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# Summer of Fun Evaluation

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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## **Glossary**

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Definition</b>
CYP	Children and young people
ALN	Additional learning needs
LA	Local authority
MI	Management information
SHEP	School Holiday Enrichment Programme
SoF	Summer of Fun

# Summer of Fun 2021 reach and outcomes

**Over 67,500** children and young people took part across Wales

**8%** were aged 0-4 years  
**85%** were 5-15 years  
**7%** were 16-25 years



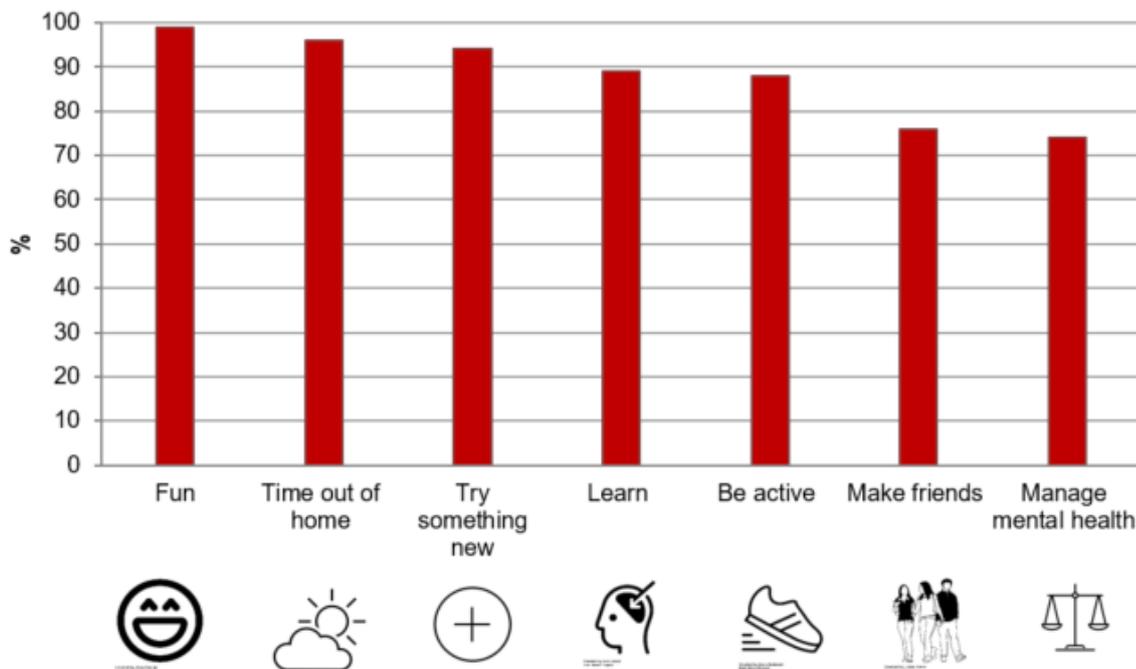
**9%** said they were Black, Asian or from an ethnic minority  
**5%** had additional learning needs  
**3%** had a disability

**11%** of sessions were delivered in Welsh medium  
**43%** in Welsh and English mediums (bilingual)  
**46%** in English medium



**99%** of children and young people said they had **fun**

Children and young people reported a range of benefits of taking part:



Top: Base: 409 provider returns, Source: MI.

Chart: Base: 864-884, Source: Participant

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 On 16 June 2021, the Welsh Government announced a £5 million Summer of Fun for children and young people aged 0-25 to play and participate in leisure, recreational, sporting and cultural activities to help rebuild their social and emotional skills in both Welsh and English. The fund was awarded to local authorities (LAs) to provide access to activities to support the social, emotional, physical and mental wellbeing of all children and young people. That, in turn, is integral to supporting them in reengaging with learning and education, enabling all children and young people to reach their full potential and critical in the recovery of the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme was delivered from 01 July to 31 September 2021. The Welsh Government commissioned Ecorys to undertake a process evaluation of the SoF programme.

### **Background**

- 1.2 A nationwide lockdown was put in place to stem the transmission of COVID-19 in March 2020; with all but essential services forced to close their doors. This included play centres, leisure facilities, community spaces, and sport centres. Schools operated differently and pupil attendance was restricted. Schools provided remote learning, where possible. Importantly, spaces that would normally have provided children and young people with safe access to enriching activities and educational opportunities were then closed intermittently throughout the following 12 months due to the changing restrictions. There is a growing body of emerging evidence on the impact of these restrictions on children and young people including on socialisation, communication, emotional and mental health, low levels of physical activity and increased sedentary behaviour (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020).
- 1.3 While all children have been impacted, the pandemic and the restrictions have had particular impact on those who were already disadvantaged. Children from low-income families are more likely to experience a lack of physical activity and isolation, with their parents being less able to afford enriching activities (The Sutton Trust, 2014; Cullinane and Montacute, 2017).

1.4 The Welsh Government wanted to support children by providing the space and time for play in the summer of 2021 by:

- supporting fun and the opportunity to express themselves through play
- community based interactive, creative and play-based initiatives for all
- provide opportunities to play with friends and peers
- creating space and opportunity for free play.

1.5 The SoF provided an opportunity for all children and young people in Wales, aged 0-25 to engage in free accessible opportunities to play in addition to regulated childcare provision (not instead of). It supported leisure, recreational, sporting and cultural activities including the arts and other outdoor activities. Access to activities such as these is considered critical in the recovery from COVID-19 to support the social, emotional, physical and mental wellbeing of all children and young people. In turn, this is integral to supporting them in reengaging with learning and education. These ambitions are set out in the Renew and Reform programme<sup>1</sup>, and seek to support all children and young people to reach their full potential.

### **Objectives of the evaluation**

1.6 The aim of this evaluation was to assess the SoF programme 2021, how it was implemented in practice, perceived outcomes for children and young people as well as learning to inform future policy and practice. Specifically, the objectives were to:

- Map how LAs delivered the SoF and variations across their models, assessing what was delivered in addition to the business-as-usual offer.
- Understand administration and operational processes, including what worked well and areas for improvement. Understand how LAs and delivery partners considered equal opportunities, accessibility and Welsh medium provision.
- Understand what enabled and motivated children and young people to attend.
- Assess stakeholder views on the outcomes and benefits of the programme.
- Identify good practice and generate ideas to improve holiday provision during school holidays in the remainder of 2021/22 financial year and beyond.

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<sup>1</sup> [Renew and reform: supporting learners' wellbeing and progression \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

1.7 This report addresses each of these questions in the chapters that follow.

**Table 1: Report outline**

<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Content</b>
<b>Chapter 2</b>	Outlines the evaluation <b>methodology</b>
<b>Chapter 3</b>	Examines the <b>design of the SoF policy programme</b>
<b>Chapter 4</b>	Explores how <b>LAs</b> planned and delivered the programme
<b>Chapter 5</b>	Reports on the <b>provider delivery</b>
<b>Chapter 6</b>	Reports on the <b>experiences of children and young people</b>
<b>Chapter 7</b>	Examines the overall <b>outcomes and benefits of SoF</b>
<b>Chapter 8</b>	Presents <b>recommendations</b> emerging from the research
<b>Chapter 9</b>	Draws together the <b>conclusions</b> of the evaluation

## 2. Methodology

2.1 Primary and secondary research was undertaken as part of this mixed methods process evaluation, between July and September 2021. The methods, participant groups, and achieved sample are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Methods and achieved sample**

<b>Participant group</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Achieved sample</b>
<b>Senior stakeholders</b> Welsh Government officials/ national partners	Qualitative interview	Provide programme context, how it was intended to be delivered	15
	Management information (MI)	Analysis of LA funding proposals	22
<b>LA SoF leads</b>	Qualitative interview	Explore local programme delivery, learning and perceived outcomes	19
	Online survey	Collect views and experiences of managers and staff delivering SoF activities	249
<b>Providers</b>	MI	Analysis of delivery reach data	409
	Online survey	Gather views and experiences of people participating in SoF activities	969
<b>Programme participants</b> children, young people and families	Qualitative interview		27
	LA leads and providers	Present early findings and co-develop conclusions and recommendations	33

## **Recruitment of participants and ethical considerations**

- 2.2 A copy of data collection materials is provided in Annex B. All participant facing study materials were professionally translated into Welsh once final versions were agreed with the Welsh Government. Qualitative interviews and surveys were offered in both Welsh and English. Overall 2 interviews and 2 focus groups were completed in Welsh; 29 participant and 8 provider surveys were also completed in Welsh.
- 2.3 The Welsh Government provided the research team with email addresses of senior stakeholders and LA SoF leads. The research team invited potential participants to take part in an interview, sending up to three reminders. The research team shared links to the online provider and participant surveys with LA leads to forward to providers to disseminate. Programme participants were invited to take part in an interview via senior stakeholders, LA leads or providers who they knew and were working with. Before starting an interview, the researcher checked that interviewees understood what participation involved and wanted to take part. Interviews with children and young people under the age of 16, were done with an adult present in the room (e.g., provider staff). The Welsh Government designed and distributed the LA proposal and management information data collection tools. This data was shared with the research team for secondary analysis purposes.

## **Data collection, management and analysis**

- 2.4 All qualitative discussions were facilitated with the aid of semi-structured topic guides and conducted remotely using MS Teams. All interviews were recorded and auto-transcribed. Transcripts were used to write-up the interview data under the agreed thematic headings and sub-headings. All qualitative data was entered into and processed in Excel. This involved initial coding and tagging of the data using an agreed coding frame. Once qualitative data was coded, a secondary analysis stage was undertaken allowing thematic analysis against the evaluation research questions.
- 2.5 Analysis of the quantitative survey and MI data was done in the software package called R. The data was cleaned before running descriptive statistics (frequencies and crosstabulations) to explore the programme's differing outputs and outcomes.

2.6 The results across different stakeholders and data collection approaches were then triangulated. This allowed examination of the findings across participant groups and analysis of the extent to which there was agreement across each theme.

### **Data considerations**

2.7 The evaluation data collection took place in parallel to the SoF delivery. A small number of LAs (3) did not respond to the invitation to participate in an interview.

2.8 Despite the delivery period being a busy time for providers the response rate to the survey was good (n=249). The full profile of SoF provider partners, however, is not known so it is not possible to ascertain if the achieved sample fully represents all providers. Some MI returns were not received in time to include them in the analysis. The analysis therefore does not represent the full scale of SoF provision. The management information had gaps and inconsistencies. A proportion of providers had not collected and submitted all required management information, and there was variation in how data requests were interpreted and entered into the form.

2.9 There was a reliance on providers to assist in administering and disseminating the participant survey and while the response rate for the participant survey was good (n=969), the research team was limited in its ability to maximise completion rates. This was to reduce data protection risks, and enable the programme to be established at pace. Additionally, arrangements for sharing personal information (e.g., name and contact information) with a third party (i.e., an independent evaluation company) were not in place. Fewer interviews with children were carried out than originally planned. There was more limited provision during the final weeks of the programme and providers had less direct contact with participants, limiting the opportunities to recruit for the interviews. Any similar schemes in the future may wish to consider making arrangements, in line with UK GDPR, for personal information to be collected and shared with an independent evaluation company.

2.10 All primary research was conducted remotely, in line with social distancing measures. Future similar studies may benefit from the inclusion of observation of activities, and in-person interviews with providers and children, young people and families.

2.11 The findings report perceived and self-reported programme outcomes. Future evaluations of any similar activities could include an impact evaluation to assess progress toward its stated outcomes. Any future programmes of a similar nature may also benefit from the inclusion of a logic model (Annex A) to provide a shared understanding of the activities and intended outcomes as well as a framework for any evaluation.

### **3. Programme design**

- 3.1 This section outlines the programme design from the perspective of senior stakeholders, including Welsh Government officials and representatives from national partner organisations involved in the policy development.

#### **Programme development and rationale**

- 3.2 An overarching aim of the SoF programme was to support children and young people to recover from the detrimental effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme idea originated from the Children's Commissioner for Wales in response to two surveys of children 'Coronavirus and Me' (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020). The survey results suggested a need for a universal support offer to give children and young people opportunities to play and socialise. The Welsh Government had also been considering ways to support children's physical and mental wellbeing needs to complement other COVID-19 recovery activities, such as support for learner wellbeing and progression, through the Renew and Reform programme.

'The last 18 months have exposed children to very adverse experiences, and we know that that play can be a great healer - play gathering with friends, and socialisation.' *Senior stakeholder, national partner*

- 3.3 The Children's Commissioner together with the Welsh Government consulted stakeholders from national government, local authorities, organisations across arts, sports and culture, as well as children and young people to formulate the policy.

#### **Reflections on programme design**

- 3.4 There was widespread support for the SoF policy programme across senior stakeholders. They believed it would help children, young people and families to re-engage with their communities, hobbies and interests, following the lockdowns.

#### *Programme name, scope and timeline*

- 3.5 Stakeholders were positive about the inclusion of the word 'fun' in the programme name. They thought it was understandable to all and captured the essence of

programme. However, one concern was that the name inadvertently implied that summer was the only time for fun as opposed to all year around.

‘The good things about SoF as a brand is the clarity it offers. The name says it all – it raises the importance of fun, play, being outdoors and is readily understandable to everyone.’ *Senior stakeholder, national partner*

- 3.6 Government officials explained that all the Welsh Government play policy is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 31 that every child has a right to play. Senior stakeholders were in favour of a universal offer, in recognition that all children and young people have been affected by the pandemic. They also suggested this would remove the stigma that can be attached to targeted programmes. Senior stakeholders were keen that groups who were disproportionately affected by the pandemic were reached, including those in families with low-income, those with ALN, disabilities, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups, and Welsh speakers. However, some stakeholders suggested the guidance was unclear about whether this was a universal or targeted offer, and open to LA interpretation. Finally, stakeholders were in support of the programme running into September 2021, to support children and young peoples’ transition back to education or usual activities.

#### *Programme delivery by LAs*

- 3.7 The SoF was delivered by LAs, with funds allocated to LAs proportionally, based on population size and deprivation. Due to time constraints the funds were issued via the existing All Play Wales Opportunity Grant. The SoF therefore sat with the LA Play Leads<sup>2</sup>. Play Leads were encouraged to take a cross-LA approach, drawing on expertise in other LA teams. The Welsh Government issued programme guidance to LAs. It was intended to be non-prescriptive, providing key principals to follow while giving LAs the freedom to design an offer to meet their local needs. LAs were required to submit their plans to Government officials for oversight. All providers

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<sup>2</sup> The All Play Wales Opportunity Grant is linked to the Play Sufficiency Duty which requires LAs to assess for and secure sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas. It covers the age range 0 to 17. Therefore, LA Play Leads have a knowledge of provision in their area and are encouraged to liaise with teams who have an impact on children’s play.

were required to submit management information to collect consistent delivery data. The Welsh Government issued branding guidelines to LAs to ensure a nationally recognisable programme.

- 3.8 Stakeholders explained that each LA has different staff and team set-ups for play grants. Some LAs have large teams whereas others only have an individual lead. Stakeholders therefore speculated that these differences may have influenced the LA's ability to plan and deliver the SoF and its capacity to engage with new or varied providers. However, Play Leads across LAs said that they worked with partners across the LA (see Chapter 4).

### **Enhancing the programme**

- 3.9 Stakeholders shared reflections on ways to further enhance the SoF programme and considerations for future holiday provision.

#### *Appointment of providers*

- 3.10 Senior stakeholders across the Welsh Government and national partners alike, suggested that one drawback of LAs developing local processes for funding providers was that national organisations had to navigate 22 different application processes. This made it difficult for umbrella organisations to support their members in their applications for funding. These stakeholders also thought there could be potential efficiencies in national organisations delivering aspects of the programme.
- 3.11 One stakeholder suggested that LAs could have partnered with a local voluntary, community organisation sector umbrella organisation to develop their local offers. They thought this would help to ensure a wider range of potential providers were supported to apply for funding, and safeguard against LAs only working with existing and known partners. Another suggestion was that LAs could procure approved and varied providers via the Children's Commissioner's network of organisations.
- 3.12 Stakeholders who represented registered organisations thought the SoF created competition between Care Inspectorate Wales registered childcare and play providers and those organisations who provide a range of children's activities, but

were not registered. They suggested that registered providers should have been favoured, as they offer a standard of quality that cannot be guaranteed of non-registered organisations. However, this programme was set up to cover older aged children and young people, and a wider range of services, than covered by Care Inspectorate Wales remit.

#### *Scope of funded activities*

- 3.13 An issue raised by senior stakeholders representing childcare organisations was that the guidance was unclear about whether childcare places could be funded as part of the SoF. Additionally, those representing the Youth Work sector reported that Youth Services (with qualified youth workers) were initially unsure if they would qualify for funding, due to the emphasis on play.
- 3.14 Those representing Youth Sector organisations, questioned whether the SoF would reach and engage adolescents. They thought the Minister responsible for youth work should have part of the programme planning. They were concerned that adolescent engagement in the programme was lower than it could have been. They attributed this gap to the funding being channelled through LA play teams coupled with the stronger infrastructure in place for younger children's provision. However, LA Play Leads generally believed that the programme guidance was clear and did not report such uncertainties (see Chapter 4).
- 3.15 Some LAs had a minimum funding amount. Senior stakeholders representing national partner organisations suggested organisations could have offered additionality to existing offers with very small grant awards.
- 3.16 Stakeholders believed that the programme had potential to identify unknown vulnerabilities and needs of families. They suggested that providers could be given information to signpost families to support services, for example, to food banks and support for domestic violence. The evaluation did not find evidence of sign-posting to these specific services as part of programme delivery.

### *Alignment with complementary programmes*

- 3.17 Stakeholders also suggested LAs should have been required to undertake a mapping activity of existing summer activities in their LA prior to being awarded funding to reduce the risk of duplication and gaps in provision. For example, they highlighted that the SoF had potential to be better aligned with School Holiday and Enrichment Programme (SHEP)<sup>3</sup>, as a programme that already supports vulnerable children.

### *Programme branding*

- 3.18 Government officials observed that the official SoF branding was not used by all LAs and providers. They suggested that the Welsh Government could have communicated directly with LA marketing teams to ensure the branding was used.

### **Programme sustainability**

- 3.19 Stakeholders advocated for a long-term investment in informal provisions to support children and young people in a sustained way. Not only to support with COVID-19 recovery, but the wider public health preventative agenda. One suggestion was for a 'Year of Fun', whereby SoF provided a pilot to learn and build from. Stakeholders suggested there was a need for all year around provision, which could be delivered after-school, at weekends and during holidays. They highlighted that long-term funding would support children and families to build trusting relationships with providers and practitioners. It would also enable providers to invest in their workforces.
- 3.20 Furthermore, stakeholders suggested that the programme may have created an expectation of future free-to-access summer provision among the public. They questioned whether the Welsh Government would be able to offer this level of funding again.

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<sup>3</sup> The LA guidance stated that the SoF should not compete with existing provision. SHEP takes place for an average of 10 days during the summer with small cohorts of children in each LA; it also has an educational aspect. ['Food and Fun' School Holiday Enrichment Programme](#)

## **4. Local authority planning and coordination**

- 4.1 This section maps LA approaches to delivering the SoF. It outlines the administrative and operational processes that what worked well or posed challenges to implementation. The evidence is drawn from LA lead interviews.

### **The Welsh Government guidance and support**

- 4.2 LA leads reported that the programme guidance was clear and offered flexibility to meet local needs. Leads questioned why providers were listed in the guidance. They explained that this seemed to create an expectation that these providers would receive funding. LA leads had to then manage this expectation. LA leads who attended the SoF online surgeries, said it was both helpful and reassuring to hear neighbouring LA plans. For some LAs, the surgeries were held too late to influence their plans. There was appetite among LA leads for further opportunities to share learning with other LAs about their approaches. Leads appreciated that the Welsh Government lead was approachable, responsive and understood how LAs work.

### **Planning and coordination**

#### *Programme steering and working groups*

- 4.3 The LA leads commonly convened working groups to plan and progress programme delivery. The exact format of these differed by LA. Some had steering groups, with representatives from partners such as the Youth Service and Libraries. Other LAs created smaller working groups dedicated to specific types of provision (e.g., sports, arts) or for specific demographic groups (e.g., by age group, children with disabilities). An alternative approach was to allocate funding to different LA departments to administer themselves. In most LAs, final programme plans were signed off by a strategic lead in Children's Services.

#### *Mapping existing provision and plugging gaps*

- 4.4 Some LAs started by mapping their existing summer offers across LA departments for the 0-25 age range. This helped to identify opportunities to 'top up' provision and gaps that could be plugged by the SoF. LA leads reported strengthened cross-LA

partnership working and the creation of a comprehensive 0-25 summer offer, as a result of the SoF.

‘It’s brought the different organisations together and created more of a holistic summer programme rather than the sports and play one, the youth service one. It’s brought them together to promote to a wider audience.’ *LA lead, urban/rural*

#### *Consulting with children, young people and local partners*

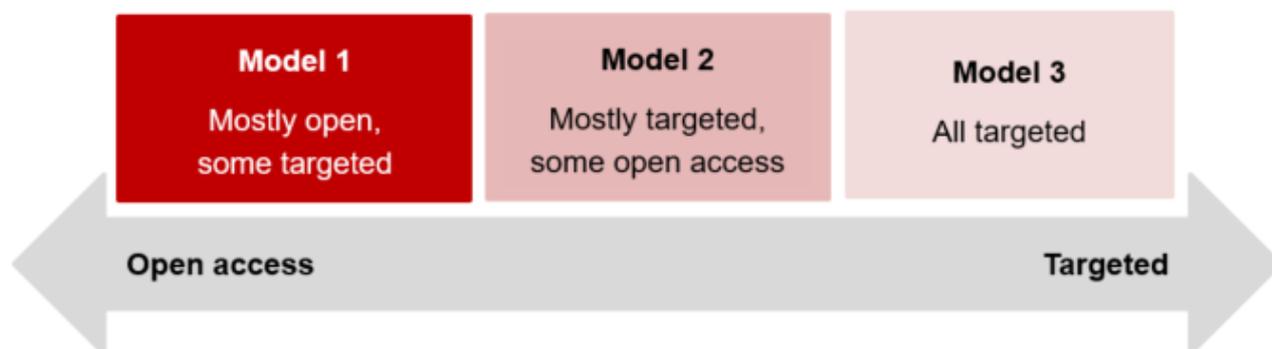
4.5 While a few LAs consulted with children, young people and local partners to help inform their SoF programme design; most LAs reported that they did not have sufficient time to do so. Instead, they built on past consultations and feedback on similar programmes, e.g., Children and Communities Grant programme.

#### **LA SoF programme models**

4.6 LAs with an existing summer offer used the SoF to expand this. They included more activities and extended activities across the 0-25 age range. Conversely, LAs with no or limited prior summer offer, planned their SoF from scratch.

4.7 Most LAs opted for a programme with both an open access and targeted offer. The emphasis and funding allocated to each of these components varied by LA. LA programmes broadly adopted one of three models as shown in Figure 1 depending on their interpretation of the SoF guidance and local team capacity.

**Figure 1: LA SoF programme model**



4.8 LA teams developed targeted offers to engage vulnerable families and demographics. LAs identified groups that would benefit from participation but may face barriers to take up open access provision. Most LAs targeted children and young people known to LA Children’s Social Services and Early Help<sup>4</sup> teams. Additionally, LAs chose to target groups that reflected the needs of their local populations (as shown in Figure 2). LAs worked closely with relevant LA staff such as social workers and Flying Start<sup>5</sup> teams to identify and refer target groups into the programme.

**Figure 2: Examples of LA SoF targeted groups**

- Families with a social worker or known to Early Help
- Home educated groups
- Gypsy and Travellers
- Young farmers
- Young carers
- Young refugee and asylum seekers
- Young parents
- Those known to Youth Offending Teams

### **Delivery timetable**

4.9 The SoF programme could run from 1 July to 30 September 2021. Due to time pressures, LAs generally started their provision towards the end of July, coinciding with the school summer holidays. LAs also ran provision into September, offering after school and weekend activities.

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<sup>4</sup> Early help, also known as early intervention, is support given to a family when a problem first emerges. It can be provided at any stage in a child or young person's life. Statutory guidance in each nation of the UK highlights the importance of providing early intervention, rather than waiting until a child or family's situation escalates. Early Help services can be delivered to parents, children or whole families, but their main focus is to improve outcomes for children.

<sup>5</sup> Flying Start is the Welsh Government's targeted Early Years programme for families with children under 4 years of age who live in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Wales.

## **SoF providers**

4.10 LAs took one of two approaches to appointing providers. LAs with existing summer offers, 'topped up' funding of existing external providers and in-house teams (e.g., Youth Service) to run additional activities using SoF funding. Working with existing providers was considered efficient within the timeframe. It also removed the need to quality assure new and unknown providers. Alternatively, LAs ran a grant application process, whereby potential providers, including in-house LA teams, submitted formal proposal applications for funding. Applications were formally assessed and scored. This allowed new providers to receive SoF funding and reassured LAs they had assessed all potential providers fairly. Some LAs allowed providers to request small funding amounts to provide additionality to existing provision, e.g., additional funding to buy equipment or to fund a day trip for participants. Additionally, LAs chose to fund places within existing provisions, in some instances. LAs maximised the funding by making use of their local assets. For example, some LAs negotiated free or discounted tickets to local attractions and hosted activities at local parks and beaches, to minimise venue costs.

### *Specialist providers for people with disabilities*

4.11 LAs engaged specialised providers to deliver activities for people with disabilities. Some LA leads reported that the availability of specialist providers was limited in their area. They explained that specialist providers, especially those offering a higher level of support (e.g., 1-2-1 provision) were generally already working with families. Therefore, the SoF offered little additionality for these groups.

### *Welsh language provision*

4.12 All LA leads were aware of the need to offer Welsh language provision. However, availability of Welsh medium providers varied by LA. In one LA, the lead explained that local providers lacked staff with Welsh language skills. In other LAs, providers had staff that were bilingual. One LA lead prioritised commissioning Welsh medium providers over bilingual services to encourage children and young people to practise Welsh. Some LA leads explained that from their experience, there was little interest among families in their area to take-up Welsh language provision.

### *Older age groups: 16–25-year-olds*

- 4.13 LA leads commonly experienced challenges in developing an offer for 16+ age groups. Leads noted that this age group often have competing priorities, like spending time with friends or working. LAs typically involved the LA Youth Service, via qualified Youth Workers<sup>6</sup> to run youth work activities. In part, this included day trips which helped to engage this age group. Other novel ways to engage this group included: running taster Duke of Edinburgh sessions, providing gym passes or driving class tasters. LA leads suggested that opportunities for volunteering and work experience may appeal to this age range.

### *Volunteer workforces*

- 4.14 Volunteer workforces were part of some LA SoF models. These LAs mobilised their existing volunteers to support provider delivery. Another LA reported that a provider proactively engaged parents attending their activities to become trained volunteers.

### **Quality assurance of providers**

- 4.15 Across LAs, providers were issued with funding agreements. All newly appointed organisations were required to meet the LA's quality standards. Quality assurance processes included reviews of provider public liability insurance, health and safety policy and safeguarding policy. LAs noted that some new providers and those that had not operated during lockdowns had gaps in their safeguarding procedures and could be unsure of how to complete COVID-19 safety assessments. LA leads supported providers to plug gaps in their processes. Due to the speed at which providers were appointed, some LA leads had concerns about whether all quality assurance processes had been sufficiently covered. LAs noted that some providers required more support than others, for example with identifying venues, booking systems and marketing, which proved time consuming for the LA team.
- 4.16 During delivery, LA leads generally kept in contact with providers by email and telephone. One LA made use of an established forum for providers to support one another and share good practise. Some LAs had planned a debrief session with

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<sup>6</sup> Funded as part of the LA Revenue Support Grant.

providers to gather feedback at the end of delivery. Some LAs conducted spot checks of delivery, but this was not widespread. LA leads explained a key barrier was the lack of staff capacity to conduct spot checks, particularly alongside SHEP monitoring. Some LA staff needed approval to visit providers as part of COVID-19 safety measures. Some LA leads questioned whether they were best placed to quality assure the range of provision, as much of it was outside of their play remit. Finally, one LA identified a provider promoting their activities under the SoF branding, although they were not funded by the programme.

- 4.17 LAs developed informal arrangements for training provider staff. One LA team offered play training and coaching to Family Centre staff so they could continue supporting play activities beyond SoF. Similarly, another LA developed a knowledge exchange agreement, whereby the LA provided play training to staff at a leisure provider. In return, the provider delivered a learning session about the leisure agenda for the LA.

### **Transportation costs**

- 4.18 The SoF funding could be used to cover transport costs of participants. LAs typically took a pragmatic decision to fund the travel costs for targeted groups, but not for other participant groups. LAs tried to plan activities located in walking distance for local communities, to reduce the risk of transportation being a barrier to participation. LAs servicing rural communities, welcomed the ability to cover transport costs. LA leads reported practical challenges of reimbursing transport costs. Participants could not always afford to pay for bus or train tickets upfront and wait to be reimbursed. LAs generally had direct invoicing systems in place with approved taxi providers, however, this option was more costly than public transport options.

### **Communications and marketing**

- 4.19 LAs were issued with marketing guidance to ensure all programme activities shared a common and recognisable SoF brand. LAs with existing summer offers and associated branding retained their original branding for efficiency. Some LAs marketed all their summer activities under the SoF banner, regardless how they

were funded. LAs that engaged their Family Information Services reported this was a successful marketing approach. By comparison, LA Communications and Marketing teams could be slow to process requests and the requirement to translate all materials also caused delays. Some LAs also marketed their offer on their local tourist board websites. Finally, some LA leads felt better skilled and equipped to run social media marketing campaigns than others, suggesting a potential training gap.

### **Booking systems for activities**

- 4.20 In the absence of customer management software, LAs used ticketing websites such as 'Eventbrite' to manage bookings. LA teams recognised that some families were more organised, better able and skilled to navigate online booking systems, and may have unequal access to digital resources (such as internet access and devices). Approaches to minimise the risk of less tech-savvy families missing out, included: releasing activities on a weekly basis; releasing bookings early for target groups; reserving places for families to simply 'show-up' without prior booking; encouraging social workers and other professionals to complete bookings for families. LA leads advocated for free provision but acknowledged that this can lead to people booking but not showing up or formally cancelling. One LA charged a nominal fee for booking open access activities to encourage attendance.

### **Managing COVID-19 risks**

- 4.21 All LAs were operating in the context of COVID-19 and changing national and local measures. LA leads explained that delivering a large-scale programme while stopping the spread of the virus added a layer of anxiety for them. LAs highlighted that their local safety measures could be stricter than national guidelines. Some LAs required their providers to be checked by the LA COVID-19 safety team. LAs limited spaces at activities to mitigate transmission risks. Families who were anxious about leaving their homes or were self-isolating were not always reached by the programme. Providers in some LAs created home activity packs and virtual activities to engage these groups. Some providers were affected by staff capacity issues, due to requirements to isolate.

### **LA team capacity**

4.22 LA Leads welcomed the SoF funding. There was widespread endorsement of the programme and provision of informal activities to support COVID-19 recovery for children, young people and families. LAs were generally awarded much larger grants than they had expected. Leads stressed they would have benefited from more time for planning and set-up. The tight timeline put undue pressure on LA teams, particularly small LA teams. Leads were delivering SoF alongside their existing workloads. Although the funding allowed for administrative costs, leads explained that there was not sufficient time to appoint and train new staff.

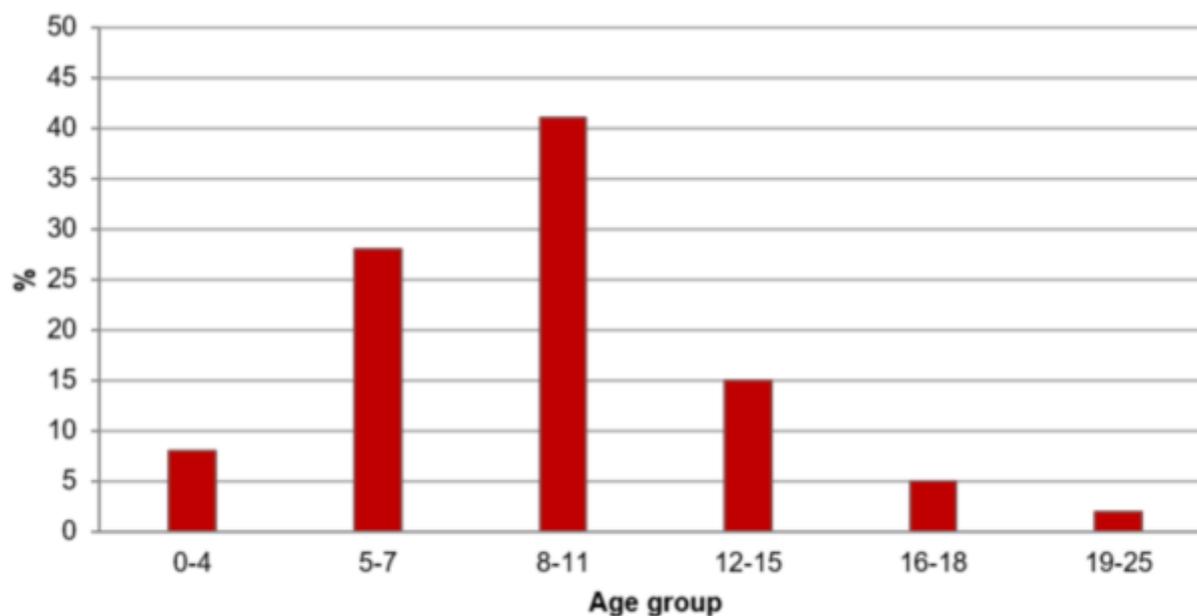
## 5. Programme delivery

5.1 This section outlines the programme from the provider perspective. It presents evidence from the provider survey and MI data.

### Programme reach

5.2 MI data showed that over 67,641 children and young people, attended at least one SoF session<sup>7</sup>. As Figure 3 shows, 70% of children taking part were primary school age (5-11 years old), while only 7% of participants were aged 16 or over. Different LAs had better reach across particular age groups than others.

**Figure 3: Children and young people attending a SoF activity, by age group**



Base: 55,293. Source: MI. Please note all providers collected or supplied age information.

5.3 Reach by ethnicity was representative of the Welsh population<sup>8</sup>, with most (91%) participants classified as White<sup>9</sup> and the remaining 9% identified as an ethnic minority.

<sup>7</sup> This number represents individual children and young people attending activities at a provider; children and young people who attending activities at multiple providers will be double counted in this figure.

<sup>8</sup> [Ethnicity by area and ethnic group](#)

<sup>9</sup> MI data (n=38,206). A number of providers were unable to supply participant ethnicity data, as they did not collect this information.

5.4 Among SoF participants, 5% had ALN and 3% had a disability<sup>10</sup>. As with age, some LAs had better reach of those with additional needs than others.

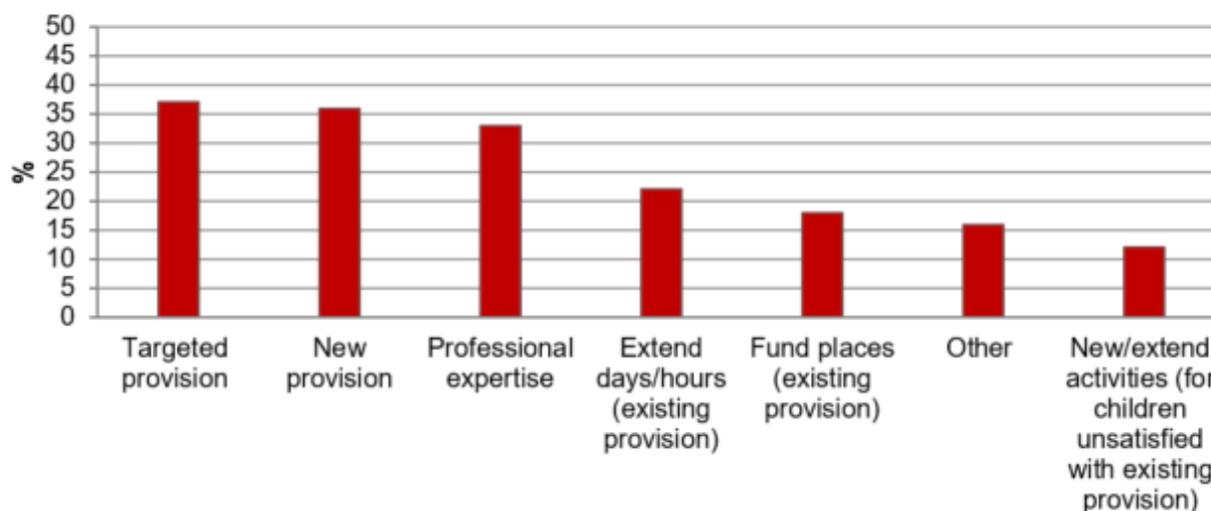
### Welsh medium provision

5.1 According to the MI data, 11% of all SoF sessions were delivered in Welsh medium. Just under half (45%) were delivered in English medium and 26% in mostly English with some bilingual elements and 17% were delivered in both Welsh and English<sup>11</sup>. A small proportion of providers (1%) delivered in another medium, e.g., British Sign Language.

### Uses of funding

5.2 Providers used the SoF funding in a variety of ways as shown in as shown in Figure 4, the top three funding uses were the offer targeted provision (37% of providers), new provision (36%) and to buy in expertise, e.g., a sports coach or artist (33%).

**Figure 4: Uses of SoF funding, by providers**



Base: 409 providers. Source: MI. Providers delivered in multiple activities, so percentages are over 100%.

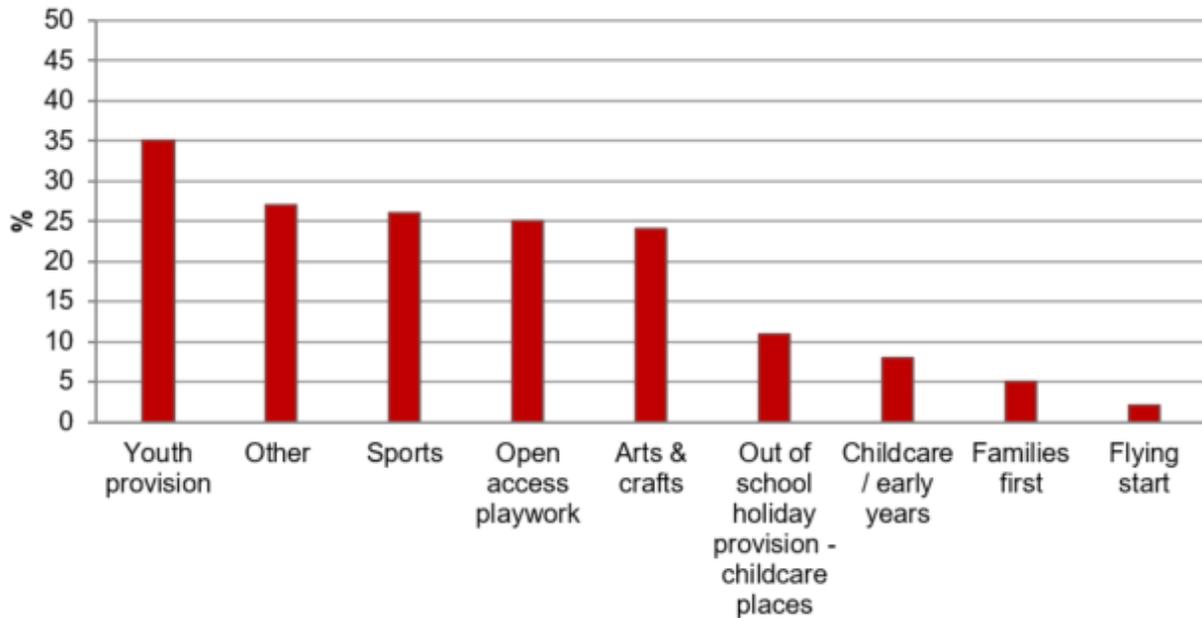
5.3 Providers offered a range of types of SoF provision: 35% of providers offered Youth provision (which includes a combination of youth clubs and provision delivered by

<sup>10</sup> MI data (n= 67, 641). A number of providers were unable to supply participant ALN or disability data, as they did not collect this information.

<sup>11</sup> MI data (n=1,113 sessions).

qualified Youth Workers); 27% said ‘other’ which included family activities, parent support, educational activities and day trips; 26% offered sport; while 25% offered open access playwork and 24% offered arts and crafts. Additionally, 43% of providers offered family activities<sup>12</sup> (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Types of provision, by providers**



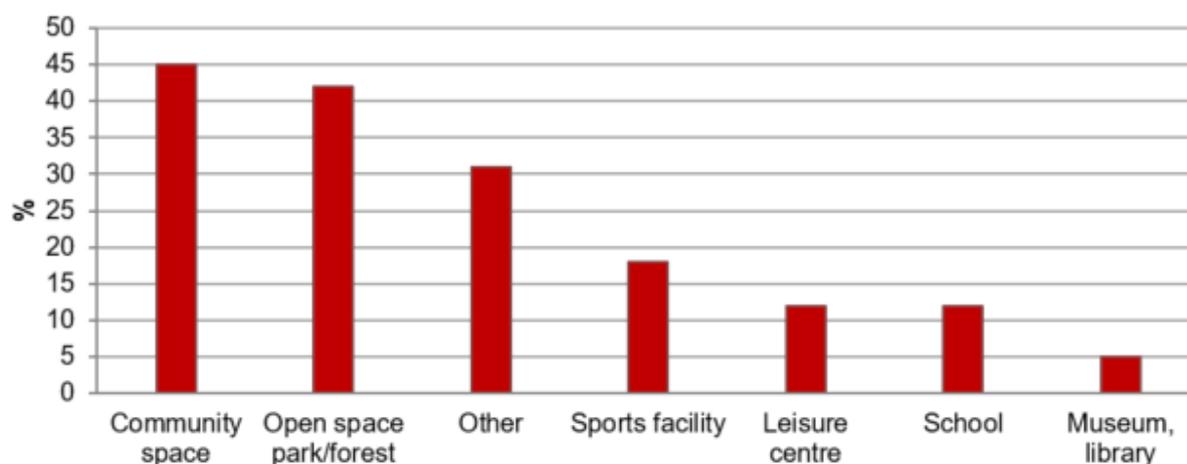
Base: 409 providers. Source: MI. Providers delivered in multiple activities, so percentages are over 100%.

### Location of delivery

5.4 Providers delivered across a range of venues and locations (Figure 6). Popular locations included: community spaces (45% of providers); open spaces including parks and forests (42%); as well as other (31%) locations including cultural venues such as cinema, theatres, zoos or in participant’s homes.

<sup>12</sup> MI data: (n=409 provider returns)

**Figure 6: Delivery locations, by providers**



Base: 409 providers Source: MI. Providers delivered in multiple locations, so percentages are over 100%.

### **Workforce**

5.5 Volunteer workforces contributed a great deal to the SoF delivery. According to the provider survey responses, over half of providers (56%) delivered activities entirely by paid staff; 39% delivered with a mix of paid staff and volunteers; a small proportion (2%) delivered solely with the support of volunteers<sup>13</sup>.

### **Barriers to attendance**

5.6 Providers believed the key barriers for participants to attend SoF activities were: parent/carer related reasons (59% of providers); transport (29%); and COVID-19 (28%)<sup>14</sup>.

### **Guidance, support and training from LAs**

5.7 The survey data indicated a potential gap in provider training and support, and differences across LAs. Overall, 54% of providers were satisfied with the support they received from the LA for SoF. Few providers indicated that they were offered support and training from the LA during SoF. Even fewer said they took-up these offers. For instance, 17% of providers said they took up support to develop their

<sup>13</sup> Provider survey: provider workforce (n=247); 3% of providers stated 'don't know'.

<sup>14</sup> Provider survey: perceived barriers to attending SoF (n=249)

policies; 14% received safeguarding training; 11% received inclusion and accessibility training and 9% recalled receiving the UK Chief Medical Officer guidelines for physical activity and accompanying infographic<sup>15</sup>.

### **Future delivery**

- 5.8 Providers were open to running similar provision next summer (2022) with funding. Around two thirds (67%) of providers said they would deliver next year if funding was available. Only a small proportion (6%) said they could deliver irrespective of funding availability<sup>16</sup>. Others were unsure or did not respond to the question.

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<sup>15</sup> Provider survey: take-up of training and support (n=249)

<sup>16</sup> Provider survey: run similar provision next summer (n=249)

## 6. Child and young people experiences

6.1 This section presents children and young people’s experiences of the programme. Evidence is presented from the participant surveys<sup>17</sup> and interviews.

### Motivations and enablers to participation

6.2 The two main ways that people found out about the SoF were through social media (45%) or word of mouth (36%)<sup>18</sup>.

6.3 The participant survey identified the main motivations for attending SoF were to: have fun (83%) and play and socialise with others (66%) as shown in Figure 7. Only 8% of respondents mentioned the opportunity to speak Welsh as a motivation for attending. Interview participants said that without SoF sessions, they would have been at home with nothing to do. For them, SoF was a reason to get out of the house.

**Figure 7: Children and young people’s motivation to attend SoF**



Base: 969. Source: Participant survey. Participants could choose multiple reasons, so Percentages are over 100%.

<sup>17</sup> Note that both children, young people and parents/carers completed the participant survey. 839 parents/carers completed it with or on behalf of a children or young person.

<sup>18</sup> Participant survey: How they heard about SoF (n=969)

6.4 Additionally, parents noted that attending SoF helped children rebuild their confidence following the pandemic.

‘My daughter looked forward to the music group every week. She learnt songs that she would sing around the house and really helped build her confidence.’

*Parent*

6.5 The survey showed that parents and carers were the key decision-makers around children and young people attending SoF (50%), while 35% of children and young people said they chose for themselves<sup>19</sup>.

6.6 Families on a low-income greatly appreciated that SoF was free, as it gave parents and children an opportunity to take part in summer activities.

‘[I would be] literally stuck in my house. There's nothing for my age range. I don't work, so paying £5 for activities, I would struggle, I can't afford to do that.’ *Young person*

6.7 In terms of transport, the survey revealed that just under half (46%) of children and young people received a lift to SoF activities. The rest either walked (25%), drove (22%), used provider transport (6%), public transport (6%) or cycled (5%)<sup>20</sup>. Of those who accessed public transport only 6% had their costs reimbursed by the LA<sup>21</sup>. Participants who had access to provider transport, said it enabled their participation.

‘I don't have car and it is difficult to manage my two autistic sons. The activities have been arranged to meet my children's need and also provide me with pick up and drop off transport, which was extremely helpful, I have not had a summer like this in [my area] before, it has been the best.’ *Parent*

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<sup>19</sup> Participant survey: Decision to attend SoF (n=969)

<sup>20</sup> Participant survey: Transport mode (n=969)

<sup>21</sup> Participant survey: Whether costs of public transport covered (n=55)

## Participant experiences of SoF provision

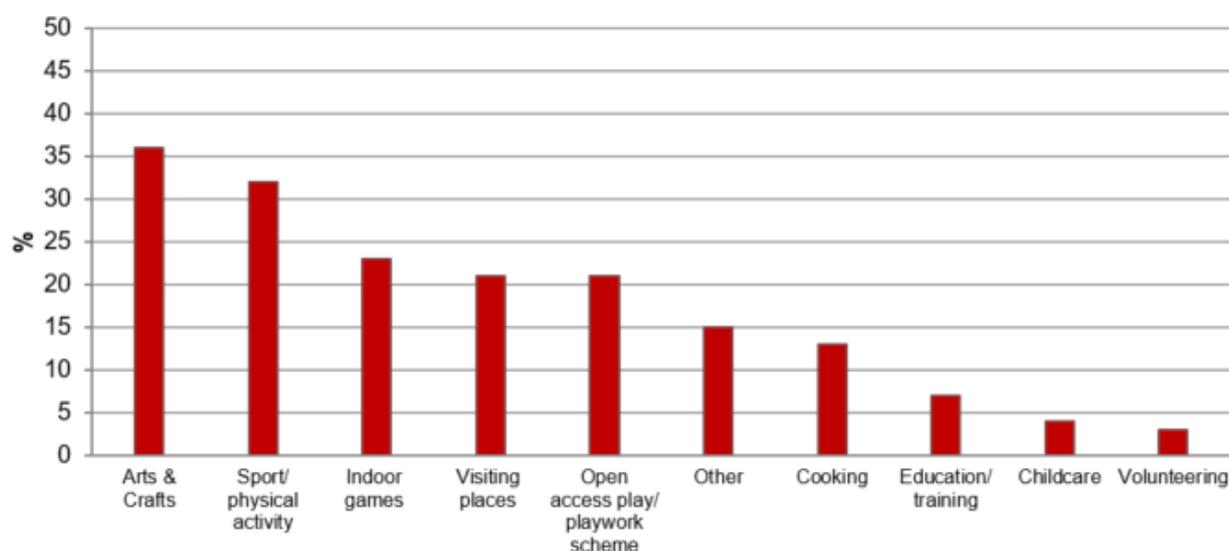
- 6.8 Children and young people’s experiences of SoF were overwhelmingly positive. Nearly all (99%)<sup>22</sup> of survey participants said they enjoyed taking part in SoF.

‘[SoF] taught me new skills that I can use in later life, and it was lots of fun!’  
*Child/ young person*

- 6.9 Children and young people had multiple opportunities to play and take part in a wide range of activities. Participants believed these helped them to socialise and build their skills and confidence. The activities survey participants took part in are shown in Figure 8.

‘I normally go out on my own to town and things, but here there are more people, it’s a social experience...before I came here I didn’t have any friends. I was a bit depressed to be honest, being here has helped a lot.’ *Child/ young person*

**Figure 8: Activities children and young people participated in, by type**



Base: 969. Source: Participant survey. Participants participated in multiple activities, so Percentages are over 100%.

<sup>22</sup> Participant survey: Enjoyment of SoF (n=965)

6.10 Children, young people and parents said they liked the variety of activities and play opportunities. Children and young people enjoyed the chance to participate in novel or new activities.

‘It was an opportunity to do some sea-based sport activity in a safe and fun setting. My daughter had a great time learning how to paddleboard with her friends.’ *Parent*

6.11 The survey responses showed that participants appreciated the choice and variety of both outdoor and indoor activities. This included sports from swimming and climbing to playing with water balloons and zip lining. As well as indoor play and activities such as board games, soft play, arts and crafts, music, and theatre.

6.12 Furthermore, participants stressed that provider staff were friendly and created a welcoming environment.

‘Fantastic activities. Something different every week. The staff are so welcoming with both parents and children. They play fantastic with them and make sure each and every child is involved in everything. Fantastic play and staff.’ *Parent*

6.13 Participants liked that the activities were for the most part, inclusive for different age groups and needs. However, parents in some LAs thought that more activities could have been inclusive of people with disabilities.

‘I was only able to participate in one activity as I am disabled, but it was very inclusive and I was made to feel part of the group.’ *Parent*

6.14 Participants liked that they could attend SoF together with their friends and family. They also enjoyed the opportunities to play and socialise with new people and make new friends.

‘The activities were things I couldn't normally do as a casual day trip and I found them exciting and different. I met some new people and had a good time with my friends which I knew already.’ *Child/young person*

6.15 Participants were generally in praise of the programme and hoped it would be run again next summer.

‘Activities provided are great (for all ages), friendly staff and nice that there's a rotation and something different to do each week. Hope we can do this again next year as we look forward to it!’ *Parent*

**Participant suggestions to further enhance SoF**

- 6.16 Programme participants were extremely positive about their experiences, as reflected in their suggestions to improve SoF. They suggested they wanted more activities, more frequent and longer sessions and for SoF to continue beyond the summer. Parents suggested that the inclusion of food would have added to their experiences and helped them to stay longer at sessions. Some parents suggested a need to offer space for parents to observe or participate in activities.

## 7. Programme outcomes and benefits

7.1 This section outlines the perceived and self-reported outcomes and benefits of the SoF for children and young people, families, local providers and the wider community. It draws on all interview and survey data.

### Outcomes for children and young people

#### *Fun, play and socialisation*

7.2 LA leads believed that the SoF provision had achieved the outcome of providing fun for children and young people. Importantly, young people agreed, with 99%<sup>23</sup> of respondents to the participant survey reporting enjoyment of their summer activities. The previous 18 months have seen children subject to prolonged periods of restrictions, isolation and a lack of opportunities outside of the home due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Senior stakeholders and LA leads alike, explained that the pandemic had brought the necessity of fun and play to the forefront this summer. They highlighted that fun, smiles and play opportunities should be viewed as important positive outcomes every summer, regardless of the pandemic.

‘I hope they’re happy and I hope they’ve had lots of fun and whatever comes out of that is fine as far as I’m concerned, that’s an outcome and that’s a positive one.’ *Senior stakeholder, national partner*

7.3 Within the context of COVID-19, the SoF provision has enabled LAs to begin to counter the negative impact of the restrictions on children’s right to play and socialisation. It was important to stakeholders that there were opportunities for children and young people to attend provision that had a sole focus on fun, rather than formal learning.

‘The main thing...is that they are having some time with their friendship groups, they’re able to sort of build-up, build back up that confidence and that self-esteem.’ *LA lead, rural*

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<sup>23</sup> Participant survey: Enjoyment of SoF (n=965)

7.4 The ability to socialise and make friends was highlighted as an outcome by all stakeholders, including young people. A large proportion of young people (76%)<sup>24</sup> who responded to the participant survey agreed that the SoF activities had helped them to make new friendships.

7.5 LA leads reported that the lack of socialisation over the pandemic, coupled with the restrictions to how schools had to operate over this period<sup>25</sup> has negatively affected the communication and social skills of some children and young people. They had seen children develop their language, communication and interpersonal skills over the course of the SoF provision.

*Opportunities to speak Welsh*

7.6 The importance of developing language skills was not only linked to COVID-19, as LA leads recognised that over the summer, children are generally less likely to practice Welsh language skills. SoF activities have offered some children and young people the opportunity to socialise using the Welsh language during the summer holidays; particularly important for those from English speaking households.

*Opportunities to try new activities – foster hobbies and interests*

7.7 The SoF gave children and young people opportunities that they may not have otherwise been able to access. Importantly, as the provision was free at the point of access, these opportunities were open to all young people irrespective of background. A majority of young people (94%)<sup>26</sup> who responded to the participant survey agreed that the SoF activities have enabled them to try new activities, while 89% felt they had the opportunity to learn new things. The opportunity to try new things led to children developing new hobbies and interests that are potentially sustainable beyond the provision. For example, one LA in affiliation with local libraries, set up a reading challenge over the summer. For many of the young people, this was the first time they had visited a public library and a number have continued to go to the library after the challenge finished.

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<sup>24</sup> Participant survey: Make new friends (n=879)

<sup>25</sup> During the pandemic schools operated virtually. Schools remained open for some children including, children of critical workers and vulnerable children.

<sup>26</sup> Participant survey: Try new activities (n=878)

'It is taking young people out of their comfort zone. They get to do things they've never done. They get to experience success in a way that they didn't think it's possible.' *Senior stakeholder, national partner*

### *Physical activity*

- 7.8 A large proportion of children (88%)<sup>27</sup> said that SoF helped them to be more active. Similarly, 49%<sup>28</sup> of providers believed that their provision supported participants to improve their physical health.
- 7.9 Young people reported that their opportunities without the SoF would have been limited. They reported that they would have spent more time at home and had more screen time.

### *Mental wellbeing*

- 7.10 The benefits of the programme on the mental health and wellbeing of young people were widely recognised by LA Leads. The activities and opportunities have allowed young people to reconnect with what has been lost through the periods of lockdown and isolation; offering children and young people the time to simply play, have fun and engage with their peers. Young people aged 12 and over, were asked if the SoF activities had helped them to manage their mental health, 73%<sup>29</sup> agreed.

'Through having fun and through being able to explore and do all the things that they haven't been able to do is going to be having like a major impact on their on their health and wellbeing'. *LA lead, urban*

### **Outcomes for families**

- 7.11 Families valued the SoF offers, with LA leads reporting positive outcomes for the families of children and young people attending the provision. A number of LAs facilitated whole-family activities; actively encouraging parents and family members to be involved, bringing them together with the sole purpose of having fun. Where parents attended, the SoF activities have improved family relationships through the

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<sup>27</sup> Participant survey: Help to be more active (n=872)

<sup>28</sup> Provider survey: Improve participant physical health (n=249)

<sup>29</sup> Participant survey: Help to manage mental health, only asked of people aged 12+ (n=864)

opportunities for positive engagement and enriching activity. One LA Lead reported that when parents were encouraged to participate in a play scheme activity, they saw families relax. The parents began mimicking the behaviours of the play workers and became more playful with their children.

‘Parents who were normally on their phones were now engaging. They see that positive interaction the children are having and then all of sudden, put their phones away, let them paint their face and stuff like that.’ *Senior stakeholder, Welsh Government*

7.12 The SoF presented some families with their first opportunity to re-engage with their local community following lockdown. One LA reported that a parent attending their family celebration event had not left the home for anything other than completing essential errands for over 18 months. This COVID-19 compliant event gave the parent the confidence to attend and had encouraged them to take further steps in re-engaging with their community.

7.13 The SoF provision offered parents and carers respite from the challenges of the pandemic, referred to as a ‘lifeline’ for some families. The restrictions of the pandemic have led to many families experiencing a change in their circumstances including: financial hardship, changes in home routine and mental health challenges. LA leads acknowledge that families needed a break this summer, more than ever; this was applicable to all families across Wales. Finally, parents and family members were simply pleased that the children were able to get out of the home during the summer and take part in enriching activities.

### **Outcomes for providers**

7.14 The SoF funding has supported industries following prolonged periods of lockdown and restrictions; providing a much-needed economic boost to local providers.

‘I think the childcare sector has taken quite a bit of a hit during COVID, so that was really important that we worked with them...working to support the local economy. And by working with local providers...we hope that we will have supported them to be able to be a little bit more sustainable.’ *LA lead, rural*

- 7.15 The SoF funding has allowed local providers to gain new audiences through the free provision. It is hoped that the taster that children and families have had will encourage them to sign-up to local services and activities, as well as pay for non-funded provision once the SoF ends, helping providers recover from the financial impact of the pandemic. More generally, through delivering the SoF, local providers have raised their profile within their local communities.
- 7.16 The SoF has also enabled some local providers to build capacity and improve the quality of their existing provision. Providers have been able to reach more young people through the activities. Some providers also benefited from using the funding to buy equipment and to take on and train more staff and volunteers over the summer. The quality of provision has also improved, for example, one LA has supported some of their new providers with safeguarding policies and COVID-19 risk assessments as part of the on-boarding process.

### **Outcomes for local areas**

- 7.17 The benefits of the SoF were thought to extend beyond the children and their families, to the wider community. Local authority leads stated that the SoF investments helped people to feel valued and it provided a 'feel good factor' for the local community.

'If you live in a community where nothing happens, you feel a bit unvalued...whereas if you feel that someone is aware of you and is looking to support you and looking to give you something, then you tend to respond better.' *LA lead, urban*

### **Sustainability and longer-term support for COVID-19 recovery**

- 7.18 The legacy of the SoF is evident from the perspective of both providers and local authorities. For many stakeholders, the SoF was their first opportunity to work on this scale in their area. Now that local authorities and individual providers have proven that they can deliver and achieve outcomes, a legacy will be the aspirations and confidence that it can be done again.

7.19 The funding also forged new collaborative partnerships between the local authorities and providers. The stakeholders were able to take stock of the assets within their local area, including the types and capabilities of local provision and the training and knowledge of staff members.

‘[SoF 2021] has set a really good foundation for us, partnerships [are] wider now and working with other parts of the team and the local authority that we possibly wouldn’t have before.’ *LA lead, rural*

7.20 Potential risks to the legacy of the programme were identified. Senior stakeholders and LA leads acknowledged that expectations of summer provision have been raised as a result of the SoF. There is a risk of public frustration if similar provisions are not funded in the future,

‘People will be expecting the same provision next year. You can’t put something on the table and then take it away.’ *LA lead, urban*

7.21 LA leads also highlighted the need for longer term investment to see the impact of community development.

‘Community development takes time. You can’t be there for one summer and then come back for another summer. It was a big level of money, to try and sustain that level of activity without the funding will be a challenge. This programme gives us evidence of how activities like this and play, benefits children, young people and families.’ *LA lead urban/rural*

7.22 While 43% of providers believed the SoF programme achieved its ambition to support COVID-19 recovery among children and young people, providers also advocated for sustained funding to support children, young people and families living with the long-term effects of the pandemic including unemployment, poverty and poor mental health among children and adults.

## **8. Participant recommendations**

8.1 This section presents recommendations for future holiday programmes. Information is drawn from interviews, surveys and discussions from the round table.

### **8.2 Recommendation 1: Retain the focus on fun and play**

- Senior stakeholders and LAs believed the focus on fun and play was crucial to support positive outcomes for children and young people's physical and mental health and should be retained.

### **8.3 Recommendation 2: Longer-term investment**

- All participant groups recommended sustained investment in year round provision for children and young people , including evenings, weekends and holidays. Longer-term funding would also help to recruit and retain LA and provider staff to support programme planning and delivery.

### **8.4 Recommendation 3: Inclusion of food provision**

- LAs and providers would have liked to provide light refreshments, as an incentive for some families to attend. Programme participants also endorsed this suggestion.

### **8.5 Recommendation 4: Time for planning and set-up**

- There was a consensus that sufficient time is needed between announcing funding and programme launch. This would support effective strategic planning, involving a wide range of partners, including schools and development of innovative practice. The time could be used to consult partners, and children and young people to help shape provision.

### **8.6 Recommendation 5: Strengthen support for LAs**

- LAs and senior stakeholders were generally in favour of flexible guidance, to allow LAs to meet their local population needs. They suggested considerations for future guidance: whether the funding can be used for childcare; whether the funding is for open access or targeted provision; that LAs are not obliged to fund suggested providers.

- Some senior stakeholders thought the Welsh Government should work with LAs to map existing provision before allocating funding, to avoid duplication and prioritise added-value activities.
- The online engagement sessions held by the Welsh Government were welcomed. LAs wanted opportunities to hear what other LAs were planning and to share learning. Improvement suggestions included having a shared platform for communications.
- Some LAs and providers did not use the programme branding (the Welsh Government logo and the hashtag #summeroffun). LAs recommended investing in a brand that can be used long-term and offering support to ensure it is used.
- Some LAs found the programme reporting processes (proposals, management information and evaluation activity) burdensome. They suggested these could be streamlined. LAs recommended that evaluation activities and tools (e.g., surveys) should have been communicated in the LA guidance, so they could make providers aware of the detailed requirements on appointment. LAs thought they should have access the participant and provider survey data to make use of LA-level information within their local learning.

#### 8.7 **Recommendation 6: Refine provider appointment, support and delivery**

- Senior stakeholders recommended future programmes should better support involvement of national providers without the need to navigate 22 different LA processes.
- LA leads discussed how managing quality assurance at provider appointment and during delivery was challenging in the timeframe, particularly for small LA teams. Senior stakeholders representing registered providers, recommended favouring registered providers in future, as they meet a high-quality standard. Some LAs said the smaller numbers of young people (due to COVID-19 restrictions) per group, may have led to better quality provision; as opposed to fewer provisions with larger number of participants.
- Parents suggested providers should have space for parents to observe or participate in delivery.

## 8.8 Recommendation 7: Enhance reach and inclusivity

- A theme among senior stakeholders, LAs and providers was **funding was not sufficient** for a truly universal offer, and there was a concern among LAs about whether it benefited the most vulnerable.
- Senior stakeholders and LA leads highlighted the importance of **free provision**, particularly for low-income families, to ease the financial burden during the holidays and support wellbeing. LAs and providers recommended the need to **retain funding for transport** to enable participation.
- Most LAs used a **booking system** for people to secure places on SoF activities; alongside holding back activities for vulnerable target groups. LAs acknowledged that some families are not able to pre-book and feared more vulnerable groups were not reached. They suggested that future provision should consider ways to manage this potential programme risk.
- Management information showed that **those aged 16 and over** were less likely to participate. LA leads also discussed how this group was harder to reach and engage. Suggestions to engage them included: running afternoon or evening activities, Youth Work, offering volunteering, mentoring and work experience opportunities. Furthermore, national providers with expertise in engaging over 16 age groups, such as the Duke of Edinburgh, were suggested potential partners. Senior stakeholders representing the Youth Work sector recommended that the Minister for Youth Work should be involved in future programme design.
- All LA leads considered appropriate provision for **people with additional needs and disabilities**. However, parents in some LAs reported that provision was not suitable for children with additional needs and disabilities. As such, future provision should consider ways to support LAs and providers to offer inclusive provision.
- The inclusion of **Welsh language medium provision** was stipulated in the programme guidance. Some LA leads reported a lack of local providers with Welsh language skills and limited interest among children, young people and families for Welsh provision. Senior stakeholders recommended a need to ensure sufficient Welsh language delivery in future programmes.

## 9. Conclusions

- 9.1 Over 67,500 children and young people were reached by the SoF programme 2021 across Wales. Almost all (99%) children and young people who completed the participant survey reported that they had fun. This suggests the programme achieved its objective of providing fun activities for children and young people during the summer of 2021.
- 9.2 LAs reported that the funding offered additionality to business-as-usual provision. LAs made pragmatic and efficient decisions about their model of delivery within the guidelines and timescales available for planning. LAs adopted one of three delivery models. Most LAs opted for an open access and targeted offer (Model 1) whereas some LAs opted for a largely open access (Model 2) or entirely targeted offer (Model 3).
- 9.3 The overall programme reach was large, especially given the short timescales available to plan, launch and promote it. However, variations in LA delivery models coupled with management information data suggests the SoF programme did not have universal reach across Wales.
- 9.4 Although LAs and providers considered how to create inclusive programmes that promoted equal opportunities, accessibility and Welsh medium provision, gaps in reach were identified for particular demographic groups. There was evidence of potential unmet need for 16-25 age groups and children with ALN and disabilities. Furthermore, there was relatively low Welsh medium provision. Most LAs struggled to know how to best engage older age groups and welcomed ideas to reach them. LA leads in some areas reported a lack of specialist providers that catered for those with additional needs or had staff with Welsh language skills.
- 9.5 The activities delivered were almost universally positively received by programme participants. The evaluation findings suggest that the SoF programme achieved its aim of providing fun play opportunities for children, young people and families. There was a consensus across evaluation participants that SoF activities supported a range of outcomes and benefits for children, young people and families, providers, local communities and LAs.

- 9.6 Children and young people's participation helped to start addressing some of the negative impacts of the pandemic, including increasing physical activity, support their mental health, and re-engagement with their community. Providers benefited from much-needed financial invest following lockdowns and developed relationships with new children and young people. LA leads believed that communities felt positive about the investment in them and their children. A potential unintended outcome is that SoF has raised local community expectations of having a similar programme next year.
- 9.7 The programme was well received by national and local stakeholders. They called for sustained, long-term funding to provide ongoing support for COVID-19 recovery. LAs and providers had developed useful learning from 2021 delivery, providing a strong basis and foundation for future provision.

## **Reference section**

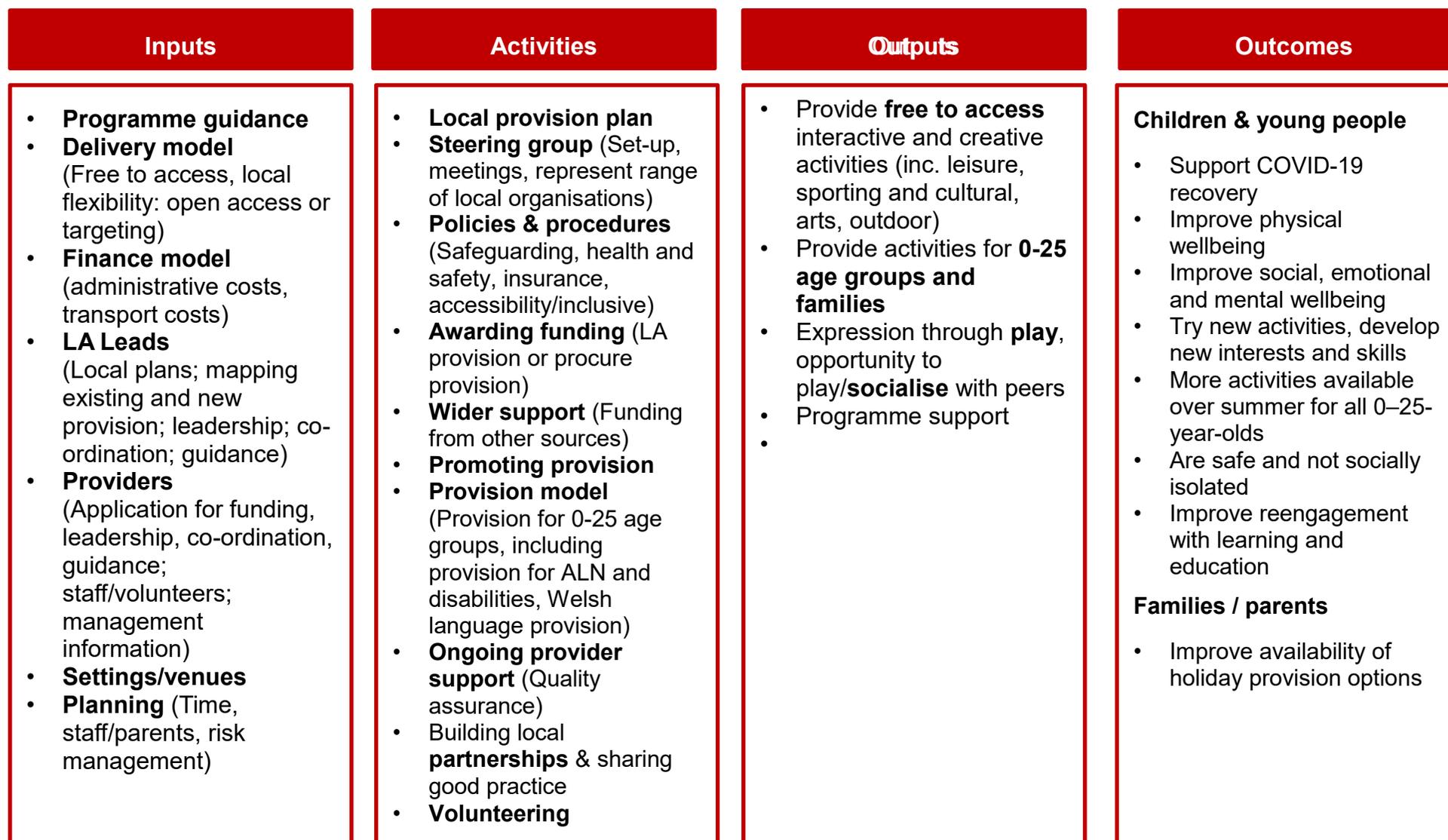
Children's Commissioner for Wales. (2020) [Coronavirus and Me](#).

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The Sutton Trust (2014) [Extra-curricular Inequality Research Brief](#).

## Annex A Logic model

This high-level programme logic model was developed as part of the evaluation, but after the programme had been delivered.



## Annex B Data collection tools

### Senior stakeholder interview topic guide

#### Background to Summer of Fun

- Roles and responsibilities
  - Job role, organisation, (brief outline of) responsibilities
  - Involvement in Summer of Fun and/or how it fits with the organisation you represent
- Overview of the programme and funding model
  - Why is it needed now
  - What you understand to be the strategic objectives of programme
  - How it is intended to complement other COVID-19 recovery initiatives

#### Programme design and set-up

- How programme is intended to be implemented across Wales
- Role of LAs
  - Guidance and information for LAs and providers – What was provided? How and when information was communicated? How LAs responded?
  - Explore value of giving LAs flexibility vs a prescriptive approach
- Target groups
  - Who is it aiming to reach? Why?
  - Rationale for provision across 0-25 age range
  - Expected participation rate
  - Considerations for accessibility and inclusive provision (e.g., Black, Asian and minority ethnic CYP, CYP with additional needs, Welsh language provision)
- Activities
  - What activities are in / out of scope for SoF? Why?
  - What is new/different about SoF compared with existing and previous holiday provision?
  - What, if any, gaps in holiday provision remain?
- Expected outcomes and for who
  - How will it benefit children, young people, families and local areas

#### Lessons learnt and recommendations

- Reflections on Summer of Fun programme development
  - Key issues/lessons learnt developing and setting up the SoF programme
  - Experiences of joined up working with Welsh Government officials and senior stakeholders from sports, arts and culture
  - Reflections on how to support LAs/ providers in setting up holiday provision
  - Timelines provided (at strategic and LA levels) to set up the programme
  - Context of COVID-19
- Recommendations for future holiday provision
  - National / local policy and practise
  - Supporting LAs / providers

## LA lead interview topic guide

### Background to Summer of Fun

- Roles and responsibilities
  - LA name, Job role
  - Brief outline of responsibilities as Summer of Fun lead

### Programme design and set-up

- Overview of how your LA organised the Summer of Fun programme
  - Check local name/branding for Summer of Fun (some LAs have a different local name)
  - Local context / key considerations (e.g., local population needs)
  - Who in LA / local partners is involved in planning / delivery
  - Involvement of children, young people and families in planning which activities should be offered
  - How the model fits with the LAs previous approaches to holiday provision coordination
  - How Summer of Fun complements other COVID-19 recovery initiatives – particularly physical activity and sport activities
- Communication and support from Welsh Government
  - Communication / support received e.g., online surgeries, written guidance
  - Have these been helpful / useful
  - Are there any gaps in information / support
  - Suggestions for improvement

### Programme delivery

- Activities [\[Interviewer: refer to local plans and tailor questions\]](#)
  - What activities LA are running
    - What's available across 0-25 age range?
    - Are activities available across 1 July-30 September period?
  - Locations of activities – schools, community settings, outdoors
  - Why were particular activities/locations chosen
  - Transport provision
  - What is new/different about SoF compared with existing and previous holiday provision?
  - What, if any, gaps in holiday provision remain?
- Providers
  - Procurement process – e.g., split of new vs. existing providers
  - Support LA is offering to providers – what is available?
  - Quality assurance processes – e.g., spot check?
  - Opportunities for providers to share learning / good practice – frequency and format of these?
  - Challenges/ what has worked well – in setting up providers for Summer of Fun
- Target groups
  - Who are you aiming to reach? Why?
  - Uptake and expected participation rate
  - How will LA know if target groups are reached?
  - Considerations for accessibility and inclusive provision (e.g., older age groups, CYP with additional needs, Welsh language provision)

- Marketing / branding
  - Promotion/engagement methods the LA/providers using to reach CYP/families to encourage take-up
  - More/less successful approaches and for which groups of CYP
  - Can they share marketing materials with Ecorys (via email after interview)?
- Delivery
  - Is delivery running as expected / intended?
  - What have been the key barriers / enablers to implementation
  - Is the SoF acceptable to CYP / the LA
- Expected outcomes and for who
  - How will it benefit children, young people, families and local areas
    - Short-term and longer-term outcomes
    - COVID-19 recovery
    - Physical activity levels
    - Social, emotional, and mental wellbeing
    - Preparation for school/learning
    - Differences in outcomes by groups of young people (age, gender, ethnicity, etc)
    - Other
- Perceptions about potential legacy for LA / local holiday provision – e.g., equipment, resources, approach to holiday provision planning

#### Lessons learnt and recommendations

- Reflections on Summer of Fun programme planning / delivery
  - Key issues/lessons learnt developing the Summer of Fun programme
  - Work has worked well / less well for implementing SoF
  - Timelines for setting up the provision
  - Context of COVID-19
- Recommendations for future holiday provision
  - National policy - supporting LAs
  - Local policy and practise – supporting providers
- Check if there is anything else LA would like to tell us about SoF

## Children and Young People interview topic guide

### Background

- What is your name?
- What's your age?/ How old are you?
- Have you been coming to [name of club/place] before this summer?
  - How did you first hear about it?
  - When you heard you were going, what did you think it would be like?
  - How often/when have you been coming [here/to name of club/place]?
  - Do any brothers/sisters/friends come as well?
- Have you been to any other similar clubs/activities?
  - Which ones and when?

### Reason for attending

- Who decided that you should go to [name of club/activity] this summer?
  - Why did you/they think you should go to [name of club/activity]?
  - Were there any reasons why you might not be able to or want to attend [name of club/activity]? Probe: examples and detail such as logistics, level of interest, check if transport or costs for transport was offered etc
- What would you have done this summer instead of attending [name of club/activity]?  
Probe: for examples and detail

### Thoughts on the club/activity

[Interviewer: share age-appropriate PAR sheets if appropriate to facilitate discussion]

- What do you think about [name club/activity]?
  - What do you like?
  - What do you not like?
- While you have been at [name of club/doing name of activity], have you...?
  - Done any activities? E.g. physical activity, sport, crafts, cultural, day visits, volunteering-for older young people only
  - Have you gone on any trips?
  - Have you learnt anything new?
- What do you think of the people that run [name of club/activity]?
  - What is good/not good about the people/leaders/coaches?
- How does [name of club/activity] compare to...
  - Other summer clubs/activities you have been to?
  - Other activities you might have been doing this summer?
  - Is it what you thought it would be like?
- If you could, what would you change?
  - **Activities**- is there anything you would like to do more/less of?
  - **Place**- is there anything you would change about where it is run?
  - **People/Leaders**- is there anything you would change about the way the people run this club/activity?
- What type of things would you like to do in the in the future?

## Outcomes

- What difference has coming to [name of club/activity] made...?
  - To you
  - Your family
- What have you learnt/gained, if anything, from coming to [name of club/activity]?
  - **Have fun** (Probe for examples)
  - A chance to **speak Welsh**
  - **New skills** (Probe for additionality- were they experiences they wouldn't have gained without the programme?)
  - **Meet people** / new friendships (Probe for reducing loneliness and isolation through meeting other people)
  - **New experiences** (Probe for additionality- were they experiences they wouldn't have gained without the programme?)
  - **Health and wellbeing** (aged 12+ only - Probe around maintaining or improving physical and mental health)
  - Will you do more of the activities you've done here in the future? (e.g. continue to do a particular sport)
- What, if anything, will you tell your friends/family about [name of club/activity] when you see them?
  - What do you think they will think about that?
- Is there anything else you would like to say before we finish?

## Participant survey

Please tell us who is completing the questionnaire

Me (child young person)	<input type="checkbox"/>
A parent/carer	<input type="checkbox"/>
The activities provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please specify) <a href="#">[Type in option]</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## About you

1. How old are you? (Please choose one answer)
2. What is your gender? (Please choose one answer)

Boy / Male	<input type="checkbox"/>
Girl / Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other <a href="#">[Type in option]</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

## About the summer activities

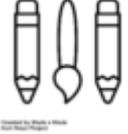
The rest of the questions are about the summer activities you are taking part in. If you aren't sure what this means ask a parent or staff member to help explain.

3. What is the name of the summer activities provider you are attending? (Please type your answer in the box below)
4. Have you enjoyed taking part in the activities? (Please choose one answer)

Yes, a lot  Yes, a little  No, not very much  No, not at all 

5. What did you like about the activities? (Please type your answer in the box below)
6. What would make the activities better? (Please answer in the box below.)

7. Which of the following summer activities have you taken part in? (Please select as many answers as you need to)

 <p>Outdoor sport or physical activity</p>	 <p>Indoor sport or physical activity</p>	 <p>Arts &amp; Crafts</p>
 <p>Games (quizzes, board games etc) that aren't physical activity</p>	 <p>Childcare</p>	 <p>Open access play or playwork scheme</p>
 <p>Cooking</p>	 <p>Visiting places (library, museum, etc.)</p>	 <p>Training or education</p>
 <p>Volunteering</p>	<p>Other <a href="#">[Type in option]</a></p>	

8. How many days have you attended before today? (Please choose one answer)

9. **Who decided that you should take part in these activities this summer?** (Please choose one answer)

 <p>Me</p>	 <p>My parent/carer</p>	 <p>My friend(s)</p>
 <p>An adult relative or friend</p>	 <p>My teacher</p>	 <p>My childcare provider</p>
 <p>My social worker</p>		

10. **How did you/they find out about these summer activities?** (Please choose as many answers as you need to)

 <p>Social media</p>	 <p>Word of mouth (from family or friends)</p>	 <p>Poster/banner in my area</p>
 <p>My local authority's website</p>	 <p>Childcare provider/school</p>	 <p>College/university [16+]</p>
<p>Other [Type in option]</p>	<p>Don't know</p>	

11. **Why did you/ they think you should take part in the activities?** (Please choose as many answers as you need to)

 <p>To have fun</p>	 <p>To play/socialise with other children</p>	 <p>To learn something new</p>
 <p>To do something creative (such as play, arts &amp; crafts)</p>	 <p>To do something active (such as dance or sport)</p>	 <p>To have a chance to speak Welsh</p>

12. **How did you travel to the activities?** (Please select as many answers as you need to)

 <p>Provider transport</p>	 <p>Public transport (such as bus or train)</p>	 <p>I had a lift from someone</p>
 <p>Walked</p>	 <p>Cycled</p>	 <p>I drove myself [18+]</p>

13. Was the cost of your travel covered by the summer activity or club? [only ask if Q8= public transport]

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

14. How much do you agree or disagree that the activities have helped you to...?  
(Please choose one answer in each row)

	Agree a lot	Agree a little	Don't agree or disagree	Disagree a little	Disagree a lot	Don't know
						
Spend more time out of my house	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learn something new	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make new friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Try new things	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Be more active	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
have fun	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manage my mental health [for 12+]	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. If this activity / club was not available this summer, what would you be doing instead? [under 18s only] (Please select as many answers as you need to)

- At home alone
- In paid childcare / holiday club
- Looked after by parents
- Looked after by brother/sister
- Looked after by an adult relative or friend

16. **How do you usually spend your time? Are you currently...[18+ only]** (Please select as many answers as you need to)

- At college
- At university
- In paid work
- Doing a traineeship or work experience
- Volunteering
- None of the above

17. **And finally, what is your ethnic group?** (Please choose one answer)

**White**

- Welsh, English, Scottish, Northern Irish or British
- Irish
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Any other White background

**Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups**

- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other Mixed or Multiple ethnic background**

**Asian or Asian British**

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Any other Asian background**

**Black, African, Caribbean or Black British**

- African
- Caribbean
- Any other Black, African or Caribbean background

**Other ethnic group**

- Arab
- Any other ethnic group
- Prefer not to answer

## Provider survey

**1. Are you responding on behalf of a provider organisation or a setting?**

- Provider
- Setting

**2. What is the name of your organisation?**

**3. Which of the following best describes your organisation?**

- Voluntary or community based group
- Local authority
- Private organisation
- Church or faith group
- School
- Other (please specify)

**4. [Q1=Provider] Is your Summer of Fun provision offered across all LAs in Wales?**

Yes, across all 22 LAs

No, just in particular LAs

**5. [If Q4=No] Which Local Authority area(s) is your Summer of Fun provision delivered in? (Select all that apply)**

**6. [Ask all] What medium are used in your Summer of Fun provision?**

- Welsh Medium
- Welsh Medium and English Medium
- English Medium with some bilingual element
- English Medium
- Other (please specify)

**7. What is the youngest age at which children and young people can attend your Summer of Fun provision?**

(select 0-25, don't know)

**8. What is the oldest age at which children and young people can attend your Summer of Fun provision?**

(select 0-25, don't know)

**9. Which of the following best describes the staff who run Summer of Fun provision for children and young people?**

- Paid staff only
- Volunteers only
- Both paid staff and volunteers
- Don't know

**10. What is the maximum number of children and young people who can attend your Summer of Fun activities at the same time, by age group?**

	Maximum number of people per activity				
	Fewer than 30	31-50	51-100	100+	Not applicable
0-4 years					
5-11 years					
12-15 years					
16 years +					

**11. Which type(s) of Summer of Fun activities do you offer? (select all that apply)**

- Open access playwork
- Out of school holiday provision - childcare places
- Childcare
- Early years provision
- Cultural activities/experiences
- Youth provision
- Sports provision
- Arts and crafts
- Families First
- Flying Start
- Other (please specify)

**12. Where are your Summer of Fun activities delivered? (select all that apply)**

- Open space / park
- Forest
- Community space
- Sports facility
- Leisure centre
- Museum, archive, library
- School

- Online / remote
- Other (please specify)

**13. Does your Summer of Fun include transport to help children and young people attend?**

- Yes, we provide our own transport
- Yes, we cover the costs of public transport
- Yes, we provide our own transport and cover the costs of public transport
- No

**14. What were your main reasons for applying for the Summer of Fun 2021 funding?** (select all that apply)

- Deliver new provision
- Extend the duration of existing provision
- Expand the variety of activities offered
- Hire more staff
- Increase the number of children and young people reached by existing provision
- Develop collaborative programmes with other settings/provision
- Access support around delivering summer holiday activities
- Other (please specify)

**15. Is your provision able to offer spaces to all the children and young people who would like to attend?**

- Yes and we have additional available spaces
- Yes, we have enough space for everyone to attend as many sessions as they would like but no additional available spaces
- Yes, we have space for everyone but can't offer everyone as many sessions as they would like
- No, we have to turn some children and young people away

**16. [If 15=No] What are the reasons you've not been able to offer spaces to all children and young people?** (select all that apply)

- Bookings are at full capacity
- We cannot meet their needs fully, e.g., language needs or health needs
- Other [Please specify]

**17. Does your Summer of Fun provision target any of the following groups that have been more negatively affected by COVID-19? (select all that apply)**

- Children aged 0-7 who are not meeting key development milestones
- Those who have been most severely affected by the learning disruption
- Children and young people who would benefit from activities supporting their confidence to engage in wider society
- Children and young people who attend Welsh medium education and would benefit from continuing their language skills through the summer
- Children and young people who need to engage in physical activity

**18. Do any elements of your Summer of Fun provision specifically target any of the following groups of children and young people? (select all that apply)**

- With Additional Learning Needs/Special Education Needs or Disability
- Educated outside of the regular school system
- Without siblings
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
- Looked after or adopted
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- Young carers
- Not digitally connected
- From low-income families or living in poverty
- Who suffered trauma or bereavement due to COVID-19
- Who experienced domestic abuse/violence
- None of the above

**19. What encouraged children and young people to attend your Summer of Fun provision? Please consider any factors that you think may have been relevant, including marketing and referral approaches (select all that apply)**

- For something to do / ward off boredom
- Parent/carer choice
- Peer influence
- Local marketing campaign
- Transport provision
- To be with other young people
- To have the chance to exercise/be active
- To try something new/different
- To support their learning
- Other [please specify]

**20. What factors, if any, do you think are barriers to the attendance of children and young people at your provision this summer?** Please consider any factors that you think may have been relevant, including marketing and referral approaches

- The activities didn't appeal to children/young people
- Parent/carer choice
- Peer influence
- Local marketing campaign
- Transport difficulties
- Accessibility issues with the location
- COVID-19 related: self-isolation, health concerns, lack of lateral flow tests, masks, etc.
- Other [please specify]

**21. What are the key outcomes for the children and young people attending your Summer of Fun provision?** (select all that apply)

- Develop specific skills (e.g., artistic, musical, sport)
- Make them feel more socially connected
- Maintain their physical health
- Improve their physical health
- Maintain their mental health and wellbeing
- Improve their mental health and wellbeing
- Improve their school readiness
- Improve Welsh language skills
- Support COVID-19 recovery
- Motivate them to take up new interests/hobbies after Summer of Fun
- Motivate them to continue regular physical activity after Summer of Fun
- Other (please specify)

**22. Which of the following information, training and guidance were offered and taken up by your Local Authority as part of the Summer of Fun funding?** (select all that apply)

Please use the 'Enter another option' box to specify other information, training and guidance options.

	Offered by LA	Taken up by provision
Safeguarding training		
Health and safety training		
First aid training		
Inclusion/accessibility training		
Support in developing relevant policies (safeguarding, health and safety, food hygiene, inclusion/accessibility, insurance cover etc)		
The UK Chief Medical Officer Guidelines for Physical Activity (and accompanying infographic)		
Other (please specify)		

**23. How useful did you find the information, training and support you received?**

- Very useful
- Fairly useful
- Not very useful
- Not at all useful
- Don't know
- Did not receive any information, training or support

**24. Overall, how satisfied were you with the support you received from your Local Authority?**

- Very satisfied
- Fairly satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Fairly dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Did not receive any support

**25. Are you going to run a similar provision in summer 2022?**

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, if funding is available
- No, definitely not irrespective of funding
- Don't know

**26. Do you think the children and young people you are working with have sufficient support for COVID-19 recovery?**

Yes

No

**27. Would you be willing to answer any further questions to support this evaluation?**