



Working with young people, a team from Northumbria University co-led the HAF Plus research project with three local authorities, including Gateshead Council.

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## Gateshead teenagers to enjoy a fun filled action packed summer

A new Holiday Activities and Food (HAF Plus) programme aimed specifically at teenagers will be piloted in Gateshead this summer.

The pilot programme, called HAF Plus, builds on the success of Gateshead Council's existing Holiday Activities and Food programme, called 'Brighten the Day' which gives children and young people who are eligible for free school meals or children and young people with special educational needs

and disabilities, access to a range of free enriching physical and cultural activities and nutritious food during the school holidays.

HAF Plus has been designed by Gateshead teenagers to make sure the holiday programme is engaging for them and meets their needs. The programme, will include lots of free, fun activities like tenpin bowling and trips to the cinema, will also give young people volunteering opportunities and the chance to enhance their skills to prepare them for further study or work.

To travel to different venues, the 40 teenagers involved in the pilot will each receive a free 7 day all zones pass which will give unlimited travel on the bus, Metro and Shields ferry. Greggs will provide the young people with free meal vouchers so that the teenagers can pick up a free meal whilst out and about. All meals to young people will comply to School Food Standards.

Together with the Healthy Living Lab at Northumbria University, the council identified a poor uptake of teenagers participating in the existing Holiday Activities and Food programme, with attendance figures show that 82% of attendees are 11 years and under and only 18% of attendees being over 12 years.

To address this gap, Northumbria University co-led, with young people, a HAF Plus research project with three local authorities, Gateshead Council, Northumberland Council, Birmingham City Council and the Mayor's Fund for London.

Gateshead Council worked with young people from Gateshead and the research team to co-design a HAF Plus programme based on local community and cultural assets. The young people from Gateshead presented their findings at a national HAF+ event that was attended by the Department for Education (DfE), Parliamentarians, national charities and other young people from across England. The young people then presented their findings at the DfE Policy Roundtable held in London. To ensure that the co-designed HAF Plus programme became a reality, Gateshead Council formed a partnership with Northumbria University, Newcastle United Foundation and Greggs.

Gateshead Council's Deputy Leader, Councillor Catherine Donovan, said: "This has been an amazing opportunity for our Gateshead teenagers to lead the way in developing a programme that is designed specifically for other

teenagers. They will take part in the trial and provide crucial feedback to help us ensure we can roll out a successful project to other Gateshead teenagers next year.”

With 20 years’ experience of researching food insecurity and holiday hunger in the UK, Professor Greta Defeyter, Director of the Health Living Lab at Northumbria University said: “Following a year-long consultation with over 500 young people from across England, researchers from the Healthy Living Lab decided to work with young people, and partner organisations, to co-design a Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme specifically targeted for 11 to 16 year olds called HAF Plus. This project not only captured the voices of young people but resulted in the co-design of four local and a national HAF Plus framework led by young people. One of these frameworks was co-designed by young people in Gateshead.

“The co-produced research, led by young people, shows that there is a rich array of local assets, including outdoor spaces, universities, cultural organisations, charities, and businesses from across Gateshead and Newcastle that young people would like to experience during the summer, but they are unable to access due to not being able to afford travel costs, entry fees, or simply they don’t think these venues are open to them. By joining forces with organisations including Gateshead Council and Newcastle United Foundation, we set out to change this.”

HAF Plus will run from Monday 31 July to Saturday 26 August and the teenagers will be able to enjoy a fun filled, action packed summer. They will be able to plan what they would like to do from a range of different activities on offer. These include ice-skating, tenpin bowling, cinema trips, volunteering, cooking, sports at Newcastle United Foundation and much more.

The young people will be asked to attend for at least three days each week or for twelve days over the duration of the programme. To encourage attendance, they will receive a reward at the end of the period. Young people, with support from researchers at Northumbria University and Gateshead Council, will be conducting an evaluation of HAF Plus and will present their findings later this year.

Teenager Faith, said: “HAF Plus is important as it provides fun activities and food to young people in a way that doesn’t single anyone out. It also provides

volunteering experiences for young people which is always good!”

During the development stage the young people said they would like volunteering and work experience opportunities as well as fun activities as they felt this would help them get a part time job or help them decide on what they wanted to do when they left school. These have also been included in the programme.

Andrew Foster, Director of Programmes and Impact at Newcastle United Foundation, said: “As a charity supporting thousands of children, teenagers and young adults every month, we recognise that meaningful holiday activity is vital in ensuring young people in our region are connected and engaged outside of school term-time.

“We are proud to be working alongside community-minded organisations in the North East through HAF Plus which allows us to provide engagement through free access to food, travel, employability support and new experiences for younger generations.”

Following on from the pilot scheme, and after taking on board the young people’s research findings, the aim is to roll out this scheme for teenagers in Easter and Summer in 2024. This will be in addition to our existing HAF programme, Brighten the Day, which is aimed at all age groups.

For further information visit [www.gateshead.gov.uk/brightentheday](http://www.gateshead.gov.uk/brightentheday)

Discover more [here](#) about the work of Northumbria’s Healthy Living Lab.

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