

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ANNUAL REPORT

April 2025 - March 2026



West
Northamptonshire
Council

northamptonshire
sport
let's move together

“My daughter had the best time – thank you so much for making the past few days so magical for her. She hasn’t stopped talking about it since she got home and cannot wait to come again”



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SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme provides healthy meals and funded places at enriching activities to children from low-income families, benefiting their health, wellbeing and learning.

Since 2018, the HAF programme has provided support to children in receipt of benefit related free school meals through holiday periods. Following successful pilots between 2018 and 2020, the government provides over £200 million each year for the HAF programme across England.

Research has shown that the school holidays can be pressure points for some families. For some children that can lead to a holiday experience gap.

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
- more likely to experience social isolation

The HAF programme is a response to this issue. Evidence shows that free holiday clubs can have a positive impact on children and young people.

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
- use local partnerships and connections, particularly with the VCSO sector

In West Northamptonshire, the 2025 HAF programme was managed by Northamptonshire Sport, who work closely with West Northamptonshire Council and the government to deliver the outcomes of HAF.



SECTION 2 HIGHLIGHTS



EASTER

Easter 2025 was delivered between the 7th April and the 17th April 2025, offering a total of 9 days of delivery. We had good engagement with schools and partners which resulted in the distribution of 12750 vouchers to eligible families and those who have been identified as part of the 15% additional cohort. Attendance rate of 86%.

Places available	7,907
Bookings	8,834
Attendances	7,618
Individuals	2,085
SEND	574
Non Attendance - Not Paid	883
Non Attendance - Paid	333
Providers	35
Vouchers issued	12,750



SUMMER

For the summer 2025 programme, we moved booking platforms to EEQU. This was a significant project for all involved as schools, providers and families needed to adjust to a new system, which is always a challenge. The benefit of changing booking systems mean we no longer have to issue vouchers, instead using a database of eligible families. Delivery took place between the 23rd July and the 29th August 2025, a total of 27 days of delivery.

Attendance was slightly less than Easter, at around 85%. We continue to see an increase in the price per head largely related to the increased cost of living.

Places available	18,860
Bookings	20,641
Attendances	17,544
Individuals	2,306*
SEND	844
Non Attendance - Not Paid	1,306
Non Attendance - Paid	1,791
Providers	45

*1,108 of whom had not attended so far in 2025



WINTER

Our main Winter delivery took place between 22nd December and 2nd January 2026. 7 days were available to our main deliverers, but because of the HAF experiences, which includes pantomimes and sports fixtures, there were 13 days available to families.

Our HAF winter experiences were fully booked and oversubscribed. We did increase the number of places available to provide as much access as possible (as well as restricting children to one HAF experience), but still had significant waiting lists. Attendance remained the same as summer at 85%

Places available	4,751
Bookings	4,590
Attendances	3,892
Individuals	1,366*
SEND	496
Non Attendance - Not Paid	0
Non Attendance - Paid	698
Providers	26

* 295 of whom had not attended so far in 2025

A total of **3,488** unique individuals attended camps during one of the three funded holiday periods, some of whom will have attended every one of the four funded programmes.

Price per head based on the number of places secured - **£35.35**

(an increase of £2.95 per place compared to 2024 costs)

Price per head based on actual attendance - **£38.35**

(an increase of £4.29 per place compared to 2024 costs)

FINANCE

Grant Awarded:

£1,114,350

Total Expenditure:

£1,002,915

Delivery Expenditure:

£964,640

Administration:

£111,435

Overspend:

£0



SECTION 3 FEEDBACK

A selection of quotes
received from parents
& children

“ My kids loved the Arts Club! So much creativity and they came home happy every day.

Having Dance and Arts in the same venue made my life easier – both my girls were catered for!

The Football Camp gave my son so much confidence. He’s asking to go every time now

I get to make friends not from school and try new things.

I’ve made so many new friends and I get to practice my handstands in gymnastics, but this year I realised I like table tennis too. If I’m at home I just get bored

I was fast and I want to be a racing driver

They were so proud of what they made and couldn’t wait to tell everyone.

My daughter had the best time – thank you so much for making the past few days so magical for her. She hasn’t stopped talking about it since she got home and cannot wait to come again



SECTION 4

FOOD

The food offered in West Northamptonshire varies depending on the camp and where the camps are being held. In some camps, such as those delivered by schools and commercial organisations with their own facilities, the food offered is often hot food. However, in other settings, where it is logistically more of a challenge to serve hot food, the providers opt for a cold meal, such as a packed lunch or a buffet. Most providers will at some point do some food preparation with the participants.

There are no central partnerships across the authority that help with the HAF food offer, therefore, providers have developed their own networks to source food. However, some supermarkets have provided support to the food offer (mainly Morrisons and Asda).

Food remains an ongoing issue as some young people do not want the food that is offered, often bringing their own food. Providers work hard to offer a wide variety of food and with the work being done with the University of Northampton, we are developing insight into the views of children and parents on the food offer.

Challenges remain around sourcing food, especially hot food at the scale and the locations needed.



SECTION 5 NUTRITIONAL EDUCATION

Northamptonshire Sport has been working with The University of Northampton on a food and nutrition project, which involved sponsoring a PHD student to develop resources on nutrition and healthy eating. Providers were supported to offer a variety of nutritional education opportunities, including trying new foods, cooking and fun food related activities.

Providers now have access to a suite of resources, including posters, plans and lesson plans that they can use as needed in their sessions, covering a range of topics such as breakfast, food allergies, food safety, nutrients and hydration.

SECTION 6 ENRICHING ACTIVITIES

The HAF programme in West Northamptonshire continues to evolve and providers work hard to offer enriching activities to their participants. We continue to be approached by new organisations, and we actively try to recruit new providers. We have a broad offer that is not just sport / physical activity based, including arts & crafts, STEM activities, pantomimes and match day tickets at Northampton Saints.

We encourage all providers to diversify the range of opportunities they provide. Many providers include trips and visits to local attractions as part of their offer, with visits including local museums, parks and other outdoor spaces. Other providers have themed days such as Harry Potter, Marvel and Disney events so they can offer other enrichment activities.

Furthermore, we piloted a 'Wellbeing' session with a number of providers to support our children. This pilot has now been expanded, and we have wellbeing practitioners now attending a number of HAF sessions to work with young people on their wellbeing.

SECTION 7

PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

Physical activity is a key element of the HAF provision across the authority. All providers are supported to offer at least one hour of physical activity per day at their camps. A significant number of providers are physical activity based, such as Believe and Achieve, Clubzone and Next Generation Sport whilst others such as The Pinnacle Climbing Centre, Northampton Tennis Coaching, Goals and Northants Steelbacks offer sports specific activity. The vast majority of providers have a background in sports coaching but for those who don't, they have access to resources to support them in providing high quality activities; we have also coordinated training to non-sporting organisations on how to effectively incorporate a physical activity offer.

Furthermore, campaigns such as the Daily Mile have been promoted with HAF providers, again providing additional ideas and support for their physical activity programme. Throughout the year, physical activities covered include archery, athletics, badminton, basketball, boxing, climbing, cricket, dance, football, fitness, go – karting, gymnastics, hockey, multi-sports, rugby, swimming and tennis.

SECTION 8

SEN/D

Engagement by children and young people with special educational needs continues to outstrip supply. Over the three 2025 programmes, those attending HAF who had special educational needs have increased to 33% of all attendees. This is despite the lack of SEN specific camps – only 3 providers offered SEN specific camps in West Northamptonshire during 2025.

Therefore, the vast majority of attendance by children with SEN/D were in the mainstream HAF provider camps. We had multiple requests from providers for additional resources, including additional 1-2-1 staffing support, to enable them to cater for children with SEN. We do try to provide as much support as we can to help with the cost of 1-2-1 provision, but the budget doesn't allow for this on a programme wide basis. We continue to work to find new organisations who can offer further opportunities for children with SEN/D.

Following feedback from the WNC Local Offer "You said, We did", we have developed and funded a SEN/D awareness training programme that was piloted in 2025 before full rollout.

SECTION 9 MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Significant efforts were put into marketing and communication, especially around the change in the booking system, between Easter and Summer delivery. Emails, letters, social media and direct contact with families and schools was carried out to ensure a smooth transition to the new system. We did see a drop in numbers booking, possibly because of the switch to a new system, so we did coordinate a leaflet drop to all eligible families and commenced a commercial radio advertising campaign to increase awareness.

Social media is another well used marketing tool. Organic posts to raise awareness of the programme to eligible families were shared on – Facebook, Twitter (X), LinkedIn and Instagram. Key times included the build-up to the Easter, summer and winter holidays. Plus, just before the booking system was made live. Promotion continued throughout the bookable holiday periods.

When required, activity providers were supported with social media promotion to raise awareness of clubs where take-up is slower.

SECTION 10 PARTNERSHIPS / USE OF RESOURCES

The West Northants HAF steering Group continued to develop in 2025, adding new partners to the group and inputting further into the delivery of HAF. The group has, for example, identified new providers and new places for HAF delivery linked to local priorities.



SECTION 11

KEY REFLECTIONS/ FORWARD PLANS

HAF continues to provide eligible families with a range of fantastic activities and opportunities. Significant progress has been made to ensure the programme moves forward but many of the challenges faced in 2025 have been there since the start of the programme, including

- **No shows**
- **Range of opportunities for older young people and SEND**
- **Communication with families and schools**

Having surveyed families throughout 2025, we are now looking to implement some of the suggestions, especially around new providers / activities. We will be looking to add providers, around secondary aged provision and SEND specific provision.

We are working to support the provider network around challenges with the programme, including the cost-of-living crisis and how this is impact providers ability to offer high quality opportunities at a price that is affordable to HAF.

SECTION 12

CONTACTS / THANKS



THANK
YOU

West Northamptonshire Council

West Northamptonshire Parent Forum

Childcare Works

All HAF Providers



clubsfor young people
Northamptonshire
involve • enjoy • achieve

clubszone[®] CZ



everyone
ACTIVE

FREESTYLE
— SPORTS & ARTS —



[GOALS]
ACCEPT NO SUBSTITUTES



Happy Days
Childcare
.....where children really do matter

Junior
Adventures
Group



Koala Klubs



Northampton
Active
~~~~~





