



Department
for Education



Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Grant Programme

Appendix 1: HAF Application Guidance Notes 2026





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Introduction

Please be sure to thoroughly review these Guidance notes, as they contain crucial information about the programme requirements, eligibility criteria, funding guidelines, required application documents, and the application process. It is essential to familiarise yourself with these details to gain an understanding of the funding scope and project criteria, which are key to completing and submitting a successful application. Once you have reviewed these guidelines and determined that this grant is suitable for your project, please proceed with the application.

All the signatories on your application form must be 18 years old or over.

Additional information and details may be requested, subject to updated [DfE Guidance](#).

Programme Overview

The Department for Education have awarded grant funding to Local Authorities to provide Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) to cover the Easter, Summer and Christmas Holiday periods for 2026-2028 to support school aged children (reception to year 11) including SEND who are eligible for benefits related Free School Meals to access healthy food and enriching activities free of charge over each of these holiday periods.

The DfE expects the equivalent of six weeks' HAF provision to be offered to eligible children across the Easter, Summer, and Christmas school holidays. The dates that HAF provision can take place during these holiday periods are not set out in this guidance.

Easter	- We expect that all participating children should benefit from face-to-face provision during the Easter school holidays, which should be for a minimum of 4 days. - In Easter this equates to 16 hours of provision. - For most children, each day should consist of at least 4 hours and be tailored to need.
Summer	- We expect that all participating children should benefit from face-to-face provision during the summer school holidays, which should be for a minimum of 16 days. - In Summer this equates to 64 hours of provision. - For most children, each day should consist of at least 4 hours and be tailored to need.
Winter	- We expect that all participating children should benefit from face-to-face provision during the Christmas school holidays, which should be for a minimum of 4 days. - This can include four days of face-to-face provision, however, where this is not possible, it should consist of two days of face-to-face provision supplemented by two days of HAF support which can be provided in the form of high-quality food hampers and activity packs. - In Winter this equates to 16 hours of provision. - For most children, each day should consist of at least 4 hours and be tailored to need.



Research has shown that the school holidays can be pressure points for some families. For some children that can lead to a holiday experience gap. Children from low-income households are:

- 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

The HAF programme is a response to this issue. Evidence shows that free holiday clubs can have a positive impact on children and young people. 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
- use local partnerships and connections, particularly with Voluntary and Community sector organisations

We know that returning to school in poor physical and mental condition can have a detrimental impact on children's mental and physical wellbeing, as well as their educational attainment.

The impact of covid-19 has meant more families are applying for free school meals and of course it has increased social isolation.

Background

Sandwell is a metropolitan borough in the Black Country, West Midlands, comprising the six towns of Oldbury, Rowley Regis, Smethwick, Tipton, Wednesbury and West Bromwich. The 12th most deprived borough in England, 35% of its children are living in what is considered relative poverty. Of the 63,462 (33,743 male, 29,719 female) children aged 4 to 16 in the area. There are over 20,000 children receiving free school meals in Sandwell with a likely increase over the coming year. For many of these families, holiday periods can be particularly challenging due to poverty, domestic abuse and poor mental and physical health. During the period April 2022-January 2025, the Sandwell HAF programme delivered 115,510 sessions across nine holiday periods (Easter, Summer, and Winter).

Sandwell HAF Impact Report 2022 – 2025

This evaluation report by Abigail D'Amore Associates highlights the real impact of the Sandwell HAF programme on children, families, and providers. It captures powerful stories and lived experiences that demonstrate the programme's value and areas for growth. We hope the findings will help shape future programme development, ensuring HAF continues to evolve, stay inclusive, and deliver life-enhancing experiences to Sandwell families.

Programme Aim

The aim of the programme is to offer free holiday club provision including healthy food and enrichment activities to school aged children from Reception to Year 11 (up to age 19 for children with SEND) who receive benefits-related free school meals. Benefits-related free school meals (FSM) 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.



For further information on eligibility, please visit [apply for free school meals](#).

Programme Outcomes

The projects we wish to fund must achieve the following outcomes for children:

- To be active and maintain a healthy level of activity.
- To eat healthy and nutritious meals.
- To take part in fun, engaging and enriching activities that support the development of resilience, character, and wellbeing along with their wider education attainment.
- Be happy, have fun and meet new friends.
- Feel safe, secure and not to be socially isolated.
- Develop a greater understanding of food, nutrition and other health related issues.
- Get access to the right support, be more engaged with school and other local services.
- Return to school feeling engaged and ready to learn.

We also want to ensure that the families who participate in this programme:

- Develop their understanding of nutrition and food budgeting.
- Are signposted towards other information and support, for example, health, employment, and education.

Government Guidance

Organisations must stay updated with the latest guidance concerning protective measures for holiday or after-school clubs and other out-of-school settings for children and young people, as well as relevant guidance related to their area (e.g., sports and clubs) and any other pertinent guidelines.

Please note the guidance is updated on a regular basis therefore please ensure you are accessing the latest updates; important links are provided below:

- [Working together to safeguard children](#)
- [Keeping children safe in education](#)
- [Out-of-school settings: safeguarding guidance for providers](#)
- [DBS check application process for volunteers](#)
- [Regulated activity in relation to children](#)
- [Enhanced DBS check](#)
- [School food standards](#)
- [Natasha's Law](#)
- [The Physical Activity Guidelines](#)
- [Martyn's Law](#)
- [Ofsted](#)



Grant Application & HAF Delivery Overview

This application covers all three HAF delivery periods in 2026: Easter, Summer, and Winter. Please see the application form for specific dates, you can specify what dates and times you will be delivering there.

- Applicants may apply to deliver HAF during each holiday period at up to three delivery sites, each located in a different town. Multiple camps at the same venue are permitted only where each camp targets a different group (e.g., SEND, primary-aged, or secondary-aged children).
- Individual and joint applications are welcomed. All delivery partners must be fully detailed within the application.
- Grants can be awarded to new provisions or to enhance existing provisions i.e. to add elements not previously funded such as meals, family activities, additional sessions, staffing, or equipment.
- Where paid provision already exists (e.g., a holiday club), HAF funding may be used to offer additional free places for eligible children in receipt of benefits-related Free School Meals (FSM).
- Provision should offer a diverse range of enrichment activities and nutritious food for school-aged children from Reception to Year 11, including those with SEND.
- Your application must demonstrate how you will encourage children, young people, and families eligible for HAF to participate and how you will promote your programme.
- Organisations providing food internally (not outsourced) must be registered as a food business.
- A nutritious meal must be provided at every session delivered.
- Evidence of match funding (cash or in-kind) is viewed favourably. This may include contributions towards staffing, volunteers, food, or venue costs.
- Marketing your provision is mandatory. Details will be shared with the Council's marketing team, published in the HAF provider directory, and submitted to the DfE for inclusion in the central HAF register.
- You must ensure that all children and young people are eligible for the HAF programme before booking onto activities, criteria are as follows:
 - All children and young people must be in receipt of benefits-related Free School Meals (FSM), attend a school in Sandwell, and be between Reception and Year 11.
 - There may, however, be some children who are not eligible for benefits-related FSM but would still benefit from HAF activities or have protected characteristics. At the discretion of the central HAF team, up to 15% of the 16-digit codes can be allocated to these children and young people (for example, those with no recourse to public funding, those with an education health care plan (EHCP), or children we care for).
- Eligible children must receive all HAF activities at no cost to their families.
- Delivery must provide the equivalent of six weeks of provision across Easter (4 days), Summer (16 days), and Winter (4 days).
- Successful organisations must obtain parental consent for the sharing of children's data with Sandwell Council for monitoring purposes. A registration/consent form must be completed for each participant.



- Every eligible child will receive a 16-digit HAF code via the Wonde E-Vouchers system. Parents must use this code to book activities through Holiday Activities (E-Vouchers). Guidance will be issued to successful applicants.
- Holiday Activities (E-Vouchers) must be used to manage all bookings and attendance so accurate data can be reported to the DfE.
- Providers must have appropriate policies and procedures in place, as set out in Appendix 3, consistent with Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board guidance. Applicants progressing to Stage 2 must submit all documents listed in Appendix 3.
- Minimum staffing levels must be maintained at all times, including for children with SEND. Providers must comply with Ofsted statutory ratios for children aged under eight and ensure safe staffing for older children.
- After delivery, an income and expenditure form and a self-monitoring report must be completed and returned with supporting receipts. Any underspend may be reclaimed by Sandwell Council.
- If you are unable to deliver as planned or need to amend your programme in any way, you must seek guidance and approval from the HAF Team before making changes.

Who can apply

You will be eligible to apply if your organisation meets the criteria set out in the council's definition of the [voluntary and community sector](#):

Grants and other support will only be made available to the following types of organisations:

- Voluntary organisations
- Community groups
- Tenant and resident groups
- Faith groups
- Housing associations
- Most co-operatives and social enterprises (provided all profits are retained for the benefit of the communities served)

That has one or more of the following structures/forms:

- Community interest companies limited by guarantee
- Community interest companies limited by share (schedule 2 including an asset lock of 100%)
- Not for profit trade associations
- Charitable trusts
- Companies limited by guarantee
- Unincorporated companies
- Wholly owned trading arms

You can also apply if:

- You are a school or operate within an educational setting
- You are a private or independent organisation
- You are a sports club or grassroots organisation



- You have governing documents and/or a charity number and/or a company registration number
- You provide services in Sandwell that benefit children, young people, and families living in the borough
- Your organisation is interested in scaling up its current provision
- Your organisation has experience delivering high-quality activities for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- You have a bank account that requires at least 2 people who are unrelated, and do not live at the same address, to sign each cheque or make a withdrawal.

Ofsted Requirements

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. Both clubs and providers that would require registration with Ofsted, and those that are exempt, can participate in the HAF programme.

To support the raising of quality and to better meet the safeguarding needs of children and young people, certain providers can choose to **register with Ofsted** even if they do not have to.

One of the direct benefits to children and families of providers being Ofsted registered is that families may be eligible for tax free childcare or the childcare costs element of Universal Credit. Through this 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.

It is the responsibility of individual HAF providers to understand whether they are required by law to be Ofsted registered and to continue to review their status as and when the provision they are offering changes.

If you are only catering for children over 8 and plan to apply for or are already on the Ofsted voluntary part of the Childcare Register, please indicate this in your application.

If you are not Ofsted registered, you will need to explain how you intend to deliver the activities within the 4-hour timeframe specified by this programme while adhering to Ofsted rules, such as by splitting delivery across days or weeks.

Holiday clubs may need to register with Ofsted, and there are associated benefits. However, we understand that not all providers will need or want to do so.

Guidance on the exemptions to Ofsted registration are set out [here](#).

DfE Framework of Standards

Department for Education expect all organisations funded through the Programme to meet their framework of standards. The standards expected are:

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
- 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

Meeting the physical activity requirement does not have to be in the form of a structured and focussed physical activity session, but might include active travel, free play and sports.

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.

Nutritional education: 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 healthy eating during mealtimes
- including food and nutrition in other activities

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
- criminality

Food education for families: These sessions could provide advice on how to source, prepare and cook nutritious and low-cost food. This could be combined with the increasing awareness and understanding of healthy eating aspect of the programme, for example, by inviting children and their families to prepare and eat a meal together at a HAF session. There are alternative ways of delivering this, for example, by providing participating children with ingredients and recipes to take away and try at home with their families.

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:

- Citizens 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 (for example, [Tax-Free Childcare](#))
- [Resilient Residents](#)
- [Settling in Sandwell](#)
- [Route2Wellbeing](#)
- [Sandwell Family Life](#)
- [Sandwell Adult and Family Learning Service](#)
- [Family Help Partnership](#)
- [Cost of Living Advice](#)
- [Information on Benefits and Support](#)
- [Information on Schools and Education](#)
- [Information on Housing](#)
- [Libraries](#)
- [Food Pantries](#)
- [Food Banks](#)
- [Think Sandwell Employment and Skills Team](#)

There are many ways that providers can meet this element of the programme, for example, through trained and knowledgeable staff engaging with families during drop-off and pick-up times. We know that many HAF providers have worked to provide weekly training and advice sessions for parents, carers or other family members. We encourage providers who want to do so to continue to offer those sessions.



Equality Act 2010: Providers must ensure their provision complies with the Equality Act 2010. You should outline the steps you will take to prevent discrimination, remove barriers, and ensure every child is able to participate. Describe the measures you will implement to make your provision fully inclusive and accessible to all children and young people, demonstrating how you will meet a wide range of needs.

Working with children with SEND or additional needs: Providers must ensure that the provision is fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010. We expect providers to put in place any reasonable adjustments which are required to ensure that children with a disability are not subject to discrimination. There is flexibility in how the programme can be delivered to children with SEND or additional needs who are in receipt of FSMs. Some of the key points for providers to consider when designing and implementing provision for children with SEND or additional needs includes:

- identifying and supporting the most vulnerable participants
- maintaining regular communication with families to understand their needs
- providing flexible support to meet family and participant requirements
- ensuring staff are trained, supported, and properly equipped

Safeguarding: Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. We want every HAF camp to be a safe and happy place for children, and for parents, carers and families to feel confident that their child is well looked after and that robust safeguarding arrangements are in place.

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
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action if you identify children to be at risk of harm

Providers must ensure those working on the delivery of the programme are familiar with the [working together to safeguard children](#) guidance.

Holiday clubs in school settings

We recommend that anyone involved in the delivery of a holiday club in school settings is familiar with part 1 of [keeping children safe in education](#).

Holiday clubs in out of school settings

By out-of-school settings we mean organisations or individuals that provide tuition, training, instruction or activities to children in England without their parents' or carers' supervision, but are not:

- schools
- colleges
- education settings providing alternative provision
- 16 to 19 academies



- providers caring for children that are registered with Ofsted or a childminder agency

The guidance for providers running out-of-school settings on [keeping children safe during community activities, after-school clubs, and tuition](#) covers advice on what policies and procedures providers should have in place for:

- health and safety
- safeguarding and child protection
- staff suitability
- governance

Volunteers and DBS checking

We know that in some settings, volunteers can play an important role in the delivery of holiday clubs. Under no circumstances should a volunteer in respect of whom no checks have been obtained be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

There may be a very small number of volunteers who do not regularly carry out this role, and so it may not be considered as regulated activity. This means they may not be required to have an enhanced DBS check.

The guidance on [regulated activity in relation to children](#) contains definitions of what we mean by regular and regulated activity.

Other workers

All staff who are employed and funded through the holiday, activities and food programme should be subject to an [enhanced DBS check](#) with barred list information.

Part 3 of [keeping children safe in education](#) sets out a clear process for safe recruitment. We recommend holiday clubs providers follow this best practice when recruiting volunteers.

Martyn's Law

All settings within scope of the legislation will need to have in place, so far as it is reasonably practicable, public protection procedures. This includes:

- evacuation (to get people out of the premises)
- invacuation (to move people to a safe place)
- lockdown (to secure premises against attackers)
- communication (to alert people on premises to the danger)

[All settings within scope of the act will have a responsible person](#) and must notify the SIA, as the regulator. For qualifying premises, the responsible person is the person who has control of the premises in connection with their relevant Schedule 1 use. For example, for a primary education institution (other than those used as a pupil referral unit), the responsible person will be the governing body or, where there is no governing body, the proprietor of the institution. For premises in the enhanced tier, they will need to appoint a [designated senior individual](#).

Working with the secondary school age range: We know from previous years that providing a HAF programme that is appealing and has high engagement levels with the secondary school age range can be challenging. Provision for this age range will often look different to that aimed at the primary age range and providers should make specific plans for this. There should be flexibility in the programme you offer to older children with careful consideration being given to a different model of food and activity provision.



This could include considering the location of provision, such as, pop up parks or urban areas. You might also consider the role that older children can have in supporting, designing and leading sessions for their peers or for younger children – to help them to socialise and develop leadership skills which can be crucial for those in year 9 to 11.

Based on previous years of the HAF programme, we know that there are several factors that providers should think about when designing a programme for the secondary age range, such as:

- running focus groups with older children in your area to better understand their needs
- the costs of running focussed provision - the costs of provision for this age range can be higher than for the primary age range
- the food and activity offer
- a different operating model, for example, offering afternoon or evening sessions - some areas have reported success running twilight sessions with an evening meal being the focus and others have operated a 'street food' style offer
- the choice of venue is often critical in building an attractive offer for this age range - some areas have reported that school venues can be less popular but pop-up provision in parks and city centres can be highly effective

Environment and sustainability: DfE is committed to sustainable development practices and believes it is important for providers to consider these and their impact on the environment. Some practices that providers may wish to consider are:

- minimising the use of single-use plastics
- where possible using locally sourced food and ingredients
- making use of food surplus organisations
- ensuring there is a wide range of recycling and compost facilities for waste
- growing fruit and vegetables and showing how they can be used and cooked
- encouraging uniform banks and exchange schemes
- This list is not exhaustive, and providers are encouraged to reflect on their settings and consider ways that their programmes can be more environmentally friendly and sustainable.

Food Offer

Clubs must provide at least one meal a day (breakfast, lunch, or tea), with all food, including snacks, meeting [school food standards](#). Hot meals are expected unless otherwise agreed with the HAF team. Providers must comply with Food Information Regulations (Natasha's Law) for pre-packed food and are advised to consult the Food Standards Agency guidance.

You can either:

- Prepare the food offer inhouse if you are a registered food business
- Outsource the food offer to a local caterer



Both in-house and outsourced catering providers are required to have a Food Standards Agency (FSA) rating of at least 4 out of 5.

To ensure that all children receive a high quality and stigma free experience, if a provider is open to both HAF-funded and non-HAF-funded places, it is vital that all of the children attending are provided with an identical food offer and that HAF funded children are treated equally.

If children on non-HAF-funded places are given the option to bring a packed lunch, then we expect the provider to ensure that children attending through HAF have the same choice. This could be fulfilled through providing packed lunches for HAF children. All packed lunches must meet the school food standards.

Alternatively, for providers who provide meals on-site, they could consider making the same healthy food available to all children, but with an additional charge for those non-HAF funded places.

All food provided as part of the HAF programme must:

- comply with regulations on food preparation
- take into account allergies and dietary requirements (see the [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.

We can share a list of food businesses that have been used by previous HAF delivery partners upon request. However, it is your responsibility to ensure the food offer meets the School Food Standards prior to any agreements.

Food information regulations - Natasha's Law

From 1 October 2021, changes to the Food Information Regulations 2014 came into effect, adding new labelling requirements for food that is pre-packed for direct sale (PPDS). Providers should take the time to read the [guidance](#) on the Food Standards Agency website and ensure that all food provision for the HAF programme meets these requirements.

Staffing and Risk Management

All staff and volunteers must be appropriately qualified, trained, and cleared to work with children, with records of training, certifications, and renewal dates kept up to date.

Compliance with these expectations will be verified through the Staff Compliance & Training Record and monitored during site visits. Providers must maintain high standards of practice,



support ongoing professional development, and take proactive measures to safeguard children and enhance the quality of their provision.

Providers may also be required to complete additional mandatory training to further improve outcomes and the quality of their provision.

- All staff and volunteers working with children and young people must hold an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check dated within the last three years or be registered with the DBS Update Service.
- All staff and volunteers must have completed, as a minimum, Level 1 Child Protection/Safeguarding training within the past 12 months.
- Providers must ensure that at least one staff member completes E-Voucher training prior to every delivery period.
- Providers must have at least one staff member or volunteer holding a valid Paediatric First Aid qualification; training should be renewed every two years unless the certificate indicates otherwise.
- Providers must have at least one staff member or volunteer with a Level 2 Food Safety/Hygiene qualification; training should be renewed every two years unless the certificate indicates otherwise.
- Providers must have at least one staff member or volunteer with a Level 2 Health and Safety qualification; training should be renewed every two years unless the certificate indicates otherwise.
- Providers may be required to complete additional training, not listed above, to enhance outcomes and the quality of provision. This training will be mandatory, and at least one staff member must attend.

Statutory requirements for the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

HAF providers are expected to have a Designated Safeguarding Lead. The DSL for HAF Providers should:

- Hold a Sandwell Core Working Together Level 3 Training qualification.
- Complete Safeguarding Training every 2 years and have easy access to relevant resources.
- Ensure that there is an effective Safeguarding policy in place and that it is reviewed annually.
- Support HAF delivery staff and work closely with the local authority and other relevant agencies to address any safeguarding concerns.

We will share the 2026 training and CPD schedule, along with the HAF Staff Compliance & Training Record, with all successful providers. This record must be kept up to date and include evidence of training certification from the Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board or other registered institutions. A copy may be requested prior to or during the delivery period.

Providers must also ensure that a first aid kit, along with accident and safeguarding records (which may be digital), is available at each delivery site.



Volunteers

The Department of Education are keen to promote volunteer involvement in the HAF programme. If your organisation works with volunteers or is looking to recruit more volunteers to support your work, we recommend referring to SCVO's website, [Lets Go Sandwell](#) where you can post an advertisement for recruitment.

Promoting your Programme

We will work with HAF providers to help them to:

- focus and target provision towards families who are eligible for free school meals
- prompt parents and carers to explore activities and provisions available for children in their area and book a place for their child
- provide off-the-shelf communication materials (including for social media) that can be easily utilised to effectively promote the scheme, which credit and note DfE's central funding of the programme

Providers should ensure that when promoting and advertising their programme, great care is taken to ensure that the children and families who could benefit from the HAF programme do not feel stigmatised and that the language used is celebratory, aspirational and focuses on the positives.

Providers must clearly state in all communications that the HAF programme is government funded and must include the DfE, SMBC, and HAF logos on all marketing materials.

Finance and Funding

What we will fund

Examples of what we will fund (this list is not exhaustive):

- Staffing, additional staff hours
- Equipment to deliver activities e.g. play resources
- Nutritious Food
- Activity instructors/professional coaches
- Room Hire
- Transport
- Admin costs
- Relevant training for staff
- Residential activity for youth groups where benefits are clearly identified.
- 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.
- Stand-alone trips, entrance fees e.g. theme parks, games centres, amusement arcades, cinemas, etc. (they must be part of a wider enrichment offer)



- SEND provision where the activities are easily accessible and appealing to appropriate age groups.
- Projects engaging older children and young people, emphasising activities tailored to their age group, such as sports, music, dance, creative projects, and wellness activities.
- Projects offering family-oriented activities to parents, caregivers, and other family members—such as guidance, recipes, sourcing and preparing low-cost nutritious meals, and virtual activities including virtual cooking—may also be funded if food for a nutritious meal is provided.

What we will not fund

Examples of what will not be funded (this list is not exhaustive):

- Places for children and young people who are **NOT** in receipt of benefits related free school meals (FSM)
- Projects that do not bring benefits to our local communities
- Activities which promote political or religious beliefs
- Retrospective funding
- Presents
- Fuel or food vouchers
- Ofsted registration and renewal fees

How much we will fund

Funding at a fixed daily rate, inclusive of food costs, is available at £30 (per child per day) for children who are eligible for free school meals. The available funding for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is provided at a daily rate of £40, inclusive of food costs. Funding for children not in receipt of benefits related free school meals is restricted, priority will be given to those who meet the HAF eligibility criteria.

For providers who have previously delivered SMBC funded HAF, the maximum number of places will be cross-referenced against the previous performance and the number of eligible beneficiaries reached. Any data submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

Funding for new applicants (who have not previously delivered SMBC funded HAF) will be capped at 40 places per day. For example:

- 40 x £30 inclusive of food costs per day for children in receipt of benefits-related free school meals.
- 40 x £40 inclusive of food costs per day for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).



We will provide funding for programme administration and management costs, covering up to a maximum of 15% of the total expenses. Conditions of payment will be provided in the Grant Agreement.

Payment of Grant

The grant will be deposited directly into the designated bank or building society account. This information will be requested at a later stage from successful applicants. Payments will be made in three instalments and released prior to the start of each delivery period, following receipt of the signed grant agreement.

Funding for the Summer and Winter periods will be contingent on performance during Easter. Any shortfall will be carried forward, and subsequent payments will be adjusted accordingly. For example, if funding was allocated for 20 places per day over four days at Easter but actual delivery fell short, payments for the Summer and Winter periods will be adjusted accordingly. Performance will be assessed based on data submitted through the Holiday Activities (E-Vouchers) system. Please note that retrospective funding for additional places beyond the agreed allocation will not be considered.

Conditions of Funding

1. Applications will be considered from private sector/independent organisations, schools/educational settings, grassroot projects, sports clubs, not for profit voluntary and community organisations.
2. Providers must deliver services within Sandwell and ensure that they benefit children, young people, and families who reside in the borough. It is important that these services are accessible to children and young people from all backgrounds.
3. Providers must declare any delivery in partnership with other organisations. Failure to do so may result in withdrawal of the grant.
4. Applications are reviewed and scored by a grants panel, and there is no appeal process. The decision of the grants panel is final.
5. The Council will not consider retrospective funding requests, and no funding will be approved for activities or costs not specified in the application.
6. Applications submitted after the closing date and time will not be considered for funding. Similarly, applications not submitted in the required format will not be considered.
7. Programme beneficiaries must meet the following criteria:
 - a. All children and young people must be in receipt of benefits-related Free School Meals (FSM), attend a school in Sandwell, and be between Reception and Year 11.



- b. There may, however, be some children who are not eligible for benefits-related FSM but would still benefit from HAF activities or have protected characteristics. At the discretion of the central HAF team, up to 15% of the 16-digit codes can be allocated to these children and young people (for example, those with no recourse to public funding, those with an education health care plan (EHCP), or children we care for).
8. Programme beneficiaries must not be charged for accessing the services provided.
9. Providers must ensure that all delivery staff and volunteers are appropriately qualified, hold valid DBS clearance, and meet the training and safeguarding requirements set out by the DfE. Staff must complete all mandatory training necessary to deliver HAF provision safely and effectively, including any additional training required to enhance outcomes and the quality of the programme. Compliance with these requirements must be met before delivery begins.
10. Providers must complete the mandatory Holiday Activities (E-Voucher) training before delivering any HAF services. Sessions will be scheduled in the month prior to each holiday period.
11. Providers must have all required policies and procedures in place and ensure compliance with DfE standards, including but not limited to:
 - Relevant insurance coverage
 - Adequate staff/volunteer ratios
 Policies & Procedures:
 - Child protection and Safeguarding
 - Health and Safety (Food safety, Lockdown and Intruder Procedures)
 - Risk Assessments
 - Online Safety Protocols
 - Equality and Diversity Policy
 - GDPR Consent Forms
 Policies and documents will be assessed prior to the delivery of the programme. Additional Requirements:
 - Catering providers must have an FSA rating of at least 4 out of 5.
 - Providers must comply with staff and volunteer training requirements.
12. Providers delivering HAF in collaboration with another organisation must have a delivery agreement in place.
13. Providers must clearly state in all communications that the HAF programme is government funded and must use the HAF, Department for Education, and Sandwell Council logos. All marketing and promotional materials must be shared with the HAF Team prior to each delivery period. Providers are responsible for monitoring bookings and should contact the HAF Team if targets are not being met. Providers may also be required to attend marketing and promotional events to promote their HAF offer.
14. Providers will be listed in the HAF directory on the Council website.
15. Providers must obtain parental consent to share children's information with Sandwell Council for the purposes of the HAF programme.



16. Providers must comply with all safeguarding requirements and report any safeguarding incidents promptly to the HAF Team.
17. Providers must adhere to the HAF framework of standards, programme requirements, and outcomes, ensuring compliance with monitoring and reporting obligations while maintaining high-quality provision.
18. Providers are responsible for meeting targets for eligible beneficiaries and for monitoring participation, progress, and outcomes in line with HAF standards.
19. Providers must update their activity information on the Holiday Activities (E-Vouchers) platform before each HAF holiday period to ensure parents can book activities by the deadline set by the HAF team.
20. Providers must update E-Voucher attendance on the day each session is delivered. Where sessions take place off-site without internet access, attendance must be recorded within 24 hours.
21. The Council will monitor all projects receiving council funding at any time during the funding period. Providers must inform the Council of any changes to project delivery, timetables, staffing, or the expected number of children attending.
22. All providers must display HAF signage in a prominent location at every delivery venue.
23. All providers must display the HAF QR code in a visible location at every delivery venue to allow parents and carers to provide feedback. Providers must also share the Parent Feedback QR code via email to ensure feedback is captured.
24. As part of our commitment to being a child-friendly borough, we must demonstrate that we are actively gathering feedback from children to shape service delivery. Providers must collect feedback from children during each HAF period and demonstrate, via the Monitoring Form, how this feedback has been used to improve current and future provision. If you need support in developing feedback resources to effectively capture children's voices, please email Karen Greenfield: karen_greenfield@sandwell.gov.uk.
25. Providers must complete a self-monitoring form at the end of each HAF holiday period to reflect and comment on their delivery.
26. Funded projects must submit a detailed breakdown of their expenditure by completing an income and expenditure form, which should be retained for a minimum of 2 years after the project concludes.
27. As part of the monitoring process, the Council will verify and request the submission of receipts for venue hire, food, transport, and other activities for examination, that make up 30% of the total grant awarded. Invoices or receipts for review should be a minimum of £100 or more. Failure to submit by the deadline will impact future holiday period funding.



28. Any unspent funding must be returned to Sandwell Council, and overspent funds will not be reimbursed without prior approval.
29. Council funding should not be utilised as "personal spending money" for children, young people, staff, volunteers, or for any items unrelated to project activities.
30. Any assets acquired with the assistance of the funding cannot be sold or otherwise disposed of, without the Council first being informed.
31. Providers are required to attend post-delivery HAF meetings, scheduled in the month following each holiday period. Attendance at these meetings is mandatory.
32. Failure to comply with these grant conditions or submission deadlines will affect eligibility for funding in the next holiday period.

Grant Funding Application Assessment Stages

All applications must be submitted by the stated deadline. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

Please note that providing false or misleading information may result in your application being rejected or any approved funding being withdrawn. Before submitting your application, please ensure that all information provided is true, complete, and accurate.

We assess and score your application against a set of local criteria and programme outcomes. The outcomes are the changes that we want you to achieve with the funding. They are based on the outcomes stipulated by the Department for Education.

Applications are reviewed and scored by a grants panel, and there is no appeal process. The decision of the grants panel is final.

Your application will be assessed as it is submitted. We will not contact you regarding missing documents or information.

Stage 1: Application Assessment

All completed applications will undergo an initial assessment to determine:

- Whether your application is fully completed, with all questions answered.
- The organisation, planning, and overall feasibility of your proposed project.
- How well your application aligns with the Programme outcomes.
- The appropriateness and realism of your project budget, and whether it demonstrates an efficient and effective use of funds.
- Your organisation's contribution to the project, whether in cash, in-kind support, or both.
- Whether your staff meet the training requirements for HAF delivery.
- Whether your project beneficiaries meet HAF eligibility requirements.
- Your approach, capacity, and readiness to deliver all Programme objectives effectively.



- The geographical accessibility of your activities for families eligible for benefits-related Free School Meals.
- Evidence of added value in your proposal.
- Your organisation's track record and relevant experience in working with children and young people, particularly in delivering similar projects.
- The quality and suitability of activities offered, such as music, dance, drama, creative arts, physical activities, outdoor learning, digital sessions, and wellbeing initiatives.
- The quality of healthy hot food provision, ensuring it meets School Food Standards.
- The quality and effectiveness of nutritional education provided to children and families.

Stage 2: Compliance, Documentation, and Financial Review

Successful organisations will be required to submit all documents listed in Appendix 3: HAF Compliance and Documentation Requirements.

During this stage, we will assess whether your organisation has:

- Robust policies and procedures in place to deliver the HAF programme safely and effectively.
- Policies and procedures that comply with Department for Education (DfE) requirements.
- Financial information to ensure the organisation's income and resources support the delivery of the proposed activities.

It is the responsibility of all HAF providers to ensure that their policies and procedures fully comply with DfE requirements. Appendix 3 is provided as a guidance reference and is not exhaustive.

Stage 3: Grant Awards

If your application is successful, we will provide details of:

- The amount of funding awarded.
- The schedule for payment of the grant.

If you are awarded a grant, you are required to notify us of any changes to your planned delivery or project activities to ensure continued compliance with programme requirements. To do this, email: VSST_play@sandwell.gov.uk.

Key Dates and Deadlines

Submission of Required Documents

Successful applicants progressing to Stage 2 of the application process must submit all documents listed in Section 14 of this application by 9th February 2026.

Mandatory E-Voucher Training – New Provider Session

A mandatory training session for new providers will take place on 23rd February 2026, from 10:00-11:00.

Mandatory E-Voucher Training – Refresher Session

A mandatory refresher training session for providers who have previously delivered SMBC-funded provision will take place on 25th February 2026, from 2:00-2:30.



Department
for Education



- **Deadline to Update Booking Details**

All providers must update their booking details on the Holiday Activities platform by 27th February 2026.

- **Deadline to Submit Marketing Materials**

- All providers must submit their marketing materials by 2nd March 2026.

- **Allocation of HAF Codes by Schools**

Sandwell schools will allocate HAF codes to eligible pupils by 4th March 2026.

- **Grant Payments Issued (subject to the satisfaction of conditions)**

Successful applicants progressing to Stage 3 of the application process will receive grant payments by 6th March 2026.

- **Easter Bookings Go Live**

Easter bookings will go live on 9th March 2026.

Withdrawing your application

If for any reason you need to withdraw your application, you may do in writing to the contact person listed below. The request must be made by a senior member of your organisation.

You have the right to withdraw your consent at any time. To do this, email: **VSST_play@sandwell.gov.uk**.

If you have any queries regarding the application, eligibility to apply or capacity to deliver, please contact **HAF_sandwell@sandwell.gov.uk** for clarification.

For any questions relating to finances and documentation please contact the Voluntary Sector Support team **VSST_play@sandwell.gov.uk**.

Data Protection

The Data Controller for any personal information held for this purpose is Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, Council House, Freeth Street, Oldbury B69 3DB.

The Data Protection Officer can be contacted at the above address and through email at: **info_management@sandwell.gov.uk**.

Any personal information on the attached form/section where you have given us consent to use, will ONLY be used for the purpose stated and for no other. For unsuccessful applications, personal data will only be kept for maximum of 12 months. For successful applications, in accordance with financial regulations data will be retained for a maximum of 7 years in line with our Document Retention procedures. Where you have not provided us with consent that information will not be used by the Council.

Any personal information provided under consent will only be used and shared for the purposes outlined on this form, however when a legal duty is placed upon the Council then the Council will consider the sharing of your information in accordance with that duty (e.g. police, etc).

Closing date: Thursday 15th January 2026 by 5:00pm



Appendix 2: School Food Standards

This checklist covers the most important parts of the school food standards. All food provided as part of the HAF programme must meet these standards. Use the checklist to plan or assess your menus. If you are contracting with an external food provider, it is your responsibility to review the agreed menu with your provider against this checklist and make any changes necessary. For more detailed information you can consult [the nutrition criteria of the Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services](#).

Food safety and nutritional standards guidance for HAF providers

Holiday clubs are required to offer at least one meal a day (breakfast, lunch, or tea) that adheres to school food standards, inclusive of snacks. The majority of meals should be hot, and when this is not possible, cold alternatives should be the exception rather than the rule. All food provided must comply with food preparation regulations and account for allergies, dietary preferences, and religious or cultural requirements. Both the grant applicant and the food provider are responsible for reviewing and understanding the school food standards. Safety and hygiene in food preparation are also essential. Use the questions below to check that you or your food provider are appropriately qualified to deliver food as part of the HAF programme.

School Food Standards questions:

Are you/your provider aware of the School Food Standards?

If you are using an external provider, does their quote take the standards into account?

Will the main meal typically be served hot in most circumstances?

Are you or your provider able to provide food that meets the standards?

Food safety and hygiene questions:

Do the relevant staff, either in your organisation or at your external provider, have Food Safety/Hygiene Certificates?

If yes, what level?

Will the food be cooked on site at the holiday club?

If no, how will it be transported?

If the answer is yes, is the site equipped with a food hygiene rating and registered as a food business?



School Food Standards Checklist

School Food Standards checklist for HAF meal provision

This checklist covers the most important parts of the school food standards. All food provided as part of the HAF programme must meet these standards. Use the checklist below to plan or assess your menus. If you are contracting an external food provider, it is your responsibility to review the agreed menu with your provider against this checklist and make any changes necessary. For more detailed information you can consult [the nutrition criteria of the Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services](#),

Starchy Food		
Please select one or both columns if the standard has been met.	Part of hot main meal	Snack or other meal
One or more portions of food from this group every day	☐	☐
Three or more different starchy foods each week	☐	☐
One or more wholegrain varieties of starchy food each week	☐	☐
Starchy food cooked in fat or oil no more than 2 days each week (applies to food served across the whole school day)	☐	☐
Bread - with no added fat or oil - must be available every day.	☐	☐
Fruit and vegetables		
Please select one or both columns if the standard has been met.	Part of hot main meal	Snack or other meal
One or more portions of vegetables or salad as an accompaniment every day	☐	☐
One or more portions of fruit every day	☐	☐
A dessert containing at least 50% fruit 2 or more times each week	☐	☐
At least 3 different fruits, and 3 different vegetables each week	☐	☐



Meat, fish, eggs, beans, and other non-dairy sources of protein		
Please select one or both columns if the standard has been met.	Part of hot main meal	Snack or other meal
A portion of food from this group every day	☐	☐
A portion of meat or poultry on 3 or more days each week	☐	☐
Oily fish once or more every 3 weeks	☐	☐
For vegetarians, a portion of non-dairy protein 3 or more days a week	☐	☐
A processed meat or poultry product (manufactured or homemade and meeting the legal requirements) no more than once a week in primary schools and twice each week in secondary schools, (applies across the whole school day)	☐	☐
Milk and dairy		
Please select one or both columns if the standard has been met.	Part of hot main meal	Snack or other meal
A portion of food from this group every day	☐	☐
Lower fat milk and lactose reduced milk must be available for drinking at least once a day during school hours	☐	☐
Foods high in fat, sugar, and salt		
Please select one or both columns if the standard has been met.	Part of hot main meal	Snack or other meal
No more than 2 portions a week of food that has been deep-fried, batter-coated or breadcrumb-coated (applies across the whole school day)	☐	☐
No more than 2 portions of food which include pastry each week (applies across the whole school day)	☐	☐
No snacks, except nuts, seeds, vegetables and fruit with no added salt, sugar or fat (applies across the whole school day)	☐	☐
Savoury crackers or breadsticks can be served at lunch with fruit or vegetables or dairy food	☐	☐
No confectionery, chocolate, and chocolate-coated products, (applies across the whole school day)	☐	☐
Desserts, cakes, and biscuits are allowed at lunchtime. They must not contain any confectionery	☐	☐
Salt must not be available to add to food after it has been cooked (applies across the whole school day)	☐	☐
Any condiments limited to sachets or portions of no more than 10 grams or one teaspoonful. (Applies across the whole school day)	☐	☐



Healthy drinks (applies across the whole school day)		
Please select one or both columns if the standard has been met.	Part of hot main meal	Snack or other meal
Free, fresh drinking water at all times.	☐	☐
The only drinks permitted are: • plain water (still or carbonated) • lower fat milk or lactose reduced milk • fruit or vegetable juice (max 150mls) • plain soya, rice or oat drinks enriched with calcium; plain fermented milk (for example yoghurt) drinks. • combinations of fruit or vegetable juice with plain water (still or carbonated, with no added sugars or honey) • combinations of fruit juice and lower fat milk or plain yoghurt, plain soya, rice, or oat drinks enriched with calcium; cocoa and lower fat milk; flavoured lower fat milk, all with less than 5% added sugars or honey. • tea, coffee, hot chocolate Combination drinks are limited to a portion size of 330mls. They may contain added vitamins or minerals, and no more than 150mls fruit or vegetable juice. Fruit or vegetable juice combination drinks must be at least 45% fruit or vegetable juice.	☐	☐



Appendix 3: HAF Compliance and Documentation Requirements

It is mandatory for all providers who progress to Stage 2 of the HAF Grant Funding round to submit all the listed documents below. Failure to do so will result in the rejection of your application. Please take note of the following:

- All supporting documents must bear the same name as the applicant organisation, including your governing document, policies, risk assessments, financial accounts, and bank account (if requested). Any discrepancies may hinder the processing of your application.
- For joint applications, each organisation should submit their respective supporting documents.
- It is the responsibility of HAF providers to ensure that all their policies and procedures comply with DfE requirements. Appendix 3 is provided as guidance and is not exhaustive. Providers should review their documentation and policies in line with government and DfE guidance to ensure that their provision meets HAF standards.

1. HAF 2026- Constitution/Governance Document – Organisation Name

This could include your Constitution, Terms of Reference, set of rules or other Governing documents. Private Sector organisations are required to submit their Companies House Registration Certificate. Schools applying for HAF Funding and partner organisations are exempt from submitting this document.

2. HAF 2026 - Latest Annual Accounts – Organisation Name

This could include your latest Annual Accounts or Statement of Income and Expenditure, dated no earlier than 2024-2025. Schools applying for HAF Funding and partner organisations are exempt from submitting this document.

3. HAF 2026 - Public Liability Insurance – Organisation Name

Public Liability Insurance or other insurance must cover the delivery period in full. Schools applying for HAF Funding are exempt from submitting this document.

4. HAF 2026 - Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy – Organisation Name

- To ensure that your policy meets the required standard for HAF delivery, please refer to the checklist provided below:
- The policy must cover the delivery period.
- The policy should comply with current statutory safeguarding legislation and Department for Education (DfE) guidance.
- Begin with an introduction that includes the organisation's name, and a brief overview of the services offered to children and young people.
- Include a statement of intent that outlines the organisation's commitment to ensuring the safety of all employees, volunteers, trustees, and children and young people receiving services. This commitment should extend to the children of adults accessing the services.
- Clearly state who the designated safeguarding lead is and outline their role and responsibilities. Additionally, identify a deputy or contact person who will assume responsibilities in the absence of the designated safeguarding lead.
- Specify the organisation's commitment to ensuring that all staff and volunteers working with children undergo safeguarding training. Describe how this training will be provided and its frequency.



- Provide a comprehensive description of different types of abuse, including sexual, emotional, neglect, physical abuse, as well as bullying, domestic abuse, emotional mental health, and wellbeing. Depending on the service user group, consider addressing exploitation, contextual safeguarding, and child-on-child abuse.
- Explain how concerns regarding a child's safety may come to light and provide links to Sandwell Multiagency Thresholds for reference.
- Detail what actions should be taken if there are concerns about a child's safety. Clearly outline pathways such as Early Help, Strengthening Families, Children's Social Care, and the processes for accessing these services.
- Describe how allegations against a member of staff or volunteer will be managed, including references to Sandwell Lado (Local Authority Designated Officer) and whistle-blowing procedures.
- Provide guidance on what information should be recorded, how it should be managed confidentially, and any relevant data protection considerations.
- Explain information sharing protocols between organisations and ensure that arrangements are in place to clearly define processes and principles for sharing information.
- Outline a clear process for recruiting staff and volunteers, including application, interview, recruitment, and induction procedures.
- Specify the role and responsibilities of Trustees/committee members within the policy.
- Describe the systems in place for distributing, displaying, and regularly reviewing the policies and procedures.
- Include the date when the policy was agreed upon, when it will be reviewed, and ensure it is signed by an appropriate senior member of staff.
- The contact details for Child Protection at SMBC are included in the Application Pack.

5. HAF 2026 - Health & Safety Policy – Organisation Name

To ensure that your policy meets the required standard for HAF delivery, please refer to the checklist provided below:

- The policy must cover the delivery period.
- Policy should comply with current Health and Safety legislation, DfE standards, and local authority requirements.
- Begin with an introduction that includes the organisation's name, and a brief overview of the services offered to children and young people.
- Include a statement of intent that outlines the organisation's commitment to ensuring the safety of all employees, volunteers, trustees, and children and young people receiving services. This commitment should extend to the children of adults accessing the services.
- Policy should reference Martyn's Law and include procedures for: The Environment; Risk Assessment; Security, Lockdown and Intruder Procedures, Arrivals and Departures; Fire safety and equipment; Hygiene; Food Safety & Hygiene; Curriculum/activities; Accidents and Incidents; Evacuation and fire drill; First Aid; Outdoor play, Outings and trips.
- Include Roles and responsibilities and the date when the policy was agreed upon, when it will be reviewed, and ensure it is signed by an appropriate senior member of staff.



6. HAF 2026 - Risk Assessment – Organisation Name

Risk assessments are an important part of this provision and should be used as an enabler to provide support rather than a barrier. A good risk assessment which supports effective risk management and creative thinking will lead to different approaches to face-to-face support rather than support being withdrawn particularly for children, young people and families who are particularly vulnerable or at high risk.

When creating your risk assessment document, it is essential to include all delivery venues, including their capacity, as well as all project activities. This comprehensive approach ensures that potential risks are thoroughly evaluated, and appropriate mitigation measures are implemented.

For each delivery venue, consider its capacity and any specific hazards or safety considerations associated with the space. Assess factors such as layout, emergency exits, accessibility, and any potential risks related to the venue's capacity limitations. In addition to the venues, carefully evaluate all project activities. This includes transportation logistics, equipment usage, participant interactions, and any other relevant aspects of the project. Identify potential risks associated with each activity and develop strategies to mitigate them effectively. By including all delivery venues along with their capacity information and considering all project activities, you can create a robust risk assessment document that addresses potential hazards comprehensively. This will help ensure the safety and success of your project implementation. Risk Assessments should be prepared in accordance with current Health and Safety Executive (HSE) regulations and local authority guidance to ensure a safe operating environment for children and staff.

7. HAF 2026 - Equality & Diversity Policy – Organisation Name

To ensure that your policy meets the required standard for HAF delivery, please refer to the checklist provided below:

- The policy must cover the delivery period.
- The policy should comply with the Equality Act 2010, DfE inclusion guidance, and local authority standards promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion across all HAF provision.
- Anti-Discrimination Commitment: A clear statement opposing all forms of discrimination, including direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other unjust treatment based on protected characteristics.
- Legal Compliance: Detail how the organisation will adhere to the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant anti-discrimination legislation, as well as any other relevant regulations and codes of practice.
- Protected Characteristics: Explicitly outline the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- Inclusion and Welcoming Environment: Affirm the organisation's commitment to creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for all children, families, and staff, regardless of their background, abilities, or protected characteristics.



- **Equal Access to Services:** Ensure that all children have equal access to the provision, regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, or any other protected characteristic, and outline measures to prevent any form of discrimination in accessing the services.
- **Staff Training and Awareness:** Commit to providing staff members with training and resources to raise awareness of equality and diversity issues.
- **Inclusive Curriculum and Activities:** Promote the development and delivery of an inclusive curriculum and activities that reflect and celebrate the diversity of the children and communities accessing your provision.
- **Support for Children with Additional Needs:** Outline the organisation's commitment to providing support and reasonable adjustments to ensure that children with disabilities or additional needs can fully participate and benefit from the HAF offer.
- **Anti-Bullying and Inclusion Policies:** Clearly establish the organisations stance against bullying, discrimination, and exclusion, and provide mechanisms for children to report incidents of bullying or discrimination based on any protected characteristic.
- **Parental and Community Engagement:** Detail how the organisation will actively engage parents, caregivers, and the wider community to promote and support the principles of equality and diversity.
- **Monitoring and Review:** Establish processes for monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the equality and diversity policy, including collecting feedback from children, families, and staff, and taking proactive steps to address any identified issues.
- Include the date when the policy was agreed upon, when it will be reviewed, and ensure it is signed by an appropriate senior member of staff.

8. HAF 2026 - Data Sharing Consent Form – Organisation Name

The form should be designed to allow you to obtain parental consent for sharing children's information (including pictures/statements/videos etc) with Sandwell Council on behalf of HAF. Providers must ensure the form complies with the Data Protection Act 2018, UK GDPR.

9. HAF 2026 - Online Safety/Digital Media/GDPR/Data Protection Policy – Organisation Name

To ensure that your policy meets the required standard for HAF delivery, please refer to the checklist provided below:

- The policy must cover the delivery period.
- The policy should comply with the Data Protection Act 2018, UK GDPR, and DfE guidance on online safety, digital media use, and safeguarding of children in digital environments.
- **Access and Use of Technology:** Define the acceptable use of technology by both staff and children, including guidelines on appropriate websites, apps, and online activities. Set boundaries for personal device usage and establish designated areas for technology access.
- **Data Protection and Privacy:** Outline measures to ensure the protection of children's personal information, including guidelines for storing and handling data, obtaining parental consent for online activities, and compliance with data protection regulations.



- Online Safety Education: Implement a comprehensive online safety education programme, including age-appropriate training on internet safety, recognising, and avoiding potential online risks.
- Internet Filtering and Monitoring: Implement effective internet filtering and monitoring tools to safeguard children from accessing inappropriate content and to monitor their online activities. Ensure that staff members are trained to recognise concerning online behaviours and respond accordingly.
- Incident Reporting and Response: Establish clear procedures for reporting any instances of cyberbullying, inappropriate online interactions, or exposure to harmful content, and define a structured response plan to address such incidents promptly and effectively.
- Staff Training and Supervision: Ensure that all staff members receive thorough training on online safety practices and are equipped to effectively supervise children's online activities. Establish clear guidelines for staff behaviour online and define their roles and responsibilities in maintaining a safe digital environment.
- Parental Involvement: Communicate the organisation's online safety policies and practices to parents and involve them in promoting online safety at home. Provide resources and guidance for parents to support their children in using technology responsibly and safely.
- Include the date when the policy was agreed upon, when it will be reviewed, and ensure it is signed by an appropriate senior member of staff.

10. HAF 2026 - HAF Staff Compliance & Training Record – Organisation Name

Training records must be kept up to date and include evidence of training certification from the Sandwell Safeguarding Children Board or other registered institutions. A copy may be requested prior to or during the delivery period.

Partner organisations are exempt from submitting this document.

11. Minimum of 3 photographs for Marketing purposes & Provider Logo (these will be used on the HAF Sandwell website; ensure parental consent has been obtained).

Please make sure to save pictures in JPEG format within a folder named "Pictures". Please include a minimum of three pictures. By submitting these pictures, you are affirming that you have obtained consent from all individuals including children featured in the pictures to share them with HAF and on all our marketing channels. Partner organisations are exempt from submitting photographs.

12. HAF 2026 - Food Registration Certificate – Organisation Name

You are required to submit a food business registration certificate for yourself if you are a registered food business, or for your catering provider if you are outsourcing catering for your provision.

13. HAF 2026 - Partner Delivery Agreement – Organisation Name (if applicable)

The partnership delivery agreement should only be submitted if you are delivering the HAF programme with a partner. The agreement should include the names of both the lead and partner organisations and outline the delivery relationship in accordance with the information provided in your HAF Application Form.

14. HAF 2026 - OFSTED Registration – Organisation Name (if applicable)



Appendix 4: Independent Referee

Independent Referee Requirement

Important: Leaving this section blank may delay your application. Schools and returning HAF providers are exempt from completing this section.

Who Needs to Provide an Independent Referee?

If you are a **not-for-profit, voluntary or community sector organisation, private, or independent organisation**, you must provide details of an independent referee.

Who Can Be a Referee?

Your referee must:

- Hold a professional or public position that can be verified.
- Be completely independent of your organisation.
- Have knowledge of your organisation and the project for which you are requesting funding.

Please provide the following details for your referee:

- Full name
- Employer details
- Occupation
- Email address
- Contact number

All information will be handled in accordance with data protection guidelines.

Referee Responsibilities

- We may contact your referee for additional information.
- If required, they must be willing to complete a short report during the assessment of your application.
- Your referee must be available during the assessment period. **Failure to receive a report from them (if requested) may result in your application being declined.**

Examples of Suitable Referees:

- Member of Parliament or elected member of a devolved legislature
- Local Councillor
- Justice of the Peace
- Solicitor
- Senior bank official
- Chartered accountant
- Senior local authority officer, civil servant, or other public sector employee
- Local authority officer (e.g., arts development, sports development, museums, lottery)
- Senior officer from a development agency (e.g., Rural Community Councils, Council for Voluntary Service)
- Healthcare professional
- School teacher
- Social worker
- Youth worker



- Police officer

(The above examples are for guidance only.)

Who Cannot Be a Referee?

Your referee **must not** be:

- Someone who will directly benefit if your organisation receives funding.
- Related to anyone who will benefit from the grant.
- A current member of your organisation, trustee, or staff member.
- Related to someone in any of these positions.
- A former employee of your organisation.

This requirement does not apply to schools.



Appendix 5: FAQ's

1. Who will be deciding whether we receive our grant payments?

Members of the HAF grant panel and SMBC grants panel will continue to make decisions regarding the payment of grants and decisions which will then be ratified by both the Director for Children and Education.

2. Can we apply our own branding to our local programme?

We are asking that all communications or publicity material for your provision indicate that the HAF programme is funded by Sandwell MBC as part of the Department for Education (DfE).

3. What reporting, monitoring information and data will we be asked for?

The grant determination letter and programme guidance set out the requirements for the data that we are required to collect. It is vital that the data we collect is robust and covers all the work we deliver as we need to demonstrate that the programme works, as well as ensuring there are financial controls in place, to support the effective management of the grant funding.

We have learned a lot about data collection over the last 3 years of operating the HAF programme. Our aim will be to make this as simple and easy as we can while at the same time, making sure we get the data that demonstrates the success of the programme. Through using Holiday Activities (E- vouchers) platform we are putting systems in place to record relevant information, ensuring we are operating in line with GDPR requirements.

4. Will there be an evaluation of the programme?

An evaluation has been undertaken by our independent evaluators, Abigail D'Amore Associates.
<https://holidayactivities.sandwell.gov.uk/sandwell-haf-impact-report-2022-2025/>

5. Do providers need to be OFSTED registered?

Holidays clubs may need to register with Ofsted and there are associated benefits of doing so. 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](#).

6. How much funding will each organisation receive and when will payments be made?

The maximum allocations you will be awarded are set out in your grant determination letter which will be sent on successful acceptance of grant.

Funding at a fixed daily rate, inclusive of food costs, is available at £30 (per child per day) for children who are eligible for benefit related free school meals. The available funding for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is provided at a daily rate of £40, inclusive of food costs. Funding for children not in receipt of benefits related free school meals is restricted, priority will be given to those who meet the HAF eligibility criteria.



For providers who have previously delivered SMBC funded HAF, the maximum number of places will be cross-referenced against the previous performance and the number of eligible beneficiaries reached. The funding for new applicants (who have not previously delivered SMBC funded HAF) will be capped at 40 places per day.

We will provide funding for programme administration and management costs, covering up to a maximum of 15% of the total expenses.

Providers will have an opportunity to apply for HAF funding for the three holiday periods.

The grant will be deposited directly into the designated bank or building society account. This information will be requested at a later stage from successful applicants. Payments will be made in three instalments and released prior to the start of each delivery period, following receipt of the signed grant agreement.

Funding for the Summer and Winter periods will be contingent on performance during Easter. Any shortfall will be carried forward, and subsequent payments will be adjusted accordingly. For example, if funding was allocated for 20 places per day over four days at Easter but actual delivery fell short, payments for the Summer and Winter periods will be adjusted accordingly. Performance will be assessed based on data submitted through the Holiday Activities (E-Vouchers) system. Please note that retrospective funding for additional places beyond the agreed allocation will not be considered.

7. Can HAF funding be used to pay for transport costs to enable children to access the provision?

We want provision to be accessible for all FSM-eligible children who want to attend. If you identify children who would like to attend and do not have provision within easy reach, you can fund transport costs for them to access the provision. These transport costs will be treated as programme expenditure.

8. Is there a limit to capital expenditure within the grant?

Funding can be used to purchase equipment for the programme, for example, to improve the catering or sports equipment at an individual club. However, 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 and must be accounted for.

Capital expenditure is classed as:

- Individual assets worth over £2,500
- Grouped assets, that is assets of a similar nature that are purchased at the same time, which cost £2,500 or more overall
- 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.

We would not see the contents of activity packs form part of a bulk purchase of equipment, therefore that would count towards your programme expenditure.



9. Can the funding be used to subsidise schemes that offer FSM and non-FSM places? Is it acceptable to support their overheads?

Where an existing childcare/activity provider with a charging policy applies for a HAF grant they will receive place payment for the number of additional free places for eligible children, e.g., a holiday camp place per child for paying families costs £30 per day. We can cover this cost per number of additional places that you can provide for HAF children.

10. Can the funds be used for residential provision?

It is open to providers to consider the use of residential provision, but they should bear in mind that it attracts higher costs, so this would have to be carefully planned and justified looking at the level of demand across the FSM cohort.

11. Can the funding be used for delivery of provision outside of Easter, Summer, and Winter?

No, HAF funding is for the provision of free holiday clubs (including food) during the 2026 Easter, Summer, and Winter holidays.

12. Can the funding be used to support other initiatives alongside food and activities that provide support to families to help raise them out of poverty (e.g., welfare rights and money advice in venues)?

Part of the role of HAF involves working with other local services and agencies to ensure a joined-up approach, including asking clubs to signpost families to support, help and resources. In the past, some HAF clubs have also run sessions for families including work on budgeting, offered volunteering opportunities for family members, worked with local support networks, signposted to citizens advice, engaged with Jobcentre Plus, etc.

13. How much funding should be allocated to meals, and will there be any funding restrictions in terms of the split between paying for food versus activities?

There is no fixed amount. For reference, the DfE allocate around £2.41 per pupil per meal for free school meals during term time. There are also no restrictions in terms of how much you spend on food versus activities. Previous HAF providers have provided food through a variety of arrangements, for example, using school or community kitchens, food delivered and prepped at the club, use of food intervention charities, the approach will often depend on the set up of the individual provider.

14. Is provision only funded for FSM children aged 4-16 (so not Early Years or post 16s)?

Yes, the funding is for eligible school-aged children only. This would include 4-year-olds who have already started in reception. However, we can accept young people up to the age of 19 if they require additional support due to SEND.

15. Can siblings under the age of 5 attend with parents?

The primary beneficiaries of the programme are intended to be children eligible for and receiving benefits-related FSM. However, if a parent turns up with younger children who are not eligible,



we will not require them to be turned away or asked to pay. Clubs should be able to use their discretion in these circumstances.

16. Can this funding be used to cover parents/carers attending sessions?

In previous years, we have seen clubs work successfully with parents, sometimes inviting them in to attend sessions etc., so we are happy for this to be included in 2026-2028. We know that this will not work in all situations and will very much depend on the type of provision, activity, or club.

17. Does this funding cover children with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)?

There may, however, be some children who are not eligible for benefits-related FSM but would still benefit from HAF activities or have protected characteristics. At the discretion of the central HAF team, up to 15% of the 16-digit codes can be allocated to these children and young people (for example, those with no recourse to public funding, those with an education health care plan (EHCP), or children in our care).

18. Can we support eligible children in the summer who are transitioning from nursery to reception (so who have not yet technically started school)?

For this year, we are focussing on school-age FSM eligible children only.

19. Is there flexibility on eligibility criteria – e.g., offering free places for non-FSM children, such as those accessing alternative provision or working families on low incomes?

Programme beneficiaries must meet the following criteria:

- All children and young people must be in receipt of benefits-related Free School Meals (FSM), attend a school in Sandwell, and be between Reception and Year 11.

There may, however, be some children who are not eligible for benefits-related FSM but would still benefit from HAF activities or have protected characteristics. At the discretion of the central HAF team, up to 15% of the 16-digit codes can be allocated to these children and young people (for example, those with no recourse to public funding, those with an education health care plan (EHCP), or children in our care).

20. How will this cover children not in mainstream schools but meet FSM criteria – can they attend?

The funding is for children who receive benefits-related free school meals.

21. What about children who are not in mainstream education, for example, some children in the home-school community?

The funding is primarily for children eligible for and receiving benefits-related free school meals. However, we recognise that there may be some cases where we will have to use a degree of flexibility to ensure that those of greatest need, who do not meet the FSM criteria, benefit from support during the holidays. This request must be made and agreed with the HAF team.



22. Can we set up cross border working protocols to support children from surrounding Local Authorities?

Yes, we recommend discussing this with your neighbouring partners as a first step, but you would need to clearly evidence the spend associated to Sandwell eligible children and the funding source associated to neighbouring authority's eligible children.

23. Is there an expectation that families will need 'proof' of entitlement to FSM to access the provision? Where schemes are being delivered in areas of high deprivation with a considerable proportion of families in receipt of FSM – is that sufficient or is further identification of FSM status required?

All Sandwell children in receipt of benefit related free school meals will receive a HAF voucher detailing a 16-digit unique code prior to each HAF holiday distributed via the school. If a parent is unable to provide a 16-digit code at the time of booking, please contact the HAF team on HAF_sandwell@sandwell.gov.uk to assess their eligibility. Voucher is pre-populated with credits (4 credits for Easter, 16 credits for Summer and 4 credits for Winter HAF holiday periods). Parents use the link on the voucher to make a booking enquiry to a provider. To enable parents to log in with ease, we recommend that they use Facebook or Gmail login options.

Providers have their own log in to the Holiday Activities (E-vouchers) platform to allow management of their own activity status. FSM reporting is generated automatically through this platform.

24. What support are we expected to provide at Winter?

You should aim to provide four days of face-to-face provision.

25. Can we buy Christmas presents for participating children with our HAF money?

You cannot use HAF funding to buy presents. If you have an alternative source of funding, it is open to providers to supplement the food hampers and activity packs with other resources, including, if appropriate, presents, but these could not be funded by the HAF programme. The funding you receive for the HAF programme should only be used for the food and activity packs.

26. What about vouchers for food or fuel?

You cannot use HAF funding to provide families with vouchers. If you have an alternative source of funding, it is open to providers to supplement the food hampers and activity packs with other resources, including, if appropriate, vouchers for food or fuel, but these could not be funded by the HAF programme. The funding you receive for the HAF programme should only be used for the food and activity packs – and should not be used to provide vouchers.

27. What if children and families are unable to attend face to face provision at all?

We expect such cases to be minimal and are encouraging face-to-face support wherever possible. However, if a small number of children and families are unable to attend in person, HAF programme funding may be used to provide food and activity packs.



28. What is meant by the additional support that will run alongside face-to-face provision?

At Easter 2021, because of the COVID-19 situation, Sandwell opted to provide blended support in lieu of a universal face-to-face HAF programme. At Christmas, this involved children receiving:

- High quality and seasonal recipe boxes or food parcels that provide healthy meals
- Activity packs
- Access to online support

The additional support can continue alongside face-to-face provision, but it must be only in circumstances whereby access to face to face provision is not possible.

29. What are the requirements around safeguarding?

It is essential that all providers have robust safeguarding arrangements in place. The DfE have published expanded guidance for this programme, including more detailed guidance on responsibilities, procedures and DBS checking arrangements.

Please review the updated guidance and ensure that safeguarding arrangements are applied in full.

30. Why don't free places cover the whole school holidays?

We know that families face the greatest challenges in the longer holidays, particularly during the summer. The programme is designed to work in conjunction with the existing childcare offers across government. This includes the Universal Credit childcare scheme and Tax-Free Childcare. Eligible parents can top up their free hours using these other, existing childcare offers.

For those who claim Universal Credit but do not claim FSM, they can access holiday or wraparound childcare provision and potentially claim back up to 85% of the cost through the Universal Credit childcare element – the ability to claim will depend on the provision itself.

Providers will have flexibility about how they deliver this provision to best serve the needs of 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.

PLEASE NOTE: There is flexibility within this offer for example, you could run shorter sessions over a longer period within each specific holiday, the delivery days do not have to run consecutively and can be split across the week. Funding is calculated based on the offer of 4 days at Easter, 16 days in the Summer and 4 days in Winter.

31. What are the expectations around the provision of food?

We expect that the food will meet the school food standards, ensuring all children receive a healthy, balanced meal. There is a requirement that most meals will be hot, however, it may be tricky to provide a good variety of hot food if undertaking certain activities from certain venues. In these instances, we would allow an occasional cold food offer as long as it adheres to the school food standards. Hot meals are expected unless otherwise agreed with the HAF team.



32. Is there any additional support to help deliver hot food if organisations do not have the facilities to do so?

Yes, even though there is no longer a centralised food offer we will be providing all partners with a list of food businesses that have been used by previous HAF delivery partners that you can utilise. Please be aware that it is still your responsibility to ensure they meet the School Food Standards prior to any agreements.

33. How do the changes to the 2014 Food Information Regulations affect us?

Changes to the Food Information Regulations 2014 mean there are new labelling requirements for food that is pre-packed for direct sale (PPDS). Full information is available on the Food Standards Agency website at: <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/prepacked-for-direct-sale-ppds-allergen-labelling-changes-for-schools-colleges-and-nurseries>.

We expect all providers to continue to take robust steps to ensure that special dietary needs can be met, and that any allergen ingredients are not introduced where substitution of food products has taken place. Providers should also maintain processes to demonstrate due diligence over the handling of substituted ingredients or products.

This can be done, for example, by seeking full advice from suppliers over product changes, scrutinising labelling and product information and ensuring the allergen matrix is reviewed to maintain accuracy.

Allergen guidance for institutional caterers, including schools, can be found at: <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/allergen-guidance-for-institutional-caterers>

Further sources of advice on allergens can be found on the school food resources page of gov.uk

34. What are the nutritional education requirements?

Clubs can 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.

Clubs can also include training and advice sessions for parents, carers, or other family members.

35. Will the funding allow children to only access the food aspects of the programme without the activities should they choose to do so?

The HAF programme aims to address issues which go beyond food provision. Access to enriching activities is a crucial element of HAF and we do not want providers to focus on food provision alone.



36. What are the expectations of providing support for lunch if the child is unable to attend the holiday activity provision?

This provision is in place for children to access enriching activities and to have a healthy meal. Attendance is voluntary, therefore there is no expectation to provide food provision through HAF funding to those children not attending the provision.

37. Will there be any specific requirements on the types of activities provided or will this be flexible for each programme to decide what works best for their children and families?

No, there are no specific requirements on the type of provision, beyond the standards that we have set out. Provision should be accessible, and you should consider what support is available to children with SEND. You will need to consider the range of provision available, with consideration to age, location and accessibility.

38. Will there be any limitations for provision in venues and outdoor spaces that are accessible to the public during the hours of activities being provided?

It will be for individual providers to select the venues they want to use and to ensure they are safe and can deliver the programme in the intended way.

39. Is there scope within the programme to focus on areas other than just physical activity and food, e.g., mental health and wellbeing?

Yes, you will have the flexibility to adapt the programme to suit the needs of the community you serve.

40. How is the funding distributed?

Funding will be allocated across Easter, Summer and Winter holiday periods, pre-payment per holiday period. Conditions of payment will be provided in the Grant Agreement.

41. Do staff within organisations have to have specific SEND training to deliver the HAF programme?

We would not stop an organisation accessing grant funding because they don't meet specific requirements. There will be a training programme that will be free to HAF providers. Any organisation that applies and requires additional support to be able to support children with additional requirements will receive this by request.

42. If I participated in HAF 2024-2025, will I need to submit all my supporting documents again?

Yes, you will be expected to provide up to date documentation.

43. How should we adjust our services during Ramadan/other Fasting periods?

To support children who are fasting, physical activities should be adapted, and regular breaks should be incorporated. For outdoor activities in hot weather, ensure the availability of shade and a safe space for all children to take breaks. Additionally, provide pre-packed food packs for fasting children to take home.