

1. Introduction

Prudhoe Town Council launched the '42 Days of Summer' Funding initiative in June 2018. The scheme was supported in response to holiday hunger, with the primary aim of offering a calendar of free events and activities throughout the summer holidays to those young people who might not otherwise have opportunities available to them, with a meal provided. The scheme was repeated in 2019.

2. Statistical differences between the years

	2019	2018
Number of Groups Supported	14 ▼	15
Number of Groups who applied but were unsuccessful	5 ▲	0
Number of young people who took part	760 ▼	1500+
Cost	£16,796 ▲	£15,385

Appendix A details the numbers and costs for each group supported in 2019.

The 2018 funding opportunity was agreed on 27th June 2018 and shared immediately with providers. Subsequently, funding decisions were agreed on 11th July 2018 only shortly before the summer holidays, during World Cup fever, and there was a great buzz about the scheme. Providers were very active in their publicity and many opportunities were oversubscribed.

The 2019 '42 days of summer' initiative had a significantly longer lead-in time, with the scheme details agreed on 17th April and funding confirmed with providers immediately after the meeting on 26th June 2019. There was less publicity and less hype about the scheme and very few providers used the period of time available to contact local schools prior to the summer holidays.

3. Constructive Criticism

It is perhaps to be expected that with all providers achieving funding in 2018, compared with 5 unsuccessful applicants in 2019, that there would be some negative feedback. Three of the groups who were not supported were very disappointed and voiced their reasons; these are summarised below.

Greenshift Education commented that the Council was misinformed to have rejected their proposal on the grounds that it was educational, as the sessions make STEM learning fun.

Happy Faces felt the Council had overlooked the different needs of their young people, making the assumption that they would be able to enjoy the other activities being delivered, on the premise that providers had ticked a box to say they were 'inclusive'. The experience of parents of young people who attend Happy Faces is that many holiday clubs and activities are not inclusive and their proposal offset that by offering something absolutely inclusive and with parents/carers able to attend as needed. Leaders were clear that the Council would benefit from some training in the area of 'inclusivity' and they would be keen to support this being taken up.

Mini-Me expressed disappointment as they had worked hard to include those young people the Council was hoping to target. Whilst there may have been repeat attendees, which is the reason their application failed, the outcomes were clear.

Those organisations who were involved also provided some food for thought on the initiative.

Churches Together tried really hard to reach out to those who might not otherwise attend any summer activities. In recognising that their initial on-line booking form may have inadvertently excluded their target audience, they created a paper-form, but this had a poor response. Churches Together have run a holiday club for many years and will continue to strive to break down the barriers to inclusion that they see as i) internet access, ii) literacy, iii) struggles with personal organisation. In attempting to combat this, Churches Together will seek to encourage participation via those organisations that are already working with families in this area.

Stomping Ground Forest School (Dukes Hagg) used the schools to promote their activity but made it clear that it was intended for children who would not otherwise pay for such provision; they also found Family Support Workers key to making referrals. The following is a direct suggestion "There is perhaps scope for a more co-ordinated approach to the programme to ensure that the hardest to reach children are utilising the provision. Some organisations who access the funding are perhaps more used to operating in outreach than others and if some of the funding was used to pay a co-ordinator who does all of the booking for the providers then each provider would require less funding as they would have less admin to do, but it would ensure that the right children were being given the right places and perhaps a more cohesive approach." (Sophie Watkinson)

Both *Dungeons and Dragons* and *Dragon Tale Theatre Group* experienced instances of people booking but not turning up; there may be others. The following is a direct suggestion from Holly Kelleher 'Dungeons and Dragons' "I'd recommend partial or no subsidising next year as those who came all said they would have paid (or their parents would have). I also don't know how disposable something is to people if they get it for free. Maybe the same range of activities and those in financial hardship can come to the Council directly and discreetly, and ask them to purchase a place on their behalf. A bit like schools meals where those who can pay, do pay."

Prudhoe Youth Project commented that the feedback form should have a non-binary option for gender, which will be taken up on any forms in the future.

4. Problems Encountered

There was a lack of enthusiasm for the initiative from some of the parents/carers of young people who are part of Northern Stars Dance Academy (NSDA) and Dragon Tale Theatre Group (DTTG). In both instances there was opposition to organisers maintaining the Council's stipulation that the funding was for the benefit of those young people who would not otherwise be able to attend; therefore, excluding members. This was considered unfair by some who upheld that as Prudhoe tax-payers, their children should have equal right to attend.

This is a difficult scenario as NSDA is a fee-paying dance school, where as DTTG is free to attend drama group. NSDA excluded members and DTTG actively targeted non-members first, only offering members later.

This issue of repeated benefit is made more difficult by the fact that each opportunity had a different scale of attendance. Whilst DTTG, Dungeons and Dragons and Churches Together had repeat attendees due to the nature of their activity, others offered single sessions with no repeat attendees and greater scope for the number of young people who could take part.

Some groups did allow repeat attendees, whether this was due to poor publicity, low demand or preference is not known.

Most funding has conditions attached so applicants need to be clear before they apply that taking up the funding and fulfilling the criteria will not foster negativity among their core customers/members, or it could be counter-productive. Likewise, the funder, in this case the Council, also needs to be sure that everyone is adhering to the criteria set, as failing to do so could result in criticism of the initiative and the Council.

Both *Active Future* and *Dungeons and Dragons* made comments relating to publicity, appearing to think the Town Council had some responsibility for publicising what was being made available. This wasn't the case and whilst we shared what providers put out, promotion was entirely their responsibility; the application process included this, but would need to be clearer.

5. Positive Outcomes



Individual and/or Organiser feedback sheets are available for the following:

Dragon Take Theatre Group Jolly Holiday Club
Prudhoe Youth Project Summer Outdoor Activities
Waterworld Swim and Bouldering Sessions
Dungeons and Dragons Five Stories at Tyne Riverside Cafe
Prudhoe East Centre Graffiti Project and Sessional Work
Stomping Ground Forest School
Friends of Eastwood Park
Computing4Kids

6. Summary

- The 42 Days of Summer Funding initiative cost a similar amount to last year but benefitted less than half of the young people. Those with activities/events with a high number of attendees were part of the calendar this year, i.e. Churches Together (158) and Friends of Eastwood Park (200) but there were 7 groups with less than 30 children attending, bringing the total number down. If the Council wish to attract greater numbers, supported activities would need to reach out to more young people. Where there are week long opportunities it is more about the quality of outcome than the quantity of attendees.
- The numbers attending Waterworld was greatly reduced from 2018, (in 2018, 203 took up the free meal and many more the free swim) this is largely attributed to the free swim session not being available every week. The regularity of being 'every Friday' last summer was a great advantage as only 25 attended in 2019, of which only 13 were from Prudhoe. The Council may wish to consider working more closely with Active Northumberland to make this available in the future.
- Prudhoe Poppets trip was a great success in 2018; many families benefitted (158 people in total) with a very cost-effective and well planned trip being provided. With their closure there is a gap for this type of family-friendly trip. The Council could approach a local coach company to offer a trip for Prudhoe families if this was considered a valuable offer.
- Concerns raised over inclusivity need to be answered and addressed.
- Still in regards numbers, there was a reduced level of funding available to support those groups who provided individual opportunities over a number of days and in 2018 were over-subscribed. NSDA (100), Active Future (72) and Computing4Kids (50) applied to deliver more sessions and would therefore have achieved the numbers reached in 2018, had funding been available.
- Some opportunities were under-subscribed, either because people booked on and then did not attend or they were poorly advertised. Low numbers should not be attributed to the activities being unwelcome as they were all of a high quality and something young people would want to attend. If funding continues, non-attendance is something that needs to be addressed. There also needs to be a more concerted effort to advertise what is available.
- Individual feedback from the events/activities and outcomes identified are very positive; the average £22.10 per person should be considered very good value for money. Measures of success can be viewed in a number of different ways, but without critical success factors or smart goals it is difficult to analyse actual achievement.
- Many of the organisations taking part have stated very honestly that they cannot be 100% sure that the activities are being taken up by those who would not otherwise benefit from a holiday programme or summer activity/trip. As this was the Council's overall aim, the initiative would require intervention if supported again.
- All of the activities offered a meal which was another of the Council's main objectives; this received high praise. Many providers sought catering options from local suppliers which helps the local economy and promotes the local offer.

- Other than some of the trips provided by Prudhoe Youth Project, all other activities took place locally and thus benefitted local venues as well as local businesses, i.e. Eastwood Park, Fuse Media Centre, Prudhoe Parish Hall, Di & Jims Fun Station, Stomping Ground Forest School, Highfield Park, Prudhoe East Centre, Prudhoe Methodist Church, Tyne Riverside Cafe and Prudhoe Waterworld.

7. Conclusion

'42 Days of Summer' has not been as successful an initiative in 2019 as it was in 2018, either in execution, take-up or positive public relations.

It is difficult to ascertain if the initiative has achieved what it set out to as the aims were not specific. If supported in the future, this initiative would benefit from having smart and very clear aims and objectives. As well as allowing the Council to measure success, it would also be more transparent, benefitting providers and members of the public who seek to challenge it.

Some of the activities available would not have been on offer had it not been for the funding provided by the Council, however, in other cases the Council has added to the offer available. Adding to the offer available could be explored even further as there are many more summer holiday clubs and activities happening locally. These are offered 'at cost' but they could be encouraged to offer 'funded places'.

Whilst there are advantages to having a thriving offer for young people over the summer holidays, and activities available 'free of charge', the Council's role in this is not clear. If the main aim is to provide outreach activities and a meal, the Council will need to consider how this can be achieved and possibly involve other agencies; neither the Council nor some of the organisations receiving funding are in a position to do this.

APPENDIX A

Group	Numbers Attending	Cost
Northern Stars Dance Academy	100	£2,099
Dragon Tale Theatre Group	19	£1,720
Active Future	72	£1,600
Waterworld	25 (13 Prudhoe)	£75
Prudhoe Youth Project	27	£1,000
Prudhoe East Centre	32	£360
Churches Together	158	£500
Dungeons & Dragons	8	£420
Friends of Eastwood Park	200	£2,000
Stomping Ground Forest Schools	12	£1,650
Computing 4 Kids	50	£825
Di & Jims Fun Station	60	£480
Artventurers	30	£300
Ferndene	20+	£1,080