



Cabinet report

Date	11 NOVEMBER 2021
Title	HOLIDAY ACTIVITY AND FOOD (HAF) GRANT RECOMMENDATIONS - WINTER 2021
Report of	CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION AND LIFELONG SKILLS

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 Winter 2021 school holidays, funded by the Department for Education's Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme.
2. Across the Isle of Wight, there are currently 3,331 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 and a week's worth of provision in each of the Easter and Christmas holidays in 2021. Organisations are also be 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 2021. The Isle of Wight Council has been awarded a total of £407,660.
5. During August/September 2021 the Council invited grant applications from organisations able to provide holiday activity and food schemes during the 2021 Winter holidays from 23 December to 3 January 2022. Applicants had to show their capability to deliver to the DfE HAF programme outcomes described in paragraph 16.
6. A total of four applications were received from four organisations and were evaluated by a panel of Council staff and a representative from a local community organisation. This resulted in the recommendations contained in this report for four grant awards up to a total value of £21,210.

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 £21,210.
10. In the event that a provider is unable to fulfil the funded number of places or has to amend its offer in the light of Covid, it is recommended that the Cabinet Member delegates approval to the Director of Children's Services to reallocate any underspent Winter HAF grant funding to ensure an Isle of Wight wide offer, within the grant allocation for Winter of £61,150. Any such reallocations will be determined in consultation with the Cabinet Member.

BACKGROUND

11. 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 in 2021. Grant allocations and requirements were published by the DfE on 8 February 2021.
12. The HAF programme covers the Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays in 2021, and the DfE has made up to £220m available 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.
13. The Isle of Wight Council have been allocated funding of up to £407,660.
14. 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.
15. 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.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

16. The desired outcomes of the 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.
17. 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.
18. The Council seeks to achieve these aims through the provision of holiday clubs and activities. Organisations will be grant funded to provide free of charge places at their schemes for eligible children and will be required to provide a healthy meal as part of their core delivery. They will provide a range of activities for the children and young people to engage with and participate in, with a focus on healthy eating and healthy lifestyles as a common theme. Organisations will also be expected to support the wider family and signpost to other key community resources as required.

PERFORMANCE

19. Four organisations bid to provide HAF activities and food schemes to eligible children and young people during the Christmas holidays. This was a disappointing response to the call for applications, despite direct approaches to all past providers and to the childcare and youth provision sectors. This is due to the particular nature of the Isle of Wight Christmas holidays, which do not allow providers to deliver a scheme for an uninterrupted four days. Instead, they must provide two days before Christmas, which include Christmas Eve, and then two days between Christmas and New Year. Providers are concerned that this will not appeal to families and that the considerable efforts they will need to make for a short delivery period may not prove productive. The Department for Education has been made aware of the challenges the HAF Winter requirements present for the Isle of Wight but has not offered flexibility in the conditions of the HAF grant.
20. Several providers reported that they usually shut down at this time of year, due to lower demand from the fee-paying market, and this enables their staff to take leave. They therefore have reduced staff capacity to deliver HAF. One of the larger providers of the summer programme travelled from Hampshire, with staff staying locally on the Island - they have not been able to source sufficient staff to participate over the Christmas holiday period. On a positive note, all past providers remain keen to participate in future HAF delivery, though unable to over Christmas.
21. The four providers will be delivering in Newport, Ventnor and Ryde. It is recognised that this leaves gaps in provision and staff will discuss with the providers their

transport options to enable them to extend their reach to all eligible families interested in booking places.

22. The reduced number of places available could reach c.400 children on the Island, an estimated 12 percent of all eligible children. This is lower than the summer HAF programme but is representative of the challenges described in paragraph 19 and the key objective for the Winter programme is to ensure that all places are taken up by eligible children.
23. 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.
24. 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.
25. 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.
26. 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.
27. 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.

CONSULTATION

28. Initially consultation was not possible due to the short timeframe of a few weeks in which to roll out the HAF programme. Since then consultation has been undertaken with providers to improve the application process, advertising and support.
29. Consultation was carried out 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

30. The Isle of Wight grant allocation from the DfE is £407,660. The table below reflects the actual and recommended spend to date, and the balance remaining for Christmas.

Table 1:

A Total Budget*	B Easter grants	C Summer recommendations	D Balance for Christmas
£407,660	£43,217	£238,886	£84,791

**The total grant is £407,660 less £40,766 (10% admin costs) = £366,894 available for providers.*

CARBON EMISSIONS

31. Consideration of the Council's Carbon Management Plan is not required as activities are being outsourced to be run by providers however discussions with providers will take place to ensure they are mindful of their carbon emissions.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

32. 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

33. The Isle of Wight Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation).
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

34. 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

35. The 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 Winter 2021 school holidays, funded by the Department for Education's Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme.

RISK MANAGEMENT

36. As part of the application process, organisations were asked to detail their Covid risk assessments. They were also asked to provide contingencies to their delivery plans should face to face sessions not be possible. Online activities and resources, and home food deliveries will enable organisations to mitigate against further restrictions if necessary, whilst still offering a level of support to eligible children and their families.

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 Winter activity, verified by attendance data submitted prior to and throughout the delivery period.

EVALUATION

37. The purpose of this report is to seek approval to award grants to four providers up to a total value of £21,210. All four applicants are previous HAF providers who have evidenced that they can provide the required activities and food schemes in areas with high numbers of FSM children.
38. The Holiday Activity and Food grant initiative will be delivered under the 'connect4communities' programme of work:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/childrenandfamilies/connectforcommunities>

39. The funding for the Winter holidays will be allocated across two different grant streams:

Grant Type A – For childcare places in existing schemes/clubs or new schemes/clubs being proposed in priority and rural areas.

Grant Type B – For Christmas holiday events, short activities, innovative projects and initiatives targeting priority and rural areas, older children & young people (11–16 year olds), and families.

40. Applications were invited against the two grant streams via the connect4communities website. 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.

41. 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.
42. 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

Appendix 1 – Recommended Grant Awards

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