

Cabinet

14 March 2023

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Education and Skills – Councillor Dr K Sandhu

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Interim Chief Executive (Chief Partnerships Officer)

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title:

Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2023: Acceptance of Grant

Is this a key decision?

Yes - the proposals involve financial implications in excess of £1m per annum and are likely to have a significant impact on residents or businesses in two or more electoral wards in the City.

Executive Summary:

The Government's Holiday Activity and Food Programme (HAF) is an enrichment programme for disadvantaged children which includes the provision of healthy food. The programme is primarily for pupils of statutory school age, who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals. Initially the programme was funded for the 2021/22 financial year only; and operated through the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays. The delivery details were set out in the Cabinet report of 9 March 2021, the Council report of 16 March 2021 and the Cabinet report of 15 March 2022.

The Government have made a commitment for this next phase of the Programme through to the end of March 2025. Coventry has received an allocation of £1,553,530 for the financial year 2023/24 (compared to a grant determination of £1,514,770 for the financial year 2022/23), subject to meeting the conditions of the grant determination letter. It is anticipated that funding will be at an equivalent level for 2024/25. This report sets out the intended approach for delivering HAF in 2023/24 and reports on 2022 activity.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1) Approve the acceptance of the Department for Education HAF grant allocation, of up to £1,553,530 for the 2023/24 financial year.
- 2) Delegate authority for decisions about the planning and delivery of the HAF, as well as acceptance of any future opportunities for additional in-year funding up to a total amount in the sum of £2.5 million pounds, in 2023/24 to the Interim Chief Executive (Chief

Partnerships Officer), following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills. The City Council will centrally co-ordinate and award monies to relevant organisations to deliver the programme to a high standard.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix 1 - Summary of Coventry Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2022 Delivery

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents

Department of Education Holiday Activities and Food Programme – Grant Determination (20th December 2022)

[HAF 2023 Grant Determination](#)

Department of Education Holiday Activities and Food Programme - information

[DfE HAF Guidance - updated 22 December 2022](#)

HAF Summer of Fun 2021 video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5sk7bSC5aq>

Coventry HAF webpages: <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/haf>

Cabinet report of 9 March 2021; Council report of 16 March 2021 - Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2021: Acceptance of Grant and Proposed Distribution

Cabinet report of 15 March 2022 - Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2022: Acceptance of Grant and Proposed Distribution

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2023: Acceptance of grant

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 Following the success of the national Holiday Activity and Food Programme (HAF) during the financial year 2021/22, the Government announced the extension of the programme to March 2025. 2022/23 was the first year of this extended phase of the programme. Details of the programme remain as set out in the Cabinet report of 9 March 2021 and the Council report of 16 March 2021 and the Cabinet report of 14 March 2022.
- 1.2 The programme will continue to target statutory school age pupils (reception to year 11 inclusive), who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals. Coventry has also included children with a social worker, children assessed (through an early help assessment) to be in financial hardship and children part of the Ukrainian Family Scheme in our eligible criteria. This means that approximately 14,500 Coventry children will be entitled to access free enrichment activities and healthy food during the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays of the 2023/24 financial year.
- 1.3 Coventry has been awarded an allocation of £1,553,530 for 2023/24. It is anticipated that the allocation for 2024/25 will be maintained at a similar level. The programme allows for 15% discretionary spend on children who are not within the category of benefits-related free school meals (as noted above).
- 1.4 The grant determination letter states that all provision funded by the local authority through the HAF programme must meet the framework of standards and meet the following core aims and objectives:
 - **Healthy meals:** holiday clubs must provide at least one healthy meal a day which must meet the School Food Standards.
 - **Enrichment activities:** holiday clubs must provide fun and enriching activities that provide children with opportunities to develop or consolidate skills or knowledge. Clubs must also provide physical activities which meet the Physical Activity Guidelines on a daily basis.
 - **Increasing understanding and awareness of healthy eating:** holiday clubs must work to improve children's knowledge and awareness of healthy eating.
 - **Signposting and referrals:** clubs must be able to provide information, signposting or referrals to other services and support that would benefit the children who attend their provision and their families. This can include advice on how to source, prepare and cook nutritious and low-cost food alongside increasing awareness of healthy eating.
 - **Policies and procedures:** clubs must be able to demonstrate and explain their safeguarding arrangements and have relevant and appropriate policies and procedures in place in relation to safeguarding, health and safety, insurance, accessibility and inclusiveness. Where appropriate, clubs must also be compliant with the Ofsted requirements for working with children.
- 1.5 Local Authorities are encouraged to work with a wide range of providers in the delivery of the programme, recognising the important role that community and voluntary organisations have played in its success so far.
- 1.6 Attendance on the programme is voluntary. Each eligible school-age child is entitled to access the provision for one week during the Easter and Christmas holiday period and four weeks during the summer. One HAF week is defined as being a total of four, four hourly sessions per week.

- 1.7 Coventry City Council can evidence the success and positive impact of its programme delivery during the 2022/23 financial year, as set out in Appendix 1: Summary of Coventry Holiday Activities and Food programme 2022 delivery. The Coventry HAF Summer of Fun 2021 video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5sk7bSC5ag> shows how the grant conditions were met through both the wide range of activities delivered across the City summary, and the impact shown from a parent and child perspective.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 Coventry City Council could decide not to accept the grant. The consequence would be that without the financial resources, the programme would cease. This is not the recommended option.
- 2.2 At the start of the programme the City Council could have procured an external organisation to coordinate and deliver the HAF programme. Instead, the decision was taken to invest in a city council team to lead and co-ordinate the programme with a wide range of local delivery partners. This approach has been successful, and if the decision was now made to procure an external organisation, this would lead to service disruption and it is unlikely that the required infrastructure, coordination, expertise and experience would be procured in readiness for delivery by Easter 2023. This is therefore not the recommended option.
- 2.3 The City Council accept the grant and continue to co-ordinate the programme centrally. Funding would continue to be awarded via the grant agreement to organisations who are able to deliver the required specification of provision, building on the existing local partnership. This is the recommended option.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

No consultation is required or necessary for the programme. There is strong engagement and collaboration with a wide range of partners across Coventry and there has been significant feedback from families that influences programme delivery.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

The acceptance of grant monies will be implemented immediately, and plans are already in place for delivery for the Easter 2023 holidays, building on the foundation of 2022 delivery.

5. Comments from the Interim Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer) and the Chief Legal Officer

5.1 Financial implications

The indicative maximum allocation available is £1,553,530 for 2022/23 financial year (a similar level to financial year 2022/23). The payments will be made by the DfE at various milestones throughout the year including receipt of delivery plans and reports back on actual activity and expenditure.

The funding is for the provision of free holiday club places (90% of the funding) in the Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays, and for Local Authority coordination costs (10% of the funding). A small team supports the delivery of the programme within the allowed 10% of the grant allocation.

A payment of up to 80% of Coventry City Council's total 2023/2024 allocation will be made in April 2023 following satisfactory receipt by 1st March 2023 of a report to the DfE setting out how the 2023/2024 programme will work and how many children Coventry City Council

expects to work with in 2023/24. A payment of up to the remaining 20% of the total 2023/24 allocation will be made in April 2024 following satisfactory submission to the DfE by 15 February 2024 of a report setting out the actual number of children Coventry City Council have worked with during delivery of the programme at Easter, Summer and Christmas in 2023.

There is a small risk that funds would be withheld if the programme is not delivered. However, this risk is mitigated because Coventry's delivery plans are based on the scheme guidance and robust risk management arrangements are in place (see section 6.2).

The grant determination letter sets out that the 15 February 2024 report must include:

- the overall number of unique children who participated in programme
- the overall number of unique children in receipt of FSM who participated in the programme
- the number and proportion of children who are in the: primary school age range, the secondary school age range and any children outside of those age ranges who attended the programme
- the proportion of primary age and secondary age children who have participated in the programme
- the number of children with SEND or additional needs who have participated in the programme.

5.2 Legal implications

5.2.1 The Council has no specific statutory duty to deliver holiday-based food and activity for families.

5.2.2 By section 31(3) and 31(4) of the Local Government Act 2003 (Power to pay grant) the Department for Education has made grant provision available to enable local authorities to provide to school age children who are eligible for free school meals, healthy meals and enrichment activities during the Easter, Summer and Christmas holiday periods free of charge. The Grant Determination sets out the conditions upon which the grant has been made available and to which the local authority must comply.

5.2.3 Law and Governance support the recommendations outlined in this report and will support the process, ensuring the interest of the Council are protected.

6. Other implications

6.1 **How will this contribute to the Council Plan (www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/)?**

This programme aligns with the council plan, and can contribute towards the following aims:

- Improving educational outcomes by working with schools to continue to improve standards, and
- Improving health and wellbeing by supporting children and young people to lead healthier lifestyles including better mental health; keeping children and young people safe from harm by providing activities; providing early intervention for families who need it; enabling people to exercise choice and control in their daily lives; reducing health inequalities and giving our children the best start in life.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

A robust risk management approach is in place for the programme.

To ensure that participating children and young people are safeguarded, only holiday provision that is approved (for example, registered as a provider with Ofsted) is commissioned. Organisations funded by HAF have developed a strong track record of working positively with children, families and schools across Coventry building a positive reputation based on trust. Checks are in place to ensure that staff have appropriate qualifications, and that employment and safe recruitment checks are in place (e.g. DBS).

The grant monies awarded is not sufficient to fully support all eligible children and young people in the city with the provision of food throughout the holidays. In order to manage this expectation, the scope of the HAF programme is clearly communicated to parents and carers.

The HAF Steering Group has established a risk and issue management approach. If a risk exceeds the threshold of tolerance and threatens the delivery of the project or signals a significant change of approach is required, it is escalated to the HAF Steering Group for consideration and options for mitigation/response determined. Risks and issues of a lower impact are mitigated and responded to within the day-to-day activity of the project team and are recorded in the project risk log.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

The programme is co-ordinated by a small team within Education and Skills (4 FTE).

6.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

As an intrinsic part of the programme, consideration is given to ensuring provision is accessible and engaging for all eligible children and young people (including those with a special educational need and disability, and older children). The programme has due regard to the requirements of the Equality Act in both the coordination and delivery of the programme.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment

None

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

The Council will continue to work with a wide range of partner organisations in the delivery of this programme, ensuring partners are proportionately represented on the HAF steering group to oversee the implementation. In forming the HAF steering group, the Council has taken full account of the DfE recommendations on composition by including the following partners: local police and other uniform services; public health; school leaders; youth services; social services; charities and the voluntary sector. Membership of the steering groups is reviewed annually.

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Councillor Dr K Sandhu	Cabinet Member for Education and Skills	-	17.02.23	20.02.23

This report is published on the council's website: www.coventry.gov.uk/councilmeetings

Appendix 1 – Summary of Holiday Activities and Food 2022 delivery

Purpose

The primary purpose of this Cabinet report relates to acceptance of the HAF grant. This appendix provides a summary of 2022 delivery. Please watch the Summer of Fun 2021 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5sk7bSC5ag>) for a broader understanding of the Coventry HAF programme.

Principles

The HAF multi-agency steering group agreed the following principles for the Coventry HAF programme, linking with the DfE objectives. These are:

- Positive, memorable and happy holiday experiences that demonstrate the value of every person
- Impacts that last beyond the holidays and experiences that reach parents and families through children and young people
- Building on, and enabling, trusted relationships and Coventry strengths
- Collaboration and partnership across a wide range of organisations and engaging with children, young people and families throughout
- Joined-up locality offer - particularly in areas of higher deprivation
- Tailored approaches for primary and secondary ages with a key focus on children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- Joining-up with school summer and education recovery programmes
- Continuous learning and improvement, including learning across Coventry, West Midlands and nationally
- Coventry HAF as a part of a joined-up offer for Coventry lower-income families

2022 delivery overview

Coventry's 2022 delivery has built on the foundations of our pilot year (2021) and continues to deliver an effective Holiday Activities and Food programme. HAF delivers a comprehensive and diverse range of holiday activities, experiences and clubs, to lower-income families in Coventry. The offer is more focussed in areas that have higher numbers of HAF-eligible children and young people. We received positive feedback from our HAF regional advisor on our programme. Below is a summary of 2022 delivery.

Increased participation

The number of unique children and young people participating in the 2022 summer school holiday increased by 100% compared to Summer 2021 (up from c.2,000 to c.4,000). The number of unique children and young people participating in the 2022 Christmas school holiday increased by 30% compared to Christmas 2022 (up from c.1,700 to c.2,200). (Note that the year-on-year increases are less for Christmas delivery due to the significantly shorter school holiday compared to the summer holiday). The Summer 2022 programme delivered a diverse programme of activities with 142 different clubs, activities and experiences delivered by over 50 different providers (e.g. community organisations, schools, universities, creative and cultural organisations).

Impact

There are an increasing number of stories and examples of the impact that clubs, activities and experiences have made on children and young people in terms of confidence and reduced levels of anxiety. Children and young people report that they have made new friends and tried things they would never have had the opportunity to do before. When they return to school from a school holiday they are able to share with their peers and teachers the positive activities they have participated in. They receive healthy meals and are cook and eat food that they may not have tried before and learn new skills. Providers report that many children and young people now continue to engage with their weekly activities as a result of an initial engagement through HAF.

One Coventry HAF Partnership approach

Providers increasingly see themselves as part of a One Coventry HAF Partnership where they can collaborate and share ideas. Providers are not only implementing new ideas but are developing new relationships with each other. The HAF programme hosts a provider celebration event, bringing together all the providers following each holiday programme. This creates a context for providers to meet with others and share ideas that they can embed into their own delivery.

Food

Hot nutritional meals are provided at the vast majority of activities (trips may be an exception to this) and breakfast is increasingly being provided by clubs that start earlier – both as an important meal to start a day, and as settling in time. Nutritional education takes place in all clubs and there is the opportunity at some clubs for the children to participate in cooking meals. The number of family cooking sessions has increased with many providers buying a standard set of cooking equipment that they can use with families. Links with the Coventry Food Network also continue to strengthen.

Digital access

Activities are booked digitally. Where families do not have digital access to book they can be booked on by providers and other professionals. Letters are also translated into 5 other languages.

Quality framework

A quality framework has been developed focussing on the following key elements through our “HAFF” quality framework. Every provider/activity is assessed against the following:

- **Hospitable** - safe and have an inclusive, friendly and welcoming environment
- **Activities** - enriching, engaging, developmental and diverse
- **Food** – provision of nutritional food, nutritional education for children and families
- **Families** - activities signpost and engage families with support (e.g. cost of living information).

Stronger partnerships with schools

Coventry schools have a HAF link/champion nominated by their senior leadership team. They are increasingly doing more to ensure all eligible children/families are aware of the HAF offer. In addition to this, in 2022, 40 Coventry schools hosted a HAF club on their school site.

Feedback

In surveys throughout 2022, feedback ratings were that between 95 and 100% would recommend HAF activities to others. Providers consult with children, young people and families and use feedback to shape the activities they delivery each holiday.

Partnerships

HAF providers within the overall programme have development individual partnerships with companies. In addition, across the HAF programme there is partnership with the Coventry Building Society (£100k investment) and with Stellantis (a global car company with UK headquarters in Coventry). Stellantis staff were involved in volunteering to pack and deliver home activity boxes for children who were unable to access face-to-face HAF provision.

Maximising attendance

A key challenge for the programme (nationally and locally) has been ensuring that those who book on activities, experiences and clubs attend the session. There are a range of reasons why children and young people may not attend including: sickness, forgetting to turn-up, and lack of consequence as the place is free. The impact of this can include: children missing out on the opportunities, higher cost per place as providers have budgeted and planned for higher

attendance. These issues are experienced by local authorities nationally and are discussed in regional and national HAF forums. Coventry has implemented the following actions to mitigate this, including:

- Setting the bookable capacity of an activity to be higher (e.g. 125%, based on an expected 25% no-show)
- Being clear in all communications with parents/carers of the impact on other Coventry children if their own child is booked on and does not attend.
- Providers contacting parents/carers prior to activities in a positive way to remind them of the sessions (including phone calls, texts, messages, emails, social media etc.)
- Providers contacting parents/carers who have booked on an activity but not attended
- Where 3 attempts have been made to contact a family, following a “no-show”, the booking being cancelled
- A stronger relational aspect (e.g. consultation with the children and young people on activities delivered, building on existing relationships with the school or organisation delivering the activities)

Key priorities and developments for 2023 and beyond

In 2023, the HAF programme will build on the foundations of 2022. Key priorities and developments will include:

- Continuing to increase the number of eligible children attending and booking each holiday;
- Continuing to increase the quality and impact of HAF food, activities and experiences;
- Developing 1-year agreements with providers for Easter, Summer and Christmas delivery to maximise continuity for families and also funding stability for providers; and
- Continuing to build the case for continued funding for HAF post-2025 through recording and analysing the impact of HAF.