

HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND FOOD PROGRAMME - DfE GUIDANCE 2022

Background

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

- 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 DfE HAF programme is a response to this issue, with evidence showing that free holiday clubs can have a positive impact on children and young people, and that 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 voluntary and community organisation sector

Following successful pilots between 2018 and 2020 the HAF programme was rolled out to all upper tier local authorities in 2021. Leicestershire County Council has received funding from the DfE to co-ordinate the provision of the programme for Leicestershire.

Aims and objectives

HAF holiday provision is for school aged children from reception to year 11 (inclusive) who receive benefits-related free school meals. Benefits-related free school meals (FSM) 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.

[Further information on eligibility for free school meals is available.](#)

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

As a result of this programme, DfE 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

DfE 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

Core Offer

Over Easter:

- DfE expect that all participating children should benefit from at least a week of face-to-face provision at Easter, which should be for a minimum of 4 days
- for most children, each day at Easter should consist of at least 4 hours of provision, with the option to tailor delivery to meet needs

We know that many providers will want to provide a HAF programme that runs for more hours, days and weeks than the minimum expectation, and we encourage them to continue to do this. The paragraphs above set out minimum expectations, and we welcome provision offering more than the minimum.

Standards for HAF holiday provision

The DfE have developed a framework of standards to provide a benchmark of what they expect from those delivering the holiday activities and food programme and expect all providers that are funded through the programme to meet this framework of standards.

Providers will need to be able to demonstrate how they can meet the minimum standards of delivery, with support from the local authority as required:

Food provision

Providers must provide at least one meal a day (breakfast, lunch or tea) and all food provided at the holiday club (including snacks) must meet [school food standards](#).

DfE expectation is that the majority of food served by providers should be hot. However, we acknowledge that there will be occasions when this is not possible and cold food should be used where it is appropriate.

Providing food on site can provide an opportunity to engage children and families in food preparation and nutrition. 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.

There are also environmental factors to consider when planning the food provision consideration should be given to minimising food and packaging waste.

Food providers

Providers, where applicable, should be registered as a food business to give reassurance they are fully compliant with food hygiene laws and 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](#).

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). Providers should take the time to read the [guidance on the Food Standards Agency website](#) and ensure that all food provision for the HAF programme meets these requirements.

Enrichment activities

Holiday clubs must provide fun and enriching activities that provide children with opportunities 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

Physical activities

Holiday clubs must provide activities that meet the [physical activity guidelines](#) 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 - this does not have to be in the form of a structured activity session, but can include active travel, free play and sports
- 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

Nutritional education

Providers must include an element of nutritional education each day aimed at improving the knowledge and awareness of healthy eating for children. These do not need to be formal learning activities and could for example include activities such as:

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

Food education for families and carers

HAF providers are expected to make available weekly training and advice sessions for parents, carers or other family members. These should provide advice on how to source, prepare and cook nutritious and low-cost food. This could be combined with the nutritional education aspect of the programme, for example, by inviting children and their families to prepare and eat a meal together.

Signposting and referrals

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

- Citizen's 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 (such as Tax-Free Childcare)

Policies and procedures

There are a wide variety of organisations and individuals involved in the delivery of the holiday, activities and food programme including but not limited to:

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

All of these groups 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

Safeguarding

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

As set out in [working together to safeguard children](#), 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](#) guidance.

Holiday clubs in school settings

We know that schools are safe places and have robust 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 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](#).

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](#) 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 Disclosure and Barring Service (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](#) 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](#) (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 lead organisation to ensure that volunteers are not 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](#) 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 register with Ofsted or they may be exempt from registration. Both clubs and providers that would require registration with Ofsted, and those that are exempt, can participate in the holiday, activities and food programme. 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 if they are attending and paying for extra childcare at Ofsted registered settings.

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 LAs 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 LA but with increased supply in areas with higher levels of FSM families in order to maximise attendance levels.

Working with children with SEND/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, delegate 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;
- Ensure 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 and 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 providing 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 the secondary age range.

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, for example, 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 safe and secure when attending a HAF programme.

Environment and sustainability

The Department for Education is committed to sustainable development practices and believes it is important for local authorities to consider sustainable practices 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/exchange schemes

This list is not exhaustive and local authorities are encouraged to reflect on their settings and consider ways that their HAF 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.