



# CHESHIRE WEST HOLIDAY CLUBS

A FEEDING BRITAIN CASE STUDY



## Establishing a sustainable programme of holiday provision through community ties

The Welcome Network in Cheshire West and Chester were noticing a problem: community activities in Cheshire West stopped during the holidays just when children and families needed them the most. With a high number of children receiving free school meals across Cheshire, the holidays can become a stressful time for families on low budgets who now need to provide additional meals. By supporting projects already established in the community, the Welcome Network has created a sustainable approach to Holiday food and fun provision.



## THE APPROACH

The Welcome Network seeks to support families in Cheshire West and Chester who are vulnerable to food poverty. They recognise the wealth of resources that already exist within the community, and aim to bring them together to provide a more effective social safety net.

In line with their overall approach, the Welcome Network set out to establish a sustainable programme of holiday provision by adding value to projects already working in the community. By supporting existing activities rather than setting up new projects they were able to reach their target beneficiaries more quickly, have a positive impact on small organisations operating in the community, and improve the level of services and support available.

Support ranged from advice on getting set up, planning of activities, training and skills development, funding, direct provision of specialised activities at the clubs, and coordination and communications.



# A ROAD MAP TO SUCCESS

Developing an effective and coordinated approach to holiday provision across the borough required some flexibility and a commitment to continuous learning. Below is an outline of the route taken by the Welcome Network, and some key learning.

## Learn from more established projects

"We began the project by learning from what was already being done in our area"

By tapping in to successful holiday clubs already operating in the area you can map out what support is currently being offered, highlight best practices, and build useful partnerships in the community. Spreading good practice and supporting community organisations to grow and develop is a way of recognising the good work already being done, and creates widespread impact in a quicker and more efficient way.

## Support existing activities

"Instead of jumping straight in as newcomers, we decided to shift the focus to adding value to programs and community centres that were already operating"

Adding value to work already being done rather than reinventing the wheel enabled the Welcome Network to tap in to networks and relationships within the communities which often take years to build. The people and organisations who have developed relationships over many years with the people using their services are often best placed to identify what the specific needs of an area are and what kind of an approach would be most successful.

## Identify gaps and your role in supporting others

"Practically, we started by looking at activities already being run and identifying the people we needed to speak to in order to determine any gaps that we could fill"

The Welcome Network discussed with local organisations and service providers what support they needed to either improve or extend their current holiday provision, or to start delivering holiday clubs if they hadn't already. The need was different in each community but generally fit within one of the following categories:

- 1. Funding**
- 2. Advice** and assistance to get the club up and running
- 3. Training** and skills development for staff and volunteers
- 4. Securing low cost food** and activity resources
- 5. Linking in** to other advice services and professionals in the community



## OVERCOMING BARRIERS

Creating a successful community programme doesn't always take a straightforward route. Mistakes will be made and lessons learned. But here are a few you can avoid as the Welcome Network has already done the learning for you.

Avoid starting from scratch, or "reinventing the wheel" The Welcome Network initially ran new projects themselves, but quickly realised that by working with people and organisations already embedded in the community they could double their impact and reach a larger number of people in a shorter period of time.



### Set clear expectations

After a period of exploring possible needs and gaps in the community it's important to then set clear expectations around what support can and can not be provided. By setting boundaries the Welcome Network was able to focus on providing the types of support which demonstrated the most impact while also creating clarity for partners around what they could ask for.

### Have a communications strategy in place

Having documentation available to share with partners and community members around the core aims of the project helped everyone to be on the same page.

## THE IMPACT

Since April 2017, activities led and supported by the Welcome Network have fed **1720 children** at **34** holiday clubs over **5** holiday periods. Alongside this direct support for families and children, various community organisations and individuals have also been supported to develop new skills, improve services and scale up their activities. A spirit of communication and sharing of knowledge and resources is firmly in place in Cheshire West and Chester, and a sustainable approach to providing food and fun for children over the holidays is well underway.

**1720**

Children  
provided with  
food & fun

**34**

Holiday clubs  
supported

**5**

Holiday  
periods in  
2017 covered

## What parents attending the holiday clubs have said...

"It is so expensive during the holiday to feed and entertain your children – these events have been brilliant and I wish there were more!"

"This has been a life saver – especially towards the end of the holiday when funds are running out!"

"The day gave me a chance to meet other mums in the area and made me feel less alone in the holiday – a brilliant event with lots of lovely food"

"The summer activities were very helpful as I can't afford to take my children out"



**For more information or support to replicate this approach to holiday food and fun provision in your own area please contact:**

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