

APPG on Hunger inquiry into child hunger during school holidays Family and Childcare Trust response, March 2017

Introduction

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this important inquiry. We know that there are a range of different reasons why children can be at risk of hunger during the school holidays, including the additional costs many families face during the holidays which can leave them having to cut back on essentials.

At the Family and Childcare Trust, we conduct an annual survey on the cost and availability of childcare in Britain, including childcare during the school holidays. This work shows the dramatic increase in childcare costs that working families face during school holidays. For low income families, these fluctuations can throw off carefully managed budgets. In addition, our research shows that there is not enough childcare to meet demand during school holidays. If a family is not able to find appropriate childcare, they are left with little choice apart from stopping work or reducing their hours.

While recent governments have rightfully recognised the importance of childcare and invested significantly, policies which aim to reduce the cost of childcare for parents, such as the 15 hour or 30 hour offer, are restricted to term time only and only support children under five.

Low and middle income families can receive support with childcare costs through Working Tax Credits or Universal Credit. The childcare element of Working Tax Credit pays for up to 70 per cent of childcare costs and Universal Credit pays up to 85 per cent, but families are not always able to claim this support for holiday childcare.

If a childcare setting is not registered with Ofsted, it cannot attract childcare help through childcare vouchers, tax-free childcare, working tax credit or universal credit. Out-of-school clubs for children over eight do not have to be registered with Ofsted, meaning that many parents cannot claim this additional support. In addition, Universal Credit is paid in arrears, meaning that families will have to meet the costs themselves, before claiming costs back. For many families, the only way to meet these will be through a loan.

In September 2016, a new 'right to request' was introduced which allowed parents and childcare providers to request that local schools provided childcare.

Holiday care costs and sufficiency

The need for longer hours of care means that childcare during the holiday period is more expensive than term time care. Using figures from our Holiday Childcare Survey 2016 and Childcare Survey 2017, the table below highlights the difference in the average cost of full-time (50 hours) holiday club to term time, afterschool care options.

	Holiday clubs	Afterschool club	Afterschool childminder	Price difference:	
				Holiday club to afterschool club	Holiday club to afterschool childminder
East of England	£119.57	£52.12	£62.10	£67.45	£57.47
East	£123.46	£49.54	£54.48	£73.92	£68.98

Midlands					
Greater London	£121.81	£52.53	£101.76	£69.28	£20.05
North East	£122.52	£59.23	£55.62	£63.29	£66.90
North West	£111.42	£46.46	£50.78	£64.96	£60.64
South East	£141.87	£55.19	£67.48	£86.68	£74.39
South West	£113.60	£51.04	£68.80	£62.56	£44.80
West Midlands	£122.76	£61.69	£55.47	£61.07	£67.29
Yorkshire and Humberside	£124.06	£50.30	£65.33	£73.76	£58.73
England	£122.34	£52.80	£68.12	£69.54	£54.22
Scotland	£121.05	£55.71	£62.22	£65.34	£58.83
Wales	£110.15	£43.13	£55.43	£67.02	£54.72
Britain average	£121.12	£52.58	£67.11	£68.54	£54.01

The difference is clear. For many areas of the UK, parents who normally rely on after school clubs or childminders for childcare cover during term time must pay over double for holiday care. These costs can be prohibitive and cause parents to give up work during school holidays. Other families may struggle to be able to find care that meets their needs. Our Holiday Childcare Survey 2016 also found significant gaps in sufficiency of holiday childcare. The table below presents a summary of the findings.

	Percentage of responding local authorities with enough holiday childcare in all of their area for children of working parents
East of England	0%
East Midlands	17%
Greater London	27%
North East	33%
North West	50%
South East	23%
South West	17%
West Midlands	17%
Yorkshire and Humberside	31%
England	27%
Wales	0%
Scotland	24%
Britain	23%

Three out of four local areas do not have enough childcare in the school holidays and the shortages are even more acute in some regions and nations: no local authorities in Wales or the East of England reported having sufficient holiday care. Furthermore, parents of children aged 12 and over, families living in rural areas and those with children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) faced worse shortages than other groups of families. Without

sufficient holiday childcare, parents may be forced to leave work or reduce their hours, reducing household incomes.

Conclusion

We urge this enquiry to consider the role that affordable holiday childcare can play in reducing holiday hunger. Holiday schemes not only provide the care that enables parents to work, but also can give children the opportunity to explore new activities to support their learning and provide food during the day. However, high costs and lack of availability lock families out of this valuable provision.

We ask the APPG to:

- Work with central government to give parents a legal entitlement to childcare from the end of parental leave throughout childhood, bringing it in line with the right to a school place.
- Work with central and local government to support schools to coordinate local strategies together with local authorities, police commissioners, leisure, arts and sports organisations, to ensure that there are enough varied school holiday activities for children of secondary school age.
- Work with central government to review the introduction of the new 'right to request' wraparound and holiday childcare to make sure it improves access to affordable childcare. This should consider a range of mechanisms for using school buildings to provide out of school care to help bring down childcare costs.
- Work with central government to find a solution so that families will be able to claim universal credit, tax credits and tax free childcare for out of school care that is not registered with Ofsted.

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