | Risk of not seizing the opportunity to develop a programme to support the wellbeing of those most adversely impacted by the pandemic | L | Implementation and carefully monitoring of the programme with an agile approach proposed to take account of any changes in local circumstances. |
| Environment / Climate | N/A | | |

7. OUTCOMES

| <u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u> | |
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| | Impact of Report |
| <p>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</p> <p>UNICEF Child Friendly accreditation and Commit to closing the attainment gap while working with partners across the city</p> | <p>The programme has been designed by children and young people and positive impacts on our work to embed the views of children and young people in our development of proposals. The summer programme will also support the wellbeing of learners enabling them to engage more fully with more formal education in the new school year.</p> |

| Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan | |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes | |
| Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes | <p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of nearly all Children & Young People Stretch Outcomes in the LOIP. The paper seeks approval to deliver a summer programme which will support the wellbeing of a large number of children most negatively impacted by the pandemic and is likely to positively impact on the following LOIP outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 95% of children (0-5 years) will reach their expected developmental milestones by the time of their child health reviews by 2026. • 90% of children and young people will report that they feel mentally well by 2026. • 95% of care experienced children and young people will have the same levels of attainment in education, emotional wellbeing, and positive destinations as their peers by 2026. • 95% of children living in our priority localities will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026. • Child Friendly City which supports all children to prosper and engage actively with their communities by 2026. |
| Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes | The programme will positively impact on stretch outcome 13 - No one in Aberdeen will go without food due to poverty by 2026. |
| UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes | The report supports delivery of the Child Poverty Action report, which fulfils the requirements placed upon the Council by the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. |

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

| Assessment | Outcome |
|------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Impact Assessment | Required |
| Data Protection Impact Assessment | Not required |

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Guidance for Local Authorities on summer funding programmes

10. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Analysis of survey responses

Appendix B – Skeletal Summer Programme Plan

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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