

HOLIDAY ACTIVITY AND FOOD PROGRAMME

Essex Evaluation

What is the Holiday Activity and Food Programme?

Essex ActivAte, is the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Programme for Essex and Thurrock, funded by the Department of Education, and managed by Active Essex on behalf of Essex County Council and Thurrock Council.

Since 2021, the programme has been breaking down barriers, offering dynamic, free physical and enrichment activities, alongside a nutritious meal, family support and food education during the school holidays. This initiative is a lifeline for children on free school meals, and those from low-income families, providing robust support to local communities.



Active Essex commissioned a deep dive evaluation of the programme during the Easter offer, considering the social return on investment, impact on young people and families, local organisations and the wider society.

The report details the significant advancement and impact of Essex ActivAte, of which have been possible due to the continued funding.

The programme has been effective in breaking down barriers for children, young people and their families, who have become to rely on the offer to feed and care for their children during the school holidays. Discontinuing this funding would not only halt this progress but also potentially reverse the remarkable strides that have been made in fostering resilience, rather than reliance, empowering families and communities to thrive independently.

What do we mean by Social Return on Investment?

It is a way to measure the value created by the programme in terms of its social, environmental and economic impacts. The method considers both the positive and negative effects on society, looking at the benefits, such as improved wellbeing, education and community development, and compares them to the costs of the programme.

TOP HEADLINES

EASTER 2024 IMPACT: *Therefore* 2024 IMPACT:

For every £1 spent on delivery, at least **£4.49** of social value was generated.

*this is a cautious estimate of the social value, and is AT LEAST £4.49

The estimated social value generated by 2024 programme in Essex is

£22.5M

taking into account the improvement to the physical and mental health families, improved nutrition, educational engagement, increased work hours and parental spending.

PAST 3 YEARS IMPACT:

250,000

meals provided since 2021, to help reduce holiday hunger.

170

different physical enrichment and food activities delivered. This includes, cooking classes, canoeing and Multi-sport.

Essex programme supported

30,000

children and young people

▶ Watch the Essex programme overview video [here](#).



The full evaluation reports can be found [here](#).

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND SKILLS

* NOMIS, 2023

Why is Essex ActivAte needed?



25,900

Essex residents are unemployed*

Small businesses are facing a number of challenges with recent changes to minimum living wage, holiday pay and business tax, as well as rising inflation. This is coupled with an ongoing systemic challenge around recruitment, career pathways and talent retention of those working in the sport and physical activity sector – particularly in frontline roles such as sports coaching and activity leadership.

Essex ActivAte significantly contributed to the Essex economy, and in particular employment rates. The programme gives local organisations opportunities for growth and deployment which has led to them employing more staff, and reaching new audiences.

Partner organisations used Essex ActivAte to identify and upskill local people, moving them from volunteers to paid leaders to employed members of the core team (including through Apprenticeships). This both builds capacity within local communities and increases the equity, equality, diversity and inclusion of the activity club sector.

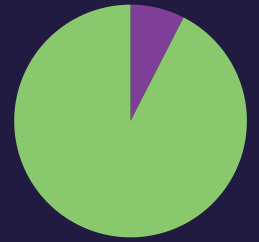
While its primary purpose is not to provide childcare, Essex ActivAte has ensured parents are able to work, instead of be forced to take reduced hours, unpaid leave or pay for childcare.

840

local people gained paid employment for Easter 2024 programme.

Percentage of paid/volunteer hours over 8 day Easter programme:

■ paid staff
■ volunteer staff



5.7

hours of work was achieved by parents per day, whilst their child attended.



£65

worth of work time (at minimum wage) was achieved by parents per day, whilst child(ren) attended club.

Many local organisations have grown geographically with Essex ActivAte giving them an 'in' to new areas. The evaluation found that if HAF funding were not able to continue, organisations would pull back to their geographic strong holds. In turn reducing both holiday and term-time provision, particularly for areas with high proportions of low-income families where there is not sufficient private income available. Therefore this would inevitably lead to a reduction of employment opportunities and some local organisations would likely fold.

60%

of organisations said that training for staff and/or volunteers was a benefit of being involved in Essex ActivAte, to future aspirations of their organisations sustainability.

70%

of organisations said that being part of Essex ActivAte provided access to new groups and communities, as well as contributing to their sustainability by leveraging further funding.

£2,358

of additional funding was leveraged per local organisation (on average)

Building on the evaluation findings, the social value related to economic growth in Essex, took in to account increased work hours, local provider spending, local parent spending on food, drinks, transport and child care, as well as leveraged provider funding.

£684,630

social value related to economic growth was generated during Easter 2024.

Therefore

The total value related to economic growth for 2024 in Essex, is likely to be in excess of:

£2,450,656

WHOLE FAMILY WELLBEING

*Essex Resident Survey, 2022

**Census, 2021

***OHID, 2022/23

****NHS, 2020

Why is Essex ActivAte needed?



More than a third of Essex residents are worried about/struggling to pay for food and essential items.*



of the Essex population suffer with anxiety and/or depression.***



1 in 10 households are lone parent families.**

36,000

children and young people aged 5-16 in Essex, experience mental health challenges.****

Many families in Essex are struggling. Essex ActivAte has taken a 'whole family' approach to support the most vulnerable children and their families. By breaking down barriers, the programme has been able to support each family member both during school holidays, and during term time in a wider offer.

There were many contributing factors to the reported improvement in parent wellbeing, and in turn this is reflected in the social value calculated.

Improvements included, reduced worry about money, reduced stress about balancing work and childcare, reduced guilt about not being able to provide memorable holiday experiences and (in some cases) respite from the challenging behaviour of their children.

£3,332,900

social value related to whole family wellbeing generated during Easter 2024.

£16,798,406

in excess total value related to whole family wellbeing for 2024.

Therefore

I was quoted £700 for a SEND club - I can't afford that, but Essex ActivAte was free

PARENT OF SEND CHILD

Increased positive wellbeing has led to parents feeling that they have more patience, improved relationships with their children and more capacity to spend quality time with them. Many parents commented that they felt the club leaders were as supportive to them, as they were to the children.



96%

of parents said their own mental health and wellbeing improved due to their child attending a HAF club.



76%

of parents said attending the club helped with their child's mental health and wellbeing 'very much'.

Life as a single parent is like climbing a mountain. There will be set-backs, and times when you feel yourself falling, but you just have to hold on and keep climbing. ActivAte has given us the rocks we have needed to keep on climbing. They have helped me to continue working when I cannot afford childcare, they have fed my children during the holidays, at times when I struggled to, and have given my children amazing adventures and happy childhood memories which they wouldn't have otherwise.

PARENT, BASILDON



HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

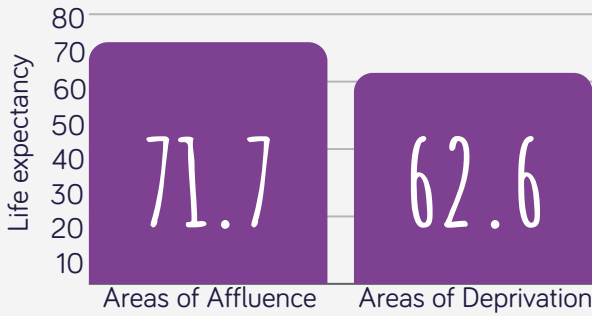
* OHID, 2022

** NCMP, 2021/22

*** Sport England, 2023

Why is Essex ActivAte needed?

Health inequalities in Essex mean that Healthy Life Expectancy varies depends where you live:



There are significant disparities across communities in Essex, which are even more prevalent in areas of deprivation.

Data shows that children living in areas of deprivation are **TWICE** as likely to be overweight/ obese**, and those from less affluent families are **20%** less likely to be physically active than those from the most affluent families, and Essex ActivAte are trying to address this.***



43%

of children said they had not had breakfast before attending the club.

Essex ActivAte aims to offer fun, physical and enrichment activities, food education and family support, both during school holidays and beyond. Essex ActivAte strives to instill healthy habits and promote an active lifestyle that children can maintain throughout their lives, while also addressing and reducing deep-rooted inequalities among families.

This programme has significantly strengthened relationships with local communities, placing families and young people at the forefront. Beyond its core mission, Essex ActivAte has extended its support to refugees, developed parents' maths skills, enhanced relationships between parents and their children, supported digital accessibility, water safety, encouraged them to take pride in their local area, and provided young people with learning opportunities in leadership and coaching skills.

To construct the social value for Essex, in relation to healthy lifestyles, the evaluation took into account the impact the programme had on families physical and mental health, as well as improving nutrition for those engaged.

At least

£205,530

of social value related to healthy lifestyle was generated during the Essex 2024 Easter delivery period.

This figure suggests that, the total value related to healthy lifestyle for 2024, is likely to be in excess of

£1,035,908

Therefore



Although the evaluation and statistics alone cannot articulate the huge impact seen by parents and young people, the interviews collected during this process, provide an insight into the significance it has had on their life, and changing their outlook on life opportunities.



She'll come home sometimes and say she's had something and she'll want to try it... then help me with cooking. If she's done something at a holiday club, she'll do it with me so we can do it together which is nice because we don't get to do that a lot.

PARENT, COLCHESTER

The evaluation found evidence suggesting likely long-term behaviour change around healthy eating and physical activity, with children and young people trying new, healthy foods - both at the holiday club and at home, and an increase in physical literacy which increases the likelihood of being physically active throughout life.

CHILDREN'S LIFE CHANCES

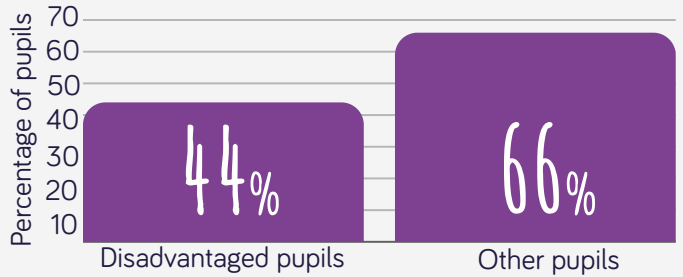
* OHID, 2022/23

**Gov.uk 2023

Why is Essex ActivAte needed?

Children living in income deprived families typically have poorer outcomes than those living in more affluent families. Recent data shows that children living in low-income families are less likely to achieve a 'good level of development' at the end of reception*, and children who are eligible for Pupil Premium **perform worse at school**.

The graph to the right, shows how more children from deprived families don't meet the expected development at the end of Key Stage 2, compared to those from more affluent families.**



Providing vital holiday support, Essex ActivAte's target audience would have otherwise been isolated at home, or potentially getting involved in anti-social behaviour. As a result, the programme provides for the basic needs of vulnerable children, giving them a safe space and hot meal during school holidays, positive experiences and opportunities to learn.

Essex ActivAte gives dignity to children attending, ensuring no distinction between those who are attending a club's paid offer and those who are from low-income families or have other vulnerabilities. Clubs provide holiday experiences and opportunities that some parents would not be able to afford, as well as stories to tell their friends on return to school.

In order to calculate the social return on investment in regards to children's life chances, the evaluation partner valued the impact the programme had on educational engagement and attainment, access to public services, access to training and reduced NEET status.

The HAF clubs give our children routine and engagement that may not be possible for some families to provide. The children break up from school confident that there'll be familiar adults that they feel safe with and return to school happy to share what they did.

HEADTEACHER, BASILDON

Throughout the last year, the Essex programme has also been able to offer a young leaders training programme across the clubs, engaging young people in delivery, giving them skills and raising their future aspirations.

83 young leaders were involved in delivery during Easter 2024, with a further 150 being trained.

£258,710

social value related to children's life chances, generated during Easter 2024.

Total value related to children's life chances for 2024, is likely to be in excess of

£1,303,944

Therefore

It was lovely to hear M talk openly about 2 new friends she had made at the club. Usually a shy quiet girl, who struggles to engage in group settings, she shared stories about her new friends, and how they had tried gymnastics for the first time, and really enjoyed it.

LSA, PRIMARY

In Essex, like many places across the country, stark disparities across communities are particularly evident in areas of deprivation, and the Essex ActivAte Holiday Activity and Food programme is addressing these gaps head on.

Clubs have supported families by signposting them to other support services such as term-time activities and physical activity opportunities, as well as additional support for children with SEND, Food Banks, and the Citizens Advice Bureau. By instilling healthy eating habits and promoting an active lifestyle, Essex ActivAte is ensuring that children carry these positive influences throughout their lives, while also tackling deep-rooted inequalities.

The programme's significant social return on investment highlights its value, creating immense social, environmental, and economic benefits. With an estimated £22.5 million in social value for just the 2024 programme, the lasting impact this can have on Essex children and their families underscores the urgent need for continued funding and support, ensuring the sustainability and expansion of this transformative programme.