



Department for Education

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme

Annual Report 2024/25

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Introduction

The HAF programme has provided invaluable support to children and families throughout Leicester during each main school holiday period, offering engaging activities and nutritious meals.

HAF-eligible families were offered the traditional HAF core offer during school breaks. Some families, particularly during our winter delivery period, have enriching activities complemented with food hampers containing ingredients to facilitate the preparation of healthy, nourishing meals at home, in cases where providers were unable to deliver the complete offer.

HAF Funding over the years shows rising demand and need for HAF

- 2018 £2 million towards new and existing holiday clubs
- **2019 –** the programme was rolled out 9 local authorities
- 2020 £9million funding was given to 17 local authorities
- 2021 2023 the government announced a further investment of over £200 million per year over the next 3 financial years for all 151 local authorities. Leicester City starts its first year of the programme.
- **2023 2025** HAF funding continued, we are currently waiting on government to confirm the continuation of HAF funds beyond 2025.

Extensive research indicates that the school holidays can be challenging for certain families, leading to a disparity in holiday experiences for some children. Specifically, children from low-income households are more likely to face obstacles:

- Limited access to organised out-of-school activities
- Inadequate nutrition
- Lack of physical activity
- Heightened social isolation

The HAF programme represents a response to address this issue. Evidence demonstrates that free holiday clubs can have a positive impact on the well-being of children and young people. Leicester has successfully tackled this challenge by implementing the following strategies listed below to enhance the effectiveness of the HAF programme, contributing to improved outcomes for children and families in need. The Feeding Leicester steering group provides support and challenge to the HAF team when strategically planning and delivering the programme and consists of Leicester City Council officers from both public health and social care and education, voluntary sector partners and representatives from other public bodies, including a representative from the Leicester West MP's office.

- 1. Offering consistent and easily accessible enrichment activities
- 2. Extending the scope of support beyond just providing breakfast or lunch
- 3. Engaging children and parents in food preparation processes
- 4. Collaborating with local partners and establishing connections with relevant providers



This picture shows happy, smiling young children with a drawing of their interpretation of a eat well plate.

The annual report provides an overview of the HAF 2024 programme in Leicester, highlighting key aspects of HAF and is also a valuable resource for understanding the programme's achievements, impact, and areas of success within the community. The report covers the following key areas:

- Funding Allocation: a detailed breakdown of the overall funding invested in the HAF programmePromotion and Media Coverage: outlines the efforts made to promote the HAF programme, including ways to raise awareness and celebrate its achievements through a variety of media channels
- Reach and Engagement: provides statistical data on the number of unique children reached during each holiday period, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Collaborative Partnerships: details organisations and stakeholders involved in the delivery and the efforts undertaken to ensure effective implementation and maximum impact
- Participate Feedback: incorporates valuable feedback from programme participants, as well as their families or caregivers in the form of case studies

HAF 2024 Highlights

This section includes the highlights and successes of the programme that Leicester has delivered.

The demand for HAF is rising as the number of children registering has consistently increased and more parents have expressed interest in HAF programmes every holiday period. With each holiday period, providers are offering more places as workforces are increased to meet the demands of HAF places required, support more SEND children and deliver the HAF programme at multiple locations.

The Leicester HAF team allow one route of booking, and this is booking directly with the provider.

Leicester City has just over 15,500 children eligible for free school meals. This map shows the geographical areas where the number of children eligible for benefit-related free school meals live, areas highlighted in red indicate a higher number of children eligible:



The breakdown of how many unique children engaged in each holiday period of the HAF programme was:

- Easter 2024: 2,433 children participated in the programme
- Summer 2024: 2,505 children participated in the programme
- Christmas 2024: 2,063 children participated in the programme

A further breakdown shows how many of primary and secondary age children participated in the programme:

- Easter 2024: 1,890 primary and 543 secondary age children participated
- Summer 2024: 1,992 primary and 513 secondary age children participated
- Christmas 2024: 1,518 primary and 542 secondary age children participated



Additionally, the table below highlights the number of children with special educational needs or additional needs who took part in the programme as summarised:

- Easter 2024: 232 primary and 76 secondary children with SEND participated, totalling 308 children
- Summer 2024: 268 primary and 73 secondary children with SEND participated, totalling 341 children





The map at <u>Appendix A</u> demonstrates Leicester and all the wards within the city. The small dots indicate the locations of the providers that delivered HAF. We worked with 54 providers, and this continues to grow year on year.

Leicester ensured HAF was geographically spread all over the city by encouraging providers to deliver in hotspots such as: where there were more FSM children; the more deprived areas of the city; and any areas where there were no providers or support, so every FSM-eligible child was able to access a HAF programme close to their home.

Through the quality assurance visits made by the HAF Team, they had noticed that children who attended HAF felt safe, often tried, and enjoyed new innovative activities they would not otherwise have taken part in, such as climbing wall, team building and digital music production. There were positive signs that HAF was helping to improve socialisation and confidence, with children expressing they felt more confident because of attending the holiday club and supporting school attendance ready for the new academic year.

Quality Assurance Assessment Template

When quality has not met our expectations, we have worked with the provider in providing recommendations and signposting to appropriate support or training. There are several Quality Assurance measures the HAF team use to assess each provider on the different categories – <u>See Appendix B</u>.

HAF Challenges

The lack of time between each HAF programme presents a significant challenge for the HAF team in Leicester. The challenge is due to the need to allocate a substantial portion of time for providers to plan, process administrative tasks, and collaborate effectively with the HAF team.

However, some providers may take longer than expected or fail to communicate promptly, which creates difficulties in adhering to the desired timeline. This may be due to providers not assigning staff to complete HAF admin work and are therefore juggling teaching or coaching alongside in addition to some providers delivering for other local authorities. Another reason providers found it difficult to meet HAF deadlines was lack of planning or difficulty in creating and maintaining effective relationships with schools or venue providers.

Furthermore, the manual process for handling bookings and allocations adds complexity. Some families may be overlooked or miss the booking deadline due to communication gaps between schools and families. Attempting to accommodate all these families would require significant administrative adjustments, including changes to the dataset, conducting eligibility checks, re-establishing communication with providers, and allowing sufficient time for providers to respond to families.

Unfortunately, the lack of flexibility in the system makes it challenging to book all eligible families as we must close our booking systems at least 2-3 weeks prior to delivery to allow for checks and allocation of places. For families that do not plan well in advance this often means they miss the opportunity, as the system is static and will not allow for cancellations/credits/live management of places.

Each year of the programme brings its own challenges, such as delivery over the Covid pandemic period. This year the tragic incident in Southport had an impact on families and providers running holiday clubs, and sadly can reduce confidence in attending such programmes.

These challenges highlight the need of:

- Improved communication between schools, families and providers
- There is a significantly higher number of primary aged children accessing the programme compared to secondary aged. This is largely due to the need for childcare for the younger aged cohort and their willingness to attend holiday club type activity.
- Greater flexibility in the allocation and booking systems

Overcoming these obstacles would enable the HAF programme to better serve all families in need and ensure that the demand for the programme aligns with the number of children who can be accommodated within the available resources.

All HAF places are allocated and offered once all eligibility checks are completed by the local authority.

How providers offer high quality, value for money:

- Allocation of places according to demand and deprived areas
- Providers delivered core offer as per guidance of the Department of Education
- Local trips in the city and beyond
- Sustainability of resources/equipment from previous delivery

Shorter holiday periods such as Easter and Winter attract fewer children as the HAF programme is delivered over the two-week period. This may be because some families choose to go on holiday, visit family or would prefer their children to rest at home. Providers have been advised to tackle this by delivering HAF sessions later in the day, so parents are more likely to get children ready in time to attend. Particularly for older children, providers focused on providing later starts and shorter HAF sessions to encourage more attendance.

Another challenge during the Easter HAF delivery, was helping providers navigate on how to adapt the core offer to meet religious needs of children and families. For example, Ramadan overlapped with Easter 2024 school holidays, which meant some children were fasting and could not eat during the lunch period. Providers were advised to pack away the lunch so children could take it home to have when breaking their fast. Furthermore, lighter physical activity, plenty of rest breaks and shorter HAF delivery sessions were also available so children were able to feel comfortable and have fun without feeling left out due to religious beliefs. Providers recognised that even younger children who were not fasting were impacted, as parents who had their routine changed due to Ramadan found it difficult getting their children to a HAF provision in time.

As Leicester is a multicultural city, with many religions and ethnicities, it is crucial to ensure all children are treated equally and that there are no religious or cultural beliefs or practices that will create a barrier to accessing HAF.

Our HAF Providers

Leicester work with established providers across the city who have been able to make the HAF delivery possible and accessible to all families including primary, secondary and SEND children. Providers ensure meals meet the school food standards and children's dietary needs e.g., vegetarian, vegan, halal, and planned holiday activities take into consideration children's different beliefs and cultures.

Where our HAF Providers are from:

- Voluntary and community groups
- Museums
- Leisure Centres
- National professional sports clubs
- Local schools
- Holiday sports clubs
- Specialist outdoor activities providers
- Local nurseries
- Adventure playgrounds

Most of the providers are specialist sports providers, nurseries, primary and secondary schools, or outdoor adventurous providers which offers children a variety of options to try different providers throughout the year. Furthermore, many providers have an existing partnership with schools as some deliver during term time which enables them to create a stronger relationship between themselves and families through HAF. Our city HAF providers have strong relationships with local communities and therefore many activities delivered were based on feedback from, and the voice of, children and young people about what activities they wanted to do.

Children have been given the opportunity to try new and innovative activities and sports which they would not be able to access without HAF and have learned new skills. Our programmes in 2024 included a wide range of enrichment activities including: museums, arts and crafts, graffiti workshops, music/DJ sets, dancing, ice-skating, skateboarding/roller skates, planting vegetables, leap of faith high rope activity, outdoor and adventurous, active Leicester leisure passes, trips to ninja warriors, boast trampoline park, bowling, cinemas, pantomime, train station and work closely with our professional clubs Leicester City in the Community, Leicester Tigers Foundation and Leicester Riders Foundation. Many of our providers will cook and eat on site, this allows children to learn about nutrition and a healthy lifestyle through engaging activities, which is the best way to learn such important skills and knowledge.

Our network sessions provide providers the opportunity to come together, we facilitate sessions with specific professionals to further enhance their knowledge and understanding. We have provided nutritional sessions as well as team-based activities, provided and signposted to resources.

HAF Funding

The table below provides a breakdown of the overall funds spent on the HAF programme for Easter, Summer and Christmas 2024.

Summary of spend	Cost
Face-to-face holiday club provision (including provider costs, holiday club staff, venue costs, activity costs, food/meal costs and other costs directly associated with the provision of free holiday club places directly funded through the HAF programme).	£1,457,555
Publicising the scheme to eligible families and other communications (included in management & admin)	£0
Capital expenditure (e.g., catering or sports equipment for clubs)	£0
Management and administration of the programme by the LA $- 2 x$ full time, 3 x part time staff	£153,675
Other costs (e.g., translations, transport, provider staff training, booking systems etc.) (included as part of face-to-face provision costs)	£0
Total HAF Expenditure 2024/25	£1,611,230

How HAF was promoted?

Leicester has promoted the HAF programme through Pop Up Pantries occurring every February and May, which are the one-week half-term holiday breaks, when the HAF programme is not available. Pop Up Pantries, funded by the household support grant, are targeted at FSM families to provide them with free food and household essentials to help them during the shorter school holidays as many families struggle to feed their children as they would normally rely on school lunches. When families attend the Pop-Up Pantry events, banners and posters were displayed with details of the HAF programme with a QR code leading to the HAF page on the council website to provide further information. During these events, another source of communication was word of mouth and informal conversations with families to explain HAF programmes better as families had the opportunity to ask questions and familiarise themselves with the HAF team. The HAF team also encouraged providers to attend these events to promote their HAF delivery to the local community and have conversations about their inclusiveness and what they offer so families could build a trusting relationship from the start. Families were also supported to overcome the digital barrier of either lack of skills accessing the HAF website to make a booking or lack of access by calling a central telephone line.

The Leicester HAF team also prioritises communications sent out to schools so they can directly spread the information about upcoming HAF programmes to parents and eligible children. This is arranged through the Extranet to all Leicester schools and management regularly meet and present at headteacher development groups to further advocate HAF.

#HAF2024 was the hashtag providers were encouraged to use on any promotions they posted on social media to create awareness of HAF. This included posts and videos to show parents what the children participated in each programme. After delivery, each provider would make a case study or a video to post with successes of their provision.

HAF Promotions:

- Pop Up pantries
- Word of mouth/ HAF central phone line
- School extranet communications
- Headteacher development groups
- Social media accounts
- Press releases to local media outlets

Nutritional Education and the promotion of healthy lifestyles

Before every HAF delivery, the Leicester HAF team ensured providers planned to include nutritional education, enriching activities, physical activity, and a healthy meal. For example, resources such as websites covering nutrition for children, posters on healthy eating were sent to providers to help create innovative sessions for children. Examples of some of the resources sent are in Appendix C.

During quality assurance visits, these four aspects were also prioritised and inspected by the HAF team to ensure the nutritional content was being taught in a creative way by providers and children of all ages understood how they could implement this in their daily lives.

Providers were encouraged to arrange their own hot food provision where possible, but for some providers only cold food could be offered. For those providers who were not able to organise their own food, the Leicester HAF team partnered with Samworth Brothers, which is a local family business that produce and deliver food nationwide, to deliver a healthy packed lunch. This would include a healthy snack, fruit, vegetables, a drink throughout the day and a hot meal that also accommodated to dietary requirements, such as vegan, vegetarian, halal, gluten-free and any allergies that parents disclosed on their booking. Some providers would provide a cold or hot breakfast option, as many noticed children were coming to the delivery sessions hungry. This demonstrates the level of attention and quality of care children received in HAF programme delivery. On the last day of provision, some offered a rewarding meal to children as an incentive to attend all days of the HAF provision; for example, pizzas, children really enjoyed with a key message of a balanced diet is important. Surplus food at the end of the day is offered as a takeaway option to families and many do take up this offer to save food wastage.

Throughout the HAF provision, children took part in multiple new sports and activities to enhance their physical health and develop new skills. Providers were advised to change up the activities and have a timetable planned so children and families knew what to expect from their day. A successful strategy providers used was to ask children what they wanted to do for the day and as a result, children were more engaged in the activities and sports they had chosen. During the HAF quality assurance visits, officers looked to see if the sports and activities were inclusive/adapted, age appropriate and engaging. Providers ensured their activities were inclusive, by simplifying rules, making adaptations to the equipment and encouraging older children to support the younger children.

Sports leadership is also part of one provider's programme offer and offers older children direct experience of mentoring and leading sessions supervised by qualified staff to enhance life/employability skills.

Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

The Leicester HAF booking system included a section for parents to disclose any SEND their child had so the HAF team could work with the providers to ensure these children were offered a suitable placement. Many providers were able to accommodate non-SEND and SEND children at the same time, as they had the staffing infrastructure, resources such as a sensory room or sensory play and were experienced with working with SEND children on a day-to-day basis. Providers who managed their own bookings system were also advised that if they were unable to support the level of SEND to make the HAF team aware so that we could look to offer alternative provision. Two providers focused on specialist/high level need SEND/behavioural issues. They offered wheel-chair focused sports and encouraged non-SEND children to participate so all children experienced innovative inclusive activities.

Before attending the HAF sessions, providers were encouraged to provide site tours and 1:1 conversation so parents felt comfortable with the offer provided, working collaboratively to ensure their child would be well cared for and needs met in a safe, engaging environment, which for many parents is often an anxiety. Allowing providers to build trusting relationships with parents has resulted in repeat visits from the children every HAF delivery throughout the year. In some cases, providers were not able to deliver the full offer but adapted it for the family and ensured the food element was included. Many of our families have an established relationship with providers and through the trust and care provided return from one holiday period to another.

Signposting and referrals

Families were directed to visit the <u>Families Information and HAF</u> webpage on the Leicester City Council website. These webpages include information on how to get support on family health, finance, housing support and childcare, including which HAF activities and Pop-up Pantry events are on for each holiday period. The <u>Household Support Fund</u> webpage and phoneline was also signposted to families who were not able to access the HAF programme due to being ineligible or not vulnerable but still struggling financially. The cost-of-living crisis has meant that a lot of families needed the financial support.

<u>Mychoice</u> is a directory of local services that Leicester City Council hold, and this link was sent to providers to access help and advice on any topics or problems a family might be facing.

The <u>Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Board</u> website is a resource for HAF providers which was shared by Leicester HAF team. This website offers training on safeguarding such as child trafficking and Designated Safeguarding Lead and provides guidance on how to make referrals.

The <u>Better Off</u> website was also shared with providers who could then have this as another resource families could access support if they disclosed to providers about financial problems. Leicester City Council has commissioned this website as it helps to calculate which benefits families are entitled to and they can also use this online tool to work out how their household budget affects their income to be able to plan better financially.

Children and family feedback

Below are the testimonials or feedback that the HAF Team have received concerning the 2024 HAF Programme.

Easter

Feedback from Children

"Thank you, Mr R, We love coming to your camps, they are always fun. You always look after us...you always have."

"When is the next camp, I cannot wait."

"I loved the activities and outdoor play."

""I liked playing outdoor! I wish there are more days of this scheme."

"I am enjoying it, it is a lot of fun, when I came here, I didn't know anyone here except my sister, we both came together here the first time. I was a bit nervous because I didn't know anyone and didn't know what it would be like. The coaches are really friendly and made me feel welcome, they keep checking on me to make sure I'm alright. The other people are also friendly and with the different things that we do I got to know them, and it's been really good to play games together with them. will be coming to the next one, I hope we do the fitness testing again because I want to see if I have got better and get a better score than last time, and there are a few people I want to see if I can beat."

Feedback from parents/carers

The image below shows a thank you card from a parent thanking the provider "Your kindness means so much, knowing my daughter is happy and safe in a new environment"

Thank you all for having Remah at your Easter camp she has enjoyed at very much. The scheme is brilliant, hot food, breakfost, Actuities & a Aeling of knowing my daughter B happy and sofe in a dud appreciate. Your kindness means so much Reniah has said this one is the best she's been too after the few she has attended this year (her air School and her Into Uni) Thank you again

"Thank you, sir, for looking after my children, they love it here with you. It is very hard at the min so thank you."

Summer

Feedback from children:

"I love coming to The Grove, I don't want it to end!"

"I gained lots of confidence in leading something new after watching the staff across the week"

"We love cooking in summer club"

"I liked using the ladders and hurdles especially when we got to make up our own movements and show to the rest of the group"

Feedback from parents/carers

"My lad had the best time!!!"

"A great scheme my kids really enjoyed it"

"A fantastic scheme, my son loved it so much."

"My daughter can't wait to come back!"

"My children loved so much they went every day.."

"I was really grateful for the scheme as it gave my children a focus in the holiday's.

Winter 2024

Feedback from children

"It was such a big surprise when Santa came. He gave me two presents, and I've never received Christmas gifts before—it made me so happy!"

Feedback from parents/carers

"My son had the best time today. 'Best day of his life' apparently! Amazing staff, so friendly; and the wonderful hamper as well!" Parent of child aged 7

"It gave me so much peace of mind to know my children were somewhere safe, being fed and entertained. I could see them happy, forgetting all the stress we were going through. It was the best gift I could have asked for, and I'm so thankful for the programme." Parent



This picture shows a junior leader playing the game of uno with a group of girls

This picture shows a group of young boys listening to instruction on an outdoor football pitch



HAF Programme 2025

Our programme has continued to develop and strengthen in 2024, laying the foundations for further development in 2025 and to continue momentum to build the national case for HAF to continue post-2026.

We continue to work with trusted providers who the HAF team know deliver high quality provisions and have a good relationship with families and schools to be able to achieve high bookings and attendance every time. In 2025 we aim to build on the connectivity between providers through networking and a celebration event at the end of the Summer 2025 to recognise and celebrate the success of HAF. We will continue to host quarterly networking meetings and training which worked well to upskill providers in 2024. More professional development will be prioritised for providers in these networking meetings in 2025.

School holidays should hold some of the best memories in a young person's life. In Leicester City we are committed to delivering safe, fun, innovative HAF programmes with healthy food as part of this...making memories that will last a lifetime.

Appendix A – Map of providers across Leicester City



Appendix B – Quality Assurance Visit Record



Department HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND FOOD WINTER PROGRAMME 2024 for Education

QUALITY ASSURANCE VISIT RECORD

Provider:	
Delivery Venue:	
Date of QA: Start & End time of QA: No. of staff on Site – Lead(<u>s)</u> Assistant(s) Volunteer(s) SEND and 1:1 Workers – 0 – not applicable	<mark>On site visit</mark> or Telephone Check In
Completed by:	

Delivery hours (Session times/length):		Attendance (attendance today & total ca No. of HAF (match to register). No. of Paid places:	pacity):	
Healthy Food - Is a healthy meal being provid	ded?		Yes	No
Detail the meal /snacks being provided today				
Who is providing the food e.g. on site, Samworth etc				
allergies/ dietary requirements /religious				
/cultural requirements considered?				
What feedback have they had from children on				
meals?				
Healthy food/lifestyle – Has the programme		ned healthy food/lifestyle	Yes	No
activities/discussions as part of the day's acti	ivities			
Detail the healthy eating/lifestyle activities				
available today, resources available				
Visible posters and pictures around?				
What other activities have been offered/are				
planned to cover the theme?				
What feedback have they had from children?				
Enriching and physical activities				
Detail enriching/physical activities being				
provided today, are they age				
appropriate/inclusive?				
What other activities have been offered/are				
planned?				

What feedback have they had from children on			
these activities?			
Signposting and referrals - is the club providing	information/signposting/referrals?	Yes	No
Detail what information/signposting activity is	Verbal signposting to parents		
available today			
Policies and procedures - Are procedures in place	e to operate the holiday provision safely?	Yes	No
Were you asked to sign in/out, asked for ID?			
Do you feel that the sessions are well			
managed/planned and can see policies and			
procedures are being adhered to?			
What safety procedures are in place? (Covid			
and safeguarding)			
What strategies are in place to deliver			
accessible and inclusive provision?			
Any other comments / feedback from provider	?		
Any further support needed from HAF team/fu	ture recommendations to the provider?		

Please rate how well you feel the provision is meeting each of the HAF standards, based on your observations and discussions today (this information will support the HAF project team's learning for future HAF programmes)

	Very Poor	Poor	Acceptable	Good	Excellent
Healthy Food Provision (that meets the School					
Food Standards) Guidance on the Food					
Standards Agency Website					
Awareness and understanding of healthy eating					
Signposting and referrals					
Enriching activities					
Accessibility and inclusiveness					
Physical activity					
Environment and Sustainability					
Policies and Procedures					
Safeguarding					
Health and safety policies and procedures					
Insurance policies and procedures					
Did the provision meet your overall aims and objectives aligned to DfE guidance?					

Children's/Parent Feedback – if possible and appropriate, please ask children for their feedback and record their responses (please re-phrase questions as needed to aid understanding). Please note first name/initials and age where possible.

What have you enjoyed most about the holiday club?
Have you been able to try out any new activities? What were they? Did you enjoy them?
have you been usie to all out any new detailed. That were usely to a jou chipy them
Have you been able to try out any new foods? What were they? Did you enjoy them?
Is there anything that would make the holiday club better?

Appendix C – Eatwell Guide Resources







Source: Public Health England in association with the Weish Government, Food Standards Sociand and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Instanci



Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh Government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

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