



# Holiday and Food 2024 Programme annual report

On 8<sup>th</sup> 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 £744,810 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.

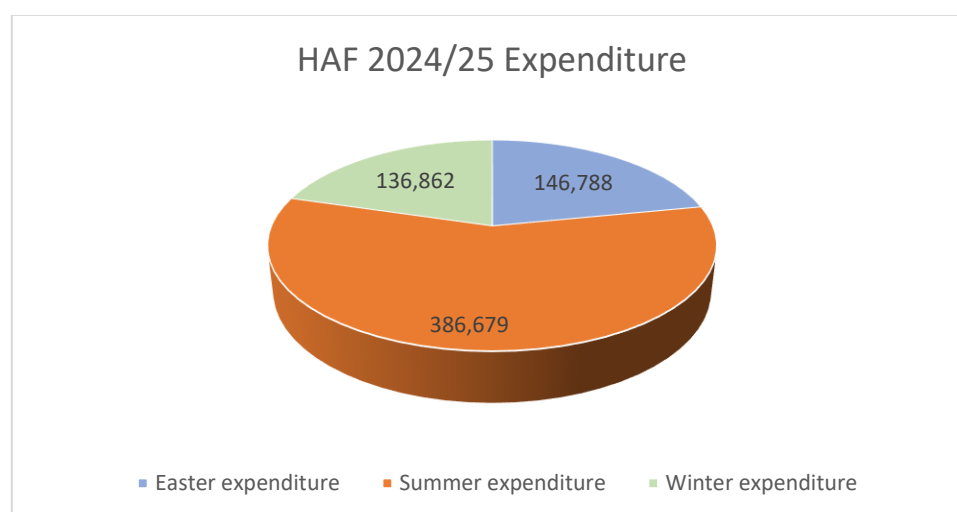
Free school meal data was supplied by the Supporting Families Programme and analysed to support a mapping exercise to indicate the levels of children who were entitled to free school meals and where they resided. This informed the differing volumes of activity that was required in each of the wards in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

## 2024 HAF submission details

### HAF 2024 Expenditure

	<b>Easter 2024</b>	<b>Summer 2024</b>	<b>Winter 2024</b>	<b>Cumulative Total</b>
Face to Face activities	128,944	334,493	126,865	590,302
Food	15,510	44,513	6,382	66,405
Advertising / Publicity	2,334	7,673	3,615	13,622
Management costs				74,481
<b>Total</b>	<b>146,788</b>	<b>386,679</b>	<b>136,862</b>	<b>744,810</b>



Over the 2024 HAF year, 1,009 sessions were delivered from 25 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 10,949 individual children and young people attending multiple activities.

We provided 14,914 meals during the activity sessions.

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

7-year-old girl – "Today was excellent, I had lots of fun and had a good time. I enjoyed the Circus people; I have never tried spinning plates before. I also enjoyed the crafts and having my face painted. There was lots to do for all ages."

12-year-old girl – "I thought today was excellent because it was fun. I had my face painted, which I have never done before. Had I not been here today with my family I would have been out with my friends, but I am glad I came. This has been the best thing I have done this Easter, I loved it."

7-year-old boy – "Today was really fun and I loved the food. I got to make a boot today with my mum. I decorated it and planted a seed in it to take home. I enjoyed the crafts, the face painting, and the Circus Skills. I enjoyed having my face painted the most today. Today was fun for kids and adults."

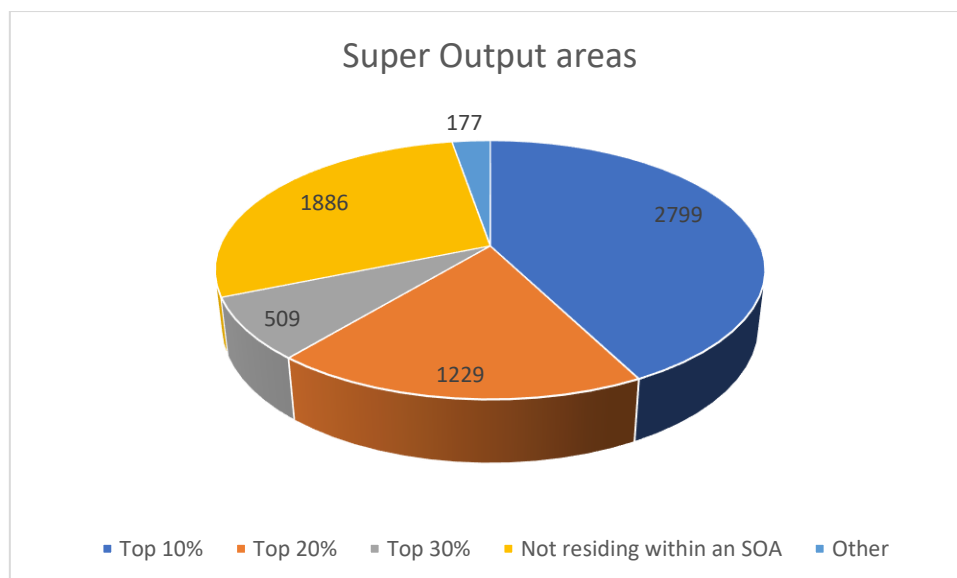
Since the beginning of the HAF programme commencing at Easter 2021 we have seen 16,868 individual children and young people attending 2,174 activities and over 58,000 opportunities have been on offer across the borough. Also 50,513 meals, 754 food parcels/food hampers distributed to children and young 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, Powered by Hip Hop, VIBE, Cabbage Hall allotments, Fearless Youth, Friends Play, Everton in The Community, YMCA, HAMMA Gym, Mako Create, and Positive Life Workshops.

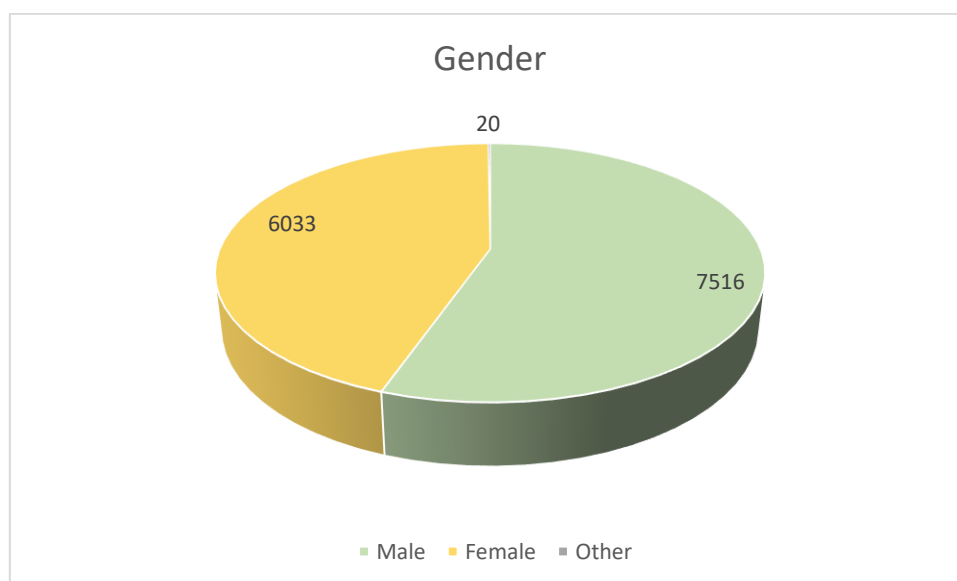
Graph 1 shows the Super Output Areas of the children who attended a HAF session (individual children and young people).

**Graph 1**



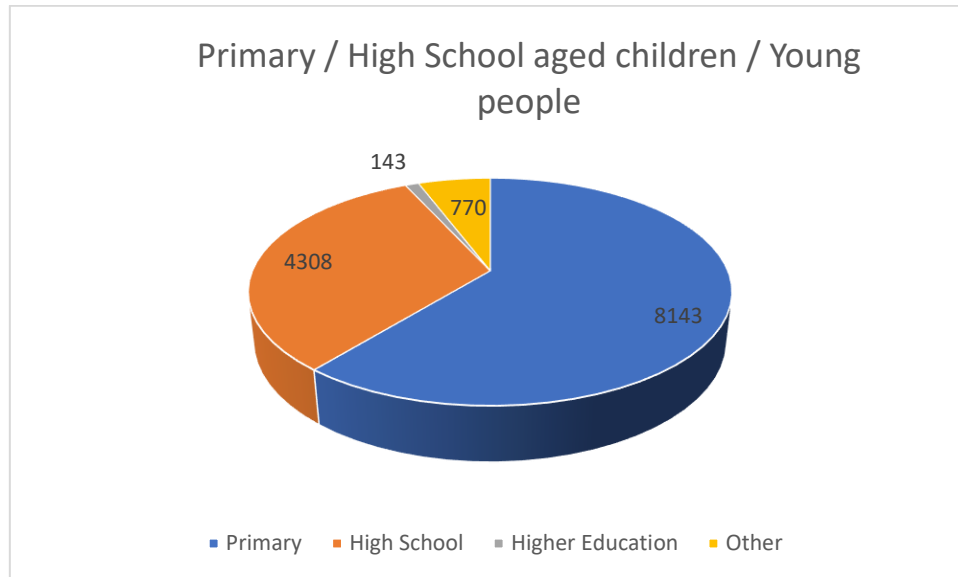
Graph 2 shows the gender mix of the children who attended a HAF session.

**Graph 2**



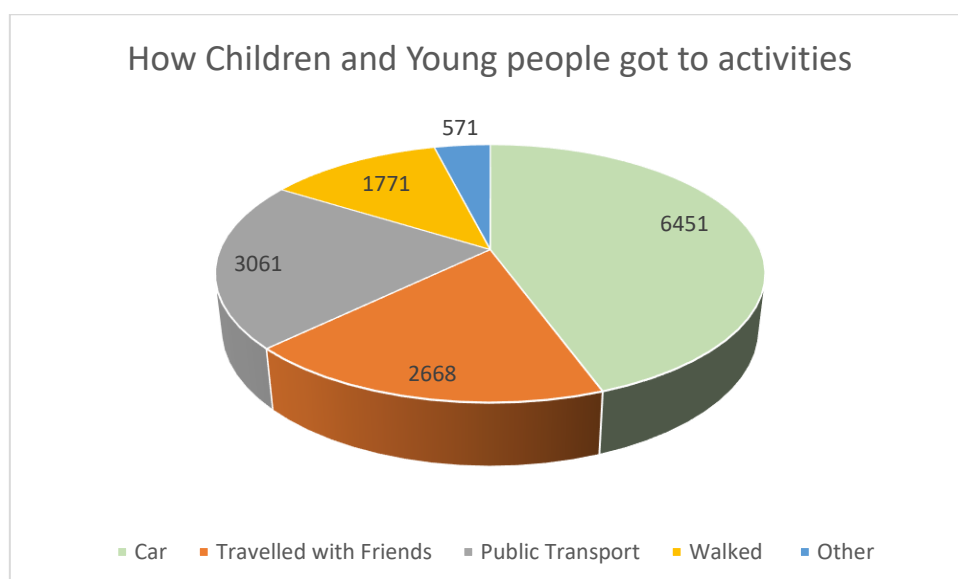
Graph 3 below shows the split of primary and secondary school children who attended a HAF session.

**Graph 3**



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

**Graph 4**



**Children and young people showing off their skills – dancing on the ceiling with Friends Play.**

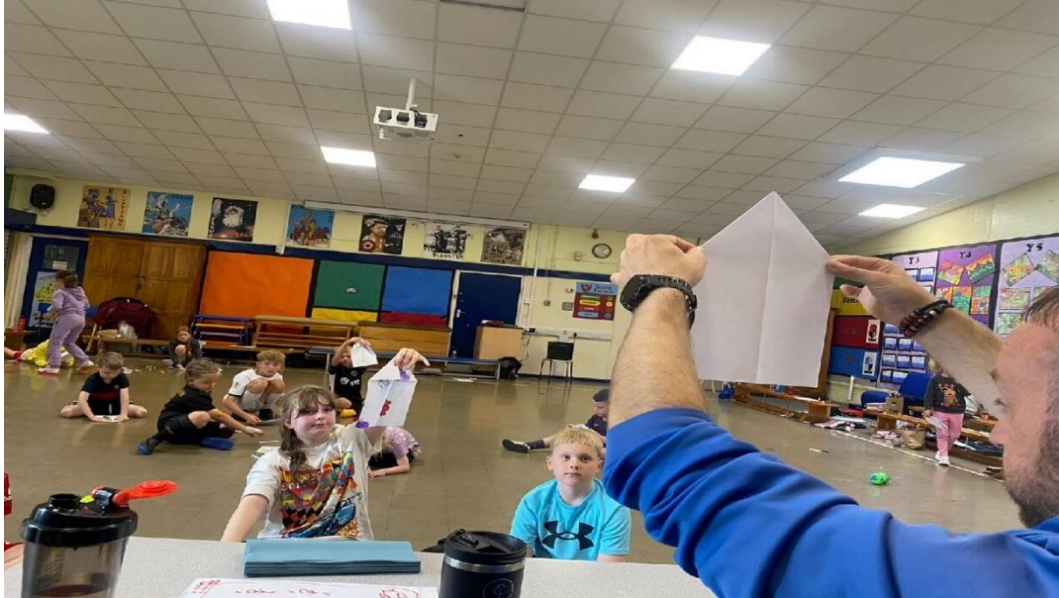


**Young people showing off their cooking skills during a pizza making activity at the Deafness Resource Centre.**

**Teamwork on show at Crosby Marina**



**Children and young people showing off their origami skills – making paper aeroplanes during an activity with PE Academy.**



## **Impact**

During the 2024 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 continuing 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 experiences and had 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.**

### **Parent/carers comments**

“Today was fun, we were surrounded by happy people and the activities put on over the holidays helps to structure our holiday time so they have something different from the usual routine to do which they wouldn’t normally be able to have every day. The children enjoyed the party games especially musical statues and having their faces painted. Today has helped them to grow their confidence but to have fun too.

**”Parent of 5 and 7 old boys.**

“He has been able to get involved with the crafts which has let him use his imagination and drawing which he loves to do. He liked the crafts the best out of everything today which allowed him to be creative.”

**Parent of 5-year-old boy.**

### **Analysis**

The HAF programme delivered 1,009 sessions and covered the whole of St Helens schools for the Easter, Summer and Winter holiday periods. These sessions were delivered by 25 local providers, in addition to this over 14,914 substantial meals were distributed to children and young people.

The 10,949 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 4,537 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 7,516 identified as male, 6,083 identified as female and 20 identified as other and the majority attending a primary school (8,143 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.

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.