



Cheshire East

TOGETHER for Children and Young People

Together we will make Cheshire East a great place to be young

Cheshire East Children and Families Grant Support

Summer 2021



Executive Summary

2020/21 has presented unique challenges for families, central government, and local government. The central government response provided high levels of grant funding to local authorities to mobilise efficient and targeted responses. As part of the wider poverty package, the Department for Work and Pension's (DWP) 'COVID Support Grant' and Department for Education's (DfE) 'Holiday Activity Fund' were targeted at supporting children and families with combating food poverty, with wider support and education included. A total of £1.9m was provided from the DWP and DfE to Cheshire East between 16 April 2021 and 31 December 2021.

- The COVID Support Grant (CSG) was a DWP funded programme with the aim of providing support to vulnerable households and families with children. The CSG ran from 16 April 2021 until 30 September 2021. The national value of the CSG was £200m, of which Cheshire East Borough Council received £1,035,849.45.
- The Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) programme has run in the Easter, summer and will run in the Christmas holidays 2021. The programme is a DfE government scheme with the aim of providing support to vulnerable children in receipt of benefits-related free school meals. The national value of the HAF programme was £220m, of which Cheshire East Borough Council received £881,340.

The CSG and HAF schemes were complimentary, both providing food support to individuals, with the CSG supporting children and families with vouchers and wider essentials to support them from the direct risk of winter poverty. Whilst HAF provided food, it also addressed education (food/physical/enriching) to produce sustainable impacts. Implementation of both schemes required support from a range of partners.

Both schemes had closely considered eligibility criteria and were designed to be as targeted and inclusive as possible. The HAF programme was targeted at benefit related FSM eligible, with some flexibility for the inclusion of other identified vulnerable young people. The CSG eligibility included FSM eligible young people, with a wider parameter for inclusivity as decreed by grant conditions, this included: are in receipt of early years pupil premium and two-year funding, care leavers up to age 25, NEET 16-18, young carers for their parents/carers, known to domestic abuse services, or identified by a registered professional as requiring additional support.

Summary of CSG Summer	Summary of HAF Summer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 42,294 total vouchers/payments - 41,956 total food vouchers - 286 total utilities inquiries - 52 total white goods inquiries - 1,094 additional food inquires (EA included) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1667 eligible young people attended - 40 providers funded over summer programmes - 70 locations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - £1,035,839.45 total spend 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - £474,815.17 was awarded to providers



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1. Introduction

The COVID Support Grant (CSG) was a DWP funded programme with the aim of providing support to vulnerable households and families with children who have been affected by the pandemic. The CSG ran from 16 April 2021 until 30 September 2021, at which point the scheme was then officially closed. The national value of the CSG was £200m, of which Cheshire East Borough Council received £1,035,849.45. The funding guidelines required a minimum of 80% of the funding to target both food and utilities, with a 20% discretion for essentials such as white goods. Reflecting these parameters, the funding guidelines also ring-fenced a minimum of 80% of the funding for children and families, with a further 20% allocation to vulnerable households.

To implement this programme, Cheshire East Council targeted approximately 10,000 known vulnerable/at risk children and families who would automatically receive their vouchers.

On 8 November 2020, the government announced that the holiday activities and food programme would be expanded across the whole of England in 2021. The programme had provided healthy food and enriching activities to disadvantaged children since 2018, with Cheshire East being invited onto the scheme in 2021. The programme has scope to cover the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021, with eligibility specifically targeted at benefit related free school meal (FSM) eligible young people.

Local authorities were tasked with ensuring their offer of free holiday club provision matched demand for all children eligible for and in receipt of free school meals in their area, for the equivalent of at least four hours a day, four days a week, six weeks a year. This offer equates to four weeks over the summer and a week's worth of provision in each of the Easter and Christmas holidays in 2021. The HAF monies provided to local authorities were eligible to fund the provision of free holiday places (both creation of new clubs and extension of existing) and coordination of the programme locally.

The goal of the programme was to encourage young people to eat more healthily over the school holidays, be more active during the school holidays, take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience, character, and wellbeing along with their wider educational attainment, be safe and not to be socially isolated, have a greater knowledge of health and nutrition, and be more engaged with school and other local services. There was also a desire for families to participate to develop their understanding of nutrition and food budgeting and signpost them towards other information and support, for example: health, employment, and education.



2. Cheshire East Council's Implementation

2.1 Grant Mobilisation

2.1.1 COVID Support Grant Planning and Mobilisation

Cheshire East's CSG implementation began on the 16 April 2021 and ran until the final day of the grant period, 30 September 2021. The project had three significant rollout periods; the 2020 Christmas holidays; February half term; and the Easter holidays. In addition to these rollout periods, inquiry forms were available for families to access support.

The CSG steering group first met on the 22 April 2021. The group had representatives from Early Help, Children's Social Care, Commissioning, Education, Finance, Internal Audit, Legal, Public Sector Transformation, Benefits and Communities. The senior responsible officer (SRO) for the project was the Director of Prevention and Support, Ali Stathers-Tracey.

The project was managed in-house to retain continuity in our offer and facilitate a targeted approach which allowed the council to develop its knowledge of our vulnerable young people and families, to provide an opportunity for the council to develop a relationship with our most vulnerable, to highlight the highest risk families and individuals for further support and to provide the opportunity to compose comprehensive data on the project's recipients.

The in-house method followed a process of identifying a range of eligibility criteria to include all at risk cohorts, and those whose risk was particularly affected by the pandemic during the winter months. Once these groups were identified a mapping process was conducted, heat maps were produced to illustrate the geographical distribution of our target children and families. This allowed us to identify delivery partners to support the delivery of vouchers to families, including schools, colleges, early years settings, Cheshire East staff working in early help and social care. Financial forecasting was conducted to appropriately proportion and distribute the funding between eligible cohorts, and to provide assurance the grant would be implemented and delivered within grant funding parameters.

2.1.2 Holiday Activity Fund Planning and Mobilisation

Cheshire East's HAF implementation began on 1 March 2021 and the last holiday period covered will be Christmas 2021, with expected final government reporting required on 29 January 2022. The programme has three significant rollout phases: Easter holidays 2 April 2021 to 16 April 2021, Summer holidays 22 July 2021 to 31



August 2021, Christmas holidays 20 December 2021 to 3 January 2022. To date, both the Easter and Summer implementation periods have been completed.

The HAF steering group first met on the 20 May 2021. The group had representatives from Early Help, Children's Social Care, Commissioning, Education, Finance, Internal Audit, Legal, Public Sector Transformation, Benefits and Communities. The senior responsible officer (SRO) for the project was the Director of Prevention and Support, Ali Stathers-Tracey.

The project team initially conducted an expression of interest (EOI) process communicated to all known private, public and third sector children's providers in Cheshire East. The EOIs captured the engagement of providers across Cheshire East, whilst accurately modelling provision. We were then able to compare our data against our free school meal mapping to ensure the appropriate commission and distribution of clubs to match our population's needs. This allowed us to network between providers who were only able to make partial offers regarding, food or activity length, and connect providers who required support with facilities/venues. Once appropriate arrangements had been put in place, we opened our grants process where we were able to finalise the model. Providers from the public, private and third sectors were invited to apply for a maximum of £20,000 per bid via the COVID-19 Community Response and Recovery Grant.

2.2 Mobilisation Periods

2.2.1 COVID Support Grant Mobilisation Periods

May Half Term –
16 April 2021 – CSG conditions received
6 May 2021 – CSG go live communications released
17 May 2021 – 21 May 2021 – Vouchers provided to schools/settings
30 May 2021 – 3 June 2021 - May half term
7 June 2021- Inquiry forms go live
9 July 2021 – CSG mid-term MI return
Summer Holidays –
5 July 2021 – 9 July 2021 – Vouchers provided to schools/settings
25 July 2021 – 31 August 2021 – Summer holidays
22 October 2021 – DWP CSG MI return date



2.2.2 Holiday Activity Fund Summer Mobilisation Period

21 May 2021 – Grant applications went live
21 May 2021 – 27 June 2021 - Rolling assessment of applications
27 June 2021 – Funding round closed
18 June 2021 – 29 March 2021 - Grant offer letters provided to successful applicants
25 June 2021 – Grant brochures provided to HAF stakeholders
25 June 2021 – Grant reporting templates provided to successful grant applicants
26 July 2021 – Providers began summer delivery
9 July 2021 – First 50% summer payment made upon successful grant application
10 September 2021 – Summer evaluation return date
17 September 2021 – Second 50% Easter payment made upon return of evaluation

2.3 Grant Participation and Eligibility

2.3.1 COVID Support Grant Eligibility

Cheshire East adopted the following eligibility criteria:

- those in receipt of income related free school meals
- those in receipt of early years pupil premium and two-year old funding
- care leavers up to age 25
- young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET) aged 16-18
- young carers
- those known to domestic abuse services
- those identified as vulnerable by a trusted professional.

The above groups amounted to over 10,000 children and young people and were identified as pre-existing groups who would receive food support automatically via their school or setting. In addition to these groups, referrals were accepted via trusted professionals for the following categories:

- those known to children's social care and early help services
- parents/carers who are experiencing financial hardship due to being unable to work as their children are self-isolating
- those who were vulnerable due to financial hardship and can be referred by a partner agency (e.g. GP, teacher, support worker).



2.3.2 Holiday Activity Fund: Determining a Successful Application

Analysis and evaluation of prospective bids was vital to ensuring the success of the programme. The grant application aimed to provide us with enough evidence to decide on the provider's inclusion in the programme, however in some cases additional clarity was required. The application forms required providers to include the following information: details on how they identified a need in their area/setting, how they would meet the key principles of the programme, how they would advertise to free school meal young people, what the service would provide, locations of delivery, how many children they intended to target/accommodate, detailed breakdown of projected costs, sustainability of project post HAF funding, evidence of mandatory policies.

All completed applications were assessed using the above criteria to determine level of need and the providers ability to deliver a suitable programme in the key principle areas set out by funding guidelines.

2.4 Grant Implementation

2.4.1 COVID Support Grant Implementation

Eligible cohorts for the COVID Support Grant were able to access support in three targeted categories: food, utilities, and white goods.

Food was provided via food vouchers. These were available from 17 April until 30 September 2021. Targeted releases to pre-existing known cohorts were provided for one week during the May half term (30 May to 3 June 2021) and three weeks during the summer holidays (25 July to 2 Sept 2021). Additional vouchers were available via the inquiry form, where registered professionals were able to apply for additional funding for one week per application. Applications were assessed based on the trusted professional's identification of need. The vouchers were purchased from Blackhawk Network which were valid for Tesco, Morrisons, Aldi, Sainsburys, Asda, Waitrose, M&S and Aldi. During both the May and summer rollouts, the vouchers were worth £20, per week, per child.

Utilities were available for electric, gas and water to the value of £49 per household via the online enquiry form. Referrals were accepted via trusted professionals. Both credit and prepaid meter households were supported. Utilities vouchers were purchased from Green Doctor Energy Consultants who provided additional energy



advice to households referred. Utilities vouchers were available from 17 April and vouchers were supplied until the scheme closed on 30 September 2021.

White goods were supplied via Cheshire East's Emergency Assistance Team, based within the Benefits department. The Benefits department had existing commissioned services called Click and St Paul's which were able to extend their support to the CSG. The white goods were accessible once per household on a needs basis, with households able to access electric cooker, fridge, washing machine or microwave. Most goods supplied were recycled or refurbished but in some rare cases a new item would be provided. White goods were available from 20 of June until the 30 September 2021.

2.4.2 Holiday Activity Fund Implementation

Once successful bids were identified, outcome letters were sent to all providers detailing they had been successful in securing funding for their clubs and how much funding they would receive.

The scheme was advertised to ensure maximum exposure. An online brochure was developed by the HAF team which was communicated to all children facing council services and to schools. In addition, a poster was provided to children's focused council service areas and distributed to schools and settings in the Cheshire East area, a communications piece was entered into the Schools Bulletin, a webpage was established with links to the online brochure and further information regarding the HAF and what it has to offer. In addition to internal exposure, successful providers were required to advertise their activities via agreed marketing strategies included in their bids. A decentralised marketing strategy proved to be an effective method of efficient mobilisation and targeted communications, providing emphasised awareness in our desired cohorts.

A 50% grant payment was made to all successful providers on the 9 July 2021 and a further 50% payment would be made once completed evaluations were received after the clubs had ran over the summer holidays.

Monitoring visits were conducted by the HAF team throughout the summer to gauge the uptake of free school meal children and if the clubs were running successfully. A feedback session and workshop was held on 25 September to reflect over summer activities and consider winter implementation.



3. Impacts of Cheshire East Summer Grants

3.1 COVID Support Grant Impacts and Benefits

Impacts

The impacts of the COVID Support Grant can be viewed in Appendix A. In summary, the impacts of the project were considerable, working with over 10,000 young people and families across Cheshire East, with a small percentage of young people from out of area (< 1%). A total of 42,294 vouchers/payments were provided across all support variants. In total, 41,956 food vouchers were provided to young people and families; 10,670 in May half term; 30,192 in the summer holidays 2021; 1,044 via inquiry forms and 50 via the emergency assistance.

Appendix B illustrates our key partners in the inquiry form process, with the main geographical areas of need demonstrated in Appendix C. In summary, these partners were Cheshire East officers from the Family Service, schools, DWP and third sector providers, with the main areas of need being Crewe, Macclesfield, Nantwich, Congleton, Sandbach, Wilmslow, Knutsford, Alsager and Poynton.

In addition to food, the project also supported utilities and white good referrals from trusted professionals. 286 utility vouchers were provided over the course of the project, which equates to 120 pre-payment meter vouchers and 166 cash vouchers.

In terms of white goods, the project supported a total of 52 households. The main goods requested were cookers (11), washing machines (13), fridge (6) and microwaves (2), with 20 claims yet to be provided. The main geographical areas of need (in descending order) were Crewe, Macclesfield, Nantwich, Congleton, Sandbach, Wilmslow, Knutsford, Alsager and Poynton.

When compared to the previous scheme, the COVID Winter Grant Scheme, which ran from December 2020 to April 2021, the programme demonstrates some interesting comparisons. The bulk food provision showed a growth from December 2020, as Cheshire East free school meal numbers grew from 7,511 (December 2020) to 8,313 (July 2021) - an increase of 10%. This influenced our overall pre-existing cohort number, which increased from 9,197 in December 2020, to 10,064 - an increase of 8.6%.

With regards to inquiry forms, our applications are shown as significantly lower than the COVID Winter Grant Scheme:

- total inquiries for the COVID Winter Grant Scheme 5,450; COVID Support Grant inquiries 1,382 (decrease of 74.6%)

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- food inquiries totalling 3,893 for COVID Winter Grant Scheme and 1,044 for COVID Support Grant (decrease of 73.2%)
- utilities for the COVID Winter Grant Scheme totalled 1,453 and 286 for the COVID Support Grant (decrease of 80.3%)
- White goods totalling 104 for COVID Winter Grant Scheme and 52 for the COVID Support Grant (decrease of 50%)

Evidence from wider social circumstances does not suggest demand has dropped, rather the omission of referrers from schools during the summer holidays (provided over 2,000 referrals during the previous scheme). Other potential factors included the fact families received funding for three weeks of food during the summer which would have reduced demand, and we are aware referrers increased their criteria for families with the intention of not creating dependence. A final consideration, with specific direction for the utilities portion, is during the summer period heating costs pressures are lessened.

Benefits

The above impacts illustrate a continued need within Cheshire East for individuals requiring support with food, utilities, white goods, and other essentials. The support for food was consistently the highest requirement for families in Cheshire East. The gap in food provision for our most disadvantaged has always provided a challenge for welfare support. 2020 and 2021 have provided particular challenges, as a result of inflation ([consumer price index UK](#) rising 4.5% since June 2020), [increased unemployment](#) (spiking at 5.2% Dec 2020, mean 4.7% since March 2020), [reduced earnings from furlough](#) (families receiving 80% - 90% of their standard income), the recontinuation of evictions and the removal of the universal credit £20 top up. When placed in a backdrop of social isolation, the previous scenario illustrates a difficult period for families, with a sliding scale of unique challenges placing pressure on finances.

Supply pressures have also been felt in the utilities world, with supply/demand issues leading to price swelling, with households paying over 50% more on utilities compared to pre-pandemic prices (Ofgem state electricity bills increased from [£53 per week to £115](#)). This placed additional pressures on families and justified the continued support with utilities that the programme provided.

Wider benefits include the project's capacity to develop and embed it within a poverty support package environment. This includes recipients of the grant, schools, settings, and colleges. In the process of doing this, we also developed a wealth of data which can now be used to develop our understanding of our most vulnerable and map out need in Cheshire East. Alongside the established relationships, a working group positioned to swiftly deal with future grants with direct lines of communications has also been created and tested. Project engagement with our at-risk cohort has also allowed the signposting for further services to be completed,



including free school meal sign up and emergency assistance. Further data benefits include being able to update our free school meal eligible list from our data.

3.1.1 Holiday Activity Fund Impacts and Benefits

Impacts

A total of 40 providers across Cheshire East delivered to 1,667 young people over the summer period as part of the HAF programme, equating to 93% of the initial target of 1,750, or as a proportion of free school meal eligible in Cheshire East, this is approximately 20%. In terms of hours, the programme received a total of approximately 56,918 hours of sessions booked onto, with a total of approximately 50,758 hours attended (approximately 84% attendance).

Each of these programmes offered at least one healthy meal, with some offering two, coupled with healthy snacks equating to a total of 16,388 meals provided. In terms of sessions, 905 sessions were held, with a total of 86,845 hours delivered. The average number of sessions attended was approximately 11, with each participant attending an average of approximately 52 hours of activities. In addition to face-to-face provision, virtual provision was also provided. 18 virtual sessions took place, with a total of 116 hours provided virtually.

Special educational needs and/ or disabilities (SEND) inclusion in the programme was a priority of the programme with all providers offering provision to SEND young people. Of our three SEND specific clubs available, 375 SEND young people attended over 19,500 hours of SEND provision and received 3,665 healthy meals.

Benefits

The 1,667 free school meal children attending holiday activities through the programme were provided with access to a healthy daily meal and snacks, take part in enriching and engaging activities with peers and improve mental health and wellbeing. The programme focused on local providers, to maximise the impact of the funding – encouraging sustainable impacts and to support and stimulate the children's activity sector in Cheshire East during the pandemic. Sustainability was a core value of the programme, not limited to provider/economic recovery, but also inclusive of the club activities. Our club activities targeted the core outcomes of the programme by offering healthy food and physical activities across all our delivery locations, including football, archery, cricket, orienteering, yoga, arts and crafts, badminton, gardening, drama, music, gymnastics, soft play, cooking, swimming and much more. In addition to the face-to-face offer, we also ensured the availability of an online virtual offer for young people unable to attend clubs for any reason, these included activity packs (including one from Disney) and kits, and access to online activities and recipe packs.



We strove to provide optionality for families, with a wide range of activities and locations on offer. In addition to short term impact, we also targeted our funding to providers who offered long term educational impacts to our attendees. This included educational materials provided to parents to develop their understanding of nutrition and food budgeting; nutritional education for children on where food comes from, what healthy food and balanced diets are, food diaries, ways to make healthy food fun and tasty, and food hygiene. Providers also offered improved awareness and mental wellbeing for young people by including wellness/mindfulness sessions such as yoga, meditation, and time to talk sessions. The wider package of support was vital to optimising the funding's impact, with children leaving with the improved tools to approach their lives and supported to organise themselves. The programme also increased young people's exposure to other services, with one referral to the front door being reported during the summer period, and their interaction with these services – with anecdotal evidence showing HAF attendees having increased attendance and enthusiasm for their school subjects.

3.2 COVID Support Grant feedback from providers and recipients

Provider	Comment
Grant Recipient	The vouchers were amazing and came at the perfect time
Grant Recipient	The vouchers have helped me buy food for my kids at a time when things were really hard, thank you!
Cheshire East Officer - Referrer	The vouchers have helped ease my families' anxieties around food, the utilities vouchers were also very useful at providing support to families and helping them
Cheshire East Officer - Referrer	All of my families have been extremely grateful for this support so thank you very much!
School - Referrer	Being able to access the vouchers has great for supporting our free school meal kids



3.2.1 Holiday Activity Fund feedback from providers and attendees

Provider	Comment
Hall Star Education & Sport	Fabulous, my daughter had the best time making new friends
Monks Coppenhall	I really love coming to the club - I wish it was on at the weekend too
Scholar Green	My child is really enjoying the holiday club. They are full of joy when I collect them at the end of the session.
St Mary's Middlewich	I have been working this week and it's great to know the girls are having fun and keeping active.
St Mary's Catholic Primary School	I can't explain how much he has enjoyed his time with you, which is lovely for me to see, he will never go anywhere because his tics/ autism etc I'm so happy thank you so much
Brereton Primary	My children attended this and really enjoyed it. They were excited to come each day.
Space4Autism	Thank you for having this as an option for us. Having a weekly club over the summer that is inclusive is fantastic and for me gives me a much-needed break and the boys love it!

Feedback from the young people who attended Holiday Activities

What was the best part?	
'Chilling with people' 'being here' 'Cooking' 'Being here' 'Drama and adding music' 'Hammocks'	'Drama, outdoor' 'To play with friends' 'learning new things and just being here' 'setting up and setting the fire'



What was the hardest part?	
'the caterpillar' 'the tent' 'keeping the fire going' 'making props n doing artwork for drama' 'nothing'	'performing but I liked it' 'keeping the fire going' 'not really hard' 'trying not to snap the willow'
What could we do better next time?	
'nothing, it was good/great' 'was great as is' 'nothing' 'more hammocks' 'more time'	'no, do it next year' 'music, art and painting' 'have marshmallows' 'more cooking'
What did you learn?	
'teamwork' 'life skills' 'how to make brownies' 'fun, trust'	'talking to others' 'how to make a camp' 'drama is cool' 'fun and trusting each other'
Other Feedback	
'absolutely fantastic' 'loved every part and hope on next year' 'fantastic day' 'the helpers were great'	'Enthusiastic and engaging' 'adults were fantastic' 'kindness' 'I would come again'



4. COVID Support Grant Challenges and Future Learning

The main learning outcomes from the programme were around its staffing requirements. The project is embedded within the offer in Cheshire East, with staff and partners highly aware of the project, referral routes and accessibility. Therefore referrals to the programme are high which results in a high staffing cost. The programme has been redeploying staff from other areas of the council which has impacted work in other areas. If the programme is going to continue to offer the level of service it currently does, special consideration will be required to be placed upon the staffing offer supporting the programme. Although this is a concern, the project team have amalgamated the learning and experience from the previous 12 months and are now in a strong position to deliver future work of this kind.

In terms of the voucher offer, project feedback indicated vouchers made immediate short-term improvements to young people and families' outcomes. With the existence of the vouchers lasting over 12 months, the local authority will benefit from sensitively handling any removal of vouching funding as concerns of dependency grow.

5. HAF Challenges and Future Learning

This summer delivery was the second delivery period of the Holiday Activity Fund in Cheshire East. We are systematically reflecting on strategic and logistical decisions, to identify efficiencies and improve future activities and experiences. A demonstration of our improvisational methods includes the commitment to improve our data collection methods and for increased clarity in our project document. We used this feedback from Easter and worked alongside providers to improve our data and document design. This provided unforeseen benefits for the HAF programme as increased proximity with providers developed an increased understanding between provider and commissioner.

Challenges of the summer programme include the scope and scale of the programme, as well as the timescales expected to delivery. These challenges are inherent to any delivery of this scale and were overcome as and when they were faced. The design and management of the programme is to credit for the mitigation and resilience of the delivery, and the achievement of remaining on brief. This is in part to the credit of providers in Cheshire East, who enthusiastically established high quality provision, worked flexibly and understandably with Cheshire East, to allow us to use them as delivery vehicles for the HAF programme. Providers and the programme team were regularly working in partnership when attendance gaps were identified, often pushing further communications, supporting the HAF programme to achieving commendatory attendance levels, many of which are akin to areas who have delivered for over two years as part of the pilot. In addition to the above, the programme also had a gap of provision in the Poynton area, because of low provider engagement. To address this,

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we ensured individuals in the area had access to our virtual offers, as well as access to clubs in the Wilmslow area.

Going forward, the programme has aimed to build upon previous feedback and new feedback from providers. We have built a project timeline which includes more provider feedback opportunities, increased provider support (bid support sessions, locality delivery support sessions, HAF provider briefings, evaluation, and data return sessions). The previous actions have been ongoing and will continue to the end of the project in January 2022, it has already begun developing provider/central team awareness and HAF programme team branding. We are also exploring providers who can deliver in the Poynton area, coupled with a pilot which will provide physical activities to young people referred into the programme by schools in the area.

Since the project has been expanded for three years, we feel the decision to model the programme as we have and to build relationships with local providers and develop their offer will pay dividends for the programme into 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 delivery. We now have an archive of providers that we will be able to confidently commission to provide to our children and families over a longer-term period (up to 3 years). Providers with less developed offers may be commissioned over smaller periods, to allow them to pilot and develop improvements into their offer.

6. Conclusions

COVID Support Grant

In conclusion, the COVID Support Grant had a major impact on the recipients of the grant. The grant has been far reaching and had a significant impact on those families in need during the pandemic. The grant provided over 40,000 vouchers to our most vulnerable during one of the most difficult and challenging years this country has faced. Although the impact and scope of the grant has been notable, it is worth considering the long-term impact of providing voucher support to families from short term central government funding pots, with no asserted sustainability.

The grant closed on 30 September 2021; however, a follow up grant called the Household Support Fund began implementation on 6 October 2021, which will utilise the data and learning from the CSG to benefit those families in need in Cheshire East. The Household Support Fund programme also has increased scope to include adults.

Holiday Activity Fund

In conclusion, the Holiday Activity Fund has had a great impact to free school meal children in the Cheshire East area so far. The grant enabled 1,667 children to access a free holiday provision over the summer period, enabling them to engage with peers and access enriching activities in a stimulating environment. Where children had become

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socially isolated due to COVID restrictions, these children were able to access this provision, which has helped with social interaction, mental health, and wellbeing as well as offering parents and carers respite. The main geographical areas where the need was identified were Macclesfield, Crewe, Nantwich and Congleton. Clubs were offered in other areas such as Sandbach, Alsager and Middlewich.

The winter stage of the HAF programme has been started, developing on learning from the summer programme. Overall, the programme has received a strong tranche of initial bids, which are largely thanks to the work between the team and providers. The programme is also excited about the opportunities of 2022-2025 delivery, and the future amendments and improvements we conduct to deliver the highest level of service possible to our most vulnerable.

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7. Appendices

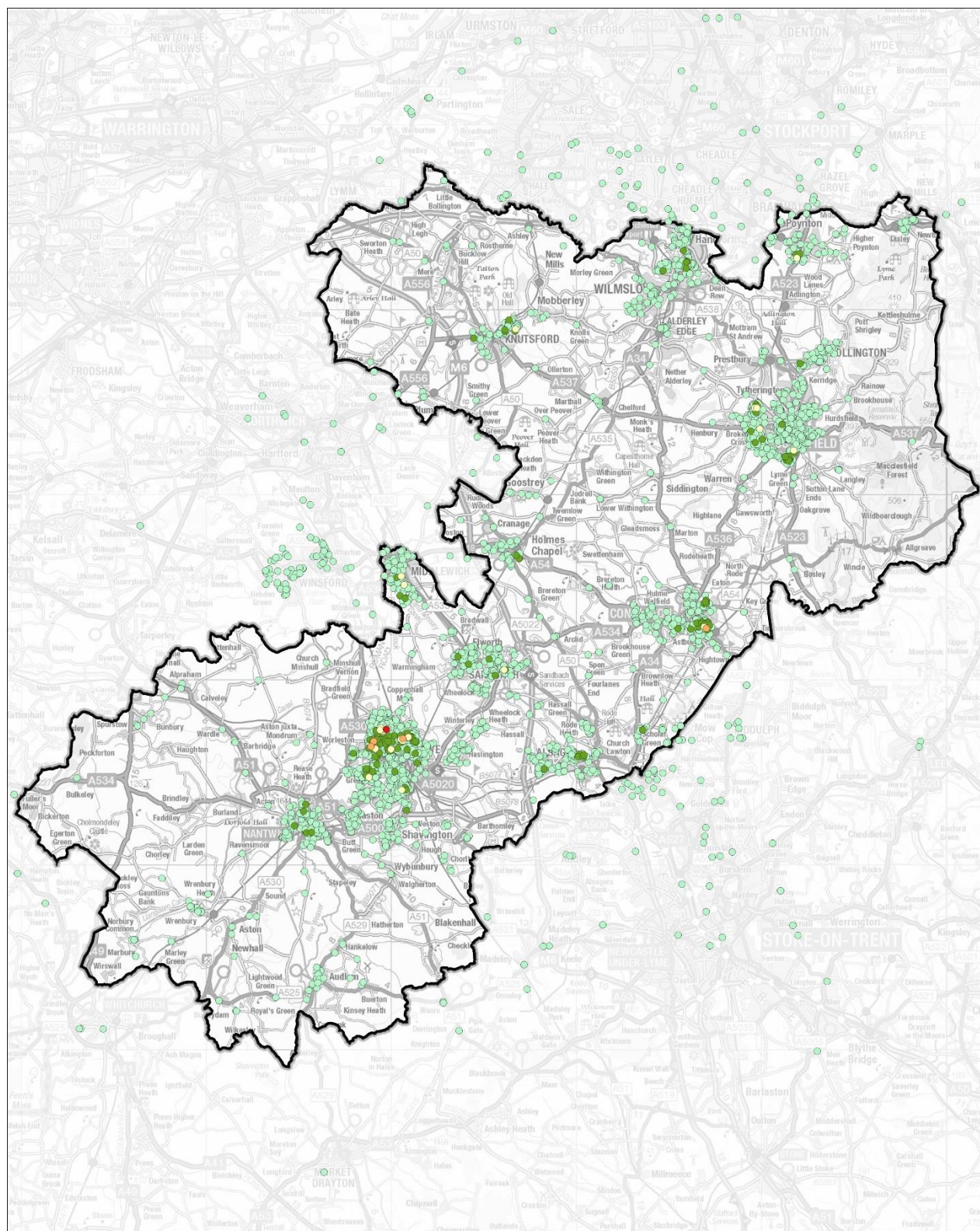
Appendix A – COVID Support Grant Impact Table

	30 September 2021	
Inquiry Forms Received (per child)		
Food	1,157 (includes duplicates)	
Utilities	806 (includes duplicates)	
White Goods	122 (includes duplicates)	
Total number on inquiry forms	2,085	
Vouchers Issued		
May Half Term	10,670	
Benefits - food vouchers	50	
Summer Break	30,192	10,064 (people)
Inquiry Forms Completed		
Food	1,044	
Ground Work (households) (sent to Ground Work)	286	
White Goods (households) sent	52	
Total	1,382	

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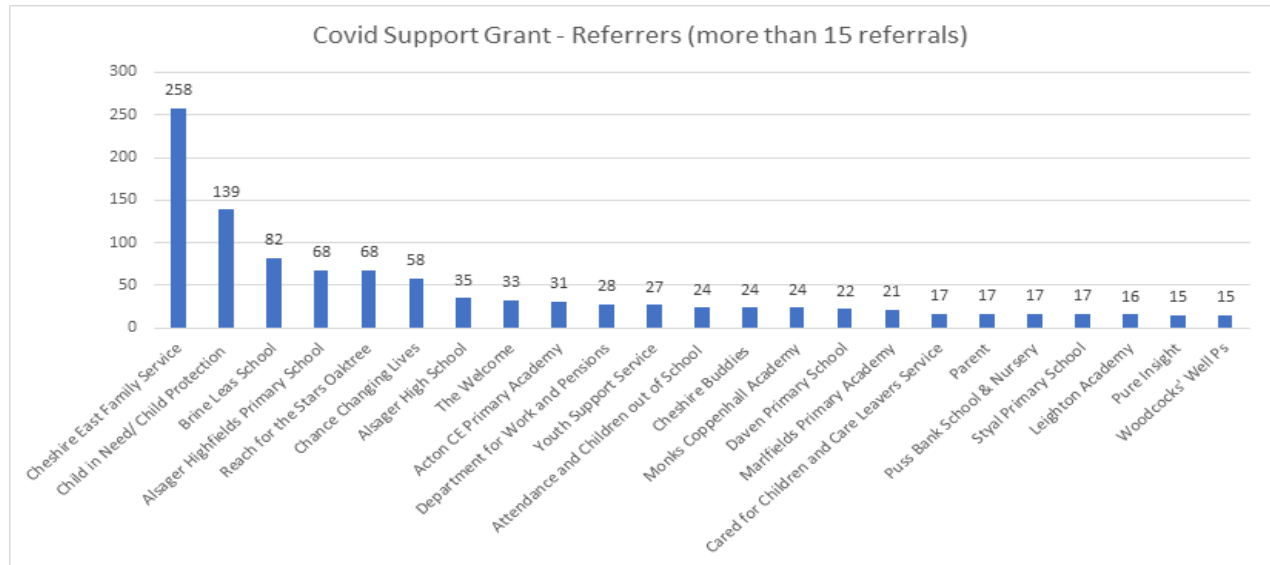
Appendix B – Map of COVID Support Grant delivery



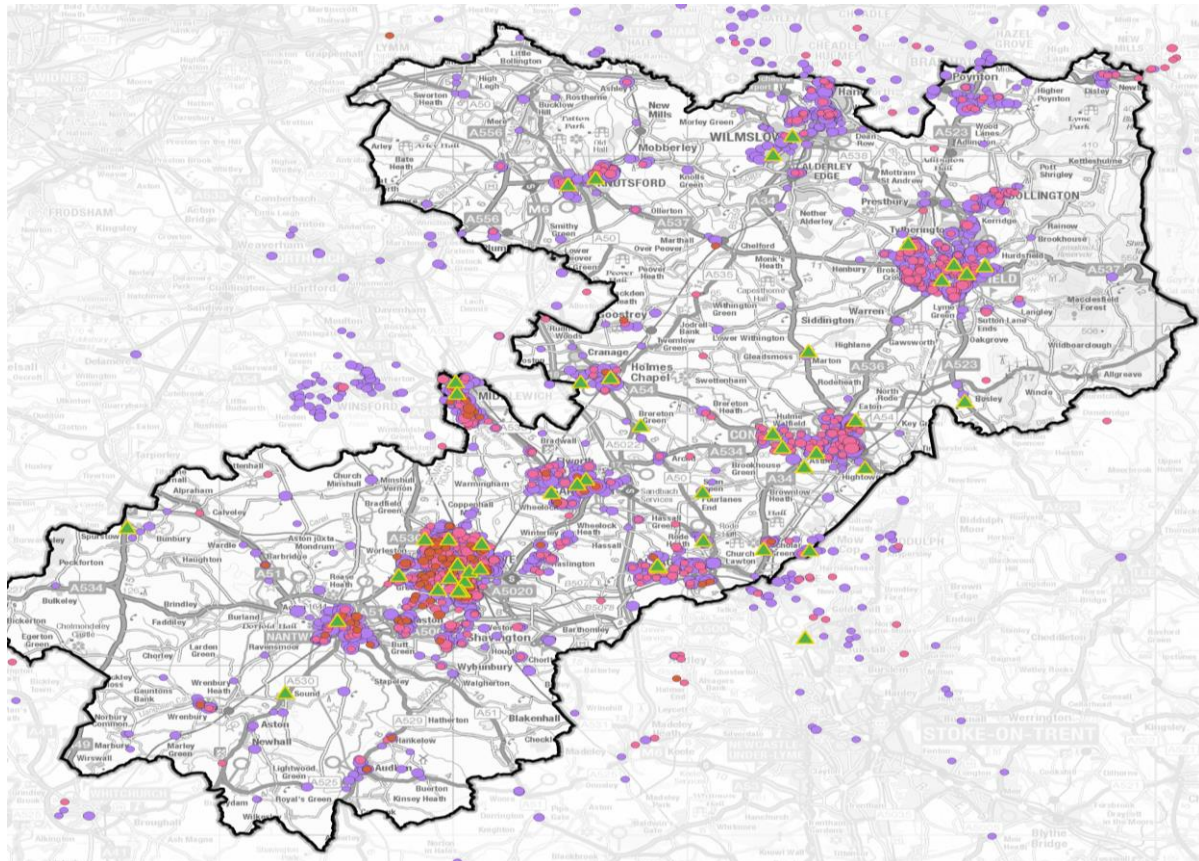
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Appendix C –COVID Support Grant inquiry form referrers



Appendix D – Holiday Activity Fund provider map



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