



ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Holiday and Food 2023 Programme annual report

On 8th November 2020, the government announced that the holiday activities and food programme was to be expanded across the whole of England in 2021. The programme has provided healthy food and enriching activities to disadvantaged children since 2018, with St Helens receiving initial funding in March 2021.

School holidays can be pressure points for some families because of increased costs (such as food and childcare) and reduced incomes, this has been especially evident during the Covid-19 pandemic. 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.
- more likely to experience social isolation.

Free holiday clubs are a response to this issue and evidence suggests that they can have a positive impact on children and young people and that 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.

This holiday provision is for children who are eligible for benefits related free school meals across St Helens and are free at the point of access. Although some holiday clubs should be made available for children who are not eligible to free school meals, who can pay to attend. The Department for Education will consider up to 15% of the funding to provide places for children who are considered to be vulnerable by the local authority.

Aims of the programme.

As a result of this programme, we wanted children who attend this provision to:

- eat more healthily over the school holidays.
- be more active during the school holidays.
- take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience, character and wellbeing along with their wider educational attainment.
- be safe and not to be socially isolated.
- have a greater knowledge of health and nutrition.
- be more engaged with school and other local services.

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.

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme, funded by a £751,570 Department for Education (DfE) grant, is targeted at families who have children who are aged 4 – 18 and are in receipt of free school meals children or who are considered to be vulnerable by the local authority (15%). The aim is to encourage children to eat more healthily and be active while not in school by attending holiday clubs during the Summer, Summer and Winter breaks.

Managed by St Helens Borough Council's Early Help Service, provision of the programme was outsourced to local partners like Saints Foundation, St Helens Children's Centres, local enterprises, faith groups and including Halton and St Helens Voluntary Community Action. This was achieved by coordinating and supporting voluntary and community sector providers to deliver the service in the spirit of the award-winning #StHelensTogether initiative, which recently won the Covid-19 Response Recognition Award at the national iNetwork Awards.

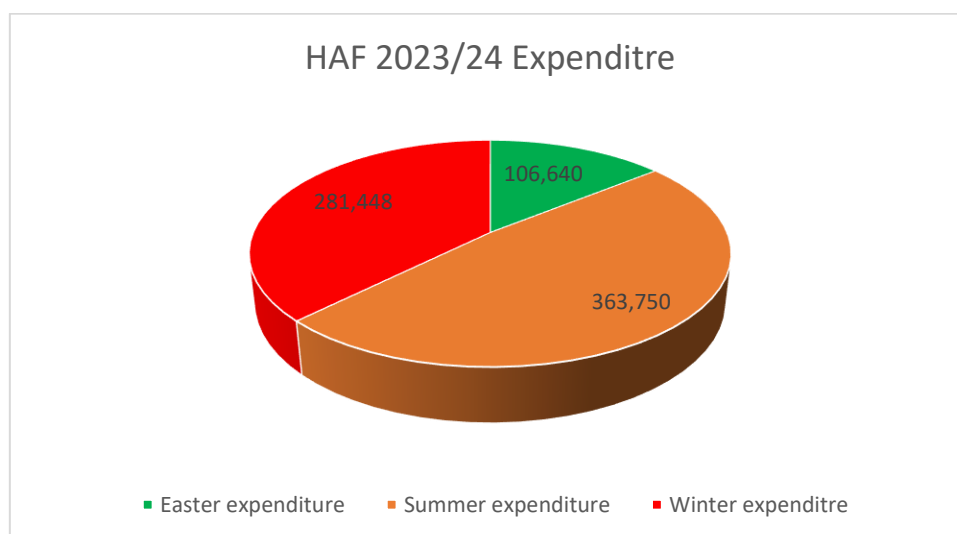
Free school meal data was supplied by the Supporting Families Programme and analysed to support a mapping exercise to indicate the levels of children who were entitled to free school meals and where they resided. This informed the differing volumes of activity that was required in each of the wards in the borough over the Easter, Summer and Winter holiday periods.

The Easter, Summer and Winter booklets were distributed to all the Local Authority, schools, local enterprises, faith groups and Halton and St Helens VCA for them to disseminate to the families and children who were eligible.

2023/24 HAF submission details

HAF 2023-24 Expenditure

	Easter 2023	Summer 2023	Winter 2023	Cumulative Total
Face to Face activities	99,149	319,375	178,054	596,578
Food	7,491	36,476	20,716	64,683
Advertising / Publicity	0	7,899	7,521	15,420
Management costs	0	0	75,157	75,157
Total	106,640	363,750	281,448	751,838



Over the 2023 HAF year, 851 sessions were delivered from 27 local providers in the voluntary and faith sectors, catering, and council services. A sample of activities included Mini Chef's, art sessions, sensory crafts, pottery, IT, Leadership courses and sports. There were also family fun days, Library activities, swimming lessons, sessions to improve wellbeing and confidence. In addition, there were family outings to Blackpool Zoo, Smithills Farm and vouchers for the cinema and 10 pin bowling.

Engagement over the year has been excellent with 11,217 individual children and young people attending multiple activities and this is an 24.5% increase on last year's programme.

We provided 15,233 meals during the activity sessions.

Children and young people who attended the activities; comments received included -

"He really seems to come out more when we have been to the sessions, he really enjoys it. He has made new friends who he talks about a lot. The HAF programme is truly amazing, do not know what we would have done without it, plus all staff are great. Keep doing what you're doing, fantastic work well done and thank you"

"The HAF programme has given my child much needed structure and routine to his day, he also enjoys the activities and environment. He was excited to go and enjoyed his time there, so job well done!"

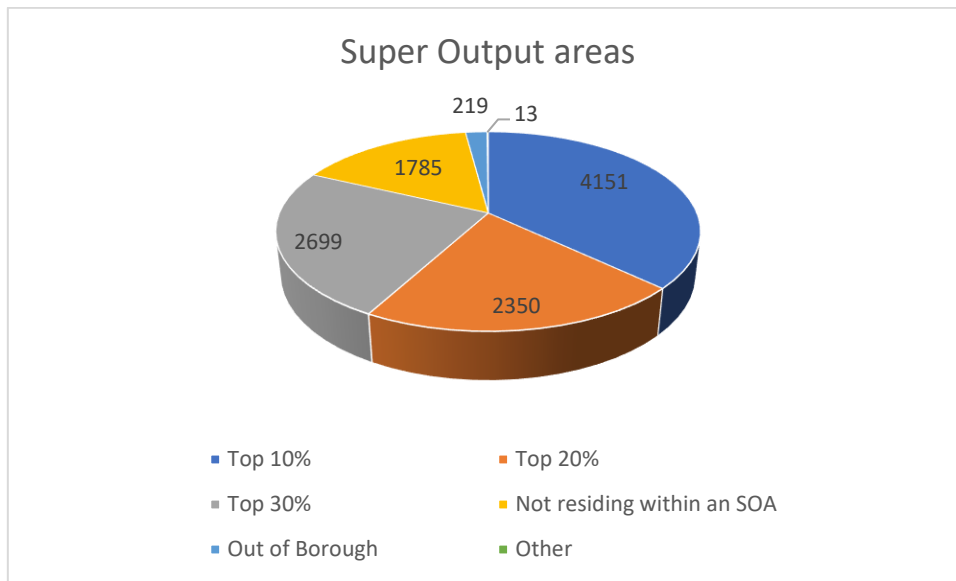
Since the beginning of the HAF programme commencing at Easter 2021 we have seen 16,868 individual children and young people attending 2,174 activities and over 58,000 opportunities have been on offer across the borough. Also 50,513 meals, 754 food parcels/food hampers distributed to children and young people who attended the programme and who were leaving care.

The partner agencies and local authority services who worked fantastically well to provide energising programmes for all were:

Family Hub & Children's Centres, Leisure Centres, Library Services, Community Safety Team, Deafness Resource Centre, Saints Foundation, Les Robert's Hypnotherapy, Active Sports, Active Futures, ComputerXplorers, Newton Community Centre, Sphairstrike Tennis, UC Crew, VIBE, Cabbage Hall allotments, Fearless Youth, Friends Play, Everton in The Community, YMCA, HAMMA Gym, Hall Star Holiday Clubs, Mako Create, and Positive Life Workshops.

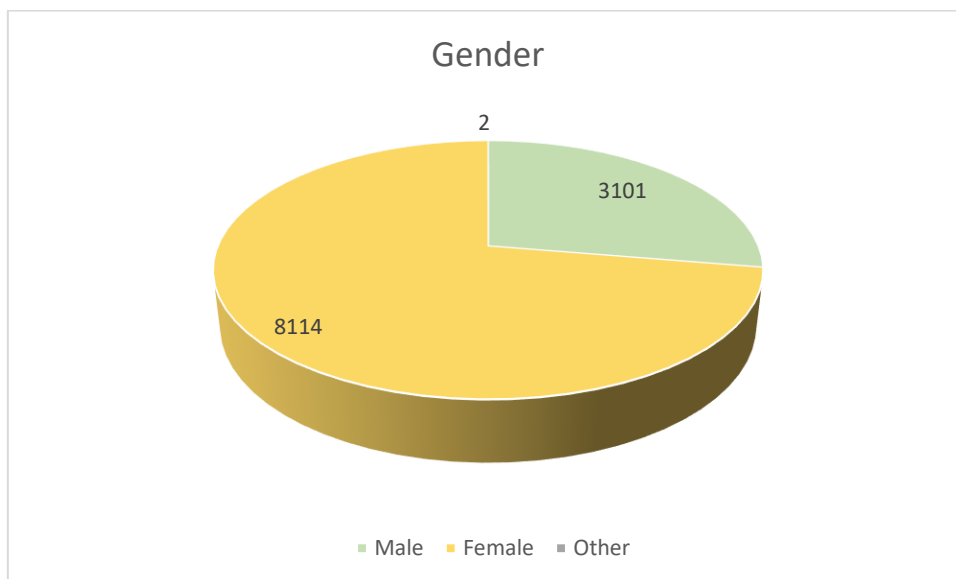
Graph 1 shows the Super Output Areas of the children who attended a HAF session (individual children and young people).

Graph 1



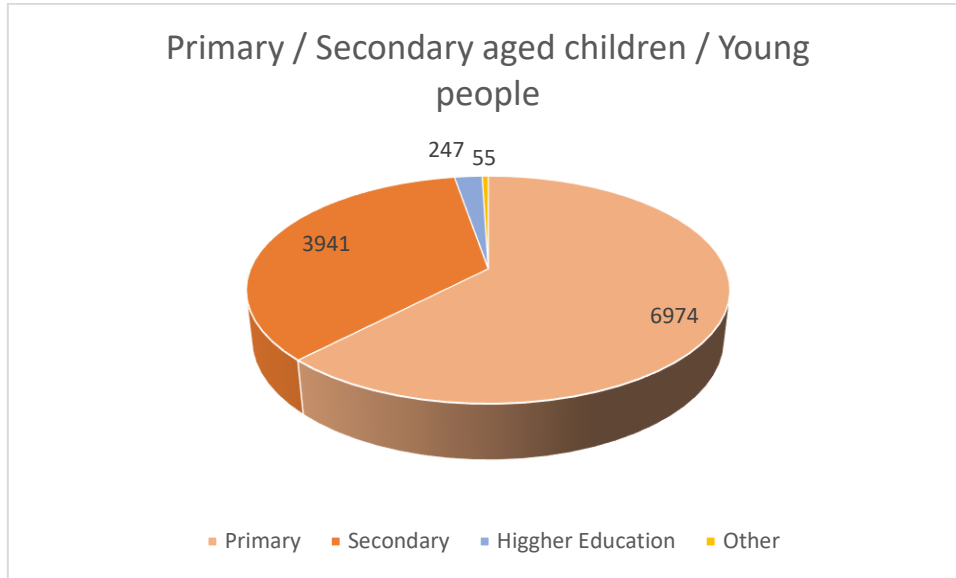
Graph 2 shows the gender mix of the children who attended a HAF session.

Graph 2



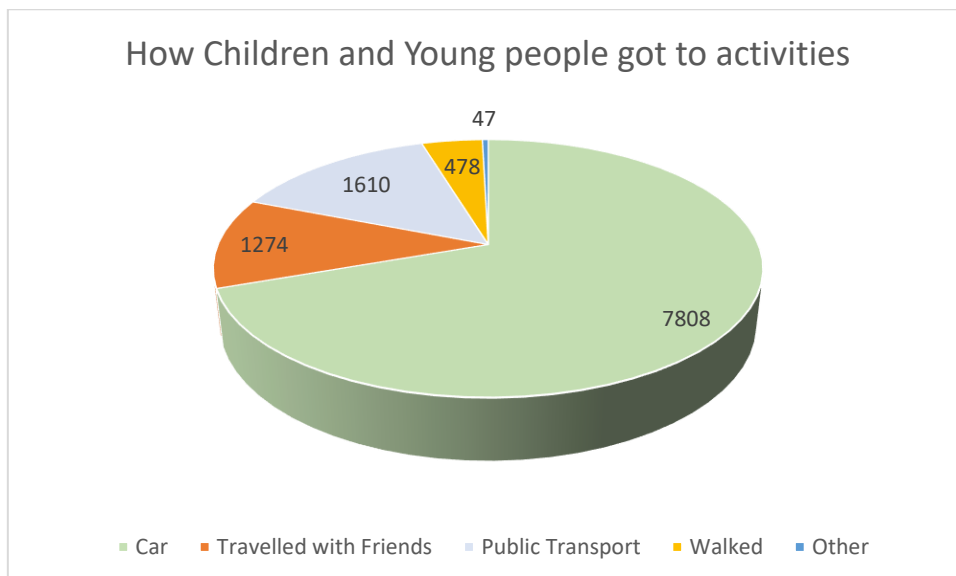
Graph 3 below shows the split of primary and secondary school children who attended a HAF session.

Graph 3



Children and families were asked how they travelled to HAF activities.

Graph 4



Children and families learning the basic areas of sign language during a visit to the Deafness Resource Centre.



Children getting started on their arts & crafts sessions delivered by OLCOTWISH.



Young people programming their own 2D computer games and animation during a Mako Create activity session.



Discovering tunnels during a trip to Loggerheads in Wales with VIBE.



Young people mountain biking through Delamere With VIBE



Children working together during a session with Positive Life Workshops.



Children and families enjoying a Family Fun day at Sutton Family Hub



Impact

During the 2023 HAF programme's children and young people have had the opportunity to experience enriching activities that they may never have had the chance to take part in due to a host of reasons notwithstanding the cost-of-living crisis. This has allowed children and young people to form friendships outside of their normal social circles as they are meeting their peers from different parts of the borough. We have seen children and young people become more confident and resilient as the programme progressed.

Families have had the issue of feeding their children and young people throughout the programme reduced because every activity that a child or young person has attended, they have received a substantial meal which has reduced the financial burden to families.

Young people have developed and gained life experience's by attending our Leadership Course, for some this will be the first certificate that they have received. They also have the opportunity to move into volunteering and this will support them later in life moving into further training and employment.

Children and families took the opportunity to attend swimming lessons that were facilitated by our Leisure Centres. This enabled families and their children to take up the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the water have fun and learn to swim, with a number of them achieving their 25-metre swimming certificate.

More of our children and families now know the impact of having a deaf child or parent within a family and they also learned new skills in basic signing.

Children/Young Peoples comments

"The HAF programme has given my child much needed structure and routine to his day, he also enjoys the activities and environment. He was excited to go and enjoyed his time there, so job well done!" **Parent/carer of boy aged 7.**

"She really seems to come out more when we have been to the sessions, she really enjoys it. She has made new friends who she talks about a lot. The HAF programme is truly amazing, do not know what we would have done without it, plus all staff are great. Keep doing what you're doing, fantastic work well done and thank you" **Parent/carer of girl aged 10.**

"These swimming sessions have helped my child to learn how to swim better than before" **Parent of girl aged 8.**

"Children have been waiting for swimming lessons for over 12 months. HAF has made this possible." **Parent of boys aged 6 and 8.**

Referrers comments

Prior to the Summer HAF programme starting this family was in extreme crisis, the family network was breaking down Mum and the girls are arguing and fighting with each other and Mum was really struggling to manage their behaviours impacting on her mental health and wellbeing Police were having to be called out to the home to calm situations down and the children were at risk of edge of care, the EIW signed mum and the twin daughter's (aged 15 Years) up to HAF Activities to reduce the tension in the home and actively involve the children in a activity promoting peer group socialisation and improving family relationships,

The girls and mum attended the Blackpool Zoo trip and they both reported that they had a lovely time together they laughed and got along and this had a huge positive impact on the girls and Mums relationship, this was an opportunity that they would have been able to have this opportunity One of the girls attended the Saints Confidence leadership Course this supported the young person's anxiety and reduced her becoming stressed and angry within the home, impacting the family in a positive way, again improving family relationships

Mum and the girls report that this summer holidays have been one of the best Summer holidays they have ever had together as a family, and they thank the HAF Programme.
Early Help Worker supporting a family.

Parent/carers comments

"I was very impressed particularly with the provision of vegan/dairy free allergy-friendly options often my girls don't have anything but here they were catered for really well. Thank you!" **Parent of two girls participating in HAF activities.**

"Staff were brilliant with the children and children felt comfortable to communicate their needs, this massively elevated their wellbeing and mental health" **Parent of two children aged 6 and 8.**

Analysis

The HAF programme delivered 581 sessions and covered the whole of St Helens schools for the Easter, Summer and Winter holiday periods. These sessions were delivered by 27 local providers, in addition to this over 15,233 substantial meals were distributed to children and young people.

The 11,217 unique children and young people who attended this year's holiday and food programme were all entitled to benefits related free school meals or were deemed vulnerable by the local authority, with 4,962 residing within the top 30% of the most deprived areas of the borough. Evidence suggests that children and families who reside within a Super Output Area are more vulnerable and likely to be in need of additional support, of the children who attended 6,920 identified as female, 4,295 identified as male and 2 identified as other and the majority attending a primary school (6,974 children).

This year's programme again built on the wide range of activities for children and young people that were SEND specific, which meant that the offer was more inclusive across the borough.

For the young people new activities such as UV dancing, outdoor pursuits, and Water sport activities were all attended well with positive outcomes.

The programme has enabled children and young people to attend activities of their choice, and this has supported children's/young people's mental health, well-being, and creative elements in addition to them having opportunities of trying activities that they may not have had the opportunity to in the past.

Families were encouraged to walk to activities during the holiday periods and although we have seen a slight increase on last year's programme, we still have work to do to further encourage more economical ways of getting to activities.