

JULY 2019



# The Social Value of out-of-school provisions

SUMMARY REPORT

Dr Sian Edwards, Dr Aneta  
Hayes, Dr Ian Mahoney and  
Prof Farzana Shain.

---



# The Social Value of out-of-school provisions: Summary Report

*Authored by: Dr Sian Edwards, Dr Aneta Hayes, Dr Ian Mahoney and Prof Farzana Shain .*

**Lead Researcher:**

Dr Sian Edwards, Keele University Email: [s.edwards1@keele.ac.uk](mailto:s.edwards1@keele.ac.uk)

**Co-researchers:**

Dr Aneta Hayes, Keele University

Dr Ian Mahoney, Nottingham Trent University

Prof Farzana Shain, Keele University

## Acknowledgements

The research team would like to thank Keele's Institute for Social Inclusion for funding the research costs. Thanks to all the parents, carers, children and other stakeholders who took part in the research and those who facilitated the research interviews.



# The Social Value of out-of-school provisions: Summary Report

## Introduction and background

More than 14 million people in the UK are estimated to be living in poverty in 2019, with 4.5 million of those being children (Trussell Trust: 2019)<sup>1</sup>. Further, more than 2.2 million people in the UK have little or no daily certainty whether they will eat (Creagh: 2019)<sup>2</sup>. Families with children experiencing food poverty are increasingly turning to charitable organisations to help provide food, with The Trussell Trust reporting that 67,500 three-day emergency food packages went to children in July and August 2016 – 4,000 more than in the preceding two months (Marsh: 2017)<sup>3</sup>. During the school summer holiday 2018, it was estimated that 3 million children in the UK were at risk of going hungry (Burns: 2018)<sup>4</sup> with some families unable to financially cover the additional food costs incurred during the six-week break.

'Holiday hunger', defined within this report as the inability to access nutritional food each day outside of school term-time, is a growing problem for some UK families living in poverty. In January 2019, for all school types, 15.4% of pupils nationally were eligible for and claiming free school meals (DfE: 2019: 6)<sup>5</sup> representing the highest levels seen since 2014. Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility is higher than the national average in Stoke-on-Trent. For example, in 2016, 22.0% of primary and secondary school pupils in Stoke-on-Trent had free school meals, compared to 14.3% nationally (DCLG: 2017: 11)<sup>6</sup>. In 2019, the End Child Poverty Coalition released a report using data from research conducted by Loughborough University, which found that 43% of children in Stoke-on-Trent are living in poverty (End Child Poverty: 2019)<sup>7</sup>. These figures suggest that there may be a high number of school-aged children within Stoke-on-Trent who are unable to access nutritional meals consistently, outside of school term-time.

Child feeding initiatives, which provide food to children in school or community settings have grown significantly over the last decade with Forsey (2017) indicating that there may be as many as 428 such

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.trusselltrust.org/what-we-do/>

<sup>2</sup> Creagh, M 'We must eradicate childhood hunger: here's how we do it' *Times Educational Supplement*, February 2019 <https://www.tes.com/news/we-must-eradicate-childhood-hunger-heres-how-we-do-it>

<sup>3</sup> Marsh, J Half of children needing summer food bank support are in primary school, *Guardian*, 25 July 2019 <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/jul/25/half-of-children-needing-summer-food-bank-support-are-in-primary-school>

<sup>4</sup> Barns, J School holiday hunger cash a 'great first step' *BBC News*, 27 July, 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-44968401>

<sup>5</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/812539/Schools\\_Pupils\\_and\\_their\\_Characteristics\\_2019\\_Main\\_Text.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/812539/Schools_Pupils_and_their_Characteristics_2019_Main_Text.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [file://ufs.educ.keele.ac.uk/homes/Downloads/Stoke-on-Trent\\_Health\\_Profile\\_2017%20\(1\).pdf](file://ufs.educ.keele.ac.uk/homes/Downloads/Stoke-on-Trent_Health_Profile_2017%20(1).pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/>



projects in existence across the UK (cited in Lambie-Mumford and Sims: 2018: 245)<sup>8</sup>. These provisions remain charitable and voluntary in nature, with “feeding initiatives plugging gaps in increasingly lean state provision” (Lambie-Mumford and Sims: 2018: 246)<sup>9</sup>. Recognising a significant need in Stoke-on-Trent, since 2017 the ‘Ay Up Duck’ project, has focused on building relationships with schools and community groups to provide access for children and their families to structured activities and food during the school holidays.

This report summarises the findings of the ‘Social Value of out-of-school provisions’ project. The research was conducted by a team of researchers based within the Keele Institute for Social Inclusion (KISI) The research consisted of a mixed-method evaluation of ‘Ay Up Duck’ - a child feeding and activities-based project addressing out-of-school hunger, led by the Hubb Foundation<sup>10</sup>.

The evaluation was conducted over a two-month period during and after the Easter school-break 2019. It sought to identify the **experienced benefits** to stakeholders, as a result of their involvement in the Ay Up Duck project.

---

<sup>8</sup> Lambie-Mumford, H. and Sims, L., 2018. ‘Feeding hungry children’: the growth of charitable breakfast clubs and holiday hunger projects in the UK. *Children & Society*, 32(3), pp.244-254.

<sup>9</sup> Lambie-Mumford, H. and Sims, L., 2018. ‘Feeding hungry children’: the growth of charitable breakfast clubs and holiday hunger projects in the UK. *Children & Society*, 32(3), pp.244-254.

<sup>10</sup> Ay up duck was launched in in the summer of 2017, with the support of Stoke-on-Trent North MP Ruth Smeeth who raised the issue of Holiday Hunger in Parliament in 2015. It was initially overseen by the Port Vale Foundation Trust in partnership with Synectic Solutions, the national StreetGames programme and Stoke-on-Trent City Council. It is now led by the Hubb Foundation which was founded in 2019



## Summary of methods used

- The research was conducted within six site locations across Stoke-on-Trent including community spaces, primary and secondary schools.
- All the research sites were located in areas that fall within the top 15% multiply deprived wards in the UK.
- Focus group activities were conducted with children and young people across the six sites. Seven children's focus group activities were conducted across the site, with 31 children taking part in total.
- Interviews and focus groups were conducted with Hubb Foundation founding members, school and community link personnel and parents / caregivers. In total 14 focus groups/ interviews were conducted across the sites and involved a total of 18 parents / caregivers.
- A snapshot survey was conducted with (n= 48) parents and caregivers, who were self-selecting respondents. The survey was available online and paper copies were distributed at participating venues.

## Key Findings

The main benefits of Ay up duck, identified by stakeholders centred on the following themes:

1. Inclusive and safe spaces
2. Community, belonging and identity
3. Cultural and social capital
4. Food and financial incentives

The key issues related to

1. Perceived stigma
2. Sustainability of the provision on a voluntary basis

### Theme 1: Inclusive and safe spaces

Ay Up Duck have worked within primary schools, secondary schools, community centres, hubs, church halls and scout huts, to provide additional resources within pre-existing groups across Stoke-on-Trent since 2017. The Ay Up Duck provision tends to be situated within those wards of Stoke-on-Trent with higher levels of multiple deprivation, where there is a recognised need from community/school link personnel for additional resources and support to children and families.

There are a growing number of provisions across Stoke-on-Trent, with a variety of venue types and time-tabled sessions for children and families to choose to attend, with some families choosing to



travel to several venues during the school holidays. There are a few exceptions to the open-access nature of the provision, where some primary schools cater only for children who attend their schools, in order to meet safe-guarding and child-adult ratio requirements.

One of the key themes to emerge from the research, was that of 'inclusive and safe' spaces, discussed below in terms of; provision type, bottom-up initiatives, safe spaces to play and inclusive practice.

**It is clear from the findings that each provision type is valued by stakeholders.** The different venue types available to attend (community, church, school) appeared to be particularly beneficial in allowing parental choice and children to find their own 'best-fit'. Although some parents have expressed that they feel that sending children to schools within the holiday period would not work for their family, nor would attendance at a church-based provision;

*"...In schools you've got that thing of, oh no, its school, I'm not taking my kids to school in the holidays. And church, a lot of people think they're going to burst into flames when they walk into the door, even though it's just a building..."*

*(Parent Interview: C2P9).*

Interestingly, these opinions were not necessarily reflected within the survey. When parents were asked which activities, they participated in most regularly during out-of-school time, sixty percent of parents responded that they were least likely to attend community groups and events. Due to the quantitative nature of the survey, no explanation is given for these responses, and Ay Up Duck community-based provisions continue to be well attended.

Due to the 'open access' nature of the community, church-based and some high school venues (no restriction on age or school affiliation) and the benefits to parents, particularly around community and belonging (discussed below) the research supports having multiple venue types and would **recommend that a choice of venue type is available in each location, where possible.**

**The 'bottom-up' nature of the initiatives**, i.e. supporting pre-existing groups who have a good knowledge around pertinent needs within the communities, works well and is best practice. This allows for community members to have their voices heard and that community and children's needs are better understood and catered for. Although it should be recognised that taking this approach is likely to result in higher costs and, at times, an unequal distribution of resources. Concerns were expressed from link personnel that the rapid expansion of the provision across the city, may result in the bespoke nature of the initiatives and the quality of the food/resources being eroded.

*"...I think they've got to be careful... that they don't water it down too much... at the moment, we've got high quality activities and things going on. If you're not careful every event will not be as good, and less people will go... it'll be six poor kids sat around the table..."*

*(Link Personnel: SLP13)*

**It is recommended that regular and recorded feedback is gained from community/school link personnel, and where possible parent and child users, to ensure continuation of best practice. A**



***diverse committee group could be set up to ensure the equal distribution of resources across venues continues.***

One of the benefits identified by parents within interviews and surveys was that the provision offered a **'safe place' for their children to play**. A significant number of parents, link personnel and children spoke about their fears of crime, and perception of rising crime within their local area.

*"There's a little park down [street] and there's a park at the end of it. And some things are bad... at night there were bad happening there. So sometimes I don't take my little sister there with me".*

*(Children's Activity: P2C1P18)*

*"...because now, not only has he got to watch out for adults when he goes out in the park, he's got to watch out for other children and so...*

*(Parent Interview: SP1P14)*

This anecdotally resulted in children being kept indoors and unable to play and socialise outdoors or in local areas.

*"...incidents that we've become aware of that have taken place out of school at local parks... that had involved primary school aged children and knives and gangs... [the children] hadn't divulged that to anybody at home, for fear that they'd then be stopped from going out".*

*(Link Personnel, Interview: PSLP5)*

Gang related violence, anti-social behaviour, alcohol and drug use within public spaces and discarded sharps and drug paraphernalia were all cited as reasons to prevent the child from playing outdoors.

*"Round my end, I won't let my children out because of the other children in the street... these little boys threw bricks through somebody's window and when the lady came out, they come and bashed her"*

*(Parent Interview: C2P7)*

Within the focus groups and surveys the Ay Up Duck provision was identified as offering a safe place to play and interact with peers. Parents also identified independence as another benefit of the provision, particularly within the context of the safety offered by the clubs.

*"You can't let your children play out in the streets, so its good for them to have somewhere to come without Mum or Dad being there"*

*(Parent Interview: PSP13)*

*"You've got the freedom, but also you know it's safe for them to have that freedom"*

*(Parent Interview: SP1P14)*



The need for a safe environment was further supported by the parent survey results which suggested that 'being safe' was the second most significant benefit (81.25%) that parents perceived their children gaining through attending the provision. The most significant perceived benefit (84.38%) being the physical benefit, e.g. taking part in sports activities, eating nutritious meals.

Consistently, the **inclusive nature** of the Ay Up Duck provision was referred to by parents in both the interviews and surveys.

*"They make everyone feel welcome, no one is excluded" (Parental Survey)*

**Inclusive practice** referred to by the parents ranged from the child's dietary requirements being catered for without issue, (whether this be due to allergens or intolerance or to observe religious practice) through to their child's additional support needs being met to enable inclusion in activities. Several parents who have children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) reported specifically that their children particularly benefitted from the provision.

*"My [children] have started to mix with other children in this area. As I have a child with Asperger's this [provision] is very important as without a safe space to go, he wouldn't be able to mix socially with others"*

*(Parent Survey)*

Key aspects of the inclusive practices referred to were; socialisation with peers, the inclusive activities and the supportive environments offered through the Ay Up Duck provision.

*"[child] is comfortable enough here, to just go and play...not sort of exclude them from things, they don't treat [child] any different because of it [SEN]"*

*(Parent interview: PCP8)*

*"My [child] has autism and does not play with or around other children however it has allowed them to be more independent and be around other people"*

*(Parent survey)*

One parent further elaborated when stating that attending the Ay Up Duck provision allowed her to feel more included also. She felt that the non-judgemental and supportive provision environment allowed her to be able to 'relax' as a parent, to feel less 'alone' in her experiences and not have "everyone staring at me", when she stated

*"...[when] you have a SEN child, you don't see as many people... it's harder to socialise... its harder because you do get judged when you take them out in public and they have a meltdown because there's too many people around or they want something and you've said the word, no"*

*(Parent Interview: CP2P11)*





In summary, across the interviews, focus groups and surveys, parents and stakeholders were overwhelmingly positive about Ay Up Duck's provision, its associated venues and affiliated activity and food providers, for their inclusivity and catering towards the diverse needs of the children and families who attend.

## Theme 2: Community, belonging and identity

The sense that **'community' was being (re)built** through the Ay Up Duck provision, was a key theme within both the school and community interviews and surveys. Although this theme was particularly pertinent for parents, it was also captured within the children's activity task, when speaking around friendship groups and collective identities.

Parents particularly expressed a sense that community has been eroded over recent years, in part due to government funding cuts, several parents spoke around the local government initiatives that they had benefit from as children and highlighted that these **services were no longer available** for their own children

*"When I was [14 years old] there used to be those things down at the school. Down at the local parks, what were them called? From City Council and stuff...we used to love that" (Parent Interview: SP1P6)*

*"They used to have things on through the holidays. Whether that happens anymore though, through any of the councils... [trails off]" (Parent Interview: PS1P15)*

The nature of communities and neighbourhoods has also changed over time, with several parents commenting that a sense of community within their residential area was non-existent or had eroded.

*"When you come here you always feel welcome... where I live, there isn't much of a community at all actually... Everyone seems to be at work, come home, and then no-one really does really seem to socialise as much" (Parental Interview: CP1P5P8)*

Additional fears around their children's safety meant that children were unable to benefit from socialising with a diverse range of people within their neighbourhoods

*"It's taking it back again, like when we were saying, like years ago, you'd go down to the park and start talking to other kids. They're not getting any opportunities when they're at home, because we're trying to keep them safe" (Parental Interview: SP1P13)*

The project findings suggest that one of the most valued aspects of the Ay Up Duck provision is the way the resources and space provided by the initiative allow groups to 'come together' and **re-build a sense of collective identity** and belonging with others



*Parent 1: ...it caters for the community.*

*Parent 2: It bringing it together again isn't it really?*

*Researcher: Bringing it together **again**? [emphasis]*

*Parent 1: Over the years, it's just spread hasn't it, people, nobody interacts with anybody now do they? Where this way, you can let your hair down, have a cup of tea and a chat while the kids play. (Parental Interview: CP2P4)*

*"It's brought the community together within the school. Because its not just the children, it's the parents seeing the parents"*

*(Parental Interview: CP2P4)*

A sense of belonging, community and collective identity are all central to maintaining **positive mental health**. The connectedness with others and personal involvement within a system so that individuals feel an integral part of that environment, have been shown to be vital to well-being and mental health and can have additional general health benefits. This is particularly important as many of the survey responses highlighted the negative impact that deprivation can have on mental health

*"Many families may feel isolated on low income" (Parent Survey)*

*"A lot of people battle mental health because of isolation, and this is making a massive difference in both kids and adult's lives"*

*(Parent Survey)*

For some of the participants the bonds that are created within the Ay Up Duck provisions are likened to **kinship**, with several responses indicating that the provision had provided them with ties replicating familial ones

*"So, it's like one big family, even though you're not related" (Parent Interview: CP2P1)*

*"They're not staff. They're family to us" (Parent Interview: PS2P8)*

Children recognise the value of **maintaining their school friendship groups** outside of school time, with many stating that because they are unable to play out or meet up with other children who live outside of their immediate home vicinity, they would otherwise not have the opportunity to meet with children during the school holidays

*"I enjoy coming to school [provision] with my friends. Because they're the ones that make it fun" (Children's Activity: PS2C2P5)*

*"You get to see your friends over like the holiday period. And you get to do lots of exciting and activity things" (Children's Activity: PS1C1P9)*



Arranging 'play dates' outside of school time carries its own restrictions and often barriers such as transport needs and limited finances mean this is not possible

*"All their friends are all over [geographical area]. So, trying to get their friends together is actually quite difficult" (Parental Interview: PS1P14)*

Children appear to be particularly aware of the financial barriers that result in restricted choices in terms of the activities that they can take part in during the summer. With many children factoring price, value for money and transport costs into their decision making when asked to place a range of activities into rank order

*"...they're expensive and a lot of people like them... and some people don't get to go as much, because they don't have enough money to and sometimes, like, even if they do have enough money, you cant get, its not cheap enough to drive there if you don't have a car" (Children's Activity: SC2P8)*

The Ay Up Duck provision provides a **level playing field**, each child attending has access to the same and equal resources, the value of this is recognised by both parents and children

*"Some people can't afford to go to places... It's [Ay Up Duck] for everyone really and not just some people" (Children's Activity, SC2P5)*

*"It costs a lot of money to do anything. Not everybody can afford it. This brings people together. Its free". (Parent Interview: C1P2P1)*

### Theme 3: Cultural and Social Capital

Both parents and children are **gaining social and cultural capital**, in attending the Ay Up Duck provisions. **Social capital** is a social relation that has advantageous or productive benefits, for example, gaining assistance or support as evidenced in the quote below

*"It's that community again. If you need advice, there's plenty of different people with different problems, because everyone's got their own problems, haven't they? Its so diverse that somebody's going to know something you're going through, and its nice to have that support as well" (Parent Interview: CP2P12)*

Other benefits include; information sharing, such as assistance in completing forms, referrals to other service providers and feeding initiatives, information regarding local services and provisions, sharing resources which is obviously integral to the Ay Up duck provision and building networks of trust, as evidenced within the quotes below

*"The kids know where they can turn to. If they've got a problem, they will come and ask you" (Parent Interview: CP2P5)*

*"Our relationships with our families are brilliant... as an example, there are not many safeguarding issues that we uncover, most of them are shared [by parents]"*



*... I do think that if you've got an organisation where there is a trust... you'll have transparency and honesty" (Link Personnel Interview: PS2LP6)*

**Cultural capital** is building social assets of a person that promote social mobility, this can include socialisation, education and opportunities. It is clear across the project findings that the opportunities the children have from attending the Ay Up Duck provision are not necessarily those they might encounter in their day-to-day experiences and provide further enrichment in a fun and informal way

*"It gives them the opportunity to do things they wouldn't otherwise have had chance to do" (Parent interview: CP2P5)*

*"...they don't see it that they're coming to learn, because they're not sitting in a classroom" (Parent Interview: PS1P4)*

Not only are the children engaging in activities that they might not have opportunity to do otherwise, they are engaging with a wide range of people and activity providers, allowing them insight into future career opportunities and gaining additional skills and training. The impact of this on children's **self-esteem and confidence** was witnessed by parents and teaching professionals

*"...some of the children that probably wouldn't have been the most vocal after a holiday, because they probably hadn't got that much to say in terms of what they'd done, were coming in and talking about some of the things they'd done over the holidays with greater confidence" (School Link: PS2LP9)*

*"It builds confidence. It teaches you how to behave in society and how to adapt to different people. It's just a massive learning experience on so many levels for them" (Parent Interview: PS1P7)*

Going forward, the social and cultural capitals accumulated by parents and children through attending the Ay Up Duck provision, might enable them to have a wider range of capitals to draw upon, and 'tap into' as personal, transferable assets. The opportunities, experiences, skills and networks being built could potentially enable members to thrive in society, conferring social status and **promoting social mobility**. However, **further research is needed to assess the longer-term impact of the provision in terms of translating the social and cultural knowledge built here into academic and social success.**

Ay Up Duck is well-placed to provide additional skills and training to help support **capital accumulation** of parents and children. The findings show that the provision is trusted and valued by those who use it and the project has helped some of the children and parents to build and establish social networks that they might not have had access to if they had not attended the clubs. There is potential to promote social mobility through sustained opportunities, sustenance and support networks within disadvantaged locations. However, there are financial costs here and sustained government funding is key to ensuring the success of this provision.



#### Theme 4: Food and Financial incentives

Children were forthcoming in expressing their reasons for attending as in part, due to the food provision. This value of the provision of food is implicit in some discussion around ways in which Ay Up Duck might be improved in future, as in the discussion below:

*Researcher: So, what would make Ay Up Duck top of your list then? ... What sort of things would you like to see?*

*Male child 1: All you can eat buffet*

*Male child 2: Unlimited food*

*(Children's Activity: C2C1P6)*

There were also a number of children who admitted that they attended the club because they were hungry

*"I haven't eaten anything this morning" (Children's Activity: PS1CP27)*

*Child 2: ...but only if I'm hungry*

*Researcher: Are you hungry? So, when you come here, do you come for food?*

*Child 1: Yes!*

*Child 2: Yes!*

*(Children's Activity: C1C1P2)*

Parents on the other hand, referred to **both financial and food needs** when discussing the benefits of the holiday provision. For example, they referred to activities and places that cost a substantial amount of money, or about the cost to keeping children occupied in general

*"...There's only so much you can do without breaking the bank and spending money. If you had to take them to [theme park] or [water park], it costs so much money" (Parent Interview: PS2PP5)*

*"We do things that are free, parks and things. Having children is bloody expensive" (PS2PP6)*



However, there was limited discussion in the focus groups from parents, in relation to their own family's needs, experiences around food or financial poverty or the impact of this upon the family. This is despite nearly half (49%) of the parental survey respondents self-reporting a household income of less than £20,000 and 66% of parents responding that they had significantly less disposable household income than the average £260 cited by Office for National Statistics (ONS) in 2015 for Stoke-on-Trent, with some parents declining to answer this survey question.

One of the most frank and explicit discussions captured around the impact of the school holidays and the additional financial pressure this puts on a family, can be seen below, when the parent was asked whether they'd started to make plans for the six-week holiday period, they replied:

*"I don't want to think about it... If you start thinking about it, you go down this rabbit hole and you just think, I won't come through the other side of it"* (Parent Interview: PS2PP5)

It is clear from the quote above, that some parents may find this additional financial pressure overwhelming, which could impact upon personal well-being and mental health. Across the interviews and indeed within the surveys, a level of disassociation with need or poverty was utilised by the parents in their responses and few parents were so direct about their own needs. Whilst there was recognition that the wider community has needs, or high levels of deprivation, this was very rarely applied to the respondent or their family's circumstances, as can be seen in the quotes below

*"There's not much stuff around here that you can do that does cater for children. And **some people** just can't afford it, to be going out all the time"* [emphasis added] (Parent Interview: CP1P2)

*"**Not everybody** can afford it"* [emphasis added] (Parent Interview: CP1P2P2)

*"**A lot of people** do struggle – money-wise"* [emphasis added] (Parent Interview: CP1P1P4)

Parents appeared to disassociate themselves from the experience of poverty / need in their discussion. By referring to the collective needs or deprivations within their geographical location, they can somewhat negotiate their own admission of need or experienced deprivation.

*"I think that [area] has a lot of single parent families which would benefit from these sessions. There are a **lot of families on low income** that could benefit"* [emphasis added] (Parent Survey)

*"There are a lot of **poor families in the area** and this is great for the kids"* [emphasis added] (Parental Survey)



## Issues (barriers)

### Issue 1: Perceptions of stigma

Reluctance to directly discuss personal food and financial need from parents is potentially due to the **stigma** around not being able to provide for children. While few parents were willing to discuss the issues openly, this was echoed within community and school link personnel interviews.

*“I do think that there’s a big stigma around ensuring that you can feed your family and feed your children...we very often have to refer to the food bank...most families are inherently proud”(Link Personnel interview: PS2LPP6)*

*“They wanted to feed people. It was like a holiday hunger programme, and we said, for god’s sake don’t call it a holiday hunger programme, because it’s going to be a non-starter” (Link Personnel interview: PS2LPP6)*

Whilst every effort has been made by the founding members and school and community personnel to ensure that the Ay Up Duck provision is not considered to be a ‘feeding initiative’ or ‘holiday hunger’ programme, instead being advertised as ‘Activities and Food’ there appears to remain ingrained high levels of experienced stigma from parents. It is inherently difficult to **challenge dominant social and political discourse** around the causes of hunger or poverty; however, ***we recommend that further work is done to ensure that stigma is reduced as far as possible.***

***It is recommended that the provision continues to be branded as ‘activities first, food as extra’ in order to allow parental and child negotiation of perceived stigma. It is also recommended that any training or initiatives such as ‘money management’ or similar which imply a personal cause for poverty continue to be avoided, and that the structural causes of poverty are reiterated in any media / conference presentations.***

### Issue 2: Sustainability of the provision on a voluntary basis in the longer term

The project has been running since 2017 and originally catered for approximately 150 children across 5 schools. The extensive needs of the community within Stoke-on-Trent have meant that the provision has grown extensively over the three-year period since its conception in 2016. This creates some considerable challenges in terms of financial and workforce sustainability, with the project reliant on securing external funding, goodwill from key stakeholders and voluntary personnel. One of the key issues around external funding, is that each funding body stipulates its own criteria of how the funds are allocated and approved sources for services, often resulting in a lack of autonomy for project staff and reliance on unsustainable donation, as highlighted below



*“...there’s criteria to funding... we’ve [previously] been told to ... deliver holiday projects that provide meals but we’re not allowed to pay for food [from the allocated funds]... so you’re reliant on donations, which are not sustainable as you don’t know what you are getting” (Founding member: FM2P21)*

*“Many times, you don’t get the money until far too late in the process. I was able to say, well we’ll start the process and if we don’t get the money then I’ll cover the cost... it made me realise how hard it is... (Founding member: FM1P7)*

The considerable financial backing from Synectic Solutions at times over the past three years to provide food and activities is evident from the quotes above, however this is not solely in terms of maintaining cashflow, but also in allocating staffing resources towards the project

*“...when you’ve got five or six members of staff full-time on this project and not one penny has been taken for our wages in the past six or seven months, then you know that the company is particularly passionate about supporting families”  
(Founding member: FM2P15)*

These gestures of goodwill are not unique to the founding members associated companies, but also from the schools and community groups where the provisions are provided. Often teaching staff will work additional hours during school holidays and community spaces are run with voluntary staff

*“We [school] pay [one staff member]. I’m here and don’t get paid. The principal at [another school] doesn’t get paid. Yes, there’s goodwill out there...” (Link Personnel: SLPP13)*

*“The [local school] used to put things on in the holidays, but [the headteacher] was saying, it’s the staff, they’re not getting the holidays they’re supposed to get... so, now the only days we have off and we close is the bank holiday week... [it means that] the volunteers get a break, because at the end of the day all they get is Christmas [off]” (Link Personnel: C2LPP5)*

In order that the provisions meet safeguarding and health and safety requirements, often the venues (school and community) are reliant on trained staff members foregoing annual leave and/or providing unpaid work. Ensuring that there are a number of staff who are able to take responsibility for the sites and are confident in doing so, requires additional training and mentorship from the venue site leaders and is not something which can be implemented instantaneously, with the responsibility often falling upon one or two senior staff members initially

*“I haven’t gone off anywhere exotic for holidays and I make sure I’m around and about... what I did start to do is get some of the staff more confident in taking the overall responsibility for the site... so that we are still involved but aren’t solely responsible. Because it wouldn’t be sustainable, moving forward, if that was the case” (Link Personnel: PS1LPP3)*

The issues of precarious funding sources, reliance upon donations, volunteers and goodwill are not unique to the Ay Up Duck project and are commonplace throughout the third sector. However, the





impact of precarious funding generally, means that quite often provisions and services provided to children and young people are inconsistent

*“I think the council should take more responsibility, they don’t offer far enough support to volunteer groups... We did have, a few years ago, a [sports provision] ...but then, once that funding was up, it wasn’t on again and they [children and YP] were left with nothing. So there needs to be that little bit of surplus money...”*  
(Link Personnel: C2LPP8)

***In order to ensure that Ay Up Duck is a consistent provision for those children and families who are benefitting from it, a consistent funding source, which allows autonomy of resource allocation is needed. A sustained cross-party government commitment to provision of this funding should be met.***

***Further to this, we recommend staffing costs of the Ay Up Duck provision are met within this budget, with additional resources made available to participating venues/sites, in order that full training and mentorship can be administered. Measures are required to ensure that staffing of the venues is sustainable, and the onus of responsibility does not fall to one or two core staff.***

## Recommendations from stakeholders

- Several recommendations were made during interviews and within survey responses, particularly by parents that further work could be done to attract older children and young people (age 12+). This may help alleviate community concerns around older groups of young people and anti-social behaviour, it would also foster community identity with youth groups.
- Parents of children with SEND suggested that more sensory activities / toys / ‘chill-out’ spaces, at venues would be beneficial to enrich inclusion.
- Both parents and children suggested that subsidised trips or excursions e.g. seaside, picnics etc. This would further enhance the enrichment opportunities and experiences available to children and young people. 15% of the families surveyed had not been on a family holiday, and presumably it is less likely that these children would have experienced a beach.
- Several parents in the surveys and interviews suggested additional skills training workshops and short course ‘up-skilling’ for themselves and the children.
- There was also some suggestion from parents that they would appreciate SEND awareness / training / support for themselves. However, in consideration of the recommendations below regarding training / initiatives and stigma perception, if this suggestion is implemented, these sessions should not be considered ‘parenting classes’ rather as information sessions.

## Recommendations from KISI project team

- Further research is needed to assess the longer-term impact of the provision in terms of translating the social and cultural knowledge built here into academic and social success. We



would recommend that this research is longitudinal in order to be able to track the educational and social impacts of the provision for young people in Stoke-on-Trent.

- A choice of venue type (school, church, community) could be made available in each location, where possible to encourage further participation from 'harder to reach' communities
- Regular and recorded feedback from community/school link personnel, and where possible parent and child users, perhaps in the form of a committee group, should be heard, to ensure continuation of best practice and equal distribution of resources across venues.
- Further work needs to be done to tackle perceived and experienced stigma around attending the provision.
- The provision should continue to be branded as 'activities first, food as extra' in order to allow parental and child negotiation of perceived stigma around poverty.
- Training or initiatives such as 'money management' or similar which imply a personal cause for poverty or socially stigmatised concepts, should continue to be avoided and 'individual blame' discourses challenged where appropriate.
- A consistent funding source, which allows autonomy of resource allocation is needed. A sustained cross-party government commitment to provision of this funding should be met.
- Staffing costs of the Ay Up Duck provision should be met within this budget, with additional resources made available to participating venues/sites, in order that full training and mentorship can be administered.

### Final observation:

Ay Up Duck is well-placed to provide additional skills and training to help support capital accumulation in both parents and children. The provision is trusted and valued by those who use it and strong social networks have been established. The potential to promote social mobility through sustained opportunities, sustenance and support networks within disadvantaged locations is within the project remit, however there are financial costs here and sustained cross-party commitment to government funding is key to ensuring the success of this provision.

# Survey Summary

67% of parents were employed or studying

## EMPLOYMENT



73% of parents owned or had access to a vehicle

## VEHICLE



55% of parents were homeowners

## HOUSE



49% of parents self-report a household income of £20k or less

## INCOME



## OUT-OF-SCHOOL PROVISION USERS



## DISPOSABLE INCOME

66% of parents self-report less than £260 GDP\*

\*ONS average figure for S-O-T (2015)



## PARENTS

74% cohabited or lived in two-parent household



## CHILDREN

74% of families consisted of two or less children



## EHC PLAN

7% of children have an Education and Health Care Plan in place

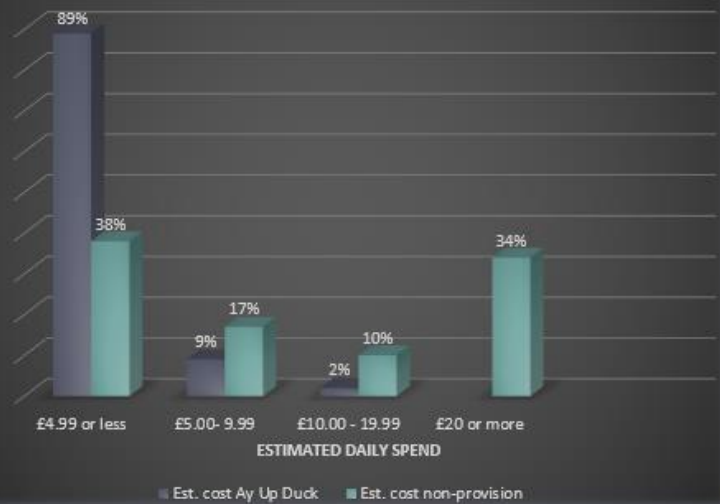


# Parental Survey Out-of-school provision



## Benefits for children

Parental self-estimated daily out-of-school costs  
Ay Up Duck vs Non provision



78%

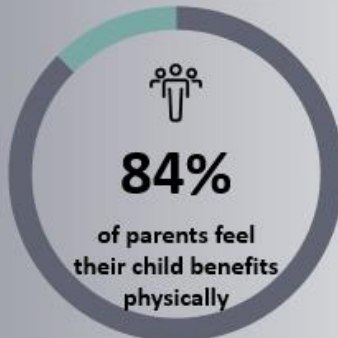


Parents feel their child benefits socially and emotionally

81%



Parents feel their child benefits from having a safe place to play



## Value of provision

1

A place for children to make new friends

2

Activities for children

3

A place to meet other parents and families

## 91% of parents likely to return



88% would recommend to friends / family

For further information:  
[s.edwards1@keele.ac.uk](mailto:s.edwards1@keele.ac.uk)

