

Holiday Activities and Food Programme Grants Scheme Guidance 2025/26

1. Background

Families can experience significant pressure points during school holidays with reduced income and increased financial pressures because of the costs of food, childcare, and enriching activities.

On Monday 20th January 2025 the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) announced the extension of the Department for Education’s **Holiday Activities and Food (HAF)** Programme across England and will enable Staffordshire County Council, to continue to work together with Partners to provide funded healthy meals and enriching activities to families of children in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) and other targeted groups during the Easter Summer and Winter school holidays 2025/26.

The Department of Education’s investment into the **HAF** Programme will be delivered through Grants to Local Authorities. Staffordshire County Council will work with accredited providers to deliver an ambitious **HAF** Programme.

2. Full HAF , HAF Light & Delivery Dates

Building on the success of the HAF Programmes to date, we are now seeking application from providers for delivery in 2025/26. Providers will provide eligible children and young people in receipt of benefits related Free School Meals with enriching activities and a hot meal during HAF sessions in the school holidays.

We are inviting organisations to apply for Grants to facilitate the delivery of HAF across Staffordshire for one, two or all three holiday programs.

Providers can apply to deliver:

- Full HAF Programme: 4 hours for 4 days during Easter/Winter School Holidays
- HAF Light Programme: 2 hours for 2 days during Easter/Winter School Holidays

- Full HAF Programme: 4 hours for 16 days during the Summer School Holidays
- HAF Light Programme: 2 hours for 8 days during Summer School Holidays

Easter Dates	Monday 14th April - Friday 25th April 2025
Summer Dates	Tuesday 22nd July – Friday 29th August 2025
Winter Dates	Monday 22nd December – Friday 2nd January 2026

3. Delivery Model

We are seeking to provide grants to organisations from the statutory (including our schools), private, community and voluntary sector whose proposals meet one of the categories outlined below:

- **Additional Places in Existing Holiday Provision):** To provide funding for additional places in an existing provision which meets the standards of the **HAF** Programme during the School Holidays
- **New Holiday Provision** To provide funding for new provision which meet the standards of the **HAF** Programme during the School Holidays

4. Eligible Children & Young People

The following children and young people are eligible for the **HAF** Programme in Staffordshire:

- Families of children who receive and/or are eligible for benefits-related Free School Meals aged 5-16 (*eligibility for Free School Meals is determined by the Department for Education*)
- Children under care order at home aged 5-16 (*as determined by Staffordshire County Council on referral*)
- Young carers aged 5-16 (*as determined by Staffordshire County Council on referral*)
- Fostered children aged 5-16 (*as determined by Staffordshire County Council on referral*)
- Children on a placement order aged 5-16 (*as determined by Staffordshire County Council on referral*)
- Siblings not eligible due to FSM regulation changes aged 5-16 (*as determined by Staffordshire County Council on referral*)

5 Staffordshire Needs:

We are seeking to prioritise applications from organisations seeking to deliver HAF provision in those districts and council wards demonstrating the highest level of needs as indicated in the table below.

District	Number of children eligible for Free School Meals
Newcastle Under Lyme	3140
Tamworth	2983
Cannock	2956
Stafford	2867
East Staffs	2790
Lichfield	2239
South Staffs	2211
Staffordshire Moorlands	2165

For additional information on the population needs of those districts please refer to The Staffordshire Observatory and filter according to the needs of children and families. [Staffordshire County Council Public WebMap](#)

6 Desired Outcomes

Our Aims for the HAF programme are to support children and young people (*and their families*) to be:

- **Happy and Healthy:** We want our children and young people to be resilient, happy and healthy, making choices that support wellbeing.
- **Feel Safe and Belong:** We want our children and young people to feel safe in their community and at home, are safeguarded from harm and have a sense of belonging.
- **Achieve and Contribute:** We want our children and young people to achieve their potential including a good education and employment, where they are supported to make positive contributions to their communities.

We believe the **HAF** Programme will contribute to the achievement of our priority outcomes by:

- Supporting children and young people to be healthy over the school holidays
- Supporting children and young people to be more active during the school holidays
- Supporting children and young people to take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience, character and wellbeing along with their wider educational attainment
- Supporting children and young people to be safe
- Seeking to prevent social isolation amongst children and young people
- Supporting children and young people to have greater knowledge of health and nutrition
- Support children and young people to be more engaged with school and other local services.

7. Provider Eligibility

The following organisations are eligible to deliver HAF and apply for grant funding:

- Voluntary and Community Organisations

- Constituted Groups or Clubs
- Uniformed Groups
- Registered Charities
- Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIO)
- Not-For-Profit Companies
- Private Limited Companies (LTD)
- Public Limited Companies (PLC)
- Limited Liability Partnerships (LLP)
- Private Unlimited Companies
- Community Interest Companies (CIC)
- Schools and Multi Academy Trusts (MACs)
- Early Years and Childcare Providers
- Statutory Organisations (including District, Borough, Town and Parish Councils)
- Organisations operating internationally, nationally, regionally and/or locally are considered eligible.

HAF Grants will **not** be awarded to:

- Individuals
- Organisations based outside the United Kingdom
- One organisation applying on behalf of another (including Consultants).
- Organisations prohibited from working with children, young people and families.
- Organisations who do not meet the requirements of the Department of Education (DfE).

8. DfE Holiday Activities & Food Programme Framework - Provision Requirements

The Department for Education has developed a framework of standards of what they expect from organisations delivering the **HAF** Programme.

Organisations receiving HAF funding **MUST** adhere to the Standards Framework. Organisations unable to adhere to the Framework will be unsuccessful in their application. Providers who are successful in their application for grant funding will have funding withdrawn if they fail to comply with the Standards Framework.

The framework can be accessed on the HAF website and at the link below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/holiday-activities-and-food-programme/holiday-activities-and-food-programme-2023>

Further details of the standards are available below.

Standard:	Standard Overview:
Food	<p>Providers are required to provide a minimum of one meal a day. This could be Breakfast, Lunch or Tea/Dinner. All Food (<i>including snacks</i>) provided through the activity must meet the School Food Standards, developed through the Department of Education. Most of the food served through the Programme should be hot where possible. There may be exceptional circumstances where a hot meal is not possible, and a cold alternative may be appropriate. Food provided through the Programme must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Comply with appropriate Legislation, Regulations, Policies, Procedures and Guidance in relation to food preparation. ▪ Take into consideration allergies and dietary requirements inc Natasha’s Law regarding food labelling. ▪ Consider any religious or cultural requirements for food. <p>Providers can view the School Food Standards here.</p> <p>If children on non-HAF-funded places are given the option to bring a packed lunch, we expect the provider to ensure that children attending through HAF have the same choice. This could be fulfilled through the provider deciding to provide packed lunches for HAF children. All packed lunches must meet the school food standards.</p>
Enriching Activities	<p>Providers are required to facilitate fun and enriching activities that enable children and young people (<i>and in some instances their families</i>) to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop new skills or knowledge ▪ Consolidate existing skills and knowledge ▪ Try out new experiences which could include physical activities, for example, football, table tennis or cricket, creative activities, for example: putting on a play, junk modelling or drumming workshops or experiences, for example: a nature walk or visiting a city farm.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have fun and socialise
Physical Activities	<p>Holiday clubs must provide activities that meet the physical activity guidelines on a daily basis.</p> <p>In line with those guidelines, we expect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all participating in the HAF programme engage in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity for at least 60 minutes per day • all participating in the HAF programme should engage in a range of physical activity to develop movement skills, muscular fitness, and bone strength • providers 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 <p>Meeting the physical activity requirement does not have to be in the form of a structured activity session, but might include active travel, free play and sports.</p>
Nutritional Education	<p>Providers are required to include an element of nutritional education each day aimed at improving the knowledge and awareness around healthy eating for children (<i>and their families</i>). This nutritional education is not required to be formal learning activities and could for example include activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ getting children involved in food preparation and cooking ▪ growing fruit and vegetables ▪ taste tests <p>Innovative approaches to Nutritional Education will be encouraged.</p>
Food Education for Families	<p>Providers are required to include at least weekly training and advice sessions for families (e.g., <i>Parents, Carers or Guardians</i>). These sessions should provide advice on how to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • source • prepare • cook nutritious and low-cost food <p>This nutritional education should include the provision of informal information, advice and guidance and could also include access to the Staffordshire Family Hub Virtual Cooking Project which is available here.</p>
Signposting and Referrals	<p>Providers are required to provide information, advice, guidance, signposting or referrals to other agencies, services, organisations, or networks of support which benefit the children (and their families) who are attending the Providers activities. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The District Family Hub Family Hubs - Staffordshire County Council

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Citizen’s Advice ▪ Child Health and Wellbeing Services, School Nurses, Dentists or Other Healthcare Practitioners ▪ Family Support Services and/or Children’s Social Care, Housing Support Officers ▪ Jobcentre Plus ▪ Organisations providing financial education, information, advice and Guidance ▪ Aiming High
<p>Policies, Procedures and Guidance:</p>	<p>Providers are required to evidence, demonstrate and explain their Safeguarding Practices. Providers must have relevant and appropriate Policies, Procedures and Guidance in place in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Safeguarding ▪ Allegations against staff and whistleblowing policy ▪ Complaints Policy ▪ Recruitment and Selection Policy; including safer staff recruitment process ▪ Health, Safety and Wellbeing ▪ Food Safety Policy ▪ Public and Employers Liability Insurance ▪ Designated Safeguarding Lead Name ▪ Designated Safeguarding Lead Level 3 Certification ▪ Name and address of Food Provider, or Food business registration details ▪ Food Hygiene Certificates (where staff are/will be handling food) ▪ Lockdown Policy/Procedure <p>Staffordshire County Council has set out additional requirements in relation to Safeguarding as outlined below.</p>
<p>Safeguarding Children,</p>	<p>Organisations facilitating HAF activities through this grant must ensure the following are in place:</p>

**Families and
Vulnerable
People:**

Staffordshire County Council will require these documents to be provided as part of the compliance checks as detail in the section Policies, Procedures and Guidance

- Safeguarding Policy
- Whistleblowing
- Recruitment and Selection Policy, including Safer Staff recruitment process
- Allegations Policy/Process – Against members of staff
- Deliver safeguarding practices in line with local inter-agency Safeguarding Policies, Procedures, Guidance and Standards as determined by the Staffordshire Safeguarding Children’s Board
- Have a thorough knowledge and understanding of Child Protection and Safeguarding responsibilities pertaining to children and vulnerable adults, and for this to be appropriately reflected within written Policies, Procedures and Guidance
- Ensure the organisation’s Safeguarding Lead has completed at least SSCB Level 3 Safeguarding Training after the initial 2 years as Designated Safeguarding Lead at Level 2. This should be refreshed at Level 3 every 2 years
- Ensure all other staff (including volunteers) have completed a minimum of SSCB Level 1 Safeguarding Training which is kept up to date in line with SSCB guidelines.
- Have a written Recruitment and Selection policy and procedure which is fully compliant with ‘Safer Recruitment’ principles and recommendations and reflects an embedded commitment to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults
- Have a written Policy in relation to the employment of ex-offenders including the assessment of positive DBS disclosures
- Seek to ensure that at least one member of any interview panel has successfully undertaken Safer Recruitment Training
- Ensure it only recruits and deploys staff (including volunteers) that have been subject to an Enhanced DBS check and can demonstrate this has been completed by the employing

organisation and ensure future compliance with any requirements introduced by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

- Maintain a current record of the details of all staff and volunteers Enhanced DBS information including the issue date, number and counter signatory body
- Report in a timely manner any safeguarding concerns to Staffordshire's Childrens Advice Service
- Maintain a current record of all staff's training and development
- Respect confidentiality of users unless there is a safeguarding concern
- Complete risk assessments for the service and promote safe practices during delivery
- Comply with the venues Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policies, Procedures and Guidance
- Complete relevant accident and injury records where necessary
- Ensure a lone working policy where applicable is implemented to ensure the welfare of staff
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers receive training and support in relation to inclusivity and accessibility

The HAF Framework also provides guidance and details with regard to Safeguarding and what is expected and required by organisations.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. We want every HAF 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.

HAF providers must adhere to the guidance 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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care acting if you identify children to be at risk of harm <p>Additional documents for organisations to review, understand and to implement with regards to Safeguarding and their provision are below:</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2</p> <p>After-school clubs, community activities and tuition: safeguarding guidance for providers - GOV.UK</p> <p>Staffordshire Safeguarding Childrens Partnership is also an excellent place for Safeguarding support and guidance for organisations supporting the HAF programme here in Staffordshire – Website Home - Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership</p>
<p>Accessibility and Inclusiveness:</p>	<p>Staffordshire is a large county with over 400 schools and academies providing education for around 120,000 pupils. About 13.5% of pupils in Staffordshire have special educational needs compared with a national average of 15.3%.</p> <p>The number of children and young people with an EHCP (Education Health and Care Plan) have been steadily rising each year from 3,500 in 2014 to 6,200 in 2021. There are far more children with SEND that are educated in a special school in Staffordshire than the national average (24% compared with 9%).</p> <p>Whilst SEND is not an eligible criterion in isolation, there is an expectation that if a child with SEND requests to book on your provision, HAF providers must adhere to the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice. SEND Code of Practice January 2015.pdf</p> <p>Providers should provide children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) with inclusive access to activities and make reasonable adjustments where possible. They should be proactive in identifying and removing barriers to access, and work in partnership with families to ensure provision is appropriate and safe and if necessary, signpost to alternative provision where required</p>
<p>Ofsted Registration</p>	<p>Providers who are not already registered with Ofsted are not required to do so just to participate in the HAF Programme.</p> <p>Guidance on the exemptions from registering with Ofsted is available at: Registration exemptions - Childminders and childcare providers: register with Ofsted - Guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) It is the responsibility of Providers to ensure if they are required to be registered with Ofsted or not.</p>

9. HAF Costs

We are seeking to provide Grants to organisations to support the delivery of activities within the **HAF** Programme. Expenditure against the Grant must relate to the delivery of the agreed activities, which may include:

- Staffing
- Volunteer expenses
- Equipment to deliver activities which includes play resources
- Nutritious food
- Activity instructors
- Professional coaches
- Room hire
- Transport
- Administration costs
- Relevant training for staff and/or volunteers
- Grants used to extend a current scheme or project or for a new idea
- Projects which provide a good range of activities including sport and physical activity, dance, drama, outdoor games, arts and crafts, digital and creative projects and wellbeing activities
- SEND provision where the activities are easily accessible and appealing to appropriate age groups
- Projects that engage with older children and young people and focus on activities suitable for that age group or a single activity such as sports, music, dance or creative and wellbeing projects
- Projects that deliver family-based activities to parents, carers and other family members e.g., advice, recipes, source and prepare and cook low-cost nutritious meals, virtual activities including virtual cooking can also be funded if food is also provided for a nutritious meal.

Expenditure against the Grant must relate to the delivery of the agreed activities, and the following expenditure will **not** be funded through Grants:

- Existing Provision (*new or expansion to existing non HAF provision*)
- Projects which are not focused on direct delivery
- Contingency costs (*e.g., funds to provide a source of income or for fundraising activities*)
- Provision that does not target children and young people who meet the eligibility criteria
- Projects that do not bring benefits to the communities of Staffordshire
- Activities which promote political or religious beliefs
- Places for children and young people who are not residents of Staffordshire (*or who do not attend a Staffordshire Education Setting*)
- Unreasonable costs where management and overhead costs exceed expectations
- VAT that you can recover

It is important to recognise that the Grant should only be used in connection with providing activities to children (and in some instances their families) who are eligible for the **HAF** Programme. Providers can provide places for other children (*and in some instances their families*) through a fee-paying arrangement.

Successful organisations will receive 50% of the Grant value on satisfactory receipt of a completed Grant Determination Pack and Terms and Conditions by Staffordshire County Council in October. The remaining 50% will be issued following the successful completion of the evaluation and monitoring return.

10. Funding Period

The funding period available is for the Easter, summer, and winter 2025/26- school holidays – half terms are not included.

11. Grant Funding Decision Making Process

Applications will be evaluated and moderated on receipt by Staffordshire County Council to ensure applications are compliant with the requirement of the Scheme. Applications will also be assessed using the Grants Criteria (*outlined below*) before being considered.

Decisions will be final, and will consider the;

- Number of free school meals in each district

- The number of applications received per district
- The venue proposed for delivery and if it is in an area of need
- A geographical spread of applications which is targeted at the most in need.
- All decisions will be based on how well the applications meet the criteria.

We will prioritise applications which are received from organisations seeking to facilitate **HAF** Programmes within districts and County Council wards demonstrating the highest level of needs. This will enable us to ensure that funding for provision both meets the needs of our eligible children (*and their families in some instances*) and is accessible within their district and/or council ward.

12. Evaluation & Moderation Criteria

Grants received by Staffordshire County Council will be moderated to ensure applications are compliant with the requirement of the Scheme. The moderation criteria are outlined below:

Assessment Moderation (PASS/FAIL)
Definition:
<p>PASS: Applications received by Staffordshire County Council) have no omissions and all mandatory questions are completed.</p> <p>FAIL: Applications received by Staffordshire County Council have omissions and not all mandatory questions are completed.</p>
<p>PASS: Applications received by Staffordshire County Council include the mandatory supporting documentation required (<i>as set out in the Application</i>).</p> <p>FAIL: Applications received by Staffordshire County Council do not include the mandatory supporting documentation required (<i>as set out in the Application</i>).</p>
<p>PASS: Applications received by Staffordshire County Council meet the required Safeguarding Requirements (<i>as set out in the Application</i>).</p> <p>FAIL: Applications received by Staffordshire County Council do not meet the required Safeguarding Requirements (<i>as set out in the Application</i>).</p>
<p>PASS: Applications received by Staffordshire County Council meet the requirements of the Grant (<i>as set out In the Guidance and Application</i>) and there is no evidence to suggest the application should be rejected.</p> <p>FAIL: Applications received by Staffordshire County Council do not meet the requirements of the Grant (<i>as set out In the Guidance and Application</i>) and there is evidence to suggest the application should be rejected.</p> <p>Applications will also be assessed using the Grants Criteria (<i>outlined below</i>) before being considered by a multi-agency Decision Making Panel:</p>

Assessment Criteria:		
Evidence:	Score Criteria:	Weighting:
Section 2	<p>Activity Proposal and Planning: Assessors will be looking for evidence that the activity is inclusive and has a defined aim and purpose and has been well planned out. It is achievable with key milestones and deliverables set within the timescales of the HAF Programme.</p> <p>Assessors will also be looking at how many children and young people will benefit from the project and how it will meet the needs of the target beneficiaries especially for those within priority groups and areas of greatest need.</p>	20%

Section 3	Activity and Food Standards: Assessors will be looking for clearly articulated evidence of how the activity will meet the Standards Framework, set out by the Department of Education. This includes the Standards relating to Food, Enriching Activities, Physical Activities, Nutritional Education, Food Education for Families, Signposting and Referrals and Policies, Procedures and Guidance.	30%
Section 4	Safeguarding Assessors will be looking for clearly articulated evidence of how the activity will safeguard children and their families participating in the activity. Assessors will make this assessment in addition to the Compliance Checks undertaken through the moderation of the application.	20%
Section 5	Partnership Working: Assessors will be looking for evidence of how others such as volunteers / partners / communities are involved in the activity. Will the funding add value to the community?	15%
Section 6	Value for Money Project Costs: Assessors will be looking the project offers good value for money, taking into the account number of people who will benefit and if any other sources of funding have also been awarded. Costs are reasonable, management costs or overheads are kept to a minimum.	15%

13. **EEQU & Attendance Registers**

Providers will be required to use our online HAF platform '**EEQU**' and complete attendance registers on a daily basis . Attendance details must include:

- No of children attending the holiday club
- No of days each child attended
- No of bookings made but child did not attend
- No of cancellations
- No of walk ins

Staffordshire County Council will work in partnership with Providers to market and promote all HAF funded clubs, however there is an expectation that providers market their provision also.

Attendance less than 60% will result in a reduction or non-payment of the second grant payment.

Quality Assurance and monitoring of HAF provision will be completed and will link to the Quality Framework and include:

- Quality assurance visits
- Feedback from children, parents/carers
- Quality of compliance information

14. Timescales

Activity:	Timescale:
Applications Open	Tuesday 21 st January
Application Closing Date	Monday February 3 rd 2025 at noon
Grant Award Notification via email	Week beginning 3 rd March 2025

CONTACT DETAILS

Email	holidayactivitiesandfoodprogramme@staffordshire.gov.uk
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