

Cabinet

18 March 2025

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Education and Skills – Councillor Dr K Sandhu

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director of Children and Education Services

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title:

Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2025: 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 Activities 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. The programme has been funded from 2021/22 through to 2024/25 and operates 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 reports of 15 March 2022, 14 March 2023 and 12 March 2024.

The Government have made a commitment for this next phase of the programme through to the end of March 2026. Coventry is receiving an allocation of £1,604,150 for the financial year 2025/26 (compared to an allocation of £1,587,840 for the financial year 2024/25), subject to meeting the conditions of the grant determination letter. This report sets out the intended approach for delivering HAF in 2025/26 and reports on 2024/25 activity.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1) Approve the acceptance of the Department for Education HAF grant allocation, of up to £1,604,150 for the 2025/26 financial year.
- 2) Delegate authority for decisions about the planning and delivery of the HAF to the Director of Children and Education Services, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills including but not limited to:-
 - a) co-ordinating and awarding monies to relevant organisations in order to ensure the delivery of the programme to a high standard; and
 - b) acceptance of any future opportunities for additional in-year grant funding up to a total amount of £2.5 million pounds, in 2025/26.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix 1: Summary of Coventry Holiday Activities and Food programme 2024 delivery

Background papers:

Section 31 Grant Determination Letter for the Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2025/26: No 31/7645

Other useful documents

A video capturing the HAF summer 2024 programme has been produced – please see the link <https://vimeo.com/1028618184/2447db9978>

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

Cabinet report of 9 March 2021: [Report](#)

Council report of 16 March 2021 - Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2021: Acceptance of Grant and Proposed Distribution: [Report](#)

Cabinet report of 15 March 2022 - Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2022: Acceptance of Grant and Proposed Distribution: [Report](#)

Cabinet report of 14 March 2023 - Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2023: Acceptance of Grant: [Report](#)

Cabinet report of 14 March 2024 - Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2024: Acceptance of Grant: [Report](#)

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 2025: Acceptance of grant

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 Following the success of the national Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) during the financial year 2021/22, the Government announced the extension of the programme to March 2025. The Government has subsequently announced an extension of the programme to March 2026. Details of the programme remain as set out in the Cabinet report of 9 March 2021, the Council report of 16 March 2021 and the Cabinet reports of 14 March 2022, 14 March 2023 and 14 March 2024.
- 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 the following children in our eligibility criteria: assessed as a “child in need”, on a child protection plan, a child in care, a young carer, assessed (through an early help assessment) to be in financial hardship, children included in the Ukrainian Family Scheme or the Home for Ukraine programme and children receiving benefits-related free school meals through having no recourse to public funds. Children and young people in Years 12 - 13 are eligible if they are in receipt of benefits-related free school meals (FSM) and either have an Education Health and Care Plan or are receiving Special Educational Needs (SEN) support at their place of education. This means that approximately 18,000 Coventry children will be entitled to access free enrichment activities and healthy food during the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays of the 2025/26 financial year.
- 1.3 Coventry has been awarded an allocation of £1,604,150 for 2025/26. 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 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. A typical 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 2024/25 financial year, as set out in Appendix 1: Summary of Coventry Holiday Activities and Food programme 2024 delivery.
- 1.8 A video capturing the HAF summer 2024 programme has been produced – please see the link <https://vimeo.com/1028618184/2447db9978>

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

Decline the Award of the Grant Funding

- 2.1 This is not a viable option as all local authorities are expected to participate in the national programme. This is not the recommended option.

Acceptance of the Grant Funding

- 2.2 The City Council accept the grant and continue to co-ordinate the programme. 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

- 3.1 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

- 4.1 The acceptance of grant monies will be implemented immediately, and plans are already in place for delivery for the Easter 2025 holidays, building on the foundation of 2024 delivery.

5. Comments from the Director of Finance and Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the Director of Law and Governance

5.1 Financial implications

The indicative maximum allocation available is £1,604,150 for 2025/26 financial year (a slightly increased level compared to financial year 2024/25). 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.

The Council's nominated responsible officer must confirm, through the submission of an annual certificate of expenditure, at the end of each financial year that the funding has been properly expended.

There is a small risk that funds could be withheld if the programme is not delivered appropriately. 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).

An annual report must be submitted, and this must include:

- the overall number of unique children who participated in programme
- the overall number of unique children in receipt of Free School Meals 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 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 interests of the Council are protected.

6. Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to the One Coventry Plan?

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/strategies-plans-policies/one-coventry-plan>

This programme aligns with the One Coventry Plan, and can contribute towards the following aims:

- Improving educational outcomes by working with schools to continue to improve standards and skills, 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 meeting quality standards is grant funded. 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 are 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 Children and Education Services.

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. A detailed assessment and analysis of equality impacts of the programme will be conducted in the Spring of 2025 looking back to programme delivery in 2024/25. This will be built into the evaluation of the programme in 2025 and will also contribute to the case for further HAF funding.

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	-	14/02/25	17/02/25

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

Appendix 1 – Summary of Holiday Activities and Food 2024 delivery

Purpose

The primary purpose of this Cabinet report relates to acceptance of the HAF grant. This appendix provides a summary of 2024 delivery. A video capturing the HAF summer 2024 programme has been produced – please see the link:

<https://vimeo.com/1028618184/2447db9978>

Principles

The HAF multi-agency steering group agreed the following principles when the Coventry HAF programme was established in Coventry, 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

2024 delivery overview

Coventry's 2024 delivery has built on the foundations of previous years 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. Below is a summary of 2024 delivery.

Participation

The 2024 school summer holiday programme was the most recent and most successful Coventry HAF holiday programme delivered. The following key statistics from the summer programme illustrate this

- c.4,200 eligible children and young people benefitted (including c.1,400 children with SEND) plus thousands of other family members;
- c.22,500 meals were provided;
- c.22,500 sessions were delivered (an increase of 26% compared to summer 2023);
- 120 different activities/clubs were delivered;
- 43 providers were directly funded, with a further 50 sub-providers/partner organisations;
- 87% of funded places provided, were attended (up from 78% in summer 2023); and
- Families gave a 4.4/5-star feedback rating on the activities.

Other key highlights from our Summer 2024 programme included:

- Use of a wide range of venues and locations including 20 primary schools, 8 secondary schools, 5 special schools, 1 university, 12 community centres, 10 leisure centres/sports facilities, 7 arts venues, 3 parks, 15 other locations/venues
- An increase in the diversity of activities in line with our principle of “something for everyone” with the inclusion of plumbing skills, trauma therapy etc.
- Stronger partnership working with family hubs including family cooking sessions, and a SEND-specific activity bus at Families for All, Park Edge and Moat House Family Hubs;
- Improvements in the quality of food provided through partnership working and the support of our HAF Project Support Officer food nutritionist. Family feedback on our food offer was 4/5-star feedback rating;
- Holy Family Larks and Owls Club (One of our Coventry HAF providers) won Best HAF Provision in the Club Central Out-of-School Club Awards 2024; and
- Development of the skills offer for children and young people (e.g. plumbing skills).

Focus on inclusion and activities for children with additional needs

Coventry HAF has a strong focus on inclusion and on children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Approximately one third of those who participate in the programme have additional needs. This has been achieved in the following ways:

- Training and up-skilling of HAF providers;
- Communication with parents/carers and providers - ensuring the specific needs of individual children are shared through an “All about me” focus;
- Additional funding for providers for staffing to increase ratios;
- SEND family experiences – benefitting 382 families with 8 different experience providers (in summer 2024); and
- SEND special school initiative – funded by Coventry Building Society for a second summer and working with 5 of our Coventry Special Schools – benefitting 128 eligible children plus family members (in summer 2024).

Quality

Providers are assessed according to a range of standards including their activities, provision of healthy food, nutritional education, safeguarding, health and safety, and information shared with families. This assessment is both prior to awarding grant funding and post-delivery (based on delivery performance, visits, feedback from parents/carers and children). 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).

Promotion

There was significant promotion of the summer programme through provider and programme marketing including: brochures and letters to eligible households, promotion through schools, social media, texts, promo-videos and other means.

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 some children 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 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 many activities (trips may be an exception to this) and breakfast is provided by some 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. Family cooking sessions are delivered by some providers who have bought a standard set of cooking equipment that they can use with families.

Feedback from parents/carers

There has been extensive feedback from parents/carers, children and young people on the programme. For example, following our summer programme, families gave a 4.4 out of 5-star feedback rating on activities.

Coventry has also received positive feedback on its programme from Childcare Works who are working with the DfE on the national HAF programme. Coventry HAF has been represented in a HAF evaluation being undertaken by the universities of Birmingham and Bristol. This includes hearing the feedback from children about HAF.

Partnerships

HAF providers within the overall programme have developed individual partnerships with a range of companies and organisations. In addition, across the HAF programme there is partnership with the Coventry Building Society (£50k investment in 2024/25) 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 in the Christmas school holidays for children who were unable to access face-to-face HAF provision.

Maximising attendance

The percentage of those booking and actual attendance has increased in 2024 – for example in the summer attendance increased from 87% of funded places attended (up from 78% in summer 2023). This has been through the implementation of the following actions to mitigate against parents/carers booking children onto activities and not attending. These have included:

- 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; and
- 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).

Areas of focus for Coventry HAF in 2025

The key areas of development and focus for 2025 include:

- Further development of our offer to children and young people with additional needs;
- Further development of our secondary school and skills-based offer in partnership with secondary schools, the Coventry Youth Partnership, Coventry and Warwick universities and others;
- A continued increase in attendance at HAF activities; and
- Continuing to build the case for continued funding for HAF post-2026 through recording and analysing the impact of HAF.

Additional information

The following providers were directly funded in 2024 (there other providers/organisations who were also involved, but not directly funded):

Aptitude, Arts a Riot, Ascension Dance Company, Baginton Fields School, Barr's Hill School, Cardinal Newman Catholic School, Canley Community Centre, Coventry Boys and Girls Club, Coventry Music, Coventry Outdoors, Coventry Rugby, Coventry SDA, Cre8fun, Creative Optimistic Visions, CV Life/Culture Coventry, Edgewick Primary, Empow- U/Energ!se, Epic Academy/SCCU, Feeding Coventry, Guardian Ballers, Guiding Young Minds, Highly Sprung, Holbrooks Community Care Association, Holy Family Primary School (Larks and Owls club), Jam Coding, Kingsbury Academy, My Activities, Onside Coaching Plumb Learning, Project Number 5, Razzamataz Theatre Schools, Rising Stars, Riverbank School, SDH Academy, Sport Works, Sprint Active Education, Sky Blues in the Community, Staffordshire Winter Sports Club (Planet Ice), Tiverton School, Tribe: Cheer, Dance and Fitness, University of Warwick Holiday Scheme, Vanny Radio, WATCH/Hillz FM, and Woodfield School.

Activities took place in the following locations in 2024:

Activities took place in the following locations:

- **Primary schools:** Aldermans Green, Allesley Hall, Charter, Edgewick, Frederick Bird, Gosford Park, Grangehurst, Henley Green, Holy Family, John Gulson, Keresley Grange, Leigh C of E, Manor Park, Our Lady, Ravensdale, Sidney Stringer Primary, Stoke Heath, Stretton, Southfields, Walsgrave C of E
- **Secondary schools:** Barrs Hill, Cardinal Newman, Cardinal Wiseman, Finham Park 2, Grace Academy, Lyng Hall, President Kennedy, Sidney Stringer
- **Special schools:** Bagington Fields, Kingsbury, Riverbank, Tiverton, Woodfield
- **Community Centres/facilities:** Bethel Church, Broad Horizon Enterprise Centre, Canley Community Centre, Coventry Boys and Girls Club, Coventry Central SDA church, Eastern Green Village Hall, Foleshill Community Centre, Holbrooks Community Centre, Holbrooks Community Care Association, Stoke Park Youth Centre, The Crez (Jubilee Crescent Community Centre), WATCH
- **Leisure Centres/sports Facilities:** The Wave, Alan Higgs, AT7 Centre, Coventry Rugby (Butts Park Arena), Moat House Neighbourhood and Leisure Centre, Planet Ice, XCEL Leisure Centre, Coombe Abbey Go-Ape! Tamworth Snowdome, Warwickshire Shopping Park (Tribe RLS Elite – Dance)
- **Arts:** The Albany Theatre, Coventry Transport Museum, Daimler Powerhouse, FarGo, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Lunt Roman Fort, Macready Theatre, Warwick Arts Centre
- **Parks:** Coombe Abbey Country Park, Edgewick Park, Gosford Green, Holbrooks Park
- **University:** University of Warwick
- **Other locations:** Aqualand, Ash End House Children's Farm, Aztec Adventure, Cadbury World, Cliff Lakes Aqua Park, Electric Wharf (Plumb Learning), Drayton Manor Theme Park, Hatton Farm/Adventure World, National Space Centre, Perkisound Recreational Centre, Sealife Centre, Red Kangaroo Trampoline Park, Skegness, Spencer's Retreat SEND Care Farm, Ten-pin bowling, Twycross Zoo, Western-Super-Mare, York Railway

A wide range of activities took place, including:

The following are examples of the types of activities included in the programme:

Animation, archery, art master classes (creative journaling, floral water-colours, illustration skills, oil painting, street art murals) Aqualand, Aztec adventure, BBQ, badminton, basketball, bouncy castles, breakfasts, broadcasting, bushcraft and survival, chef academy, cheerleading, choreography, coding, circus skills, climbing, combat archery, cooking, crafts (tie dye, quilling, origami, gemtastic jewellery and fabric), creative journaling, cricket, dancing, drama, drawing, DJ-ing, fitness, football, forest school, fun days, giant board games, go- karting, gadgets, gaming, gardening, gymnastics, horse riding lessons, ice-skating lessons, inflatable air track, inflatable bungee, karaoke, inflatable assault course, lacrosse, laser tag, lego building, lava lamp making, MicLab (sustainable stations, stop motion animation, stitch in time, connections and innovations), movies, movie making, multi-activity clubs (crafts, sports, arts etc.), music workshops, netball, ninja warrior, paintballing, performance (parkour, free running and contemporary dance), performing arts, photography, physical theatre, picnics, podcasting, plumbing lessons, pool, pottery, radio, rap, robotics, roller skating, rounders, rugby, singing, science, SEND sensory corner, skateboarding lessons, stable management, sports day, stop-motion animation, swimming lessons, team building, tennis, trampolining, tree-top

adventure, tug-of-war, The Wave, trips (Western Super Mare, Drayton Manor, Go-Ape, Hatton Park, Red Kangaroo, Cliff Lake Aqua Park, Tamworth Snowdome, Warwick Arts Centre, York Railway, Skegness, London, West Midlands Safari, National Space Centre, Lunt Roman Fort, Ash End Farm), ultimate frisbee, videography, water sports, water-colour/ink painting, zip wire and other activities.