

HAF Worcestershire Easter Delivery Report 2025

Introduction

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme is a Department for Education (DfE) funded initiative. The Programme was initially trialled in 2018 and success saw the programme expanded across the whole of England to every Local Authority in 2021/22.

Since 2021, Sutton Croft Ltd has been commissioned by Worcestershire County Council (WCC) to manage the grant funding allocation and delivery of the programme 'HAF Worcestershire'.

HAF Worcestershire is aimed at children and young people between the ages of 5-16, in receipt of benefits-related Free School Meals (FSM). There is limited flexibility in the programme guidelines to offer places to other vulnerable cohorts including families considered to be 'just about managing'.

HAF Worcestershire has significantly grown since the start of the programme and works directly with holiday club providers, schools, charities, community groups and other organisations to offer an inclusive, varied and flexible programme for eligible children.

The Aim of HAF

Research has shown that children from low-income families 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 aim of the programme is to reduce the pressure for families during school holidays by offering free access to activity clubs providing physical activity, enriching activities, healthy food and support for families.

Eligibility Process

HAF Worcestershire uses a central booking portal developed in collaboration with BookingLab. Children and Young People (CYP) must be verified as eligible for HAF to book activities. This process is as follows:

1. Families and parents sign up via the HAF booking portal to register for access to the HAF programme.
2. Once signed up, accounts are pending until they are checked against the FSM database and verified.
3. When individual child profiles are verified as either FSM eligible or referred status, parents and families can book on to activities.

Non-FSM Eligibility

Providers have the flexibility to offer up to 15% of their total places to participants who are not eligible for benefits related free school meals but are considered to be vulnerable. These groups include but are not limited to:

- Children assessed by the local authority as being in need, at risk or vulnerable
- Young carers
- Children of refugee families
- Looked after children who are in Kinship Care
- Children living in areas of high deprivation or from low-income households who are not in receipt of free school meals
- Children in transition phases between nursery and primary school or primary and secondary school

Easter 2025 – Programme Overview

43 providers were commissioned to deliver HAF during the Easter holidays at over 60 venues (including trips). Clubs and activities were designed for children and young people to attend across the county and included SEND-specialist and SEND-mainstream places.

The core offer is based on the DfE's 4x4 model – four days' worth of activities delivered within four hours per day – i.e., 10:00-14:00 each day x four days. Given the length of school holidays over two weeks, the majority of providers delivered dates across both weeks and in many cases, doubling the offer to eight days of activities/camps in total.

A wide offering of activities, clubs, workshops and visits included theatre and performing arts, sports camps, swimming sessions and water safety skills, pony riding and care, forest school, arts & crafts, yoga and mindfulness sessions, coding and programming, outdoor pursuits and an increased youth offer including ice skating, bowling, cinema trips, Ninja Warrior courses, farm visits and museum/educational experiences – some running as family visits, ensuring parents/carers and/or siblings were able to join together.

SEND specialist provision was commissioned with trusted partners to run sensory and soft play sessions, adapted bike riding skills courses and small group day trips to accessible venues. In addition, mainstream SEND places were offered within the HAF programme to ensure inclusive, accessible provision that also offers four-hour childcare.

New provision was also trialled during the Easter holidays, with the aim of reaching new groups, new interests and, specifically, to target young people aged 12-16. Long-standing HAF community partners ran bespoke, smaller youth groups in addition to their usual provision in order to reach more families, or those new to the programme and to further understand needs and interests of attendees aged 12+.

A continued priority, provision mapping identified gaps in the programme and allowed focus to be placed on areas that may be underserved. Longer-term strategies include the partnering up of new venues, schools or community groups who may not deliver HAF activities currently but could do so in the future, and the potential expansion of existing

providers who can support in secondary locations or partner with other providers who may benefit from collaboration in order to expand programmes.

SEND provision remains a high-priority objective to ensure accessible, inclusive places are offered within mainstream activities and where necessary, SEND-specialist. The HAF programme continues to work with the Groups, Activities & Short Breaks offer to understand parent/carer needs and review suitable partners and potential providers alongside feedback surveys, which inform future provision commissioning.

Continued commitment to a consistent, high-quality offer with tried and trusted HAF community partners is also reflected in current feedback, alongside the range of activities and enriching experiences offered.

Accessing HAF

HAF supported 1352 individual CYP at Easter 2025 – 78% were primary-aged children and 22% secondary-aged young people. The average number of days attended was 3.

5891 children and young people are now registered and verified on the HAF booking site, ensuring instant access to places when bookings are live. At winter 2024, approximately 4400 children and young people were registered and approved – this Easter therefore had an increase of 34% of verified eligible children.

Registrations are encouraged year-round, via parent & carer newsletters, school bulletins and targeted communications, and via the HAF social channel. The number of registrations for new families accessing HAF continues to increase, including via providers direct – this often includes families who may need additional support in accessing the programme or are unable to book via the HAF site.

Attendance

A total of 5657 places were made available for HAF activities across Worcestershire. 89% of places offered were booked.

71% of places were booked and attended.

Overall (including face-to-face provision and day trips), 5657 places were offered, 5025 places were booked, and 4013 places were attended.

Places attended breakdown:

- 3% of places attended were specifically for CYP with SEND
- 23% of places were attended by secondary-aged children
- 77% of places were attended by primary-aged children

The following table breaks down places attended by the type of places and age group of places:

	Primary-aged	Secondary-aged
Mainstream places attended	2972	902
SEND specific places attended	126	13
Total places attended	3098	915

Individual Children and Young People

Overview of Easter CYP

The following table shows the breakdown of individual CYP accessing Easter 2025 by FSM and SEND:

	Primary-aged	Secondary-aged
FSM & Non-SEND	755	199
FSM & SEND in universal settings	165	67
FSM & SEND in SEND specialist provision	29	6
Non-FSM & Non-SEND	46	13
Non-FSM & SEND in universal settings	44	10
Non-FSM & SEND in SEND specialist provision	18	0
Total attendees	1057	295

Individual CYP key stats:

- 90% of CYP were eligible for FSM
- 78% of CYP were primary-aged
- 22% of CYP were secondary-aged
- 25% of CYP had SEND
- 47 CYP were from refugee families

Programme Strengths

The HAF programme in Worcestershire continues to receive positive feedback on range of activities offered, quality of provision, consistency of known and trusted providers who offer a safe, welcoming environment for children and young people.

Parent/carers feedback informs how providers are commissioned for each delivery period and regular contact with families via social media and newsletters and with community partners, ensures the programme is meeting need and interest, whilst exploring any gaps in provision and understanding new trends or interests that may encourage further reach and growth.

Highlight summary:

- Continued commitment to high-quality provision
- Responsive to parent/carer/CYP feedback and programme objectives
- Responsive to evolving programme to best meet family needs against budget
- Commitment to youth provision and 'HAF Legacy'
- Returning families and CYP to the programme
- Refresh communications with all schools in Worcestershire to increase engagement with HAF; through signposting families, sharing content, booking support or by delivering HAF activities at school either directly or through external provider.
- Improve SEND inclusion in mainstream provision. Providers recruited additional support staff and enhanced training to better support individual CYP.
- Continued development of SEND specialist provision
- Continuous commitment from providers in understanding key objectives for HAF delivery and working collaboratively with peers and HAF team to ensure best practice.
- Continuous review and mapping of HAF locations to identify and fill gaps in provision.
- Encourage support from external workshops or educational providers within lead provider settings to enhance the HAF offer.
- Continued to support of families who may otherwise struggle to access HAF (limited internet access/learning difficulties/illiteracy, etc).

Providers

Key stats:

- A total of 43 providers delivered this Easter (some running multiple venues or expanded programmes, such as a SEND-specific provision in addition to mainstream)
- Over 60 HAF venues (including trips)
- Providers include;
 - Voluntary or community- based organisations
 - Private organisations
 - Schools
 - Local Authority

Funding Allocation

Funding allocation reflects the percentage of FSM eligibility.

The following table breaks down grant funding allocation by district, from summer 2022 to Easter 2025:

District	Easter 2024	Summer 2024	Winter 2024	Easter 2025
Malvern Hills	£40,060.00 (18%)	£172,929.87 (19%)	£19,825.00 (9%)	£32,856.00 (14%)
Redditch & Bromsgrove	£57,524.00 (25%)	£204,715.00 (22%)	£84,497.00 (33%)	£58,694.00 (25%)

Worcester City	£56,320.00 (25%)	£244,581.58 (27%)	£59,790.00 (23%)	£65,820.00 (28%)
Wychavon	£48,110.00 (21%)	£183,530.55 (20%)	£75,732.00 (29%)	£51,495.00 (22%)
Wyre Forest	£25,535.00 (11%)	£106,784.00 (12%)	£8,226.00 (3%)	£20,040.00 (9%)

*3% funding allocated to Severn Arts for workshop deliveries across the county

HAF in Schools

A total of 19 schools (primary, secondary, special, independent and alternative provision) supported the HAF programme, either as lead providers or as venues.

Lead providers manage full HAF delivery in-house. As venues, schools host external providers who deliver the HAF programme on school site. By working with HAF in either capacity, school support provides the following benefits:

- Reduced workload of holiday provision coordination for school, allowing a combined group of paid/HAF activities.
- Offers on-site consistency for pupils between school holidays.
- Supports positive school relationships and engagement experiences for children.
- Offers paid opportunities for TAs during school holidays.
- Improves communication between provider and school to offer better support for CYP.
- Offers site familiarity for CYP and accessibility within local communities.
- Schools are recognised as safe, secure venues for parents with good knowledge of local children attending and any particular needs or challenges they may face.
- Offers good quality resources, facilities and often sufficient catering areas to allow for hot food provision.
- Supports the attainment of pupils who may otherwise struggle with formal education within a safe, familiar setting where teachers can support continued development.

A challenge posed by school provision can impact the engagement of the older age range of CYP (12-16) – some parents/carers and providers report that returning to school during the holidays for provision is not always suited to all HAF attendees and that older young people prefer to move away from a formal education setting.

HAF Activities & Clubs

Contracted places across districts:

- Worcester City had 1420 places, 25% of the county total
- Malvern Hills had 606 places, 11% of the county total
- Wychavon had 1103 places, 19% of the county total
- Wyre Forest had 700 places, 12% of the county total

- Redditch and Bromsgrove had 1828 places, 32% of the county total

Activities included:

- Drama/theatre/performing arts
- Music workshops
- Coding & programming
- Arts & crafts
- Dance
- Forest school
- Multi sports
- Football camps
- Swimming
- Water safety sessions
- Horse riding
- Team building
- Sensory & soft play
- Educational visits – museums/exhibitions/farms
- Youth cafes & clubs
- Personal development, including new skills, leadership, project management & teamwork
- Community projects
- Day trips – local leisure venues, themed events

Quality Assessment

Continued commitment to high-quality provision is measured and monitored against the following:

Measure	Description
EOI Quality Response	Detailed EOI application form detailing provider experience, evidence and proposed plans.
Safeguarding and Policies	Health & Safety and Insurance checklists and organisations submit all documentation prior to delivery.
Provider support and training	Ongoing mobilisation and delivery support, access to training courses designed for HAF.
Delivery reporting	Final delivery report including registers, summary of delivery, photos and family feedback.
Self Assessment	Providers complete a self assessment of delivery
Site Visits	The HAF Programme Team performed site visits during activity sessions and completed an informal assessment sheet.
Provider feedback	Providers completed a feedback process to review the HAF Easter delivery programme.
School feedback	Schools that participated in HAF were asked to provide feedback.

Family Feedback

Parent/carer surveys are sent to all registered families following each delivery period. The data collected allows thorough assessment of the programme – including strengths and areas for improvement, both from the parent/carer and child/young person perspective.

The headline stats:

Quality

- 87% of respondents rated the quality of HAF activities offered as **Excellent** or **Very Good**, a 9% improvement from the last holiday delivery during winter 2024, and a 17% improvement over summer 2024.
- 96% of respondents rated the staff delivering HAF activities as **Excellent** or **Very Good**, up 5% from winter 2024 and 19% from summer 2024.
- 73% of respondents rated the quality of food provided as **Excellent** or **Very Good**, up 16% from summer 2024.
- 88% of respondents rated the overall quality of the HAF programme as **Excellent** or **Very Good**, up 11% from winter 2024 and 23% from summer 2024.

Social Impact

- Asked if the child/ren enjoyed Easter HAF activities, 90% of respondents answered **Yes** – up 17% from summer 2024.
- Asked if the HAF programme delivered at Easter had a positive impact on child wellbeing, 88% of respondents answered **Yes** – a 5% increase from winter 2024 and 25% from summer 2024.

How is HAF Used?

Whilst HAF benefits many regular families returning to programme year-on-year, wider development to improve reach and raise awareness for families not currently accessing the programme is a continued priority.

To further understand how families access HAF, the survey asked respondents if they are new to the programme, use it regularly, or book activities ad hoc, depending on need at the time and if any particular activities of interest are offered.

- 78% of respondents have all used HAF prior to Easter 2025.
- 61% of respondents reported that they still access HAF in much the same way, booking as many activities as they did when they first starting using the programme.
- 19% of respondents reported that they use HAF less than they used to, whilst 20% said they book more now.

- Of the respondents who use the programme less now, reasons included aging out of programme, circumstantial changes that mean HAF is no longer a necessity, limited activities to suit interest in area or difficulties in booking non-FSM children.
- Of the respondents who use the programme more now, reasons included change to working pattern, no longer hybrid or remote and more reliant on childcare support, sibling aging into HAF, child is benefitting from the programme or has expressed enjoyment and wishes to continue attending.
- 95% of all respondents reported they would use Worcestershire's HAF programme in the future and 86% said they are planning to book summer 2025 activities.

The HAF Impact

Below are some of the examples received of parent/carers and child feedback following the Easter HAF delivery:

- "I can leave my child with absolute peace of mind knowing that he is safe, eats (and tries new) delicious food and that he always comes home so, so happy after having a wonderful day." – Parent
- "My son enjoyed the sports activities as he can be very active due to his ADHD. He found it difficult the first time being left alone (without parent) but the second day was easier and he really enjoyed it." – Parent
- "My daughter is being assessed for autism and can find it hard to get involved in activities without a family member there. Cube Youth have given her the confidence and support to allow her this level of independence. The Easter HAF opportunities were varied and fun and allowed us the peace of mind that our daughter would be engaged and well taken care of." – Parent

Key feedback on the quality of provision offered and the support this lends to families:

- "The variety of activities is great."
- "Lots of fun activities, with a good mix of multisport and arts & craft type sessions."
- "Really nice to see more choice of activities for the older children (16 year olds)."
- "The activities on offer were fantastic. We really enjoyed being able to spend time together as there were more activities where I could join (my daughter)."
- "I think this is a backbone for parents and children in need who are suffering financial hardship. The activities with lunches included are a huge help and mentally lift both the parent and child, when times are already tough."
- "So much stress has been alleviated by your program and I'm so grateful for it."
- "It's things like this that keep parents working and earning and children happy and safe."

Key feedback from providers and partners within the community:

- “(Name removed) aged 13, attended and thoroughly loved taking part in the drama session over the Easter period. Mum has booked her child into our Youth Theatre for a taster session immediately after the Easter holidays and we are confident that a bursary place can be offered to (name removed).” – Worcester Theatres
- “L has loved every trip with Malvern Youth Club — from Water World and Cotswold Wildlife Park to Laser Tag, Ninja Warrior, and the cooking day. The whole team of youth workers has made such a positive difference in his life and mine. I’m very grateful — he’s grown in confidence, made new friends, and had an amazing Easter holiday. Thanks also to HAF, as without the support, we wouldn’t have been able to afford these trips as a family. A big thank you to everyone involved for providing a safe, welcoming space for my L, he loves youth club & feels he can talk to the youth workers & feels they listen. The games, crafts plus food provided are a bonus :) MASSIVE Thanks again to you Jo and MCP.” – Malvern Cube Projects
- “M loved the activities and once again the youth club has made a huge difference to us as a family. It gives M time away doing exciting things with his peer group as well as giving me some space, which, as a foster carer I really appreciate. M has made friends at club and is learning skills about sharing and co operation and if he has a slip up, he is met with kindness and understanding but also the firmness he also needs. M attended 4 lots of activities this Easter and loved each one. Many thanks for all the work it takes to organise these.” – Malvern Cube Projects
- “I’d like to do this every day in the holidays!” – Child attending HAF camps
- “Staff listen to what I actually want to do.” – Young Person attending HAF youth provision
- “The small groups are better – it’s peaceful and I’ve made new friends.” – Young person attending HAF youth provision
- “One of the children attending PAL Fitness holiday clubs did not talk when he first joined the programme (struggling with anxiety). Now that he is accessing our HAF provision, he is growing in confidence each day and after the Easter holidays, will hopefully be going back to school, ready to continue his progress socially, emotionally and academically.” – PAL Fitness

Programme Development

In response to the vital feedback received by families, schools and community partners, the following objectives set clear guidance for the ongoing delivery of HAF:

- Increased provision, particularly in Malvern and Wyre Forest
- Increased provision for 11+ only sessions and more sessions for the upper age range
- More family activities/days out (seasonal)
- Options for hampers/care packages – particularly for families who live in rural areas of Worcestershire (seasonal)
- Age-appropriate activities for 11+, such as trips to the cinema, bowling or other leisure facilities
- An increase in SEND provision within mainstream HAF delivery, where respite is provided rather than stay & play sessions for parents/carers

- Increased hours to support working parents

As part of our commitment to continued growth within the above areas, Easter delivered:

- A growth for 11+ provision, designed in partnership with local communities and in response to CYP interests and needs, including sessions specifically targeting 11+ as stand-alone provision (trialled across Wychavon, Redditch, Bromsgrove).
- Increased capacities for existing youth provision across Worcestershire.
- Further increases, where viable, for SEND places within mainstream provision, plus expansion of SEND-specific activities.
- An allowance for family events/activities in addition to the prioritised face-to-face provision, where demand was proven.
- Wider choice of activities, experiences and off-site opportunities that may otherwise be inaccessible.
- Continued improvement on place management – where parents are reminded to manage bookings, notify of cancellations and returned places re-offered to the site or via waiting lists
- More robust management of funded places, ensuring proven attendance of places before releasing additional places and budget to meet demand.
- Refreshed the programme to minimise oversaturation of specific areas or activities.
- Monitored uptake and demand for more niche activities with a view to increasing where there is interest.
- Increased engagement with schools, local communities and great promotion of HAF activities, via WCC communication channels, social media, newsletters and targeted marketing.

Summer 2025 Planning

The core offer for summer will again reflect the Department for Education's guidance on the 4x4x4 ratio (4 hours per day x four days per week x 4 weeks). However, where viable extended hours will be incorporated to further support working parent commitments and, where possible within budget, providers will be encouraged to further extend their offers beyond the 16 sessions.

While the programme continues to welcome new providers to enhance Worcestershire's diverse, accessible, and inclusive HAF offer, there remains a strong commitment to long-standing partners who deliver consistent, continuous support including wraparound care and signposting that extends beyond a single day's activity camp.

Planning for summer is already well underway, with the full programme set to launch four weeks before the school holidays. Families can look forward to a wide range of exciting activities designed to entertain, engage and create lasting memories during the break.