

Sefton Council – Information for HAF Providers

2024/25



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Contents

Overview of the HAF Programme	2
Who Can Apply for HAF Funding?	4
Provision Requirements	1
Additional Provision Requirements	4
HAF Programme Eligibility	7
Applications, Funding and Grant Payments	8
Application Calendar	9
Monitoring	10
Frequently Asked Questions	11

Overview of the HAF Programme

The government has made funding available to local authorities to coordinate free holiday provision, including healthy food and enriching activities. School holidays can be pressure points for some families due to increased costs and reduced income. This 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
- more likely to experience social isolation

Free holiday clubs are a response to this issue and evidence suggests that they 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.

Who the programme is for

The HAF programme funding is for children from **reception to year 11 (inclusive) who receive benefits-related free school meals (FSM)**. Providers can use up to 15% of their funding allocation to provide places for children who are not in receipt of benefits-related free school meals but who may be vulnerable or who they believe could benefit from HAF provision.

Benefits-related FSMs 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. 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. More information on FSM eligibility can be found [here](#).

Aims of the programme

There are many benefits for children who attend the HAF programme. We want to encourage all HAF providers to ensure a high-quality experience that will result in children:

- receiving healthy and nutritious meals
- maintaining a healthy level of physical activity
- being happy, having fun and meeting new friends
- developing a greater understanding of food, nutrition and other health-related issues
- taking part in fun and engaging activities that support their development
- feeling safe and secure

- getting access to the right support services
- returning to school feeling engaged and ready to learn

Families can also benefit, when HAF providers include their needs in planning and delivering their programme. This could be through:

- providing opportunities to get involved in cookery classes
- ensuring they are signposted towards other sources of information and support, such as health services or employment and education opportunities
- Providing opportunities for parents/ carers to enter education or work

The Core Offer

The HAF programme runs for 6 weeks (24 days) spread across the Easter, summer, and Christmas school holidays.

Over Easter:

- Participating children should be offered 1 week (4 days) of face-to-face provision.

Over summer:

- Participating children should be offered 4 weeks of face-to-face provision, covering 16 days

Over Christmas:

- We expect that all participating children should be offered a week (4 days) of provision.
- This can be 4 days of face-to-face provision or 2 days of face-to-face provision complimented by 2 days of HAF support which can be provided in the form of high-quality food hampers and activity packs.

Length of HAF sessions

All HAF funded sessions should be a minimum of 4 hours. We know that some individual providers want the flexibility to offer longer or shorter sessions, and this is possible within this description. For example, to meet the needs of secondary-aged children in the summer, a provider could offer shorter sessions, which included food and activities for 2 to 3 hours and for 3 to 4 days per week. This could be complemented with opportunities for children to undertake voluntary work, building new skills or trips and experiences.

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Who Can Apply for HAF Funding?

Organisations across the statutory (including our schools), private, community and voluntary sectors are invited to apply to the HAF Programme Grants:

- Voluntary and Community Organisations
- Constituted Groups or Clubs
- Faith Groups
- Uniformed Groups
- Registered Charities
- Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIO)
- Not-For-Profit Companies
- Private Limited Companies (LTD)
- Private Limited Companies
- 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 Programme 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).

Provision Requirements

Enriching Activities

All HAF-funded provision must provide fun and enriching activities that allow children 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

We expect all HAF providers to provide a balanced programme. For providers whose primary focus is set around a specific activity or sport, we expect them to ensure that children attending their provision benefit from a holistic and varied experience.

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.

Food

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](#).

The expectation is that most of the food served by providers will be hot. However, we acknowledge that there will be occasions when this is not possible, and a cold alternative may be used. Providers are welcome to prepare food on site or use external caterers and suppliers.

All food provided as part of the programme must:

- comply with regulations on food preparation
- take into account allergies and dietary requirements - [allergy guidance for schools](#)
- take into account any religious or cultural requirements for food

There is flexibility in the design of the food provision which should always be tailored to ensure that all food meets the dietary needs of the children and families who attend. The food served should also be appropriate for the nature of the session, for example, offering cold packed lunches for parks or outdoor venues or for day trips. Food can be prepared on site or can be organised through an external caterer if required.

Increasing awareness of healthy eating, healthy lifestyles, and positive behaviours

We expect providers to incorporate helping children to understand more about the benefits of healthy eating and nutrition into their programme. These do not need to be formal learning activities. This could include:

- 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

Free Resources:

[Healthy Eating Resources](#) | Public Health England

[Free Teaching Resources](#) | Food a fact of life

[Food Facts](#) | Change4Life

[Food Topic for Kids](#) | Activity Village

[Healthy Eating Resources](#) | Twinkl

[Food Smart & Resources](#) | Healthy Schools

Offering positive learning and development through HAF activities creates stigma-free opportunities to support children and young people in learning about healthy lifestyles and exercise. This could cover, for example, the use of vapes, cigarettes, drugs, and how this can lead to issues including: economic, social, personal safety, exploitation and criminality.

Food education for families and carers

Where possible we expect HAF providers to make available training and advice sessions for parents, carers or other family members. This can include advice on how to source, prepare and cook nutritious and low-cost food alongside increasing awareness of healthy eating. 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 offer information, signposting or referrals to other services and support, that would benefit the children who attend their provision and their families. Other services and support could include:

- 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](#))

Useful Links:

[Sefton Support Hub](#) | A digital One Stop Shop for residents to find help, advice and guidance, as well as financial and social support.

[South Sefton Foodbank](#)

[Help on a low income](#) | Citizens Advice

[Turn2Us](#)

[30 hours free childcare](#) | You may be able to get 30 hours free childcare if: you live in England & your child is 3 to 4 years old

[Free education and childcare for 2-year-olds](#) | Check if you are eligible for free childcare

Additional Provision Requirements

Safety

The safety of the children/young people attending your projects along with the safety of your staff, the organisations involved, the environment and families linked to your projects is paramount. Providers must be able to demonstrate and explain their safeguarding arrangements and have relevant and appropriate policies and procedures in place in relation to safeguarding, health and safety, insurance, accessibility and inclusiveness. Where appropriate, clubs must also be compliant with the Ofsted requirements for working with children.

The best way to ensure that actions have been taken to reduce and mitigate risks is to undertake risk assessments on all activities associated with the operational delivery of your project. Some specific areas which will require consideration: Suitably qualified and trained staff, adequate first aid provision, appropriate insurances, data protection, facilities and equipment that is fit for purpose and appropriate to the activity and its participants and engagement of third-party organisations.

Safeguarding:

Each provider is responsible for ensuring that suitable safeguarding measures are in place, including staff DBS checks, adequate supervision (staff ratios), signing in and out procedures, consents are in place for photographs, suitable child protection policies and reporting processes.

If you feel a child is in immediate danger, please call 999.

If you are worried that a child or young person in Sefton who may be suffering significant harm please call the safeguarding team on **0345 140 0845**. Operating hours are Monday to Thursday – 9am to 5.30pm and Fridays – 9am to 5pm

If the issue cannot wait until the next working day, please contact our Emergency Duty Team outside of the above hours, including weekends and bank holidays, on **0151 934 3555**

For more information and to fill in a [Child Referral Form](#) please visit our [Report a Concern](#) webpage. See also below links for raising adult safeguarding concerns and concerns regarding domestic abuse:

[Raise a concern about an adult
Domestic Abuse](#)

Policies, Procedures and Guidance

HAF providers must provide Sefton Council with evidence of relevant, up to date and appropriate policies, procedures and guidance. The below documents will be requested upon during the application process at Easter and whenever updates are required.

Safeguarding policy
Insurance certificates
Health and safety policy
Fire safety and evacuation plan
GDPR policy
DBS checks
Risk Assessments
Food Hygiene Certificate (if applicable)

Expectations Regarding SEND Provision

In line with the Equality Act (2010) and the Public Sector Equality Duty (2011), it is expected that all holiday provision will be accessible to children and young people with special educational needs, disabilities, who are vulnerable or who have additional needs. Additional funding is available to fund support for young people with additional needs on a case-by-case basis.

Best practice for inclusion

- At the point of booking, ask parents if their child/ren has a special educational need or disability – families should be able to self-determine this
- It is also useful to understand if children have an EHCP in place
- Providers to communicate with the parents and carers of children with SEND prior to attendance, if possible through a face-to-face meeting
- To understand if any adjustments or accommodations can be made to meet the child's needs

Promotion and Marketing

All providers are responsible for promoting and marketing their HAF provision to the best of their ability to ensure they meet the funded number of attendees. Sefton Council will market the programme internally and externally and additional support with promotion can be requested to utilise existing council marketing routes. HAF funding is granted upfront and is not dependent on filling all places, however future funding applications will reflect previous take up of provision.

Reaching out to FSM children: It is important that on your promotional materials you make clear reference to free places for children who are in receipt of benefit-related Free School Meals. We encourage providers to work closely with schools and to utilise existing community links to ensure that wherever possible free places are marketed to eligible children.

Logos: Providers must make it clear in their communications that the HAF programme is funded by the Department for Education and both the DfE logo and Sefton HAF logo should be used for this purpose. If a logo cannot be used on promotional activity such as in press releases, then please acknowledge the source of funding with reference to the DfE and SMBC. Logo's can be found on our providers Padlet or be request via email.

Promote your activity offer: There are several methods you can use to let eligible families know about your activities. These include: social media; emailing existing/new potential families where you have contact details; producing a hard copy and/or electronic flyer; on your website; working directly with schools and other local organisations. Please use the hashtags #HAF2024 and #SeftonHAF across your social media channels.

Bookings, Cancellations and 'no shows'

We encourage providers wherever possible to use online booking for their HAF programme. This may be through your website or through an online form such as Google Forms. It is also advisable to have other options available, as online only bookings can be a barrier for some families to attend.

While each eligible child should have the opportunity to attend 4 sessions per week of HAF activities we advise that bookings are on a per session basis to provide a flexible approach for families and to reduce the number of no shows.

Limiting 'no shows' Due to the free nature of HAF provision it is likely that some families may cancel or not show up to booked sessions. While Sefton Council still funds non attended sessions we expect all providers to have steps in place to minimise this happening. These can include having text reminders; ensuring families are contacted in the event of a no show; and easy cancellation processes. More information can be found on our [Tips for Reducing Nonattendance](#) sheet. We also encourage all providers to operate a waiting list once all their HAF funded places are full. In the event of nonattendance or cancelation places can then be offered to children on the waiting list.

HAF Programme Eligibility

The HAF Programme is primarily for young people in receipt of benefits related free school meals and should be targeted towards these young people. This should be made clear when marketing your programme and all bookers should be made aware of the eligibility and that their information will be checked against council held records. All registers of attendees will be cross checked against the Education Department Pupil Benefit Management System.

15% non-eligible allocation

Up to 15% of your funding allocation may be spent on providing places for non-eligible young people. This group of children are sometimes referred to as vulnerable or additional needs. It includes, but is not limited to, children and young people living in poverty, young carers, with special educational needs or disabilities, being supported by children's services or social services, or being educated through alternative provision etc.

Checking Procedures

You must have systems in place to ensure the young people attending your provision are eligible. This can include one, or a combination, of the following:

- Using already held data – e.g. if the provision is a school or from previous rounds of HAF
- Taking direct referral of eligible children from schools; other trusted public body; or agency
- Direct cross checking with schools before delivery
- Direct cross checking with the HAF team before delivery

Allowing parents and families to 'self-declare' their eligibility is no longer sufficient if additional checks are not also in place to ensure that the self-declaration is accurate.

Families or young people who believe they are eligible but do not appear on the system can email their surname, national insurance number and date of birth to holidayactivity.andfoodprogramme@sefton.gov.uk or visit the below link to check the eligibility criteria and apply:

<https://www.sefton.gov.uk/schools-learning/grants-and-funding/free-school-meals/>

Applications, Funding and Grant Payments

Expressions of interest are welcome to deliver HAF from new providers, these will be considered on a yearly basis, except in exceptional circumstances, to enable existing providers the opportunity to deliver at all three delivery periods.

Applications forms are available to existing and new providers who have submitted successful expressions of interest forms at three points each year for Easter, summer, and winter delivery.

Expenditure of the grant must relate to the delivery of agreed activities, which may include:

- Staffing costs: Applying to both payroll members of staff (of your organisation) and any sessional staff you may need, who will be specifically designated to work on your HAF programme of activity and delivery.
- Volunteer expenses: using a volunteer daily rate (not hourly rate) travel expenses and food.
- Equipment: to deliver activities which includes play resources
- Nutritious and healthy food, snacks and drinks
- Activity instructors/freelancers /Professional coaches
- Venue/room hire
- Relevant training for volunteers etc.
- Programme management costs (proportionate to the overall amount you are applying for and reflective of the scale, quality, diversity, and delivery of your activities).

HAF funding cannot be used for the following:

- Existing Provision (unless applying for additional costs incurred to create a new service or expansion to an existing 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
- Places for children and young people who are not residents of Sefton or not attending a school in Sefton

How are applications assessed?:

Applications will be assessed on receipt by members of Sefton Council in line with the guidance provided by the Department for Education. Decisions will be based on how well applications meet the criteria and will consider:

- Whether applications have been completed with no omissions
- If all required documentation has been received
- Standards and suitability of activities and food
- Value for money
- Location of provision (to ensure a geographical spread which is targeted at areas most in need)
- Age of young people (to ensure all key stages are catered for)
- Previous performance and monitoring

How much funding is available?:

Providers can apply for a maximum of 4 sessions at Easter and at Christmas and a maximum of 16 sessions in Summer per venue. Providers that deliver separate sessions for primary and secondary aged children may apply to run two sessions per day, e.g. 8 sessions over 4 days at Easter.

Funding is awarded based on a per child, per day rate of up to £20. Any additional costs, for example support for children with additional needs or extra costs for bespoke provision, can be requested and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Successful applicants will be notified and will receive an offer letter detailing the level of funding granted. On receipt of the offer letter providers will be asked to send an invoice for the agreed funding to Sefton Finances. Funding can take up to thirty days to clear from the date of processing.

Easter	
Easter Applications Open	22nd January
Easter Applications Deadline	16th February
Easter Grant Approvals	W/C 19th February
Easter Holidays	28th March – 15th April
Easter Monitoring Deadline	26th April
Summer	
Applications Open	13th May
Application Deadline	7th June
Grant Approvals	W/C 10th June
School Holidays	23rd July – 2nd September
Monitoring Deadline	20th September
Winter	
Applications Open	7th October
Applications Deadline	1st November
Grant Approvals	W/C 4th November
School Holidays	20th December – 6th January 2025 (TBC)
Monitoring Deadline	19th January 2025

Monitoring

The Department of Education require data to be captured and reported back about each project, the children/young people that attend the projects, and the costs associated. Completing this monitoring is a condition of the grant and failure to supply the information may lead to future funding being refused. Representatives from Sefton Council will also conduct a monitoring visit to each HAF provider at least once per year.

At end of each delivery period a short questionnaire will be sent out to be completed and returned by. This information to be collated by providers and sent back to the Local Authority will be used to report back to the DfE, the Director for Children's Services and to local Councillors/leaders. An evaluation from the 2021 provision was commissioned. The findings are in the link attached: [Evaluation of the 2021 Holiday Activities and Food Programme](#).

Providers must provide the following information at the end of each delivery period:

- The number of unique children, funded by HAF, who attended
- The number of unique children who paid to attend or were funded by another source
- Whether the provision was fully booked
- How many sessions were cancelled or counted as non-attendance
- Information of any specialist provision that was provision e.g. 1:1 or support for additional needs
- A brief outline of how your programme met the criteria

At the end of each week of HAF provision we will also ask for a full register of every child attending who has been funded through the HAF programme. Please record:

- **Full name**
- **Postcode**
- **Date of birth**
- **Number of sessions attended**
- **SEND information**
- **Ethnic group**

Following completion of each round of HAF there will be an opportunity to provide detailed feedback, evaluation, case studies and photographs from your delivery.

Free School Meal Eligibility

All submitted registers will be cross referenced against Sefton's Education Department Pupil Benefit Management System which holds the details of young people attending schools in the borough who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals. If FSM attendance is below the 85% required by the DfE additional support will be given to ensure the right families are targeted.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Can HAF funding be used to deliver provision after school or during half terms?

A. The HAF funding is currently ringfenced for 1 week during the Easter and Christmas holidays and for 4 weeks during the Summer

Q. Do children on Universal infant free school meals (UIFSM) qualify for HAF places?

A. No, 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.

Q. Is provision only funded for children in reception to year 11 (inclusive) who receive benefits-related free school meals (FSM)?

A. Yes, the funding is for school-aged children only. This would include 4-year-olds who have already started in reception.

Q. Can I offer a morning and afternoon session?

A. Yes, only if they are for separate primary and secondary aged groups. For example 10am -2pm for primary aged young people and 2pm – 6pm for secondary aged.

Q. Can I also charge for additional holiday club spaces?

A. Yes, we encourage you to offer paid places to children who do not meet the HAF eligibility if the provision is of the same standard and there is no risk of stigma attached to the funded children.

Q. Do children need to attend every session?

A. Each eligible child should be offered 4 days during Easter and Christmas and 16 days over Summer. If they do not wish to attend every session or drop out these sessions can be offered to other eligible children.

Q. How long will the funding take to clear once the invoice is sent?

A. Payments take up to thirty days from the date of processing the invoice.

Q. Do you have to be Ofsted registered to be part of this programme and receive funding?

A. Providers do not have to be registered with Ofsted if their provision is exempt from Ofsted registration. A list of provision which is exempt from Ofsted registration can be found here – [Registration exemptions - Childminders and childcare providers: register with Ofsted](#)

Q. Will the funding allow delivery without the food aspects of the programme?

A. No, the provision of food is an essential part of the programme. Holiday club provision must include food as well as enriching/physical activities.

Q. Can we use volunteers to help deliver our programme?

A. Yes, if all volunteers are DBS checks and have undertaken appropriate training.

