



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
Working better with you

## DECISION BOOK

**Issue: 629      Date: 15 APRIL 2021**

Decisions set out in the book have been made under delegated powers by the Chief Executive, Executive Directors or the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer, in consultation either with the relevant committee or Lead Councillor.

The Decision Book process has been altered to suspend the current Councillors' call-in arrangements within the 10-day period after its publication and replace it with the ability during that period for three Councillors to request a retrospective review of the decision in writing to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

The decision book can be accessed on the Council's website - <https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/mgListOfficerDecisions.aspx?bcr=1&BAM=0>

The officer reports accompanying the decisions are attached.

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## DECISION BOOK - ISSUE 629 - 15 APRIL 2021

### 1. HOLIDAY ACTIVITY FUND

<u>DECISION</u>	<u>LEAD COUNCILLOR(S)</u>	<u>WARDS AFFECTED</u>	<u>PAGE NO.</u>
1. HOLIDAY ACTIVITY FUND	COUNCILLOR BROCK	BOROUGHWIDE	1

This report sets out the decision to implement a Holiday Activity Fund programme.

It is the decision of the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council that a Holiday Activity Fund in respect of residents meeting the following criteria is introduced:

Phase 1 Summary, further information in section 5.3

- (a) A targeted scheme of free, enriching holiday activities and healthy food for families with school age children eligible for Pupil Premium Free School Meals during the Easter 2021 school holidays

Phases 2 & 3 Summary, further information in section 5.3

- (a) A targeted scheme of free, enriching holiday activities and healthy food for families with school age children eligible for Pupil Premium Free School Meals during school's Summer and Christmas holidays up to 31 December 2021

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR BROCK - LEADER OF THE COUNCIL		
DATE:	15 APRIL 2021		
TITLE:	HOLIDAY ACTIVITY FUND		
SERVICE:	BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR CHILDREN	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
AUTHOR:	VICKY RHODES	TEL:	0118 937 2998
JOB TITLE:	DIRECTOR OF EARLY HELP AND PREVENTION	E-MAIL:	<a href="mailto:Vicky.Rhodes@brighterfuturesforchildren.org">Vicky.Rhodes@brighterfuturesforchildren.org</a>

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the decision to implement a Holiday Activity Fund programme.
- 1.2 On 8 November 2020, the government announced that the holiday activities and food programme will be expanded across the whole of England in 2021. The programme has provided healthy food and enriching activities to disadvantaged children since 2018. The programme will cover the Easter, summer and Christmas school holidays in 2021.
- 1.3 School holidays can be particular pressure points for some families because of increased costs (such as food and childcare) and reduced incomes. For some children that can lead to a holiday experience gap, with children from disadvantaged families:
  - less likely to access organised out-of-school activities
  - more likely to experience ‘unhealthy holidays’ in terms of nutrition and physical health
  - more likely to experience social isolation
- 1.4 Free holiday clubs are a response to this issue and evidence suggests that they can have a positive impact on children and young people and that they work best when they:
  - provide consistent and easily accessible enrichment activities
  - cover more than just breakfast or lunch
  - involve children (and parents) in food preparation
- 1.5 Funding for the scheme was confirmed on 07 February 2021, and local authorities are expected to have arrangements in place to administer the scheme by early March. The scheme will last until 31 December 2021.

- 1.6 The aim is to provide enriching activities and healthy food available to children eligible for free school meals for the equivalent of at least 4 hours a day, 4 days a week, 6 weeks a year.
- 1.7 The funding covers 4 weeks in the summer and a week's worth of provision in each of the Easter and Christmas holidays. DfE expect that food, not vouchers, are provided as part of a programme of enriching activities. Regional DfE discussions indicate an expectation that most Easter programme will be delivered virtually.
- 1.8 The Department for Education will provide funding to County Councils and Unitary Authorities (including Metropolitan Councils and London Boroughs), under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, who will administer the scheme and provide assistance to vulnerable families with children.
- 1.9 The £220 million for the scheme is a fixed envelope that will not be topped up. Reading's share of the £220 million is £501,050
- 1.10 The Government have set some national criteria for the funds but are allowing local authorities to determine local implementation of the scheme.
- 1.11 This report sets out the national guidance and proposed offer to Reading residents, taking into consideration demand, economic need and consistency with our neighbouring authorities
- 1.12 An Equality Impact Assessment for these proposals has been carried out and is set out in Appendix One.

## **2. DECISION**

**2.1 It is the decision of the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council that a Holiday Activity Fund in respect of residents meeting the following criteria is introduced:**

**Phase 1 Summary, further information in section 5.3**

**(a) A targeted scheme of free, enriching holiday activities and healthy food for families with school age children eligible for Pupil Premium Free School Meals during the Easter 2021 school holidays**

**Phases 2 & 3 Summary, further information in section 5.3**

**(a) A targeted scheme of free, enriching holiday activities and healthy food for families with school age children eligible for Pupil Premium Free School Meals during school's Summer and Christmas holidays up to 31 December 2021**

## **Appendix 1 - Equality Impact Assessment**

### **3. POLICY CONTEXT**

#### **NATIONAL GUIDANCE AND CRITERIA**

- 3.1 The guidance sets out the required collaboration between Department of Education, including their delivery partners, such as District Councils and charitable organisations, etc., to successfully meet the policy intentions within the agreed framework. It also provides any constraints that need to be worked within and the distribution of funding and reporting arrangements.
- 3.2 Authorities have the local ties and knowledge, making them best placed to identify and help those children and families most in need.
- 3.3 On 19 November draft guidance was issued to Local Authorities, and although discretion has been given to produce a local scheme, there are requirements on the allocation of funding as defined by a framework set out at 3.5 below in relation to the children and families that can receive support from this fund and the type of support the money can be used for.
- 3.4 The Guidance indicates Local authorities are required to target this support to children eligible for benefit related free school meals. Authorities can request applications for support or can proactively identify households who may benefit or can take a combination of the two approaches. In accordance with their general legal duties, Authorities must have a clear rationale or documented policy/framework outlining their approach including how they are defining eligibility and how households access the scheme.
- 3.5 Awards must be based on the following framework:
  - 100% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to support households with children eligible for free school meals.
  - The provision needs to include food and food preparation, as opposed to vouchers. Activities need to meet school meals standards<sup>[Y11]</sup>. Activities can be delivered virtually in Easter 2021, but must include a focus on nutrition and healthy diet
  - It is important that Authorities develop overall policies appropriate for their areas, and proportionate procedures, for the allocation of the grant monies by reference to the above criteria.

#### **4. SCOPE OF FUNDING**

- 4.1 Authorities are directed to support children as detailed in the guidance. Authorities can extend provision to parents able to pay. They should use the funding from March 2021 up to the end of December 2021 to meet needs as defined in the guidance.

#### **5. HOLIDAY ACTIVITY FUND PROPOSED BY READING**

- 5.1 The £220 million funding has been dispersed according to the population of each authority, weighted by a function of the English Index of Multiple Deprivation. Indicative grant allocation for Reading, subject to final approval by HM Treasury, is £501,050, spend will need to be managed to ensure enough funds are available for the duration of the 10-month scheme.

5.2 The funding provided will allow for targeted support for vulnerable children and families.

5.3 The Council propose to utilise the grant in 3 phases:

**Phase 1**

*February/March 2021*

- Recruitment of HAF Coordinator
- Issue of specification to providers to express an interest in delivering part/all of the Easter Holiday scheme.
- Establish steering group
- Cross reference census data to identify the SEND/ Short breaks children
- Create web-based form for parents to register interest in Easter activities
- Evaluation of applications and release of grant funding to local community groups to extend existing capacity for food support
- Liaise with neighbouring LAs to clarify support for Reading FSM<sup>[YJ2]</sup>

**Phase 2**

*April- September 2021*

- Review take up of Easter programme
- Submit DfE return
- Refine specification and seek interest from the market to deliver Summer Programme
- Identify in-house capacity to deliver aspects of Summer programme with focus on 14+ age group<sup>[YJ3]</sup>
- Monthly steering group meetings to identify areas for adding value/capacity building local services
- Communicate with schools and parents<sup>[YJ4]</sup> (and seek feedback from children and young people)
- Deliver Summer Programme

**Phase 3**

*October to December 2021*

- Review take up of Summer Programme
- Submit DfE return

Brighter Futures for Children will administer the scheme on behalf of the Council.

5.4 To ensure the support reaches families known to be vulnerable, the process will identify eligible recipients through existing data.

5.5 The scheme will end on 31 December 2021. Eligible cohorts will be reviewed after each school holiday to ensure newly eligible families are included.

5.6 Brighter Futures for Children will confirm eligibility through school census/data.

**6. APPEALS**

6.1 Discretionary Support Schemes are not subject to any formal statutory appeals process and therefore there are no appeal rights.

**7. FRAUD**

7.1 The Council will not accept deliberate manipulation and fraud - and any resident caught falsifying their records to gain a support will face prosecution and any

payment issued will be subject to claw back, as will any payments paid in error.

- 7.2 One of the biggest risks for this scheme is impersonation fraud, where fraudsters work through a residential area and falsely claim under the names of eligible recipients. Risk has been reduced by a targeted scheme to eligible families.
- 7.3 To help mitigate this risk, BfC are proactively contacting families with eligible children in advance the Easter scheme. The programme will not include any vouchers or cash payments. Children will need to attend activities for families to receive food parcels/hampers
- 7.4 Authorities wishing to work with Third Party Organisations to deliver the scheme must carry out suitable due diligence checks to ensure they are viable and able to deliver the support. So, for example, ensuring all charities are registered and<sup>[YJS]</sup> taking extra caution if they are new organisations.
- 7.5 Authorities are also encouraged to ensure checks are in place to verify the identity of those eligible

## **8. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

- 8.1 This proposal will contribute to the following key priority set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2018-21:

Protecting and enhancing the lives of vulnerable adults and children:

To ensure every vulnerable person is safe and can achieve their potential and aspirations. Our priorities for vulnerable adults are to promote independent living, manage the rising demand for services, and strengthen our working relationships with partners in the health, education and voluntary sectors.

## **9. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 None to note.

## **10. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

- 10.1 Communications appropriate to a targeted scheme will be promoted on respective websites. There will be minimal social media promotion to mitigate any potential risks of fraudulent claims.

## **11. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 11.1 A Full Equality Impact Assessment is set out at Appendix 1.

## **12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 None to note

## **13. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 The cost of these payments will be met by Central Government, the Holiday Activity Fund is ring-fenced and any unspent funding will need to be repaid to DfE.

- 13.2 Once funds are exhausted, there is no top up available, the scheme will end, this may be earlier than 31 December 2021 depending on demand.
- 13.3 The RBC allocation is £501,050. The funding ends 31st December 2021. Funding will be released in tranches following submission of required management information.
- 13.6 After removing administration costs for the scheme, as shown below a, maximum of £450,945 is available to support activities for children eligible for Pupil Premium Free School Meals.
- 13.7 Projected calculations include a weighting of the Fund towards the summer holidays when direct support is more feasible:

<b>Food and Activities</b>		
Easter		£56,368
Summer		£338,209
Christmas		£56,368
Coordination /Admin Fees		£50,105
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£501,050</b>

13.8 Payments will be made by Department for Education at the following milestones:

- a. In March 2021 (the 2020-21 allocation listed in Annex A), upon satisfactory receipt of a delivery plan from the Authority by 26 February 2021 setting out the intended scale and reach of their programme for Easter 2021;
- b. In June 2021 (up to 50% of the 2021-22 allocation), upon satisfactory receipt of a report by 14 May 2021 detailing the delivery of their programme at Easter 2021 along with a delivery plan for Summer 2021;
- c. In November 2021 (up to 30% of the 2021-22 allocation), upon satisfactory receipt of a report by 15 October detailing the delivery of the programme at Summer 2021 along with a delivery plan for Christmas 2021;
- d. In February 2022 (up to 20% of the 2021-22 allocation), upon satisfactory receipt of a report by 29 January detailing the delivery of the programme at Christmas 2021 along with final report for the whole 2021 programme and a certificate of expenditure/statement of grant usage.

13.9 The Holiday Activity Programme funding allocation includes reasonable administration costs to enable Authorities to deliver the scheme. Authorities should deduct their estimated administration costs from the total allocation to determine the amount remaining. DfE have indicated that 10% of the grant is reasonable for this programme.

## 14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

### 14.1 Grant Determination



# Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

For advice on this document please contact Clare Muir on 72119 or email [Claire.Muir@reading.gov.uk](mailto:Claire.Muir@reading.gov.uk).

Please contact the Project Management Office at [pmo@reading.gov.uk](mailto:pmo@reading.gov.uk) for advice and/or support to complete this form from a project perspective.

Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed: Holiday Activity Fund  
 Directorate: BfC  
 Service:

Name: Vicky Rhodes  
 Job Title: Director of Early Help  
 Date of assessment: 22.02.2021

## Version History

Version	Reason	Author	Date	Approved By

## Scope your proposal

- **What is the aim of your policy or new service/what changes are you proposing?**
- 

- 1.1 On 8 November 2020, the government announced that the holiday activities and food programme will be expanded across the whole of England in 2021. The programme has provided healthy food and enriching activities to disadvantaged children since 2018. The programme will cover the Easter, summer and Christmas school holidays in
  - 1.2 School holidays can be particular pressure points for some families because of increased costs (such as food and childcare) and reduced incomes. For some children that can lead to a holiday experience gap, with children from disadvantaged families:
    - less likely to access organised out-of-school activities
    - more likely to experience ‘unhealthy holidays’ in terms of nutrition and physical health
    - more likely to experience social isolation
  - 1.3 Funding for the scheme was confirmed on 07 February 2021, and local authorities are expected to have arrangements in place to administer the scheme by early March. The scheme will last until 31 December 2021
  - 1.4 The aim is to provide enriching activities and healthy food available to children eligible for free school meals for the equivalent of at least 4 hours a day, 4 days a week, 6 weeks a year.
  - 1.5 The Department for Education will provide funding to County Councils and Unitary Authorities (including Metropolitan Councils and London Boroughs), under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, who will administer the scheme and provide assistance to vulnerable families with children
  - 1.6 The £220 million for the scheme is a fixed envelope that will not be topped up. Reading’s share of the £220 million is £501,050
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- **Who will benefit from this proposal and how?**

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The funding is intended to benefit children eligible for pupil premium free school meals will benefit from free enriching activities during school holidays

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- **What outcomes does the change aim to achieve and for whom?**

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The scheme seeks to ensure eligible children can attend free holiday activity provision, with a focus on healthy eating, nutrition and physical activity.

The targeted nature of the scheme removes the need for families/professionals to make an application for support.

The funding does not enable support to other vulnerable children, but local schemes are encouraged to develop plans that add value to the funding which may include fee-paying families.

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- **Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?**

Families with children who are eligible for pupil premium free school meals. They will want easily accessible, locally based activities that are engaging and enriching.

Schools. Head Teachers want to ensure support reaches families who will benefit most. Schools are supporting contacting eligible families to promote take-up

## Assess whether an EqlA is Relevant

How does your proposal relate to eliminating discrimination; advancing equality of opportunity; promoting good community relations?

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- Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some (racial, disability, sex, gender, sexuality, age and religious belief) groups may be affected differently than others? Make reference to the known demographic profile of the service user group, your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc.

No The scheme is targeted to ensure it reaches those most in need. School census data ensures families previously means tested are reached.

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- Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Make reference to your complaints, consultation, feedback, media reports locally/nationally.

No (delete as appropriate)

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If the answer is **Yes** to any of the above, you need to do an Equality Impact Assessment.

If **No** you **MUST** complete this statement.

**An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant because:**

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The scheme is targeted, using data to evidence families who require support.

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Completing Officer: Vicky Rhodes

Lead Officer:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Glassbrook'.

## Assess the Impact of the Proposal

Your assessment must include:

- **Consultation**
- **Collection and Assessment of Data**
- **Judgement about whether the impact is negative or positive**

Think about who does and doesn't use the service? Is the take up representative of the community? What do different minority groups think? (You might think your policy, project or service is accessible and addressing the needs of these groups, but asking them might give you a totally different view). Does it really meet their varied needs? Are some groups less likely to get a good service?

How do your proposals relate to other services - will your proposals have knock on effects on other services elsewhere? Are there proposals being made for other services that relate to yours and could lead to a cumulative impact?

**Example:** A local authority takes separate decisions to limit the eligibility criteria for community care services; increase charges for respite services; scale back its accessible housing programme; and cut concessionary travel.

Each separate decision may have a significant effect on the lives of disabled residents, and the cumulative impact of these decisions may be considerable.

This combined impact would not be apparent if decisions are considered in isolation.

### Consultation

How have you consulted with or do you plan to consult with relevant groups and experts. If you haven't already completed a Consultation form do it now. The checklist helps you make sure you follow good consultation practice.

[Consultation manager form - Reading Borough Council Dash](#)

Relevant groups/experts	How were/will the views of these groups be obtained	Date when contacted

## Collect and Assess your Data

Using information from Census, residents survey data, service monitoring data, satisfaction or complaints, feedback, consultation, research, your knowledge and the knowledge of people in your team, staff groups etc. describe how the proposal could impact on each group. Include both positive and negative impacts.

(Please delete relevant ticks)

- Describe how this proposal could impact on racial groups
  - Is there a negative impact? Yes / No / Not sure
- 

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- Describe how this proposal could impact on Sex and Gender identity (include pregnancy and maternity, marriage, gender re-assignment)
  - Is there a negative impact? Yes / No / Not sure
- 

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- Describe how this proposal could impact on Disability
  - Is there a negative impact? Yes / No / Not sure
-

- Describe how this proposal could impact on Sexual orientation (cover civil partnership)
  - Is there a negative impact? Yes / No / Not sure
- 
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- Describe how this proposal could impact on age
  - Is there a negative impact? Yes / No / Not sure
- 
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- Describe how this proposal could impact on Religious belief
  - Is there a negative impact? Yes / No / Not sure
- 
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## Make a Decision

If the impact is negative then you must consider whether you can legally justify it. If not you must set out how you will reduce or eliminate the impact. If you are not sure what the impact will be you **MUST** assume that there could be a negative impact. You may have to do further consultation or test out your proposal and monitor the impact before full implementation.

(Delete numbers below which don't apply)

- 1. No negative impact identified - Go to sign off**
- 2. Negative impact identified but there is a justifiable reason**

You must give due regard or weight but this does not necessarily mean that the equality duty overrides other clearly conflicting statutory duties that you must comply with.

- 3. Negative impact identified or uncertain**

What action will you take to eliminate or reduce the impact? Set out your actions and timescale

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- **How will you monitor for adverse impact in the future?**
- 
-



X

X

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Completing Officer

Lead Officer