



**Moray Holibub Club**  
**An impact evaluation of holiday and out-of-school activity**  
**September 2021**



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## About this report

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This report presents the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit's (SPIRU)<sup>1</sup> appraisal of the work of Moray Holibub Club. SPIRU has no vested interest in the work of Moray Holibub Club; this is an independent appraisal. This report comprises a single page of headline findings, a three-page Executive Summary, and a full 30-page report including Annexes.

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## About SPIRU

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SPIRU is an interdisciplinary research group based at Glasgow Caledonian University, which often works in partnership with other stakeholders to investigate and develop effective responses to poverty and inequality in Scotland and beyond. SPIRU is committed to advancing GCU's mission to promote the Common Good and to align its research to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. SPIRU contributes to these ambitions through applied research, policy analysis and engaging with policy makers, campaign groups and community stakeholders.

SPIRU has a particular interest in food insecurity issues: it has written several reports on school food.<sup>234</sup> During 2020, it reviewed work in Scotland to tackle food insecurity during the coronavirus crisis, completing a nationwide review of local action,<sup>5</sup> and undertaking case study analyses of local partnerships,<sup>6</sup> and local organisations<sup>7</sup>.

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## Table of contents

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About this report .....	2
About SPIRU .....	2
Table of contents .....	2
Ten Takeaways.....	3
Executive Summary and Key Recommendations .....	4
1. Introduction: Moray Food Plus and <i>Time to Prosper</i> .....	7
2. Moray Holibub Club and the Business of Moray Food Plus .....	9
3. Does Moray Need a Moray Holibub Club? .....	13
4. Deliverables: Claims to impact .....	15
5. What Makes the Difference? .....	22
6. Mission Match .....	24
7. Conclusions .....	27
Annex 1: Our Approach to Evaluation .....	28
Endnotes .....	32

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## Ten Takeaways

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- 1** Moray Holibub Club was a partnership project, led by Moray Food Plus from 2017 to 2019. It provided a holiday club experience to children from low-income households in isolated rural communities in Moray.
- 2** The Moray Holibub Club was available during the school summer holiday period. Children took part in a morning of activities (sometimes outdoor, sometimes sporting), ate breakfast, a hot meal for lunch and received food parcel to take home with them at the end of the day, and at the weekend.
- 3** The Moray Holibub Club, was run in partnership with the Moray Council Youth Work Team, Keith Loft Youth Project, the Lossie 2-3 Group, and Stramash.
- 4** From 2017 through to 2019, 12 clubs ran with 252 children participating.
- 5** The Moray Holibub Club provided for children from low-income households, offering provision that was absent from remote and rural parts of Moray.
- 6** The Club provided opportunities for children to gain confidence, and develop and extend friendship groups.
- 7** With the small numbers of children participating, the prominence of children with behavioural problems was more readily apparent. Although managing these problems presented problems for staff, pride was expressed when referring to positive impact.
- 8** The benefits of the Club were reported to extend beyond participating children and young people. A less stressful family life and improved educational engagement and outcomes were directly attributed to Club participation.
- 9** Through the provision of food and activity, the Club reduced pressure on family budgets at a time when free school meals were not available. It was reported that this enabled parents to feed themselves, comforted in the knowledge that their children's nutritional needs were still being met.
- 10** The Moray Holibub Club was unable to provide services in person during the pandemic in 2020, and was discontinued in 2020 when funds were no longer available to support its work.

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# Executive Summary and Key Recommendations

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## About this evaluation

This is an independent appraisal by the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit (SPIRU) of the work of Moray Holibub Club. SPIRU was invited by the Scottish Government in the Spring of 2020 to undertake this evaluation. Initial plans to complete the work over the Summer of 2020 were interrupted with the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. The evaluation draws on five sources: the wider academic/applied literature on out of school provision; documentary evidence provided by Moray Food Plus; interviews with staff; interviews with service users; and responses of Mairi McCallum BEM (Project Manager) and Sarah Cruden (Community Food Worker) to the research team's ad-hoc queries. The sources consulted are listed in the Annex and are referenced throughout the report. This report was drafted in November 2020, revised in the first few months of 2021, and published by SPIRU in September 2021. Professor McKendrick managed the evaluation, in conjunction with Jenna Woods, a SPIRU researcher. The conclusions reached are independent.

## What we knew in advance

### *What are the key historical milestones of the Moray Holibub Club?*

- **2011 – Formation.** The organisation that became Moray Food Plus is formed.
- **2017 – Inception.** The Moray Holibub Club is introduced.
- **2020 – Closure.** Moray Food Plus announce that the Moray Holibub Club is to be discontinued.

### *What did we know about the work of the Moray Holibub Club and the wider work of Moray Food Plus?*

- **The Offer.** Children took part in a morning of activity, ate a hot meal for lunch in the afternoon and received a food parcel to take home with them at the end of the day.
- **Partnership.** The Moray Holibub Club was organised in partnership with the Moray Council Youth Work Team, Keith Loft Youth Project, the Lossie 2-3 Group, and Stramash.
- **Reach.** From 2017 through to 2019, 252 children participated across 12 clubs.
- **Wider work.** Moray Holibub Club was only one of a wide range of activities and services provided by Moray Food Plus (MFP). MFP also provides emergency food provision, community food larders, food recovery, community meals, Campus kitchens, Nourish workshops, cooking sessions, lunch clubs and food growing initiatives.

### *What community was served by the Moray Holibub Club?*

- **Moray.** The Clubs ran across Moray in Forres, Elgin, Lhandbryde, Lossiemouth, Buckie and Keith.
- **Demographics.** Moray Holibub Club was attended by school children aged between 5 and 14 from low-income families.

### ***What were the main goals of the Moray Holibub Club?***

- **Poverty relief through food systems.** The Moray Holibub Club sought to relieve and prevent poverty among the residents of Moray. It sought to promote healthy eating and encourage fairer food systems through community food initiatives.
- **Prevention of “Holiday Hunger”.** The Moray Holibub Club sought to ensure that children who attended the Club were provided with at least one hot meal per day.

### **What did we find?**

#### ***What did the Moray Holibub Club deliver?***

- **Activity provision.** Moray Holibub Club gave children from low-income households the opportunity to take part in various activities throughout school holidays, some of whom may not have had the opportunity to take part in such activities otherwise.
- **Food provision.** Children who attended Moray Holibub Club were provided with breakfast and a hot lunch on days when the club ran, and returned home at the end of the week with food to keep themselves fed over the weekend.
- **Development opportunity.** Older children were often encouraged to become involved with the running of the clubs, looking after younger children and participating in food preparation.

#### ***What difference did the Moray Holibub Club make?***

- **Widening opportunity.** The Moray Holibub Club is reported to offer new opportunities by introducing new activities to children from low income families in isolated areas.
- **Facilitating socialisation.** The Moray Holibub Club encouraged children to socialise with children from a wide range of age groups, enabling the formation of friendships between children who may otherwise have met.
- **Bolstering confidence.** Participant children were reported to have returned to school more confident, displaying lower levels of shyness. Older children were also reported to have gained confidence from learning new skills and discovering new passions.
- **Improving behaviours.** Participant children were reported to have improved behaviour, leading to reduced levels of school exclusion.
- **Strengthening family relationships.** Stronger bonds between siblings were reported, as a result of having the opportunity to spend time together in the Club setting, and by spending time apart when this was facilitated by the participation of one sibling at Moray Holibub Club. Children were also reported to have been encouraged to discuss their emotions which led to stronger familial bonds.
- **Fostering child development.** The Moray Holibub Club enabled older children to take on new responsibilities and to learn new skills. For example, older children supporting younger club goers and taking a more active role in food preparation.
- **Tackling child and family food poverty.** The Moray Holibub Club primarily targeted children from lower income families, providing two meals per day, which was reported to have allowed parents/carers to budget better during the school holidays, allowing them to feed themselves, comforted in the knowledge that their children’s nutritional needs were still being met.

### ***What influenced how Moray Food Plus makes a difference?***

- **Context – unmet demand.** The Moray Holibub Club was offering a service for which there was no alternative in remote and rural part of Moray. It was helping overcome social isolation in the long summer holiday period.
- **Connections.** The Club was dependent on partnership to extend reach. There are examples when this worked well, but also of partnerships that were less successful, and areas in which local partners could not be identified.
- **Funding.** The Moray Holibub Club was successful at securing funds to support its work, although this necessitated much effort from Moray Food Plus and was often made available in a timeframe that made forward planning.
- **Information sharing.** The most successful examples of its transformative potential were when the Club had full access to background information on those participating children with behavioural problems, enabling Club staff to plan more effectively to meet these needs.

### **What needs to happen now?**

#### **Learning lessons from Moray.**

- There is growing interest in extending entitlement of the equivalent of free school meals to eligible children and young people over holiday periods. It would be useful for those outside Moray who are canvassing for this provision to reflect on lessons that could be gleaned from the experience of the Moray Holibub Club.

#### **Moray learning lessons.**

- There a need for those concerned with tackling food insecurity and poverty in Moray to reflect on the experiences and demise of the Moray Holibub Club. In particular, if future funding becomes available to extend entitlement of the equivalent of free school meals to eligible children and young people over holiday periods, then there will be a need to devise efficient and effective modes of delivery modes that meet the particular needs of those in Moray.

#### **Understanding the impact of lost provision**

- It is clear that the Moray Holibub Club was providing a valuable service to children, young people and families in Moray. It is highly unlikely that there is no longer any demand for the service it provided. It would be instructive to learn whether alternative providers are delivering equivalent support, to understand the adverse impact that the loss of provision may be having on families in need of support, or to consider whether the new opportunities in the Programme for Government 2021-22 afford potential to re-introduce the service.

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# 1. Introduction to this Impact Evaluation

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## Introduction

The aim of this report is to appraise the work of the Moray Holibub Club. The starting point for our inquiry is an understanding that the Club successfully delivered holiday/after school provision in Moray. Our objective is to undertake a rapid appraisal to answer the following key questions:

- What is the nature of the service that the Club provides?
- To what extent does provision meet local need?
- What is the impact – and claims to impact – of the Club?
- What are the drivers of the Club’s success?
- What lessons can be learned from the work of the Club that might help improve provision elsewhere?

## Moray Food Plus and Moray Holibub Club

The Moray Holibub Club Project was initiated in 2017 by Moray Food Plus and its partners as a response to an expected increase in demand for emergency food provision during school summer holidays. The project delivered from 2017 until 2019, and was curtailed in 2020.

It comprised twelve local clubs, with bases in Forres, Elgin, Lhandbryde, Lossiemouth, Buckie and Keith. 252 children participated in a range of sporting and outdoor activities. Participating children were provided with two meals every day and received a take-home food parcel at the end of the week.

## Scottish Government Interests

Moray Holibub Club is of interest to the Scottish Government, which has shown growing concern over food insecurity and in the nature of out of school provision/ childcare in recent years.

With regard to childcare/out of school provision:

- The 2017-18 Programme for Government committed to publish a framework for after-school and holiday childcare.<sup>8</sup>
  - In response to this commitment, the Scottish Government consulted the sector in 2019,<sup>9</sup> and published a summary of report on this consultation in November 2020.<sup>10</sup>
- The Child Poverty Delivery Plan, 2018-2022 had a specific action on after-school childcare and holiday provision.<sup>11</sup>
  - In response to the commitment in the Child Poverty Delivery Plan, the Scottish Government introduced a £3 million *Access to Childcare* fund in 2020 to support childcare provision and activities in local communities. Managed by Children in Scotland, fifteen organisations were funded in September 2020 (through to March 2022) for work that aims to explore how childcare can become more accessible and affordable to low-income families.<sup>12</sup>
- £20 million has been allocated to fund a range of activities for children, young people and families, in what is being described as a National Summer of Play in 2021.<sup>13</sup>
- In the 2021-22 Programme for Government,<sup>14</sup> the Scottish Government committed to:
  - build a new system of wraparound childcare for school aged children. It committed to a five-year delivery

plan, with details to be published before the end of 2021.

- Expand free early learning and childcare to 1- and 2-year-olds – starting in this parliamentary term for children from low-income households

With regards to tackling food insecurity:

- Three questions on food insecurity were introduced to the Scottish Health Survey in 2017,<sup>15</sup> which provide data for the new National Indicator on food insecurity that was introduced in 2018.<sup>16</sup>
- The Poverty and Inequality Commission has offered advice to the Scottish Government on tackling food insecurity during the school holidays.<sup>17</sup>
- The 2019-20 Programme for Government committed to increase investment from £0.5 to £2 million to accelerate action on food insecurity in the school holidays.<sup>18</sup>
- In May 2020, the Scottish Government published research mapping organisations responding to food insecurity in Scotland.<sup>19</sup>

The Scottish Government is interested in projects, such as Moray Holibub Club, where school holiday period provision comprises food and activity/childcare.

## ***Time to Prosper Impact Evaluation***

This evaluation is a key part of a broader project, funded by the Scottish Government, that aims to understand how different models of holiday/after school provision can generate positive outcomes for children and young people.<sup>20</sup>

Moray Holibub Club is of interest as it used the medium of food provision to engage children and young people in a rural area.

Complementary evaluations of organisations operating under different models are being undertaken as part of this wider project:

- A large activity-based charity operating across large parts of a Scottish city<sup>21</sup>

- A large food-based charity operating in deprived neighbourhoods across the whole of a Scottish city<sup>22</sup>
- An established youth project operating in a deprived neighbourhood in a Scottish city.<sup>23</sup>

## **Our Approach to Evaluation**

The approach adopted is that in the style of an appreciative inquiry, in which the objective is to explore ‘the best of what is, in order to imagine what could be’.<sup>24</sup> Adopting a ‘this works’ starting point, this appraisal focuses on identifying the drivers of success, in order that others might glean useful learning. Notwithstanding our starting position, we maintain a critical stance throughout.

This is a rapid evaluation, undertaken over a ten-week period in the latter half of 2020, a point after which the operations of Moray Holibub Club had concluded.

Our approach is described more fully in Annex 1.

## **Structure of this report**

This report begins by describing Moray Food Plus and its work (Ch.02), before evidencing the need for its work in relation to tackling poverty and food insecurity, and providing support related to family employment (Ch. 03). The appraisal progresses through three sections:

- *Deliverables. Claims to Impact.* What did Moray Holibub Club provide? (Ch. 04)
- *What Makes the Difference?* A review that aims to understand the deliverables in context (Ch. 05)
- *Mission Match.* Mapping the work of Moray Holibub Club to local and national strategies that promote the ‘common good’ in Moray and Scotland (Ch. 06).

We conclude by reflecting what has worked and what others might learn from this work (Ch. 07).

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## 2. Moray Holibub Club and the Work of Moray Food Plus

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### Introduction

In this section of the report, we describe the activities, priorities, people, development and funding of Moray Food Plus, the organisation responsible for the Moray Holibub Club.

### Mission

Moray Food Plus asserts that everyone within the broader community of Moray has the right to food. It works to achieve four key objectives:

- (1) To advance the education and relieve the poverty of residents in Moray by promoting healthy eating and food preparation including fresh fruit and vegetables and making other produce accessible and affordable through community food initiatives;
- (2) To relieve the poverty of residents in Moray and advance environmental protection by promoting the development of schemes where waste food is minimised by establishing systems to divert food from waste disposal to those individuals in need;
- (3) To advance health through education and promotion of, and increased access to, healthy eating options; and
- (4) To promote, establish and operate other schemes of a charitable nature for the benefit of the Community within Moray.

### Origin

Moray Food Plus – originally “Moray Foodbank” – was established as an independent not-for-profit food distribution organisation in Moray in April 2011. Its launch followed a successful food poverty alleviation pilot project initiated by Community Food Initiatives North East (CFINE). At the time of

the organisation’s inception, Moray was identified by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) as a priority area with significant levels of rural isolation<sup>25</sup>.

Moray Foodbank introduced various projects to address poverty. A member of the Trussell Trust from 2011, the board took the decision in February 2019 to withdraw membership and to develop an alternative approach to tackling food insecurity. In June 2019, *Moray Foodbank* was renamed as *Moray Food Plus* to better reflect its work, and to reduce the stigma associated with emergency food provision through foodbanks.

### Development

Table 1 summarises key milestones in the development of Moray Food Plus from its inception in 2011.

**Table 1: Timeline for the development of Moray Food Plus**

2011	Moray Foodbank established as an independent not-for-profit food distribution organisation.
2017	Moray Foodbank reported busiest July on record for food parcels / Introduction of Moray Holibub Club.
2019	Changed name to Moray Food Plus on 20 <sup>th</sup> June to better reflect the work undertaken by the charity / Withdrew membership from the Trussell Trust.
2020	COVID19 pandemic impacted the scale and capacity of intervention projects.
2020	Moray Food Plus announces that Moray Holibub Club will no longer operate.

## Finance

Moray Food Plus is funded by public donations, legacies, gifts and grants for core activities. Funding partners include:

- Fair Food Transformation Fund
- Impact Funding
- Henry Duncan Grant
- MFR Cash for Kids
- Social Enterprise at Moray College
- Bailie Gifford Community Awards Fund
- Tampon Tax Community Fund
- YouChoose3 – Health
- YouChoose3 – Communities
- The Stafford Trust
- Go For It
- Bags of Help (Tesco)
- Sustain Food Power
- Marks & Spencer
- The Robertson Trust
- John Laing Charitable Trust
- Miss Winifred Theresa Agnes Shee’s Trust
- Crerar Trust
- EIS Moray
- NHS Grampian
- Elgin Common Good Fund
- Create

**Table 2: Income and Expenditure, 2015 to 2019**

Year	Income	Expenditure	Balance
2016	£111,117	£102,199	£8,918
2017	£40,668	£56,651	-£15,983
2018	£95,472	£79,264	£16,208
2019	£166,464	£121,061	£45,403

Source: OSCR<sup>26</sup>

According to the 2019 Annual Report<sup>5</sup>, the largest proportion of Moray Food Plus’ expenditure is staffing costs (£71,898), with the second highest being service provisioning (£16,289).

## People

Moray Food Plus is run by a small team of dedicated staff and volunteers and is dependent upon the support of its volunteers who provided approximately 6,060 hours<sup>5</sup> of unpaid service during fiscal year 2019.

## Provision

Moray Food Plus provides a wide range of services for those experiencing food insecurity, or at risk of it. It works with local partner organisations to reduce the amount of food wasted by redistributing surplus food in Moray.

The following are among the key activities that target adults (including families):

**Mitigating Impact of Welfare Reform.** The impact of welfare reform and the roll out of Universal Credit alongside Moray’s low wage economy has encouraged Moray Food Plus to further engage with people experiencing food insecurity in the area by offering services and activities that aim to address the issue of food insecurity in a long-term and non-stigmatising way.

**Emergency Food Provision:** Distribution of emergency food parcels to individuals and families facing food-related crises, most commonly due to benefit delays, benefit changes and low income. In 2018-2019, Moray Food Plus provided emergency food to 4,448 individuals including 2,817 adults and 1,631 children.<sup>27</sup>

**Community Larders:** Moray Food Plus has established 18 larders across Moray at a range of community points, including homeless centres and other supported accommodation hostels. The community larders offer those experiencing food insecurity dignity and choice in a food crisis by allowing them to choose the food they would like to eat, to access emergency food when foodbanks are closed, and to take as much or as little as is needed to feed themselves and their families.

Moray Food Plus plans to increase the number of larders available and to reduce the number of referrals to the foodbank.

**Food Recovery:** Working alongside local partners, Moray Food Plus saved almost 17 tonnes of food and 18,000 litres of milk from waste between 2018-2019.<sup>5</sup> Recovered foods are used to support over 27 groups including breakfast and lunch clubs and cooking activities. Moray Food Plus plans to expand this work in future years.

**Community Meals:** Community meals act as an informal approach to food provision and emphasise the social value of food, bringing people of the community together. In 2018-2019, ten community meals were delivered. Moray Food Plus hopes to continue to increase this type of provision.

**Campus Kitchen:** Moray Food Plus supported students at Moray College to host five free breakfast events and “pay what you feel” lunches which 150 people attended in 2018-2019.

**Cooking Sessions for Groups with Particular Needs.** Sessions are also provided for particular interest groups. For example, one-to-one and small group cooking sessions delivered by Moray Food Plus staff to SACRO residents from Guildry House (Elgin) and Covesea (Lossiemouth) identified as being most vulnerable and most in need of intensive support. Similarly, *Cook ‘n’ Share* sessions delivered at the Phoenix Centre in Buckie for people facing mental health difficulties.

**Older People’s Lunch Club:** Moray Food Plus runs the Older People’s Lunch Club on a weekly basis. The Lunch Club is delivered in partnership with Elgin High Church and is attended by 20 to 30 people each week. It specifically targets older people who are experiencing social isolation.

**Cooking and Growing at ‘The Royal’ Temporary Accommodation Hospital:** This enabled Moray Food Plus staff to work with residents at ‘The Royal’ to deliver a popular

and successful cooking and growing project. The project ended in March 2019.

Moray Food Plus also organise a wide range of activities that are targeted at children. The Northern Alliance<sup>28</sup> funded this work; specifically, to appoint a member of staff to organise, deliver, oversee, promote and evaluate its work with children and young people. In addition to the Moray Holibub Club, this included:

**Nourish Lunch Sessions / Nourish Sessions:** Moray Food Plus’s Nourish Project is one of several community-based projects run by Moray Food Plus with the aim of connecting people through food. This project includes cooking and wellbeing workshops for children and young people, delivered in schools by external sessional staff alongside a member of school staff, as well as adult cooking sessions.

**1:1 Kit Bag Sessions.** Multi-sensory resource to encourage people to share feelings and encourage reflection.

**Mindfulness Sessions.** Story-based sessions to relax children.

**Homework groups.** Weekly support for children who are not completing their homework.

**Lego therapy Sessions.** Lego-based sessions to encourage children to develop communication and social skills.

**Friendship Sessions.** Work with small groups of children for eight weeks, using a range of the aforementioned tools.

## **Moray Holibub Club and the wider work of Moray Food Plus**

As outlined above, Moray Food Plus has delivered a range of projects and initiatives aimed the prevention and relief of poverty. This report offers an evaluation of the Moray Holibub Club.

The Moray Holibub Club project was initiated in 2017. Local and national factors provided an impetus for its formation. Nationally, in its 2017 Annual Report on Welfare Reform,<sup>29</sup> the Scottish Government reported an increase in food bank referral and use and emergency food provisioning across the country, owing to the continued roll out of Universal Credit and the introduction of the six week wait for initial payment. Similarly, Moray Food Plus reported an increase in emergency food provision in Moray in 2017, leading to its busiest July on record.

In anticipation of these problems in Moray - a national problem that was being evidenced locally - Moray Food Plus conceived the Moray Holibub Club. It was delivered in partnership with the Moray Council Youth Work Team,<sup>30</sup> Keith Loft Youth Project,<sup>31</sup> the Lossie 2-3 Group,<sup>32</sup> and Stramash<sup>33</sup>.

The Moray Holibub Club was active from Summer 2017, through until 2019, operating during the October, Easter and Summer holiday periods. Twelve clubs delivered to 252 children across Moray in Forres, Elgin, Lhandbryde, Lossiemouth, Buckie and Keith. Children took part in a morning of sporting, outdoor and various other activities, ate a hot meal for lunch in the afternoon and received a food parcel to take home with them at the end of the day.

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic prevented the service from operating fully in 2020. Due the funding difficulties, Moray Food Plus announced that the project was to be discontinued.

## **Conclusion**

Moray Food Plus was established in 2011 as a not-for-profit food distribution organisation whose primary objective was to reduce hunger in the Moray council area - an area identified by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation as priority with significant levels of rural isolation. Since then, the organisation has developed and grown to serve the wider community, aiming primarily to advance education levels, promote healthy eating, promote a fairer food system, and to relieve poverty in the area.

Moray Food Plus works with local partner organisations to minimise food waste, reduce the impacts of welfare reform, and engage with the community through the provision of services and activities that aim to address the issue of food insecurity in a long-term and non-stigmatising way.

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## 3. Does Moray Need a Moray Holibub Club? The Socio-economic Context of Moray

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### Introduction

In this section of the report, we review the wider context within which the Moray Holibub Club operated in order to ascertain whether there is a need for its service. We review the prevalence of poverty and food insecurity in Moray, and profile its working families.

### Moray

Moray is situated in north east Scotland – between Inverness and Aberdeen – and with a population of under 100,000 it is one of Scotland’s smaller local authorities.<sup>34</sup>

### Poverty in Moray

According to the latest Scottish Government reports (for pre-Covid-19), it is estimated that over one million people are living in poverty in Scotland at the current time, equivalent to 24% of children, 19% of working aged adults and 14% of pensioners.<sup>35</sup>

There is no direct equivalent of these national data that would allow poverty in Moray to be compared to the national average. On the other hand, recent improvements to the ways in which estimates of child poverty for local authorities are calculated, give greater confidence and improved understanding of its distribution across Scotland.<sup>36</sup>

End Child Poverty’s estimate of child poverty for children aged under 16 suggests that child poverty in Moray is close to the Scottish average (23.4% for Moray as a whole).<sup>37</sup> Our analysis of HMRC’s ‘Children in Low Income Families Measure’<sup>38</sup> suggest that more intense pockets of poverty can be found across the

area, with ‘local’ poverty exceeding one third of all children % in parts of Buckie, Forres, Elgin and the area in and around Fochabers and Llanbryde.<sup>39</sup>

Notwithstanding the limitations in capturing rural poverty and wellbeing,<sup>40</sup> the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation provides a more broadly based summary of wellbeing, ranking small areas across Scotland in terms of levels of deprivation, and classifying them according to whether they are among Scotland’s Most Deprived areas.<sup>41</sup> Overall, 3.2% of datazones in Moray are among Scotland’s 20% Most Deprived areas.<sup>42</sup>

### Food Security in Moray

In July 2018, food insecurity was added to the list of National Indicators that work toward achieving the eleven National Outcomes that are part of Scotland’s National Performance Framework.<sup>43</sup> The Scottish Government is committed to measure whether Scotland is making progress in tackling food insecurity and – together other stakeholders – to take action to make this happen.<sup>44</sup>

Almost one in ten adults in Scotland (9%), report that, at some time over the last year (pre Covid period), they were worried about running out of food, because of a lack of money or other resources.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, it was self-reported that the same lack of money or resources, also led to 6% of adults eating less than they should, and 3% of adults running out of food. As for child poverty, there are no directly equivalent data for local areas.

One way in which we can approximate child food insecurity is to consider the number of pupils who are registered for free school

meals. Although an imperfect indicator,<sup>46</sup> it might be reasoned that registration for free school meals beyond the years of universal entitlement (currently P1-P3 across Scotland, and P1-P4 in Glasgow) provides some indication of families need for support to feed school-aged children.

Again using pre-Covid data, to avoid any distortions, beyond the years of universal entitlement to free school food, one in five children in upper primary school (19.5% of P4-P7)<sup>47</sup> and one in seven secondary school pupils (15.6%) in Scotland are registered for free school meals.<sup>48</sup> In Moray, the respective proportions are 12.1% for upper primary and 10.2% for secondary school. Although below the Scottish average, a substantial proportion of children in Moray are registered for food support.

In 2020 (pre-Covid data), registrations for free school meals approached one in three children for two primary schools in Moray (St Peter's RC Primary School and St Thomas RC Primary School) and was greater than one-in-five in four others (Portknockie, Pilmuir, Millbank and Applegrove). In four secondary schools, one-in-ten children or more were registered for free school meals, with the highest rates of registration recorded in Forres Academy (13.1%) and Buckie High School (13%).<sup>49</sup>

## Working Families in Moray

Two thirds of children living in poverty in Scotland are living in households with at least one adult in employment; the risk rate of this in-work poverty for families with children seems to have stabilised (68%), having risen markedly in the five years between 2009-12 and 2014-2017.

Over 16,000 of Moray's citizens are aged under 16, with an additional 2,000 aged 16 or 17; approaching one in five of the area's residents are children (19%).<sup>50</sup> Almost one quarter of Moray's 11,000 family households are headed by a single parent (23%).<sup>51</sup>

Local labour market indicators for Moray,<sup>52</sup> estimate that three quarters of working aged adults in Moray are in employment (76%). Moray has a jobs density of 0.78 (the number of jobs for each adult of working age). Moray residents typically earn £562 (median wage for full-time workers), among the lowest in Scotland.

## Conclusion

With a sizeable child population, and many families at risk of poverty and food insecurity, it is clear that the service that was provided by Moray Holibub Clubs could still make a positive contribution to children, family and community life.

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## 4. Deliverables: Claims to impact

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### Introduction

In this section we describe the claims to positive impact that were made by Moray Holibub Club and on behalf of it.

### Earlier Impact Evaluations

Moray Food Plus published an end of funding report for the Northern Alliance in June 2020.<sup>53</sup> This report, authored by Moray Food Plus and Moray Holibub staff, is the only evaluation of the work of the Moray Holibub Club.

Given the status of the Northern Alliance as a Regional Improvement Collaborative with a responsibility for improving educational attainment, it is understandable and appropriate that this evaluation was particularly focused on the impact of the Moray Holibub Club on educational outcomes. In this report, the impact of the Moray Holibub Club is appraised in terms of its longer-term effect on children's behaviour, resilience and attainment.

The report is akin to an appreciative inquiry, opening with the statement that Moray Food Plus, "... knew that our Nourish and Moray Holibub Club work was successful but due to lack of capacity had been unable to carry out more in-depth evaluation".

A multi-method approach was adopted, comprising interviews, observation, case study analysis and surveys that used standardised assessment tools with parents (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire), teachers (Progress and Performance Report) and children (Students' Life Satisfaction Scale). Ten case studies are presented in the report.

Positive impacts resulting from Moray Holibub Club participation are reported for both younger children and older children, with these impacts being reported in terms of socialisation, confidence, behaviour, participation and responsibility. Positive impact for participating parents was reported in terms of socialisation, family relationships, downtime and finances.

The findings of Moray Food Plus' evaluation are echoed in this independent project evaluation.

### Activity Provision

#### *Providing and Widening opportunity*

The activities that were offered to the children were described as "bought in, specialist activities" that offered opportunities to children from lower income families, particularly those from rural and isolated areas, to try new things and to socialise with other children:

... we know that ... children from the lower income families feel quite isolated in the holidays because their families aren't able to take them to activities as much.

*(Moray Food Plus Project Manager)*

Widening of opportunity also extended to making use of what might be considered to be readily available resources that were not being used:

... Elgin is the main town, and ... the seaside is ... five, ten miles away, not far. ... you've got beautiful beaches five miles away, [and children from town] who've never been to the beach. ... It's just about giving them opportunities to try new activities.

*(Moray FP Resilience Development Officer)*

The activities included archery, craft sessions, cooking sessions, theatre, dance, circus skills, science, sports, animal handling and various outdoor activities. The widening of opportunity was confirmed by the families:

... one time there was cheerleading, and another time it was archery ... stuff you'd not expect to get around here.

*(Family One)*

More directly, the work funded by the Northern Alliance had the objective of impacting on five domains, i.e. socialisation, confidence, behaviour, family relationships, and child development. We draw on our interviews with staff and families to reflect on claims to impact in each of these areas.

### **Impact on Socialisation**

Staff and parents reported positive impact on children's socialisation. Connections formed in the Moray Holibub Club carried over outside of time spent in the Club:

... she loved ... making new friends and obviously there was older kids who would volunteer to help so she made acquaintances with them and if she sees them in the street, she says hi to them ...

*(Family One)*

... I went to the woods with another mum and her two kids and she's part of the walking group. So, we went with the three kids up to the woods and that and they loved it.

*(Family Two)*

The Moray Holibub Club provided opportunities for children to socialise. These opportunities are not readily available for all children, particularly those from low-income backgrounds in more remote areas. The Club helped reduce the risk of social isolation during the holidays when there no school-based weekday interaction with peers:

... children from the lower income families feel quite isolated in the holidays because their families aren't able to take them to activities as much ... Moray is quite rural ...

you can have children that are ... living up a farm track and they don't see any other child over the holidays.

*(Moray Food Plus Project Manager)*

These positive impacts extended to the wider family, particularly on the mothers of children who attended the Moray Holibub Club. Reference was made to a local walking group in one area, attended by other mothers of Moray Holibub Club attendees and, often, Moray Food Plus staff members:

We now do a walking group on a Wednesday morning, and ... four of us will just meet up, including [*name of Moray Food Plus staff member*] ... so, I'm still in contact with a few people

*(Family One)*

I've made some good friends out of it [Moray Holibub Club] as well ... I go for a walk on a Wednesday morning with ... two other mums

*(Family Two)*

Thus, benefits were expressed for both parents and children. These benefits were considered to be particularly important for those living in remote rural areas, such as are found in many parts of Moray.

### **Impact on Confidence**

Socialisation is also reported to have had positive impact on confidence levels, once more an observation drawn by both parents and staff:

... being able to make friends had a big impact on her confidence ... she was with ... all different years ... it helped her get on, and like, be more confident in herself

*(Family One)*

... it's had quite an impact on their confidence. It's increased their confidence; they've gone back to school with new friends and they are not even within their own age group

*(Moray Food Plus Project Manager)*

Just as socialisation is reported to lead increased confidence, so added benefits are reported to result from increased confidence:

We had one young lad - he was ... severely off the rails and got booted out of school ... [he] was lacking confidence and I had him come into the kitchen with me 'cos he was wanting to do catering. He's actually at college now. ... He's doing cooking, elementary food and hygiene certificate and everything ...

*(Moray Food Plus Project Manager)*

The last two examples report benefits that were experienced beyond the Club, for children in school (last extract on previous page) and older children in college (above). The last example also reports improvements in behaviour.

### ***Impact on Behaviour***

As suggested above, some of the children who came to Moray Holibub Club displayed behavioural problems both at home and in school. It was reported that their behaviour improved as a direct result of engaging in Club activities. Improvements were reported in terms of listening to directions and acting upon them; socialising with other children, family members and club facilitators; and displaying more calm and acceptable behaviour at the Club. Feedback from teachers confirmed that this better behaviour was also evident in school, leading to a reduction in exclusions.

This is not to underestimate the challenge that this presents for staff members. However, good relations with the schools and early engagement with parents enabled the Club to take preparatory steps to manage the challenging behaviour that was anticipated.

We had one young lad we had to phone mum to come in and I spoke to the school about him because he will be one of the challenging people coming up ... the advantage of the Moray Holibub Club was you got to know them ...

*(Keith Youth Loft Project Manager)*

### ***Impact on Family Relationships***

The better behaviour was also reported to have benefits for family life in general, with one parent reporting that her son had issues controlling his temper, which he was managing better following his participation in the Club:

... when he first started school he wouldn't come home and tell me what he had done in school. But lately he has, and I think that's made him more comfortable ... I think [it's] because when he'd come from the Moray Holibub Club, I used to just go and meet him outside the hall. You weren't to go in you just had to wait for him coming out. ... They just acted like it was the school and I'd just wait for him coming out ... and he was coming out and giving me big hugs and everything. I said well something's working because XXX's got a temper

*(Family Two)*

This parental testimony reinforced the conclusions that were reported in Moray Food Plus' own evaluation. Thus, Club participation was reported to have encouraged better behaviour that, in turn, benefitted both school and family life.

### ***Impact on Child Development***

The activities allowed children to develop in different ways and at different levels. For example, older children were often invited to help with food preparation and supporting younger club-goers. Older children assumed new responsibilities and learned new skills:

... They (P7s) came in as ... volunteers ... They were just at the age where they were going to High School. They were a wee bit too cool for Moray Holibub Club. So, the workers ... helped them come in as volunteers. They still took part in all the activities ... but they were given that wee bit of responsibility ... some of them helped lead the activities or they helped prepare the lunch and the breakfast. Once they had done it ... they wanted to come back and help out because they were given that responsibility, they were made feel quite important.

*(Moray Food Plus Project Manager)*

For some of the older children, this leadership was accredited, led to Awards being received and was considered to contribute toward positive educational outcomes:

... they got accreditation for it and got achievement awards as part of Moray Holibub Club ... and they got a volunteer Saltire Award because they volunteered as well. Two of them actually ... one in particular she was a shy, shy lassie and she came in and she wouldn't even give us eye contact to start with. Now that's her going into social care at college.

*(Keith Youth Loft Project Manager)*

... my daughter's got speech problems... basically, like, going there helped with her speech

*(Family One)*

Benefits were often reported for children who presented with challenging behaviour or personal skills that were under-developed. Although the number of participants may be small (in part a reflection of the demography of remote rural areas), the impacts were reported to be significant and were gained by those in greatest need.

## **Food Provision – Tackling Food Poverty**

The core business of Moray Food Plus is tackling food insecurity.

The whole kind of purpose of the club was really just looking at lower income families. Holiday poverty. You know, [providing] food [and tackling] holiday hunger.

*(Moray Food Plus Project Manager)*

Primarily targeted at children from lower income families, the Moray Holibub Club delivered a significant food offering, providing two meals per day – breakfast and a hot meal for lunch – and a backpack on a Friday to ensure that children and their families were fed over the weekend:

I think a lot of the kids wouldn't have breakfast otherwise, and obviously we make sure that they have a hot lunch, just in case that they don't have the opportunity of having a hot meal.

*(Moray Food Plus Project Manager)*

It was targeted at lower income families ... to provide a bit of food provision. ... at the end of every week we did a ... Friday backpack where we gave the children a bag ... of cereal pots, cereal bars, cup a soups, ... you know. ... So they would have a bit of food over the weekend. ... If they could boil a kettle, they could make whatever was in the pack.

*(Moray Food Plus Project Manager)*

So, they got hot meals and then they got a pack home with them that the food bank would give us. They got the funding through Cash for Kids. They got their pack home for the weekend and then surplus food left over the kids got home with them, a snack or a bit of fruit or something like that.

*(Keith Youth Loft Project Manager)*

Staff stressed the benefits of the Friday backpack to ensure that children were sustained over the weekend. Provision was tailored to individual needs and benefits were reported to extend beyond the provision of food; children also had the opportunity to try new food (broadening their horizons) and the provision was reported to ease parental stress, with the knowledge that that their children would be receiving a daily hot meal:

The Friday backpack idea worked really well. That seemed to be appreciated by a lot of the families. ... They tailored that. If they were aware that somebody had a gluten intolerance, they made sure that they had their own specialist one. ... they tailored that as much as they can.

*(Moray Food Plus Project Manager)*

... giving children the opportunity to try new foods as well.

*(Moray FP Resilience Development Officer)*

... some of the feedback ... from parents was that it just took a weight off their shoulders knowing that their kids were going to get a hot meal and they didn't have to worry.

*(Moray FP Resilience Development Officer)*

The success of the Moray Holibub Club in tackling holiday hunger was insufficient to overcome food insecurity for these families. Project workers ruminated on the limitations on what could be achieved through the Club's work:

... only run it ... two weeks out of six in the summer holidays. It's not making a massive impact sort of longer term. ... at least you know, for that period they are still being supported and they are getting something that is sort of home cooked and nutritious.

*(Moray Food Plus Project Manager)*

... food poverty in holidays is real and the Moray Holibub Club just probably touched the surface, you know ... we didn't have that many cases in the scheme of things you know, but it did have an impact.

*(Moray FP Resilience Development Officer)*

However, for participating families, the benefits of Club participation were tangible and significant. It was reported that food insecurity was reduced for one family, as there was no need for the parent to forgo food in order to feed their child, when they were being fed at the Club. Indeed, given that the wider family was sometimes drawn upon to provide food, the benefits of Club participation might be described as extending beyond the child's family unit:

... I would make sure she was fed. So, if we were running low, it was always her [who got fed]. ... if I did struggle, like, running out of food or that, I'd go to either the food bank or I'd ask family for money ... she was coming home [from Moray Holibub Club] full ... Yeah, it [food] wasn't running low [at home].

*(Family One)*

Although the provision of food at the Club is a financial saving – a reduction in the cost of living for families – this was not emphasised as a benefit by Moray Food Plus in its evaluation or by parents in this evaluation.

The experience of food at the Club was also reported to have shaped family food practices. Recognising the benefit for her son of having a hot lunch at the Club, one mother

intimated an intention to implement changes in her son's school routine:

... he was having like two hot meals [at the Club]. ... At the moment he has packed lunches at school because we've got to pay for the meals now ... because he's in Primary 4. So, I said then in the next couple of weeks will be putting money in and you'll be going for hot meals at school, because I like them to get hot meals ...and I always make a hot meal at night.

*(Family Two)*

The most rewarding aspect of working for Moray Holibub Club was reported to be the positive impacts on children. While this was sometimes described in terms of activities, or personal development (first two examples below), this was also described in terms of knowledge that food security was being assured through Club participation (final example):

... we have always had really positive feedback. A lot of children want to come back year on year. ... The people that are delivering the Moray Holibub Club really enjoy it as well. ... when you see the photos afterward of all the activities, and of all the big smiley faces and everything, and that's what's really made it worthwhile. And feedback from parents has been positive.

*(Moray Food Plus Project Manager)*

... seeing the happy faces ... that was the best thing. ... just seeing some of the ... children that attended ... - you know they have challenges and they struggle socially – so seeing some of these children really coming out of their shells ... I worked with them, I knew them, and knew how hard it was for them to socialise. ... just seeing them come out of their shell over the week, making new friends.

*(Moray FP Resilience Development Officer)*

I think seeing the kids getting a warm meal. Well I think healthy warm meal and activities during the holidays when they probably would have just been stuck at home doing nothing

*(Keith Youth Loft Project Manager)*

## Covid-19 Adaptations and Moray Holibub Club Closure

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic initially led to a suspension of the Moray Holibub Club that was scheduled for the Easter school holidays.

Alternative provision was offered during the Summer holidays of 2020, when it became apparent that facilities would not be available. The Resilience Development Officer worked from home but sought to maintain close contact with the families, offering support through regular check in phone and video calls and video calls to the parents of the children. Moray Food Plus' funders allowed Club funds to be used to purchase supermarket vouchers to provide the equivalent of what the children may have received at the Club.

Later in 2020, it was announced that the service would be permanently withdrawn across Moray, having not been able to secure sufficient funds to sustain the service.

With many reported positive impacts, and with no indication that the needs that it met and the opportunities that it gave are no longer required (or are being delivered by alternative providers), it can be surmised that closure will have an adverse impact on children, their families and communities of which they are at. This issue was explored with parents and staff. Concerns were raised for both children and their parents:

... I think it's just the children enjoy it and have fun and like the activities. ... some of the children will be sad that they're not able to go. We know that for some of the families, they get a wee bit of respite ... [the children] can go to the club, they get their food, they get their activities and there is no cost involved for the family, so, I think there might be a bit of an impact there.

*(Moray Food Plus Project Manager)*

However, some concerns were raised that alternatives to the Club provision – such as providing supermarket vouchers rather than providing food – would be less effective in meeting needs:

I think it is going to have a big impact. These kids aren't getting a meal. ... I don't want to speak wrongly, but [if] they give them [parents] vouchers for kids during the holidays ... I don't think that's a better idea either to be honest, because half the parents won't be using those vouchers for the kids.

*(Keith Youth Loft Project Manager)*

Although parents acknowledged the benefits for themselves and the family of the Club, they tended to describe the consequences of Club closure in terms of the impact on their children. In the extract below, there is a sense that there would be longer-term benefits for the family in terms of providing food (a benefit that was expected to result from improved budgeting skills), but that the child may lose out by not being able to take part in the activities. This mother remained hopeful that Moray Holibub Club would return in the future:

... I think now it won't be as bad as before because I've finally managed to perfectly budget myself after years of budgeting, but I think it will be more of an impact on [my daughter], 'cos ... she enjoyed going to it ... hopefully, it'll come back.

*(Family One)*

Staff were also particularly concerned over the loss of opportunity for children, perceiving that there were no other providers offering children equivalent opportunities in their area"

... we were one of the main organisations doing the holiday provision. There's not many organisations ... across the country. There's not a massive amount of ... children's activities that are free ... we were probably one of the few things that were running. So, there's not really much to sign post people to ... There's just not the same opportunities in the area for those sorts of things.

*(Moray Food Plus Project Manager)*

... I think it will have an impact, because as I said there is no other holiday provision.  
*(Moray FP Resilience Development Officer)*

## **Conclusion**

Before the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, Moray Holibub Club offered opportunities to children of lower income families from many parts of the county. Positive impacts were reported by staff and parents, for both younger and older children terms of socialisation, confidence, behaviour, participation and growing responsibility. Parents and the wider family were also reported to benefit from children's participation in the Club.

It is currently unclear how the needs that were being met will be attended to in the future.

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## 5. What Makes the Difference?

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### Introduction

In this section, we review the drivers that underpinned the success of the Moray Holibub Club.

### Context

The local context presented a challenge to overcome, but also accounted for the success of the Moray Holibub Club. Child poverty can be found in both urban and rural Moray, although it is typically less visible and less concentrated in rural areas.

As noted in the previous part of this report (*Deliverables*), it is reported that there are few alternatives to what the Club offered, particularly so in more rural and more remote parts of Moray. For participants, it provided a service and opportunities that were beyond reach. At the same time, the smaller numbers participating in local groups undermined the viability of the service.

### Connections

Partnership working was central to the success of the Moray Holibub Club. Contributing to the success of the project were supermarkets, schools, activity and other service providers, among others. Partnerships were important to assure the success of both food and activity provision:

... if they [Tesco] knew Moray Holibub Club was on, they'd keep food back for us ... The Community Food Champion ... has actually been fantastic for us. ... the in-house baker at Tesco would make extra pancakes. So, for pudding I could give them pancakes with toffee sauce plus bananas and ice cream. I would purchase the majority of my ingredients from Tesco. ... but we were always getting a donation from them.

*(Keith Youth Loft Project Manager)*

There was a sense that the benefits extended beyond participating children and their families. It was reported how some of those who benefited from their children's participation at the Moray Holibub Club would make contributions in service of the wider community. In Keith, it was noted that some of the parents whose children attended the Moray Holibub Club would often donate to the food bank that was co-located at the project's base:

It was a win/win, ... partnership. ... Some of the parents would come and put in donations.

*(Keith Youth Loft Project Manager)*

The connections with activity providers that were established through the Moray Holibub Club – such as Wild Things<sup>54</sup> - also stoked interests that could be used beyond the Club. Furthermore, working in partnership to provide activity made the task of delivering less demanding:

We've recently worked with Wild Things - they're ... outdoor activities [providers] ... and we got funding for that. ... I would like to go forward and do more of that sort of thing, ... it's lower key, it's much, much easier to organise than Moray Holibub Clubs, and you know, working with other organisations they take a bit more responsibility as well. ... I was out every day doing nature walks. I was obviously responsible for the children and had all that sort of paperwork ... but it was just very nice to have a lovely organisation that knew exactly what they were doing, and they took charge of that sort of bit, ... I would love to do more of that.

*(Moray FP Resilience Development Officer)*

Partnerships were also reported to be important in expanding the reach of the Moray Holibub Club.

We expanded [beyond Keith] and we ran in Forres but only for one session because that was with the youth work team [and it] ... fell by the by. We started working [in Kinloss] with ... a kid's group there. ... we did that for a couple of years. Lossiemouth we did for a few years. Elgin we did for a few years. We worked initially with the Lossie group. They were able to support us to deliver the Elgin one and then we started using the Home School Link workers for that. Lhanbryde is ... the next one we developed after Keith because we do a lot of work in the Lhanbryde area. ... We delivered one club there and then we started doing it in partnership for children. We haven't managed to deliver anything in Speyside, so that was always somewhere that we would have wanted to deliver but we just didn't have any partners we could work with in that area.

*(Moray Food Plus Project Manager)*

Although critical to extending reach in some places, the absence of partners prevented provision in other places. Furthermore, partnerships were successful in some areas, but less so in others.

## Funding

Staff were also open in sharing their thoughts on the challenges faced in the planning and delivery of the Club. Securing funding and arranging activities for the children were identified:

Funding obviously is the biggest issue. MFR [Moray Firth Radio] and Cash for Kids were always really supportive, but it was year on year funding. So, it was quite hard to develop stuff. ... [We] quite often found out we were getting the funding about a month before they were planning on delivering, so it was quite last minute, and you've got a lot of families sort of asking if you are running this year so that's been difficult. ... last year we did get some funding from the Scottish government Holiday Fund.

*(Moray Food Plus Project Manager)*

... some of the challenges were the activity organising, just waiting on people calling me back and stuff like that, relying on people and kind of worried that, *can I trust them?*  
*(Moray FP Resilience Development Officer)*

These challenges are familiar to those in the Third Sector. Funding facilitates provision, but there are often uncertainties that surround it.

## Information Sharing and Challenging Family Work

Many children presented with behavioural problems, which was demanding on the staff. The skills involved in providing to these children (and parents) should not be understated. Earlier evidence was presented of information sharing in advance to facilitate effective preparation. However, this was not always forthcoming:

... we had a lot of behavioural challenges at the clubs ... we had registration forms which, ... you know, we've got all the information [parents and other service providers were] prepared to give us, but maybe sometimes parents weren't giving us all, parents and home-schooling workers, weren't giving us .. true reflection of ... certain children o.

*(Moray FP Resilience Development Officer)*

... one challenge was the behaviour of the children, because some of them came from really deprived families and I don't want to single that out because that's what the project we about.

*(Keith Youth Loft Project Manager)*

## Conclusion

In the final analysis, the strengths of the Moray Holibub Club were also its vulnerabilities. The benefits were clearly stated and reported as particularly valuable to the small numbers of children who were reached (quality of impact, rather than quantity, being the mark of success). Ultimately, Moray Food Plus was unable to secure funding to sustain the Club, leading to its withdrawal in 2020.

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## 6. Mission Match

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### Introduction

In this section we explain how the work of the Moray Holibub Club could contribute to wider agendas at local, national and global levels of analysis.

### Tackling Child Poverty and Food Insecurity in Scotland

The *Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017* committed Scotland to eradicate child poverty by 2030<sup>55</sup> with the *Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018-2022*<sup>56</sup> outlining the initial means through which this is to be achieved. Within this Plan is a 'driver diagram' which described three realms of anti-poverty actions. The work of Moray Holibub Clubs could be described in terms of each realm:

- *Increase income from employment.* It might be hypothesised that children's participation in Moray Holibub Clubs could enable their parents to participate (or participate more fully) in the labour market, thereby increasing their income from employment.
- *Reduce cost of living.* It might be hypothesised that Moray Holibub Clubs provided accessible and affordable (i.e. no-cost) activity that either removed or reduced expenditure for families (who might otherwise be spending on children's leisure).
- *Income from social security or benefits in kind.* The provision of food as part of the Moray Holibub Clubs is a benefit in kind that removes a direct cost from household budgets.

As was noted in the Introduction (section 1), through its *2021-22 Programme for Government*,<sup>57</sup> the Scottish Government has committed to strengthen the role of childcare in tackling child poverty in the years ahead.

More generally, food provision is an action to tackle food insecurity, which as noted earlier, is one of the National Goals that Scotland is committed to monitor and take action to address, as part of the National Performance Framework.

The strongest impact of Moray Holibub Clubs on tackling child poverty may be less direct, i.e. by engaging children and young people, providing focus, interest and direction that encourages personal development, and provides an alternative to pathways that lead to less positive destinations.

Others might simply assert the value of what Moray Holibub Clubs provided was that it enhanced the quality of life as lived, in the here and now.

Therefore, the work of Moray Holibub Clubs could be considered to have a longer-term impact on tackling child poverty, or value for softening the impact of child poverty, at the current time. However, these observations are not inconsistent with the recognition that the work of Moray Holibub Clubs delivered what is required in the national action plan to tackle child poverty and national aspirations to promote food security at the current time.

### Moray's Local Child Poverty Action Plan/Report

At the time of writing, local authorities and their local NHS Board are preparing their third Local Child Poverty Action Report to report on progress in tackling child poverty locally in 2021 and to outline the specific actions to be taken in the year ahead.

Of note was the sixth of the eight strategic outcomes in the first LCPAR for Moray was a

commitment to ensure that “*People with low incomes can access free or affordable childcare, credit, energy/energy efficiency, food, housing, out of school/holiday clubs, sanitary products and transport*”. (**emphasis added**).<sup>58</sup>

In the second LCPAR, progress with this target was rated as ‘amber’ suggesting that some mitigation was required to as there were risks to targets and/or timetables. Nevertheless, it was reported that almost 200 households had requested support from the Flexible Food Fund during lockdown (70% of which were households with children).<sup>59</sup>

## Scotland’s National Performance Framework

Each Scottish Government (and the Scottish Executive before that) has outlined its vision for Scotland. A National Performance Framework<sup>60</sup> was introduced in 2007 and re-launched in 2018. It defines the national purpose in terms of five goals, underpinned by three values. Providing focus to the framework are 11 National Outcomes and 81 National Indicators (a revision of the 16 Outcomes and 63 Indicators that provided focus from 2007-2018).

The work of Moray Holibub Clubs is closely aligned to one of these National Outcomes:

- tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally

Furthermore, it might be argued that the way in which the Club operates also contributes to several others:

- grow up loved, safe and respected so that they realise their full potential
- live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe
- value, enjoy, protect and enhance their environment
- have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone
- are healthy and active

Conceived thus, the work of Moray Holibub Clubs can be understood as contributing to a range of Outcomes that are valued in Scotland in that they work toward the shared vision of what Scotland could be.

At a more focused level, the work of Moray Holibub Clubs might also be hypothesised to make a more direct positive contribution on an improving ‘performance’ for a number of the National Indicators:

- Child wellbeing and happiness<sup>61</sup>
- Children and positive relationships<sup>62</sup>
- Child material deprivation<sup>63</sup>
- Places to interact<sup>64</sup>
- Social capital<sup>65</sup>
- Confidence in children and young people<sup>66</sup>
- Resilience of children and young people<sup>67</sup>
- Engagement in extra-curricular activities<sup>68</sup>
- Economic participation<sup>69</sup>
- Relative poverty after housing costs<sup>70</sup>
- Cost of living<sup>71</sup>
- Food insecurity<sup>72</sup>

Clearly, the work of Moray Holibub Clubs would have been of an insufficient scale to shift overall national performance. However, these are conceived as ‘indicators’, and there is merit in explaining how the work of the Club could have contributed to these wider national agendas.

## The Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, all member states of the United Nations adopted the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, at the heart of which are 17 Sustainable Development Goals,<sup>73</sup> which are a call to action in all countries. It could be argued that these are more pertinent in nations such as Scotland, in comparison to the Millennium Development Goals, which they replaced. Scotland is fully committed to working toward achieving these goals.<sup>74</sup>

The 17 Global Goals, are monitored through a framework of 231 unique global indicators (some of which are shared across Goals). As for the National Performance Framework in Scotland, there is merit in positioning the work of Moray Holibub Clubs against the SDGs to clarify how its work contributes to this wider global agenda: The SDGs that are pertinent are as follows:

- End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

## Conclusion

The work of the Moray Holibub Clubs contributed in many ways to a range of wider agenda at the local, national and global scales.

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## 7. Conclusions

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### Introduction

In this section, we reach conclusions on each of the five research questions.

### What is the nature of the service that the Moray Holibub Clubs provided?

Moray Holibub Club was a summer holiday provision. It presented a wide range of activities for children and young people in a range of locations across Moray. Food provision was a strong focus of the project, with participating children receiving breakfast, hot lunch and food to take home to their families at the end of the day, and over the weekend.

### To what extent did provision meet local need?

The Clubs provided an opportunity that was not available to low-income families from remote and rural parts of Moray.

### What was the impact – and claims to impact – of the Moray Holibub Clubs?

Moray Holibub Clubs were reported to have significant positive impact for participating children. Positive impacts were described for socialisation, confidence, behaviour, participation and responsibility. Positive impact was also described for participating parents in terms of socialisation, family relationships, downtime and finances. The

wider community (community spend), and education institutions (improved behaviour and engagement) were also reported to benefit indirectly from the work of the Club.

### What were the drivers of the Moray Holibub Clubs' success?

Demand for the service provided implies that it has the potential to be impactful, albeit for small numbers given the geographical context.

### What lessons can be learned from the work of the Moray Holibub Clubs that might help improve provision elsewhere?

Moray Holibub Club was withdrawn in 2020. However, much positive impact was reported. There is a need to consider issues of viability and sustainability if equity in holiday provision is to be achieved for children in more remote and rural parts of Scotland (where there are fewer children). The demand for the service and value for the service is no less intense for participating children. There is a need to reflect on the pre-requisites of success for holiday food and activity provision in parts of Scotland with smaller numbers of children.

### Conclusion

Moray Holibub Club delivered a comprehensive package of food and activity for the three years when it was in operation. Ultimately, it was not possible to sustain the provision.

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# Annex 1: Our Approach to Evaluation

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## Introduction

In this section, we describe and appraise the approach taken in this impact evaluation.

## Why Moray Holibub Clubs?

As noted in the introduction, this evaluation is a key part of a broader project, funded by the Scottish Government, that aimed to understand how different models of holiday/after school provision generated positive outcomes for children and young people.

The Scottish Government suggested that Moray Holibub Club was included as one of the case studies, as it was an example of a small-scale project that sought to deliver a food-based intervention in a remoter rural part of Scotland.

## Focus

As noted in the introduction, our objective was to undertake a rapid appraisal to answer the following key questions:

- What is the nature of the service that the Moray Holibub Clubs provides?
- To what extent does provision meet local need?
- What is the impact – and claims to impact – of Moray Holibub Clubs?
- What are the drivers of the Moray Holibub Clubs' success?
- What lessons can be learned from the work of the Moray Holibub Clubs that might help improve provision elsewhere?

## Appreciative Inquiry

As noted in the introduction, we have adopted an approach that in the style of an appreciative inquiry, in which the objective is to explore 'the best of what is, in order to imagine what could be'.<sup>75</sup> We do not claim to have undertaken work that adheres to all aspects of Appreciate Inquiry; rather, we assert that the broad objectives of such work framed our approach. Adopting a 'this works' starting point, the appraisal focused on identifying the drivers of success, in order that others might glean useful learning. Notwithstanding our starting position, we maintain a critical stance throughout.

## Activities

As noted in the introduction, our approach comprised four elements.

- A review of earlier appraisals
- An analysis of documentary evidence from Moray Holibub Clubs
- Interviews with three stakeholders, at different levels in the organisation
- Interviews with two families.

Each is discussed in more detail in this Annex.

## Timeframe

In advance of the fieldwork, John McKendrick met several times with the Scottish Government to agree project objectives, and contacted Moray Holibub Clubs, who agreed to facilitate the evaluation.

The fieldwork started in 2020 on September 29<sup>th</sup> and concluded on December 7<sup>th</sup>, covering a ten-week period. During this period, Scotland tightened restrictions on mobility and interaction, in order to protect public health from Covid-19.

## People

The research was completed by Jenna Woods, under the guidance of John McKendrick.

Jenna Woods was employed 0.5 FTE for this ten-week period, although she was also responsible for undertaking a mapping of local provision of holiday activity/food provision in a case study beyond Moray during this period. In effect, Jenna committed 12.5 days to this impact evaluation.

John McKendrick managed and designed the overall project. John also reviewed all interview transcripts and supported Jenna, who is lead author of this report.

Although jointly responsible for this report, John and Jenna worked as part of a broader research team of five, which met weekly from September 29<sup>th</sup> through December 7<sup>th</sup> to discuss common interests and emerging issues across the four impact evaluations that comprised the broader project.

## Research Ethics

The Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Sciences at Glasgow Caledonian University approved the fieldwork. At each stage of the research design and administration, steps were taken to ensure that the research adhered to recommended practice for document analysis and key informant interviews. Specific steps taken included:

- Providing interviewees with information about the purpose of the research and the research requirements, to ensure that participation was based on informed consent.
- Only collecting personal details (names and contact details) for the purpose of arranging for the receipt of a voucher (for a store of their own choosing), as a token of appreciation for their participation.
- Asking for permission to record interviews and explaining the reasons for recording

- Storing research data securely, for example, password-protecting interview transcripts.
- Removing personal details (names and contact details) from data files and storing in line with General Data Protection Requirements.
- Ensuring that no service users are identified by name in the published report arising from the research.
- Offering interviewees the opportunity to receive copies of the final report.

## Working with Moray Holibub Club to Facilitate the Research

An initial meeting with Moray Food Plus' Project Manager (PM) and Resilience Development Officer (RDO) was held on 22nd October, after which a workplan was devised by SPIRU and approved by Moray Food Plus. Moray Food Plus was keen to support the evaluation, acknowledging that this would be a valuable exercise for the organisation, in addition to meeting the needs of the *Time to Prosper* project.

Moray Food Plus was asked to provide copies of project documentation for analysis and a list of research informants who could be contacted for interviews. The workplan, information sheet, interview schedules for families/young people, interview schedules for staff and consent forms were sent to the PM and RDO for approval.

During the initial meeting, interviews were arranged with the PM and RDO for the following week commencing 26th October. Project documentation was sent to the researcher immediately following the initial meeting.

Candidate interviewees were identified by the RDO over the following weeks. The RDO advised that she had difficulties finding families to agree to take part in the research. As interviewee contact details were received, the researcher contacted each individually to arrange a suitable time and date.

Interviews were arranged with the Project Manager of Keith Youth Loft Project and two families whose children were users of the Moray Holibub Club service. There were attempts made to arrange interviews with two more families which, due to personal and timing issues on the side of the families, were unsuccessful.

### **Activity 1: Appraising Previous Evaluations of Moray Holibub Clubs**

Moray Food Plus received funding from the Northern Alliance to appoint a dedicated member of staff to organise, deliver, oversee, and promote its various interventions and service provisions. The remit also required an internal evaluation of the work of Moray Food Plus.

Moray Food Plus produced this evaluation - an end of funding report - for the Northern Alliance in June 2020.<sup>76</sup> This report reviews the impact of various interventions – including the Moray Holibub Club – reflecting on the longer-term impact on children’s behaviour, resilience and attainment.

### **Activity 2: Evidencing Outputs and Outcomes from Moray Holibub Clubs’ Documentation**

Few reports were available on the activities of Moray Food Plus and the Moray Holibub Club project.

Moray Food Plus provided the Annual Report for the Financial Year 2019-2020; this enabled key partners and funders to be identified, and gave an indication of the range of Moray Food Plus activity.

### **Activity 3: Learning from Staff**

Three staff members involved in the planning, development, delivery and evaluation of the Moray Holibub Club project agreed to be interviewed to help the researcher to better understand the importance of the project and the impact it had on the children who attended, their family and school lives and the wider Moray community. Three semi-structured qualitative interviews were undertaken:

- Staff participant 1: Moray Food Plus Project Manager
- Staff participant 2: Moray Food Plus Resilience Development Officer
- Staff participant 3: Keith Youth Loft Project Manager

The interviews covered the following themes:

- Description of the work of Moray Holibub Clubs
- Description of their work with Moray Holibub Clubs
- What were the best things about their work with Moray Holibub Clubs?
- What was the most challenging aspect of their work with Moray Holibub Clubs?
- Who was reached and not reached?
- Who benefitted most?
- What would have made Moray Holibub Clubs work better
- Advice to others who might seek to introduce a Holibub Club
- Now that the Moray Holibub Clubs do not exist, what might be the impact of this

The interviews lasted between 33 minutes and 49 minutes and were undertaken in either video call or telephone format.

Staff readily accommodated the research and were engaging in the interviews. The information provided was valuable in enabling us to better understand the work of the Moray Holibub Clubs and the respective staff contributions. Staff were also open about the challenges of working with the Moray Holibub Clubs.

## Activity 4: Learning from Users

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were undertaken with two families that had used Moray Holibub Clubs:

- Family participant 1 (Family 1): Mother of an eight-year-old girl who attended every Lhanbryde Moray Holibub Club since the 2017 school summer holidays
- Family participant 2 (Family 2): Mother of an eight-year-old boy who attended Lhanbryde Moray Holibub Club on four occasions

The interviews covered the following themes:

- Introduction to self
- Experience of financial stress
- Management of out of school care
- Initial awareness of work of Moray Holibub Clubs
- Benefits of engaging with Moray Holibub Clubs
- Costs involved in Moray Holibub Clubs
- Time use when children are at Moray Holibub Clubs
- If Moray Holibub Clubs did not exist, what would be the impact

The interviews lasted between 19 minutes and 49 minutes and were undertaken in video call and telephone format.

## Reflections

It would have been instructive to engage more of the young people and families who made use of Moray Holibub Clubs' services and families from a wider range of the Clubs.

As Brent (2009) has argued, describing deprived neighbourhoods in a way that solely relies on secondary evidence from official documents, maps, bar charts and statistics fails to adequately tell the stories of people's lives and experiences and instead reduces them to diagrams and infographics.<sup>77</sup> We attempted to avoid this problem by engaging with staff and users. However, our analysis would have been enriched if we had engaged more who used and delivered the service.

## Conclusion

Notwithstanding the limitations of a rapid impact assessment, the research delivered to brief, enabling us to address each of the research objectives.

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## Endnotes

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