



Decision Report

Purpose: For Decision

ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL

DECISION UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

DECISION CANNOT BE TAKEN BEFORE 20 FEBRUARY 2024

Title

**HOLIDAY ACTIVITY AND FOOD (HAF)
GRANT RECOMMENDATIONS EASTER 2024**

Report of

**CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION
AND CORPORATE FUNCTIONS**

Executive Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for grant awards to organisations offering holiday activity and food schemes to benefits eligible Free School Meal (FSM) children during the Easter 2024 school holidays, funded by the Department for Education's Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme.
2. Across the Isle of Wight, there are currently 3937 children who are potentially eligible to access holiday places on the HAF programme based on actual Free School Meal data (FSM eligibility numbers from school census information).
3. The aim of the HAF programme is to make free of charge places available to children eligible for benefits related free school meals for the equivalent of at least four hours a day, four days a week and for six weeks a year. This would cover four weeks in the Summer holidays and two weeks at Easter and Christmas. Organisations are also able to offer additional places to fee paying families.
4. The Department for Education (DfE) has provided every local authority in England funding to coordinate free holiday provision, including healthy food and enriching activities, for children eligible for benefits related free school meals. The programme covers the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2024. The Isle of Wight Council has been awarded a total of £427,210.00.
5. During January/February 2024 the Council invited grant applications from organisations able to provide holiday activity and food schemes during the 2024 Easter holidays from 1 – 12 April 2024. Applicants had to show their capability to deliver to the DfE HAF programme outcomes.

6. Applications have been received from local organisations and were evaluated by a panel of Council staff. This resulted in the recommendations contained in Appendix A to this report for grant awards up to a total value of £68,765.00.
7. Market engagement was undertaken with a range of providers to ensure that they were aware of the opportunity for funding and could apply for a grant. Particular focus was given to areas with known gaps in provision such as rural areas and areas of high numbers of FSM children.
8. Successful organisations will need to submit monitoring to the Council to ensure that the funding is reaching the target cohort of children and young people and that the provision is of good quality.

Recommendation

9. It is recommended that Cabinet approves the award of grants to the organisations identified in Appendix 1 to this report to a total value of £68,765.00.

Background

10. On 8 November 2020, the Government announced that the HAF pilot programme, which had provided healthy food and enriching activities to low-income children since 2018, would be expanded across the whole of England from 2021. Grant allocations and requirements were published by the DfE on 20 December 2021.
11. The HAF programme covers the Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays from 2022 - 2025, and the DfE has made up to £205m available in 2024/25 to local authorities for the programme. It is available to children in every local authority in England and builds on the success of the local holiday programmes that the Government funded since 2018.
12. The Isle of Wight Council has been allocated funding of up to £427, 210.00.
13. School holidays can be particular pressure points for some families because of increased costs (such as food and childcare) and reduced incomes. For some children that can lead to a holiday experience gap - with children from low-income families less likely to access organised out-of-school activities; more likely to experience 'unhealthy holidays' in terms of nutrition and physical health and more likely to experience social isolation.
14. Free holiday clubs are a response to this issue and evidence suggests that they can have a positive impact on children and young people. The DfE found that they work best when they provide consistent and easily accessible enrichment activities, when they offer more than just breakfast or lunch, and when they involve children (and parents) in food preparation.
15. 11 organisations bid to provide HAF activities and food schemes to eligible children and young people during the Easter holidays.

16. The number of places available could reach 1806 children on the Island, an estimated 45.8 percent of all eligible children. The key objective for the Easter programme is to ensure that as many places as possible are taken up by eligible children.
17. All funding granted to third party organisations (including schools, and early years providers) will be supported by a grant agreement setting out the conditions of the funding as well as reporting requirements. Third party organisations will be required to report to the Council on how they have spent the funding provided, in line with the DfE grant criteria.
18. The Council has developed a monitoring approach which will embed and drive quality from the outset of the project. Monitoring is completed in three phases with the first being a self-assessment process mapping provider planning against HAF standards.
19. In phase two, the HAF Project Officer reviewed the provision offered and challenging providers where needed, highlighting and sharing exemplar practice. Phase two also included monitoring visits.
20. The final phase pulls together qualitative data to include the views of children and participating families. In this phase we will identify and highlight the most significant changes made to individuals, families and communities. This will form the basis for our own evaluation by the DfE.

Corporate Priorities and Strategic Context

21. The desired outcomes of the HAF Programme are to encourage children and young people:
 - To eat more healthily over the school holidays;
 - To be more active during the school holidays;
 - To take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience, character and well being along with their wider education attainment;
 - To be safe and not to be socially isolated;
 - To have greater knowledge of health nutrition;
 - To be more engaged with school and other local services.

Responding to climate change and enhancing the biosphere

22. The recommended awards enable lower-income families to access free holiday activities with a healthy meal close to home. This should reduce participants' need to travel longer distances.

Economic Recovery and Reducing Poverty

23. The HAF programme is targeted towards lower income families and the signposting standard requires all providers to support parents to access employment advice and support. Signposting activity also encourages parents to access benefits to boost household income for those most in need.

Impact on Young People and Future Generations

24. The HAF programme also aims to ensure that the children and families who participate in the programme develop their understanding of nutrition and food budgeting as well as being effectively signposted towards other information and support for example related to physical and mental health and wellbeing, employment and education.

Consultation and Engagement

25. Consultation has been undertaken with providers before, during and after each delivery round in 2023 to improve the application process, advertising and support.
26. Consultation was carried out in 2023 with other agencies and IWC departments to ensure activities were available in rural areas and areas of deprivation where there are a higher number of FSM children recorded.

Financial / Budget Implications

27. The Isle of Wight grant allocation from the DfE is £427,210.00. The table below reflects the actual and recommended spend to date, and the balance remaining for Christmas.

Table 1:

A	B	C	D
Total Budget	Easter grants	Summer grants	Christmas grants
£427,210.00	£71,842.00	£233,482.00	£55,882.00

Legal Implications

28. Legal agreements have been drawn up by the Isle of Wight Council's Legal Services to be signed by all providers to ensure due diligence from both a financial and legal perspective.

Equality and Diversity

29. The council as a public body is required to meet its statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equal opportunities between people from different groups and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
30. Under the Equality Act 2010 we are required to have due regard to our equality duties when making decisions, reviewing services, undertaking projects, developing and reviewing policies.
31. These grants will have a positive impact on the following protected characteristics:

- Age - children and young people and their families will benefit from these grants.
- Disability – services provided will be inclusive.

Options

32. The recommended option is to seek approval for grant awards to organisations offering holiday and activity and food schemes to benefits eligible Free School Meal (FSM) children during the Easter 2024 school holidays, funded by the Department for Education's Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme. The alternative is not to award funds and decline to claim the funding being made available by the Department for Education for the benefit of lower income and vulnerable children and families on the Isle of Wight.

Risk Management

33. As part of the application process, organisations were asked to detail their risk assessments.
34. In the event that a provider is unable to fulfil the funded number of places, any underspent funding will be deducted from the final 20% payment. The figure will be decided from the final data provided by the provider at the end of the HAF Easter activity, verified by attendance data submitted prior to and throughout the delivery period.

Evaluation

35. The purpose of this report is to seek approval to award grants to 10 providers up to a total value of £68,765.00.
36. The funding for the Easter holidays have been allocated across two different grant streams:
 - a) Grant Type A – For childcare places in existing schemes/clubs or new schemes/clubs being proposed in priority and rural areas;
 - b) Grant Type B – For holiday-themed events, short activities, innovative projects and initiatives targeting priority and rural areas, older children & young people (11–16 year olds), and families
37. Applications were invited against the two grant streams. Organisations were able to apply for one or more of the grants available depending on the type of activity that they were seeking to deliver.
38. When a provider is awarded HAF funding communication will be maintained to ensure to evaluate the overall ability to meet the HAF principles, quality and standards of its HAF project in line with the principles and requirements of the DfE.
39. Audit visits will be carried out with each provider to gather information and observe the activity to ensure the quality of the provision is sufficient to meet the HAF criteria. A blended approach will be carried out with both on-site visits and remote contact via video or telephone arranged in advance.

Appendices Attached

45. Appendix 1 – Recommended Grant Awards

Contact Point: Theresa Wall, Senior Early Years & SEND Lead, 📞 821000 e-mail
theresa.wall@iow.gov.uk

NAOMI CARTER
*Service Director Education, Inclusion &
Access, Children's Service Department*

(CLLR) JONATHAN BACON
*Cabinet Member for Children's Services,
Education and Corporate Functions*