

Report to the Cabinet Committee

26 January 2026

Wards: All**Department for Education-Holiday Activities and
Food Programme (HAF) 2026-29****Report of the Director of Children, Young People and Families Services****Report Status:**

This item is not exempt

This is a key decision. The matter is in the Forward Plan

Forward plan ref: 0054/25.

1. Purpose of the Report and Summary

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the proposed implementation plans and the budget for the delivery of the Department for Education's (DfE) 'Holiday Activities and Food (HAF)' programme 2026-29, and to seek approval for the decisions necessary to enable delivery of the programme. The proposals incorporate:
- An overview of the HAF programme.
 - The Council's funding allocation and proposed financial plan, payment and reporting requirements.
 - How the programme will be coordinated across the city, including governance and integration with other relevant and strategies.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve the proposed programme approach within the funding for Hull's HAF 2026-29 programme, specifically:
- To accept the grant terms agreed by Assistant Director, Legal Services and Governance with the DfE for 2026-29.

- To continue to operate a Public Sector/Voluntary Sector steering group to build on the development and delivery work carried out in previous holiday programmes.
- To provide continued governance for the investment of the grant funds in a manner that supports sustainable model for delivery of Holiday Activities and the Food Programme.
- To delegate authority to the Director of Children and Families Services in consultation with Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services and Assistant Director, Legal Services and Governance to procure and authorise entry into the contracts necessary to deliver the HAF programme up to the value of the funding envelope.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 From 2021-2026 the DfE provided 150 tier 1 local authorities with funding to deliver a Holiday Activities and Food Programme. This has now been extended for a further 3 years, this was confirmed via an email from the DfE on the 25 August 2025. The 2021-2026 programme has delivered support for children, young people and families following the challenges they have faced during the pandemic and ongoing financial insecurity.
- 3.2 School holidays can be 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 disadvantaged families less likely to access organised out-of-school activities; more likely to experience ‘unhealthy holidays’ in terms of nutrition and physical health and are more likely to experience social isolation.
- 3.3 The proposals provide the basis for the ongoing development of a sustainable model for delivery on a partnership basis operating across the public sector and voluntary sector partners in the city.

4. Key Organisational Impacts

4.1 Impact on other Executive Committees (including Area Committees) and decision makers:

The HAF Programme 2026 aims to continue to have a significant offer in all the city covered by our Area Committees and a briefing paper will be circulated to all Area Committees. A representative from the Area Teams is an integral part of the HAF Steering Group and by working through existing local networks the programme will continue to ensure joint work with all Area Team activity as appropriate.

The HAF programme also has a significant impact on the emotional, mental and physical activity levels of children, young people and families, a strategic priority within Hull’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Briefings for the Health and Well Being board will be provided as requested.

4.2 Contribution to the delivery of the Community Plan, the Council Plan and/or Area Plans:

4.2.1 HAF delivery contributes to the Community Plan ambitions:

Ambition 1: Safe and Welcoming Neighbourhoods:

- Tackle the root causes of crime, making communities more resilient.

Ambition 2: A healthier and fairer Hull:

- Keep children and families at the heart of our city and build an environment which supports positive health choices.

Ambition 3: Reaching our full potential:

- Hull will be a great place to raise a family and for children to grow up in.
- The voices of children and young people are heard and respected and the contribution to decisions affecting their lives is valued.
- Lifelong learning opportunities, learning or enjoyment and support to nurture talent enables young people and adults to thrive in their work and be happy in their lives.

Ambition 6: Our culture, our heritage, our city:

- Young people, and intergenerational families will be at the heart of our city through the creation and delivery of activity in partnership with them.

4.3 Impact on other key strategies/business plans:

4.3.1 The decision will also support the delivery of the outcomes in the:

- Children and Young People's Plan.
- Towards an Active Hull Partnership Physical Activity Strategy, including the Place Based Expansion (PBE) programme.
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- Food Strategy.
- Early Help and Prevention Strategy.

4.4 Equalities Impact Information

4.4.1 An Equalities Impact Analysis Screening Tool has been completed and approved.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 The HAF Steering Group consists of partners from across the public and voluntary sector who have been involved in developing the implementation plans outlined in this paper. In addition to this Learning Events were delivered in November-December 2025 which engaged organisations across the partnership, including the voice of children and young people. Ongoing stakeholder engagement will be an integral part of the implementation plans as is ensuring the role of children and young people in the further shaping of the programme for 2026-29.

6 Background

- 6.1 The Council, since 2021, have delivered a partnership led holiday activities and food programme across easter, summer and Christmas holiday periods, known locally as Healthy Holidays. Cabinet approved the approach to the programme in March 2021. A subsequent paper was also approved at cabinet to deliver HAF from 2023-2026, building on the learning from 2021-22 delivery. This paper specifically relates to the next three years.
- 6.2 On August 28, 2025, the Council received formal confirmation from the DfE that the HAF programme will continue in all participating local authorities in England for the next three years, with funding, nationally, of £200m each year. This new funding covers three delivery years: 2026-27, 2027-28, 2028-29. The 2026-2027 HAF budget has been confirmed as: £1,478,390, this is like previous years.
- 6.3 This funding is provided to coordinate free holiday provision, including healthy food and enriching activities for children who receive benefits-related free school meals. It is of course optional for eligible children to attend this provision if they wish. This gives the Council and its partners a fantastic opportunity to provide a fun and worthwhile activities for the children, young people and families of Hull.
- 6.4 The grant funding is informed by the numbers of children eligible for free school meals (FSMs) in Hull.
- 6.5 The overall number of pupils eligible for a free school meal as at October 2020 school census was 11,929 or 28.6%. In the period to the school census of May 2025 this figure has grown to 15,154, representing 35% of the total school roll. An increase of 6.4 percentage points since HAF commenced. The recent work on auto enrolment will see this number increase over 2025-6 academic year, then from September 2026, all families who are in receipt of universal credit will revive free school meals.
- 6.6 The aim of the programme is to make free places available to children eligible for FSMs for the equivalent of at least four hours a day, four days a week, and 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 Hull the programme will

continue to exceed this, by delivering an extended offer for example, longer summer delivery, and the DfE, in 2024-25, allowed Hull to successfully deliver a pilot in February half term. Additional half term delivery is subject to liaison with the DfE in accordance to grant terms and conditions.

7 Issues for Consideration

7.1 Since 2021 the partnership has delivered a very successful programme, building on the learning year on year. To understand the reach, impact and social value of the programme please see our HAF Annual Reports (see appendix A). Here you will see quotes, videos and photos from providers and participants and family members about the real difference and impact it has made.

7.2 Financial Planning – it is anticipated funding will be invested as per previous years with a mix of:

- a) Strategic Grants with key partners/services such as HCaL; Strategic Providers including Professional Sports Clubs; CYPFS services; Corporate Events Team.
- b) VCS Grants Programme – to support delivery of activities via voluntary and community sector organisations, ensuring we keep this as simple as possible to enable smaller organisations to take part in the delivery.
- c) Specific investment into activities for CYP with additional needs; ensuring the voice and influence of young people, parents and carers shapes the programme.
- d) Core funding for the HAF Coordination role of the Council plus central management costs; and
- e) Other costs as identified, for example communications and marketing, branding and promotional materials.

This will be adapted as we continue to move through the programme and develop our learning from partners.

7.3 Governance and Reporting-The HAF Steering Group with key partners/services is now well-established which reports into CYPFS SLT and provides reports to CST and key partnership bodies. In addition to the Steering Group there are a range of work strands established to focus on key areas such as SEND provision, alongside the SEND Parent/Carer Forum, food and nutrition; communications and marketing, large scale events and others.

7.4 Eligibility Criteria-Since 2021, the primary focus of the HAF programme has been on school-aged children eligible for benefits related Free School Meals.

7.5 The City's programme is required to demonstrate the following:

- a) We are offering the programme comprehensively across the full geographical area; and
- b) Fully meeting demands from free school meal eligible children in the area.

Local authorities have discretion to use up to 15% of their funding to provide free or subsidised holiday club places for children who are not in receipt of benefits-related free school meals but who the local authority believe could benefit from HAF provision.

This may include, for example:

- Children assessed by the local authority as being in need, at risk or vulnerable
- young carers
- looked-after children or previously looked after children
- children with an EHC plan (education, health and care)
- Children who have low attendance rates at school or who are at risk of exclusion
- 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

This list is not exhaustive, and it is open to the local authority to decide which children should benefit from the 15% flexible funding element of their HAF funding

- 7.6 In February 2021 Cabinet also approved Hull's operating principle and approach of opening the programme to everyone in the city, by using match funding and in-kind support to ensure the programme is open and accessible to all children and young people in the city while retaining the priority focus on those eligible for FSM.
- 7.7 During November-December 2025 there have been a range of learning events with both the steering group members, strategic partners and local delivery partners. These sessions have listened to partners about what has worked well, what didn't go to plan and what more can be done to ensure we deliver an even more successful programme 2026-29 targeting families most in need. Key areas of refinement include:
- 7.8 Targeted engagement of schools with the highest FSM proportions, working directly with senior leaders and families/friends of to understand and address barriers to participation, and strengthening referral and promotion routes to families most likely to benefit.

- Increase the focus on delivering activities with higher levels of FSM eligible families based on location by postcode.
- Secure access to additional venues located in areas of high FSM density, further addressing barriers to participation by reducing the need for travel.
- Marketing & communications – develop improved branding more appropriate to the 11 – 16 age group. Targeted localised promotion in areas with high levels of FSM, promotion through partner services, expand use of existing networks and develop voice and influence as a promotional and advocacy medium.
- Further refine the prioritised booking and selection process to retain the allocation of places to FSM-eligible children first, while retaining flexibility to offer any unfilled capacity to non-FSM children. This approach ensures the programme continues to reach those in greatest need without reducing overall accessibility or utilisation.
- Continue to work with HAF providers to develop and diversify their service offer, working towards sustainable delivery outside the HAF funded periods.

7.9 Programme activity will be delivered through a wide range of local partners and internal services who are all well placed and experienced in the delivery of holiday activities and who can importantly ensure that families can also access additional support should they need it. Delivery will include:

- Strategic large-scale activities and events have been very popular, since 2021 a proportion of funding has been used to deliver multiple Playdays, ZebFest (an event aimed at teenagers) and Beach Days. These events have also helped to provide opportunities for local services to directly engage with numerous children, young people and families.
- HCaL will again be able to provide high quality activities through our libraries, parks and open spaces, ice arena, museums, swimming pools and Leisure Centres offering free swimming, literacy and learning activities and more.
- Discussions with schools are taking place to explore the opportunity of their sites been used as hub sites for HAF delivery, this will help to support transitions especially from primary to secondary schools.
- The partnership will continue to develop a strong activity offer across our VCS network and community-based facilities such as youth centres and Family Hubs will be available.
- All activities will be supported by a quality food offer using a mixed model of delivery; some centrally provided, and some of the organisation’s sourcing, preparing and cooking their own food on site.
- The partnership will continue to ensure there is a robust marketing and communication plan to increase awareness of the programme and reach as

many families as possible. The Healthy Holidays website will continue to be a central plank alongside additional published materials such as leaflets into school bookbags for all primary school children.

- The DfE's minimum standards re safeguarding, insurance, health and safety etc. are central to the delivery of a high quality and safe programme. Education and training linked to the minimum standards will be available for all delivery partners alongside 1-1 support for organisations where necessary.
- Continued Engagement with the DfE's National Support Partner for HAF, this currently is, 'Childcare Works' who coordinate regional cluster meetings and national events which the Hull team and key partners attend.

8. Options and Risk Assessment-Look at this section

8.1 The risks associated with the programme are as follows:

- Non-compliance with the DfE HAF programme criteria resulting in withdrawal of the funding allocation for the city.
- Absent of a partnership approach there will be a reduced offer of activity and food provision for children, young people and families in need of support across the city during Easter, summer and Christmas holiday periods.
- Expectations will be raised, and the recurrent delivery of a similar programme is unsustainable.

8.2 The proposed governance arrangements and delegations will provide the framework to ensure that the programme is delivered within the budget and timeframe provided.

8.3 Delivering the scheme in conjunction with VCS and Public Sector partners together with targeted in year investments will provide a greater likelihood of developing an approach which can be sustained in future years.

- a. Option 1 – approve the recommendations within this report to implement the DfE HAF programme 2026-29 through partnership between the public sector and the Voluntary Sector with targeted investments in programme elements which offer the opportunity for long term sustainability. This will facilitate sustainable investment to support young people in receipt of free school meals in the city. This option is the preferred option and will result in the delivery of a high-quality offer of holiday activities and food for our families in need across Hull.
- b. Option 2 – cease to engage with the national HAF programme and deliver a local programme, subject to sourcing funding, at a much smaller scale. This will not provide the scale and reach of activities and food required to support our families most in need. This could result in greater family stress and

emotional/mental health issues, food insecurity, increased social isolation and non-engagement in community-based activity during pressurised holiday periods. It would also reduce the investment into local delivery partners including Hull's VCE sector. Hull would fail to receive a total of circa £4.2m funding to provide support for families.

9. **Comments of the Monitoring Officer (Assistant Director (Legal, Capital Delivery and Governance))**

9.1 The Council has a general power of competence under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 including the ability to enter into the funding agreement with the DfE. Any subsequent procurement exercise would need to be in line with the requirements of the Procurement Act 2023. The Council will also need to consider any Social Value as part of its procurement exercise under the requirements of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012. Any subsequent grants that may be provided by the Council would need to be compliant with the regime set out under the Subsidy Control Act 2022. [BP]

10. **Comments of the Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance and Transformation)**

10.1 The Section 151 Officer supports the proposed Holiday Activities and Food plan, using the HAF grant, as detailed (JR)

11. **Comments of the Assistant Director OD & HR and compliance with the Equality Duty**

11.1 The content of the report is noted. There are no staffing or equality issues arising for the council from this decision which provides essential support for families in need. (KH)

11. **Comments of Overview and Scrutiny**

12.1 This report will be considered by the Children, Young People and Families Overview and Scrutiny Commission at its meeting on the 19th January, 2026 (Sc2045)

13. **Comments of the Portfolio Holder for Childrens Services - Councillor Linda Tock**

13.1 I am pleased that Hull CC is due to receive an additional 3 years of funding to deliver the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme. This funding is vital in supporting our commitment to provide enriching activities and nutritious meals for children and young people during school holidays. The HAF programme plays a key role in tackling holiday hunger and promoting wellbeing across our

communities. We will ensure the grant is used effectively to deliver high-quality provision in line with Government requirements and local priorities.(PF1064)

Pauline Turner

Director of Children, Young People and Families Services

Contact Officer: Rachel Roberts, Head of Early Help and Prevention

Telephone No.: 01482 616200

Email: Rachel.Roberts2@hullcc.gov.uk

Officer Interests: None

Background Documents: -

Appendix A: To learn more and see the impact of HAF in Hull, please view our website with Annual Reports from 2021-22, to date: [Annual Report — Healthy Holidays Hull](#)

Implications Matrix

This section must be completed and you must ensure that you have fully considered all potential implications

This matrix provides a simple check list for the things you need to have considered within your report

If there are no implications please state

I have informed and sought advice from HR, Legal, Finance, Overview and Scrutiny and the Climate Change Advisor and any other key stakeholders i.e. Portfolio Holder, relevant Ward Members etc prior to submitting this report for official comments	Yes
I have considered whether this report requests a decision that is outside the Budget and Policy Framework approved by Council	Yes
Value for money considerations have been accounted for within the report	Yes
The report is approved by the relevant Director/Assistant Director	Yes
I have included any procurement/commercial issues/implications within the report	Yes
I have considered the potential media interest in this report and liaised with the Media Team to ensure that they are briefed to respond to media interest.	No
I have included any equalities and diversity implications within the report and where necessary I have completed an Equalities Impact Assessment and the outcomes are included within the report	Yes
Any Health and Safety implications are included within the report	Yes
Any human rights implications are included within the report	Yes

I have included any community safety implications and paid regard to Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act within the report	No
I have liaised with the Climate Change Advisor and any environmental and climate change issues/sustainability implications are included within the report	No
I have considered how the decision may contribute or impact on culture and heritage within the city.	Yes
I have included information about how this report contributes to the Community Plan/ Area priorities within the report	Yes
I have considered the impact on air quality, carried out an appropriate assessment and included any resulting actions or opportunities necessary to improve air quality in the report.	N/A
I have considered the impact on Children Looked After and Care Leavers and any resulting actions/implications have been included within the report.	Yes