



Essex
ACTIV  **ate**

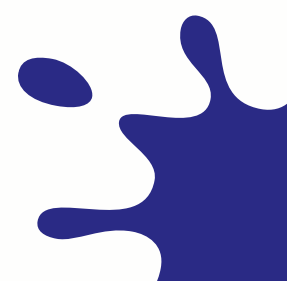
HOLIDAY ACTIVITY AND FOOD PROGRAMME
ESSEX HAF 2023 REPORT

Funded by

Department
for Education

 Active Essex


Essex County Council





Essex ActivAte is the name for the Holiday Activity and Food programme run by Active Essex. The programme is delivered across twelve districts in Essex covering Basildon, Brentwood, Rochford, Castle Point, Colchester, Tendring, Epping, Harlow, Uttlesford, Chelmsford, Braintree and Maldon.

There are **40,618** of children and young people on income related free school meals across Essex (data for 2023), with the highest percentage of children living in Essex County Council 'Levelling Up' areas such as Basildon, Harlow and Tendring.



Essex ActivAte work with nearly **100** locally trusted organisations across the county to deliver funded holiday clubs and memorable experiences for young people, helping to support their physical and mental wellbeing, enhance their skills, encourage friendships and try new activities. Clubs also provide a nutritious school standard meal, helping to reduce holiday hunger.

At the start of 2023, the 'WONDE' central booking system was introduced to partners and the team to check the eligibility of the children using the schools MIS system. This was successful, with **539** which is 95% of Essex schools adopting the offer to release HolidayActivities voucher codes to eligible families by email or text, which will allow them to book onto funded local activities.

[Read the Essex ActivAte 2023 impact report here.](#)



ESSEX ACTIVATE EASTER HAF 2023



We delivered...

202



activity clubs over an average of 8 days delivering a range of physical activity, enrichment sessions and food education to eligible children and young people in Essex



spaces on offer

118

primary clubs

35

secondary clubs

5

primary and secondary clubs

31

specialist SEND hubs

13

specialist mental wellbeing hubs

Total unique primary 5,220

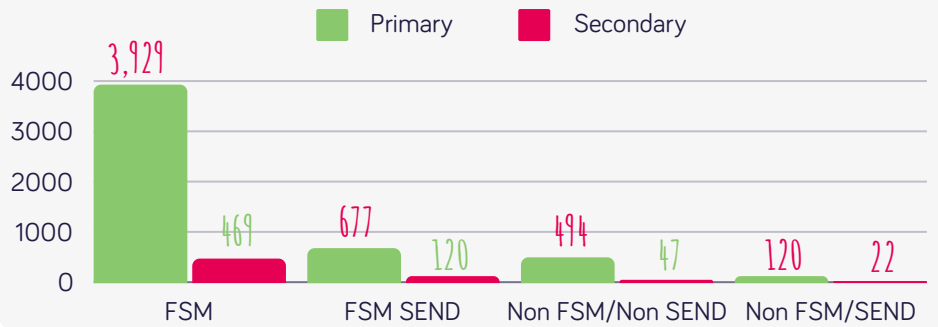


Total unique secondary 658

Total primary attendances 24,042

Total secondary attendances 2,520

Unique children attended:



As a result...



spaces filled across Easter

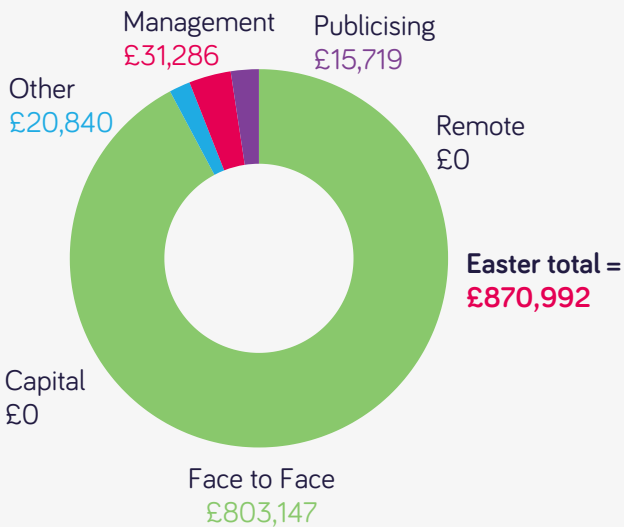


eligible for benefit based free school meals



individual children and young people engaged in an Easter HAF club

Funding allocation and how it was used across Easter



Easter saw an increase of enrichment activities during club delivery including working with the Essex Public Health Team on their Core +20 campaign and embedding the theme of Oral Health into clubs supported by Community Dental Services.



8,000

oral health packs containing a teeth cleaning kit and chart were given to support families during the cost of living crisis and educate young people about the importance of oral hygiene.

One club in each of the 12 Essex districts were funded through the London Marathon Foundation Trust to deliver a skate event within the local community, inviting all Essex ActivAte children and their families to try new sports, learn new skills and enjoy free refreshments and hot food.



[WATCH NOW](#)

CHALLENGES AND LEARNINGS

For Easter, Essex ActivAte trialed a new central booking system with WONDE. The team along with WONDE successfully onboarded all providers and supported them through the setting up of the system.

- ✓ Increase engagement - Club providers started to increase their reach and engage new young people at their club
- ✗ Time consuming - New process to learn with training, drop in sessions and QA's with the ActivAte team
- ✗ ActivAte team reporting - Partners hadn't marked their registers and some number discrepancies
- 💡 Reporting unique attendees - More accurate reporting due to new booking system providing data instead of partners

Previously, the team reported unique children from each club, therefore a child could attend 3/4 clubs and count as a unique child at each. With the new system, those unique children were given an ID and only counted once, therefore this number will be lower than previously reported.

“The holiday clubs are a godsend! With the cost of living crisis getting worse daily, it means we still get the opportunity to get out into the community. Routine is very important to my child and therefore he can't wait to go to the holiday club - we would definitely be lost without it!

Parent from Braintree

ESSEX ACTIVATE SUMMER HAF 2023



We delivered...

192

activity clubs run by 91 club providers over an average of 20 days, delivering a range of physical activity, enrichment sessions and food education to eligible children and young people in Essex

111

primary clubs

39

secondary clubs

5

primary and secondary clubs

31

specialist SEND hubs

11

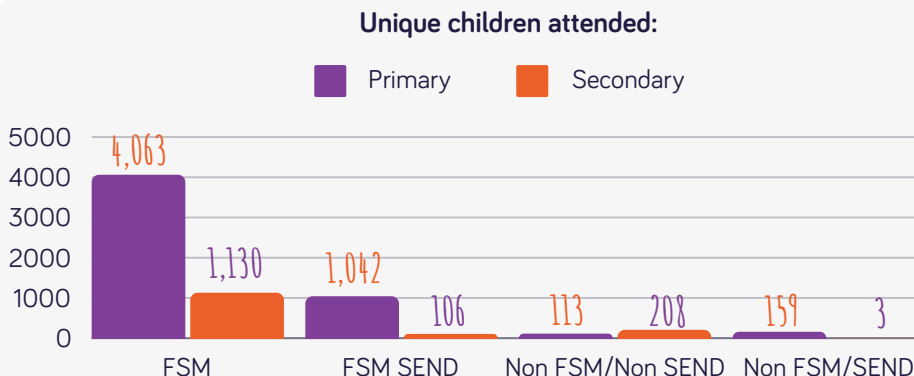
specialist mental wellbeing hubs

As a result...



6,824

individual children and young people engaged in a Summer HAF club



Total unique secondary

1,447

Total unique primary 5,377



Total secondary attendances 6,596

Total primary attendances 54,596

8,000+

extra secondary spaces were offered, showing the growth of the programme since summer 2022



95%

of Essex schools positively engaged with the programme to release HolidayActivities codes to eligible families

HIGHLIGHTS

The summer programme extended its support offer to local families and children, helping them to learn new skills and enhance their knowledge outside of HAF clubs.



72

parents gained maths skills, budgeting and homework support through Essex County Council's Multiply sessions provided by six organisations at summer HAF clubs

[READ MORE >>](#)



65

young refugees were allocated codes from the 15% discretionary places and supported through a summer HAF club

[READ MORE >>](#)

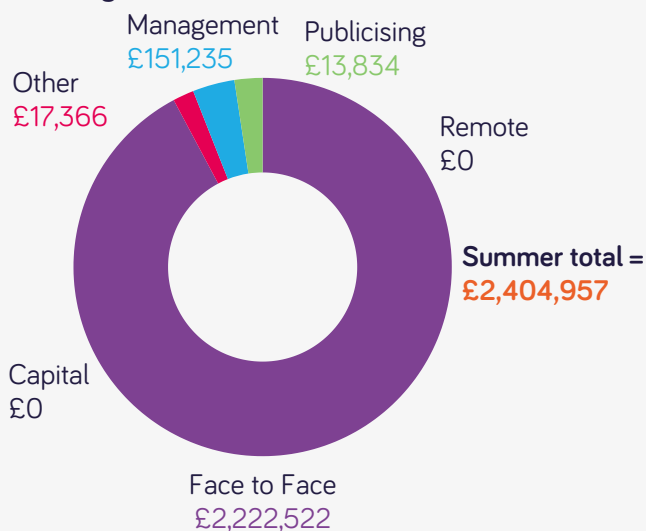
CHALLENGES AND LEARNINGS

Although ActivAte funded more spaces than filled in summer, the team worked closely with delivery partners to track and monitor spaces. As a result, any underspend was carried over from spaces that were not filled, to the winter HAF programme, ensuring the summer programme was the best value for funding allocation and wasted funding was limited.



For the winter programme, the team were able to limit spaces initially, but as club spaces quickly filled, more spaces were allocated, leaving less spaces wasted.

Funding allocation and how it was used across summer



“

The clubs are invaluable, and for my foster child, essential! He doesn't get to socialise in the holidays and these clubs give him the chance to play with children his age - we would be lost without them!

Parent from Tendring

ESSEX ACTIVATE WINTER HAF 2023



We delivered...

204

activity clubs over an average of 4 days, delivering a range of physical activity, enrichment sessions and food education to eligible children and young people in Essex

119

primary clubs

39

secondary clubs

4

primary and secondary clubs

30

specialist SEND hubs

12

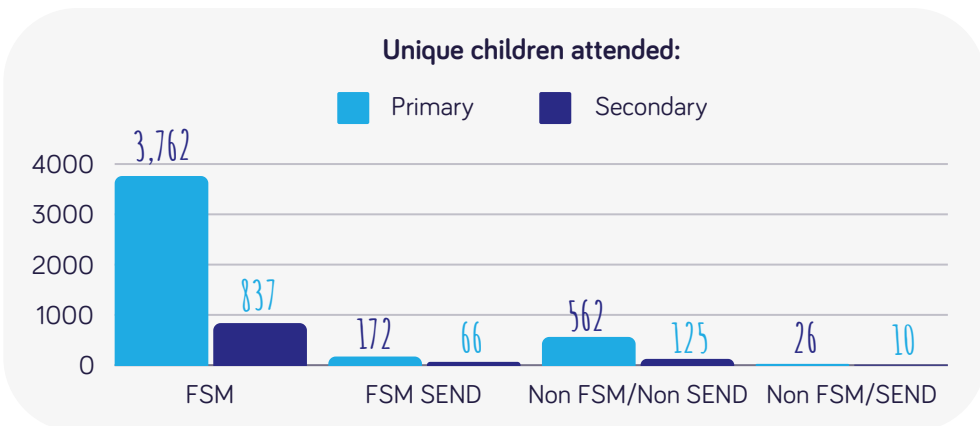
specialist mental wellbeing hubs

As a result...



5,560

individual children and young people engaged in a Winter HAF club



Total unique primary
4,522

Total unique secondary
1,038

Total primary attendances
7,568

Total secondary attendances
1,683

98%

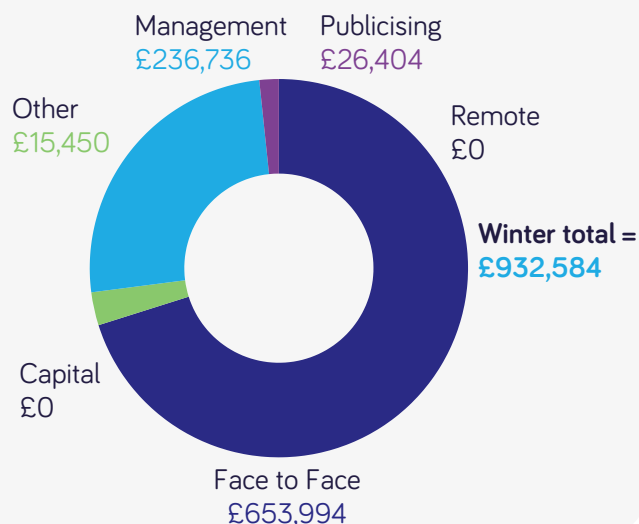
of Essex schools positively engaged with the programme to release HolidayActivities codes to eligible families

54%

of eligible families redeemed their HolidayActivities voucher code and booked onto a local Winter HAF club

The marketing plan was reviewed ahead of the programme due to the winter holidays being close to Christmas, which could affect bookings. The ActivAtE team focused on attending festive community events in schools and to speak directly with families about the winter HAF programme and how they can book on. School engagement increased due to families needing support more in the winter as a result of the cost of living crisis.

Funding allocation and how it was used across winter



HIGHLIGHTS



300+

food hampers including different essentials, gifts and treats to help struggling families around the cost of living crisis



9

unique family experiences including a winter wonderland experience, helped to bring local communities together and ensure local families have valued and memorable experiences with their children

CHALLENGES AND LEARNINGS

The winter HAF programme proved to be a challenging time for engagement as the programme kicked off just two days before Christmas. Schools across Essex broke up for Christmas at different times, therefore attendance significantly varied across the delivery period.

Some of our clubs provided hampers to families of children who had attended two days of face to face clubs. The hampers were very popular and partners managed to pack them with quality foods, essentials and family activities. The days in between Christmas and New Year took a dip in numbers, but then picked up again in January just before the children went back to school, showing a need for support after Christmas.

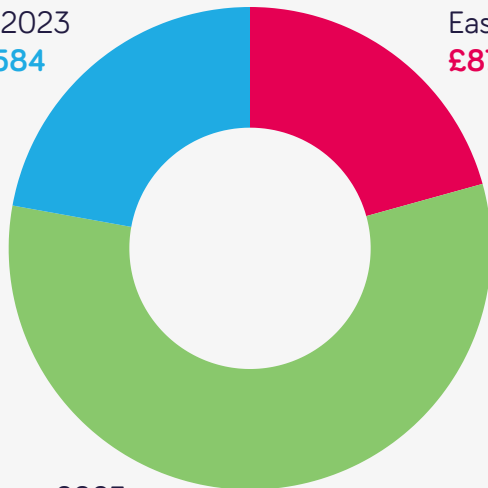
“We would not survive without this club! We are a low-income family, but are grateful that Multi Sports understands we need the support, because without this, we would not survive, especially with food costs and keeping my part time job. It really helps our mental health too.”
Parent from Chelmsford

FINANCIAL REVIEW



Winter 2023
£932,584

Easter 2023
£870,992



Summer 2023
£2,404,957



TOTAL FUNDING RECEIVED:
£4,208,533



Holiday Club Face to Face Provision
£3,679,663

Working with 92 locally trusted organisations to deliver an average of 200 clubs across Essex during each holiday period. The face to face provision included SEND, mental wellbeing and sport and youth crime specialist hubs in each of the 12 districts. The range of activities were diverse including sporting and enrichments activities such as theatre music dance and acting, outdoor activities with bush craft, den building and fire pit cooking, animal encounters with farms and pony therapy, crafts, slime and graffiti, also sports, playground games, themed days and much more.



Marketing and Communications
£55,957

- 30,000 childrens activity booklets and family support packs
- Promotional banners for each delivery partner to display at local club venues
- Essex ActivAte brand development including website, social media, posters/flyers
- Sun boards, sun lotion and oral health packs offered at HAF clubs to educate young people and support families during the cost of living crisis
- Radio and DAX ads, bus ads, filming and photography, locality reports and infographics, networking events and awards ceremonies. Read the case study [here](#).



Management and Administration
£419,257

Essex ActivAte is managed by a team of 8 full-time staff members, including an Essex ActivAte lead, locality leads, marketing lead and business support.

- The Essex ActivAte lead works with the team in pulling together a consistent programme delivery across the 12 districts of Essex, working on the Department for Education reporting and evaluation, partnership development and liaising with local authority system leads.
- Essex ActivAte locality leads work closely with HAF delivery partners across the five locations in Essex, building relationships and supporting organisational development to ensure sustainability in a place based approach.
- The marketing lead promotes Essex ActivAte across all digital and print platforms, as well as signposting key messages to support local families.
- Business support - Administration and Essex ActivAte partner support. Working with Procurement and Essex County Council Finance Team, ensuring the quality checks and compliance of all partners receiving DoffE funding to deliver the programme.



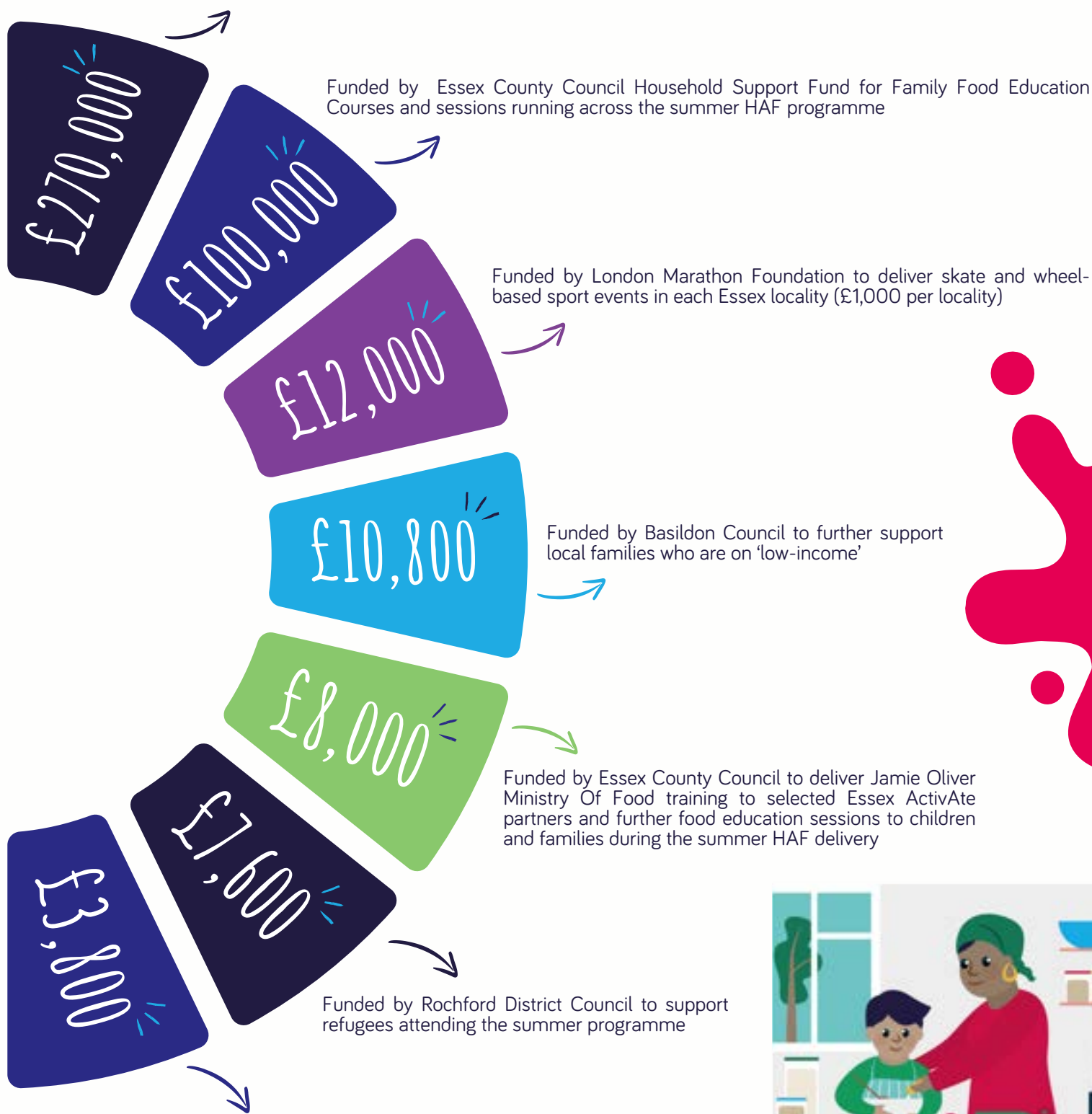
Additional Costs
£53,656

Covering the cost of the the WONDE/HolidayActivities central booking system, which sends a unique booking code to all eligible families of children on income related free school meals, using the schools MIS system. All delivery partners were successfully onboarded to the system and received ongoing support with drop in sessions running up to and during the school holiday delivery period.

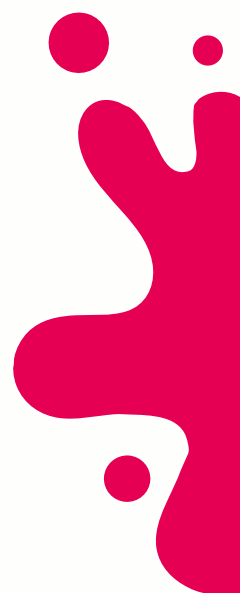
ADDITIONAL FUNDING LEVERAGED

Across 2023, the following money was leveraged to support the delivery of Essex ActivAte programmes:

Funded by Essex County Council 'Levelling Up' fund to support families on income related free school meals and low income families during the smaller three half term holidays that are not covered by DofE funding.



Funded by Essex County Council to deliver Multiply maths to 72 parents of children attending Essex ActivAte clubs to improve their maths skills and gain knowledge in supporting their child's maths homework



SUMMARY OF 2023



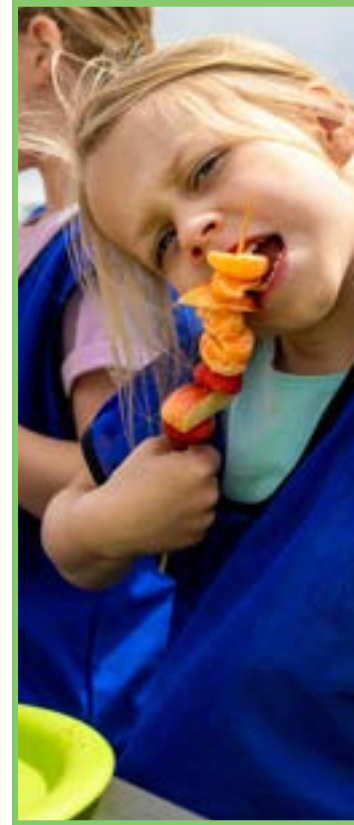
With a move to the WONDE central booking system ahead of the 2023 HAF programme, the delivery of Essex ActivAte clubs across the year came with challenges, although positive steps forwards. Having a booking system that released unique codes directly to eligible parents meant that Essex ActivAte could confidently check the eligibility of all children that were booking onto local HAF clubs, and spaces were being filled by young people who needed support the most.

Although a positive step in using the funding as directed, it meant that there was decrease in reported individual children attending across the year. This highlighted the need of putting on a programme for those families who fall just outside of the income related free school meals threshold as 15% discretionary spaces were in huge demand each HAF holiday.

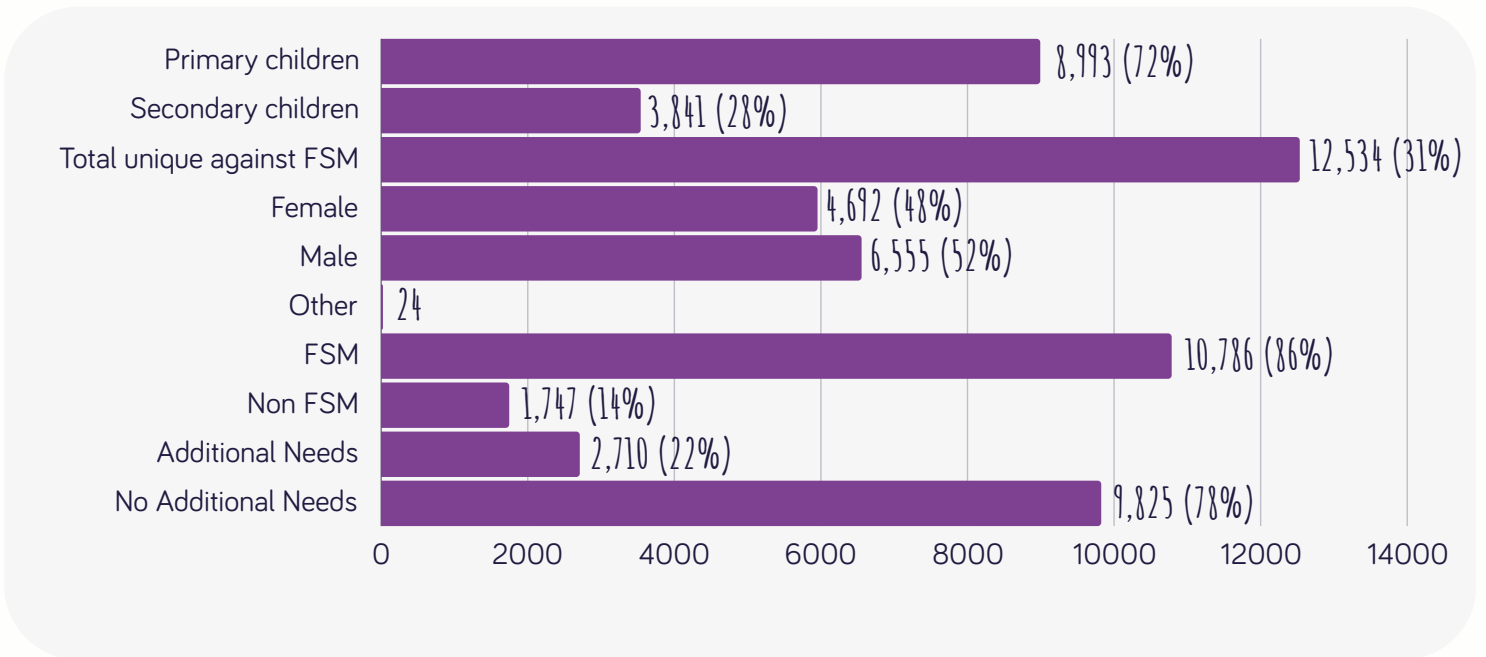
The reported data highlighted that Essex were below the expected reach for individual children on free school meals at around 13% per holiday. However, having the booking system meant that Essex ActivAte could sort the individual children reached over the whole year delivery, with a total reach of 31%, which exceeded the expected target for the funding allocated.



Looking to plan ahead, Essex ActivAte created a robust, marketing and communications engagement plan to target and reach as many eligible families and children as possible, increasing brand awareness of the programme and highlighting the parent journey of how to claim and book using a HolidayActivities voucher code. HAF locality leads also dived into their local communities to relay this message, also through school communications and by attending school events, community family days and sharing information with the community hubs and child and family services.



EASTER, SUMMER AND WINTER TOTAL DATA



total days booked



total days attended (80%)



sum of unique children over three holidays



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR



MINISTRY OF FOOD
♥ JAMIE OLIVER

children and young people engaged in cooking sessions with Jamie Oliver's Ministry Of Food programme across the HAF summer programme, educating them on cooking skills, nutritious foods and a healthy, balanced lifestyle

[READ MORE](#) >>



Click [here](#) to watch the video.



LIT - Leaders In Training
LEARN. WORK. ACHIEVE.

young leaders were given opportunities and valuable experience in community sport settings. They gained leadership and teambuilding skills by working closely with the HAF programme to deliver and experience supporting holiday clubs.

[READ MORE](#) >>



Click [here](#) to watch the video.



Active Essex Foundation (AEF) and Youth Partnership



unique children and young people attended an AEF holiday club with Essex ActivAte



of children who attended an AEF holiday club with ActivAte were eligible for free school meals

The Active Essex Foundation (AEF) works closely with Essex ActivAte each holiday to offer primary and secondary, tertiary youth provision for young people who are involved in criminality or are victims of exploitation, as well as children who are vulnerable due to further risk factors. AEF works in partnership with locally trusted organisations to offer a bespoke secondary and tertiary intervention holiday programme. This is to engage vulnerable young people who are less likely to attend mainstream Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programmes due to complex issues and challenges. The provision combines sport and physical activities with mentoring, life skills and opportunities to volunteer and gain qualifications. It aims to divert vulnerable children and young people away from becoming victims of exploitation or from engaging in criminal behaviours themselves by offering more positive activities. Several partners who deliver AEF holiday provisions also deliver AEF's Sport and Life Skills programme, ensuring continuity for the young people on these programmes outside of term time.



Click [here](#) to read the AEF HAF report 2023.

Stakeholders and family support

Active Essex and the Essex ActivAte team are in a unique position due to sitting within the Public Health team at Essex County Council.

This allows the ActivAte team to be a part of working groups and on various system boards, to ensure that HAF is on the agenda and being communicated at a strategic level countywide. This includes the Health and Wellbeing Boards, Children Partnership Boards, Cost of Living Groups, Community Safety Partnerships, ICB and Education Teams.

The ActivAte team also have working relationships with groups such as The Early Years, Wrap Around Care, Short Breaks, Libraries, and Levelling Up. Working in a Place Based manner, the ActivAte team are able to form strong connections with community hubs, Children and Family services, social workers and other referral services to ensure the greatest reach to all eligible children and families across Essex.



CHALLENGES OF THE YEAR

Families with children needing additional needs

Essex ActivAte are able to deliver SEND specialist hubs through experienced locally trusted organisations around Essex. On average, there are 30 SEND specialist hubs delivering during each holidays, offering a range of support and activities for children with additional needs and disabilities.

One of the ongoing challenges around each holiday period is being able to accommodate all of the children require a space at specialist SEND clubs, both for children on income related free school meals and for those families who apply for a 15% discretionary space.

Essex ActivAte have a good working partnership with the Essex County Council short breaks team and work together to signpost to each others clubs across the county wherever possible, however the limited amount of SEND delivery partners makes it difficult accomodate all children who require a space.

Unfortunately during 2023, many families who requested a discretionary place outside of the free school meals criteria for a child with SEND, were unable to have a space due to limitations.

31 
SEND clubs delivered during each holiday period

939 
Unique SEND children attended an Easter HAF club

1,110 
Unique SEND children attended a summer HAF club

274 
Unique SEND children attended a winter HAF club

2,323 
Unique SEND children supported at a 2023 HAF club



Parent communications

Since introducing the WONDE booking system at Easter, it has been a challenge to communicate to eligible families how to claim and use their HolidayActivities voucher code, to book onto local holiday clubs. Parents have struggled to use the booking system or have been unsure on where to locate their voucher code, therefore from feedback provided, we have focused on making the parent journey smoother by working closely with WONDE to create visuals and guides on how to use their voucher. Digital and print assets such as flyers, leaflets and videos have been created to help make the booking process smoother and more accessible for families, and in return, the voucher code redemption rate has increased, as well as the overall reach and engagement.

Schools engagement

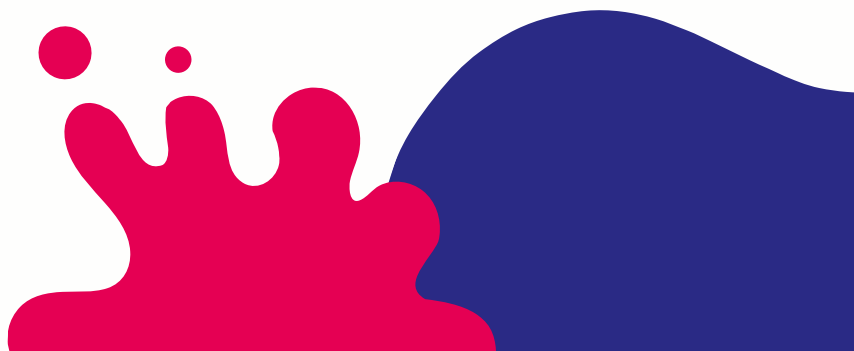
At the start of 2023, school engagement was challenging as the team tried to find individual representatives in Essex schools to champion the Essex ActivAte programme and highlight communications to eligible families. Most Essex schools knew about the programme, but a wide range of eligible families were not making use of the HAF offer. The team strived to work with schools by sharing key information and resources, so that in return, families would then engage with the HAF programme and book onto holiday clubs. The steps the team took were:

- Embedded ActivAte in the weekly schools newsletter
- Targeted the top 5-10 schools with numbers of high free school meal children, meeting with the schools team, offering parent sign up support, engaging in assemblies and school events
- Attended the County wide EPHA (Essex Primary Head Alliance) meetings to talk about Essex ActivAte and how they can get involved

School relationships are now going from strength to strength which has now resulted in stronger relationships and endorsement of the HAF programme in 2024.



Click [here](#) to watch the school engagement video.



COMMUNICATIONS AND PROMOTIONS

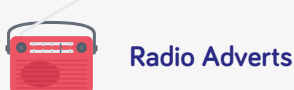
Marketing has played a vital role within Essex ActivAte over the past year, helping to reach new and existing target audiences across Essex communities through different marketing methods. By using different marketing methods, eligible young people and families have understood how the programme can support them, which as a result, has increased engagement within local communities.

Marketing techniques Essex ActivAte piloted in 2023 include:

DIGITAL MARKETING



Social Media and Paid Social Media



Radio Adverts



Bus Stop Adverts



Infographics



Presentations

PRINT MARKETING



8,000 Oral Health packs



Flyers and posters



Business cards



ActivAte club banners

ACTIVITY AND SUPPORT BOOKLETS



30,000 Easter, Summer and Winter activity and support booklets

Identifying the need to continue to support, engage and educate children and families at home, activity and family support booklets were designed and created.

Children's activity booklets included inspiration around physical activity, crafts and games, baking recipes, library reading focuses and themed education such as sun and water safety. Family booklets offered community support and local offerings, resources, guidance, tips and useful contacts, helping parents around the cost-of-living crisis.

SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT

With social media being recognised as a pivotal platform for posting about club bookings, community offerings, blog stories and the benefits of the programme, paid social media on Facebook was implemented ahead of the summer and winter holiday programmes, aiming to increase voucher redemption and club bookings. Following on this success, an Instagram was then created in 2023.



increase of Facebook profile visits compared to 2022



increase in Facebook engagement compared to 2022



increase of Facebook followers in 2023



Using a mix of images and videos across social media platforms showing how families' can claim and book using their HolidayActivities voucher code has increased code redemption and bookings each holiday period. As a result, ActivAte have continued to engage new families on social media through repetition of messaging about the programme and how to book onto local clubs.

Read the Essex ActivAte marketing and communications impact report here.

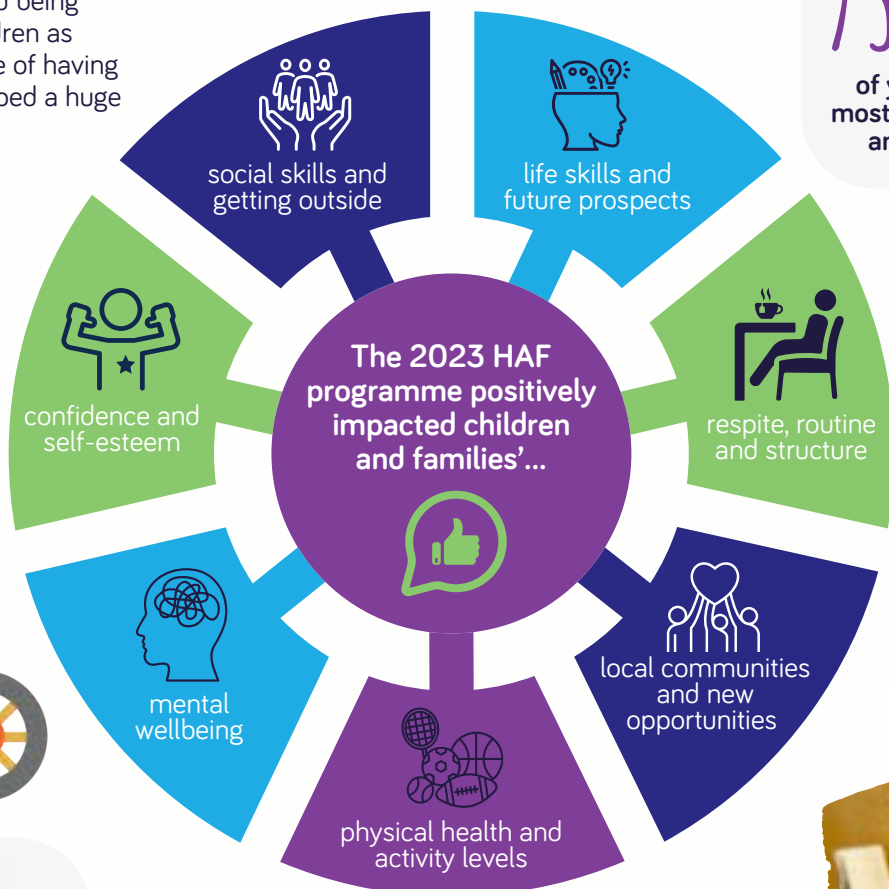


THE IMPACT OF ESSEX HAF 2023

“Z has autism and enjoyed being around mainstream children as well as having the routine of having a club to go to. It has helped a huge amount with his anxiety!

PARENT FROM HARLOW

73% of young people felt they mostly developed their social and teamworking skills at a HAF club



61% of young people developed their creativity skills at a HAF holiday club, as they were able to explore new interests and hobbies

“The holiday clubs are very important to us as a family. Manna's Ark in particular is a godsend to us. With the cost of living crisis becoming worse every day it means we still get the opportunity to go out into our community. Routine is very important to my child and therefore he very much looks forward to attending Manna's Ark each holiday. The owners are two of the kindest people I know. We would definitely be lost without Manna's Ark.

PARENT FROM WITHAM



94% of children benefitted the most from an easier transition back to school which helped with routine and structure during the holidays, as a result of attending a HAF club

55% of children were inspired to try new activities due to having positive role models in the coaches

63% of children said they felt more understood and confident as their communication skills had developed since attending a HAF club

“My kids absolutely enjoyed this summer thanks to the different clubs offered, I would otherwise not be able to afford. We visited two different farms, also sports events, golf, climbing, it was unbelievable, my kids felt over the moon! This was such a great experience to visit places and activities we never did before, also to meet new people and make friends. My son is in the autistic spectrum and I believe this experience is invaluable for him especially. He also managed to overcome many fears and felt included!

PARENT FROM BRENTWOOD

Watch the Essex ActivAte 2023 celebratory video [here](#).