

The story of

**HERTS
SUMMER
PARKS**

2023

by Herts Sport & Physical Activity Partnership

Contents

1. Overview

2.

Background

3.

Making It Happen

4.

Monitoring & Evaluation

5.

Outreach & Legacy

6. Future Recommendations

1. Overview

Introducing HAPpy's 'older sister'

The 'Herts Summer Parks' programme, funded by HAPpy*, was a pilot project that aimed to plug the gap in provision for 12 to 16-year-olds eligible for, but not engaging with Hertfordshire's main HAPpy programme. It was identified that pre-booking was a barrier to accessing provision for this demographic, So, the team at Herts Sport & Physical Activity Partnership (HSP) wanted to offer an alternative opportunity for these young people to access the benefits HAPpy brings and delivering in areas where they already socialise.

Adopting a festival style, our pop-up events were held across five public parks in Hertfordshire throughout August 2023. The programme featured a range of sports, activities, arts and crafts, and provided food provision in the form of vouchers redeemable at food outlets in the local area.

The following report will summarise the **approaches the initiative took**, its **key successes**, and the **challenges** that need to be addressed for it to fulfil its full potential.

*(*Through the Department of Education Holiday Activity and Food Fund.)*



2. Background

Funded in part through HAPpy and the Department of Education's underspend and in line with HAF principles, the Herts Summer Parks Programme was designed to provide free physical activity and food opportunities across five parks in Hertfordshire during summer 2023 for secondary school-aged children (12-16 yrs.) who receive benefits-related free school meals (FSM).

The areas were first selected using FSM data within our Local Insight tool. The areas chosen had the highest proportion of children on benefits-related FSM within our Active Local* areas (*HSP's place-based approach to tackling inequality). Once an area was chosen the respective Active Local officer for that area sourced further insight into what parks may be suitable. Key partners, such as local authorities, were approached to discuss availability and whether they wanted to be a part of the programme.

Once the parks were chosen, we mapped out their current provision and availability to ensure the initiative would not clash with any other local programmes.

The confirmed locations and days were as follows:

- **Meadow Park** – Borehamwood, Hertsmere – **Mondays.**
- **King George V playing fields** – Stevenage – **Tuesdays.**
- **Cheshunt Park** – Cheshunt, Broxbourne – **Wednesdays.**
- **King George V playing fields** – Welwyn Garden City, Welwyn Hatfield – **Thursdays.**
- **King George V playing fields** – Watford – **Fridays** (replacing a park in South Oxhey which was originally selected but substituted due to ongoing building work and renovations).

We worked collaboratively with our local authority partners to gain land permissions, complete event notification forms, write event plans and finalise all risk assessments. All these documents were then submitted to the relevant

Safety Advisory Group or Safety Advisory Team (known locally as SAG/SAT teams) for approval. In addition to this, the team worked closely with local partners to understand the young people's interest in certain activities within their local park. We also attended local youth strategy group meetings and projects to gain insight from the young people themselves.

It is important to note that we commissioned two health and safety advisors from Stevenage Borough Council who consulted and supported the programme's risk assessments and event plans. This included secondary site visits to all five parks (accompanied by Sporting Inspirations CIC) to inform the site-specific risk assessments and an overall separate activity-based risk assessment.

To align with the main HAPpy programme, we structured the events to include one main sporting activity, one main enrichment/arts and crafts activity, plus a more open well-being element and food provision.

3. Making It happen

Staffing

Activities

Food Provision

Marketing & Communications

Key Partnerships & Dignitaries

3. Making it Happen

Staffing

HSP commissioned Sporting Inspirations CIC (SI) to be the delivery partner who would be responsible for providing the onsite delivery staff for the duration of the programme across all parks (with the slight difference in Broxbourne as noted below).

Sporting Inspirations CIC officers had total control of the programme (other than Broxbourne) with two event leads and three to four assistants on any given event. **They were responsible for the following:**



- Transportation (driving the hired van throughout the programme and coming back to base at the end of every week to be topped up).
- Set up and set down of the equipment (excluding any external hired in activities where instead they facilitated arrival and engaged with/supported providers).
- Overall event management.
- Primary safeguarding responsibility.
- Leading on health & safety as required.
- Leading the registration process (an online Microsoft Forms document created and continuously monitored by HSP staff)
- Capture of monitoring and evaluation.
- Onsite marketing content
- Capturing youth voice.

HSP project staff were in constant communication with the three event leads and John Manitaro (CEO, Sporting Inspirations CIC) via a management WhatsApp group. This provided an invaluable mechanism for instant feedback on delivery, the sharing of photos (with consent) and key updates/tweaks in procedures as the programme progressed.



3. Making it Happen

Activities

Based on insight gained, we planned a varied programme of activities with a theme each week for the main activities which was replicated across all parks in the given week (see table below; activities in bold were delivered by an external individual/organisation). This ensured the programme remained cost-effective and consistent, offering the young people in each area the same opportunity to access all activities on offer.



Week	Main Physical Activity	Enrichment / Well-being Activity	Third Activity	Fourth Activity
1	Bubble Football - Sporting Inspirations staff lead.	Origami Workshop - (5 activities) by ArtByVanessa.	Connect four & giant Jenga 'chillout' tent.	Multisport offer (badminton, volleyball, football, spike ball, floor basketball).
2	Pump Track – Fast Trax.	Graffiti Workshop - Demograffix (Mon, wed, Fri). Graffiti Stars (Tues & Thurs).	Connect four & giant Jenga 'chillout' tent.	Multisport offer (badminton, volleyball, football, spike ball, floor basketball).
3	3x3 Basketball - Sporting Inspirations staff lead.	Nature inspired Art & Crafts Workshop – Jam Arts Water colour painting and collage.	Connect four & giant Jenga 'chillout' tent.	Multisport offer (badminton, volleyball, football, spike ball, floor basketball) Frisbee Golf.
4	Climbing Wall - The Fun Firm.	Bracelet Making & Relaxation/mindfulness Colouring – self lead.	Inflatable Football Darts - The Fun Firm.	Connect four & giant Jenga 'chillout' tent & Multisport offer (badminton, volleyball, football, spike ball, floor basketball).

3. Making it Happen

Broxbourne, Cheshunt Park: A Different Model

We took a slightly different approach with one of the five parks, commissioning Matt Ridley (Broxbourne Sports Development Officer) and Broxbourne Borough Council casual staff to take the lead on co-ordinating supporting activities, staffing and marketing of the Broxbourne contingent of the programme. Held at Cheshunt Park it formed an extension of their established 'Lark in the Park' Programme.

To provide consistency within the registration process, monitoring, evaluation, and quality of the programme, two event leads from Sporting Inspirations attended this park each week to support Broxbourne Borough Council staff with the delivery. They had access to the main external providers used at the other sites, but devised a slightly different programme of supporting activities (in bold) for their four events as shown on the table on the next page:

Whilst this approach reduced some staffing costs, this model presented some challenges due to the need to have an extra level of liaison between Sporting Inspirations and Broxbourne Borough Council. This park was unfortunately the lowest attended site across the programme. This site was marketed separately as a park of Broxbourne's wider 'Lark in the Park' programme, and as such there is the possibility it did not benefit from our centralised Herts Summer Parks marketing approach. The park was also hit with extremely poor weather in week one which severely affected numbers in comparison to the other sites.



3. Making it Happen

Broxbourne, Cheshunt Park Activities

Week	Main Physical Activity	Enrichment / Well-being Activity	Third Activity	Fourth Activity
1 Wed 2nd Aug	Bubble Football *2 extra Sporting Inspirations provided*	Origami workshop - Art by Vanessa	Tag Archery – Bubble Boy Events brought equipment, inflatable barriers, and staff.	Multisport – Broxbourne Council multisport offer, nerf wars and water fights.
2 Wed 9th Aug	Skateboarding – ABC Skateboarding provided equipment and staff.	Graffiti Workshop Demograffix	Cruz Basketball - provided equipment and staff (plus extra Basketballs in the van in case needed).	Multisport – Broxbourne Council multisport offer, nerf wars and water fights.
3 Wed 16th Aug	Skateboarding – ABC Skateboarding provided equipment and staff.	Nature Art Workshop Jam Arts	Tag Archery – Bubble Boy Events brought equipment, inflatable barriers, and staff.	Multisport – Broxbourne Council multisport offer, nerf wars and water fights.
4 Wed 23rd Aug	Climbing Wall & Football Darts -The Fun Firm.	Bracelet Making & Relaxation Colouring Sporting Inspirations	Skateboarding – ABC Skateboarding provided equipment and staff.	Multisport – Broxbourne Council multisport offer, nerf wars and water fights.

3. Making it Happen

Food Provision

To ensure that the programme was cost-effective and delivered on a commitment to reduce food waste, HSP produced a branded credit card-style food voucher. The cards (as shown here) were given out at the point of registration, a process each attendee was required to complete before engaging in the activities each day.

We engaged with 10 local food providers (at least two per park) across the five different areas. Most provision were within walking distance of the respective parks. At the Cheshunt and Watford events we took a slightly different approach, with Cheshunt Golf Club and Watford Cycle Hub both offering onsite options.

Food voucher cards were redeemable for either a selection of 'meal deals' or up to a set monetary value as agreed with each food provider prior to delivery starting. Cards were valid throughout August, giving young people the opportunity to redeem on the day of the event or at their convenience until 31st August 2023 in line with the main HAPpy programme.

Pictured below: Example of double sided food voucher



On initial evaluation, most of the food vouchers (approx. 75%) were exchanged on the evening of the programme running in their respective parks, but some individuals opted to redeem their vouchers in the week or at the weekend. Food providers were very complimentary of the programme, saying that it raised awareness of their business in the local area and amongst 12–16-year-olds, an audience that they would not usually be able to reach. Some stayed open longer to accommodate the programme (Simmons, week 3) and others (Watford Cycle Hub) saw numbers increase in a subsequent 'Pedal for Pizza' event they ran in the weeks following the programme for the same demographic.

Total number of food vouchers redeemed at each food venue:

- **Borehamwood:** (219 of 258 attendances) **The Arch** – 209 and **Cacao bean** – 10
- **Stevenage:** (183 of 235 attendances) **Misya Meze** – 113, **Fish & Chips** – 68 and **Ritty's** – 27 (approx.)
- **Cheshunt:** (136 of 142 attendances) **Golf club** – 136
- **Welwyn:** (264 of 302 attendances) **Tikka Masala** – 59 and **Simmons** – 205
- **Watford:** (161 of 155 attendances) **Cycle Hub** – 87 and **Fish & Chips** – 74 (6 surplus meals redeemed could be children who attended the closest of the other 4 parks redeeming their meal at the Watford outlets).

3. Making it Happen

Marketing & Communications

- Youth groups and projects attended (Jan-March) and a survey was conducted to gain youth voice around what activities/food individuals would want at the programme pre-delivery, which garnered nearly 70 responses - a good sample for us to shape our decision.
- Approximately 1500 A5 flyers and 120 A3 posters were printed and distributed to services for young people, ONE YMCA, local authorities, and Sporting Inspirations CIC to share with any projects and public areas that the 12- 16-year-old target audience frequented (June).



Herts Summer Parks will be running at Meadow Park tonight from 4pm till 7pm !!!!

This week's activities include a **pump track**, **graffiti workshop**, **frisbee golf** and much more!

Come down and register any time after 4pm to receive your **FREE** food voucher which you will be able to exchange for a hot tasty meal at **The Arch** on Shenley Road or **Cacao Café** on Leeming Road.

We look forward to seeing you! 😊



- Some site-specific promotion in different parks – i.e. widescreen 16:9 ratio version of the flyer produced to be added to the pre-film advert reel of a Movies in the Park event in Meadow Park at the end of July and an article in Welwyn Hatfield Council ONE Magazine.
- Daily social media teaser posts in the 3 weeks leading up to the programme.
- All Active Local officers were given marketing material to put up in their respective areas.
- Games Organisers were made aware of the programme via email and asked to share it with their schools.
- Youth strategy meetings were attended to promote Herts Summer Parks.

- A 'register your interest' form went live in the 3 weeks leading up to the programme and was used in all the social media posts. This helped give the team an idea of the numbers to expect for each park (approx. 180 had been completed before the programme starting and 319 by the end of the programme).
- All secondary schools local to each park were emailed with relevant marketing material and asked to push out to their students to help raise awareness from the end of June.
- All those who completed the 'register your interest' form and agreed to be contacted were emailed every week and reminded that the programme was running in their local park tonight (see example above).
- Instagram reels were uploaded daily to showcase the different activities going on providing a teaser for activities coming up the following week.

3. Making it Happen

Key Partners & Dignitaries

We had regular attendances from several local PCSOs, Local Authority Sport Development officers and Children & Young People's leads, and the Mayor of Stevenage, who attended week 4 of the programme along with a local ward Councillor. Representatives from Services from Young People (Hertfordshire County Council) attended the first session in Meadow Park, Borehamwood to cross-promote their HAPpy camps running from Meadow Park Football Club.

Herts Mind also reached out and sent us a flyer that they wanted to share with the young people to promote a regular well-being session that they had recently launched in Watford.

Pictured right: Stevenage Mayor, Myla Arceno, visiting the programme in our final week.



3. Making it Happen

Partnership Working

We would like to formerly acknowledge and sincerely thank the local authority contacts of all 5 parks and our 2 key Delivery partners without whom the programme would simply not have happened let alone be nearly as successful:

Local Authorities

- Hertsmere - **Helen Hopkins**
- Stevenage - **Lorna Wormald**
- Broxbourne - **Matthew Ridley**
- Welwyn Hatfield - **Milan Johnston**
- Watford - **Caroline Roche**

Their unwavering support and enthusiasm for this project from the outset was hugely appreciated. They were generous with their time and shared local knowledge and expertise for the nuances of the specific processes, key partners, complimentary programmes and youth groups in their respective areas which proved invaluable in the initial planning stages and throughout the programme.

Giving us insight on which parks to use, and putting us in touch with the key council contacts helped us navigate the varied and complex park permissions processes efficiently.

Allowing us to present at youth groups and key partner meetings, identifying which schools, local services and facilities to approach and giving us insight into how they tend to communicate aided with the distribution of our marketing material and promotion of the programme. They were instrumental in selecting our delivery partner and keen and willing to share facilities or activities set up for other events and initiatives to make this programme a success.

Delivery Partners

John Manitar and **Matt Ridley** and their respective teams at **Sporting Inspirations CIC** and **Broxbourne Borough Council** were fantastic partners in the delivery of the programme.

As our eyes and ears on the ground, the staff were proactive, quick to communicate any feedback, and always willing to adapt to any changes that needed to be made in the day to day running of the programme. They regularly went above and beyond their responsibilities to support our external providers and ensure that they consistently delivered high quality, safe, fun and engaging events. Their personable, relaxed and inclusive manner ensured that children had a positive and memorable experience at every event they attended. We are particularly grateful for all their efforts to gather photos and video content which helped us with ongoing promotion and to capture the true essence of the programme in action and it's impact on the young people.

Special mention to **John** for his support with food provider payments and flexibility to provide extra staff, top up resources and equipment without question. Thanks go also to our event leads **James, Caroline** and **Lauren** for your relentless energy and hard work throughout the demanding 4 week schedule.



4. Monitoring & Evaluation

Attendance & Key Data

Feedback - Young People

Feedback - Partners & Providers

Findings & Reflections

4. Monitoring & Evaluation

Monitoring & Evaluation Overview

The report so far represents a snapshot of the programme as a whole and identifies headline data after initial analysis and immediate reflections.

In the weeks post delivery, a programme review/debrief meeting took place between the HSP project management team and SI event leads on 27th September, which John kindly followed up on with contributions from all staff that worked on the programme. Since the different model was used for Cheshunt Park we also gathered feedback separately from Matt Ridley and the Broxbourne Borough Council staff asking them to review the specific challenges they faced and any other key reflections and recommendations we should consider.

We also reflected on feedback gathered from those who completed the 'Register Your Interest' form and subsequently attended the programme and from the food providers. Everything will be used to analyse and refine the planning process for future events.

The following pages provide a deeper analysis and an evaluation of all the data captured with key learnings, case studies and recommendations with the ambition of having the programme recommissioned.



4. Monitoring & Evaluation

Attendance

Herts Summer Parks was successfully delivered on 19 out of 20 planned delivery days between 31st July and 25th August. Only one event, had to be cancelled due to adverse weather (Tuesday 8th August - Stevenage week two), however, food provision was still honoured for the 51 people who came to collect vouchers (12 from the asylum seeker group and 39 other attendees). Fortunately, the main enrichment activity, a graffiti workshop was rebooked for Tuesday 22nd August, giving the young people the opportunity to participate in this activity during week four, in addition to the other activities already scheduled so that they did not miss out.



Total number of unique attendances: 727 (690 individuals and 37 individuals from Needham House Hotel Asylum Seeker group)

Total number of attendances including returnees: 1,091 (including 67 from Needham House Hotel Asylum Seeker group)

As split by park:

- Borehamwood = 258
- Stevenage = 235
- Cheshunt = 142
- Welwyn = 302
- Watford = 155

As split by week (across all parks):

- Week 1 – 139
- Week 2 – 286
- Week 3 – 293
- Week 4 – 376



4. Monitoring & Evaluation

Key Data

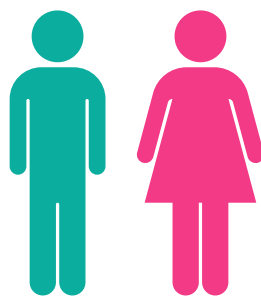
The **GENDER SPLIT** was approximately **70 % male to 30 % female**.

Whilst further analysis needs to be done to understand this gender split, we do not think the activities offered were the main reason for this difference. We had a good mix of young people, but it was an open programme and girls tend to hang around outdoor parks less we hypothesise that they were less likely to walk in or stumble across the event. Through evaluation, we might be able to gain a better understanding of how each gender heard about the programme and how we could market events to different genders in future to target them differently.

We had some attendees who identify as a different gender to the one they were assigned at birth. We believe we fostered a calm and open environment for attendees, offering opportunities for 1:1 conversation with our external activity deliverers and Sporting Inspirations Staff, particularly in the enrichment/craft activities tent which offered more quiet time.

Around a quarter of those who attended declared they were on **FREE SCHOOL MEALS**.

Whilst it was anticipated that it would be hard to target only young people on FSM with an open park programme, we placed ourselves in areas mapped as having the highest concentration of FSM using insight from Hertfordshire County Council. It is also important to note that around 15% of the children who attended declared they did not know if they received free school meals, and around 5% preferred not to say. If we were to run the programme again, we would look at how we could target the marketing a little more to increase the number of attendees who are on benefits related free school meals so that the majority of those that benefit from the programme meet the criteria set by the DfE.



The **AVERAGE AGE** of attendees was **13.8**.

As we were in public parks, we had some challenging conversations with children aged 10-12 years old who wanted to get involved in the activities but were not eligible due to the age restrictions. It was made clear to our coaching staff that only 12-16-year-olds should be allowed to take part in the activities due to the gap in provision/engagement for this age group. Instead, those children aged 10-12 years old were made aware of the other opportunities for younger age groups in the wider HAPpy programme. This may have to be reviewed for any future events.



4. Monitoring & Evaluation

Feedback From Young People

“Great club, friendly workers, would be great to see it running again next year!”

“Please come back next year because when I am sitting at home on Wednesday, I get to be excited for tomorrow.”

“This programme is wonderful; I want to come back again. My favourite thing was the rock climbing and playing football with Ben. I will miss Herts Summer Parks.”

“Great activities... helped me go outside more and socialise with other people.”

“I have really enjoyed learning a new skill, especially spray painting and meeting new people.”



4. Monitoring & Evaluation

Feedback from Providers & Partners

"We had a great first session yesterday. Was really nice to see the young people get involved in some painting and drawing."

Josie Scibetta, Jam Arts

"I wanted to extend my gratitude to each one of you for your incredible efforts in putting together the Summer Park Programme. Your dedication and commitment have made this initiative possible, and I'm thrilled to be part of such a passionate team."

Matthew Ridley, Broxbourne SDO, Local Authority

"Thank you so much for having me and I'm glad I added value to your programme. Many thanks again for the brilliant opportunity to support others."

Vanessa from Art by Vanessa (delivery provider)

"It has increased awareness of our existence and activities we offer in the immediate housing estate and community, we ran a Pedal for Pizza event 1 week after the programme ended and had over 90 young people attend which I think was a direct result of the Herts Summer Parks programme."

Kate Jenkins, Watford Cycle Hub (food provider)

"Thanks for the invite to Meadow Park yesterday, it was great to see Summer Parks in action and so many young people engaging in positive and fun activities. The pump track and graffiti workshop looked great, and it was nice to chat to some of the young people. Well done on all your hard work and it was amazing to see so many young people there. An added bonus that the young people get a hot meal as well."

Helen Hopkins, Hertsmeire Borough Council SDO, Local Authority

4. Monitoring & Evaluation

Key Findings & Reflections

This was a very ambitious pilot programme. To launch from scratch in five delivery sites spread across the county and run every weekday over four consecutive weeks, particularly in outdoor public parks was a huge task. It took a lot of staff hours to get it off the ground pre-delivery. Whilst the number of hours worked was technically equivalent to one full-time member of staff for six months, this programme would not be possible for one person to co-ordinate.

In practise, it required a division of labour between at least two or three members of staff with each having a different focus at different stages of the process. This was due to the various logistics of gathering insight, buying equipment, setting up suppliers, securing and liaising with external activity and food providers, producing event plans and risk assessments for land permissions, designing and distributing marketing materials, and various food provider and park visits in the lead up to and during delivery. Overall, we feel the HSP team adapted well and showed initiative in engaging various consultancy support to help with the more important elements in the planning stages.

They also made some important decisions around the food provision and staffing that allowed the programme to meet its objectives.

Given the size of the task, we are proud of the product we were able to deliver; the attendance figures and the impact it made, all of which surpassed our expectations. Reflecting deeper on the process, post-delivery data analysis, review meetings and feedback from various parties, there are several changes we feel we could make to improve the programme, which are outlined below.

Parks

Based on overall attendance numbers, we believe we took the right approach in the initial mapping stages and positioned ourselves in the right five areas with a high density of children on FSM and would replicate this model. However, since the data showed that an average of only 25% of attendees declared they were on FSM we believe there would be merit in considering changing sites in certain areas.

This is supported by feedback gathered from key local authority partners of Broxbourne and Borehamwood, with Matt Ridley stating that “Exploring Grundy Park as an alternative venue was suggested, anticipating a potential uptick in attendees” and Helen Hopkins saying that “...the location is a good one, but if you wanted to get more into the heart of Cowley Hill, I would suggest Aycliffe/Brooks Meadow”.

The Parks in Borehamwood, Stevenage and Welwyn were more central in town and more visible to/accessible for passing trade, whilst the parks in Watford and Cheshunt were a little more rural and nestled within a housing estate, so this no doubt skewed the attendance numbers in favour of the former. However, they were all chosen for key criteria; flat space, access points, the ability to utilise a MUGA area/existing facilities and natural boundaries to support with event management.

4. Monitoring & Evaluation

Staffing, Timings & Frequency

Knowing that HSP did not have the capacity to staff the programme delivery, we initially approached key partners in the local areas of each site to staff the events in their respective parks. When it became apparent this would not be possible in most areas, we consulted with all local authority SDOs to recommend the top three youth worker delivery partners they would commission for such a programme.

Sporting Inspirations were chosen as they were highly thought of in all areas. In addition, Broxbourne Borough Council agreed to utilise casual staff working on a similar existing programme so it was agreed to trial this for their park. Despite our efforts to integrate this Park into the wider programme by having two Sporting Inspirations staff leads to support every week, there were some issues around responsibility for certain aspects. Upon reflection, this did not work as well as we had hoped, as the 'Lark in the Park' sessions (which were aimed at a slightly younger age group) that immediately preceded our event caused some confusion with younger children staying onsite which detracted slightly from us engaging with the older age group and caused some issues in set up crossover.

Whilst Broxbourne staff had the multi-sport delivery experience we found that Sporting Inspirations was the right team to have on the ground to engage with the target demographic, this was reinforced by the positive feedback we received from partners and parents with one stating that "The team are excellent role models for young males" and that they appreciated the 'Positive work done with my son and other young people about peer relationships' and the team themselves reflecting that they had 'great team spirit and atmosphere which connected and resonated with the young people and their families'. Logistically we found it easier liaising with just one organisation and would not hesitate to recommission them again but would do so across all five sites in future.

To fully align with the HAPPy guidelines the events were originally required to be a minimum of four hours long, we found that the staffing costs, hiring of external activities and the food element having to be delivered onsite were proving hard on the budget allocated. So, we approached Herts County Council to reduce the timings in order for us to deliver quality provision.

It was agreed that three hours of delivery would suffice if a solution could be found to outsource the food element,

which inspired us to employ a food voucher system. 4-7 pm was decided upon to provide an early evening activity before dinner time which seemed to work well but based on our debrief discussions with Sporting Inspirations, they felt that 3-6 pm would work even better based on feedback received from young people and their families, and that attendance numbers tended to drop off by 6/6.30pm on average as children were hungry. Welwyn Garden City food provider, Simmons concurred as, although they were prepared to stay open longer to accommodate on one occasion, the earlier time would be easier to manage long term if numbers were to increase. It was suggested by Broxbourne staff that this could be reduced even further to two hours to engage children for the full time.

However, we found that attendees tended not to stay for the full duration, they would rather come and go as they pleased within the three hours. With a marked influx from the start, numbers would steady but continue to trickle in and people would stay for on average an hour, so upon reflection, we feel reducing the time any further would lose engagement overall but adjusting the start time of the event by one hour may encourage children to remain for longer and make better use of the food provision on the day.

4. Monitoring & Evaluation

Staffing, Timings & Frequency continued.



Aiming for around 50 people on average, for three hours' delivery, we staffed each event with a minimum of five people for a 1:10 ratio with two event leads working seven hours inclusive of driving the van from base to each site and being on site from 2pm - 8pm to set up/down and three remaining staff members working five hours, 3pm-8pm to help finish setting up before delivery at 4pm and set down. Except for one week where we identified a certain activity (Bubble Football) that would need an extra dedicated member of staff to oversee it, we found that overall, this worked well. However, HSP project officers were on site more in the first two weeks so could be utilised as extra members of staff. Then, as the programme grew momentum towards the 3rd and 4th week, we needed more cover for the general event where there was an influx of attendees at registration or numbers needed rotating on the activities.

The SI team reflected that whilst set up got easier week on week, it was physically demanding for two members of staff to do alone until 3pm.

4. Monitoring & Evaluation

Staffing, Timings & Frequency continued.

They felt that we needed to look at separate set-up and delivery staff, or a break before delivery started to allow a meal break/preparation time for the event itself to keep the quality of delivery high. "30 minutes extra would allow the team time to liaise about what could be improved upon from the previous day and expectations overall and link up for a briefing with the external delivery partners as it was such a variable programme each week."

We also felt we could have reduced set up to three gazebo tents rather than four, "combining the first aid and sign-up tents to optimise time, effort, and space." also to allow for additional activity space should it be required. **As such, we would budget for 2 event leads for 7 hours and 6 support staff for 6 hours for each event if we were to run it again.**

Regarding delivery dates, we chose to stay in the same park on the same weekday for four weeks and for ease of messaging in marketing for the entire month of August. We started with good numbers and found that attendance increased between 25-30% week on week at every park. The retention rate was low from weeks one to two but increased to around 60% between weeks two and three and weeks three and four.

We were still attracting a steady number of new attendees by the 4th week. This shows that by running for 4 weeks we were able to offer continuous provision for children throughout the summer holiday in each area, something they could depend on and look forward to each week.

It gave the same people the opportunity to attend multiple times and meant more people had at least one opportunity if they were away in the earlier weeks and did not miss out on the programme entirely. This increased engagement in the programme overall and would be an opportunity missed if the programme was any shorter than three weeks. Sporting Inspirations praised this approach stating, "We felt it worked well, being mid-week, and on the same days for each park. It gave the programme consistency and built good momentum".

Whilst it has been suggested that if the programme were to run again there may be merit in taking a more targeted approach of one full week of activity in each park or reducing the length of the programme to save on costs, in fact by delivering over four weeks we were able to economise in most areas and provide a better experience.

We could book external delivery providers for an entire week, which they were more willing to commit to rather than depend on their availability of one-off days over an extended period which resulted in some offering a bonus activity as an incentive for the longer block booking duration and ultimately allowed us to offer a more varied programme of activities to more people. It also provided some consistency for delivery staff setting up the same activities for the week and they were more willing to commit to a block of 4 weeks of work. Whilst we did conduct a staff training day from noon on the first day of delivery, they would have appreciated an earlier staff briefing, and a little more context on the target audience/reason behind the programme pre-delivery and with a little more planning they could have structured days off a little better for individuals to overcome any tiredness and call upon a bigger pool of staff.



4. Monitoring & Evaluation

Activities.

All the main activities were well received by attendees, and we gathered some really positive feedback, with the Climbing Wall, Graffiti Workshops and Pump track being mentioned as particular highlights and one noting that there were “Brilliant, fun activities that I hadn’t seen before”.

We were keen to keep the enrichment element and Sporting Inspirations remarked that “having a mix of sport and arts was helpful as it targeted a variety of young people”. Whilst we tried to schedule either a main physical activity or arts and crafts activity each week with supporting activities it was noted that the most successful weeks were when we had a hosted activity/workshop for both elements. Most notably, going from week two with both the pump track and graffiti workshop, the basketball flopped as the main physical activity in week three despite having a Nature Art workshop. So, we would suggest that this approach be incorporated into planning the programme as a whole next time.

We also tried to learn and adapt during the programme based on staff feedback so from week three to week four,

when we had scheduled two big-ticket physical activity items as the finale, so had planned a more relaxed open enrichment activity (bracelet making and mindfulness colouring), learning from week two to week three we approached the providers of the graffiti workshops and JamArts to ask them to add extra days for the Broxbourne and Stevenage events in week four to top-up for those who missed out on these activities on the days they had bad weather, which was well received. For the other parks that week we added a creative activity to capture youth voice on a mural in support of the bracelet making and mindfulness colouring. In hindsight, this could have been incorporated into the chillout/wellbeing tent rather than as one of the main enrichment activities.

We would keep most of the activities but would need to consider adding a few new main activities to keep things current and fresh. We believe we had most areas covered however it was suggested that we were missing a dance/music-inspired activity. It was also noted by Broxbourne borough council staff that “Connect Four and Jenga attracted a demographic different from the intended audience with families and children being drawn to these activities, making redirection challenging” since the events were mainly for teenagers.

Giant Chess and Giant Cards have been suggested as alternatives. Music and bean bags were intended in the chillout tent which we were not able to deliver on time. However, we still believe that these would attract an older audience and increase the number of 14-16-year-olds attending.

Other activity suggestions include a self-contained gaming van, ‘Design you own’ skateboards or bags/accessories, street dance/DJ workshops and martial arts or self-defence workshops. The skateboarding and tag archery activities offered only in Broxbourne were popular and offered something different so we would look to offer these opportunities across all areas. Water-based activities taking advantage of the summer weather and team-building-themed sports day-inspired thinking games, as well as carry-over competitions could also be incorporated to encourage return attendance.

We were unable to ascertain why many more boys than girls attended the programme overall, other than the reasons we have already stated earlier in the report. There were slight differences between the parks, for example on average Welwyn had more boys attend than any other park and Cheshunt had more girls than boys most weeks, but this was not significant enough to draw a particular conclusion.

4. Monitoring & Evaluation

Food provision

The food voucher system was highlighted as a key success of the programme. It was stated by one parent as a “great incentive to engage young people” and by a local Councillor, as “an inspired decision to keep waste down and engage the young people in the community, I think it’s great”.

Whilst there was some mention by the delivery staff of it being taken advantage of slightly at the Welwyn Garden park events with some attendees coming for the food voucher and only staying for 10 mins of activity before leaving (possibly accounting for in some way their increased numbers overall). On the whole, it was used as was intended as an added benefit of engagement in the activities and whilst some providers were more popular than others all were engaged with proving that the young people especially those on FSM appreciated the choice, quality and quantity of food on offer.

The card gave them responsibility, confidence, and a sense of empowerment to be able to redeem their food in key community businesses they wouldn't usually be able to afford and the flexibility to do so at their convenience.

The two onsite options had their pros and cons and worked in different ways. Matt Ridley highlighted that providing the food at the golf club meant the Cheshunt events were more of a “social Hub - the appeal of food and drink as a means for group interaction was highlighted, reinforcing its importance in fostering a vibrant atmosphere” Similarly the onsite food option at Watford meant that young people could put their order in for pizzas, engage in the activities, then pick up the order, eat out in the park and continue to engage with the activities if they wanted, rather than leave to get there food separately.

Though there were some pitfalls. With the golf club being the only food option for the Cheshunt events, young people did not have the option to redeem their food in any other way than on the night and so missed out when bad weather cancelled the event one week. Whereas, the Watford Cycle Hub, was one of two options available, the other being offsite. The golf club's feedback was that the only downside was “it was an issue when the first week was a washout and we had to cover the cost of additional staff brought in to administer the scheme when numbers were low due to inclement weather”. All others were existing outlets with a set number of staff to run their usual business that the children went to, so this was not an issue.

On feedback surveys sent out to all food providers after the programme, the unanimous response was that they would be happy to be providers on the programme again. They were impressed with the simple and fast payment process and increased custom, but one common theme was that rather than the poster provided just advertising that vouchers were redeemable in their establishment, they suggested that it would be beneficial to incorporate the agreed set-menu choices relevant for their venue into the posters provided. By visually displaying the meal options, children would be able to identify and select their preferred meal quickly and easily.

This modification would simplify the ordering process, save time and avoid some confrontation, given many children typically turned up on the night the programme was running. In future, we may look to drop Cacao Bean Café in Borehamwood in favour of another provider and if numbers were to increase significantly would have to consider adding one more option for each site perhaps to spread the load. Also, if numbers increased significantly, we would have to look at whether it was sustainable for John Manitará (CEO, Sporting Inspirations) to be the interim payee as it was a lot of work for him to pay the various invoices for the existing ten providers on time on our behalf as it was. Alternatively, we would look to pay him an additional admin fee.

4. Monitoring & Evaluation

Activity & Food Provision Imagery



4. Monitoring & Evaluation

Marketing

The most common and unanimous feedback post-delivery from various partners - Broxbourne Borough Council, Food providers, Sporting Inspirations staff and parents of attendees was that the programme would have benefited from earlier promotion.

There is no doubt we would have liked to launch the programme earlier and build a more robust marketing campaign in the lead-up to delivery as after the logistics of the events were fully confirmed we only really had three full weeks of promotion. Given this, we were pleased with the numbers that did attend, but think the programme has so much more potential. Now that we have run the programme once and have all the key elements in place to roll out again with only minor changes needed, we will be able to focus our efforts more on this. It should be possible to build on the brand created and put a 12-week marketing schedule in place in the lead-up to delivery.

As part of our targeted approach, we decided to distribute the programme's marketing materials to the three to five secondary schools and various youth services/projects closest to the respective parks,

assuming that children would only attend from local schools and travel within the vicinity.

Whilst, based on our mapping, this was a valid approach to reaching the most children on FSM, on analysis of the 'which school do you attend' data taken at registration, we discovered that children were prepared to travel from much further afield to attend the programme than we anticipated; one individual even attended events at multiple sites on multiple days throughout the programme.

The Watford events for example, attracted children from a much larger range of schools (14), some situated outside the Watford area over the border in London, compared to other parks (average of 8). On reflection, this is likely due to a higher density of population and the excellent train transport links in Watford whilst other areas are more dependent on bus travel or less well connected. Others went to parks that were not necessarily closest to their school, some may live in the area and go to school out of the area. So, rather than just sending the marketing material for their local park only, a more joined-up approach is needed to market the programme as one, rather than as five individual events,

to ensure a broader audience is aware of the complete programme.

Given this insight, in the future, we would also not take such a uniform approach across all sites and would be more mindful of having a tailored marketing plan for each park, taking into consideration geographical factors, transport links and the different awareness of services in certain areas. The insight also shows that there is a clear gap and appetite for this kind of provision for this age group regardless of whether attendees are on FSM or not and they are prepared to travel for it.

Rather than just depend heavily on flyers and posters we could explore larger means of pre-event promotion; we did attempt this in 2 areas, Borehamwood and Welwyn Hatfield utilising opportunities to promote the programme in a local publication and another event immediately preceding the programme starting, but it was not enough to have a significant impact. Matt Ridley also suggested that "Improved signage/banners placed a few weeks before the event, with a potential addition on the Skatepark railings at Cheshunt Park, could elevate awareness and attendance next year."

4. Monitoring & Evaluation

Marketing continued

As well as better pre-delivery promotion we would have liked to produce more comprehensive marketing material that could be used during the events themselves. Children walking past the event often assumed it wasn't for them. This led to a little confusion, as some children were unsure whether they could attend the event and quite a lot of attendance was by the event lead proactively approaching people in the park already. While we had initially planned to have feather banners made to identify the registration tent, first aid and line the general event area with a few generic 'Herts Summer Parks' and for brand awareness, due to time constraints we had to improvise with an A board with A3 posters at registration with a simple message of who the event was for and the food providers on offer for the respective sites. This didn't convey quite the right message and could not be seen from afar for visual impact.

If we were to run the programme again, we would invest more time in designing marketing posters that convey the appropriate message and make it clear that this free event is open to children aged 12 –16 and make sure they are put around the entrances of the parks not just at the registration tent and would ensure to include feather banners in the marketing budget.

On the registration form, we found that the majority of responses to 'where did you hear about the programme' were 'from a friend'. So, the most prominent form of promotion was by word of mouth. Therefore, next time, to increase awareness and engagement with the target audience, we should explore marketing on social media platforms that are more accessible to children, such as Snapchat, TikTok, and Be Real, rather than relying solely on business-to-business HSP channels. We would have to consult with HCC about the ethics of this.

Interestingly for Stevenage and Borehamwood, we found that most of the children heard about the programme through a youth worker or coach in the 2nd week. This shows there is more awareness of certain services in these areas if the programme were to run again concurrently with other HAPpy provision, such as services for young people or other youth services we would need to be mindful of more opportunities to cross-promote. If the insight shows that they are likely to deliver the first three weeks again then perhaps this project could cover the second half of the summer to plug the gap and create a whole summer holiday offer.

We are still keen to maintain the pop-up, open nature of the programme and continue to have an on-the-day registration process rather than the events requiring pre-booking, as this remains a key barrier for engaging with the target 12- to 16-year-old audience. However, we acknowledge that we would have to have a more robust and possibly simplified registration process. This would need to capture only key data and we would need to consider getting parental consent rather than simply taking parents as an emergency contact only, as attendees under 16 cannot officially consent or answer all the questions, we asked of them for themselves. Disability and medical condition data were taken in the interest of safety to adapt activities and school was taken to measure our reach, but they were arguably not necessary.

4. Monitoring & Evaluation

Marketing continued

Our 'Register your interest' form only went live three weeks before the programme started and had relatively good engagement even in this short time (approx. 180 had completed before the programme started and 319 by the end of the programme). So, we know the marketing we did had a good reach, and we could make use of this more. Furthermore, we missed an opportunity to use this to gather more information before the event which would have streamlined the on-the-day registration process.

Lastly, we believe this programme has huge potential to be a hub for local services to engage on mass with this hard-to-reach demographic. Whilst we were pleased we were able to link up to the Asylum Seeker project in Stevenage (Case Study to follow) and that several youth services and PCSOs visited the events, we think there is more scope for them to offer activities/workshops as part of the events. We tried to reach out to some but with the programme in its infancy, this did not garner much engagement. However, with a proven model, we could use this brand to promote the opportunities to them.

The other Gazebo could be used as a workshop tent and as a regular slot for local community services to promote programmes or offer help in all areas of life such as career advice, CV writing, mental health - Mind in Mid Herts and Herts Constabulary possibly offering drug workshops or fire service roleplay over the summer period as an extension to the work they do in schools as community outreach.



5. Outreach & Legacy

**Needham House Asylum
Seeker Group**

**Post-programme Opportunities
& Legacy Projects**

5. Outreach & Legacy

Outreach Project - Needham House Asylum Seeker Group

Approximately 60 young people aged 12-16 staying at Needham House Hotel in Hitchin were given the opportunity to access the Herts Summer Parks programme in Stevenage on three occasions. The hotel had recently been taken over to house Asylum Seekers of varying nationalities (including Sri Lankan, Turkish, Ukrainian, and Afghan) and, as a result of HSP's involvement in the working group coordinated by North Herts District Council, funding for transport was made available.

HSP supported hotel staff with organising the group outing, and staff and adults from within the community supported the trips so that safeguarding ratios were maintained. The group first attended on week two and was escorted to the Misya Meze Grill after 45 minutes of the park activity due to bad weather. On this occasion, the group ate in the restaurant, but for both the following weeks,

the staff went to collect the food whilst the young people engaged in the activities, following which they all sat down in the park to eat together. Based on a request from the group in the 3rd week, Sporting Inspirations staff bought and ran a cricket activity in the 4th week of the programme especially for them, given that it is the national sport for many of their nations.

“Thank you for today!

The kids loved it, even with all the rain. The food was enjoyed by all the children ... As you can imagine we have several other children wanting to come so we will do our best to maximise the numbers for next week but will have to speak with site manager etc before I can confirm on this.”

Duty Manager at the hotel

Following the end of the Herts Summer Parks programme, HSP is continuing to develop the relationship with the hotel via other sport and physical activity opportunities.

5. Outreach & Legacy

Post-Programme Opportunities/Legacy Projects

Case Study 1: Community Basketball Project, Watford.

After reviewing the feedback from our youth voice surveys, we opted to organise a basketball-themed week across all parks given its popularity among teenagers in most areas. As they have one of the best MUGA facilities in the area the Herts Summer Parks Programme in Watford witnessed a high turnout of children who participated in basketball, as such since the programme has finished this has led to John Manitaro of Sporting Inspirations linking up with Watford's Sports Development officer, Caroline Roche to create a new community basketball programme project so children within Watford now have consistent access to engage in basketball, encouraging physical activity long term.

Case Study 2: Daniella, Borehamwood.

Daniella and her father live in a block of flats that overlook Meadow Park. Daniella has ASD and ARFID (Avoidant Restrictive Eating Disorder), rarely leaves her home and struggles to socialise with peers. Out of all the summer holiday provision, her dad advised that Herts Summer Parks was the only programme she showed an interest in.

On the first delivery day, Daniella came down to the park and would only engage in an activity with her dad by her side. Her father told us that Daniella has extreme attachment needs, that her ARFID means she has a very restricted diet and that he doesn't really get any respite time or have much at his disposal due to income.

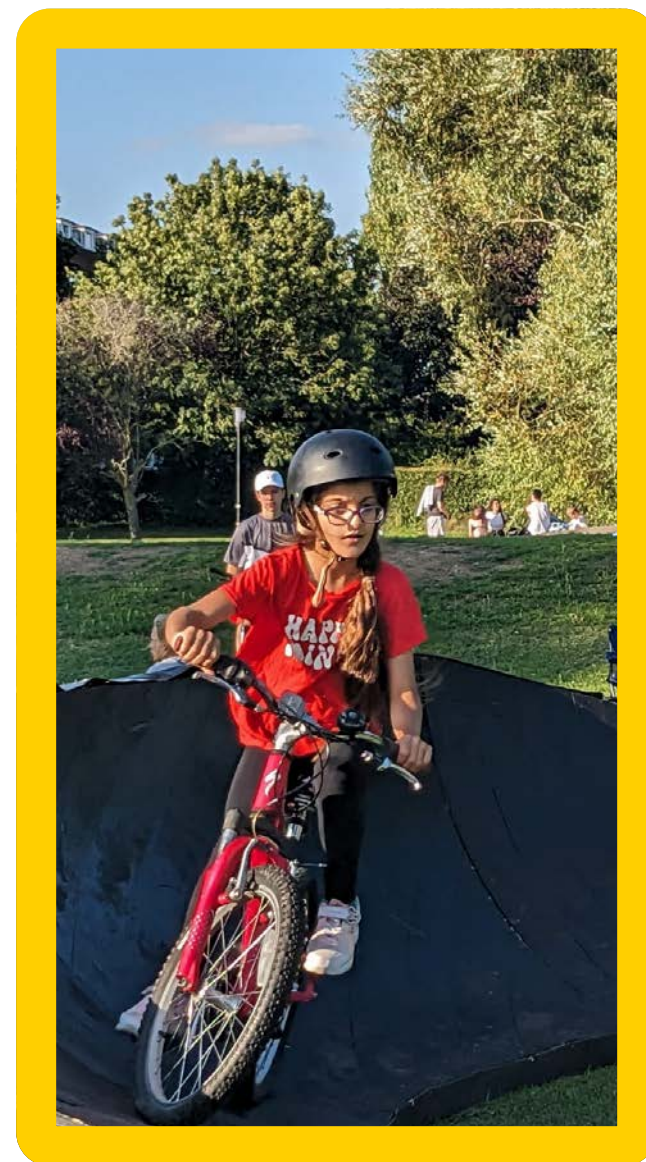
During Week 1, our origami activity provider Vanessa engaged with Daniella and created origami earrings which inspired Daniella to start her own business. After the first week of the programme, Vanessa had some left-over materials and tools which she gifted to Daniella so she could pursue her very own business. Daniella attended again in week three and by the last week of the programme,

Daniella came down by herself and engaged with all the activities. She was confident speaking to the staff and lots of other children and had had food from The Arch on each occasion. The Herts Summer Parks programme came to Daniella's doorstep and for whatever reason engaged and resonated with her as an individual. It gave her opportunities she would otherwise not have had, brought her out of her shell and broadened her horizons, something we as a team are very proud of.



6. Future recommendations

- This programme requires a small project team rather than one individual.
- The same five areas should be used, with a possible move to different parks within the areas. Or, if other locations were to be explored and confirmed, we would recommend repeating the process of consulting support to finalise event plans and risk assessments for chosen sites.
- The programme duration is best set to three hours. However, based on feedback from the coaches that attendance drops after 6 pm, it may be beneficial to adjust the programme's time from 4-7pm to 3-6pm.
- Maintaining the programme's duration of four weeks and not dropping below three weeks would be beneficial in building momentum and overall reach.
- Based on the feedback from parents and children regarding them as positive role models, we recommend commissioning Sporting Inspirations to run the programme again.
- More in-depth conversations need to be had with local authorities and affiliated partners to develop a more in-depth marketing strategy for the and discuss approaches to take with individual parks.
- We recommend keeping most of the activities due to their popularity, however, we would recommend introducing some new ones to keep the event fresh and exciting.
- More in-depth conversations are needed with HCC regarding obtaining parental consent and gathering vital data.
- Consideration should be given to utilising social media platforms that cater more to the target market, such as Snapchat, TikTok, and Be Real.
- Due to the success of the food voucher system and the fact that it significantly reduces costs, it is recommended that this is continued, and more food providers engaged to cater for increasing numbers.





WHAT'S NEXT?

We certainly hope this is not the end

hertsummerparks@herts.ac.uk

Report written by: E Catlin, Project Officer,
Children and Young People's Team,
Herts Sport & Physical Activity Partnership (HSP)

Date of report: September 2023 (Revised December 2023)

Hertfordshire's
Holiday Activity Programme

