

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Finance Policy and Resources
DATE	1 December 2016
DIRECTOR	Pete Leonard
TITLE OF REPORT	Tackling Food Poverty – Update Report
REPORT NUMBER	CHI 16/283
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report follows the recommendation from report no. CHI/16/187 to Finance Policy and Resources Committee on 20th September 2016 which requested an indication of how the Council can help to ensure no child is exposed to hunger during the school holidays.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Committee are asked to note the report and agree:

1. That Aberdeen City Council pilots a child food poverty holiday meals programme in the Easter and Summer school holidays 2017;
2. That there is not existing budget allocation for this so costs are developed for inclusion in the 17/18 budgeting process;
3. That a detailed plan is brought back to committee in February 2017 for approval;
4. That a response to Rt Hon Frank Field is made on the basis that Aberdeen City Council is committed to piloting child holiday meal provision during 2017.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no current financial implications for this report. The body of the report does however lay out initial costings which have been estimated by various council services in relation to running such a programme. The confirmed financial implications will become clear as

more research is done, and a detailed plan is brought back –including estimates from various partnership organisations.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5. BACKGROUND/ MAIN ISSUES

The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission recently stated: 'Child poverty is set to rise not fall in the next five years. The Institute for Fiscal Studies predicts that 3.5 million children – one in four – will be in absolute poverty by the end of the next parliament.'

Delivering a mix of good food provision and enrichment opportunities outside the busy school calendar year not only helps alleviate hunger but it can support working parents and those struggling with family food budgets in pressured holiday periods. It can also raise children's aspirations, offer safety and give opportunities for fun and socialising.

We need more research on the impact such programmes can have on attendance, achievement and attainment outside school to see what influence it can have in term time.

The cost of meals during school holidays, particularly for those pupils entitled to free school meals, has been identified as a financial burden on low income families and those families in poverty. The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) report, Cost of the School Holiday, highlighted the impact of this on families and the further disadvantage it can cause.

There have been individual local schemes in Aberdeen attempting to alleviate this issue, e.g. a church in Seaton ran a programme offering hot meals during the school holidays, and in Northfield a programme took place over the Summer 2016 which offered free food and activities to local families – this programme involved the work of local charity Cfine and a number of volunteers.

The above projects have largely relied on the availability of volunteers, varying supplies of food and limited access to catering facilities (usually domestic or portable appliances within community areas rather than catering facilities). Despite these difficult variables, good work has been done in the provision of activities for children whilst also engaging the parents in other spheres, such as tackling debt issues for example. With a more strategic approach these schemes could reach a larger number of families and could offer a more targeted level of support, both in food provision and in tackling wider issues of inequality and poverty.

The suggestion of this report is that Aberdeen should pilot a child food poverty holiday meal programme in one school in the Easter holidays 2017 and roll out to further schools in Summer 2017. The specifics of this programme need to be determined through a period of research, assessment and detailed planning. This report lays out initial estimates

and potential options, but also highlights the need for further planning before such a programme is carried out.

The programme would target families who were most in need by offering spaces firstly to those who were entitled to Free School Meals (FSM). It would also target areas of deprivation and regeneration areas in order to provide enhanced support to the areas which are facing the most financial difficulty in the city. This would include people on the fringe of entitlement to free school meals who are struggling financially, a group identified through work in Renfrewshire.

Aberdeen City Council's catering service has already done a huge amount of work in securing the 'Food for Life' Silver Catering Mark - which covers both nutritional and sustainable food standards for the primary school meals service. It is proposed that this standard should be the standard for extending meal provision into holiday periods.

There are currently seven primary schools in the city where free breakfast services are provided: Heathryburn, Kittybrewster, Riverbank, St Peter's, Tullos, Walker Road and Woodside.

These areas coincide with our regeneration locality localities (Northfield, Torry and Woodside, Tillydrone and Seaton) and would therefore link in with the intention of targeting these areas through the emerging locality plans.

The Facilities team has suggested that Tullos School is chosen as the location for a pilot programme for one week in Easter 2017. Tullos was suggested as it is a community school with the facilities to also offer non-catering activities (has access to a gym hall etc.)

The Facilities team estimated the cost of providing cleaning and catering services, including lunch for 20 children, for 5 days for 1 week in Easter would be approximately £730 per week. A breakdown of this figure can be seen on Appendix 1.

These costs are subject to a number of factors including:

- The costs detailed above do not take account of any pupil supervision staff costs which would be required.
- Meals served would be two course, either soup and main or main and dessert depending on that day's menu. All meals would meet Scottish Government nutritional requirements for food served in schools.
- Cleaning Service costs are very basic. These may need to increase once exact areas within buildings to be used were determined.
- All staff hourly rates are at 2016/17 levels and would be subject to any uplift applied at April 2017.
- Use of schools would be subject to success let applications
- It would not be possible to roll service out to all of the schools where we provide free breakfast services. Only four of the seven

schools (Heathryburn, Kittybrewster, Riverbank and Tullos) have the facilities to prepare lunch menus, the other three have meals transported in pre-service having been prepared at another kitchen.

In addition to the above facilities cost, there would also be a necessary cost for supervision and providing play and activities for the children. To gauge this cost, estimates have been gathered from Aberdeen Childcare Services. In order to provide a programme of activity and supervision, costs are approximately £650 per week (for 20 pupils). Again, a breakdown of this can be seen on Appendix 1. This estimate is variable depending on the number of additional support needs children in attendance.

The total cost of providing a child poverty school holiday programme including activities and lunch (incl. all cleaning, catering, facilities, child supervision and activity costs) would therefore be approximately £2,760 for the two weeks of the Easter school holidays (if using only the afore-mentioned council services).

It is not yet clear what the likely uptake of such a programme amongst the target group of young people would be. Existing community projects have reported difficulties in reaching those most in need therefore we need to gather information on the demand of such a programme, the likely areas of uptake, and how best to engage with families in this area. In terms of school premises, secondary schools are a further option to consider as they offer larger facilities and more opportunities to offer activities.

There is an opportunity to develop a model which will involve the third sector and communities in the delivery of this school holiday meal service – this may help to reduce the costs. Other local authorities (Renfrewshire Council) have offset some expenditure costs by opening the programme up to families who are not entitled to Free School Meals, but are willing to pay for the service. They have also included training opportunities for adults and young people to work alongside catering staff in developing food and cooking knowledge and skills.

The provision of play and structured activity will be a key element in ensuring rounded provision. This approach would underpin work on Rights Respecting Schools and link to UN Convention on the Rights of the Child articles 24, health and 31, play.

Research will be carried out at target schools to assess likely demand for Easter and Summer 2017, with further discussions taking place with key services, community groups and third sector partners with view to developing a cost effective model for consideration by the committee.

The Right Hon Frank Field MP wrote to the Council Leader on 9th September asking that consideration be given to a proposal that, by

2020, no child is exposed to hunger during school holidays – the letter and information is at Appendix 2.

6. IMPACT

Improving Customer Experience

Implementing holiday meal programmes to tackle child food poverty will deliver benefits for our customers on a range of levels including reduced food insecurity and food poverty, improved access to healthy and sustainable food. This will contribute to improved health outcomes by tackling obesity and diet related ill-health as well as improving social inclusion through development and provision of meals.

School holidays are especially difficult for low-income families whose children usually receive free school meals or support from breakfast clubs. It has been identified that the school holidays can increase the family shopping bill by between £30-40 per week. Such schemes which target lower-income families would therefore have a positive effect on reducing this extra expenditure.

Improving Staff Experience

A child food poverty programme is expected to improve staff experience by helping ensure pupils return to school more engaged and nourished than might otherwise be the case and with the reassurance that they have been able to participate and eat well during school breaks.

Improving our use of Resources

A child food poverty programme will help improve the use of resources by identifying areas of duplication, making best use of existing resources across communities, helping with more effective rollout and scaling up of good practice.

Corporate

This proposal contributes to Aberdeen: The Smarter City through:

Smarter Living (Quality of Life)

- We will enhance the physical and emotional wellbeing of all our citizens by offering support and activities which promote independence, resilience, confidence and self-esteem.
- We will work with our partners to seek to reduce the levels of inequality in the city.

- We will promote and improve opportunities for physical activity and sport to enable Aberdeen's citizens to lead more active, healthier lives.

Smarter People (Social and Human Capital)

- We will provide a high quality education service within our schools and communities which will improve attainment and life chances of our children and young people to achieve their full potential in education, employment or training.
Working with our third, public and private sector partners, we will provide opportunities for lifelong learning which will develop knowledge, skills and attributes of our citizens to enable them to meet the changing demands of the 21st century.
Again, working with partners, we will create a City of Learning which will empower individuals to fulfil their potential and contribute to the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of our communities.
We will aim to have a workforce across the city which has the skills and knowledge to sustain, grow and diversify the city economy.

Public

This report is likely to be of interest to the public on the basis that there is considerable interest in aspects of child food poverty, and what is being done to reduce it.

EHRIA - completed

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

There is a medium financial risk to the Council to develop and maintain a free 'food and fun' programme.

Work to alleviate food poverty, with a specific emphasis on tackling child food poverty and the impact on children's futures in helping improve attainment is likely to have a positive impact on the Council's reputation.

There are expected positive impacts on the environment through reductions in food waste and better management of that waste.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

CHI/16/003 Sustainable Food Cities
CHI/16/187 Sustainable Food Cities - Tackling Food Poverty.

Filling The Holiday Gap (Update 2015) - All-Party Parliamentary Group
on Hunger

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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Appendix 1.

Breakdown of Facilities Management estimated costs:

Catering Service:

- Cook in Charge – 21 hours @ £18.63 p/h (all staff hourly rates are at top of scales and inclusive of on-costs) = £391.31
- Catering Assistant – 10 hours @ £8.69 p/h = £115.66
- Meal production costs (based on analysis from two weeks of our current winter menu cycle) – 125 meals (25 per day) at an average of £0.83 p/m = £103.75
- Subtotal = £610.74

Cleaning Service :

- Cleaning Keyholder – 10 hours @ £11.09 p/h = £110.90
- Uplift for material and cleaning chemical costs = £9.10
- Subtotal = £120.00

Total weekly FM Costs = £730.74

Breakdown of Childcare Services estimated costs:

- Childcare Support Worker- £14.50 p/h (on cost included) x 2.45hr x 5 days a week = £177.62 per week
- Casual Childcare Support Worker - £ 12.80 p/h (on cost included) x 2.45hr x 5 days a week = £156.8 per week
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Total weekly Childcare Services Costs = £648.02

Total weekly Facilities and Childcare Services costs: £1378.76

Appendix 2

North Ayrshire Council

North Ayrshire Council keeps open ten primary schools most days during the holidays. During 2015 it provided 11,000 meals to a daily total of 650 children. In that year, the total cost of this exercise was a little over £30,000 – the cost of each meal consisting of £1 for food, £1 for labour, and £1 for activities. The provision has continued throughout 2016.

East Renfrewshire Council

East Renfrewshire Council keeps open two schools during the Easter, summer, and October holidays, for a daily total of 200 children. Provision consists of a free meal, followed by sporting or creative activities. The total annual cost before income from paying pupils – those not entitled to free school meals but who nonetheless wish to come along to be with their friends – is £88,000.

Feeding Birkenhead

The Feeding Birkenhead campaign was allocated £27,441 in charitable funds by Magenta Living, the town's biggest housing association. The campaign is using these monies to lay on free food and fun activities in community centres for children during the school holidays.

120 children were fed meals by the first four pilot projects during the 2015 Whitsun holiday. Eight projects then ran free food and fun projects at various stages during the summer holiday. 2,058 children received at least one meal over those six weeks, at a total cost of £15,069. Feeding Birkenhead projects operated again in the October half term holiday, providing free food and fun for 360 children at a total cost of £2,430, and the figures have stabilised at this level in each holiday since then. We expect that a large number of children will have been helped in the recent summer holiday.

The food has been sourced mainly from FareShare, His Food and Kellogg's – who donated surplus breakfast products – with other foodstuffs bought in or donated.

A common theme that runs through each of these examples is that they aim to ensure families do not need to rely on food parcels from a food bank, or go without food at all. Moreover, by serving hot meals in a communal environment and accompanying them with fun activities, they do not carry the same stigma or sense of shame that one feels when they need to take their family to a food bank.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

LEADERS' OFFICE
13 SEP 2016
11492
RECEIVED

Councillor Jenny Laing
Leader of Aberdeen City Council
Town House
Broad Street
Aberdeen, AB10 1FY

9 September 2016

Dear Mr Laing

I am writing to ask whether you might consider piloting a 'free meal and fun' programme to prevent children in Aberdeen being hungry during school holidays.

You may be aware that the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Hunger, which I chair in Westminster, has published a series of reports on the changing extent and causes of hunger in the United Kingdom. One of our key findings was that the queues for food banks tend to grow once the school holidays arrive. For those children who usually receive a free school meal during term time, the holidays often usher in a period of going day after day without a substantial meal.

The Group's evidence suggests a national programme, rooted in local communities and backed by public funding, could all but eliminate child hunger during the school holidays and thereby reduce considerably the number of families relying on emergency food parcels. I therefore wrote to the First Minister asking whether Scotland might take a lead on this front. The Deputy First Minister said in response to my letter that local authorities are able to decide whether or not to set up their own projects. It is in this connection I am writing to you.

I understand that North Ayrshire and East Renfrewshire have established school holiday provision for hundreds of poor children in each respective local authority. Details of their provision, as well as the approach taken by the Feeding Birkenhead campaign, which I co-ordinate, are enclosed in an Annex to this letter.

In seeking to develop such provision across the country, I am writing to ask whether this could be of interest to you. Were the food to be sourced from charities such as FareShare and His Church, who rescue good food that has become surplus in supermarkets' supply chains, before it is burnt or thrown to waste, this could help to keep costs to a minimum while also delivering an environmental benefit.

I very much hope you will be willing to consider this proposal, so that by 2020 no child is exposed to hunger during the school holidays.

Best wishes and I look forward to hearing from you,

www.frankfield.co.uk

Appendix 2.