

The teens that summer forgot

July 2020

Summer holiday programmes are a vital bridge between the summer and autumn terms; a chance for children and young people to try new things, have fun and develop valuable life skills in a structured but stimulating environment. Usually summer is a time when sports clubs, play schemes, holiday programmes and youth spaces come to life, bringing in those who would otherwise be cooped up at home with nothing to do. This summer, however, there is little to look forward to. The provision on offer for children is looking threadbare despite a great deal of enthusiasm, hope and will for programmes to run, from young people and organisers alike.

Guidance published¹ on 1st July gave the green light for summer schemes to go ahead, as long as safety measures are carefully adhered to. This will make a huge difference to a very small number of families. In many areas, however, the guidance is too little too late – only two weeks in advance of schools breaking up. Delays to the release of guidance have left too much uncertainty for many organisers, forcing them to cancel everything they had planned. While some areas are persevering with some form of summer engagement, these programmes will be happening in a much-reduced form and reaching a far smaller group of children.

There is also a risk of over-13 year olds being side-lined from plans because of the slightly increased health risks they carry. The guidance does not prevent over-13s from taking part but asks providers to do additional safety planning around these age-groups which could be a deterrent. Additionally, the guidance bans overnight and residential provision for the time being. This will hit certain groups hardest such as those eligible for respite care or edge-of-care interventions, like teens with SEND or at risk of criminal exploitation. Those with special educational needs should be prioritised according to the guidance but could end up being excluded if their additional needs are deemed too complicated to manage.

To avoid a summer 'black hole' for children and especially teens, there is an opportunity to put youth services at the heart of catch-up plans² to prevent yet another injury for the young because of Covid-19. Schools, youth organisations and community groups need direction and close support so that they can plan for summer but more importantly beyond this to patch up the gaps Covid-19 has created.

Examples of holiday programmes still going ahead:

Some summer programmes are still intending to run and are frantically planning to reshape their offer around government guidance. Most of these revised schemes and clubs will be highly targeted towards the children in their areas they believe are most vulnerable:

- > The **NCS Trust** will be delivering a revised late summer and autumn programme with sessions on subjects such as employability, health and wellbeing, careers guidance, citizenship and skills for independent living.
- > **Northumberland County Council** has announced that there will be 28 pop-up summer schools this year. This combines a teaching plan with a Newcastle United Foundation partnership.³

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/protective-measures-for-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak#who-can-attend-your-out-of-school-setting>

² See NYA: Time Out: Reimagining Schools: A youth work response to Covid-19 (June 2020): <https://nya.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/0888-NYA-COVID-19-SCHOOLS-report-P3.pdf>

³ <https://www.itv.com/news/tyne-tees/2020-06-24/pop-up-schools-to-be-set-up-in-northumberland-this-summer/>

- > **Rochdale Borough Council** will be running one scheme for vulnerable children with significant input from its health and leisure provider.
- > **Wigan's** summer programmes have had to be scaled back, especially for 13-18 year olds for whom the provision is run by charity partners and schools.

There are other areas which still hope to run something over summer, but have nothing confirmed, for example:

- > **Young Somerset** hopes to put on some summer activities focusing on the return to school, building up confidence, and social skills and communication. Among this are hopes to do some small group work with vulnerable young people, such as kayaking and conservation.

Many areas and programmes have developed an enhanced virtual offering as a result of Covid-19, however online activity is limited in its reach and can only achieve so much.

Examples of cancelled programmes:

Many areas have taken the difficult decision to cancel their summer clubs and activities. For some, this is because government guidance has come too late and there is simply not enough time for planning to incorporate all of these stipulations. Other areas have cited the challenges and costs associated with meeting social distancing requirements, restrictions on facilities and issues with transport for children. Some organisations have staff on furlough which has contributed to capacity issues.

- > **Sainsbury's Active Kids Holiday Clubs** have been cancelled this summer. Last year the clubs reached 100,000 children in 70 locations. Schools only recently learnt about this decision, leaving many without alternative plans for the children who were meant to be attending.
- > We know of at least 5 local authorities which have cancelled their holiday programmes. One found that it was too late to organise activities after the published guidance because of the local authority off-site visit timescales.