

ADVICE FOR THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT ON ADDRESSING POVERTY DURING SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

Executive Summary

Request for advice

The Poverty and Inequality Commission was asked by the Scottish Government to consider whether there are actions in *Every Child, Every Chance: The Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018-22* that should be developed in tandem in order to maximise their effectiveness. In particular, the Commission was asked to consider the role of local authorities, social enterprise and the third sector in providing after school and holiday care and responding to school holiday food insecurity. The Commission was asked to consider how relevant commitments could best be delivered to complement each other.

How the Commission developed its advice

In order to explore these issues Commissioners visited a number of holiday projects during the summer holidays 2018 and spoke to parents, children and workers. Members of the Commission had discussions with a number of voluntary organisations, local authority and COSLA officials, Scottish Government officials and other policy experts. Members of the Commission talked to parents at a community hub, and One Parent Families Scotland also undertook a discussion group with parents on behalf of the Commission.

The pressures that families face

The Commission has recognised that families face a range of pressures during the school holidays. These include food insecurity and childcare, but also relate to wider finances, play and activities, parenting, and social isolation. There are some innovative and successful examples of services and projects meeting the needs of families in local areas. A lot of these offer food as a core element but also offer play and activities and sometimes other supports to families. The Commission heard, however, that this type of provision was not available consistently across the country and that there was a lack of co-ordination, leading to gaps, duplication and people being unaware of what is available.



Recommendations

The Commission is making three primary recommendations to Scottish Government in relation to holiday provision.

Recommendation 1: The Scottish Government should introduce an additional cash benefit during school holiday periods in recognition of the additional costs that families face. The amount should be set at a level that at least matches the equivalent costs of school meals.

Recommendation 2: The Scottish Government, COSLA and local authorities should work together to take a strategic approach to developing and funding a coordinated package of school holiday support that addresses the full range of pressures faced by families with low incomes.

Recommendation 3: Building from existing services, holiday club provision, with nutritious and culturally appropriate food as a core element, should be available for all children from low income families.

Families have a range of needs during school holidays, but direct cash transfers would provide the most dignified way to lessen the financial pressures on families, offering families choices in how to meet their needs for things like food, activities, fuel and transport.

While direct cash transfers should be the first response to the additional financial and food needs that families experience, families face other pressures and have a wider range of needs during school holidays that require a response that goes beyond cash transfers.

The Scottish Government, COSLA, and local authorities, working with the third sector and other partners, should look to develop an overall package of school holiday support for families. Local holiday club and food activities should form the backbone of provision that links to childcare, financial support and other services.

The Commission has also made a number of further recommendations about issues that should be taken into account in developing this provision. These recommendations are set out throughout the Commission's advice.

ADVICE FOR THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT ON ADDRESSING POVERTY DURING SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

REQUEST FOR ADVICE

The Poverty and Inequality Commission was asked by the Scottish Government to consider whether there are actions in *Every Child, Every Chance: The Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018-22* that should be developed in tandem in order to maximise their effectiveness. In particular, the Commission was asked to consider the role of local authorities, social enterprise and the third sector in providing after school and holiday care and responding to school holiday food insecurity. The Commission was asked to consider how relevant commitments could best be delivered to complement each other.

BACKGROUND

School holidays make up 13 weeks of the year, so children and young people spend a quarter of their year not in school. This brings additional costs and challenges for families, particularly over the six week summer holiday and at Christmas. During the school holidays a number of key supports for children and families are not provided, such as free school meals, breakfast clubs, after school clubs, after school activities and guidance/pastoral support within school.

The research evidence suggests that for low-income families school holidays can increase financial pressure and lead to food insecurity, poor health, and missing out on opportunities that are available to children in higher income families.¹ There is evidence that 'summer learning loss' may be more significant for children from low-income families and it has been argued that this may be a primary factor behind the attainment gap.²

In research carried out by the Child Poverty Action Group in Glasgow³, just over one third of parents responding said that they had found it hard to pay for meals in the holidays. Over a quarter of parents had skipped meals to feed their children and seven percent had used foodbanks to feed their children during school holidays.

Paid employment can be an effective route out of poverty for families but the cost and availability of childcare during school holidays can make it difficult for some parents to take up or sustain work.

¹ Stewart, H., Watson, N. & Campbell, M. (2018) 'The cost of school holidays for children from low income families', *Childhood*, 31 May 2018, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0907568218779130>

² *ibid*

³ Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland (2015) *The Cost of the School Holidays* <http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-Scot-Cost-School-Holidays-full%20report.pdf>

In addition to the cost of childcare, it is currently difficult to identify whether there is sufficient holiday childcare available. Local authorities have powers to provide out of school care during school holidays but there is no statutory duty for them to do so. A survey by the Family and Childcare Trust found that many local authorities did not have data to tell them whether there is enough holiday childcare available in their area to meet the needs of working parents.⁴

In *Every Child, Every Chance* the Scottish Government committed to investing an additional £500k per annum in 2018-19 and 2019-20 in providing help for children experiencing food insecurity during school holidays. An additional £2 million was subsequently announced in the Programme for Government 2018-2019. The Scottish Government has also made a commitment to develop a new strategic framework for after school and holiday childcare by the end of this Parliament.

HOW WE HAVE INVESTIGATED THE ISSUE

Commissioners visited a number of holiday projects during the summer holidays 2018. These included three projects run by North Lanarkshire Council as part of their Club 365 work, a project at Dalmarnock primary school in Glasgow, and a YMCA holiday project in Edinburgh. While at the projects Commissioners spoke to parents, children and staff about their views and experiences of holiday provision.

In addition to visiting the projects, members of the Commission had discussions with a number of voluntary organisations running relevant projects or programmes, with local authority and COSLA officials, with Scottish Government officials and with other policy experts. Members of the Commission talked to parents at a community hub in Fife, and One Parent Families Scotland also undertook a discussion group with parents on behalf of the Commission. The Children's Parliament shared some thoughts about summer holidays from their Aberdeen Imagineers with the Commission.

The Commission also held a round table discussion to test its thinking with a number of people from third sector organisations, local authorities and parents.

⁴ Cottell, J. & Fiaferana, K. (2018) *Holiday Childcare Survey 2018*, Family and Childcare Trust <https://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/holiday-childcare-survey-2018>

THE PRESSURES THAT FAMILIES FACE

A particular focus around school holidays is the cost of food for families who would usually receive free school meals, however, families with low incomes face a much broader range of pressures during school holidays.

Some of these pressures can be exacerbated for some families due to their particular circumstances. Families with a disabled child or adult, for example, may face additional barriers to accessing activities or suitable childcare and have higher transport and other costs. Families in rural communities may have fewer options nearby and experience additional transport and food costs. Lone parent households may be particularly vulnerable during school holidays due to a lack of support. Black and minority ethnic families may face additional barriers to accessing services. We recognise that it is most often women who are dealing directly with these pressures and that the vast majority of parents and carers that we talked to tended to be mothers or grandmothers. We also recognise that in some cases the primary carer is not the parent but will still face the same issues.

We set out some of the main pressures that families face below.

Financial pressures

Household expenditure increases during holiday periods but there is no additional financial support available. For families on low incomes this can include additional food costs, fuel costs and costs for activities or transport. Winter holidays can bring particular financial challenges with the costs of Christmas and higher fuel bills. Some parents need to borrow money to manage essential living costs during holiday periods.

Food

The absence of free school meals and breakfast clubs means that families have to find extra money for food. As food can be the only discretionary part of a family's budget this can lead to children receiving inadequate food or to parents going hungry in order to feed their children. Some parents told us that having access to some free healthy meals during the holidays saved them money and helped them manage costs.

Play and activities

'In Summer, we get bored. There isn't anything to do in our area. I go and hang out with friends in the Tesco car park. There is a trampoline park but I don't have enough money to go there.'

Imagineer, Children's Parliament

It can be a challenge to provide play opportunities and activities for children on a low income. Even where free or low cost activities are available, the cost and availability of transport may be a barrier to accessing them. Some parents told us

that they could not go to activities outside their local area because of the cost of transport, because there was no bus service or because buses might not turn up. Apart from the financial costs, there may also be a lack of suitable places to play in the local area. Some parents told us that they could not let their children play outside because of traffic or neighbour issues.

Parenting

'Arguments between family can get in the way of having a good summer.'
Imagineer, Children's Parliament

Holiday times can lead to parenting challenges that are not necessarily an issue during term time. During school holidays conflict can increase between siblings or between parents and children and parents may not get any time without their children to do necessary tasks or get a break. This can be particularly challenging for lone parents, parents of children with additional needs or parents with mental health issues. Some parents told us that routine was important for children, and it could be difficult when term-time routine stopped.

Childcare

'I wouldn't work because I couldn't afford the childcare costs.'
Parent, OPFS

Working parents require additional childcare over school holidays as children are not in school, and before and after school clubs are not operating. Both the availability and affordability of childcare are key issues. Anecdotally it has been suggested that some parents may need to give up work or reduce hours over the holidays because of difficulties accessing affordable childcare.

Social isolation

'My child was really isolated before we came to the activities at the Family Centre.'
Parent, OPFS

Both parents and children may become socially isolated over holiday periods. Existing supports and activities often stop over the holidays and families may not be able to afford to go out to take part in activities or meet people. Some parents told us that without somewhere to go in the holidays they could feel isolated and that having other parents to talk to made a big difference. The inability to feed extra children or embarrassment about the family home may prevent children from inviting friends over.

Other pressures

Families with children who are not yet school age may also face additional pressures during the school holiday periods. School nurseries, play groups and other services may stop over the school holiday period. Even where services for pre-school and younger children operate over school holidays, having older children at home may prevent families from attending. This can increase risks of social isolation, reduce play opportunities and increase parenting stresses. At the other end of the age group, there appears to be a lack of provision offered for high school age young people.

Children at risk of abuse and neglect may be more vulnerable during holiday periods and there may be a delay in concerns being recognised by statutory agencies. Child Protection Committees Scotland have launched the 'Eyes Open' campaign to encourage the general public to be watchful of children in their local area who may potentially be vulnerable⁵.

EXISTING SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROVISION

There is real diversity in existing school holiday provision. While the Commission has not been able to look comprehensively at existing provision, it has visited or heard from a range of programmes. Although food was often the initial focus of projects around school holidays, and often provided a route to access funding, it was clear that projects were addressing a wider range of family needs. This was confirmed in discussions with those involved in running or advising on projects who considered that food was a catalyst, but not necessarily the most important aspect of their work.

Research by Northumbria University⁶ in 2016, mapping holiday provision across the UK, asked organisations to identify the top needs for families and children in their community during the school holidays, and found that the priority needs were considered to be:

- Food provision
- A safe place to play
- Childcare provision
- Social activities

The Commission supports the principles set out by the Independent Working Group on Food Poverty⁷, which are used by the Fair Food Transformation Fund, and these provide a good starting point for thinking about wider support to families during school holidays. These are:

⁵ <https://www.celcis.org/news/news-pages/eyes-open-scotland-child-protection-cpscotland/>

⁶ <http://www.apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/members-area/advisory-groups/catering-school-meals/appg/reports/mapping-of-holiday-provision-summary-report-nov-2016/>

⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/dignity-ending-hunger-together-scotland-report-independent-working-group-food/pages/7/>

1. That people with direct experience of food poverty help shape and deliver the service or solution.
2. That projects recognise the social value of food and aim to build community around food to create the feeling of a place where people choose to go, rather than have to go.
3. That projects provide opportunities for people to contribute, for example, through volunteering in different roles, sharing and learning new skills, growing food and participating in local community life.
4. That projects ensure that, as far as possible, people are able to choose what they eat; that the choice should include fresh and healthy food, and that where people can pay something for their food they have the dignity of being allowed to do so.

The Commission looked at programmes delivered by both local authorities and third sector organisations, some of which build on term-time activity and some of which are stand-alone holiday provision. The provision ranged from food and activities for a couple of hours a day, or a couple of days a week to full day, full week provision. However, there were few examples of provision that covered every week of the school holidays. We saw examples of provision where children and parents attended together and others where children attended on their own. Some provision was by referral only, while other provision was open to anyone living in the area. Age ranges of the programmes varied and in some programmes there were lots of different activities while others were specifically focused on one activity such as football, dance or cooking classes. All the provision included food and in some programmes cooking by parents or children played a significant part.

Additional funding available in 2018 from Scottish Government and local authorities for food and activities during school holidays appears to have enabled extra holiday provision this summer. However, timescales of funding announcements may have made it difficult this year to plan strategically to deliver this.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Financial Support

Recommendation 1: The Scottish Government should introduce an additional cash benefit during school holiday periods in recognition of the additional costs that families face. The amount should be set at a level that at least matches the equivalent costs of school meals.

Families have a range of needs during school holidays, but direct cash transfers would provide the most dignified way to lessen the financial pressures on families, offering families choices in how to meet their needs for things like food, activities, fuel and transport. This aligns with the report of the Independent Working Group on Food Poverty which recognised that food insecurity is primarily a consequence of inadequate household income and that any response must increase and maximise income through both work and social security.

The Commission has previously recommended that the Scottish Government should make use of its social security powers to top up or create new benefits to tackle child poverty. In addition to this the Scottish Government should also look at introducing additional cash benefits during holiday periods for those who are eligible for the school clothing grant. Existing mechanisms, such as the school clothing grant, should be considered as a way of delivering this. Financial transfers may be particularly important for families with older children who are not eligible, or do not wish, to attend many of the holiday programmes on offer. The amount should be set at a level that at least matches the equivalent costs of school meals and consideration should be given to how much payments should be and when they should be provided. Provision of additional financial support, in combination with the proposed income supplement, would contribute towards the 2030 child poverty targets.

Further recommendation

- **Scottish Government funding for financial and related advice services should specify that services must demonstrate how their delivery can contribute to addressing the issues for families relating to school holidays.**

Family financial health checks should be available in advance of summer and Christmas holidays to try to prevent families entering financial hardship over these periods. These could also be used as an opportunity to make families aware of holiday clubs and other support that is available during the school holidays. In some circumstances some families may need access to affordable credit in order to manage fluctuating incomes and costs around holiday times. Specific affordable credit initiatives could also be developed around the school holidays.

Co-ordinated approach to school holiday support

Recommendation 2: The Scottish Government, COSLA and local authorities should work together to take a strategic approach to developing and funding a coordinated package of school holiday support that addresses the full range of pressures faced by families with low incomes.

While direct cash transfers should be the first response to the additional financial and food needs that families experience, families face other pressures during school holidays that require a response that goes beyond cash transfers.

The Scottish Government, COSLA, and local authorities, working with the third sector and other partners, should look to develop an overall package of school holiday support for families. This should aim to address the range of pressures that families face and involve policy areas including food insecurity, out of school care, raising attainment, play, family support, advice services, physical activity, health improvement, employability and beyond.

The Commission has seen and heard about a range of provision for children and families in school holidays. There are clearly some very innovative and successful examples of services meeting the needs of families in local areas. The Commission also heard, however, that there was a lack of co-ordination of provision leading to gaps, duplication and people being unaware of what was available. School holiday activity would benefit from a co-ordinated response at local level. Consideration should be given to ensuring that there are lead officials within local authorities who have responsibility for school holiday periods. These officials could take the lead on behalf of Community Planning Partnerships to enable a more strategic, collaborative approach to be developed to meet families' needs during school holiday periods. This collaborative approach should build on existing provision and involve businesses and social enterprises as well as local authorities and the third sector.

A co-ordinated approach should be taken across national funding streams that are currently being used to fund holiday programmes, such as the Fair Food Transformation Fund and the Attainment Scotland Fund, and consideration should be given to using some of the £50m child poverty fund to help create the necessary infrastructure for school holiday support.

One specific issue that was raised with the Commission was the use of school buildings. While some holiday provision that we heard about was making effective use of school buildings, the Commission heard frustrations that in other areas school buildings were not open during school holidays, were too expensive to hire, or that school kitchens could not be used. In some cases this is because local authorities do not control access to school buildings out of school hours as this is managed by facilities management companies. Occasionally it seemed that lack of co-ordination between different departments and different department budgets made access

difficult and expensive. Local authorities should explore what options there are to improve access to school buildings and other appropriate local authority venues during school holidays. Local authorities should also look at what other local authority assets, for example, transport, could be made use of to support children and families during school holidays.

Further recommendations

- **The Scottish Government should identify someone to take a role co-ordinating Scottish Government policy relating to school holidays.**
- **Each local authority should take responsibility for strategic co-ordination of action around school holidays in their area, and of holiday club provision in particular. This should build on existing provision and encourage collaboration between providers.**
- **Scottish Government, COSLA and local authorities should take a more co-ordinated approach to existing sources of funding and looking at what additional funding may be required.**
- **Local authorities should explore what options there are to improve access to school buildings and other appropriate local authority venues during school holidays. They should also look at what other local authority assets could be used to support children and families during school holidays.**

Holiday and childcare provision

Recommendation 3: Building from existing services, holiday club provision, with nutritious and culturally appropriate food as a core element, should be available for all children from low income families.

Local holiday club provision, available for children from low income households in every part of Scotland, should form the backbone of the overall holiday support package. Nutritious and culturally appropriate food should be a core element and this provision should help make the link for parents to access other forms of support.

Models of holiday food and activity provision

The Commission looked at a range of types of holiday provision, all of which had the provision of food and activities as a core part of their model. Some projects had also incorporated providing additional food for families for weekends/evenings through offering food bags or encouraging families to take any food that was leftover. Different children and families value different things from holiday provision: for some food will be most important, for others play and activities, and for others a chance to socialise with other families.

'I go to a club at my school every week [during the summer holidays]. There is football, games and activities like computing. I like playing football with my friends.'

Imagineer, Children's Parliament

The parents we spoke to emphasised the importance to them of getting to spend time with other parents so they were not isolated. Parents told us that it was good to have activities where all the children in the family could be together, whatever their age, as otherwise it could be difficult to attend. However, they also liked options for older children to have some separate activities so that brothers and sisters could get a break from each other. Some projects that we spoke to told us that requiring parents to come along might mean that some of the children most in need of their support might not be able to attend.

'I needed to have activities for both routine and it was good having a healthy meal twice a week. That saved us money.'

Parent, OPFS

Parents talked about the importance of having a routine and the difficulties when school-based activities and other term time activities stop during the holidays. Holiday projects that are an expansion of existing provision, such as after school or term-time community activities, are valuable for families because they are already familiar and safe and those running them are likely to be more aware of families' needs. Opportunities to build on existing term-time programmes, activities, or out of school care should be explored. For example, it was suggested to the Commission that the existing network of Active School co-ordinators providing term-time activities could potentially be more involved in developing co-ordinated holiday provision.

Some children and young people may need more specifically designed, or more intense, support to meet their needs. This may provide a continuation of support provided during term-time.

It is important that there continues to be a range of models and providers as different children and families have different needs from holiday provision. These models should have nutritious and culturally appropriate food at their centre.

Further recommendation:

- **There are different models of provision, which suit different circumstances and come with different costs. Local authorities and their partners should ensure that families are involved in designing provision to meet the range of needs in their area. This should include appropriate provision for children with additional support needs.**

Access to provision

The Commission has seen examples of universal provision available to all children living in a particular area and targeted provision for those receiving free school meals or meeting other specified criteria. There are advantages and disadvantages of both approaches. It should be open to local areas and providers, in partnership with families, to decide whether a targeted or universal service is preferable, with the key principle being finding the best way to ensure that the families who would benefit most are able to access it and doing so in a dignified way. Any targeted provision should be delivered in a way that is non-stigmatising.

The take-up and impact of holiday provision should be monitored and evaluated to ensure that it is reaching and benefiting those who most need it, particularly those who are not engaged with other services. Some families may find it more difficult to access suitable provision, for example, families with disabled children, families living in rural areas, black and minority ethnic families, families with English as an additional language, or low income families living in areas with low levels of deprivation. Specific consideration should be given to developing provision that meets the needs of these families.

In developing holiday club provision the needs of families with children who are not yet school age but who may also face additional pressures during the school holiday periods should be taken into account. Opportunities for co-ordinating provision for younger and school-age children, or for linking to other services and support should be considered.

Transport was a critical issue for many of the parents we spoke to who needed something available in their local area, because they could not afford bus fares or bus services were too unreliable.

‘Things would be easier if transport costs were cheaper’
Parent, OPFS

Some of the holiday providers we spoke to also recognised the importance of accessibility and transport. While it will not always be possible to have something available in walking distance, some of the holiday programmes provided transport to collect and drop off children to enable them to attend.

Further recommendation:

- **Transport requirements should be considered as part of holiday club provision.**

Care Inspectorate registration

There is a lack of clarity about whether holiday clubs need to be registered with the Care Inspectorate where their purpose is not childcare. Some holiday programmes feel that they are restricted to only running for a couple of hours a day because they

are not registered with the Care Inspectorate while others run for longer on the basis that their purpose is to provide activities and food, rather than childcare. It would be helpful to provide holiday programmes with clarity about this.

Further recommendation:

- **The Scottish Government should work with the Care Inspectorate to clarify issues around whether registration is required for holiday provision.**

Volunteer opportunities

Some models may also provide volunteering opportunities for parents, young people, or other members of the community, which can support them to develop skills and experience to help them into work. Volunteers we spoke to told us that they enjoyed volunteering and it helped them avoid becoming isolated during the holidays. The parents we spoke to valued the work of the volunteers but also stressed that it was important to have paid workers to provide stability and reliability.

Holiday childcare

A survey by the Family and Childcare Trust found that parents in Scotland pay on average £124.44 a week for holiday childcare and that many local authorities did not have data to tell them whether there was sufficient holiday childcare available for different groups of children in their area.⁸ The Commissioners did not have a chance to visit any examples of holiday childcare provision that were specifically designed to meet the needs of low income working parents for low cost childcare, and it is not clear to what extent this is available.

Lack of availability of affordable holiday childcare can restrict parents' ability to work. Research by the Child Poverty Action Group in Glasgow⁹ found that three quarters of parents who responded relied on family for informal childcare during holidays and almost half (45%) relied on friends. Fourteen percent had reduced their working hours and 37% had changed their working hours to manage childcare. 14% said that caring for children during the holidays either reduced or stopped job seeking activities such as attending interviews and completing applications. Half of parents responding felt that affordable childcare would reduce difficulties during the holidays. Organisations working with families in Glasgow also suggested that some children across the city were going unsupervised during school holidays due to unaffordable or unavailable childcare.

The Scottish Government has committed to assessing the availability of after school and holiday childcare provision this year and to publishing a new strategic framework by the end of this Parliament. Further work is required to look at the impact of holiday

⁸ Cottell, J. & Fiaferana, K. (2018) *Holiday Childcare Survey 2018*, Family and Childcare Trust <https://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/holiday-childcare-survey-2018>

⁹ Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland (2015) *The Cost of the School Holidays* <http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-Scot-Cost-School-Holidays-full%20report.pdf>

childcare availability and affordability on parents with low incomes. The new strategic framework should be linked with the overall 'school holiday' programme and take account of the other work around school holidays.

The new strategic framework should look at opportunities to co-ordinate provision of both childcare and holiday clubs so that parents are clear about the full range of options that are available and that gaps can be identified. Some local authorities currently offer options where free holiday club provision for children from low-income families is also available for families who are able to pay so that it can be used as childcare. More provision like this could increase options for parents and reduce perceptions of stigma around holiday provision for children from low income families.

Holiday childcare could also be a focus of the intensive employment support programme that can look at tailored support for parents.

Further recommendations:

- **The Scottish Government assessment of afterschool and holiday childcare availability should also look at affordability and at any evidence about the impact of availability and affordability on parents' opportunities to work.**
- **The new strategic framework for out of school care should connect to the school holiday programme and should look particularly at opportunities for combining free holiday club provision with paid-for childcare.**
- **The Scottish Government should explore how the new intensive employment support programme for parents can take account of holiday childcare.**

Young people

School holiday provision for high school age young people has been identified as a gap by many of the people with whom the Commission has spoken. Families face many of the same financial and other issues as with younger children, but there seems to be little targeted provision in many areas. Part of the reason for this is likely to be the reluctance of young people to attend organised provision and the increasing sense of stigma about poverty felt by children as they get older. We did hear, however, about some programmes that seemed to be connecting well with young people around activities such as football, dance and cooking classes. Holiday provision that is a continuation of existing term-time activities for young people may also be more successful in connecting with young people.

More could be done to try to meet the needs of these children and young people for food and activities. Direct financial transfers could be particularly relevant here. The existing pilot to use the Young Scot National Entitlement Card to provide targeted additional support, incentives and rewards to children and young people affected by poverty, potentially provides another opportunity to provide additional benefits to

young people during school holidays. This could include access to food or activities and could be provided in conjunction with businesses.

Further recommendations:

- **The Scottish Government and local authorities should look at how the needs of young people can be met during school holidays and what can be learnt from existing provision that is being used by young people.**
- **The Scottish Government should look at what opportunities there may be to use the Young Scot National Entitlement Card to provide targeted additional support.**

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Financial Support

Recommendation 1: The Scottish Government should introduce an additional cash benefit during school holiday periods in recognition of the additional costs that families face. The amount should be set at a level that at least matches the equivalent costs of school meals.

Further recommendation

- Scottish Government funding for financial and related advice services should specify that services must demonstrate how their delivery can contribute to addressing the issues for families relating to school holidays.

Co-ordinated approach to school holiday support

Recommendation 2: The Scottish Government, COSLA and local authorities should work together to take a strategic approach to developing and funding a coordinated package of school holiday support that addresses the full range of pressures faced by families with low incomes.

Further recommendations

- The Scottish Government should identify someone to take a role co-ordinating Scottish Government policy relating to school holidays.
- Each local authority should take responsibility for strategic co-ordination of action around school holidays in their area, and of holiday club provision in particular. This should build on existing provision and encourage collaboration between providers.
- Scottish Government, COSLA and local authorities should take a more co-ordinated approach to existing sources of funding and looking at what additional funding may be required.
- Local authorities should explore what options there are to improve access to school buildings and other appropriate local authority venues during school holidays. They should also look at what other local authority assets could be used to support children and families during school holidays.

Holiday and childcare provision

Recommendation 3: Building from existing services, holiday club provision, with nutritious and culturally appropriate food as a core element, should be available for all children from low income families.

Further recommendations

Models of provision

- There are different models of provision, which suit different circumstances and come with different costs. Local authorities and their partners should ensure that families are involved in designing provision to meet the range of needs in their area. This should include appropriate provision for children with additional support needs.

Access to provision

- Transport requirements should be considered as part of holiday club provision.

Care Inspectorate registration

- The Scottish Government should work with the Care Inspectorate to clarify issues around whether registration is required for holiday provision.

Holiday childcare

- The Scottish Government assessment of afterschool and holiday childcare availability should also look at affordability and at any evidence about the impact of availability and affordability on parents' opportunities to work.
- The new strategic framework for out of school care should connect to the school holiday programme and should look particularly at opportunities for combining free holiday club provision with paid-for childcare.
- The Scottish Government should explore how the new intensive employment support programme for parents can take account of holiday childcare.

Young people

- The Scottish Government and local authorities should look at how the needs of young people can be met during school holidays and what can be learnt from existing provision that is being used by young people.
- The Scottish Government should look at what opportunities there may be to use the Young Scot National Entitlement Card to provide targeted additional support.

Annex

The Commission would like to thank the following organisations and individuals for their assistance with this work.

Achieve More! Scotland

Children in Scotland

Children's Parliament – Aberdeen Imagineers

CPAG Scotland

COSLA

Cyrenians

Dalmarnock Primary School

East Renfrewshire Council

Fife Council

Lindsay Graham, Independent Food Policy Advisor

Happy Days Community Hub, Fife

Lynn Hendry

Martin Johnstone, Independent Working Group on Food Poverty

Menu for Change

North Lanarkshire Club 365

One Parent Families Scotland

Scottish Out of School Care Network

YMCA Edinburgh

We would like to thank the Aberdeen Imagineers (Children's Parliament) for letting us use their summer holiday picture in our report.

