

Accord recognised for combating holiday hunger



As a holiday hunger forum is hosted in the House of Commons today, and an all All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) publishes a hard-hitting report into the plight of up to 3 million children who could go hungry during school holidays, one of the largest housing and social care organisations in the Midlands remains committed to tackling this issue.

Accord is the founder of Holiday Kitchen, a robust learning, food and play programme for families when they need it most. Holiday Kitchen offers fun well-being activities and healthy communal meals for pre- and primary aged children and their families during school holidays, a time when the APPG report *Hungry Holidays* estimates several million children could risk being hungry in the school holidays due to the lack of free school meals.

Holiday Kitchen is co-delivered by staff and volunteers in community-based venues across the West Midlands and beyond, positively tackling food poverty, social isolation, safeguarding, debt, physical inactivity, poor mental health and learning loss which are most acute during summer breaks.

In summer 2016 Holiday Kitchen provided a total of 6718 activity days with meals across 27 venues in the West Midlands.

Sara Woodall, Executive Director of Communities, Accord, said: "The cold reality is that, in 2017, children across the West Midlands, indeed across the country, are going hungry during school holidays as the access to free, or low cost, nutritious meals is restricted. There is also an increase in the number of families with children relying on food banks during school holidays, compared with other parts of the year, coupled with other particular difficulties that arise at those times which restrict families' ability to afford food. Our Holiday Kitchen programme is recognised across the country as a model to take forward not just by providers but also Government to try to combat some of these issues."

Dr. Caroline Wolhuter, Head of Social Inclusion, Accord, agreed: "Holiday Kitchen's mission is to support vulnerable families thrive throughout the year.

"Based on family learning and play principles, we aim to improve access to, and experiences of, good holiday nutrition. We also offer educational, fun and accessible holiday activities which go a long way in strengthening family and peer relationships."

After taking part in Holiday Kitchen, the majority of parents and carers felt that they ate more healthily than normal and that they now felt more confident in making healthy meals and snacks for their children. In addition to an

increased awareness around food budgeting and how to prepare healthy meals on a budget, families benefit from enrichment activities which open doors to improved learning and well-being throughout the year and not just school holidays.

One parent at a participating children's centre stated, *"Holiday kitchen is a great opportunity for families on a budget to have quality family time. During school holidays, I've seen myself really struggling with finance, routine and feeding nutritious meals. I have found holiday kitchen helps me with all that and more for me in a very safe, informative and fun way."*

For more information on Holiday Kitchen, **email Caroline Wolhuter** or call 0121 442 5092.

Download our latest Holiday Kitchen report, 'What Children Think in 2016'
