

Norfolk County Council

Record of Individual Cabinet Member Decision

Responsible Cabinet Member: Cllr Penny Carpenter (Cabinet Member for Children's Services)

Background and Purpose:

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme is being led by Children's Services, with Active Norfolk providing the coordination and operational management of the HAF programme, including securing and funding a wide range of activity providers to offer a broad programme of HAF activities across the county for 5-16 year olds during the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays.

On 25 January 2024, Norfolk County Council (NCC) received confirmation of the 2024 grant allocation from the Department for Education for the HAF programme, indicating that the Council will be able to claim up to £2,772,340 for the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2024.

With its focus on free holiday provision, including healthy food and enriching activities, for children eligible for means tested free school meals, the HAF programme supports our commitment as a Council to a shared ambition that Norfolk is a place where all children and young people can flourish and the Council's Better Together for Norfolk strategy.

This is a decision to maintain the current successful approach to the delivery of Norfolk's HAF programme during 2024, utilising the grant allocation to the County Council confirmed on 25 January for the final year of the current programme.

It is also a decision to delegate decisions related to the implementation of Norfolk's HAF programme to the Executive Director of Children's Services.

Decision:

Is it a key decision? Yes

Is it subject to call-in? Yes

If Yes – the deadline for call-in is: 4pm, Thursday 14 March 2024

Impact of the Decision:

This decision will enable children eligible for means tested free school meals to access fun, free and enriching holiday activities through the HAF programme during 2024.

Evidence and reason for the decision:

The HAF programme supports our shared ambition that Norfolk is a place where all children and young people can flourish.

The HAF programme aligns to the Council's Better Together for Norfolk strategy with its vision that Norfolk is a place where everyone can start life well, live well and age well, and where no one is left behind, and for communities to feel safe, healthy, empowered and connected, their individual distinctiveness respected and preserved.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

There is an expectation that Norfolk County Council, as one of 152 upper tier local authorities in England, makes use of the HAF grant funding to enable children eligible for means tested free school meals to access healthy food and take part in free fun activities over the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays, in line with the programme guidance issued by the Department for Education.

The Council's delivery of the programme has continued to receive positive feedback both from the Department for Education as well as from families across the county who clearly value the HAF programme.

Financial, Resource or other implications considered:

There are no financial implications for the Council's budget as the HAF programme during 2024 will be funded through the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) grant provided by the Department for Education.

Record of any conflict of interest:

None

Background documents:

No

Date of Decision: 7 March 2024

Publication Date of Decision: 7 March 2024

Signed by Cabinet Member:

I confirm that I have made the decision set out above, for the reasons also set out.

Signed:

Print name: Cllr Penny Carpenter

Date: 8 February 2024

Accompanying documents:

Holiday Activities and Food programme - Decision making report.

Once you have completed your internal department clearance process and obtained agreement of the Cabinet Member, send your completed decision notice together with the report and green form to committees@norfolk.gov.uk

Individual Cabinet Member Decision Report

Item No:

Report Title: Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF)

Date of Meeting: N/A

Responsible Cabinet Member: Cllr Penny Carpenter (Cabinet Member for Children's Services)

Responsible Director: Sara Tough, Executive Director Children's Services

Is this a Key Decision? Yes

If this is a Key Decision, date added to the Forward Plan of Key Decisions: 1 February 2024

Executive Summary / Introduction from Cabinet Member

This report provides a review of the successful Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme in Norfolk during 2023 and highlights our intentions for the programme in 2024.

The HAF programme is being led by Children's Services, with Active Norfolk providing the coordination and operational management of the HAF programme, including securing and funding a wide range of activity providers to offer a broad programme of HAF activities across the county for 5-16 year olds during the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays.

Following the roll out of the HAF programme to all 152 upper tier local authorities in England in 2021, Norfolk County Council is receiving grant funding from the Department for Education to ensure the coordination and provision of free holiday provision, including healthy food and enriching activities, for children eligible for means tested free school meals, as detailed in the report.

On 25 January, we received confirmation of the 2024 grant allocations to local authorities for the HAF programme, outlining what we will be entitled to claim for the holiday periods during 2024. This will be the final period of Department for Education funding for the HAF programme that is currently confirmed by Central Government.

Recommendations:

To maintain the current successful approach to the delivery of Norfolk's HAF programme during 2024, utilising the grant allocation to the County Council confirmed on 25 January for the final year of the current programme.

To delegate decisions related to the implementation of Norfolk's HAF programme to the Executive Director of Children's Services.

1. Background and Purpose

- 1.1. In 2021, the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme was rolled out to all 152 upper tier local authorities in England. As a result, Norfolk County Council is receiving grant funding from the Department for Education to ensure the coordination and provision of free holiday provision, including healthy food and enriching activities, for children eligible for means tested free school meals.
- 1.2. HAF funding for each local authority is confirmed on an annual basis via a Section 31 Grant Determination letter, and local authorities are required to confirm plans for, and then report on, HAF delivery to demonstrate it is fully in line with the published HAF programme guidance¹ issued by the Department for Education.
- 1.3. On 25 January we received confirmation of Norfolk's 2024 grant allocation for the HAF programme, outlining we will be entitled to claim up to £ 2,772,340 for the Easter, Summer, and Christmas holiday periods during 2024 as the last year of the current HAF funding from Central Government. We are anticipating that this allocation will be confirmed in a formal grant determination letter for HAF, as in previous years.
- 1.4. In line with the grant requirements set out by the Department for Education, a ceiling of 10% of the annual grant is being used to support the coordination and management of the programme, via Active Norfolk, hosted within the Council's Community and Environmental Services directorate, making use of their infrastructure and links with a range of activity providers across the county.
- 1.5. The remainder of the funding is being used to fund a wide range of 3rd party organisations to provide free holiday activities for eligible children and young people aged 5-16. These organisations range from small grassroot groups offering HAF provision often to children and young people that they already are working with, through to larger activity providers able to offer provision on scale and across multiple locations around the county.
- 1.6. Ahead of holiday periods, there is an open process for any organisations to submit an expression of interest to deliver HAF activities. All applications go through a standard assessment process and are reviewed by a funding panel made up of Children's Services and Active Norfolk officers to ensure the

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/holiday-activities-and-food-programme/holiday-activities-and-food-programme-2023>

provider meets the programme standards, including safeguarding, and to score submissions.

- 1.7. We are making use of the scope with the guidance issued by the Department for Education to use up to 15% of the funding to provide free holiday club places for more vulnerable children who are not in receipt of benefits-related free school meals but would especially benefit from taking part in HAF activities.
- 1.8. Norfolk's HAF programme is being supported by a multi-agency strategic group, chaired by a senior officer from Children's Services, which reports into the Children and Young People Strategic Alliance via the Prevention and Early Help Board, ensuring there is robust multi-agency oversight and support for the programme.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 To maintain the current successful approach to the delivery of Norfolk's HAF programme during 2024, utilising the grant allocation to the County Council confirmed on 25 January for the final year of the current programme.
- 2.2 To delegate decisions related to the implementation of Norfolk's HAF programme to the Executive Director of Children's Services.

3. Impact of the Proposal

- 3.1 In line with the Department for Education guidance, our HAF providers are expected to provide high-quality experiences that result in children:
 - receiving healthy and nutritious meals
 - maintaining a healthy level of physical activity
 - being happy, having fun and meeting new friends
 - developing a greater understanding of food, nutrition and other health-related issues
 - taking part in fun and engaging activities that support their development
 - feeling safe and secure
 - getting access to the right support services
 - returning to school feeling engaged and ready to learn
- 3.2 During the Summer 2023 holiday period the programme worked with 109 activity providers offering 46,472 free sessions over the 6-week holiday period. Over the winter 2023 holiday the programme worked with 75 providers offering 5,691 free sessions over 4 days.
- 3.3 Of the 4,774 children and young people aged 5-16 who participated over the summer in 2023, 72% were primary age, 28% secondary age; 52% were male and 48% were female. Over the winter programme, of the 1,662 children taking part, 75% were primary age with a similar split between males/females to the summer.

- 3.4 The programme has worked hard to increase accessibility of all HAF activities on offer as well as extend the number of more specialist providers offering sessions as part of the scheme. As a result, around 24% of children taking part in HAF sessions in the summer 2023 programme were individuals with SEND. This increased slightly to 25% for the winter programme.
- 3.5 Training has been offered as part of monthly drop-in sessions with HAF providers. This has included a programme of input from partner organisations such as Ormiston Families or Kooth, and covered issues such as: engaging schools, managing behaviour with neurodivergent children, epilepsy and asthma training, neglect, mental health, the 'Every Move' booking system, providing hot food, as well as discussions on any learning from previous holiday periods.
- 3.6 Families have been encouraged to have telephone or email interactions with providers to discuss the specific needs of their child so that reasonable adjustments can be made, and to understand any specific requirements, adaptations, medical conditions or other adjustments their child may need.
- 3.7 Parents/carers of children needing additional 1:1 support to access HAF activities have been encouraged to discuss their child's needs with the activity provider to determine if they have the skills / capacity to support them. If additional support has been needed, the programme has been able to fund this support if a suitable person can be found and where there is no other option.
- 3.8 In general, based on the programme guidance issued by the Department for Education, the programme cannot fund transport for families to access HAF activities. However, where there are particular circumstances, the programme has been able to support families, on an exceptional basis, taking account of the specific needs of the family and the vulnerability of the child.
- 3.9 The summer 2023 programme had an average satisfaction score from families of 9.1 out of 10. 59% of participants reported doing more physical activities since taking part, 47% reported being inspired to try healthier foods and 42% reported wanting to be part the cooking process at home. 96% of participants indicated they would like to participate in future HAF activities.
- 3.10 For the winter programme in 2023, the average satisfaction score from families was slightly increased at 9.2 out of 10. 66% of participants have reported doing more physical activities since taking part, 46% have reported being inspired to try healthier foods and 52% have reported wanting to be part the cooking process at home. 97% of participants have indicated they would like to participate in future HAF activities.
- 3.11 It is a Department for Education expectation that HAF activities are subjected to quality assurance visits and a comprehensive schedule of visits has taken

place over each holiday period, primarily undertaken by Active Norfolk staff, with some visits also undertaken by Children's Services officers.

- 3.12 Over the 2023 summer holidays, there were 87 quality assurance visits undertaken over the 6 weeks, whilst for the winter 2023 programme, 40 quality assurance visits took place over the 4 days of activities. The team use the Department for Education requirements to score each provider across several criteria, including accessibility and inclusiveness, and safeguarding. Any issues are raised with the provider during the visit and followed up with a written report with any recommendations for the provider.
- 3.13 The visits are used to inform the development of the programme and the following areas for development have been identified: more embedding of opportunities to learn about food and nutrition as part of activities, training and support to enable younger staff and volunteers to be involved, ensuring appropriate signage at venues, more differentiation of activities when there is a large age range, and working with providers to encourage good levels of attendance.
- 3.14 The HAF programme has benefited from an audit of processes by NCC's Audit Team in February 2023. This confirmed that appropriate monitoring processes are in place and the HAF team have addressed the recommendations from the Audit Team.
- 3.15 The programme has also been audited financially by the Department for Education and we receive ongoing positive feedback from Childcare Works, commissioned by the Department for Education to oversee local authority delivery of the HAF programme across England.

4. Evidence and Reasons for Decision

- 4.1 The HAF programme supports our shared ambition that Norfolk is a place where all children and young people can flourish.
- 4.2 The HAF programme aligns to the Council's Better Together for Norfolk strategy with its vision that Norfolk is a place where everyone can start life well, live well and age well, and where no one is left behind, and for communities to feel safe, healthy, empowered and connected, their individual distinctiveness respected and preserved.

5. Alternative Options

- 5.1 The Government rolled out the expansion of the HAF programme to all 152 upper tier local authorities in England, with an expectation that all local authorities make use of the grant funding to enable children eligible for means tested free school meals to access healthy food and take part in free fun activities over the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays.

5.2 The Department for Education has issued programme guidance which sets out clear expectations for the HAF programme, and these expectations are being fully met by our delivery of the programme, as confirmed by the ongoing positive feedback we receive from Childcare Works, commissioned by the Department for Education to oversee local authority delivery of the HAF programme across England.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 This programme is being funded through the grant to Norfolk County Council. Given the scale of the funding being received, agreement to utilise the grant for the final year of the programme, as outlined in this report, constitutes a Key Decision.

7. Resource Implications

7.1 **Staff:** none

7.2 **Property:** none

7.3 **IT:** none

8. Other Implications

8.1 **Legal Implications:** none

8.2 **Human Rights Implications:** none

8.3 **Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) (this must be included):**

The HAF team has completed a detailed equality impact assessment which is being used to inform delivery of the programme.

8.4 **Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA):** none

8.5 **Health and Safety implications (where appropriate):** none

8.6 **Sustainability implications (where appropriate):** none

8.7 **Any Other Implications:** none

9. Risk Implications / Assessment

9.1 The HAF programme, with its focus on funding for local authorities to coordinate and provide free holiday provision, including healthy food and enriching activities, is distinct to any current financial support from Central Government in relation to hardship and food support for families.

- 9.2 School holidays can be pressure points for some families and children from low-income households are 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.
- 9.3 Currently, there is no commitment from Central Government to further funding for the Holiday Activities and Food programme beyond 2024. Any opportunity to encourage Central Government to identify continued funding for holiday activities beyond 2024 should be taken given it is clear that Norfolk's children and their families have greatly valued this provision.
- 9.4 The HAF programme has strengthened and supported the network of activity providers working with children and young people across the county and their ability to offer free activities during school holidays. If Central Government funding for the programme ends, this will impact on providers, many of whom would struggle to continue to provide holiday activities for children, potentially resulting in gaps in provision within some communities.
- 9.5 Within this context, the multi-agency HAF Strategic Group is focused on how HAF delivery is integrated with wider responses to children and young people, including how we secure a legacy from the programme should the current Central Government funding cease.

10. Select Committee Comments

- 10.1 There will be an opportunity to update on this final year of HAF delivery as part of bringing a wider update report on Norfolk's developing 0-19 offer for families to the People and Communities Select Committee during 2024.

11. Recommendations

To maintain the current successful approach to the delivery of Norfolk's HAF programme during 2024, utilising the grant allocation to the County Council confirmed on 25 January for the final year of the current programme.

To delegate decisions related to the implementation of Norfolk's HAF programme to the Executive Director of Children's Services.

12. Background Papers

- 12.1 Record of Individual Cabinet Member Decision

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained within this paper, please get in touch with:

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