



Department
for Education

Grants to fund local coordination of free holiday activities and healthy food for disadvantaged children during 2021

Guidance for local authorities

February 2021

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Change log

Version	Issued date	Page number	Changes made to LA guidance 2021
1.0	February 2021		Final version issued to begin 2021 delivery

Context

1. This document provides information for local authorities delivering the Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF) in 2021.
2. On 8 November 2020, the Government announced that the Holiday Activities and Food programme, which has provided healthy food and enriching activities to disadvantaged children since 2018, will be expanded across the whole of England in 2021.
3. The programme will cover the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021, and we will make up to £220m available to local authorities for the programme. It will be available to children in every local authority in England and will build on the success of the local holiday programmes that the Government have been funding since 2018.

Background

4. School holidays can be particular pressure points for some families because of increased costs (such as food and childcare) and reduced incomes. For some children that can lead to a holiday experience gap - with children from disadvantaged families less likely to access organised out-of-school activities; more likely to experience 'unhealthy holidays' in terms of nutrition and physical health and are more likely to experience social isolation.
5. Free holiday clubs are a response to this issue and evidence suggests that they can have a positive impact on children and young people. It also shows they work best when they provide consistent and easily accessible enrichment activities, when they offer more than just breakfast or lunch, and when they involve children (and parents) in food preparation.

Aims & objectives

6. In 2021, we will be providing grant funding to all local authorities across England to coordinate free holiday provision - including healthy food and enriching activities - for children who receive benefits-related free school meals. It will be optional for eligible children to attend this provision if they wish.
7. As was the case in previous years, the focus of the programme will be on children eligible for benefits-related free school meals. Local authorities are asked to ensure that the offer of free holiday club provision is available for all children eligible for free school meals in your area though we would not expect all eligible children to participate.

8. The aim of the programme is to make free places available to children eligible for free school meals for the equivalent of at least four hours a day, four days a week and for six weeks a year. This would cover four weeks in the summer and a week's worth of provision in each of the Easter and Christmas holidays in 2021.
9. Local authorities and their providers will have flexibility about how they deliver this level of provision to best serve the needs of children and families in their area. For example, in the Christmas and Easter holidays, local areas could spread a week's worth of provision across a two-week period. In the summer, you may wish to spread the equivalent number of hours over a longer period. There will also be flexibility in how the programme can be delivered to older children, for example it might be later in the day or through shorter sessions.
10. We also encourage local authorities to make the holiday clubs available to any children not eligible for free school meals, who can pay to attend. This might be through operating bespoke provision, or operating as part of already existing holiday provision in the area, with the likelihood of a mixed arrangement depending on the local supply and demand for provision.

Coordination of HAF programme

11. Local authorities will receive grant funding to deliver the HAF programme in their area. This will cover the provision of the free holiday places and the coordination of the programme locally. Some local authorities may coordinate it themselves, and others may choose to work with another organisation to coordinate the provision on their behalf. We recognise and greatly value the important role that community and voluntary organisations have played in this programme over the last three years, and we encourage all local authorities to work with a wide range of partners in the delivery of this programme.
12. Based on the experiences of our HAF coordinators in previous years, we believe the key elements of the role of coordinating holiday provision should involve:
 - a. mapping the holiday provision in your area to ensure that holiday provision exists and is supporting the areas of greatest need;
 - b. establishing a steering group to support implementation and delivery that should include representatives from a wide range of local bodies, including local police and other uniform services, local public health officials, school leaders, youth services, social services, charities and the voluntary sector:

- c. drawing in wider support to enhance the local programme, for example bringing in funding from other sources such as philanthropists, sponsors, food providers as well as supermarkets and local businesses providing these organisations fit with the values and aspirations of the programme;
- d. developing a local plan for provision in your area, based on what you know about local supply and demand;
- e. ensuring that sufficient, adequate provision is available across your area for children with SEND/additional needs;
- f. awarding funding to holiday club providers in order to ensure there is enough provision to meet demand;
- g. supporting all providers to meet our framework of standards (including safeguarding requirements and meals that meet school food standards) and to improve the quality of their provision;
- h. working with families to reduce dependency by providing nutritional education for children and educating families around purchasing and preparing healthy meals on a sustainable basis;
- i. promoting and advertising provision, including working with local schools and other agencies to encourage the most at need children to attend;
- j. working with other local services or agencies to ensure a joined-up and efficient approach (e.g. signposting, sharing resources); and
- k. building local partnerships and sharing learning and good practice among local partners.

13. It should be noted that some areas will already have well developed models for coordinating holiday provision and as a result we recognise that they may not need to take all of the above steps.

14. What we're trying to achieve through this programme is for children who attend provision:

- a. To eat more healthily over the school holidays;
- b. To be more active during the school holidays;
- c. To take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience, character and well being along with their wider education attainment;
- d. To be safe and not to be socially isolated;
- e. To have greater knowledge of health nutrition; and
- f. To be more engaged with school and other local services.

15. We also want to ensure that the children and families who participate in this programme develop their understanding of nutrition and food budgeting as well as being effectively signposted towards other information and support for example health, employment and education.

16. As with our previous programmes, you will have flexibility as to how you deliver this in your area, providing you reach the aims and objectives set out above.

Funding

17. We know that there are administrative costs associated with the setting up and running the HAF programme and ensuring you have sufficient staff. As set out in the grant determination letter, we expect that LAs will not spend more than 10% of the total funding allocated on the costs associated with running the programme.

18. The remaining 90% should be used to fund places for FSM eligible children and this 90% can be used flexibly.

19. Funding can be used to support a comprehensive, inclusive and accessible offer (e.g. setting up new provision where needed, paying for additional staff to expand existing provision or to meet additional needs etc.)

20. Funding can also be used to support quality improvement, for example, money to bring in activity providers such as sports coaches or money to establish partnerships with catering organisations.

Capital Expenditure

21. Funding can also be used to purchase equipment for the programme, for example, to improve the catering or sports equipment at an individual club. However, only where this expenditure meets our criteria for classification as capital expenditure, the amount you spend on this should be limited to 2% of your overall programme expenditure.

22. Capital expenditure is classed as:

- a. Individual assets worth over £2,500
- b. Grouped assets, that is assets of a similar nature that are purchased at the same time, which cost £2,500 or more overall
- c. Bulked assets, for example a bulk purchase of equipment where the value of the individual item is below the set value, which cost £2,500 or more overall.

23. Any equipment that does not meet the above criteria, will not be classed as capital expenditure and will not therefore be subject to the 2% cap mentioned above in paragraph 21.

Payments and reporting

24. In order to derive maximum learning from the funded activity, and in order to best meet the Department's policy objectives for this funding, LAs will be responsible for gathering management information from the providers and clubs they fund about the children and families they are supporting. Following each holiday period (Easter, Summer and Christmas) we will ask for LAs to report on their activity over the holiday period.

25. The requirements for LAs are set out in the grant determination letter which we will use to monitor performance at a high level. LAs will have the autonomy to set other performance indicators to measure their own performance (or that of partners).

26. Payments will be made by Department for Education at the following milestones:

- a. In March 2021 (the 2020-21 allocation listed in Annex A), upon satisfactory receipt of a delivery plan from the Authority by 19 February 2021 setting out the intended scale and reach of their programme for Easter 2021;
- b. In June 2021 (up to 50% of the 2021-22 allocation), upon satisfactory receipt of a report by 14 May 2021 detailing the delivery of their programme at Easter 2021 along with a delivery plan for Summer 2021;
- c. In November 2021 (up to 30% of the 2021-22 allocation), upon satisfactory receipt of a report by 15 October detailing the delivery of the programme at Summer 2021 along with a delivery plan for Christmas 2021;
- d. In February 2022 (up to 20% of the 2021-22 allocation), upon satisfactory receipt of a report by 29 January detailing the delivery of the programme at Christmas 2021 along with final report for the whole 2021 programme and a certificate of expenditure/statement of grant usage.

27. The above reports will be provided in accordance with guidance and templates issued by the Department, and will include data on the children and families attending clubs in each local authority area.

28. Local Authorities will be required to work with the Department and with any support organisation appointed to work on behalf of the Department in relation to the monitoring and delivery of the Programme.

29. All of the data and information collected by the clubs and providers should all be collected in strict adherence to GDPR.
30. An evaluation will be undertaken this year to evaluate the impact the programme has had and will focus on delivery across the summer. This will be undertaken by a national provider and will be subject to a tendering process. We expect all LAs to cooperate with the evaluation of the HAF programme.

Support for LAs

31. The DfE HAF LA Implementation team will support LAs in delivering the HAF programme, focusing initially on the Easter holidays. Each LA will have access to a named contact who they will be able to contact with queries and requests for support. As part of the package of support, group meetings, regular communications and the sharing of resources and best practice will be promoted and facilitated.
32. We are also procuring a national support contract which will be in place from April 2021. The Department launched an invitation to tender (ITT) on 7th January 2021 for a support contractor to provide support, advisory and performance monitoring services to assist local authorities with ensuring holiday provision for school-age children. Once in place, the support contractor will work closely with the Department and local authorities across England to provide practical planning and delivery advice from Spring 2021 onwards.
33. We encourage LAs to work closely with neighbouring LAs and to establish clear cross border working protocols to ensure that adequate provision and support is offered to children from surrounding LAs.

Eligibility

FSM eligible children

34. As with previous years, the primary focus of the programme will be on school-aged children eligible for benefits related Free School Meals, and LAs must ensure that the offer of free holiday club provision is available for all children eligible for free school meals in their Local Authority area. This does not mean they are all required to attend as the provision is voluntary.
35. The free holiday club places must be targeted at children who are eligible for and receiving benefits-related free school meals.

Other children and families with need

36. If you can demonstrate that:

- i. you are offering the programme comprehensively across the full geographical area; and
- ii. fully meeting demand from free school meal eligible children in the area:

Then you can seek approval from the Department to use up to 15% of your programme funding to provide free or subsidised holiday club places for children who are not in receipt of benefits-related free school meals but who are considered by the local authority as vulnerable or in need of this provision. For example, this may include children assessed as being in need, looked-after children, children with an EHC plan (education, health and care), children assessed as otherwise vulnerable, or children living in areas of high deprivation.

Community and Voluntary organisations

37. We recognise and greatly value the important role that community and voluntary organisations have played in this programme over the last 3 years. We encourage all local authorities to work with a wide range of partners in the delivery of this programme.

38. Some local authorities may coordinate the programme themselves, and others may choose to work with another organisation to coordinate the provision on their behalf.

39. Where LAs work with community and voluntary organisations whether as a coordinator or as a delivery partner, we expect this to be done on a cost recovery basis so that these organisations are fully funded for the work they undertake.

Standards for holiday provision

40. We have developed a framework of standards over the past few years that are designed to provide a benchmark of what we expect from those delivering the HAF programme.

41. One of the key elements of the role of a HAF programme coordinator will be to improve the quality of provision across the local area and to ensure that providers are supported to meet the high-level standards.

42. We acknowledge that it may be difficult for some providers to meet all of these standards from the outset. We are keen to build capacity and capability in the system and we are keen that local authorities support providers during the period leading up to the holidays in order that they will meet the standards. In support of

this, local coordinators will be able to award funding to providers that don't meet the standards at the start of the grant period as long as they put a specific plan in place to ensure that the standards are met before the start of the holidays.

43. We expect all providers who are funded through the HAF programme to meet our framework of standards. The standards that we expect for 2021 providers are:

- a. **Food:** clubs must provide at least one meal a day (breakfast, lunch or tea) and all food provided at the club (including snacks) must meet [school food standards](#). Our expectation is that the majority of food served by providers will be hot, however, we acknowledge that there will be occasions when this is not possible and that a cold alternative should be used. All food provided as part of the programme must comply with regulations on food preparation and take into account allergies and dietary requirements and preferences as well as any religious or cultural requirements for food.
- b. **Enriching activities:** clubs must provide fun and enriching activities that provide children with opportunities to develop new skills or knowledge, to consolidate existing skills and knowledge, or to try out new experiences. This could include: physical activities such as football, table tennis, cricket; creative activities such as putting on a play, junk modelling, drumming workshops; or experiences such as a nature walk, visiting a city farm etc. Authorities should consider how they can support providers to deliver a rich and varied mix of fun and enriching activities which are age-appropriate.
- c. **Physical activities:** clubs must provide activities which meet the Physical Activity Guidelines on a daily basis.
- d. **Nutritional education:** clubs 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, and taste tests.
- e. **Food education for families and carers:** clubs must include at least weekly training and advice sessions for parents, carers or other family members which provide advice on how to source, prepare and cook nutritious and low-cost food.
- f. **Signposting and referrals:** clubs must 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, information provided by:

- i. Citizen's Advice
 - ii. School Nurses, dentists or other healthcare practitioners
 - iii. Family Support Services or Children's Services
 - iv. Housing Support Officers
 - v. Jobcentre Plus
 - vi. Organisations providing financial education
- g. **Policies and procedures:** clubs must be able to demonstrate and explain their safeguarding arrangements and have relevant and appropriate policies and procedures in place in relation to:
- i. Safeguarding
 - ii. Health and Safety
 - iii. Insurance
 - iv. Accessibility and inclusiveness
 - v. Where appropriate, clubs must also be compliant with the Ofsted requirements for working with children

Ofsted registration

44. Holidays clubs **may** need to register with Ofsted and there are benefits associated with doing so, but it is not a requirement for clubs and providers participating in the HAF programme and we know that not all will need or want to do that. Guidance on the exemptions to Ofsted registration are set out here [Registration exemptions - Childminders and childcare providers: register with Ofsted - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/registration-exemptions-childminders-and-childcare-providers-register-with-ofsted).

45. Families may be eligible for tax free childcare or the childcare costs element of Universal Credit, through which 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. Further information is available via this link: <https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/universal-credit>

Impact of COVID-19

46. The Department acknowledges that delivery of the programme at Easter could potentially be impacted by COVID-19. In some cases, face-to-face delivery of holiday clubs may not be possible in the Authority's area and remote delivery of the programme may, in some circumstances, be more viable.

47. If the Authority cannot hold face-to-face holiday clubs as a result of COVID-19, the Authority may operate flexibly to ensure that eligible children still receive the type of support detailed in paragraph 14 and 15. For example, this may involve children receiving food parcels that provide healthy meals, activity packs along with access to online support if they are unable to congregate in holiday clubs due to COVID-19. Our LA implementation team will work with LAs to keep them up to date on the impact of changes as the programme progresses.



Department for Education

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