

Report of the Strategic Director Children’s Services to the meeting of Children’s Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 20 December 2023

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Subject:

Holiday Activity and Food Programme (HAF)

Summary statement:

To provide an update on the Holiday Activity and Food Programme (HAF) delivery across the district

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:

Equality Objectives	Report Statement
Community:	The HAF programme delivers holiday clubs within communities across the district. The funding enables our Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations to deliver the holiday clubs in their locations, and they make up the majority of providers. This funding supports with their sustainability as valued organisations in the district
Services:	The VCSE organisations work with the children and families to develop their offer aligned to the grant requirements. They support families to book places on the clubs and access wider services via signposting. The HAF programme supports collaborative working between the VCSE; Council and other partners to maximise on the benefits to the children and families at a hyper local level. VCSE organisations benefit from free training via the HAF programme enabling them to use those skills in support of their wider work.

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Children’s Services

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is to present a progress update to Childrens Overview and Scrutiny Committee around the HAF programme delivery and the impact on children, families and providers.
- 1.2 The Holiday Activity and Food Programme (HAF) has strong leadership and assurance measurements in place. Support from Elected Members; Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise organisations; Sport and Leisure; Public Health, Schools; Libraries; Museums and others. Has enabled the programme to improve each year, expanding the opportunities for children and young people across the district during each holiday period.
- 1.3 The programme has embraced mapping technology to enable targeted approaches to delivery for areas with fewer holiday clubs. This approach increased provision and the programme was a finalist in the OJC Awards 2022 under the Community Partnership category. We were the only HAF programme to reach this level.
- 1.4 The HAF Steering committee is a DFE grant requirement and meets quarterly with representatives from Council directorates; public health; VCSE; Police and the Uniform Services. Their role is decision making around grant funding allocation proposals and assurance aligned to grant funding criteria. The committee works well and supports the programme.
- 1.5 The DFE appointed Childcare Works to work with local authorities to assist delivery against the grant criteria and to facilitate support networks; knowledge sharing and best practice. The DFE require HAF Programme Leads to:
 - attend the majority of cluster meetings to support knowledge sharing across local authorities.
 - attend sessions with their appointed delivery adviser as requested.
 - collaborate with their appointed delivery adviser on developing and implementing action plans where required.
 - cooperate with DfE's management information collection requirements and any requests for involvement in research.

Bradford HAF is an active participant in the networks and has been invited by Childcare Works and DFE on a number of occasions to present at events. This is positive as it enables us to profile Bradford and the great work our holiday clubs do in the delivery of HAF and the positive impacts on our children and families.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 27 October 2021, the government announced a 3-year funding settlement of over £200 million from the DFE each year for the holiday activities and food (HAF) programme.
- 2.2 The HAF Programme funding is for school age children from Reception to Year 11 (inclusive) who are in receipt of benefits related Free School Meals. Bradford received £2,600,268 for 2021/2022, £3,042,980 for 2022/2023, £2,947,680 for 2023/2024 and we anticipate to receive £2,947,680 for 2024/2025

2.3 The aim of the programme is for delivery of high-quality holiday clubs that ensure children experience the following:

- 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.
- opportunities to cook and share meals with their families.
- ensuring their families are signposted to other information and support e.g., healthcare; debt management.

2.4 Our VCSE organisations in Bradford are integral to the delivery of the HAF Programme. There are 112 HAF providers and 51 are VCSE organisations. Our provision is split across the district as per the table below for 2023.

Constituency	Number of Providers	Number Children Supported
Bradford East	30	2,303
Bradford South	15	962
Bradford West	29	2,444
Shipley	7	588
Keighley	20	1,483
District Wide	12	5,747
Total All Areas	128	13,527

2.5 In addition to the providers we also allocated HAF funding to Sport and Culture Service in Dept of Place to deliver HAF Summer of Fun Sessions. These took place in parks across the district.

2.6 During summer 2023 13,000 children participated in 4,355 activities. These included the following:

- 1493 Sport Related
- 162 Nature Related
- 599 Art Related
- 743 Social Related
- 567 Education Related
- 372 Food Related
- 62 Culture Related
- 65 Music Related
- 292 Family Related.

2.7 The introduction of an online booking system has enabled providers to promote their clubs more widely. All providers upload their holiday club details and parents can

then select the club that meets their child's needs. Providers supported parents with limited digital skills or no digital access to register their children, ensuring they had equal opportunity to access a place. Parents can also contact providers directly from the list on the HAF website.

- 2.8 Following direction from the DFE, all families who had children in receipt of benefits related free school meals, had to be issued letters for summer clubs with a booking code for their child. This meant that 30,000 letters were issued at a cost of £18,441 taken directly from the HAF Grant
- 2.8 The letters resulted in over 2,500 calls to the HAF Programme due to people losing the codes: address changes etc. This was challenging for parents/carers/providers and unsustainable for the HAF programme to manage. Following discussions with the DFE we agreed that a new process would be implemented for Christmas 2023
- 2.8 Eligible children and their codes will be added directly into the booking system for Christmas 2023. The system will automatically check if a child is eligible when their information is added into the booking system. In the event the child is not eligible the parents/carers will be directed to the provider to identify if they have non HAF places available. Any saved postal costs will be distributed across the Christmas holiday providers.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 We have 30,000 eligible children in receipt of benefits related free school meals. On that basis the DFE expected us to fill our clubs with eligible children. Therefore, in 2023 we had to advise providers that their HAF funding could only be used to provide free places for SEND and children in receipt of benefits related Free School Meals
- 3.2 The removal of the flexibility for our providers to use 15% of their funding allocation, for non-eligible children, was a concern. However, the majority of holiday clubs have managed to accommodate non-eligible children through their own resources or as an exception based on severity of need.
- 3.3 Our implementation of codes identifying eligible children, has increased the number of eligible children attending and evidenced our targeted approach to the DFE. We hope this will allow us to enable providers to use 15% of their funding to support non-eligible children in 2024. However, this will be a DFE decision.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- 4.1 The Holiday Activity and Food Programme is funded from the DFE. There is no use of Council funds for any part of the programme including staffing and delivery.
- 4.2 The DFE have agreed to fund the programme to the 31st March 2025. Our funding allocation for 2024/2025 delivery will be confirmed by January 2024. We are advised that this is likely to be the same amount we received for 2023/2024 delivery which is £2,947,680.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- 5.1 The HAF programme has been operating since 2020 when we were a DFE pilot, and a robust governance process is in place. This includes a Steering Committee as required by the DFE.
- 5.2 Quality assurance visits are made, by the Project Manager and Quality Assurance Officer, to providers to ensure adherence to the grant funding agreement, in addition to observation of holiday club delivery including discussions with families. This approach provides a robust risk management framework.
- 5.3 As places are free to eligible children, providers experience issues with non-attendance. To mitigate this, they subscribe an additional 10% over their planned cohort size. This does not fully resolve the issue. There is a risk that the DFE ask us to move to a pay on attendance model to providers. This could impact on their ability to deliver holiday clubs and we have raised this with the DFE and continue to oppose this approach.
- 5.4 The DFE funding commitment is to the 31st March 2025 which means that 2024 could be the last delivery period. In the event that the funding does not continue for 2025, our disadvantaged children will miss out on fantastic opportunities and some of our VCSE providers may cease to operate. We continue to advocate for continued funding.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

- 6.1 Local authorities receive grant funding to deliver holiday, activities and food programme in their area. Grant funding is calculated based on the numbers of children eligible for and in receipt of free school meals in each area. The [grant determination letter](#) is used to monitor the performance of the local authorities.
- 6.2 It is a requirement that every local authority will appoint or have in place a HAF coordinator who takes responsibility within the local authority for the delivery of the programme. This will be alongside having sufficient staff who are dedicated to working on HAF all year round.
- 6.3 All organisations delivering the HAF programme must be able to demonstrate that they have in place relevant and appropriate policies and procedures for safeguarding, including the recruitment of staff and volunteers e.g., enhanced DBS checks. Health and safety and relevant insurance policies, accessibility and inclusiveness.
- 6.4 All food provided as part of the HAF programme must comply with regulations on food preparation and take into account allergies and dietary requirements.
- 6.5. Holiday clubs may need to legally register with Ofsted depending on the provision they offer, they may also be eligible to register with Ofsted on the voluntary register or they may be [exempt from registration](#) entirely. Local authorities are expected to check with all their HAF providers that they are appropriately registered.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The funding for holiday clubs supports VCSE organisations to keep operating. The 3 year funding has been vital and further funding is essential to maintain the level of club availability.

Holiday club provision enables families to access wider support around skills; employment; education etc. This approach helps to deliver a sustainable approach to personal and family improvement, including health and well being.

7.2 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

Not applicable.

7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

The provision of holiday clubs for children from reception to Year 11 supports in reducing opportunities for children to engage in, or be exposed to, anti-social behaviour or crime. Some clubs for older children operate in the evening to support this.

7.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Not applicable.

7.5 TRADE UNION

Not applicable.

7.6 WARD IMPLICATIONS

The Holiday Activity and Food Programme is delivered across the district and applies to eligible children from all wards.

7.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The HAF Programme ambitions align to Bradfords children and young people strategy.

The Holiday Clubs provide some of our most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people with access to food; activities and experiences that they would normally not access. The positive impact on both children and families mental and physical health is evident.

Holiday Clubs enable families to continue working during holiday periods knowing their children are safe. Wider support for families is provided by the clubs by enabling access to other services on site or via signposting.

7.8 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

No issues identified.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

8.1 None.

9. OPTIONS

9.1 Not applicable.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 That the delivery approach to the Holiday Activity and Food Programme and associated outcomes are noted and approved.

11. APPENDICES

11.1 Holiday Activity and Food Programme Summer 2023 delivery report. This outlines recent summer delivery and feedback from children, families and providers

11.2 Four Case Studies outlining the holiday club delivery and the impact on children and families.

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

12.1 The DFE Grant Conditions for delivery of the Holiday Activity and Food Programme. [Holiday activities and food programme 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114142/Holiday_activities_and_food_programme_2023_-_GOV.UK.pdf).