FIT, FED AND READ 2019

Programme Evaluation Research Report

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Glossary

Sport: This covers both traditional sport, such as invasion games, and leisure-time physical activity, for example, running and skipping.

List of Abbreviations

ADHD: Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder

BAME: Black, Asian and minority ethnic

HSP: Herts Sports Partnership. This is the Active Partnership for the county of Hertfordshire, UK.

PA: Physical activity

SDGs: The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

SfD: Sport for development

UH: University of Hertfordshire. This is the University undertaking this research evaluation report

UN: United Nations

Executive Summary

Fit, Fed and Read is a sport for development project that focuses on providing holiday programmes for primary school children (7-12 years old) who are eligible for free school meals. The focus is on providing physical activity options, a healthy meal (and healthy eating advice), in addition to supporting literacy development.

The project that was evaluated for this report ran across 10 sites in Hertfordshire during four weeks of the 2019 summer holidays (on four days per week).

The aims for this project were:

1.   Increase knowledge & consumption of healthier foods (holiday hunger)

2.   Increase physical activity levels (holiday inactivity)

3.   Reduce feelings of isolation (holiday isolation)

4.   Improve wellbeing and self-efficacy in young people

5.   Reduce the educational attainment decline over the summer break

6.   Increase families' awareness of local provision to enhance the long-term sustainability of the proposed improved life outcomes.

The evaluation study undertook research to explore four of these aims (1, 2, 5 and 6), using two types of methods: free drawings and focus groups. Firstly, children across all 10 sites were asked to draw their most and least favourite part of the programme and provide a short, written explanation of their drawings.

Focus groups with parents took place at five sites in the final week of the programme, asking them to reflect on their children's experiences and their own thoughts of the programme. The methods used in this study are explained in further detail in Section 2 on page 10.

The results are presented in five sections, to reflect the key components of the programme and its aims. A summary of the results from both sets of data are shown below, with more detailed results in Section 3 on page 15.

- **Physical Activity (PA)**
  - The children largely enjoyed undertaking the physical activity sessions. However there were discrepancies between sports/PA that were, and were not, enjoyed e.g. an activity that was enjoyed by some children, was not enjoyed by others.
  - Most of the children were physically active before the programme.
  - The programme had a positive impact on a few of the children e.g. some increased PA levels during the programme.

- **Food**
  - The feedback on the catering company was positive, with the children largely enjoying the meals and the parents happy with the variety and quality of the food.
  - The programme had a positive impact on a small proportion of the children during the programme, with some diversifying the type of healthy food consumed e.g. trying new fruit.
  - The food boxes were popular but did not appear to achieve its' intended outcome. The contents tended to either not make it home or were eaten on the day.
  - There was mixed feedback regarding the financial impact on food bills over the holiday period. A few parents felt it substantially eased the financial burden of food shopping. Others felt that by reducing food bills, it enabled the saved money to be spent on paying for other activities, such as day trips, outside of the programme.

- **Mood**
  - Some parents reported that their child[ren]'s confidence had improved during the programme.
  - Parents whose children had behavioural/developmental disorders, such as ADHD, reported that their behaviour had improved over the programme's duration.

- **Literacy**
    - There were mixed reports for the literacy aspect of the programme. The parents largely felt this was a good aspect of the programme. Some of the children felt it was their favourite part of the programme, whilst others felt it was their least favourite part of the programme.
    - A couple of the parents felt their children's reading level and confidence had improved as a result of the library workshops.
    - Most parents reported that their children were already library members, but two families had become members as a result of the programme.

- **Education Attainment**
    - This section also resulted in mixed feedback. Approximately half of the parents felt their children were well engaged in school, whilst some reported that their children did not enjoy school.
    - In one project site, some of the children were not in formal education. Their parents felt the programme gave them confidence, improved their social skills and that attending a structured programme would help facilitate their return to formal schooling.

Section 1

Programme Context

Sport for development (SfD), where sport is used to try to influence wider societal issues, has becoming an increasingly integral aspect of the international and UK sports development industry. Furthermore, policymakers across different sectors are recognising its potential to help address various societal issues. For example, SfD has been identified as being able to positively contribute to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2015).

Programmes that focus on trying to use sport as a hook to enact social change include to increase educational attainment (Bailey, 2017), improve social cohesion/integration (United Nations, 2003), reduce anti-social behaviour (Sandford, Duncombe, & Armour, 2008), improve health (Gray et al., 2013) and reduce crime (Gallant, Sherry, & Nicholson, 2015).

Those from a low socio-economic status background are an important social group for SfD projects. Research suggests a higher proportion of people from these backgrounds are more likely to disengage with education and have a lifetime of poorer health than those from other socio-economic backgrounds (e.g. Pampel, Krueger & Denny, 2010; Ferguson, Bovaird, & Mueller, 2007).

This has become especially pertinent since austerity measures were introduced in the UK. Austerity actions, such as reduced public sector funding, were introduced in 2010, to reduce national debt (Parnell, Spracklen, & Millward, 2017), following an economic recession. Some scholars suggest that reduced public sector funding influenced some societal issues, such as higher levels of poverty and increased crime (Treadwell, 2018; Dagdeviren & Luz, 2019).

Research on austerity and perceived associated poverty has particularly focused on young people. It has been suggested that in the immediate term, poverty can result in holiday hunger and poor nutrition (Jolly, 2018), whilst in the medium and longer term, it can result in a decline in educational attainment (Pampel et al., 2010), when compared to their peers from higher socio-economic backgrounds.

To try to reduce these socio-economic differences, initiatives across various sectors (such as the arts, music, sport and theatre) have been developed, including using sport as a hook. The Fit, Fed and Read project evaluated in this report is an example of using sport as a hook to engage young people and to try to reduce these societal inequalities. This programme therefore aims to contribute towards the UN's SDGs (and associated targets and indictors) 1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger), 3 (good health and wellbeing), 4 (quality education) and 10 (reduced inequalities).

Programme Introduction

Fit, Fed and Read is a sport for development (SfD) project that focuses on providing holiday programmes for primary school children (7-12 years old) who are eligible for free school meals. The focus is on providing physical activity opportunities, a daily healthy meal (and healthy eating advice), in addition to supporting literacy attainment.

This project is led by the Herts Sports Partnership (HSP) and has a steering group, compromised of different delivery partners. These are the Fire and Rescue Service (who host the programme at their fire stations), Hertfordshire Catering Ltd (who provide the catering and healthy eating workshops), Hertfordshire Libraries (who provide the literacy element of the programme), Families First (who help with referrals for appropriate participants), and the University of Hertfordshire Coaching Staff (who provide the delivery staff for the programme).

The programme originates from the StreetGames' national Fit and Fed project to target holiday hunger. The Hertfordshire project has been funded by the Big Lottery for a three-year period (2019-2021). The project runs during two weeks in the Easter holidays and four weeks of the six-week summer holiday in July/August (on four days per week). It ran for a pilot year in 2018 across six sites and for the Big Lottery funded three-year period, it is running across 10 sites in the county. The project has won a number of local and national awards in its pilot and first year of operation.

More information on the project and its' partners can be found on the HSP website: https://sportinherts.org.uk/sport-for-social-change/fit-fed-read/

Research Background

In the pilot testing of the 2018 project, the HSP undertook an internal evaluation, focusing on demographic attendance data, children workbooks, parental survey and separate focus groups, whilst also seeking feedback from programme delivery, and HSP, staff. As this evaluation produced useful and insightful results (and contributed towards the successful funding of the current three-year project), it was determined to largely undertake the same type of data collection for the first year of the funded project. This research was undertaken for the summer holiday 2019 period only, due to resource constraints.

Two of the main data collection tools were workbooks and focus groups. The workbooks were completed by attending children on a daily basis. The books included general activities which were completed during partner sessions, such as the library and catering visits. The books also included questionnaires to understand the participants' dietary, physical activity and literary habits, in addition to their mood/feelings. The workbooks also included free drawing and colouring activities, such as drawing a healthy lunchbox, and drawing their favourite and least favourite part of the programme. The latter part of this workbook is provided in Appendix 2 on page 41.

The focus groups were conducted with participants' parents/carers in the final week of the programme. More detail on the research methods is provided overleaf in Section 2.

For this research report, results from the focus groups and the free drawing data in the workbooks will be presented and discussed.

Section 2

Research Methods & Aims

The research design for the 2019 programme was discussed by the HSP and lead researcher in early 2019, to be used as a pilot for the research strategy for the remainder of the project.

The aims for this project were to:

1. Increase knowledge & consumption of healthier foods (holiday hunger)
2. Increase physical activity levels (holiday inactivity)
3. Reduce feelings of isolation (holiday isolation)
4. Improve wellbeing and self-efficacy in young people
5. Reduce the educational attainment decline over the summer break
6. Increase families' awareness of local provision to enhance the long-term sustainability of the proposed improved life outcomes.

The evaluation study undertook research to explore four of these aims: 1, 2, 5 and 6.

Focus groups

Data collection: The focus groups took place in the final week of the programme, to ensure the parental views of the full programme were able to be considered. As these project sites were spread throughout the county, it was deemed impractical to conduct this research at all ten sites. Thus, the focus groups took place at five of the sites, which were Baldock, Hatfield, St Albans, Stevenage and Watford. These were deliberately chosen to reflect the diversity of the programme, including the least and most socio-economically deprived; the most and least ethnically diverse; and the most rural and urban sites, to understand whether these factors influenced any of the potential project outcomes.

These groups took place in the project settings, in a small private room. All the discussions lasted for 60-90 minutes and were led by the researcher, with the HSP Project Manager, Will Slemmings, also in attendance. Eligible participants were parents/carers whose child/children attended the project at each site.

The research was approved by the University of Hertfordshire's Human Research Ethics Committee (LMS/SF/UH/03850). Parents were initially contacted by the project delivery

staff, who informed them about the research, gave them a participant information sheet, consent form and demographic questionnaire. Parents were further reminded about the data collection by delivery staff and were also informed by the lead researcher just prior to each respective focus group. Participants completed the consent form and demographic questionnaire before the discussions commenced.

Attending participants were given a £10 Tesco voucher, as a thank you for their time. The focus groups had 16 participants in total, with an average of four people per group (range of two to six participants). Due to a variance of parental/carer availability, some groups were conducted with two participants, whilst the others conformed to the recommended focus group participant attendance number. Although a two-participant focus group is lower than the recommended attendance figure, it was felt their views were still important to be considered, thus the data collection proceeded.

The focus group questions were adapted from the interview guide used in the pilot study, in partnership between the HSP and lead researcher. A copy of the interview guide is provided in Appendix 1 on page 38. These questions covered topics aligned with the project aims: Physical Activity, Eating, Mood, Literacy and Educational Attainment. There were also questions relating to process evaluation, namely the best aspects of the programme, potential suggestions to improve the programme, views on the venue and visits from external partners (such as the Police). The group discussions were audio recorded for accuracy.

It must be noted that the themes presented in this research report reflect the focus group participants only and may not reflect the thoughts of all parents/carers of children in the programme.

Data analysis: After each focus group, the lead researcher and Project Manager briefly discussed the main topics of discussion, as a form of member checking. Further to this, a research summary, detailing the key topics and also the behaviour/group dynamic of each focus group, was produced. This was shared and discussed with the Project Manager for accuracy, as an extra form of member checking.

The audio recordings were transcribed by the HSP and analysed by the lead researcher using thematic analysis, which involved grouping the main ideas that were discussed into similar

themes. The themes that emerged from the focus groups have been categorised into seven sections, largely reflective of the interview structure, as can be seen in the results section.

In each section, the main themes are presented first, followed by any minor themes which were briefly mentioned but provided an interesting perspective.

Study participants: Out of the 16 participants, 15 were female (14 were mothers, one was a grandmother), with one male parent. Their ages ranged from 27 to 64, with an average age of 41 years old. Eleven of the participants were White British, with five ranging from different ethnic minority backgrounds. The vast majority were unemployed (11), with two working part time, one retired whilst two identified as disabled.

Free drawing

Data collection: All children across the 10 project sites were given workbooks on their first day. As previously discussed, these included different activities, in addition to the data collection tools. It was originally discussed that data collection would include various free drawing/colouring activities, such as a healthy lunchbox, and what they felt constituted healthy eating.

However, upon analysing the data, it became clear that not all of the project sites consistently completed the workbooks. Furthermore, it was difficult to determine the meaning of some of the drawings/colourings, as they did not include written commentary and some of the content was unclear. To avoid mis-representing the participant data, it was decided that only the participants' free drawings of their favourite and least favourite aspects of the programmes would be included. It was further decided that only the drawings with written instruction on what the drawings meant would be included, again to avoid misrepresenting the data.

Data were not available from all participating children, as some left the project early and not all delivery staff requested participants to complete this part of the data collection. Therefore, the number of drawings considered for analysis were 51 of the favourite, and 45 of the least favourite, aspects of the programme across all ten sites.

It must be noted that the themes presented in this research report reflect the workbooks that were eligible for analysis and may not reflect the thoughts of all children who attended the programme.

Data analysis: The data were analysed using thematic analysis. The pictures were organised into different themes (such as physical activity sessions and interpersonal). There were six themes each for the most and least favourite aspects of the programmes. The main themes are presented first, followed by any minor themes which were briefly mentioned but provided an interesting perspective.

Study participants: Across the 10 project locations, 196 children attended the programme. The ages of the children ranged from 6-12 years old, with an average age of 8.94 years, whilst 60% of attendees were male and 40% female. Nearly a fifth (18%) of these children were classified as having a disability. Approximately 70% of children were identified as White British, with approximately 20% from a BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) background and 10% from other ethnic backgrounds.

Section 3

Focus group findings

The focus group themes have been separated into two sections: process and outcome evaluation, with the respective themes presented in each section. The main themes under each section are presented first, before the minor themes are presented.

Process evaluation

Participants were asked to discuss their impressions of the programme, what they thought worked well and also what could be improved.

What worked well

There was widespread consensus across all groups with the aspects that participants thought had worked well.

- All of them reported that their children **loved the programme**, with one stating "*it's been a godsend*" and another commenting "*it's been fabulous, they love coming. They rave about it and can't wait to get out of the house in the morning. They clock watch from half 7[am]*".

- Others, especially those whose children have varying behavioural/developmental disorders, felt the programme was **extremely beneficial** for their children.

- All were also extremely **complimentary about the venue**, with comments such as "*He [child] said 'best day ever!' I [parent] said 'better than Christmas?' He said 'yes!'*"; "*It's an ideal place*", with some parents commenting on the fire station staff: "*they are friendly*" and "*they love it, [child] is talking about how he wants to be a firefighter*".

- Another positive aspect that was commented on by nearly all the focus groups was the external visits, particularly the **Police visits**. One focus group specifically had a discussion on some of their children's previous non-programme experiences with police: "*we've had Police at the house, where [child] knows they're on our side, but [child] sits there and is scared of their presence…having the exposure here is a*

positive thing in trying to change [that perspective]"; "*I strongly believe if children have more interventions like this, then it helps massively*" and "*they're there to help you and I think they drummed into the kids, that we're not against you*" and other groups made comments such as: "*I think [child] has really enjoyed the police, especially the arresting part*" and that their children "*now got [sic] more respect for them*".

- A minor theme discussed was the structure of the programme. Some parents felt that the summer holiday **programme was more structured** than the Easter programme, which they felt worked well.

Suggested programme improvements

Whilst the parents were glowing in their praise for the programme, there were a number of discussions on how the programme could further improve. There was no overriding consensus on potential improvements, with some disagreement between different groups. For this topic, there were two main themes.

- Firstly, three groups felt there needed to be **better awareness and advertising** of the programme: "*I think it's a brilliant scheme. I think it's just a pity that more people who are in the same situation … aren't utilising it*".

- Another suggestion across three of the groups were to further engage with the Emergency Services, particularly with **Paramedics**, where the children could learn about CPR and basic first aid. One group suggested that as the HSP have a relationship with UH, it could be worth engaging with student Paramedics, which could be beneficial for both the children and university students.

- The **programme length** and **attendance requirements** were also discussed by a couple of groups, with no unanimity:
    - Two groups felt that the attendance requirements (that children registering for the programme had to commit to all four weeks) deterred some eligible participants, particularly those who had holidays booked or if they were due to visit their other parent during some stages of the holidays

- One group discussed the length of the daily sessions, stating that it would be beneficial to have longer daily sessions, whilst another group felt the programme should last for the full summer holiday period.

- There were some other interesting potential improvements. One participant suggested that the children could undertake some **food preparation/basic cooking**, to understand how to prepare healthy food and nutrition. Another suggested a visit to an **allotment** (this parent owns an allotment slot) to understand where healthy food comes from.

Outcome evaluation

Physical Activity (PA)

In the focus groups, parents were asked their thoughts on their child(ren)'s general physical activity and whether the physical activity element of the programme had impacted their children.

- Most of the children across the project sites were **generally physically active** outside of the programme. However there were a couple of children who could be classified as **less active**: "*[child] gets extremely bored at home. I can't convince him to go outside and do activities or fitness. He says he is allergic to fitness, so this has been good for his health and getting him up and about*".

- In relation to potential PA outcomes from this project, one parent said their two children were already active, but the **programme increased their physical activity levels**: "*because their friends are playing aren't they, so they are like 'ahh I'm going to miss out'*".

- Other parental feedback discussed the **inclusive nature** of the PA sessions: "*the exercise they encourage him to do, but it isn't forceful, which is good, whereas at school [it is forced]...here it is all just encouragement, which is nice and refreshing for them*".

- Across the project sites, there were a number of children who had behavioural/ developmental disorders, such as Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) and/or Asperger's Syndrome. One parent felt that the programme's PA sessions **wore their child out, which helped with their behaviour**: "*[child] is border line ADHD. So he is very active and this wears him out nicely for the day*".

Food

For this section, there were four questions. One of these covered any potential impacts of the weekly healthy eating workshops; another related to the family food pack that was given to the child participants every Thursday; any potential financial impact resulting from the programme feeding their children during the holiday period; and whether the holiday period affected their child[ren]'s eating patterns/routines.

- Across the focus groups, parents generally felt their children **already had quite healthy diets**. They all gave **positive feedback on the catering services** and felt the food provided was varied and nutritious: "*they love the meals here, because it's different every day*".

- Some of the participants reported **slight changes in their children's eating habits**.
    - Some participants reported that their children were now eating some new food: "*the other kids are eating it as well and seeing them eating it and enjoying it, sort of gives her the influence to try it*", and "*I think it's made them all willing to explore different foods*", and *"[child] has never touched peaches before, but now she has about 15 in the fridge. So they are picking stuff up here and bringing them home*"
    - Another participant reported their children were now actively looking for new fruit to try in the supermarket: "*she's now looking around for things down the fruit and veg aisle*".

For this summer holiday programme, **food packs** were introduced each week. These were given to the children every Thursday and were designed so that the families would have some food for Fridays and over the weekend (when they were not at the programme), in addition to recipe cards to help guide and educate families on healthy eating.

- From the focus groups, it would seem that this addition **did not achieve its intended outcome**. Some of the parents were unaware of these boxes, whilst others reported that the food was eaten within a couple of hours of leaving the programme each week: "*I think I've only seen one come home*", and "*yeah I've seen it but he's eaten it all himself*" and "*as soon as they get in the car, it's like swapsees*".

Finally, a significant aim of this project was to reduce holiday hunger. The parents were asked to describe any potential **financial impact** this programme had on feeding their children during the school holidays. There were **mixed thoughts** on this topic.

- Some parents felt that their children still **ate the same amount of food at home**, despite being fed at the programme.

- However some others felt it had been **hugely beneficial** for reducing food expenditure: "*especially during the summer holidays when you really are struggling moneywise to try and make sure that the kids are getting a healthy diet*".

- Some felt that the programme **helped financially as it kept their children entertained**, which reduced the need for the parents to pay for trips: "*it's helped me financially in the sense that I'm getting [child] out the house. I would have to plan loads of different days out, which obviously would've cost me loads of money*" and "*my shopping bill has halved these last four weeks and that's a big help cause [sic] I'm a carer for [child], as he is epileptic as well, so like the income isn't massive. So even four weeks of not having to buy that meal means we can afford to go do other things in the other two weeks…you know so it just takes the pressure off*".

Mood

Participants were asked two questions for this section: whether they had seen any changes to their child[ren]'s behaviour over the duration of the programme and whether they thought the programme influenced any potential changes. There were two clear themes in this section.

- A number of parents felt their children's **confidence had increased** as a result of attending the programme: "*she does get anxiety, whereas this place, she doesn't have that, she just comes along…she has got a lot more confidence and having a little group of friends, it helped her a lot, but we will see what changes when they go back [to school, where they have been bullied]*" and "*[child] has gained a lot of confidence…she is definitely mentally matured…she's more confident in playing, you know little things like when we go to the park, she won't just head for her age. She'll head for any age, anyone will do*".

- Four parents felt their **children's behaviour had improved**. These parents were discussing their children with ADHD: "*during this period when he is here, he's active, therefore he's not so frustrated, because he gets frustrated at home. He can get argumentative and get physically violent*" and "*I think he's channelled all his excess energy into this, whereas at home, he's sitting there getting wound up, because he doesn't know what to do. So yeah, [child] has definitely been different, bit calmer*".

- From the discussions, the programme also incidentally seemed to improve some of the **parents' mental health**, with one stating "*having him for four days, it takes the pressure off*", "*[its] made the holidays a lot more bearable*" and "*it's done them good, but it's also done me good*".

Literacy

For this section, questions were asked regarding the weekly library workshops. They were asked about their child[ren]'s previous reading habits, their thoughts about the workshops and whether these workshops may have an impact on the child and wider family throughout the year.

- Most parents reported that their children were either **current library members** and/or **enjoyed reading**. However there was some positive feedback about the impact of the workshops.

- Two parents stated that the workshops had **improved their children's reading skills** and that they had **gained reading confidence**: "*[child] is slowly getting into reading. He has delayed development, so he's a bit slower with the reading. He's just got into David Walliams book, so now he has found something he enjoys reading, we can keep him going along and going to the library will push him a little bit…someone [at the programme] was talking about them and [his sister] has got them, so he came and asked to borrow one of her books…he is sat in bed at night ready…he's up in bed giggling away to David Walliams*" and *"[child] all of a sudden started reading a lot more…I think it'll have a positive impact when she goes back to school because there will be a massive difference in her reading level*".

- Some of the parents stated they were **already library members** but **two have now joined the library**: "*It never occurred to me to sign up for a library because like I say, I buy books…when the kids came home and talked about it, I'm like, why didn't I do this before? It saves some money*" and "*we now have library cards…[child] is now too late for their reading challenge … but next holidays, they will be doing it*"

- One parent mentioned their children enjoyed the virtual reality section of the library, whilst another felt the library would now become a more approachable place for their children.

Educational Attainment

For this final section, participants were asked about their child[ren]'s engagement with education.

- There were mixed responses, as approximately half of the parents reported their children were **well engaged** in school, whilst some of the parents stated their children **did not enjoy school**: "*[child] was really worried about going to secondary school and making new friends. This has shown him how easy he can make new friends and is not as nervous about making new friends at school*".

- In one focus group, there were a number of parents whose **children were not in formal education**, for various reasons.
    - They all felt the programme had been **beneficial**: "*he's had time out of school…so this has been a godsend in the social aspect and obviously …the reading and physical activity has given him a routine*" and "*he's not actually in school, so it has been good for him coming here …[it has] stimulated his mind a lot and he has enjoyed it*"
    - One parent stated that their child was due back into formal education in that following academic year and that this programme was a good introduction into structured sessions, which they hoped would **get their child ready to re-enter school**.

Free drawing findings

At each of the 10 project sites, workbooks were completed by the child participants. These workbooks were then electronically scanned, and the data collection activities were reviewed for inclusion in this evaluation report. As previously discussed, the free drawings, where children depicted their favourite and least favourite part of the programme, were evaluated for this report.

Table 1 (below) provides a breakdown of the completed workbooks per project site, how many workbooks provided viable data to be included in the evaluation and reasons for their potential non-use. It is expected this table will guide future project implementation and research processes.

Site	Workbooks completed	Workbooks used in evaluation	Reasons for non-use	
Baldock	8	3	3	No drawings completed
			1	Had drawings but no explanation
			1	Had drawings & explanation but incomprehensible
Bishops Stortford	10	10	N/A	
Borehamwood	16	0	16	No drawings completed
Cheshunt	22	12	7	No drawings completed
			3	Had drawings & explanation but incomprehensible
Hatfield	18	0	18	No drawings completed
Hemel Hempstead	14	7	6	No drawings completed
			1	Had drawings but no explanation
Rickmansworth	10	0	10	No drawings completed
St Albans	10	6	4	No drawings completed
Stevenage	23	13	9	No drawings completed
			1	Had drawings & explanation but incomprehensible
Watford	22	0	22	No drawings completed
Total	132	51	**39%** of workbooks include viable data	

Table 1: Table of workbooks completed across all sites and reasons for inclusion in this report

Out of the 196 children who attended the programme, 132 completed the workbooks. As presented in Table 1, 51 of these workbooks were viable for data analysis and the results from these 51 workbooks are discussed below.

Altogether, there were 96 free drawings used for this evaluation. This included 51 drawings depicting the favourite aspect of the programme and 45 drawings of the least favourite aspect of the programme. Some of the participants drew two or more drawings per category, whilst some completed one category but not the other. All legible drawings, with comprehensible written descriptions, were included.

There may be a number of reasons why more participants did not complete this aspect of the workbook. For example, it may have been that a child did not attend the whole programme, may not have wanted to complete it or may not have been encouraged by delivery staff to complete. The reasons for this should be further explored to increase eligible data for future iterations of the programme evaluation.

Favourite parts of the programme

This data provided six distinct themes, which unsurprisingly largely follow the project aim categories. These themes are further discussed below.

The most dominant favourite aspect of the programme was the **physical activity** sessions. This was to be expected, as the project used sport as a hook to engage these participants. The children specified which sport they enjoyed the most, with dodgeball the overwhelming favourite (30 drawings). Other sports, including football, cricket, visiting the park and the 'Under the Sea' game were all popular with at least two participants. The drawing overleaf represents some of these feelings:

FooTbALL!
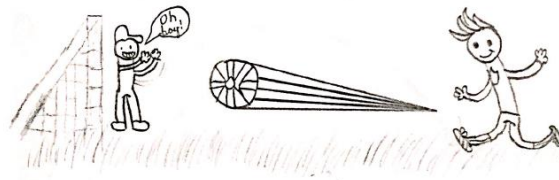
The remaining themes were all far less popular with participants, with only a few drawings for each of these themes. The next most popular aspect of the programme was **food**. There were five drawings depicting the smoothie bike, with a couple of participants enjoying the catering generally and one commented on enjoying the cereal bar:

Interpersonal benefits of the programme were also highlighted, with friendships being drawn. This included socialising with their friends, in addition to making new friends, as shown below:
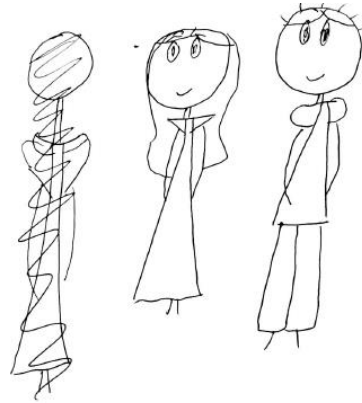
What have you drawn?
Megan + Liam

Other themes included visiting the **library**, the visits from **The Police** and also two participants highlighted the respective **fire stations**, for example sitting in the fire truck.

Least favourite parts of the programme

This data also provided six themes, which are generally similar to the most favourite aspects of the programme.

The overwhelmingly prominent theme was the **physical activity** sessions. There was no sport that was the obvious least favourite, with dodgeball and cricket receiving the highest number of drawings (four each), closely followed by football, Splat and volleyball. A number of other activities received one drawing each. Two examples of this theme, of cricket and football respectively, are shown below:

A number of participants reported that there was **no aspect** of the programme they enjoyed the least, whilst the literacy aspect, particularly the library visits, were not popular with four participants:
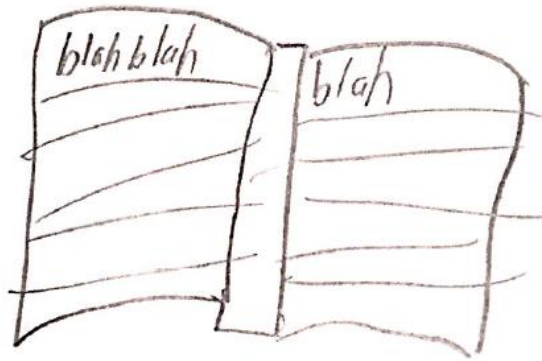
The other themes, **food**, **interpersonal** and **weather**, all received negligible mentions. For food, some children discussed some of the vegetables provided, whilst another did not like the smoothies. For interpersonal, some specifically mentioned one peer, whilst an argument and dislike of the other gender were also portrayed.

Section 4

Synthesis of findings and recommendations

There were a number of key concepts from the two sets of data, which are presented below.

- **Physical Activity (PA)**
  - The children largely enjoyed undertaking the physical activity sessions, though there were discrepancies between sports/PA that were (not) enjoyed e.g. some enjoyed some activities, some did not enjoy the same activities.

  - Most of the children were physically active before the programme.

  - The programme had a positive impact on a few of the children e.g. some increased PA levels during the programme.

- **Food**
  - The feedback on the catering company was positive, with the children largely enjoying the meals and the parents happy with the variety and quality of the food.

  - The programme had a positive impact on a small proportion of the children during the programme, with some diversifying the type of healthy food consumed e.g. trying new fruit.

  - The food boxes were popular but did not appear to achieve its' intended outcome. The contents tended to either not make it home or were eaten on the day they were provided.

  - There was mixed feedback regarding the financial impact on food bills over the holiday period. A couple of parents felt it substantially eased the financial burden of food shopping. Whilst others felt that by reducing food bills, it enabled the saved money to be spent on paying for other activities, such as day trips, outside of the programme.

- **Mood**
    - Some parents reported that their child[ren]'s confidence had improved during the programme.

    - Parents whose children had behavioural/developmental disorders, such as ADHD, reported that their behaviour had improved over the programme's duration.

- **Literacy**
    - There were mixed reports. The parents largely felt this was a good aspect of the programme. Some of the children felt it was their favourite part of the programme, whilst others felt it was their least favourite part of the programme.

    - A couple of the parents felt their children's reading level and their confidence had improved as a result of the library workshops.

    - Most parents reported that their children were already library members, but two families had become members as a result of the programme.

- **Educational Attainment**
    - This section also resulted in mixed feedback. Approximately half of the parents felt their children were engaged well in school, whilst some reported that their children did not enjoy school.

    - In one project site, some of the children were not in formal education. Their parents felt the programme gave them confidence, improved their social skills and that the structure would help facilitate their return to formal schooling.

Recommendations for future practice

When considering the four aims that this report evaluated, it appears that the programme largely aligns with the aims. Each of the programme's aims are now considered against the report's data, with respective recommendations provided for future programme iterations.

Aim 1: Increase knowledge and consumption of healthier foods

From the focus groups' feedback, it would appear that *most of the children already had a healthy lifestyle*. However, as this was discussed in a group setting, some parents may have felt reluctant to report otherwise. For a small minority of the children, the programme seemed to have positively increased their knowledge of healthy food and during this four-week period, had consumed a greater variety of healthy food.

However, there is a *paucity of feedback on this from the child participants*. Originally it was planned to include this feedback in an activity in the workbooks. However this idea needs to be reconsidered, as the current design of the workbook makes it difficult to clearly ascertain whether the programme had contributed to an increased knowledge of healthy eating.

The research suggests that the *food boxes had a negligible impact* on this aim (and also on alleviating holiday hunger on the days when the programme was not delivered). Therefore it is recommended that this does not continue in the future.

Aim 2: Increase physical activity levels (holiday inactivity)

The research in this report suggests *most of the children were physically active before the programme*. Similarly to the previous aim, as this was discussed in a group setting, some parents may have felt reluctant to report otherwise. There were a couple of children whose physical activity levels were positively impacted by attending, but it would appear that the programme did not have a major impact on this aim. However, in other preliminary data collected from parents associated with the programme, the data suggested that the majority of children registered on the programme were classified (according to the Chief Medical Officer) as not sufficiently active. This raises a number of possibilities: firstly that the data collected in this report is only reflective of the participants (and associated parents/carers) who contributed to the report; that in a peer situation, some people may not feel comfortable

sharing certain details; or the focus group attendees' children/grandchildren belonged to the minority of children that met or exceeded the Chief Medical Officer's recommended physical activity guidelines. The uncertainty of the data for this aim makes it difficult to draw definitive conclusions, so this aim should continue to be monitored and children who do not meet the Chief Medical Officer's recommended physical activity guidelines should continue to be prioritised during recruitment.

Aim 5: Reduce the educational attainment decline over the summer break

There were two sections of the evaluation that covered this aim: literacy and educational attainment.

Education attainment: across the five focus groups, approximately *half of the parents reported their children were currently well engaged in school*. Some stated their children did not enjoy school but felt the programme had increased their confidence. There were some children who were not in formal education, and their parents felt that the programme would help them adapt to re-join formal education in the next academic year.

Literacy: Most of the parents reported that their *children enjoyed reading* and were already library members. The feedback from children was varied, with some reporting it was their favourite aspect, whilst others felt it was their least favourite part of the programme. Two children appeared to gain an increased confidence and improved reading skills from the programme.

To fully understand whether this aim can be deemed to be achieved, it would be important to explore whether the perceived educational attainment outcomes (confidence and adapting to re-entering formal education) have a longer-term positive impact on those children's engagement in school. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to explore whether these perceived improved reading confidence and skills have helped to reduce educational attainment discrepancies with their peers from higher socio-economic backgrounds.

Aim 6: Increase families' awareness of local provision to enhance the long-term sustainability of the proposed improved life outcomes

From the focus groups, it would appear that *most parents were aware of the need for their children to maintain a healthy lifestyle*, such as healthy eating and sufficient physical activity.

For this aim, the only relevant feedback from the focus groups was that two families have now become library members as a result of the programme, and that one parent felt the library now appeared to be a more approachable venue. From the suite of activities in the programme, it seems difficult to understand what can contribute to this aim, apart from the library aspect.

General recommendations

Another important component of the programme is the provision of a daily meal for the attending children to mitigate holiday hunger and thus reduce the financial burden on families.

The data in this report, and other preliminary survey data collected from the programme, suggest the vast majority of parents agreed it was harder to make ends meet during the holiday period and the programme appeared to help parents financially. However, in the data from this report, it seems that *some parents used those savings to take their children on trips/other activities* when the programme sessions were not running. This appeared to be useful for the parents, as it gave them an opportunity to treat their children, and presumably enjoyable and beneficial for the children. It could also be argued that these trips could help reduce wider societal inequalities between these children and their peers from higher socio-economic backgrounds, which is very important. However in light of the programme's aims, recruitment for future iterations needs to be considered and it must be questioned whether the current recruitment eligibility is suitable. As the main aim of this programme is to alleviate holiday hunger, *is the programme targeting and attracting those who need this support the most*? The findings of this report suggest that eligibility and recruitment is reconsidered to focus on those that may be at most need.

Contribution to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals

If we consider these findings to their contribution to the UN's SDGs, it could be argued that the programme positively contributed towards SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) during the duration of the programme.

Recommendations for future research

Some of the workbook content has been used for other evaluation reports, so their use in that context should be considered separately. However, the use of workbooks for these evaluation purposes should be considered, for numerous reasons.

For this evaluation, as the *drawings have been useful, this method should continue to be used for future research evaluations*. However, there are a number of recommendations for their continued use:

- These were only completed by 39% of eligible participants. Reasons for non-completion should be explored and measures put in place to increase completion, such as greater training for all delivery staff.

- The full meanings of the drawings were not always understood, as some participants did not complete the written explanation element of this section, and others' written content were incomprehensible. It is recommended that explanations of these drawings are done verbally, for example, as a show and tell component of the programme. This may be difficult to implement practically but should be explored, to ensure more completions and also to enable a deeper and more accurate understanding of participant feedback.

The workbook did contain some sections to try to understand the potential impact of Aim 1 (Increase knowledge and consumption of healthier foods). These included children drawing/colouring a healthy lunchbox and their favourite meal. Upon reflection, it was difficult to analyse these and understand the potential impact of the programme on the participants' knowledge, so other methods to explore this aspect are needed.

- It is recommended that participants undertake *pre and post testing of healthy eating knowledge through play*. An example would be to provide magnets or plastic toys of different types of food. In the first week (before the first healthy eating workshop), children would be asked to place each food item into a category on the floor/board (e.g. junk food, healthy food etc) and asked to explain why they placed it in that category. They would then be asked to undertake this task again in

the final week. If there are any differences, they would be asked to explain why, to determine if the programme had an impact on their understanding.

One of the major programme recommendations is to *reconsider the recruitment of participants*, to ensure those most at need of the programme are engaged. It is proposed that future research could help support this. It is recommended that:

- The participation data from 2019 is reviewed, to understand exactly who has been attending and how they were recruited.

- Then interviews are undertaken with key recruiters (e.g. Outreach Workers) and HSP staff to explore how and why some families were engaged and others may not have been engaged with the programme.

- If accessible, interview some of those families who may have not engaged (who may be most at need) to understand why they did not engage and provide recommendations of how to potentially engage them in the future.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Focus Group Semi-Structured Interview Schedule with parents/carers

Introduction

The purpose of this session is to get your feedback on the Fit Fed and Read project. It is really useful for us to hear your views because we want to run the project in a way that will be most beneficial to you and your children.

Brief introductions

Ask each attendee to briefly say their name and their favourite thing (e.g. colour, sport, activity).

Starter question…

1. What is your impression of the Fit, Fed and Read project?

    Probes: *What specific features of the project stood out? What has worked well/poorly about the sessions?*

Physical Activity

2. How would you describe your child's relationship with physical activity?

    Probes: *Do they like/dislike it? Why? / Why not? How does it impact them? Better/worse behaviour? Better/worse sleep?*

3. How do you think that the physical activity element of the Fit, Fed and Read project has had an impact on your child?

    Probes: *How has it impacted them? In what ways has it been beneficial/detrimental to them?*

Eating

We know that the holidays can be a difficult time for a lot of families and many families have to change their eating habits/diets in the holidays. We want to explore this topic a little bit with you.

4. The children have been given one healthy eating workshop each week during this project along with a hot and healthy meal each lunchtime. Do you think that these workshops have made an impact on your child's eating or attitude to food at home?

> Probe: *In what ways has it made an impact/not made an impact? Can you give an example? How do you see this impacting your family in the longer term?*

5. Can you describe your thoughts on the breakfast bar/fruit and family pack provided to your children each Thursday?

> Probe: *What impact did this have on your family? How did you use the family pack?*

6. Tell me a little bit about the financial impact that the school holidays have on you.

> Probes: *What changes, if any, do you tend to make to account for the holiday period? How does this affect your family/social life?*

7. In general, how do you think the holidays affect your child's eating patterns/behaviours/routine?

> Probes: *Frequency of meals/snacks? More tired or more restless/ hyperactive?*

Mood

8. Thinking back over the last four weeks, have you seen any changes in your child's or children's behaviour?

> Probe: *Can you give a specific example of where you think the project has affected your child's behaviour? (Positive or negative)*

9. Do you think that coming to Fit, Fed and Read has affected the mood of your children?

> Probe: *How has it affected their mood? Positively/negatively…*

Literacy

The library have been coming in to deliver workshops to your children once a week over the course of the project.

10. What do you think about these sessions and what impact do you think they had on your child?

11. How do you think these sessions might impact your child and wider family throughout this next year?

Educational attainment

12. Please describe your child's relationship with lessons and other aspects of school?

   Probes: *Do they enjoy school? How well do they engage in lessons?*

Venue

13. This programme has been run in fire stations. What are your thoughts about using the Fire Station as a venue?

14. If it was not possible to run the project in fire stations, where do you think would be a good alternative to host it?

   Probes: why?

General

15. If you could make one change to the project, what would it be?

   Probes: Why do you think that change would be beneficial? How would you enact that change?

Close

Is there anything else you would like to say about the project that has not been covered in what we have talked about today?

Thank the attendees for taking part in the focus group and discuss how the data will be used.

Appendix 2: Examples of free drawing sections of the children's workbooks

24. Draw your FAVOURITE part of the project?

What have you drawn?

25. Draw your LEAST FAVOURITE part of the project?

What have you drawn?