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Suffolk Holiday Activities: Evaluation Report

October 2020

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Introduction

About the Programme

In June 2020, Suffolk County Council awarded the Youth Sport Trust (YST) a grant to deliver a **Summer Holiday Activities Programme**, creating and distributing holiday activity packs to support wellbeing and encourage physical activity to disadvantaged children and young people in Suffolk during the summer holidays. The programme was funded by Suffolk County Council through the Department for Education Holiday Activities and Food programme.

Up to 3 million children risk being hungry in the school holidays. This group comprises over a million children growing up in poverty who receive free school meals during term time, as well as an estimated 2 million who are disqualified from free school meals because their parents work but remain in poverty. The loss of Free School Meals during the school holidays can cost a family £30-40 per week¹. Furthermore, digital deprivation exists within disadvantaged areas, with 20% of those on free school meals (FSM) in the UK having no access to a home computer².

For vulnerable and low-income families, the risks relating to nutrition, learning, emotional wellbeing, social interaction and financial security are most pronounced during long summer holidays where parents and carers find themselves under increased pressure to feed children and provide activities for them. Therefore, the programme aimed to encourage children and young people to engage in physical activity, connect with others, try new things and develop self-awareness – and was designed to support the health & wellbeing of participants and their families.

Over the summer holidays in households across Suffolk, the Holiday Activities Programme aimed to provide access to good physical activity for vulnerable children and support the activity levels and emotional wellbeing of vulnerable children. This was delivered via **Equipment/Resource Packs** from YST, with support provided by key workers who were working and engaging with the families.

About the Research

Within the equipment pack, families were encouraged to complete an evaluation postcard to provide feedback on the pack they received. The feedback was individually designed to allow feedback from Young people, Parents/Carers, and Key Workers. This report summarises the feedback provided by a sample of those who received the equipment pack in Suffolk. The intention of the report is to evaluate the responses provided and draw key learnings and recommendations from the evaluation for future or similar iterations of this programme.

1592
YOUNG
PEOPLE ON
THE VIRTUAL
SCHOOL ROLL
ENGAGED

901
PRIMARY
AGED YOUNG
PEOPLE

691
SECONDARY
AGED YOUNG
PEOPLE

350
KEY
WORKERS
SUPPORTING

600
EXTRA MINI-
PACKS SENT
TO CHILDREN
IN CARE

30
EXTRA PACKS
SENT TO
CHILDREN IN
REFUGES

About the Holiday Activity Packs

What was in the pack?

The Summer Holiday Activity Packs were delivered directly to children in their homes. Contents reflected different age ranges, and included:

- **Holiday Activity Pack Guide** - how to make the most of the pack
- **Physical Activity cards** - ideas for active games and challenges (with links to online copies and ideas too)
- **Personal Challenges** - setting goals and engaging in self-challenge
- **Active in Mind Challenges** – a range of activities to build confidence, resilience and positive emotional wellbeing
- **Social Challenges** - using the resources with family and friends
- **An equipment kit bag to support virtual activities** - contents include; stress ball, reaction ball, sensory ball, water bottle, Frisbee, skipping rope plus more and other age-related kit
- **Unique YouTube Channel** - with a wide range of activity ideas and video demos.
- **Chateez Keyring** - providing opportunities to check in on feelings and emotions
- **'Have Your Say' evaluation card**- encouraging feedback about the packs



Whilst many of the items in the pack were provided to children and young people of all ages, there were some items which were age related, and differed depending on the Key Stage of the child. For example, KS1 children received a Healthy Movers backpack with content. Additionally, KS3 children received playground chalk, but KS4 children received a whiteboard and pen.

Process Evaluation

Strengths of the Programme Design

Key to the success of the delivery of equipment packs was the regular contact between Youth Sport Trust and Suffolk County Council, throughout the programme. The creation of a clear, internal project team meant there was close communication across different stages of the programme itself.

For future iterations of the programme, it is important that success is similarly built upon clearly defined roles from all staff members involved, which allows ease of communication throughout. A key result of the current programme design was that the delivery of the equipment packs had a 95% success rate with regard to families receiving the packs to their door. Any undelivered packs were returned to Youth Sport Trust and on to Suffolk County Council for redistribution.

Finally, the element of surprise with regard to the packs being delivered to families was discussed as a key strength of the programme. This is also reflected in feedback from key workers, which includes:

“The first and most noticeable impact for this young person was receiving something in the post! Not only had he never received something in the post before, it was an exciting parcel which he said felt like his birthday or Christmas!”

Therefore, creating a ‘buzz’ around the packs is key to the success and is likely to maintain engagement as it is framed as a gift for the young people.

Improvements in the Programme Design

The success rate outlined above suggests there is little room for improvement with regard to the distribution of packs. Nevertheless, feedback suggested that address data was not always fully cleansed, which meant that, in some cases, deliveries were unable to be made. It also meant additional costs were incurred by YST, which was absorbed as a goodwill gesture. More in-depth cleansing of the data may have meant that packs arrived quicker and ultimately given the young people more time with the packs.

Secondly, a key reflection of the programme design was the element of surprise with regard to the packs being delivered to families. Whilst this is largely regarded as a positive of the programme, from a supply chain perspective this did cause a few issues with the supplier, who received a small number of calls, some aggressive, from some recipients questioning why they received the delivery. To avoid this occurring again in future iterations of the programme, there could be a form of pre-communication with families, to let them know that there is an exciting offer that is coming soon.

Finally, whilst a strength of the programme was the speed in which such packs were created and delivered to families, feedback for future iterations of the programme did offer that more time to create an even better proposition would be beneficial and put less pressure on the supply chain to turn the project around.

Impact

Social Media Response

The Twitter hashtag #SummerInaBox was encouraged to be shared amongst all those who were engaged with the pack (see right).

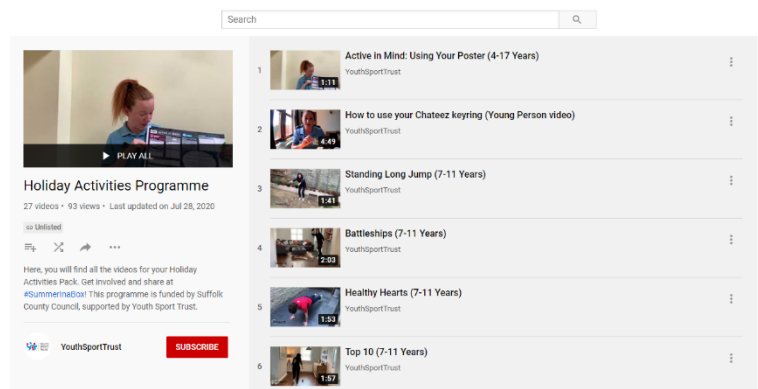
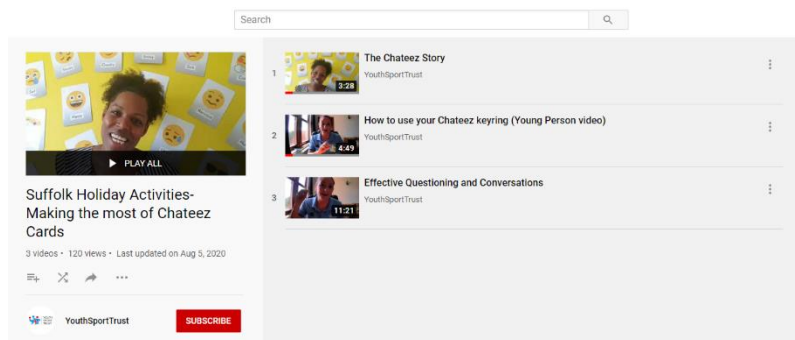


YouTube Channel hits:

As part of the resources, two YouTube channels were included for all families to view, with a wide range of activities and ideas to engage with. The final views on the channel were as follows:

CHATEEZ PLAYLIST:

120 VIEWS



HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES PROGRAMME PLAYLIST:

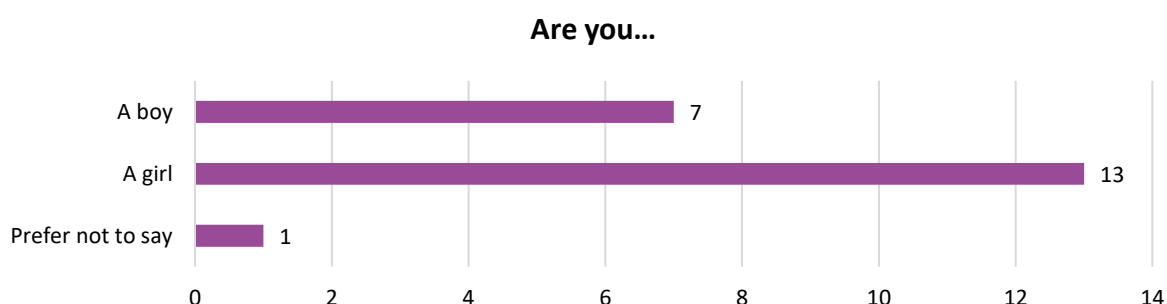
93 VIEWS

Evaluation Postcard

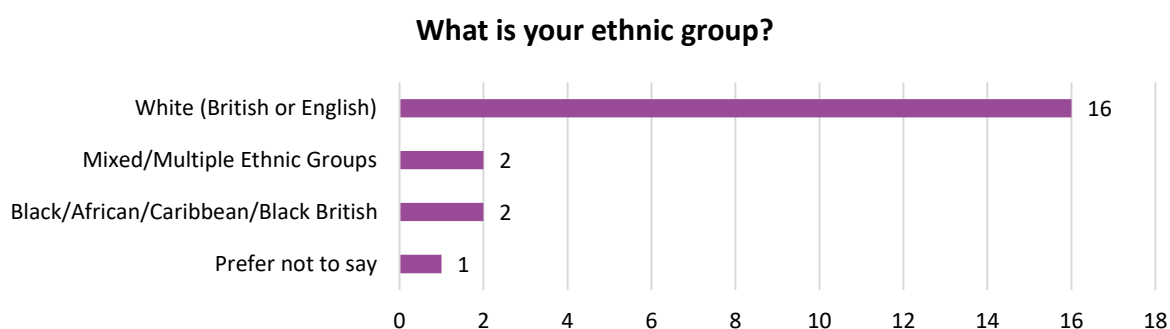
Families were encouraged to complete an evaluation postcard enclosed within the pack, to provide feedback on the pack they received. Young people specifically were incentivized with all those who returned their evaluation being entered into a prize draw to win a Fitbit watch. The feedback was individually designed to gain feedback from young people, parents/carers, and key workers. No responses were returned from parents/carers; however, a total of 21 young people completed the evaluation postcard.

Young People Demographics

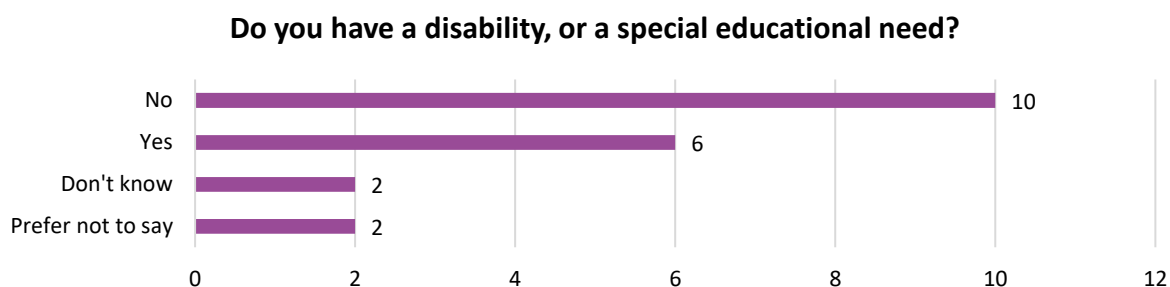
Across those who completed the survey, 13 were girls and 7 were boys (1 x 'Prefer not to say').



As shown below, respondents were predominantly White (British or English) ethnicity, with four out of 21 young people reporting that they were from a Black ethnicity or a mixed ethnic group.

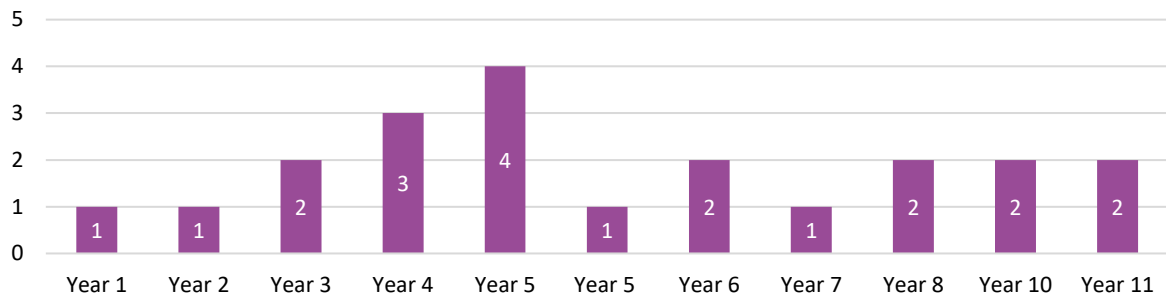


Ten of the respondents reported that they did not have a disability or special educational need (SEND). However, six reported that they did have a disability or SEND (2 x 'Don't know', 2 x 'Prefer not to say').



Finally, whilst there was a positive spread of respondents across multiple year groups, young people who completed the evaluation were most likely to be in Year 4 or 5.

What school year group are you in (in September 2020)?

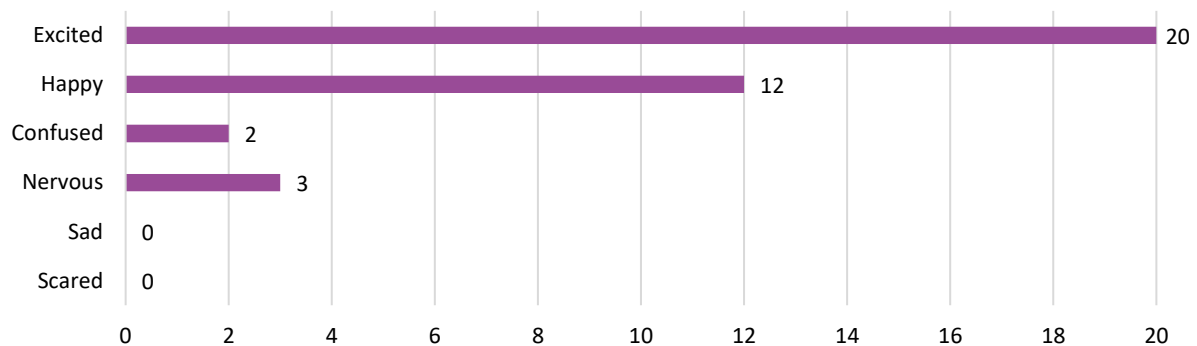


“When I Got My Pack...”

As shown below, there was a positive feeling amongst young people when they got their pack, and many were excited and happy to explore the equipment provided. A couple of respondents reported feeling confused, which is perhaps reflective of the fact they did not know too much about the pack before receiving it.

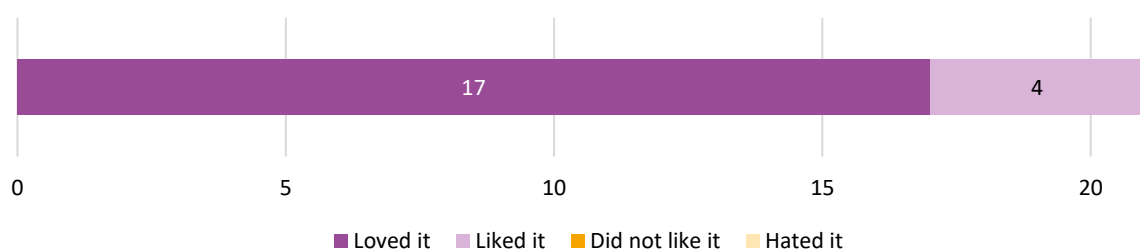
How did you feel when you first got your pack?

(You may select more than one)



There was a similarly positive response from young people in their opinion of the pack when they received it. All 21 respondents reported that they ‘Loved’ or ‘Liked’ the pack when they first got it.

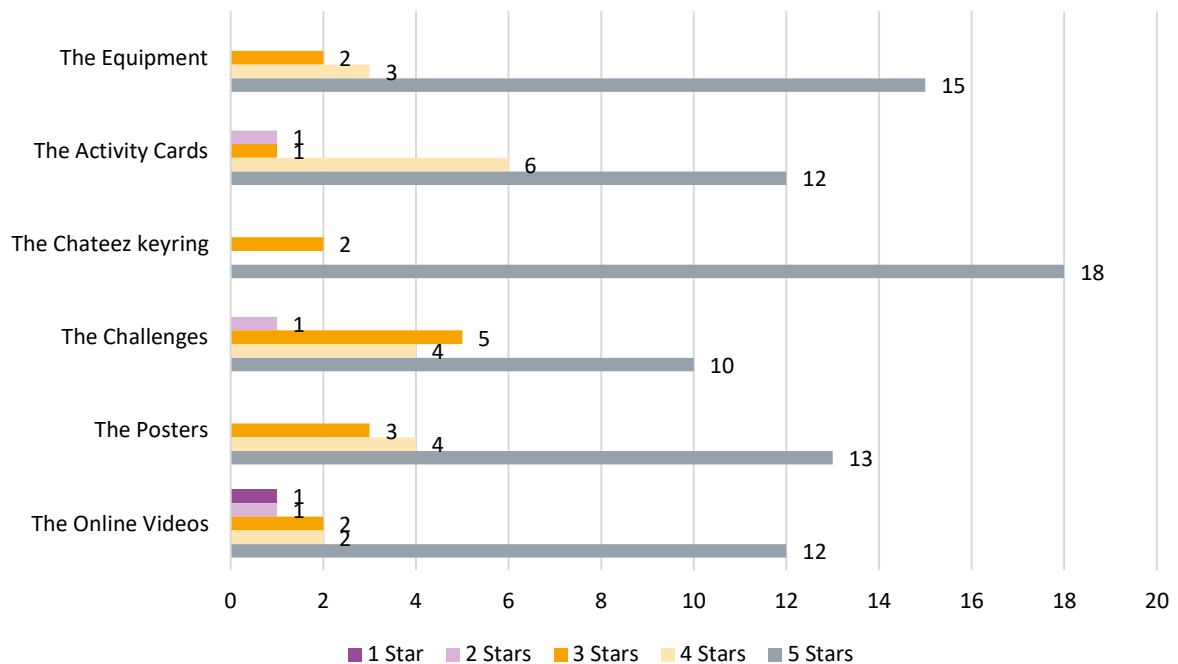
What did you think of the pack when you first got it?



“Inside My Pack...”

Young people were asked to rate the different elements of the pack out of five (1 star = rubbish, 5 stars = brilliant). As shown below, respondents were most likely to rate all parts of the pack as five stars. The most popular part of the pack was the Chateez keyring, followed by the equipment. A small number of respondents rated the online videos with a low response (1 – 2 stars); however, this may be that they did not access the videos so were unable to reliably rate them. As shown below, it appears that the interactive nature of the pack was most well received by young people, in which they could physically engage with the resources.

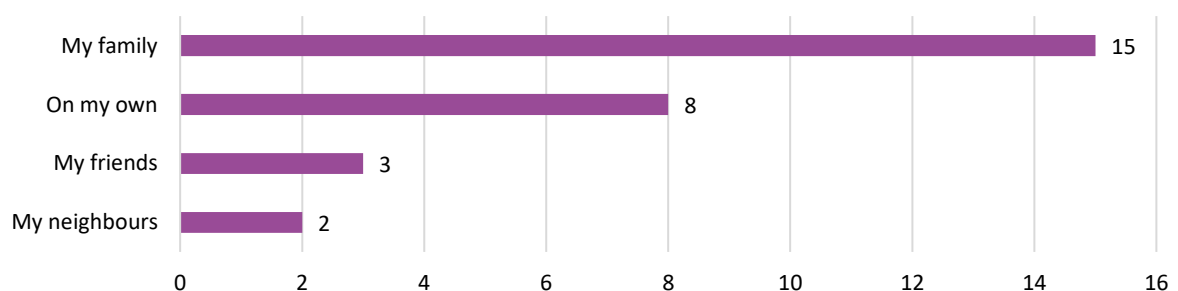
Please rate the following parts of the pack



“Using My Pack...”

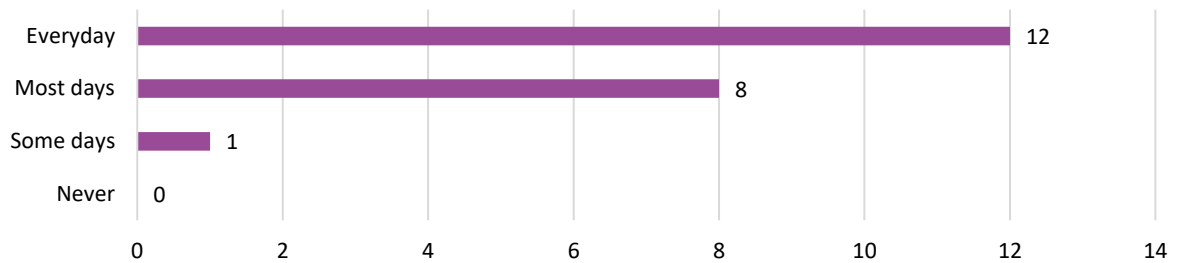
Young people were asked to report who they used the pack with, when they were engaging with it. Positively, respondents were most likely to use the pack with their family, and less than half also used it on their own. Young people used the pack with friends or neighbours in a minority of cases, yet this is likely to reflect the current COVID guidance to reduce close contact with others outside of your own household.

Who have you used the pack with (You may select more than one)



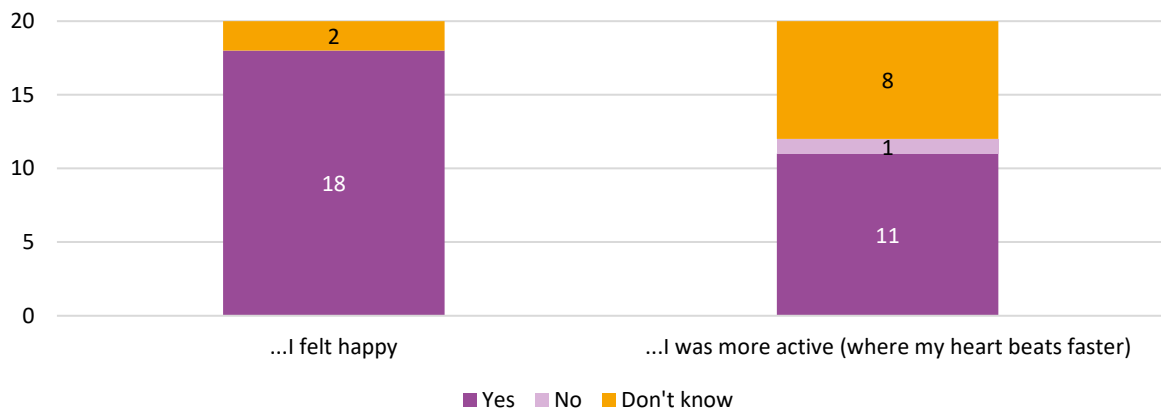
Similarly positive, young people were most likely to report that they used the pack every day. Out of 21 respondents, 20 reported using it every day or most days.

How often have you used the pack?



The large majority of young people agreed that they felt happy when they were using the pack, which is similarly positive. When asked if the pack made them more active, the response was reduced with approximately half of respondents saying yes, and half saying 'don't know' or no. This may reflect that the pack contained different elements which didn't always require being active when engaging with it (e.g. watching the YouTube channel).

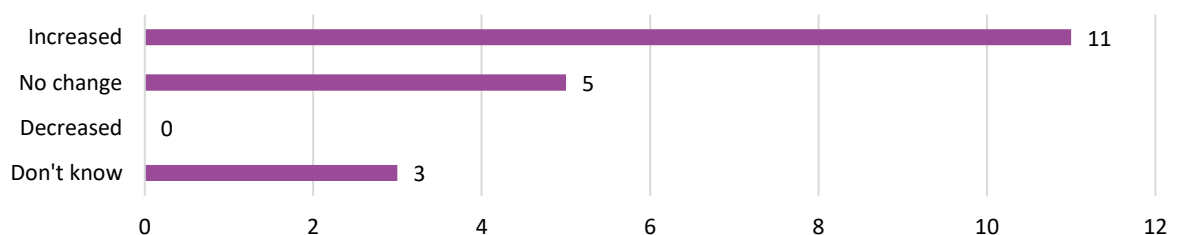
When I used the pack...



“After Using My Pack...”

Approximately half of the young people reported that using the pack had increased the amount of physical activity they do, whilst one quarter reported that the pack had no change on their physical activity. As expected, no one reported a decrease in their physical activity levels.

Has using the pack changed the amount of physical activity you do?



Finally, young people were asked to write a response to the following questions:

1. What was the best thing about using the pack?

Responses from young people were varied, in what they thought the best thing was about using the pack. The Chateez cards received a positive response, and young people reported how it encouraged them to do more exercise. Key quotes from respondents included:

- *That it has helped me, like the cards have. And I loved the Chateez cards.*
- *With my mental health, it has been a bit better*
- *The exercises and the gifts, thank you*
- *It encouraged me to exercise and get active*
- *I love how active I was being*
- *Learning I can do more exercise*
- *It increased my health, I am healthier now*
- *That it helped me keep calm*
- *I liked the chalk, Chateez keyring and the recipe cards the best*

2. What would make the pack better?

Positively, many young people said there was nothing that they would change about the pack, which suggests that they received a wide variety of resources to use. An interesting addition if there were to be future iterations of this pack would be a sticker chart. Additionally, the Active in Mind resources looked to promote positive mental health, but more resources within mental health were suggested and might be more beneficial for Key Stage 4 students.

- *Telling you how to use all the things not just the things that keep you fit*
- *Nothing. It's perfect*
- *A sticker chart for the activities*
- *Not, I loved it the way it is, so I wouldn't do anything*
- *Maybe more things to make better mental health*
- *A chalkboard*
- *A bit more sport*
- *Nothing it is amazing as it is*
- *If it had a better selection of toys*

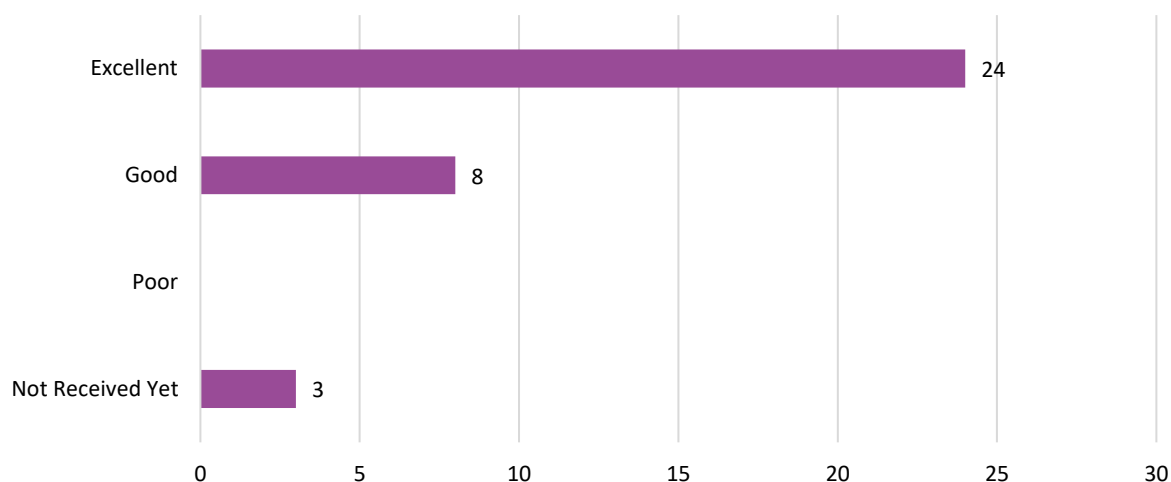
Key Worker Feedback

In addition to the evaluation postcard and surveys built by Youth Sport Trust, key worker feedback was gathered by Suffolk County Council which provided some in-depth insight into the value of the packs for young people and their families. Key insight included:

- *“I support a family with a parent who struggles to be active with the children due to her mental health difficulties. This pack helped her get involved in sports with the children. Since then she has made a goal to be more active and she now has the goal to go for a walk once a day with the children.”*
- *“I work with a young boy aged 7 who has complex additional needs. He has not had a school place for 9 months as his behaviour is so challenging. He is non-verbal. During a video call he was very excited to show me his activity packs. He took out his favourite things and used his communication strategies to tell me about how he had used his packs with his Mum and how he plays with them. His Mum told me that the activities were spot on for him and really lifted his mood which in turn improved his behaviour with less meltdowns and aggressive outbursts.”*

In particular, all key workers who wished to use them were provided with a set of Chateez cards. As shown below, key workers were asked to rate the Chateez cards, and all those who received the cards were hugely positive in their responses, with all rating them as Excellent or Good.

If you have received your Chateez Cards, how would you rate them?



Notable feedback from key workers in relation to their ability to help young people and families with communication using the Chateez cards included:

- *“The Chateez cards have supported me to complete wishes and feelings work with young people, particularly those that found talking virtually whilst at home difficult.”*
- *“The youngest child in this family finds it difficult to name, express or contain his emotions. I have shown dad how he can use the Chateez cards with him to help support this, which is currently working well.”*
- *“I have used these cards with two young people so far and they have been really helpful to either start off a conversation or to scale how successful an intervention has been. They are also very good at helping me understand a young person’s perception of things.”*
- *“They have helped as a practitioner to have a resource to gain wishes and feelings from children, particularly from those that find talking on camera difficult. It has supported with SEND children as i can use them to talk about feelings and emotions, whereas before they were finding words confusing and overwhelming.”*
- *“I’m working with a young person who struggles to recognise her own feelings and emotions which causes her to become angry and frustrated when she’s unable to express herself. During a video call I have looked through my pack of cards and she has had her kept ring cards. We have talked through each emoji and then further explore when she has felt this way. This has helped her name how she’s feeling. I have encouraged mum to use these at home when she sees young person becoming frustrated and have emailed school asking if she can have these in school too.”*
- *“One of my young people has autism and finds using these with mum very helpful, it means she doesn't have to speak if she doesn't want to, Mum says that she is speaking more now and thinks it is down to using the cards”*
- *“I have used the cards speaking to a young child of 3 years old. It was a good tool to use to talk about different feelings. she could point to a card when asked how she felt about a particular time. We practiced making the faces on the cards!”*
- *“As soon as they were passed to the child, she was picking out the different faces, we made this into a game and were then trying to pull the same faces, but it was really useful for the child to learn about feelings.”*

As shown above, a key strength of the Chateez cards is the flexibility in which they can be used by key workers with young people and families. Not least because of the current coronavirus pandemic where communication is limited (and often moved to online platforms), the use of the cards to express emotion is a positive tool to help young people identify and express their emotions with others.

Conclusion

Taken together, the responses that have been provided by young people who received the **Summer Holiday Activities Programme** sports equipment pack were positive overall and indicated that this was a useful pack to support wellbeing and encourage physical activity amongst disadvantaged children and young people in Suffolk during the summer holidays. Supporting such families is of huge importance at the best of times, but during the coronavirus outbreak in 2020, the need to support families has grown to be even more important.

Particularly positive feedback was provided in relation to the Chateez cards, which allowed young people to engage with familiar 'emoji's' but also allow them to interact, identify and share their emotions with others using the cards. This was reflected in the feedback given from young people and from key workers who saw the cards as a useful tool to support their work.

While the digital resources were not widely used or engaged with, this may be due to the lack of technology used by families who received the pack. Indeed, as discussed above, the digital deprivation that might exist in certain disadvantaged areas within Suffolk could explain this, with figures in the UK showing that 20% of those on free school meals (FSM) having no access to a home computer ². This should not deter future iterations from using online resources in delivery but may explain why the raw number of interactions might have been lower than expected.

It must be noted that the number of respondents (21 young people) who returned their evaluation card represents a small sample size, therefore percentage calculations could not be made and the results may need to be treated with caution in how representative they are of all those who were engaged in the programme. Moreover, it may be that those who did return their evaluation card are likely to reflect a sample who closely engaged with the **Summer Holiday Activities Programme**, which is another factor to consider.

Further research would be useful to determine the attitudes towards the **Summer Holiday Activities Programme**, from the perspective of parents/carers. Whilst this was built into the evaluation for these groups, it would be useful to supplement the responses from young people with more in-depth, qualitative feedback from the adults who were also involved.

Recommendations

Within the context of the equipment packs, a number of recommendations are outlined below:

- 1. The More Interactive, The Better** – positive responses for the whole pack is highlighted by the fact that children and young people can actively engage in the resources and see their own development. The resources that young people could physically interact with were rated most positively. Small additions such as a sticker chart for the activities would mean greater interactivity and logging of progress.
- 2. Signpost to Further Information** – within the Active in Mind packs, there were some excellent resources in relation to physical wellbeing and mental health. For Key Stage 3 and 4 children in particular, it may be useful to include further reading and information that they could seek out to support their mental health. Or if necessary, any access to local mental health services.
- 3. Maximise the Use of Social Media** – in addition to the #SummerInaBox hashtag, it would be valuable to encourage families to send in videos of them using the equipment packs. This can increase engagement and spark ideas and excitement for those who are watching the YouTube channel or looking at engagement on Twitter. While not everyone may have access to such technology, the use of social media could still be a useful tool to spark a ‘buzz’ around the packs, where possible.
- 4. Maximise methods to seek feedback** – while the present report outlines the feedback provided by young people, this sample was small, and we had built methods to gain feedback from parents/carers which was not responded to. The use of incentives (i.e. prize draw for Fitbit watch) is likely to have been useful, but greater direction could be given regularly to key workers to encourage families to use the pack and to provide feedback.

For future iterations, it might be beneficial to send multiple reminders to families throughout the programme. Additionally, future iterations could trial other methods of feedback – for example, a live online class to run activities with live feedback built into a chat function at the time.

References

1. Forsey, A. Hungry Holidays: A report on hunger amongst children during school holidays. 64 (2017).
2. Green, F. Schoolwork in lockdown : new evidence on the epidemic of educational poverty . Professor of Work and Education Economics , UCL Institute of Education . Executive Summary . 1–20 (2020).

Appendix

Context	Aim	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short term outcomes	Long term outcomes
<p>Up to an estimated 3 million children risk being hungry in the school holidays. This group comprises over a million children growing up in poverty who receive free school meals (FSMs) during term time, as well as an estimated 2 million who are disqualified from free school meals because their parents work for their poverty. (Source: Hungry Holidays, 2017)</p> <p>The loss of Free School Meals during the school holidays can cost a family £30-40 per week. (Source: Hungry Holidays, 2017)</p> <p>For vulnerable and low-income families, the risks relating to nutrition, learning, emotional wellbeing, social interaction and financial security are most pronounced during long summer holidays where parents and carers find themselves under increased pressure to feed children and provide activities for them.</p>	<p>Over the summer holidays in households across Suffolk we aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide access to good physical activity for vulnerable children - Support the activity levels and emotional wellbeing of vulnerable children 	<p>DfE funding distributed by Suffolk County Council</p> <p>YST staff, resources and expertise</p> <p>Key worker support</p>	<p>Deliver Summer Holiday Activity Packs* directly to homes to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Online video activity content - Hardcopy activity content - Active in Mind posters and videos (KS2,3,4) - Equipment packages to support virtual activities (KS2,3,4 e.g. balls, skipping rope, stress ball) - Healthy Movers packs (KS1) - Chateez Keyring - Evaluation postcard <p>*Packs to be age appropriate and where required meet the needs of SEND children</p> <p>Activities and challenges for children to complete across the summer holidays to cover three themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active challenges - Emotional challenges - Social challenges 	<p>1592 homes receive virtual and hard copy support packs</p> <p>1592 vulnerable children, on FSMs from reception age to KS4 living in targeted communities across Suffolk receiving support</p> <p>350 Key workers engaged to support children and families</p> <p>Online content 'hits' recorded, using Google analytics to track the number of clicks made by families.</p> <p>1 Impact report</p>	<p>For the children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase in opportunities to be physically active - Increased physical activity levels (physical wellbeing) - Improved emotional and social wellbeing <p>For families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved support during the summer holidays - Increased confidence in providing holiday activities for their children 	<p>Reduction in holiday hunger in Suffolk</p> <p>Sustained improvements to nutrition, physical activity levels and wellbeing amongst vulnerable children in Suffolk</p> <p>Improved support (networks) for vulnerable families in Suffolk</p>

YST RESEARCH

The Youth Sport Trust (YST) is a national children's charity passionate about creating a future where every child enjoys the life-changing benefits that come from play and sport. YST Research offers research, analysis, insight and evaluation services to organisations with an interest in the wider children and young people's sector. Our research expertise is focussed on improving the wellbeing of children and young people through sport and physical activity.

Our specialisms include:

- Education, PE and school sport
- Community sport / clubs
- Early years settings
- Life skills and employability
- Activism and volunteering
- Health (physical, social and emotional)

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Contact us:

Youth Sport Trust

SportPark Loughborough
University
3 Oakwood Drive
Loughborough
Leicestershire LE11 3QF

T 01509 226600
E RESEARCH@YOUTHSPORTTRUST.ORG
W WWW.YOUTHSPORTTRUST.ORG

 @YOUTHSPORTTRUST
 YOUTHSPORTTRUST

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