

Blaenau Gwent Summer Activity Report

Background and Context

On 8th July 2020, the Welsh Local Government Association announced that funding would be made available to local authorities to deliver engaging and enriching activities, to help participating children and young people from economically deprived areas to re-engage with education. The Blaenau Gwent allocation was confirmed as £20,987, a proposal for which was submitted on Friday 17th July.

Blaenau Gwent Programme

The Education and Environment Directorates worked closely with schools, along with colleagues in Social Services and Aneurin Leisure Trust, to establish Clwb Yr Haf/Summer Club, which operated throughout 4 school buildings in the most deprived areas of Blaenau Gwent (schools were selected on the basis of FSM entitlement, area/deprivation status and interest). Initially, we planned to engage 8 schools across the 4 Valley's within Blaenau Gwent, to establish provision over a 2 week period, with sessions running in 4 schools during the first week and 4 during the second week. We also sought to establish Welsh-medium provision via Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg. However, due to limited staff availability throughout August, only 4 of the 8 schools targeted were able offer the programme, these were:

- Willowtown Primary School
- Bryn Bach Primary School
- Rhos y Fedwen Primary School
- Blaen y Cwm Primary School

The schools identified pupils who they felt would benefit from the programme. Applications and letters were drafted and distributed by the Council, with the following number of children targeted in each school:

- Willowtown Primary School - 19
- Bryn Bach Primary School - 28
- Rhos y Fedwen Primary School - 45 (due to limited uptake/engagement in summer activities in previous years, a higher proportion of families were targeted with the option to extend over 2 weeks in line with the level of engagement)
- Blaen y Cwm Primary School - 26

Health and Safety and reopening site assessments, along with COVID Secure Risk Assessments were carried out at each school site prior to the activities taking place. Each external provider also risk assessed their activities, considered site access and other associated requirements prior to the programme being delivered. Numbers of children able to access the provision were capped and groups agreed during the programme development phase, along with staffing, cleaning, caretaking and catering arrangements.

The Summer Club programme was run over a 5 day period (in line with availability of staff and facilities), during the first week of August. Sessions were delivered between the hours of 8:30am and 12:30pm for up to 24, 8-11year olds per/school setting. The

8-11 age range was chosen in consideration of the availability of activities and childcare i.e. the Early Years Childcare and Play team, along with the Youth Service and Aneurin Leisure Trust, where providing activities and services for up to 8 and over 11 year olds. In addition, this age range has engaged well in holiday programmes historically, and was set to be a target group for the School Holiday Enrichment Programme, should it have gone ahead this year. Importantly, consideration was also given to health and safety, along with the age range of children who the schools identified as requiring engagement, provision and support.

A 5-day activity programme was established in each school inclusive of catering provision (healthy snacks). The programme of activities included sports, art, craft and science delivered by an array of providers in partnership with school staff. The school staff focused on re-introducing children to the learning environment, wellbeing and the delivery of complimentary education-based activities (please refer to **Appendix 1** for an example of the activity programme).

Outcomes

In total, 53 children engaged daily across the 4 school sites. Surveys were undertaken with the children at the end of the programme, for which 47 responses were received (22 girls and 25 boys). Please refer to **Appendix 2** for a detailed breakdown of the survey data. All children fully engaged with the activity programme which was replicated at each school setting. Activities included the daily mile, arts, sports and science. A series of partners were engaged in the delivery of the activity programme including: Aneurin Leisure Trust who were also a key partner in establishing the programme, Eco Educational, the Skate Board Academy, Lucy Dance and Carl Betty Taekwondo. As detailed above, the school staff provided wellbeing support throughout, as well as assisting in the delivery of the activity programme etc. The external providers commented on how helpful the school staff were and felt that they really bought into, complimented and supported the activities being provided.

Feedback received from both the staff and children was extremely positive. The Catering Service were able to increase the snack provision to twice per/session due to surplus stock availability in school kitchens as a result of the school closure period. A significant number of children who engaged with the Summer Club had attended the School Holiday Enrichment Programme in 2019. The children commented that they missed the opportunity to engage in cooking activities; however, the risk and site assessments along with COVID-19 response requirements prohibited such activity.

A number of the children were returning to school for the first time since March 2020. The school staff took the opportunity to work closely with these children and offer them the opportunity to catch-up and check in, whilst also gaining an insight into the changes in school life and facilities. The sessions supported the children to re-engage with each other, staff and education by providing a series of fun and meaningful activities aligned to the curriculum, addressing their fears, anxieties and any concerns which they had. The activities also encouraged and facilitated expression, movement, healthy eating and lifestyle. Continuous indoor and outdoor play and learning underpinned the programme delivery. Outdoor play offered a perfect companion to the provision indoors, working in harmony and providing a complementary environment to enhance and extend experience and activity.

Both the indoor and outdoor activities offered the children:

- Access to space with opportunities to be their natural, exuberant and physical selves.
- Fresh air and direct experience of how the elements of the weather feel.
- Contact with natural and living things, to maintain their inborn affinity, curiosity and fascination for all things belonging to the natural world.
- Freedom to be inquisitive, exploratory, adventurous, innovative and messy.
- A vast range of real experiences that are relevant and meaningful.
- Opportunities to discover, play and discuss/talk about their feelings so that new experiences could be processed, understood and used.
- An environment that feeds information into all the senses at the same time.
- Involvement with the whole body, promoting improved physical and mental health.
- Emotional and mental wellbeing, where self-image and esteem grow.
- Social interactions that build relationships, social skills and enjoyment of being with others.
- Opportunities to set themselves challenges and to learn how to keep themselves safe during these ever changing and unprecedented times.
- A safe and inclusive space to promote learning and allow them to express feelings, thoughts and ideas via a variety of mediums.

In conclusion, despite the quick turnaround required to establish provision, the Summer Club was successful in engaging with 53 vulnerable children from economically deprived areas, who required additional provision to support and promote their wellbeing and ongoing engagement in education.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Activity Programme



schedule Clwb yr Haf
2020 Willowtown.xlsx

Appendix 2 – Pupil Survey Data



Questionnaire
Survey data to Educa