

SHARING IDEAS AROUND THE NETWORK

HOPE 4 SUMMER

TACKLING HOLIDAY HUNGER AND SUPPORTING FAMILIES DURING THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS

MAY 2015

Hope 4 Summer was organised by Together Middlesbrough and Cleveland (TMC) and brought together local organisations and churches, providing holiday clubs and healthy meals for over 400 children around Middlesbrough, during the 2014 summer holidays.

Background and Vision

For many families the summer holidays are a struggle. Children are at home 24/7, and without the provision of free school meals the weekly budget has to stretch further for food. Finding money for activities and treats is difficult, and the 6 week holidays can feel overwhelming. During the summer of 2013 Middlesbrough Food Bank saw a 40% increase in demand for support for families, and Safe Families for Children¹ also had a big rise in referrals as vulnerable families struggled to cope.

The vision of Hope 4 Summer was to be a grass-roots community based response, supporting families during the summer holidays by running affordable holiday clubs, providing fun activities and healthy meals. TMC contacted local churches based in areas of significant deprivation that were already working with children and families, and asked them to take part in the project. Hope 4 Summer partnered with several different local organisations:

- Local churches across Middlesbrough, providing the venues, volunteers and resources to run holiday activities
- Middlesbrough Food Bank, which provided non-perishable food items for healthy snacks and packed lunches
- Middlesbrough Council, providing funding to Middlesbrough Food Bank to purchase extra food items
- Safe Families for Children, which referred vulnerable families needing extra support during the school holidays



Planning and Training

Representatives from local churches gathered in April 2014 to discuss the project and plan activities. Each church agreed to run holiday activities in their local community for either 1-2 weeks or for 1-2 days each week, coordinating to ensure that activities were happening somewhere in Middlesbrough throughout the six weeks of the summer holidays.



A joint venture between the Diocese of York and Church Urban Fund

Each church put together a team of staff and volunteers to plan and run their activity programme. Support was provided from the York Diocese Youth & Children's advisers and a training programme for volunteers was organised by TMC to provide training in safeguarding, paediatric first aid and coping with challenging behaviour.

Project details and costs

A Together Grant of £5,000 from Church Urban Fund was used to fund the project. Each church received £600 to cover the costs of running the holiday activities, and the remainder of the budget was used for meetings, training and evaluation.

Sessions ran for 2-4 hours per day with 25-50 children aged between 5-11 years, based around the capacity of the churches in terms of volunteer numbers and the size of the venue. Sessions were either free or cost no more than 50p. Each session offered a range of themed activities such as arts, crafts, sports, games, music, and drama, and at every club the children received healthy packed lunches and snacks. The clubs each had a strong theme, creating an imaginary adventure to another world, for example Harry Potter, Treasure Island, Around the World, and Finding Nemo.

¹ [Safe Families for Children](#) is a volunteer organisation that gives support to families in crisis.

The holiday clubs were advertised in local schools and community venues using fliers and posters, and many churches arranged to go into their local schools to do an assembly to help promote the project. Safe Families for Children and Middlesbrough Food Bank were able to refer families to Hope 4 Summer, and Middlesbrough Strategic Partnership promoted the project.

Evaluation and Impact

Each church was asked to evaluate their programme of activities, and representatives of all the churches met in September to evaluate the Hope 4 Summer project. Key outcomes can be summarized as follows:

- The project worked with over 400 children and families
- Most families accessed the project through local contacts and promotion in schools
- Most churches were able to attract new volunteers to help with the project either from the local community or Middlesbrough College or Teesside University
- Feedback about the holiday club themes was extremely positive, children and parents loved the imaginary worlds that were created
- Parents were extremely positive about the provision of low/no-cost activities based in their communities
- The provision of healthy snacks and packed lunches was really enjoyed by the children and parents reported that this had helped with their tight budgets.

Building Community: Hope 4 Summer was a great way of getting churches working together and also with their local communities. Every church that took part reported that they had new children and families coming along that they had not worked with before, and it inspired local mums and grandmas to get involved with volunteering. The model of a grass roots response, working with communities to help themselves seems to have worked.

Valuable Partnerships: The Hope 4 Summer project owes much of its success to the local churches who ran the projects. The churches were able to offer facilities such as halls and kitchens, and parents valued that the holiday clubs were based in their local community. Each church had existing safeguarding policies and procedures in place, and a pool of staff/volunteers already working with children and families through activities such as Sunday School, Brownies, boys brigade, and after school clubs. Hope 4 Summer was able to access support from church resources at little or no cost, for example children's and youth advisors, and safeguarding training.

Working with Middlesbrough Food Bank allowed the project to bulk buy food items, which kept costs low, and it was fantastic that the local authority sponsored the cost of the non-perishable food items.

Looking Forward

Hope 4 Summer will take place again in 2015 with 4-5 new churches taking part, and existing churches extending their plans to offer support to more children and families. Support from Middlesbrough Food Bank and Middlesbrough Council has been secured, and Teesside University have offered support with volunteers through their Volun-Tees Programme. TMC created a [video](#) about Hope 4 Summer, which is a useful resource for explaining the vision for Hope 4 Summer, and how the project was run. Hope 4 Summer also featured in a [report about tackling holiday hunger](#), which provides several interesting case studies from around the UK and abroad.

Feedback from Parents

"My kids came home happy and tired and slept really well, the best gift you could have given me"

"My wife died last year and this is my first summer on my own with the children, 45 days off school feels like such a lot for me to fill. This holiday club has really helped and is building up a store of happy memories for them after so much sadness."

"I'm a local mum and volunteering with the holiday club is giving me something really positive to do with my children."

"If there was no holiday clubs I couldn't afford to do anything with the kids, because I wouldn't have enough money to do anything with them."

"Communities have broke down from what they used to be, so bringing the families and kids back together....it can only be good."