

Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) Annual Report

2023 - 2024

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HAF Programme Overview

Since 2018 the Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) has provided support to children in receipt of benefit related free school meals during the school holiday periods. In 2021, after successful pilots between 2018 and 2020, the Department for Education (DfE) rolled-out the HAF programme across England. The programme aimed to enable young people aged 4-16, eligible for benefits related free school meals (FSM) to take part in free activities run by local organisations across the borough.

The school holidays can be a particular pressure point for some families which may lead to some children having a holiday experience gap. Research has shown that children from low-income families 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 was devised a response to this issue, with evidence showing that free holiday clubs can have a positive impact on children and young people, working 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 voluntary and community organisation sector

As a result of this programme, we want children who attend this provision to:

- eat healthily over the school holidays
- be active during the school holidays
- take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience, character and wellbeing along with their wider educational attainment
- be safe and not to be socially isolated
- have a greater knowledge of health and nutrition
- be more engaged with school and other local services

We also want to ensure that the families who participate in this programme:

- develop their understanding of nutrition and food budgeting
- are signposted towards other information and support, for example, health, employment, and education

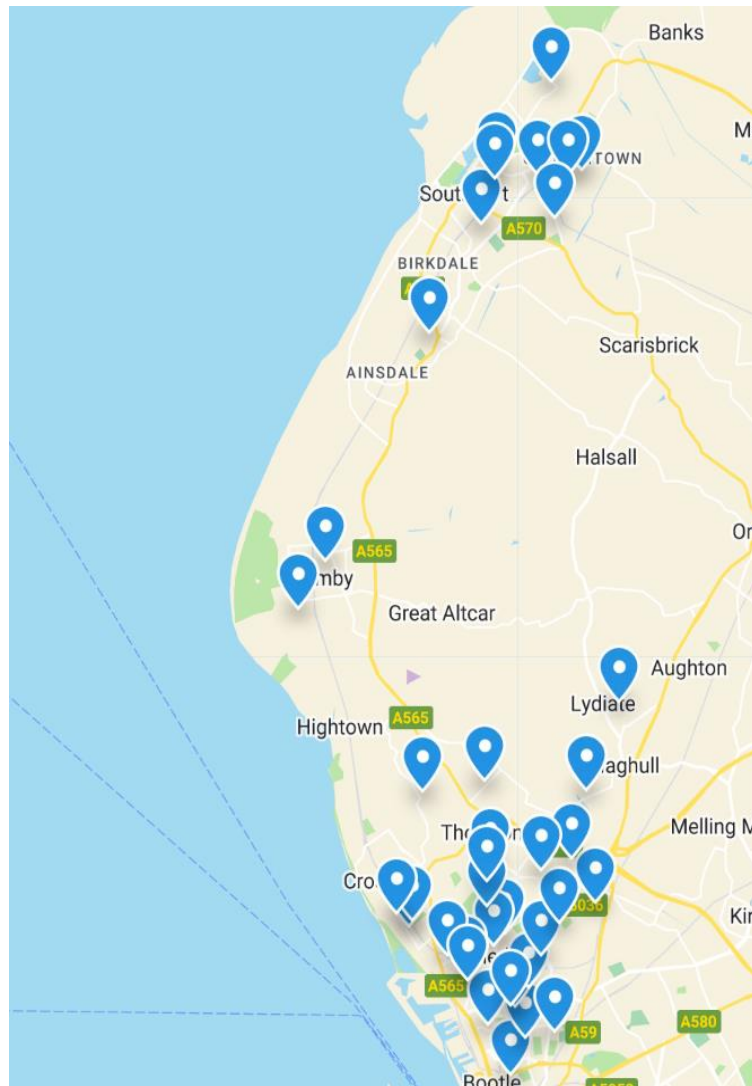
HAF Programme in Sefton

There are over 10,000 young people living or attending school in Sefton who are in receipt of benefits related free school meals. Just over 1 in 4 primary school age pupils, 1 in 5 secondary schools age pupils, and almost half of pupils attending special educational needs schools were eligible for free school meals in Sefton during 2021/22.

A total of £997,728.67 was spent on delivering HAF in Sefton in 2023/24. This includes £210,858, £585,994.80 & £123,978 awarded in direct grant funding to providers in Easter, Summer & Winter respectively. £49,097.87 was spent on administrative expenditure; £7,800 on training and £20,000 was awarded in capital grant funding.

Provision Mapping in Sefton

The number of children in receipt of benefits-related free school meals differs greatly throughout the borough. The percentage of eligible pupils attending schools ranges from 2.3% of pupils at the lowest end to 70.3% at the highest. The highest concentration of eligible pupils attend school in Bootle, Seaforth & Litherland and Southport.



We aim to provide appropriate levels of HAF provision in accordance with the number of eligible children in each area and continue to work with providers to ensure this is maintained.



Easter 2023

In the Easter holidays 2,185 unique young people attended HAF provision, compared to 1,195 in the previous year – this included 355 secondary aged children, more than double the previous year. They were able to take part in a wide range of activities from multi sports, football, arts & crafts, boxing, cooking, yoga and more. Clubs brought in external facilitators to provide unique experiences like petting zoos, circus skills and science workshops. Children also took part in a variety of trips throughout the Easter holidays to local centres including Farmer Ted's, Flip out trampoline park, Bounce House & Watersports Centre; as well as local parks and the cinema.

Clubs incorporated many Easter themed activities throughout the holidays including visits from the Easter bunny and an Easter bonnet making competition. Spring also provided a great time for children to get involved with gardening with many clubs growing their own vegetables for the children to look after and eat throughout the year.

Our providers focused heavily on healthy eating with many encouraging children to become more involved with the planning of menus and preparation of meals. This included discussing healthy swaps; conversations around how food gives us energy; and why is it important to eat your five a day. Families were invited to come into venues to eat alongside their children and many clubs created meal and recipe kits to take home. Young people were encouraged to sit down and eat, facilitating conversations around healthy lifestyles.



HAF providers continued to work to make their provision more accessible after noting increased numbers of children with additional needs the previous year. Additional and 1:1 support was funded and clubs worked with experienced SEN workers to ensure young people's needs were met. Clubs adapted their sessions by providing different lunch options; incorporating quiet spaces; and providing ear defenders.

41

Number of Providers

2185

Number of unique attendees

497

Number of children with SEND

355

Number of secondary aged attendees

1830

Number of primary aged attendees

10918

Number of individual bookable spaces



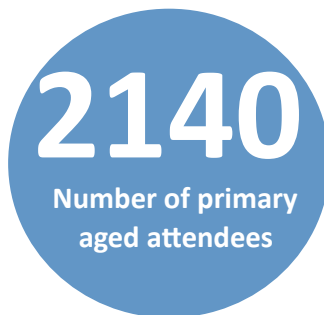
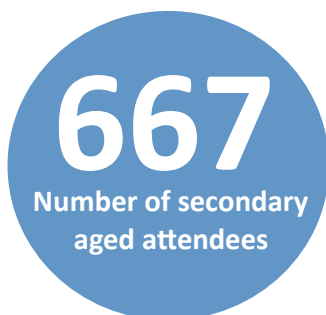
Summer 2023

Summer HAF was our biggest programme to date with 45 clubs compared to 37 the previous year which ensured that there was a diverse range of activities on offer across the borough. A total of 2,807 young people attended funded HAF provision, over 1000 more than last summer.

Our summer programme saw existing providers grow their offer after the success of the Easter with many offering more places for young people, a wider variety of activities, more signposting and a continued focus on healthy eating and exercise. We welcomed new providers including North West Angling Academy giving young people the opportunity to engage in activities that many had never tried before.

The nice weather meant more trips to attractions like Moel Famau and Gulliver’s World and many clubs made the most of local sites including parks, Formby and Crosby beach and Rimrose Valley.

Summer HAF provided a great opportunity to continue discussions around healthy eating and keeping active. Children were able to harvest, cook and eat vegetables that had been planted on sight and take some home to share with their families. Some of the most popular meals included home made pizzas; fruit kebabs; fresh smoothies; and themed days Mexican, Chinese and Italian cuisine. Many clubs worked with young people to design their own menus, encouraging discussions around nutrition, food waste and hygiene. Lots of outdoor activities ensured that staying hydrated was promoted and young people learned about the benefits of water compared to fizzy and energy drinks.





Winter 2023

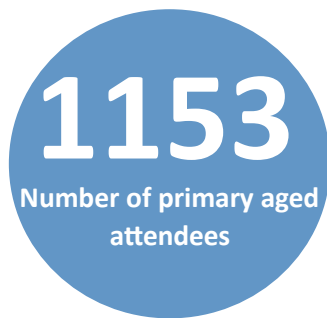
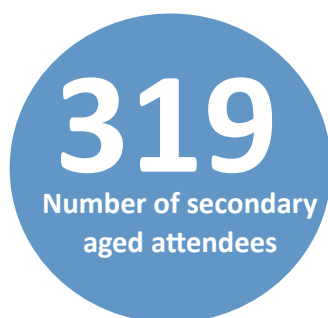
Winter HAF is challenging to deliver for some of our clubs as many have reduced operating hours over Christmas or do not operate at all, however this year 33 clubs offered HAF funded spaces compared to 22 last year which ensured as many children as possible were able to access funded provision. A total of 1469 children attended HAF provision across the Christmas holidays between December 18th and January 6th. Most of clubs delivered their provision in the first week of January which ensured young people were ready to get back into routine once the new school year began.



Despite the bad weather young people still managed to get outside to enjoy a range of activities like football, walking, basketball, and fishing. On rainier days these activities were moved indoors or swapped for activities like table tennis, football, dance, crafts, gymnastics, cooking and even a silent disco.

Children took part in a variety of trips over the holidays including to Knowsley Safari Park, Fun Arena and the Plaza Cinema. The highlight for many young people was a trip to Hope Street Theatre and The Atkinson to see a Christmas pantomime, which for many was their first theatre experience.

Many of our clubs provided a Christmas dinner for young people and for their families alongside Christmas parties, games, visits from Santa and presents. This provided an opportunity to take time out to sit at the table with their peers, staff and families members





Additional Support

School Holiday Meal Vouchers

During the school holidays Sefton Council supported families by providing meal vouchers. Families eligible for free school meals can use the vouchers, worth £15 per child per week to buy food from local supermarkets, either in-store or online. The vouchers can be spent in supermarkets across Sefton and can only be spent on food and essentials and can't be used to purchase alcohol, tobacco, lottery tickets, phone top-ups or stamps.

Be Active Free Swimming Sessions

In 2023 we partnered with Sefton's Leisure team to offer free swimming sessions to young people in receipt of benefits related free school meals at Bootle, Maghull, and Southport leisure centres. Eligible children were entitled to one free swim in the Easter holiday, Christmas holiday and half terms; and five swims during the summer break. For under 8's an accompanying adult could also swim for free. A total of 181 adults and 467 children applied for the free sessions and it will be continuing for 2024.

Capital Grant Funding

In January we opened applications for our HAF Capital Grant Fund. Existing HAF providers were invited to apply for £2500 - £5000 to spend on capital resources that would enhance their HAF programme and future provision. Eight successful applicants each received £2,500 to purchase assets including ovens, fridge freezers, tables and chairs, electronic tablets, cookware and dining ware; sports equipment and more. The assets will greatly enhance what the clubs are able to offer- particularly in their food provision as much of the existing equipment was no longer fit for purpose. All the assets bought with the funding will have a residual usage beyond HAF 2023 with many providers utilising the equipment to improve or expand their wider community provision.

MVRP Funding

In early 2024 we were awarded £19,000 by Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership to supplement our HAF programme in February half term. The funding was used to create bespoke activities for young people in Netherton, Litherland and Bootle including sports and fitness; arts and crafts; dance; team games; and printing and design sessions – alongside targeted work around antisocial behaviour and equality. Food and drinks were also provided as well as free passes to the cinema and to a local skatepark.

Key Outcomes

Healthy Eating

Throughout 2023 children have learned about healthy options; the importance of nutrition; why it is important to eat fresh fruit and veg; and how food gives us energy. HAF settings, particularly those with a focus on physical activity, have been a great environment to introduce nutritional education in a fun and engaging manner by incorporating healthy eating topics into their daily activities.

HAF clubs have also been a great way to get young people to try new foods with many clubs noting that children were much more likely to try a food if they had been involved in the cooking and preparation. Many clubs worked with children to decide what meals would be on offer, prompting discussions around balanced meals, food waste and health. One club reported their 'Spin the Wheel' fruit game was popular and that young people were 70% more likely to try a new fruit when playing the game. Providers noted that even if children tried a food that they did not like they were pleased to have given something new a go and were more open to trying new foods going forward. Staff pointed out that from the start of 2023 to the end young people were making healthier choices; eating more fruit and vegetables and drinking more water.

Incorporating healthy eating habits also enabled young people to spend time sitting down to eat with their peers and with staff. Clubs found that in this environment many of the attendees felt relaxed, calmer and able to open up more. Some young people noted that they had not sat and eaten around a table before but that they had really enjoyed it.

Many of our clubs provided recipes and food for children to take home and cook with their families. These centred around simple healthy meals and often included budget-friendly ideas and meals that could be made in the slow cooker or air fryer.

Encouraging and Safe Environment

Much of the feedback from our providers this year centred around the fun, safe and inclusive environment that they were able to offer to young people and the huge benefits this had on specific children. We consistently heard cases of young people who were often nervous to attend school or holiday clubs who ended up thriving in HAF funded provision. Parents told clubs that their children had grown in confidence by the end of the summer and were now much more likely to attend a holiday club in the future. The diverse nature of the clubs on offer meant that young people could try new activities at their own pace- this was evident in sports clubs where children were split into different groups and could try a new sport without feeling intimidated by those who had played before.

At North West Angling Academy a parent reported that their child with ADHD was '*calmer here than anywhere else*' and that the club had helped her son begin to overcome his attachment issues. Another parent told us that their child often refused to attend school and would only eat very limited foods but was excited to come to the fishing club and had begun to try foods he had never eaten before.

Benefits for organisations and parents

The HAF funding has enabled organisations to continue to provide holiday clubs at a time where take up of places had fallen due to the cost-of-living crisis and families working from home. By providing HAF funding clubs were able to continue to operate and provide paid for places alongside funded ones. Many clubs also noted that young people who had attended for the first time in 2023 were attended wider provision in half terms and school times- enabling them to build lasting relationships with the individual and their families.

While the focus of the programme is centred around providing enriching and engaging experiences for young people, we have found it has a secondary benefit for parents who otherwise would not be able to afford childcare. Positive feedback has come from parents who have been able to re-enter work or training due to the programme while others noted that they were able to get jobs done around the house or dedicate time to other family members. Multiple clubs have also fed back that the HAF Programme has been an opportunity for parents to connect with one another; build friendships and share support. At the Inclusive Hub parents of children with additional needs often stay for a drink after dropping their children off providing an informal peer support group.

The key element of signposting is a key element of HAF which has been beneficial to both organisations and families. Alongside offering support to children and families themselves clubs have been able to signpost families to services throughout Sefton to help with a range of health; cost of living; and community support. These include links to the following organisations: *South Sefton Foodbank, Venus Centre, In Your Shoes Community Hub, Sefton Community Learning Service*; Ukraine Welcome Centre; Family Wellbeing Centres; Citizens Advice; and Homestart. Clubs were also able to share access to our [HAF Padlet](#) which launched in 2023 and includes information on free activities and support for families across the borough.

New Experiences

One of the key aims of the HAF Programme is to ‘*bridge the holiday experience gap*’ by providing young people and families with experiences and activities they otherwise would not be able to take part in. This was particularly evident in affluent areas within the borough where organisations were aware that children had commented on holidays or activities that their peers were taking part in that they were not.

The range of clubs available through HAF ensured that young people were able to access fun, engaging and social activities during the holidays- many of which combined HAF funded and paid places. Many clubs also brought in external providers to deliver specialist craft, music, cooking, drama and sports sessions and organised trips which would have been costly to individual families.

Key Support for Vulnerable Families

Throughout 2023 our providers told us that the HAF Programme had enabled them to support families through extremely difficult times, providing young people with a fun and safe environment and parents/ carers with time and support. One club was able to provide emergency provision to four siblings, needed due to their mother passing away suddenly. The club was able to provide additional support to the family through food relief, signposting and allowing the children to explore their feelings and thoughts in a safe environment.

Feedback

“Keep doing amazing work, I love it so much”.

“The food was the best thing, then the show”.

“I had a boss time and loved every bit of it”.

“My favourite thing was going to Flip out, I’ve never been there before.”

“I loved making mini egg cookies, that was the best”.

“My favourite was going to the farm and seeing the cute animals.”

“Our favourite was flip out because there’s loads of things to play on.”

“I liked putting the ice-cream in the chocolate eggs and decorating them, they were so yummy.”

“I really loved this week especially the cooking and the recipes”

“I love Apollo Sports and the arts crafts and sports. I love the smoothie blind game where we have to guess what flavours we are drinking”

“The response from both of my children who came home really happy every day in particular my eldest daughter who while being older than most kids she was made to feel included and it really helped develop her confidence”

“I’d like to thank the team for being so great with child and being so inclusive and accepting. Child can’t wait to come back!”

"This really helped Lily gain in confidence, she had a more excited positive attitude when attending the holiday club. It has helped with her going back to school feeling confident."

'My daughter has had the best time and grown in confidence in a short space of time'.

"I can't believe you got him to eat brown bread."

"I don't know what we would have done without this – obviously because of Axxxx's additional needs we are very limited as to what we can do and where we can go; this has been the best summer holidays ever because he has been safe and happy and has made new friends."

"This has been a godsend, I'm not sure we would have survived the holidays without the summer club."

"He's loved it and has been really excited to come in and it's been great as I couldn't afford to pay for a holiday club."

"Thank you so much, they've loved coming here and it's been amazing for me as well to have a little break and I could do things with the baby. Next time this is on could they come again if possible."

"My son has been attending the summer club, and he's absolutely loved it, they do various different sports each day, and he's got stuck in and enjoyed every single one. All the members of staff are amazing and go above and beyond for all the kids and really make the days fun, I will definitely be sending my son again".

Case Studies

Already in the foster care of their paternal grandmother, their mum passed away just before Christmas 2022. Whilst previous contact with their Mum was estranged and limited due to safety issues, the boys have been adjusting to knowing that they won't see their Mum again. The boys have attended the weekly evening youth session and appear to thrive from the interaction with workers and peers. The youngest boy displays anger and anxiety issues and has been assessed as having ASD which we are fully aware of and are able to identify his 'triggers' to ensure he can be offered a safe place to decompress his feelings. The boys are receiving support within their school also. The middle sibling is displaying strong leadership skills and will soon become a young volunteer within the YCP team. The eldest sibling will hopefully become involved in our outdoor bushcraft opportunities with a little encouragement – watch this space!

YCP

'We have been with Hype @ LCFA since your first camp there and I just wanted to pass some feedback on as I for one appreciate all the work you guys do!

I have two sons aged 8 who count down for half terms to just attend HYPE and the programme they put on for the children. I get asked regularly through term to check the website to see if it's time to book again! HYPE at LCFA is warm, welcoming, friendly and most of all Fun all whilst engaging and learning new things. The team provides opportunities for the children every week and a little trip for them to finish the week off which in itself is amazing. Both my boys go in eager and excited and are picked up being the same, if not happier than when they went in! They have made so many new friends and class the coaches as their friends too. Special shout to John, Mia, Pat as these are the names that are mostly mentioned. But equally, when picking up the boys all coaches are just fantastic. Wanting to engage and encourage the kids. The work Hype do is fantastic and gives the right message to kids who attend. I will 100% be following Hype and keeping my sons active on programmes they offer whether this still be at LCFA or somewhere else as the people who are involved are fantastic and are great role models for my children.

Thank you for providing this and helping families when times are tough! I've said it lots and I will continue to sing your praises as your work is great. Always happy smiley kids at the end of the day when I arrive to pick my sons up.'

Parent feedback from HYPE

We are aware that one of our families who consist of 4 children are under children's services. The children took part in our 8 sessions getting full access to our programme. We offered support with left over meals and produce we had bought so that they could take this home to ensure that they also had food for an evening meal. As part of our community centre, we take children who are in need away on weekend residential to Skipton. All of these children took part in the residential we offered, we also supported the family with Clothing and toiletries to ensure they had the same experience the other children taking part had.

Community by Nature

"It's always daunting leaving a little one in a new playscheme. My niece is only 5 and I was keen for her to be kept busy over the summer break. She loved coming to the playscheme, made lots of friends and proudly showed us how she learned to do the monkey bars. The best thing about the playscheme was that she met other children in foster care. She came home telling us stories of the friends she had made who also had foster carers or lived with their family in kinship care like her. It helped her realise that she is not alone."

Parent feedback

"4 of my children attended this fantastic holiday club, 2 of them being autistic and 1 with no confidence at all. I have 9 children and it can be very tricky entertaining them every day. They also have different interests. These 4 were able to have a break without their younger siblings. This was something for the 4 children to look forward to each day they attended. They made lots of crafts things to bring home, they made some friends and have confidence to do this without me being there. Massive big thank you to them all and I hope that my children get this lovely experience to come again."

Parent feedback

One family that attended our scheme consisted of 2 females both had additional needs. One has severe autistic needs and needed constant reassurance at the start of the project she was the older of the 2 siblings. The other child had food allergies which had to be monitored by our staff daily. During the project the 2 girls were inseparable at the start of the project and the older sibling would not let her sibling out of her sight. As the project went on staff encouraged the girls to join different friend's groups. This enabled both girls to become more independent from each other. The parents commented on how they had seen the improvement and how this was starting to have a positive impact in their home life too. Every year at the end of the summer project we select children who we think would benefit from an activity weekend away in Skipton. We approached the family about taking the older sibling, to which the parents replied that if we had asked them at the start of the summer then they would have declined the offer, but after seeing how much their child had come on and out of herself then they would if she wanted to go. I am glad to say upon writing this report she is very excited and is looking forward to attending Skipton Eshton Grange residential on 15th to 17th September with her other peers.

Community by Nature

"Just a text to say a huge thank you to yourself and the team for the summer camp at Linacre primary. My little boy attended 3 weeks and he absolutely loved every minute of it. It was amazing for him to be out the house having fun with friends and being active and doing different things each day instead of being home or doing the normal stuff we do regularly. We greatly appreciate him having the opportunity to attend".

Parent feedback

Delivery Partners



J.E.Ts Centre



