



**A SUMMER
HOLIDAY FROM HELL**
Experiences of
children living in
poverty in London.

The Summer Give is The Childhood Trust's fundraising campaign that utilises The Big Give's online match fundraising platform. The campaign focuses on alleviating the impact of child poverty in London during the summer holidays when children are particularly vulnerable. Last year our Summer Give campaign raised £778,000 for 36 charities that supported 7634 children and young people in London. The Summer Give 2018 will be The Childhood Trust's largest summer campaign to date, raising much needed funds to enable 62 charities to support approximately 15,000 disadvantaged children in every London borough.

To understand the extent of vulnerabilities and challenges that disadvantaged children face without the security and activities afforded by school, The Childhood Trust conducted a survey targeting children and young people supported by the charities participating in the Summer Give 2018. The survey aims to improve upon the 2017 pre-activity survey and provide a more detailed view of children's experiences during the long summer holidays.

The results are collected from 22 charities that plan on supporting 12,337 children and young people, ranging from 4-18 years old during the forthcoming summer holidays. The questions can be grouped into 3 main categories:

1. Issue of 'holiday hunger' amongst children and young people supported by the beneficiaries
2. Supervision of children and young people
3. Identification of the risks of violence and anti-social behaviour of children and young people supported by the charities.

This report aims to provide an overview of the results of The Summer Give 2018 Survey and link it to the results of the Summer Give 2017 survey. It also explores the broader context of adversities facing children and young people living in poverty in London during the summer holidays.

Summary of Results

66%

of children and young people would go hungry if a charity did not provide meals during the holidays

90%

of children and young people will not go on holiday (i.e. will not experience a period away from home) during the summer holidays

50%

of children under the age of 11 are left without adult supervision during the summer holidays

65%

of children and young people are frightened of being attacked and/or exploited by gangs during the summer holidays

54%

of children and young people have witnessed violence during the holidays

73%

of beneficiaries responded that there is a high threat of violence to children and young people during the summer holidays (compared to term time)

50%

of beneficiaries reported that there is a high threat of sexual exploitation of children and young people during the summer holidays (compared to term time)

48%

Children / young people have witnessed drug taking during the holidays

45%

of beneficiaries responded that the youth violence in communities they serve is out of control (41% described it as "significant")

Data collected from 22 charities providing support for 12,337 children and young people, ranging from 4-18 years old during the forthcoming summer holidays

Analysis of Results

Issue of 'holiday hunger' experienced by children and young people supported by charities.

The London Food Poverty Profile report by Sustain (2015) revealed that approximately 1.5 million children in the UK qualify for free school meals, but since provisions are not available during the school holidays, there are 170 days of the year when children from impoverished families have little or no access to healthy food. The issue is especially pressing because for 1 in 10 children, school lunch is often their biggest meal of the day as reflected in a report by the Greater London Authority in 2013. Over half a million children in London are estimated to struggle for food during the holidays and this number is expected to increase as 700,000 young Londoners were living in poverty by the end of 2016 (Sustain, 2015).

"I didn't have any breakfast 'cos there was nothing in the fridge. I don't eat breakfast much anyway. When we don't have any food for dinner my Dad will go out to borrow money from our neighbour. Sometime he doesn't come back and I have to go asleep"

Girl, 11, (Interviewed at a Mayors Fund for London's Kitchen Social Hub)

This result is corroborated by our survey which informs that charities working with impoverished children in London communities expect that 66.13% of children and young people will go hungry if they did not provide meals during the holidays.

This is a stark increase from the 37% reflected in 2017's survey figures.

In addition, increased reliance on Food banks during the holidays leave children vulnerable to inconsistencies in supply. In 2017, Food banks across the UK came under pressure as children lost access to free meals during the holidays, on top of a 40% year-on-year increase in referrals (Bryan, 2017).

'Holiday hunger' has implications beyond physical malnourishment as teachers reflect that children who return to school malnourished after the holidays have fallen behind compared to their peers and many will never claw back this learning and health disadvantage to fulfil their full potential (Mayors Fund for London, 2016). This is illustrated by research that finds Primary school children from low socio-economic status show a significant learning loss across the summer months. Furthermore, when children return to school following the summer holiday it takes them approximately 3 ½ months for their spelling ability to catch up to the same level that they had achieved prior to the summer holiday. (Shinwell & Defeyter, 2017). Research by Hirsch (2007) reflects that poorer children are 9 months behind, leading to an education divide between poorer children and their peers. Naturally, families and communities are affected too, with some parents skipping meals to feed their children. As it is, an average of 21% of parents in London have, at some point, skipped meals so that their children could eat (GLA, 2013). The lack of school meals mean that families struggling to meet ends meet rely on unhealthy food options which are often cheaper. Health services report that the BMI of poor children increases dramatically in the school holidays as children engage in less activity and eat food that is low in nutrition (Mayors Fund for London, 2016).

“These are my favourite biscuits. I’ve had them for six years, since 2012... No-one else likes them. I have 19 for lunch.”

Boy, 9 (Interviewed at a Mayors Fund for London’s Kitchen Social Hub)



Many children depend on a charity to provide meals during the holidays
– taken at a Mayors Fund for London, Kitchen Social Project, 2018

The APPG also revealed in 2017 included accounts of a group of children who had to drop out of a holiday football tournament in the latter stages of the competition because they had not eaten a meal in the days leading up to the event and their bodies simply gave up on them (Hughes, 2017).

As such, The Summer Give 2018 aims to provide vital funds for charities that provide nutritious meals for children, including The Mayors Fund For London’s Kitchen Social programme that will be operating over 60 hubs throughout London this summer.

Supervision and safety of children and young people

It's really helpful because I don't have to spend money. If you want to take them to activities in other places you need to pay like 2 pounds per child. So bringing them here I don't have to spend a penny, which is like, that's one of the things. If not, they'll just stay at home because I'll be thinking I don't have the money to take them anywhere.

Mother of 2 boys, interviewed at Mayor's Fund for London's Kitchen Social Hub

During the holidays, disadvantaged children from working families are often left without supervision for long periods of time throughout the day as parents can work multiple shifts to make ends meet. Research has shown that the number of children living in working households that fall below the poverty line has increased by 70% over the last decade (Mayors Fund for London, 2016).

Our charity partners reported that 49.95% of children under the age of 11 are left without adult supervision during the summer holidays, an increase from 44% in the previous year. Furthermore, 89.95% of children and young people will not experience a period away from home during the summer holidays, a slight increase from 87% in 2017. This results in multiple issues of safety and emotional well-being.

"Last summer I spent all day indoors watching telly. My Mum was working, it was SO boring."

Girl, 9 (Interviewed at a Mayors Fund for London's Kitchen Social Hub)

The average cost of holiday childcare in London is £121.81 per a week, a price that is beyond reach for families surviving on minimum wages and or zero hours contracts (Family and Childcare Trust 2016). Without resources to pay for childcare arrangements, impoverished families face the agonising choice between not earning enough money to feed their family and leaving them alone at home (Jowit, 2016). Furthermore, when children are left home alone, the older children are left with the responsibility of looking after the youngest members of the family. This denies them a childhood enjoyed by their peers, including opportunities to participate in enriching activities during the holidays, forcing them to take on caring responsibilities well beyond their years.

Children and young people left unsupervised for long periods of time are at risk, unsafe, vulnerable to anti-social activity and feel frightened of attack and or abuse. Loneliness, boredom and fear are most common for those younger than 10 years of age and in the early teens, there is a greater susceptibility to peer pressures and thus, an increased likelihood of participating in anti-social activities, as will be elaborated in the section below (Rajalakshmi and Thanasekaran, 2015).



A holiday club funded by The Summer Give 2017 keeping children safe in Haringey.

Children of aged between 4 and 11 left alone at home for more than 3 hours a day reported higher levels of behavioural problems, higher rates of depression and lower levels of self-esteem as compared to their peers who had supervision (Rajalakshmi and Thanasekaran, 2015).

The Childhood Trust's Summer Give 2018 supports charities that meet the practical needs of children during the summer holidays, providing trusted adult supervision such as; youth workers, mentors, inspiring activities and an opportunity to make new friends in a safe environment.

Identification of the risk of violence and anti-social behaviour of children and young people supported by the beneficiaries

Summer holidays often means the lack of proper care and supervision for children and young people living in poverty, as mentioned in the section above. Without the safety, routine and productivity afforded by schools, children and young people are susceptible to violence and abuse as well as an increased tendency to participate in anti-social activities due to boredom and lack of fulfilment.

Our 2018 survey reports that 54.4% of children and young people have witnessed violence during the holidays. Without the safety and security afforded by schools, children and young people are more likely to witness or suffer abuse and violence during holidays.

This is supported by 72.73% of beneficiaries who responded that there is a high threat of violence to children and young people during the summer holidays as compared to term time. Furthermore, 50% of beneficiaries reported that there is a high threat of sexual exploitation of children and young people during the summer holidays as compared to term time. This is in stark contrast to 55% of respondents in the 2017 survey saying that children and young people are at a medium risk of violence and sexual exploitation during summer holidays as compared to term time.



Summer on the streets can be terrifying for children, nearly half of the children in our survey reported witnessing drug taking during the summer holidays

(image from Brixton drill music video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4R0FQGzo9ZM>)

Data from the Havens project on rape and serious sexual assault of children indicates that those in the 30% most deprived communities were 7.5 times more likely to suffer abuse than those in the 30% least deprived communities (Mayor of London Office for Policing and Crime, 2017). Furthermore, an inquiry provided a conservative estimate of approximately 3,000 young people at risk of child sexual exploitation in London, with young people involved with gangs being most vulnerable (Mayor of London Office for Policing and Crime, 2017).

The 4Children charity found that 80% of the 16,000 youngsters surveyed said that they had nothing to do outside of school (BBC, 2007). This has resulted in 70% of young people becoming involved in anti-social behaviour and petty crime because they were bored (BBC, 2007). This is supported by our survey findings in which beneficiaries reflect that 65.04% of children and young people they support are frightened of being attacked and/or exploited by gangs during the summer holidays, an increase from 62% in the previous year.

Youth services in London have been cut by £145m since 2011 leaving disadvantaged children and young people facing a bleak outlook. Not having positive opportunities to participate in healthy activities during the holidays amongst children in deprived communities is contributing to an unprecedented rise in gang violence and knife crime. Faced with loneliness, insecurity and disconnection from their families, many find a sense of community with others in the same situation. This leaves children particularly vulnerable to gang exploitation and abuse. The rising incidence of youth violence underpins the fears and insecurities faced by young people as a dominant driver of knife crime, many of whom believe that they need to be prepared to defend themselves against knife carrying "opposition." (London Assembly, 2017).

There has been a worrying rise in offences carried out by under-10s. Statistics have shown that as of 2017, children under 10 years old were linked to more than 2,604 offences, a 38% increase from 1,891 in 2016 as gang leaders are recruiting children young enough to avoid prosecution to carry out the attacks (Edkins, 2018).

There has also been a sharp rise in the number of arrests of teenagers for drug dealing, with figures showing that between 2013 and 2017, the number of arrests of under 18s for possession with intent to supply rose by 28% (Marsh, 2018).

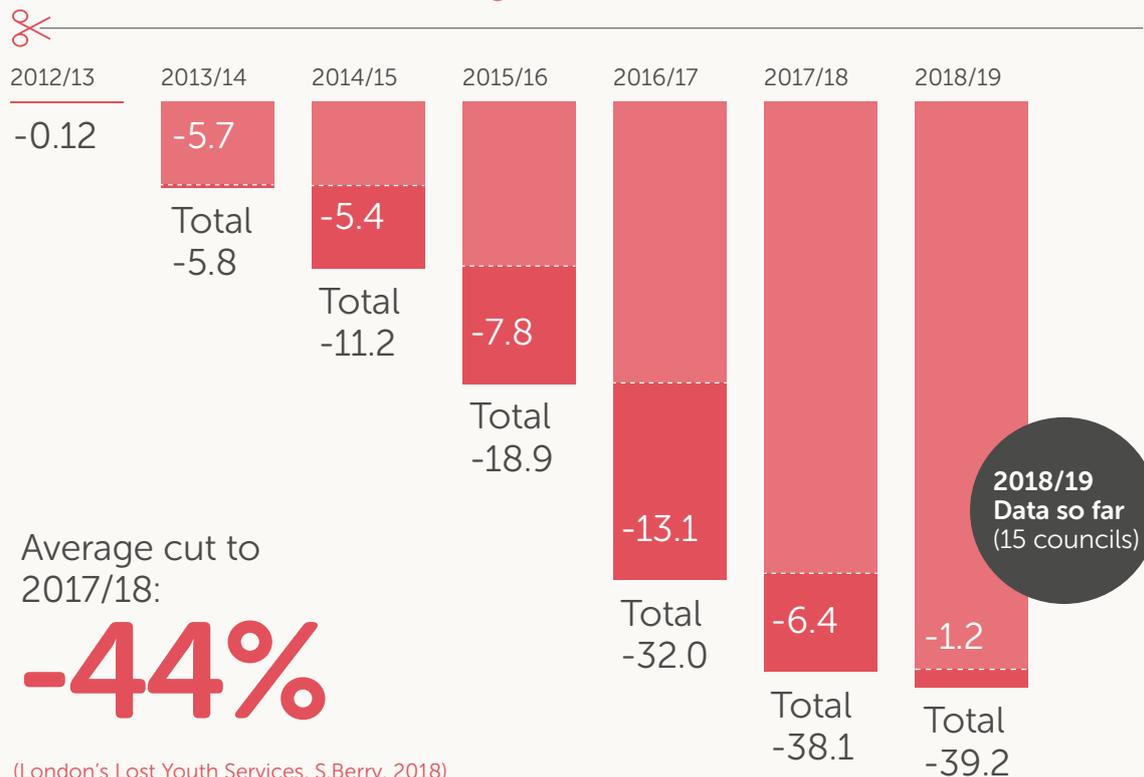
Figures show that children as young as 12 are being arrested for possession with intent to supply heroin and crack cocaine, prompting concerns that young people are being recruited by urban gangs and dealers who groom them and offer them money (Marsh, 2018).

It is important to support charities targeted at inspiring and providing for the emotional needs of children and young people. Charities that we support provide emotional support for children as well as the delivery of opportunities to try new experiences and develop new skills in a safe environment. Such activities often provide the only alternative to gang-related activity and anti-social behaviour. This is especially important amidst recent incidences of youth crime in London, with knife crime and gang violence on the rise.



Knives recovered by Metropolitan Police's Operation Sceptre prior to Summer Holidays 2017

London youth service budget cuts since 2011/12 (£m cut by 30 councils)



Average cut to 2017/18:
-44%

(London's Lost Youth Services, S.Berry, 2018)

Figures reflect that in 2015-16 there were 6,290 victims of serious youth violence, a 4% increase on the previous year and over a 20% increase on 2012-13 (London Assembly, 2017). The capital has recently witnessed the shootings of 2 children over the bank holiday and a few weeks ago, it was announced that for the first time, the murder rate in London was higher than that in New York (Mwale, 2018).

In London, the racialised nature of the problem is clear as young black boys are disproportionately affected by this violence (Mwale, 2018), thus pointing to the need to support community-based projects in an environment that reinforces a sense of identity and pride independent of gangs. Youth violence is also perpetuated by deep reductions in youth service budgets, particularly to programmes that divert inner-city youths away from gangs and knife crime (Topping, 2011). An inquiry into London's youth services found that 81 youth clubs and council youth projects have closed their doors since 2011 (BBC, 2018) with at least 800 full-time equivalent youth workers cut from council services since 2011. The year with the highest cuts was in 2016/17 when 433 posts were removed compared with 2015/16 by the 22 councils that provided data. (Berry 2018)

Conclusion

We were playing basketball when they came in. There's no point running cos you gonna get beat worse. I got beat all over and my friend was kicked in the head. They were laughing. We know them from our block, if we didn't they'd have poked [stabbed] us. It happens all the time.

Boy, 10 interviewed at project in North Kensington

The results of our survey point to a childhood in crisis for those living in poverty. While their better off peers enjoy time off from school spending time on holidays with family, engaging in enriching activities, travel and play, children from disadvantaged families face hunger, violence, sexual abuse, and exploitation or worse by gangs or older children similarly disadvantaged. Such adversity undoes the valiant efforts of schools to break down the barriers of child poverty by setting children back educationally by up to a whole term. In the light of this fact alone, the cuts to youth services are a false economy and a tragedy for the life chances and well being of the capitals poorest children.

Children are facing a summer holiday from hell unless they can access free or very low cost local support and activities. That support is more than likely to come from the services of a charity rather than a Local Authority funded project. This year our Summer Give campaign will fund 62 charities to support the needs of over 15,000 London children this summer, helping to alleviate the impact of child poverty with a diverse range of activities including, camping, cooking, sports of all kinds, sailing, climbing, drama, circus skills, music, writing and just having fun.

It is our vision that no child should ever have to go hungry in London or be afraid of violence or abuse during the holidays. Every Local Authority should ensure that all children, regardless of family income have somewhere safe to play and enough nutritious food to eat. Without this investment we risk further widening the gap in children's life chances and in the long term, destabilising civil society in the capital.

It was the first time we've ever been anywhere. Since Mum died my Dad hasn't had a job and we've never gone nowhere. I'll never forget camp, never. It was the best time of my life,

Girl, 11, supported by a project in North Kensington that took a group of 25 children camping for a week, including her two younger sisters.

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