

Guidance

Holiday activities and food programme 2023

Updated 22 December 2022

Applies to England

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Overview

This document provides information for local authorities delivering the holiday activities and food programme for 2023 to 24. You should read it alongside the grant determination letter.

On 27 October 2021, the government announced a 3 year funding settlement of over £200 million each year for the holiday activities and food (HAF) programme. The first year of this funding settlement was 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024 is the second year of the funding settlement. This follows the successful roll out of the programme across all areas of England in 2021.

The funding for each local authority for the HAF programme will be confirmed in the grant determination letter for the programme on an annual basis.

This funding is for the 153 upper tier local authorities to coordinate and provide free holiday provision, including healthy food and enriching activities. The programme will again be available to children in every local authority in England. The holiday periods that we expect local authorities to cover are set out in [the core offer](#) section.

Background

Since 2018, the HAF programme has provided support to children in receipt of free school meals through holiday periods.

Following successful pilots between 2018 and 2020, the programme was rolled out to all upper tier local authorities in 2021.

Research has shown that the school holidays can be pressure points for some families. For some children that can lead to a holiday experience gap. Children from low-income households are:

- less likely to access organised out-of-school activities
- more likely to experience 'unhealthy holidays' in terms of nutrition and physical health
- more likely to experience social isolation

The HAF programme is a response to this issue. Evidence shows that free holiday clubs can have a positive impact on children and young people. They work best when they:

- provide consistent and easily accessible enrichment activities
- cover more than just breakfast or lunch
- involve children and parents in food preparation
- use local partnerships and connections, particularly with the VCSO sector

Since 2021, the HAF programme has enabled us to support hundreds of thousands of children and their families throughout the Easter, summer, and Christmas school holidays.

Who the programme is for

The HAF programme funding is primarily for school aged children from reception to year 11 (inclusive) who receive benefits-related free school meals (FSM).

Benefits-related FSMs are available to pupils if their parents are in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits and have a claim verified by their school or local authority.

For further information on eligibility, visit [apply for free school meals](https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals) (<https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals>).

Local authorities are asked to ensure that the offer of free holiday club provision is available for all children in receipt of benefits-related free school meals in their area. Though this does not mean we expect all to attend, as the provision is voluntary.

Universal infant free school meals

All children in reception, year 1 and year 2 in England's state-funded schools receive a free meal under the universal infant free school meals (UIFSM) policy.

Infant pupils who receive a free meal under UIFSM must also be eligible for benefits-related FSM to be able to access a place on the HAF programme.

Other children and families

As in previous years, local authorities have discretion to use up to 15% of their funding to provide free or subsidised holiday club places for children who are not in receipt of benefits-related FSM but who the local authority believe could benefit from HAF.

In deciding which children should benefit from the 15% flexible funding, local authorities should ensure that these places are aligned to their local priorities.

Local authorities are not required to seek written approval from the Department for Education (DfE) for the use of this 15% flexibility. They are expected to continue to monitor and report on this element of their expenditure and ensure it remains within the limit.

Aims of the programme

There are many benefits for children who attend the HAF programme. We want to encourage all HAF providers to ensure a high quality experience that will result in children:

- receiving healthy and nutritious meals
- maintaining a healthy level of physical activity
- being happy, having fun and meeting new friends
- developing a greater understanding of food, nutrition and other health-related issues
- taking part in fun and engaging activities that support their development
- feeling safe and secure
- getting access to the right support services
- returning to school feeling engaged and ready to learn

Families can also benefit, when HAF providers include their needs in planning and delivering their programme. This could be through:

- providing opportunities to get involved in cookery classes
- ensuring they are signposted towards other sources of information and support, such as health services or employment and education opportunities

The core offer

Overall, local authorities are expected to offer the equivalent of 6 weeks' holiday provision to eligible children.

Over Easter:

- we expect that all participating children should benefit from at least 1 week of face-to-face provision, which should be for a minimum of 4 days

Over summer:

- for local authorities that have a summer holiday that spans 6 full calendar weeks, participating children should be offered at least 4 weeks of face-to-face provision, which cover a minimum of 16 days
- for local authorities that have a summer holiday that is less than 6 full calendar weeks, participating children should be offered at least 3 weeks of face-to-face provision, which should cover a minimum of 12 days
- if only 3 weeks are offered at summer, then these local authorities, are expected to offer an additional week during a half-term holiday period, so that their overall provision reaches 6 weeks across the year

Over Christmas:

- we expect that all participating children should benefit from a week of support which covers a minimum of 4 days

- as in 2021, our preference is at least 4 days of face-to-face provision, however where this is not possible, it should consist of at least 2 days of face-to-face provision complimented by at least 2 days of HAF support which can be provided in the form of high quality food hampers and activity packs

Length of HAF sessions

Our expectation is that in every HAF funded holiday week, local authorities should offer all eligible children the equivalent of at least 4 hours a day, 4 days a week. We know that some individual providers want the flexibility to offer longer or shorter sessions, and this is possible within this description.

Example

To meet the needs of secondary-aged children in the summer, a provider could offer 6 weeks of provision consisting of shorter sessions, which included food and activities for 2 to 3 hours and for 3 to 4 days per week.

This could be complemented with opportunities for children to undertake voluntary work, building new skills or trips and experiences.

In planning their HAF programme, local authorities are expected to make sure that eligible children can access a level of provision that meets their needs. They should bear in mind that the overall HAF offer to the child does not need to be from a single provider but can be delivered through a range of providers with a blend of offers available.

Other holiday periods

Funding for this programme is available for the Easter, summer, and Christmas holidays only.

The only exception is for those local authorities with a shorter summer holiday period (less than 6 full calendar weeks). These authorities have the flexibility to limit their summer provision to 3 weeks and provide an additional week (a minimum of 4 days) in one of the longer half-term holiday periods.

Standards for holiday provision

We have developed a framework of standards to provide a benchmark of what we expect from those delivering the holiday, activities, and food programme.

One of the key roles of the local authority will be to:

- improve the quality of provision across the local area

- ensure that providers are supported to meet the high-level framework of standards

Framework of standards

This section sets out the standards we expect for HAF funded providers. We expect local authorities to make best use of the variety of local and national organisations who are available to support them and their providers in the delivery of these aspects of the HAF programme.

It is the local authority's role to ensure standards are met across the programme and to support local providers who do not meet them to ensure they are adequately supported through training, support, and partnerships.

Not all providers have to deliver all aspects of the programme, but our clear expectation is that where possible, all participating children should benefit from all aspects of the programme. This might mean that local authorities adopt a blended approach to ensuring children can access different aspects of the programme through different providers.

Provision for all

We strongly encourage local authorities to ensure the clubs and providers they fund are open to all children, not just to those who received a place funded by the HAF programme.

Food provision

All providers must provide at least 1 meal a day (breakfast, lunch or an evening meal and all food provided at HAF clubs (including snacks) must meet [school food standards](http://www.schoolfoodplan.com/actions/school-food-standards/) (<http://www.schoolfoodplan.com/actions/school-food-standards/>).

For some children, the opportunity to enjoy a hot meal at a HAF club is important and our aspiration is that providers should, where possible, try to offer hot meals to children attending HAF clubs. However, we acknowledge that this is not always possible and that alternatives to hot meals can sometimes be more suitable.

To ensure that all children receive a high quality and stigma free experience, if a provider is open to both HAF-funded and non-HAF-funded places, it is vital that all of the children attending are provided with an identical food offer and that HAF funded children are treated equally.

If children on non-HAF-funded places are given the option to bring a packed lunch, then we expect the local authority and the provider to work together to ensure that children attending through HAF have the same choice. This could be fulfilled through the provider and the local authority making arrangements to provide packed lunches for HAF children. All packed lunches must meet the school food standards.

Alternatively, for providers who provide meals on-site, they could consider making the same healthy food available to all children, but with an additional charge for those non-HAF funded places.

All food provided as part of the HAF programme must:

- comply with regulations on food preparation
- take into account allergies and dietary requirements (see the [allergy guidance for schools \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-food-standards-resources-for-schools/allergy-guidance-for-schools\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-food-standards-resources-for-schools/allergy-guidance-for-schools))
- take into account any religious or cultural requirements for food

There is flexibility in the design of the food provision which should always be tailored to ensure that all food meets the dietary needs of the children and families who attend. The food served should also be appropriate for the nature of the session, for example, offering cold packed lunches for parks or outdoor venues or for day trips.

While there can be benefits to using a central food service to provide meals to HAF clubs, we expect local authorities to carefully consider whether using a central food service is the right approach for providing high quality, attractive and tailored meals for those attending the HAF programme.

Providing food on site can provide an opportunity to engage children and families in food preparation and nutrition. Providers have reported that when children are involved in designing menus and the preparation of food, they are more engaged and more willing to try new and healthier food.

We recommend that local authorities consider the provision of the food element of the HAF programme, in particular, in making sure that providers and children are involved in the planning and preparation of food. Such a developmental approach can be key to effecting long-term change in engagement with food and nutrition.

There are also environmental factors to consider when planning the food provision. Local authorities should consider whether clubs preparing food on their own premises would produce less food and packaging waste and result in fewer food-miles than off-site, centralised provision.

Food providers

Local authorities should ensure that the providers they work with are, where applicable, registered as a food business. This provides reassurance to all of those involved that food safety standards are being met.

A food business is defined as anyone preparing, cooking, storing, handling, distributing, supplying or selling food. Further information is available on [food business registration \(https://www.gov.uk/food-business-registration\)](https://www.gov.uk/food-business-registration).

Local authorities are responsible for enforcing food hygiene laws and can inspect any registered food business at any point in the food production and distribution

process. We recommend that HAF coordinators within each local authority are in regular contact with their food safety inspectors to ensure that HAF providers are fully compliant.

Food information regulations - Natasha's Law

From 1 October 2021, changes to the Food Information Regulations 2014 came into effect, adding new labelling requirements for food that is pre-packed for direct sale (PPDS).

Local authorities should read the [guidance on the Food Standards Agency website \(https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/prepacked-for-direct-sale-ppds-allergen-labelling-changes-for-schools-colleges-and-nurseries\)](https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/prepacked-for-direct-sale-ppds-allergen-labelling-changes-for-schools-colleges-and-nurseries) and ensure that all food provision for the HAF programme meets these requirements.

Enrichment activities

All HAF-funded provision must provide fun and enriching activities that allow children to:

- develop new skills or knowledge
- consolidate existing skills and knowledge
- try out new experiences
- have fun and socialise

This could include but is not limited to:

- physical activities, for example, football, swimming, table tennis or cricket
- creative activities, for example, putting on a play, junk modelling or drumming workshops
- experiences, for example, a nature walk or visiting a city farm
- free play, for example, fun and freedom to relax and enjoy themselves

We expect all HAF providers to provide a balanced programme. For providers whose primary focus is set around a specific activity or sport, we expect them to ensure that children attending their provision benefit from a holistic and varied experience.

Physical activities

Holiday clubs must provide activities that meet the [physical activity guidelines \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-uk-chief-medical-officers-report\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-uk-chief-medical-officers-report) on a daily basis.

In line with those guidelines, we expect:

- all children and young people participating in the HAF programme should engage in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity for an average of at least 60

minutes per day

- children and young people participating in the HAF programme should engage in a variety of types and intensities of physical activity to develop movement skills, muscular fitness, and bone strength
- children and young people should aim to minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary, and when physically possible should break up long periods of not moving with at least light physical activity

Meeting the physical activity requirement does not have to be in the form of a structured activity session, but might include active travel, free play and sports.

Increasing awareness of healthy eating, healthy lifestyles, and positive behaviours

We expect providers to incorporate helping children to understand more about the benefits of healthy eating and nutrition into their programme. These do not need to be formal learning activities. This could include:

- getting children involved in food preparation and cooking
- growing fruit and vegetables
- taste tests
- discussing food and healthy eating during mealtimes
- including food and nutrition in other activities

Offering positive learning and development through HAF activities creates stigma-free opportunities to support children and young people in learning about healthy lifestyles and exercise. This could cover, for example, the use of vapes, cigarettes, drugs, and how this can lead to issues including:

- economic
- social
- personal safety
- exploitation
- criminality

Signposting and referrals and supporting families

HAF providers should be able to offer information, signposting or referrals to other services and support, that would benefit the children who attend their provision and their families. Other services and support could include:

- Citizens Advice
- school nurses, dentists, or other healthcare practitioners
- family support services or children's services
- housing support officers

- Jobcentre Plus
- organisations providing financial education
- early years and childcare, including help to pay for childcare (for example, [Tax-Free Childcare \(https://www.gov.uk/tax-free-childcare\)](https://www.gov.uk/tax-free-childcare))

There are many ways that providers can meet this element of the programme, for example, through trained and knowledgeable staff engaging with families during drop-off and pick-up times.

We know that many HAF providers have worked to provide weekly training and advice sessions for parents, carers or other family members. We encourage providers who want to do so to continue to offer those sessions.

These sessions could provide advice on how to source, prepare and cook nutritious and low-cost food. This could be combined with the increasing awareness and understanding of healthy eating aspect of the programme, for example, by inviting children and their families to prepare and eat a meal together at a HAF session.

There are alternative ways of delivering this, for example, by providing participating children with ingredients and recipes to take away and try at home with their families.

Example

In Lambeth and Southwark, they worked with the Kitchen Social programme to incorporate the 'take and make' into their Summer of Food and Fun HAF programme. Participating children received a box of ingredients and recipe cards to take home so that families could cook and eat healthy meals together at home.

The boxes, which were designed with nutritionists:

- met school food standards
- were low cost
- took under 30 minutes to make
- were 'low cook', which aimed to ease financial constraints and build families confidence in cooking

The boxes also included healthy eating and physical activity challenges and information to support children learning and being active at home.

Policies and procedures

There are a wide variety of organisations and individuals involved in the delivery of the holiday, activities and food programme including:

- schools
- colleges
- nurseries
- private providers
- charities
- youth clubs
- community groups

All organisations delivering the HAF programme must be able to demonstrate that they have in place relevant and appropriate policies and procedures for:

- safeguarding, including the recruitment of staff and volunteers
- health and safety
- relevant insurance policies
- accessibility and inclusiveness

Ensuring providers meet the programme standards

Local authorities should have in place a system to monitor the HAF providers they fund so that they can be assured that they meet the expected standards for the programme and are providing a high quality and fun experience for children. Having an assurance process in place will provide reassurance to all involved.

Local authorities will also need to ensure that robust due diligence checks are carried out on each provider they fund through the HAF programme.

It is expected that local authorities will carry out visits to the providers they fund in order to be satisfied that the provision is suitable, and that the provider has everything in place to deliver a high-quality programme. We recognise that each local authority will develop an individual approach and a proportionate system to monitor their HAF providers.

It may not be necessary or proportionate to visit every provider during every holiday period and there are many ways that local authorities can keep in regular contact with providers. As a minimum, it is expected that an assurance visit would normally be made to new providers or to providers that have not been visited for more than 12 months.

We expect all providers who are funded through the programme to meet our framework of standards. We expect that assurance visits focus on ensuring that providers can meet the HAF programme standards.

Food provision

Check:

- what plans the provider has in place to provide high quality and nutritious food
- how will they ensure that the food served will meet the school food standards

- if they have talked to children and families about the food they will serve
- if they have a robust system in place to ensure the food they serve takes into account dietary, religious or cultural requirements
- if they have a robust system in place to manage allergies
- if they are open to both HAF-funded and non-HAF-funded children, and how they ensure that all children get the same experience

Awareness and understanding of healthy eating

Check:

- if the provider will run specific sessions on healthy eating
- what activities or sessions the provider has planned that support children in making good decisions about food
- how they plan to incorporate the theme of healthy eating and healthy lifestyles into their HAF provision

Signposting and referrals

Check:

- how the provider engages with the families of the children who attend their provision
- what the provider has in place to guide and advise children and their families to ensure they are aware of and, where appropriate, referred to other services and agencies

Enriching activities

Check:

- what enrichment activities will be on offer
- why the provider has chosen them
- if the activities on offer are age appropriate

Accessibility and inclusiveness

Check:

- if the provider has a bespoke offer for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) that is clearly highlighted
- how the provider will ensure that the needs of children with SEND are identified
- how the provider will ensure that all staff are appropriately trained to deliver high quality, accessible and inclusive provision

Safeguarding

Check:

- if all staff have received safeguarding training
- if all staff been checked and vetted by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), where appropriate
- what policies the provider has in place to ensure safeguarding incidents are dealt with robustly and rapidly

Health and safety policies and procedures

Check what health and safety procedures and policies the provider has in place.

Insurance policies and procedures

Check if the provider has up to date and appropriate insurance policies in place.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. We want every HAF club to be a safe and happy place for children, and for parents, carers and families to feel confident that their child is well looked after and that robust safeguarding arrangements are in place.

Local authorities are statutorily responsible for safeguarding in relation to children in need, under statute 17 of the Children Act 1989, and looked after children under statute 20 of the Children Act 1989.

We encourage all local authorities to work closely with their local safeguarding children partnership to:

- make them aware of the HAF programme and what it can offer
- ensure that they can support the programme to put safeguarding arrangements in place

As set out in [working together to safeguard children](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>), safeguarding is defined for the purposes of this guidance as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action if you identify children to be at risk of harm

Local authorities should ensure that their local safeguarding partners understand the holiday, activities and food programme and those working on the delivery of the programme are familiar with the [working together to safeguard children](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>) guidance.

There are a number of accredited organisations who can provide safeguarding and child protection training courses for those involved in working with children. We expect local authorities to be able to demonstrate that those involved in the delivery of the holiday, activities and food programme in their area are competent and have received adequate training and support.

We expect every local authority to produce and maintain a central register of all the providers they fund through their HAF programme and to put in place a system for inspecting each provider and ensuring all adhere to the standards set out in this guidance.

Holiday clubs in school settings

We know that schools are safe places and have safeguarding arrangements in place.

Where activities are provided by the governing body or proprietor of a school, under the direct supervision or management of their school staff the school's child protection policy will apply.

Where the activities are provided separately in the school but by another body, the governing body or proprietor should seek assurance that the body concerned has appropriate safeguarding and child protection policies and procedure in place.

We recommend that anyone involved in the delivery of a holiday club in school settings is familiar with part 1 of [keeping children safe in education](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>).

Holiday clubs in out of school settings

By out-of-school settings we mean organisations or individuals that provide tuition, training, instruction or activities to children in England without their parents' or carers' supervision, but are not:

- schools
- colleges
- education settings providing alternative provision
- 16 to 19 academies
- providers caring for children that are registered with Ofsted or a childminder agency

These settings generally provide tuition, training, instruction or activities outside normal school hours (for example, evenings, weekends, school holidays), although some settings are run part-time during school hours to help meet the needs of those in home education.

The guidance for providers running out-of-school settings on [keeping children safe during community activities, after-school clubs and tuition](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-during-community-activities-after-school-clubs-and-tuition) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-out-of-school-settings>).

[code-of-practice/keeping-children-safe-during-community-activities-after-school-clubs-and-tuition-non-statutory-guidance-for-providers-running-out-of-school-settings](#)) covers advice on what policies and procedures providers should have in place for health and safety, safeguarding and child protection, staff suitability, and governance.

Volunteers and DBS checking

We know that in some settings, volunteers can play an important role in the delivery of holiday clubs.

Under no circumstances should a volunteer in respect of whom no checks have been obtained be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

For some of the voluntary staff involved in the delivery of the holiday, activities and food programme in holiday clubs, this work will be done regularly and considered to be regulated activity. This means they will be subject to an enhanced DBS check with barred list information.

There may be a very small number of volunteers who do not regularly carry out this role, and so it may not be considered as regulated activity. This means they may not be required to have an enhanced DBS check.

The guidance on [regulated activity in relation to children](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>) contains definitions of what we mean by regular and regulated activity.

Example

A guest speaker or presenter visits a holiday, activities and food programme club to deliver a talk on nature.

The guest is escorted by staff at the club (who are DBS checked) while on the premises and is not left unsupervised with children at any time. In these circumstances, we would not expect a DBS check to be carried out.

To provide reassurance to parents, families and carers, we strongly recommend that all volunteers who are involved in the delivery of the holiday, activities and food programme in holiday clubs should have an [enhanced DBS check](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/dbs-check-applicant-criminal-record>) (which, where applicable, should include children's barred list information).

We do not recommend holiday clubs using volunteers that are not DBS checked, but if this occurs, it is the responsibility of the local authority to ensure that volunteers are not at any point left alone and unsupervised with children in holiday clubs.

Other workers

All staff who are employed by holiday club providers funded through the holiday, activities and food programme should be subject to an enhanced DBS check with barred list information.

Part 3 of [keeping children safe in education](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>) sets out a clear process for safe recruitment. We recommend local authorities and holiday clubs providers follow this best practice when recruiting volunteers.

Ofsted registration

Holiday clubs may need to legally register with Ofsted depending on the provision they offer, they may also be eligible to register with Ofsted on the voluntary register or they may be [exempt from registration](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/childminders-and-childcare-providers-register-with-ofsted/registration-exemptions) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/childminders-and-childcare-providers-register-with-ofsted/registration-exemptions>) entirely. Both clubs and providers that would require registration with Ofsted, and those that are exempt, can participate in the HAF programme.

To support the raising of quality and to better meet the safeguarding needs of children and young people, certain providers can choose to [register with Ofsted](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/childminders-and-childcare-providers-register-with-ofsted/the-ofsted-registers) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/childminders-and-childcare-providers-register-with-ofsted/the-ofsted-registers>) even if they do not have to.

One of the direct benefits to children and families of providers being Ofsted registered is that families may be eligible for tax free childcare or the childcare costs element of Universal Credit. Through this families may be able to [claim back up to 85% of their childcare costs](https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/universal-credit) (<https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/universal-credit>) if they are attending and paying for extra childcare at Ofsted registered settings.

It is the responsibility of individual HAF providers to understand whether they are required by law to be Ofsted registered and to continue to review their status as and when the provision they are offering changes.

We expect local authorities to check with all their HAF providers that they are appropriately registered, particularly those providers who may have amended their childcare offer during the holidays because of the HAF programme.

Tailoring your provision

Local authorities and their providers will have flexibility about how they deliver provision to best serve the needs of children and families in their area. We encourage all local authorities to have a rich mix of provision catering for children with different interests and of different ages.

There should also be good geographical spread across the local authority but with increased supply in areas with higher levels of FSM families in order to maximise

attendance levels.

Working with children with SEND or additional needs

There is flexibility in how the programme can be delivered to children with SEND or additional needs who are in receipt of FSM. Some of the key points for local authorities to consider when designing and implementing provision for children with SEND or additional needs include:

- identifying the most vulnerable children, young people and families
- making decisions and, where appropriate, delegating responsibility for decision making to different levels of the system to enable responsive support
- speaking to families regularly to understand how their needs may have changed and may have continued to change
- being flexible in supporting families
- ensuring staff are trained, supported and provided with appropriate equipment in order to provide flexible and responsive care in line with government guidance
- maintaining a positive level of trust in staff from a parent perspective
- ensuring staff receive the right level of training from a provider perspective

Risk assessments are an important part of this provision and should be used as an enabler to provide support rather than a barrier.

A good risk assessment which supports effective risk management and creative thinking will lead to different approaches to face-to-face support rather than support being withdrawn particularly for children, young people and families who are particularly vulnerable or at high risk.

There are many local and national organisations including special schools with expertise in working with children with SEND or additional needs and we recommend that local authorities engage with them.

Working with the secondary school age range

We know from previous years that providing a HAF programme that is appealing and has high engagement levels with the secondary school age range can be challenging. Provision for this age range will often look different to that aimed at the primary age range and local authorities should make specific plans for this.

There should be flexibility in the programme you offer to older children with careful consideration being given to a different model of food and activity provision.

This could include considering the location of provision, such as, pop up parks or urban areas. Some areas have reported a reduction in anti-social behaviour around those areas with a focussed HAF provision. Others have reported increases to the levels of assurance among parents and families that their children and young people are safe and secure when attending a HAF programme.

You might also consider the role that older children can have in supporting, designing and leading sessions for their peers or for younger children – to help them to socialise and develop leadership skills which can be crucial for those in year 9 to 11.

Based on previous years of the HAF programme, we know that there are several factors that local authorities should think about when designing a programme for the secondary age range, such as:

- running focus groups with older children in your area to better understand their needs
- the costs of running focussed provision - the costs of provision for this age range can be higher than for the primary age range
- the food and activity offer
- a different operating model, for example, offering afternoon or evening sessions - some areas have reported success running twilight sessions with an evening meal being the focus and others have operated a 'street food' style offer
- the choice of venue is often critical in building an attractive offer for this age range - some areas have reported that school venues can be less popular but pop-up provision in parks and city centres can be highly effective
- travel costs - local authorities should try and ensure provision is local and accessible and may wish to work with local transport providers to offer free or discounted travel to offer greater freedom and mobility during the holidays

There are many local and national organisations with expertise in delivery to the secondary age range and we recommend that local authorities engage with them. Working through trusted and established organisations is one way of achieving effective reach and delivery

Environment and sustainability

DfE is committed to sustainable development practices and believes it is important for local authorities to consider these and their impact on the environment. We strongly encourage local authorities to make their own judgements on how sustainable development can be reflected in their ethos, day-to-day operations and throughout the delivery of their HAF programmes.

Some practices that local authorities may wish to consider are:

- minimising the use of single-use plastics
- where possible using locally sourced food and ingredients
- making use of food surplus organisations
- ensuring there is a wide range of recycling and compost facilities for waste
- growing fruit and vegetables and showing how they can be used and cooked.
- encouraging uniform banks and exchange schemes

This list is not exhaustive and local authorities are encouraged to reflect on their settings and consider ways that their programmes can be more environmentally friendly and sustainable.

Example

As part of the HAF programme in Leeds in 2021, Zero Waste Leeds ran a school uniform exchange scheme. The aim of this was to make it easy to share good quality, used school uniform and preventing it from going to landfill.

With clothing production having a sizeable carbon impact, Zero Waste Leeds found that they could reduce their environmental footprint by sharing uniform so that it is worn for longer and demand is reduced for new uniforms. Schemes such as this can also assist those families who might need help with the cost of new uniforms.

Local coordination by authorities

Some local authorities may coordinate the HAF programme themselves, and others may choose to work with another organisation to coordinate the provision on their behalf.

It is a requirement that every local authority will appoint or have in place a HAF coordinator who takes responsibility within the local authority for the delivery of the programme. This will be alongside having sufficient staff who are dedicated to working on HAF all year round.

The level of resource in each local authority will be determined locally but should be proportionate to the level of funding received.

Local authorities have responsibility for the coordination and implementation of the HAF programme in their area, which involves several important aspects.

Mapping provision, demand, and creating a local plan

We expect each local authority to have carried out mapping of the available holiday provision in your area to ensure that sufficient levels of holiday provision exist. This mapping should be considered alongside data showing the location of FSM eligible children.

The local authority can then ensure that their provision is targeted at the right areas and continues to support those of greatest need. Local authorities should ensure that when mapping provision, they distinguish between the different age ranges and types of provision that are available and ensure all needs are met across their area.

This mapping will allow you to develop a local plan for provision including any commissioning activity, based on what you know about local supply and demand.

Steering group

All local authorities will have established a steering group whose role it is to support the delivery of the programme and ensure that the right partners continue to be engaged with and supportive of your programme.

We know that the HAF programme works best when it is a cross-cutting and collaborative effort and we recommend that your steering group should include representatives from a wide range of local bodies, including:

- local public health officials
- school leaders
- youth services and young people
- social services and safeguarding leads
- charities and the voluntary sector
- local police and other uniform services

Complementing your programme with other support

Partnership working has far-reaching benefits for HAF providers, ensuring resources go further and best practice is shared. Building and sustaining effective partnerships with a range of local organisations can support areas in successful delivery.

In many areas, local authorities have been successful in drawing in wider support to enhance their local programme. For example, this could be through direct commissioning, or by bringing in funding or support in kind from other sources such as:

- philanthropists
- sponsors
- supermarkets
- sports organisations
- local businesses

We would encourage you to actively consider any partnership arrangements and opportunities and to share case studies of any strong examples of partnership working you have developed in order for us to further support local authorities in this area.

Putting in place provision for children with SEND or additional needs

It is vital that every local authority ensures that sufficient, high-quality provision is available across your area for children with SEND or additional needs who are in receipt of FSM.

This could be through making sure that your providers plan how they will accommodate children with SEND or additional needs or making sure that those with more complex needs are able to access suitable provision, for example, by working with special schools in your area.

Awarding funding to providers

We recognise and greatly value the important role that community and voluntary organisations will play in the HAF programme. We encourage all local authorities to work with a wide range of partners in the delivery of this programme.

Effective mapping, alongside building an understanding of the sorts of enriching activities that children of different ages want to engage in will support an effective commissioning strategy.

Ensuring providers meet the HAF programme standards and driving up the quality

A key element of the local authority's role is supporting all providers to meet our programme standards, which are set out in full in the [framework of standards](#).

Local authorities should also have a system in place to monitor the provision they are funding and ensuring that they support providers to comply with or improve the quality of their provision, for example, through arranging bespoke training or qualifications.

Promoting your programme

Our HAF communications toolkit will be updated and made available to local authorities to help them to:

- focus and target provision towards families who are eligible for free school meals
- prompt parents and carers to explore activities and provisions available for children in their area, and book a place for their child
- provide off-the-shelf communication materials (including for social media) that can be easily utilised to effectively promote the scheme, which credit and note DfE's central funding of the programme

Local authorities should ensure that when promoting and advertising their programme, great care is taken to ensure that the children and families who could benefit from the HAF programme do not feel stigmatised and that the language used is celebratory, aspirational and focuses on the positives.

Local authorities must make it clear in their communications that the HAF programme is funded by DfE and a logo is available and should be used for this purpose.

We will again use #HAF2023. We encourage all local authorities and their providers to use this across their social media channels.

Sharing best practice and cross boundary working

We encourage all local authorities to build local partnerships and networks to share learning and to participate in events and on platforms that share best practice on a local or national level.

We also encourage local authorities to work closely with neighbouring local authorities and to establish clear cross border working protocols. This will help to ensure that adequate provision and support is offered to children that live close to boundaries.

Support for local authorities

DfE's local authority support team worked with local authorities to deliver the HAF programme during the Easter holidays in 2021.

In April 2021, DfE started working with the organisations Mott MacDonald and Hemsall's, jointly known as Childcare Works, to provide support, advisory and performance monitoring services to assist local authorities with HAF provision.

Each local authority has been allocated a named Childcare Works HAF adviser who they can contact with queries and requests for support. As part of the package of support, group meetings, regular communications and training sessions will continue to be promoted and facilitated.

Childcare Works also have a helpdesk which is run by the coordination team and is open Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm for queries. Local authorities have been given the helpdesk contact details directly. The DfE team is still in place, working with Childcare Works, and will continue to send out regular communications and oversee the grant arrangements.

Alongside the responsibilities set out in the coordination section of this guidance, we expect each HAF coordinator to engage with the support offer provided by DfE. As a minimum, we expect HAF coordinators to:

- attend the majority of cluster meetings to support knowledge sharing across local authorities
- attend sessions with their appointed delivery adviser as requested
- collaborate with their appointed delivery adviser on developing and implementing action plans where required
- cooperate with DfE's management information collection requirements and any requests for involvement in research.

All other support, such as bitesize sessions, is optional but strongly encouraged to drive continuous improvement of this programme nationally and locally.

Funding

Local authorities will receive grant funding to deliver the holiday, activities and food programme in their area.

Our grant funding is calculated based on the numbers of children eligible for and in receipt of free school meals in each area.

We anticipate that the cost of provision within a local authority area may vary to take account of the variety of needs, for example provision which specialises in specialist activities, expert tuition or input supporting those with SEND may have a higher unit cost.

Administrative costs

2023 to 2024 will be the third year that local authorities have been running the HAF programme in their area. The initial costs associated with setting up and establishing the programme should now be minimal, but there are still administrative costs associated running the holiday activities and food programme. Local authorities will continue to be able to use up to 10% of their total allocation to cover such costs.

Purchasing equipment

Programme funding can also be used to purchase equipment for the programme, for example, to improve the catering or sports equipment at an individual club. Where this expenditure meets our capital expenditure criteria, the amount you spend on this should be limited to a maximum of 2% of your overall programme expenditure.

Capital expenditure is classed as:

- individual assets worth over £2,500
- grouped assets, that is assets of a similar nature that are purchased at the same time, which cost £2,500 or more overall
- bulked assets, for example, a bulk purchase of equipment where the value of the individual item is below the set value, which cost £2,500 or more overall

Any equipment that does not meet these criteria, will not be classed as capital expenditure or be subject to the 2% cap.

Awarding funding to providers and other delivery organisations

In awarding funding to other organisations, whether through the awarding of grants or through a larger scale tendering process, we encourage local authorities to adopt a flexible approach. This will help ensure their programme makes the most of the broad range of organisations available to them, in particular, those smaller community organisations who hold existing relationships with children and families.

Where local authorities work with community and voluntary organisations whether as a coordinator or as a delivery partner, we expect this to be done on a cost-recovery basis. This is so that these organisations are fully funded for the work they undertake.

There is no requirement for local authorities to limit funding to single holiday periods. We know that many local authorities have successfully adopted a model of recruiting and funding providers for multiple holiday periods.

Payments and reporting

Local authorities will be responsible for gathering management information from the providers and clubs they fund about the children and families they are supporting. Following each holiday period (Easter, summer, and Christmas) we will ask local authorities to report on their activity.

The requirements for local authorities are set out in the [grant determination letter \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/holiday-activities-and-food-programme\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/holiday-activities-and-food-programme) which we will use to monitor performance at a high level.

Local authorities can set other performance indicators to measure their own performance or that of partners.

Payment schedule for 2023 to 2024

April 2023

Payments of up to 80% of the total 2023 to 2024 allocation will be made in April 2023 following satisfactory receipt by 1 March 2023 of a report.

February 2024

Payments of up to the remaining 20% of the 2023 to 2024 allocation will be made in April 2024 following satisfactory receipt by 15 February 2023 of a report.

Reporting schedule for 2023 to 2024

March 2023

By 29 January 2023, we will provide you with a template for the completion of a report, that must be returned by 1st March 2023, setting out:

- how your 2023 to 2024 programme will work including a comprehensive plan for each holiday period in scope
- details of how many children you expect to work with

February 2024

By 15 December 2023, we will provide you with a template for the completion of a report, that must be returned by 15 February 2024. The report will set out the actual number of children you worked with during delivery of the programme at Easter, summer and Christmas in 2022.

This should include:

- the overall number of unique children who participated in the programme
- the overall number of unique children in receipt of FSM who participated in your programme
- the number and proportion of children who are in the primary school age range, the secondary school age range, and any children outside of those age ranges who attended the programme
- the number of children with SEND or additional needs who have participated in your programme

Reporting after each holiday delivery period

As with previous years, we will ask each local authority to provide us with information about the HAF programme after each delivery period.

We will ask a number of core questions in every report. Local authorities should ensure that the providers and clubs they work with are able to accurately collect this information.

Data collection

After each holiday period, including the optional additional half term period for those local authorities with a summer holiday of 6 weeks or less, we will require a data return from each local authority that will set out what the cost of the programme has been for the financial year to date.

It will also need to include how many children participated in your programme during the last holiday period including, but not restricted to:

- the overall number of unique children who participated in the programme
- the overall number of unique children in receipt of FSM who participated in your programme
- the number and proportion of children who are in the primary school age range, the secondary school age range, and any children outside of those age ranges who attended the programme

Where necessary and in addition to the 1 March 2023 report, DfE may also ask local authorities to provide additional information on their plans for specific holiday periods.

All of the data and information collected by the holiday clubs and providers should all be collected in strict adherence to the [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation>).

Additional data collection

Our intention for HAF 2023 to 2024 is to ask a small number of local authorities to collect additional data on the children that attend their HAF programme. This will allow DfE to cross match the data with our National Pupil Database, which contains a variety of information on pupil characteristics, education and family set-up.

This will help us to understand more about those who the HAF programme is reaching and also allow us to monitor any long-term impacts on children who attend the programme. Having more information in these areas will help us to ensure that the HAF programme is set-up in a way that is most beneficial to eligible families, as well as strengthening the evidence base for HAF more broadly.

If we select your local authority to participate in this additional data collection, we will notify you by 31 January 2023 (or earlier where possible) and will provide you and your providers with additional support (including data collection teach-ins), templates and guidance.

In annex C of the grant determination letter, we have set out DfE's standard GDPR clauses and how personal data will be collected, processed and stored by local authorities. This annex applies only to local authorities who will participate in this additional data collection. The annex also contains a list of variables for data collection.

Annual report

In addition to the reporting requirements, we require each local authority to produce an annual report on their HAF programme which should include:

- the overall funding you have spent on the HAF programme
- the proportion of the funding that was spent on administration and a breakdown of how this was spent
- how many unique children you have reached in each holiday period
- the proportion of primary age and secondary age children who have participated in your programme
- the number of children with SEND or additional needs who have participated in your programme
- information on the families and carers they have engaged with through the food education, signposting and referrals aspect of their programme

- which organisations are represented on their steering group
- which organisations you have worked with in delivering the programme

You may also include:

- feedback from participants, their families or carers
- results of any surveys
- case studies or particular highlights
- how you have promoted the programme and celebrated it through the media and social media

The report for the 2023 to 2024 HAF programme should be submitted to DfE by 30 June 2024. As with last year, we will allow local authorities flexibility in how they format and present their annual report, but we will make a template available to local authorities in early 2024.

The 2023 to 2024 HAF programme report must be placed on the local authority's HAF website.

Local authority HAF website

We know that the majority of local authorities now have a dedicated HAF website or a section on their local authority website dedicated to the HAF programme. We know that these are a valuable source of information for parents, families, schools and providers who are interesting in the programme.

From April 2023, all local authorities must have a HAF website or dedicated pages on their website for their HAF programme.

It should include:

- your [annual report](#) for the HAF programme
- up-to-date information on what HAF provision is available in your area for every holiday period, including links to booking systems or portals
- information about the standards that providers are expected to adhere to in delivering the programme
- information for parents and families on what other help is available to support them, for example, information about tax-free childcare
- information for schools about programme and details about how they can get involved and support the programme

Certificate of expenditure

We will also require a certificate of expenditure (or statement of grant usage) which should be completed after the end of the 2022 to 2023 financial year and be submitted to DfE by 1 May 2023. We will provide you with a template and guidance for this document at the end of the reporting period.

This certificate of expenditure will report on the activities funded by DfE and confirm that the grant outputs that have been delivered as part of the HAF programme:

- have been delivered to a satisfactory standard
- the expected benefits have accrued or will accrue

These reports will support the regularity assurance statement for the National Audit Office and your statement will need to be signed off by your chief financial officer or chief internal auditor.

Once the statements have been returned to DfE, we will carry out a sample check of up to 10% of the statements. The local authorities selected will be required to submit additional evidence to demonstrate that the information declared in the statement of expenditure is accurate.

Those local authorities selected for this sample check will be notified by Friday 6th May and will be provided with further instructions on the process.

As part of the statement of expenditure assessment process, those local authorities who have an underspend on the 2022 programme will be contacted about the process of recovering any unspent funding.

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