



Department
for Education

Evaluation of the 2021 holiday activities and food programme

Research report

March 2022

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Government
Social Research

Contents

List of figures	4
List of tables	5
Executive Summary	6
Acknowledgements	10
Chapter 1 - Introduction	11
1.1 Background and policy context	11
1.2 The Holiday Activities and Food Programme	12
1.3 The HAF 2021 evaluation	14
1.4 Report structure	18
Chapter 2 - Attendance and activities	19
Summary	19
2.1 Attendance and attendee characteristics	20
2.3 Activities	29
2.4 Facilitators and barriers to attendance	38
Chapter 3 - Outcomes and impact	41
Summary	41
3.1 Children	42
3.2 Parents/carers	53
3.3 Organisations	60
3.4 Local area and labour market	63
Chapter 4 - Coordinator and provider models	65
Summary	65
4.1 Coordinator model	66
4.2 History of HAF provision and focus of HAF 2021	68
4.3 Application process	69
4.4 HAF budget and expenditure	70
4.5 Mapping and planning	71
4.6 Provider selection, engagement, and models	73
4.7 Delivering activities	74
4.8 4x4x4 model and implementation	74

Chapter 5 - HAF implementation and effectiveness	77
Summary	77
5.1 Marketing and engagement	78
5.2 Booking, registration and monitoring	80
5.3 Joint working, support, and guidance	82
5.4 Training, support, and guidance provided to clubs	86
5.5 Policies and procedures	89
5.6 Inclusive provision	89
Chapter 6 – Sustainability	93
Summary	93
Chapter 7 - Recommendations	97
Appendix A: Theory of Change	99
Appendix B: Technical Report	100
Process evaluation	100
Appendix C: References	116
Appendix D: Family Survey Questionnaire	119

List of figures

Figure 1: Remote support approaches	37
Figure 2: Reasons for non-attendance	39
Figure 3: Club enjoyment.....	51
Figure 4: Benefits of receiving any form of childcare support over the holidays (HAF parents/carers in employment)	57
Figure 5: HAF coordinator models	67

List of tables

Table 1: Process evaluation interviews.....	15
Table 2: Attendance (days) by age	23
Table 3: Hours typically spent at clubs on attendance days	24
Table 4: Youngest and oldest ages allowed at clubs	26
Table 5: Attendance by funding source and age.....	27
Table 6: Parental age and work status, HAF and non-HAF	29
Table 7: Remote support provided.....	36
Table 8: Physical activity outcomes between HAF and non-HAF users	43
Table 9: Information received during Summer Holiday	54
Table 10: Proportion of summer holiday club funding provided by HAF	61
Table 11: Activities undertaken by coordinators as a result of HAF	82
Table 12: Coordinators' rating of training or support received	83
Table 13: Coordinators accessing support from DfE/Childcare Works in Summer 2021	84
Table 14: Coordinators support rating by type of support accessed	84
Table 15: Proportion of clubs that received training/support.....	87
Table 16: Process evaluation LA sampling approach	100
Table 17: Process evaluation club sampling approach.....	101
Table 18: LA sampling approach for club survey	104
Table 19: Target and achieved sample for club survey (LA).....	105
Table 20: Target and achieved sample for club survey (type)	106
Table 21: Impact evaluation LA sampling approach	109
Table 22: Population and sample profiles	113
Table 23: Maximum number of child and parent responses	114

Executive Summary

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme was first launched as a pilot by the Department for Education (DfE) in 2018. It was designed to support disadvantaged families during the school holidays by providing healthy meals and enriching activities to young people. In 2019, DfE developed an expanded and more targeted programme across nine local authorities (LAs), with clubs being required to provide nutritional education (e.g., involving participants in preparing food) in addition to a healthy meal and enriching activities. By 2020, the HAF programme rolled out £9 million funding across 17 local authority areas, with 10 providers delivering local programmes for a minimum of four weeks between July and August 2020.

HAF 2021 was delivered at considerably greater scale than previous HAF programmes, with funding totalling £220 million available to all 151 local authorities in England to run clubs in the spring, summer and winter holidays. HAF 2021 aimed to improve outcomes for children eligible for benefits-related free school meals, including healthier eating and increased activity during the school holidays, participation in enriching activities which support school-readiness, increased safety and social inclusion, greater nutritional knowledge, and further engagement with school and other services. In addition, in line with previous Ecorys recommendations from the evaluation of HAF 2019, the expanded programme also included an emphasis on engaging families in nutritional education.

The evidence in this evaluation shows that there was high demand for HAF in 2021. Local HAF coordinators reported that **almost three quarters of a million children (730,000) took part**, of whom 616,000 children had their places directly funded by HAF and 498,000 were eligible for free school meals. This means the HAF 2021 summer programme reached 29% of all children eligible for free school meals. **Data from families shows children attended for an average of 9.6 days over the summer holidays, and that 70% of these children had not previously attended a free summer holiday club** (see Chapter 2). Around a fifth of clubs (22%) reported having to turn some children away, suggesting some level of unmet demand at a notable proportion of clubs. LAs met their aspiration to offer a mix of clubs providing a wide variety of engaging, fun, and inspiring activities, with a key theme being improved choice for children, parents/carers, and carers. There were signs that clubs found it easier to source and run physical activities, compared to other forms of activities, possibly because a notable proportion of clubs already had a prior focus on sport.

A range of positive outcomes were reported. For children, there was some evidence to suggest that HAF exceeded its aspiration to increase healthy behaviours through participation in physical activity and enriching activities. Overall, 92% of HAF children reported engaging in 30 minutes or more of activity per day compared to 87% of children who did

not attend HAF¹, and 77% of HAF children reported taking part in at least 60 minutes of activity compared 67% of children who did not attend HAF. **Children who attended HAF were considerably more likely to report having taken part in outdoor sport and exercise** (79% compared to 53% in a normal holiday week), **and indoor sport and exercise** (64% compared to 28%). For children who attended HAF, this included physical activity undertaken both when at HAF and outside of HAF in a normal holiday week. Together, these findings suggest that attending the HAF programme increases the level of physical activity FSM-eligible children take part in during the holidays.

Children who attended HAF often tried and enjoyed new things they would not otherwise have taken part in, such as drama or playing a musical instrument. There were positive signs that HAF was helping to improve socialisation and confidence, with 77% of children reporting they felt more confident because of attending the holiday club. The family survey analysis provided evidence that **children were becoming more socially connected through taking part in HAF**. Just over a third (35%) of parents/carers reported that their child who attended HAF saw or played with their friends most days of an average holiday week, compared to 21% of parents/carers whose children did not attend. Qualitative research illustrated the importance of these outcomes following COVID-19 lockdowns, and how building softer outcomes could potentially help support wider school readiness and mental wellbeing (although these were out of scope for the evaluation). Children had fun and enjoyed attending HAF, with HAF clubs given an overall ranking for enjoyment of 8.5 out of 10 by children.

More than nine clubs in ten (93%) stated that they provided at least one healthy meal (meeting the School Food Standard) every club day. Impact data showed that children felt they ate more healthily at clubs, with qualitative feedback from parents and club staff suggesting they had similar perceptions. However, impact data from parents was not able to substantiate this potential finding as this data suggested HAF attendance resulted in lower consumption of both healthy and unhealthy foods for children. The likely reasons for this, linked to the research design, are expanded on in the full report. Providers were also expected to include an element of nutritional education for children each day, which the evidence suggests was not consistently achieved.

Overall, the family survey results show that HAF parents/carers received more information on most types of support (e.g., childcare services, health services) than those whose children did not attend HAF, as measured in the family survey. However, views on the extent and effectiveness of signposting from HAF clubs varied and limited information was shared regarding health and employment.

¹ These figures compare children eligible for benefits-related free school meals who did and did not attend HAF. All findings that compare children (and families) who did and did not attend HAF are based on a sample of families who were all identified as eligible for benefits-related FSM.

Parents/carers of HAF attendees found it slightly easier to find suitable childcare over the holidays compared to non-HAF parents, but the survey results show there remained significant difficulties in finding childcare during the summer holidays. There was also positive evidence that HAF provision helped maintain employment. **Around a quarter of employed parents/carers whose children attended HAF said that childcare enabled them to keep working the same hours (26%) or to stay in work (25%). For just under a fifth (18%) childcare meant that they were able to work more hours per week, with 14% saying it enabled them to change the shifts they worked to fit better with looking after children.** This suggests that HAF contributed to supporting working parents/carers. More than half (57%) of parents/carers whose child attended a HAF club felt that childcare affected their labour market participation. This is likely to reflect the fact that parents/carers were at different stages of attachment to the labour market, including nearly half (49%) in full or part-time work.

After 18 months of the COVID-19 pandemic during which the youth work sector delivered very limited holiday club activities and many staff did not work, HAF funding was felt to have played a crucial role in enabling clubs to operate during summer 2021. The youth work sector was badly hit by the pandemic, and HAF funding allowed coordinators to reinvest in local services to support COVID-19 recovery. HAF had a notable impact on overall provision of holiday clubs – about half (49%) of clubs taking part in the survey started delivering provision in summer 2021. Most clubs relied heavily on HAF funding, with 37% receiving all their funding from HAF and a further 25% receiving at least three quarters of their funding from HAF. The main self-reported outcomes for participating organisations were increased capacity through funding, professional development opportunities and compliance activities. Added value was potentially brought via increased partnership working among delivery organisations, including a mixture of new and existing, formal and informal partnerships. In the case study areas, a main theme was that HAF was felt to have benefited wider communities, who were said to value the local investment that helped provide positive activities for children and brought communities together.

All coordinators surveyed were very likely (97%) or quite likely (3%) to run HAF again in 2022 if funding were available, suggesting a very high level of satisfaction with the programme and with LAs capacity to provide similar delivery in the future if substantial funding is provided. Similarly, nearly all clubs surveyed (98%) said that they were likely to run a club again if HAF funding were accessible. This creates a solid foundation for the future delivery of HAF given recent Government commitments to continue funding the programme, with most LAs (84%) rating their commissioning processes as excellent or good.

HAF clubs during the COVID-19 pandemic worked well when they were delivered at familiar, convenient venues, run by friendly, approachable, and diverse staff, able to meet the needs of children with special educational needs and disability (SEND) and had effective booking systems. A strong theme was that HAF provision was inclusive, although certain

providers felt they needed more support in this area. The main barriers to attendance were lack of awareness of clubs, eligibility limits, COVID-19, household practical barriers (including distance from clubs or difficulties booking sessions) and club operating hours not always being practical for some working parents/carers.²

² Funding for HAF has been confirmed by DfE for three years 2022/23-2024/25.

Acknowledgements

The Research Team at Ecorys would like to thank all the local HAF coordinators, providers, project staff, volunteers, children, and parents/carers who took part in the evaluation.

We would also like to thank Grace Ablett, Helen Connolly, Christopher Gray, Sarah Haywood, Matt Chappell, Andy Hudson, Asha Kamal, and Kashweka Palmer at the Department for Education (DfE) for their guidance and input. Further thanks go to the members of the Expert Panel convened by the DfE which provided methodological and thematic input at key points during the evaluation. We would also like to thank the Steering Group members, particularly Dr Maria Bryant and Dr Grace Gardener and the Fix our Food programme for their contribution to the process and documentation. Thanks also to our study partners Dr Carolyn Summerbell and Jane Evans for their work and support, and the team at Kantar, most notably including Emily Edwards-Hughes, Peter Matthews, Alex Thornton, Danny Price and Cindy Ndejemi, as well as the Kantar fieldwork team.

The Ecorys researchers undertaking the case-study fieldwork and analysis were led by Rachel Blades and Erica Bertolotto, and included Natasha Burnley, Iliana Georgieva, Valdeep Gill, Jo Llewellyn, Lilly Monk and Mariya Yanishevskaya. The surveys were scripted and administered by Erica Bertolotto. The quantitative survey data analysis was overseen by Panos Deoudes, Maire Williams, and Erica Bertolotto.

The study was directed, and project managed by Korina Cox, Diarmid Campbell-Jack, and Martina Diep (Ecorys), and Alex Thornton (Kantar).

Chapter 1 - Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned Ecorys UK to lead the independent evaluation of the 2021 Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme, together with study partners Jane Evans, Dr Carolyn Summerbell, and Kantar. Data collection took place between April and October 2021.

1.1 Background and policy context

1.1.1 The general context

Holiday periods can cause stress and difficulties for many families, especially for the 11% of children living in severe material deprivation in the UK (Taylor-Robinson *et al*, 2019). Children from low-income families are more likely to be isolated during the school holidays, in part due to additional food costs (Gill, O., and Sharma, N., 2004) and lack of access to affordable enriching activities (The Sutton Trust, 2014).

Issues caused by food insecurity and hunger can have serious adverse effects on children's mental and physical health. These effects include emotional problems, anxiety, and depression, which can translate into long-term issues, and contribute to inter-generational poverty (Johnson, A., and Markowitz, A., 2017; Sosenko, F., *et al*, 2019). Hunger can also result in problems with concentration which can negatively impact on educational attainment (Black, M., 2012; Pickett K., *et al*, 2021).

In 2020 and 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions on work and school further exacerbated the precarious nature of food security, including loss of family income, school closures, and increased challenges in obtaining nutritious food, with six in ten low-income families struggling to cover the costs of three or more basic essentials, including food, utilities, rent and childcare (Edwards, Z., *et al*, 2020). Linked to this, the Trussell Trust observed an 81% increase in families with children using their food banks in the second quarter of 2020 (Weeks, T., *et al*, 2021). The Food Foundation found that 41% of children eligible for FSM experienced food insecurity during the pandemic, with 20% experiencing food insecurity during the Christmas 2021 lockdown (Goudie, S., McIntyre, Z., 2021).

Evidence also suggests the quality of the food eaten by children eligible for free school meals decreased over lockdown. A study conducted by Northumbria University's Healthy Living Lab found that half of the children receiving free school meals had significantly reduced their consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables and had increased their intake of sugary drinks and snacks during the first national lockdown. The proportion of children skipping meals also increased (Defeyter, G., and Mann, E., 2020).

To address these issues, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) provided three specific support packages. These packages were the COVID Winter Grant Scheme, to support children, families and the most vulnerable over winter 2021; the COVID Local

Support Grant, to support those most in need across England with the cost of food, energy, water bills and other essentials; and the Household Support Fund, to support households in greatest need.

Children experienced learning loss during the pandemic due to lengthy periods of school closures, or disruption due to self-isolation. A systematic review by Ofqual concluded that “*disadvantaged primary school students were disproportionately behind expectations*” following the disruption to and closure of schools during 2020-21 (Newton, P., 2021). Children from low-income families were less likely to have access to the resources needed to get online and there were delays in Government programmes to deliver technology to households who needed it (Vibert, S., 2020). Government responded by providing 1.3 million laptops and tablets to help disadvantaged children learn at home (DfE, 2021).

Research and evaluation show that focused interventions reduce the challenges families with low incomes face during holidays. Holiday clubs played a crucial role in reducing food insecurity and providing food-related enriching activities during the school holidays, (Bayes, N., *et al*, 2021). FSM-eligible children who attended holiday clubs had better quality diets and more closely adhered to School Food Standards, underlying the importance of holiday programmes to support food security (Crilley, E., *et al*, 2022). They were also less likely to experience holiday hunger (Long, M.A., *et al*, 2021). The evaluation of Kitchen Social found that holiday clubs could reduce hunger and social isolation and provide enriching activities (Feeding Britain, 2017). The evaluation of Holiday Kitchen in the West Midlands revealed that 50% of families felt better prepared to feed their children more healthily following the programme (Evans, J., 2020).

1.2 The Holiday Activities and Food Programme

HAF was launched as a pilot in 2018, with £2 million allocated to support new and existing holiday club providers across seven partnerships. Following the successful pilot, a total of £9 million was awarded to providers in 11 local authority areas in 2019, with the programme being evaluated by Ecorys (Campbell-Jack *et al.*, 2020). The 2020 HAF Programme then rolled out £9m to 10 providers across 17 local authority areas during the summer. There was no overall evaluation in 2020, but individual projects reported engaging high numbers of children during the summer holidays – 5,458 children in Newcastle (StreetGames, 2020), 3,582 children in Blackburn and Darwen (SpringNorth, 2020), and 11,400 across West Cheshire, Wirral and Halton (Edsential, 2020).

The expanded HAF 2021 programme aimed to support disadvantaged families nationally, through bespoke provision and by providing healthy meals and enriching activities to children during the summer holidays. Unlike in previous versions of the programme, HAF 2021 was delivered entirely through LAs, with ringfenced grant funding allocated to LAs based on the proportion of children eligible for free school meals. HAF 2021 had four main aims, namely:

- To improve the nutrition of children who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals, in the holidays.
- To increase healthy behaviours (e.g., participation in physical and enriching activities) amongst eligible children during the holidays.
- To improve school readiness (including behaviour, confidence, and socialisation) amongst children who are eligible for benefits-related FSM.
- To improve parents' confidence and behaviour around purchasing and preparing healthy meals on a sustainable basis.

HAF 2021 was considerably larger than previous HAF programmes, being available to disadvantaged children in all 151 local authorities in England. £220 million funding was allocated to individual LAs based on the number of FSM-eligible children in each area. There was additional focus in 2021 on engaging families in nutritional education, and providing information and support to families, such as signposting to relevant services (employment support, childcare services, etc.).

In 2021, HAF funding was available nationwide and covered the local coordination of the programme and provision of free holiday club places for all children eligible for FSMs for a minimum of four hours a day, four days a week, over four weeks in the summer (the '4x4x4' approach). The role of local authority coordinators involved mapping local provision, establishing a steering group to support delivery, planning provision including for children with SEND, awarding funding to providers (i.e., delivery organisations) and supporting them at all stages of planning and delivery, advertising provision and building local networks for delivery and to share learning.

Unlike in previous years, HAF 2021 also required local coordinators to arrange a week of provision in the Easter and Christmas holidays. LAs were also encouraged to make clubs available to those who could pay to attend, as part of existing holiday provision or using a mixed approach based on local supply and demand.

Local authorities could apply to the DfE to use up to 15% of programme funding to provide free places for other children who an LA deemed to be vulnerable or in need, including looked-after children, children with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan, children assessed as otherwise vulnerable, and children living in areas of high deprivation. They were eligible to use the 15% if they could demonstrate they were offering the programme comprehensively across their area and were fully meeting demand from FSM eligible children across their area. Additionally, LAs could retain up to 10% of funding to cover the administration and coordination costs of the programme.

Childcare Works (a partnership between Hemsall's and Mott MacDonald) was the national support provider helping areas map provision, plan and deliver advice, report to DfE, implement local communication plans, and set up peer-to-peer support. They established

the LA Knowledge Hub, a site aiming to help share information across LAs, and ran a regular series of 'bitesize sessions' aiming to increase understanding and raise awareness of best practice on key strands of delivery. Childcare Works also set up regional meetings to achieve the same aims. Additionally, the Holiday Activities and Food Alliance ('The Alliance') was formed to help LAs and delivery partners exchange knowledge, expertise and share best practice. The Alliance was an independent collaboration of national and local charities and not-for-profit organisations previously involved in delivering HAF.

During the Easter 2021 delivery, many areas were able to offer some level of face-to-face holiday club provision. However, COVID-19 meant that some local authorities needed to switch to remote provision which in cases included providing recipes boxes, food parcels, activity packs or online activities to children and families.

Subsequent to the evaluation, the Government announced in their Autumn Budget Statement in 2021 that funding of HAF would continue for a further three years, with funding over £200 million per year (HM Treasury, 2021).

1.3 The HAF 2021 evaluation

The HAF 2021 evaluation aimed to assess the impact of HAF 2021 on programme aims, and to understand whether HAF was implemented as intended. The overall evaluation built on the 2019 evaluation to meet the following top-level objectives to:

- understand how the HAF 2021 programme was implemented, whether it was implemented as intended and what factors enabled effective implementation.
- evaluate the impact of the HAF 2021 programme on nutrition, healthy behaviours, and school readiness of FSM eligible children.
- assess how the HAF 2021 programme supported the development of resilience, character, wellbeing and educational attainment of FSM eligible children.
- evaluate the impact of the HAF 2021 programme on parent/carer behaviour and confidence around purchasing and preparing healthy meals.

The objectives were refined through the feasibility study and other discussions with DfE. As a result, the focus shifted from school readiness and educational attainment towards parent/carers' labour market participation and HAF's contribution to providing childcare.

A full Theory of Change was developed as part of the evaluation to outline the programme design from activities to outcomes. The final Theory of Change is available in Appendix A.

1.3.1 Data collection

The evaluation included two key strands: a process evaluation and an impact evaluation, which involved collecting data from numerous parties, including coordinators, provider

leads and staff, parents/carers and children. This section outlines in brief the data collection approaches used for each strand. Further details are available in Appendix B.

1.3.1.1 Process evaluation

This section outlines in brief the data collection approaches used for the process and impact evaluations.

Table 1: Process evaluation interviews

Stage	Methodology	Length (mins)	Target	Achieved
Pre-delivery	Coordinator interviews	45-60	10	10
During	Child interviews	15-30	45	60
During	Parents/carers interviews	20	40	34
During	Club staff interviews	45	40	51
Post-delivery	Coordinators, strategic leads interviews	45-60	15	15
Post-delivery	Coordinator survey	NA	151	116
Post-delivery	Club survey	NA	400	424

All interviews took place in ten Local Authorities, with these LAs being randomly selected according to the proportion of children eligible for FSM and the number of 5–18-year-olds in each area. A single club was randomly selected for the case study in each local authority to give a representative spread of club type and size. Covid-related social distancing meant interviews were conducted online or via phone.

Pre-delivery interviews took place in the first half of July 2021; case study interviews during provision in August; and post-delivery interviews between late August and September 2021. Post-delivery interviews included a small number of interviews with strategic leads, namely individuals working with coordinators, for example on HAF steering groups. All data from interviews was analysed thematically in NVivo. Participatory tools for younger and older children were developed and used in three LAs, with 89 tools completed and returned.

An online survey was sent to 1,092 clubs in 27 LAs, with the survey covering HAF preparations, implementation, quality standards, training/support, and sustainability. Post summer fieldwork ran from 30th August to 9th September, including a short period at the end of the holidays so staff could respond before holidays ended in case they were absent after the end of the holidays due to their contracts ending or leave. In total, 424 final questionnaires were received, meeting the 400 target and achieving a response rate of 39%. Data was weighted by local authority, type, and size of club.

A separate online survey was sent to the coordinators in each of the 151 LAs. This covered implementation, delivery models, training and support, types of club, and joint working and learning. Fieldwork ran from 6th to 17th September. In total, 116 final questionnaires were received. Data was not weighted due to the large proportion of responses.

1.3.1.2 Impact evaluation

A feasibility study conducted at the start of the evaluation established that the most suitable methodology for the impact evaluation was a single point in time online family survey, with separate parent/carer and child sections to be completed by a random sample of FSM-eligible families in certain local authorities.

Sixteen LAs were selected for the study, based on the number of 5-18-year-olds in each area and the proportion of children eligible for FSMs. The National Pupil Database (NPD) was used to select families with children aged 5-18 who were FSM-eligible, with sampling taking account of the number of eligible children in each household, the LA, Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) decile, ethnicity, and SEND. The final sample comprised of 50,000 addresses: 35,000 in the main sample and 15,000 in a reserve sample.

Key questions focussed on parents/carers and children being asked to recall the extent that they took part in certain activities during the holidays, both when attending clubs and on non-club days. The parent/carer element lasted ten minutes and the child element lasted five minutes. Questions covered similar topics to allow triangulation, given that the survey relied on recall of actions in the holidays. The family survey questionnaire was cognitively tested and amended before being launched. All 35,000 families in the main sample were posted an invitation to take part in the 15-minute online survey, with fieldwork starting on 9th September. Following monitoring, the reserve sample was issued on 30th September, with fieldwork closing on 18th October. Final data was cleaned, checked, and weighted so that the achieved sample of 4,996 parental surveys (559 HAF users and 4,437 non-HAF users) and 3,949 child surveys (469 HAF users and 3,703 non-HAF users) matched the profile of the 50,000 families in the final sample and the 16 selected LAs. One child was selected at random from each family as the 'focus child' with parents/carers instructed to answer all questions in relation to that child and to ensure the 'focus child' answered the child questions in the questionnaire.

Respondents were allocated to either the treatment (child attended HAF club) or comparison (child did not attend HAF club) groups depending on their response to initial questions on holiday club participation. Options for these questions were both cognitively tested and discussed with coordinators so that they would be as accurate as possible. As the sample was drawn from FSM eligible children in the NPD, both treatment and comparison groups solely contained relevant families. An Inverse Probability Weighting (IPW) approach was taken to ensure the treatment and comparator groups had a similar profile. Analysis concentrated on comparing results across treatment and comparator groups. Primary outcomes on physical activity and healthy food eating (child outcomes reported by parent)

were based on a Generalised Least Squares regression model, with this showing the estimated difference between the groups with p values calculated (see Appendix C). The IPW and all final analysis was conducted in R.

1.3.1.3 Management Information (MI)

This report also presents MI data from local authority coordinators from the October Delivery Report, a census of all local authorities conducted by the DfE at the end of the summer holidays, covering implementation, perceived impact, costs, and quality standards. This is referred to throughout as the “ODR”.

1.3.2 Data Limitations

As with any large-scale evaluation, there are several data limitations which should be considered.

- Interviews with children tended to be relatively short, particularly where children were young. Feedback from children tended to be relatively general and focused on overall enjoyment and satisfaction rather than providing more detailed information.
- For the process evaluation, fieldwork was only conducted with those involved in HAF. This meant that views of parents/carers, children and club staff who were involved in HAF could not be compared to those who were not involved.
- For the impact evaluation, while most Family Survey respondents completed the survey fairly soon after the end of the holidays, this was not the case for everyone. There is a strong possibility this may have affected recall, particularly if children only took part in clubs at the start of the holiday.
- The lack of a pre-measure for the Family Survey (due to resource, time and methodological constraints) meant that matching treatment and comparison groups for the impact evaluation required using data from parental recall of healthy behaviours prior to the holiday.
- Certain parent/carer questions in the Family Survey required parents/carers to know details of provision at holiday clubs, with this particularly affecting questions on food provision (see Chapter 3). Parents/carers taking part in cognitive testing stated they had good knowledge and recall but this cannot be guaranteed and is likely to have affected the quality of answers. This was partially ameliorated by using similar questions from children to triangulate results.
- Parents had to identify whether or not their child had attended a HAF club (using question wording tested with parents and coordinators). In cases where parents did not know, the club name was checked against a list of HAF clubs, although it was not possible to undertake more detailed validation.

While these limitations are important and should be taken into consideration, the overall evaluation provides a solid basis for assessing the impact of HAF and how the programme has worked. In particular, the Family Survey was completed by many respondents, and a

very large number of interviews were conducted with coordinators, staff, parents/carers, and children.

1.4 Report structure

The remainder of this report covers:

- Attendance and activities (Chapter 2). The number and type of children attending the programme, what HAF clubs offered children and families, the level of demand, key factors affecting take-up by eligible families, and activities provided.
- Outcomes and impact (Chapter 3). The extent that the programme improved outcomes for children, parents/carers, local organisations, and the effect on the local area and labour market.
- Coordinator and provider models and approaches (Chapter 4). The type of approach adopted by coordinators and providers, the history of HAF, views on the application process, FSM eligibility, HAF budget, mapping activities, the way that providers and clubs were selected, engaged, and approaches to the 4x4x4 model.
- HAF implementation and effectiveness (Chapter 5). Covering what worked well and less well in terms of marketing, booking, registration and monitoring, training and support, policies and procedures, and inclusive provision.
- Sustainability (Chapter 6). Steps taken to ensure sustainability and the likelihood of running HAF in the future.
- Conclusions and recommendations (Chapter 7).

Chapter 2 - Attendance and activities

This chapter covers overall attendance figures, duration of attendance, and the approaches taken to offering and targeting eligible participants. It also provides an overview of the activities offered in HAF clubs, before outlining the main facilitators and barriers to attendance.

Summary

Coordinators reported that almost three-quarters of a million (730,000) children attended a HAF summer holiday club in person, of whom 616,000 were funded by HAF and 498,000 were eligible for free school meals. The majority of attendees were primary school aged (76%). Data from parents found that children attended for 9.6 days on average in the summer holidays (n=534). Of those attending, 70% had not attended HAF or similar free provision before, suggesting that HAF successfully expanded provision. The pandemic did not appear to have a negative effect on the attendance of HAF funded children, with clubs being as likely to say the pandemic had a positive effect on provision as it had a negative effect.

The majority of coordinators (89%) and clubs (72%) had referral systems in place, with referrals coming mostly from schools (81%) and social services (44%). Clubs offered provision for a range of ages, with most provision targeted to primary age children. Family survey data found that just under a quarter (23%) of HAF attendees were recorded as having SEND in the National Pupil Database (NPD) –higher than the 9% reported by coordinators.

There was a mixed pattern in the extent to which clubs offered certain types of activity, with almost all clubs reporting they provided physical activities every day (89%), around half (51%) providing enriching activities every day, and 33% providing nutritional education every day.

Children mainly attended HAF clubs so as to try new and engaging activities. Most clubs (62%) offered nutritional education for parents/carers. Parents/carers were also widely supported through signposting to other services. The main facilitators to attendance were delivery at convenient and familiar locations, friendly staff, and the ability to meet the needs of children with SEND. The main barriers included lack of awareness or interest in the clubs. In total, around a third (34%) of parents said that they weren't aware of clubs they could attend.

Our recommendations for improving attendance include working to engage secondary school age children by offering a diverse range of activities, and developing a communications and marketing strategy.

2.1 Attendance and attendee characteristics

- Coordinators reported almost three-quarters of a million (730,000) children attended a HAF summer holiday club in person, of which 616,000 children's places were directly funded by HAF and 498,000 were eligible for benefits-related FSM
- On average, HAF attendees spent just under 10 days at the club (9.6 days)

2.1.1 Number of attendees

Self-reported data from coordinators in the ODR showed that **approximately 730,000 children attended a HAF summer holiday club** in person across the 151 LAs. Population data based on the ODR suggests that one third of the children eligible for FSM across the 151 LAs attended a HAF summer club. This percentage varied by LA, with 27 LAs having between 6-15% of their total population eligible for FSM attending a HAF club, and five LAs having between 70-84% attending. Further detail on participants' age can be found in section 2.2.1.

In total, 66 of the 151 ODR respondents stated that they offered some remote provision, with 36 saying that they offered this as a direct result of COVID-19 (the remaining 30 wanted to offer some remote provision,³ regardless of COVID-19). Of those LAs that offered some remote provision as a direct result of COVID-19 (n=36), the vast majority (n=33) described the **impact of the pandemic as limited**, with only a single or a small number of holiday clubs affected. One LA said the impact was moderate, with up to half of all holiday clubs affected, while two LAs reported that over half of all holiday clubs were affected. In total, LAs reported that 108,000 children were supported remotely over the summer holidays (see Chapter 2). Of these 108,000, 89% were eligible for FSM (consisting of 58% primary school children and 31% secondary school children). Of the 11% who were supported remotely and were not eligible for FSM, 8% were primary school children and 3% were secondary school children.

2.1.2 Eligibility

The ODR shows that of the 730,000 children who attended HAF summer holiday clubs, **84% (616,000) had their place at the club directly funded via the HAF programme**. This included funding for children eligible for free school meals, as well as 15% for vulnerable, non-free school meal eligible children. Additionally, LAs reported using funding beyond the HAF grant to offer places to an even greater number of children who weren't eligible to be funded via HAF funding, for example those who were identified as vulnerable but whose place LAs were unable to cover with the HAF funding.

³ Some of the remote provision may have been funded by the LA rather than through HAF

The club survey asked what proportion of attendees had places funded by HAF. More than four in ten respondents (42%) said all attendees were HAF funded, 18% said more than three quarters, but not all, were HAF funded, 13% said between half and three quarters were HAF funded, 16% said between one quarter and half were HAF funded, and 10% said less than one quarter were HAF funded (n=388). These results generally back up the data reported in the ODR that 84% of attendees were HAF funded, with the slightly lower levels suggested by with the club survey, potentially due to the club survey only covering certain local authorities.

According to data collected from all areas in the ODR, 498,000 (81%) of HAF-funded attendees were eligible for FSM, with the **vast majority of clubs in the club survey (89%) feeling that HAF had a 'large positive' or 'positive' impact** on the number of free school meal eligible children attending their club.

2.1.2.1 Open access and targeted provision

Based on the club survey, **most clubs (58%) were open to all children** (including children whose families were paying for places), while 38% were only open to children eligible for FSM or vulnerable children who clearly needed the provision. A small proportion (3%) were open only to specific groups, such as children with SEND, Children Looked After (CLA) and accommodated (n=424). When asked to note how they may have targeted children,⁴ the majority of clubs (70%) actively targeted FSM eligible or other vulnerable children. Four in ten (41%) targeted everyone, and 14% targeted specific groups of children such as children with SEND(n=424).

Clubs used their specific HAF-funding to provide places to a wide variety of children. As expected, almost all clubs (99%) used HAF-funding to provide places for FSM-eligible children. Two-thirds of clubs (65%) also used HAF-funding to provide places for children with SEND, 47% for looked after or accommodated children, and 20% for other groups of children (n=423), in line with HAF funding arrangements (either as these children were also eligible for FSM or were eligible using the 15% funding arrangement to support other vulnerable children).

In the case study areas, there was a mix of clubs delivering HAF only for FSM eligible children and clubs delivering a blended offer that provided both HAF-funded and paid-for places. Coordinators who chose to deliver a blended offer often wanted to enable children to attend with their friends, regardless of FSM status.

“We've been able to listen to parents so [...] children could go with their friends to the same provision, regardless of whether their friend is eligible for Free School Meals or not and, for me, that was important. Friendships are important for

⁴ Respondents were allowed to select multiple answers and therefore the total does not add to 100%

children to maintain, especially given COVID, and how that has impacted on friendships and children's' friendship groups.” – *Coordinator*

In addition to supporting children eligible for FSM, HAF summer clubs were able to use up to 15% of their HAF funding to support **other vulnerable children**. Around three quarters (74%) of LAs used this flexibility. Case study data showed that additional groups commonly supported included children with SEND, CLA, young carers, and children living in areas of high deprivation. LAs also reported offering provision to children experiencing poor mental health, those who had a family member in prison, and refugees. Clubs sometimes provided specifically tailored activities for children considered to be at risk from exploitation and domestic violence, those known to the criminal justice system, and looked after children, to give them positive activities and role models.

“[The LA used] the 15% [to engage children] that we feel would be safer in a club than at home.” - *Coordinator*

One LA used the funding to consider requests for children to attend HAF with a friend who was not eligible for FSM. Local partnerships helped to meet the needs of different community groups, e.g., a rugby club offered bespoke provision for a local Bulgarian population.

Despite the eligibility flexibility, the case study coordinators stated frequently that there were vulnerable children who did not meet thresholds for FSM eligibility. For example, households with domestic violence, some parents/carers in receipt of universal credit, and households experiencing in-work poverty. In some areas the coordinators were able to use the 15% to reach these children. However, some clubs were delivering at capacity and could not offer spaces to all the children they considered vulnerable. Conversely, LA teams reported that some children who were eligible, particularly those of secondary school age, did not want to attend HAF without friends (who were not eligible for FSM).

In some areas providers had to turn away children who were not eligible for FSM, and in some areas parents/carers complained (including publicly on social media) that working parents/carers who were struggling were not eligible for HAF. These parents/carers made requests for HAF to be open to all children (not just FSM-eligible children), and to younger children (under 5 years).

Because of these issues, coordinator teams highlighted a potential risk that HAF could create divisions among local families. One suggestion was that DfE could give LAs permission to design their own eligibility criteria in order to reach a wider range of children who were known to be vulnerable but not necessarily eligible for FSMs.

2.1.2.2 Referrals

Virtually all coordinators (89%) and clubs (72%) said that they **had referral systems in place** where organisations could refer eligible children and families to the HAF programme. Most coordinators said they accepted referrals from schools/colleges (61%) and social

services (61%), followed by referrals from youth services (50%). Over a third (39%) accepted referrals from charities/VCSOs, with a similar proportion (34%) accepting them from public health officials. LAs reported that they also took referrals from the police (22%) and other organisations (28%), including other LAs, Local Resilience Forums and self-referrals. This data fits with evidence from clubs that they were linking with different organisations in the run-up to HAF, with more than three quarters (79%) making links with local schools, and two thirds (65%) making links with local services, such as children’s centres, libraries, and local parks (n=417).

While data from coordinators shows the overall systems or agreements that were in place at an LA level, data from the club survey shows the types of organisations from which clubs actually received referrals. This shows that **clubs mainly received referrals from schools, colleges, or other educational establishments (81%), or from social services (44%),** with some accepting referrals from other holiday clubs (23%) or other organisations (9%), including some from local charities (n=277).

A minor theme was that assessing eligibility from referrals and in general could prove challenging. One coordinator who was not in an LA said they did not have access to FSM data from their LA and had to trust that parents/carers were honest about their children’s FSM eligibility. In another area, when parents/carers registered through providers, providers sent the booking details to the coordinator who ran eligibility checks. Other approaches to checking eligibility included asking families to state whether they were FSM eligible when booking activities, getting referrals from schools and local community organisations, and targeting children that providers knew to be FSM eligible. One case study area offered HAF to everyone and did not target FSM eligible children.

2.1.3 Duration of attendance

On average, children in the sample **attended HAF for 9.6 days** during the summer holidays (n=534), with attendance generally being higher for primary school age children than those of secondary school age, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Attendance (days) by age

Days attended HAF clubs	Primary school age	Secondary school age
More than 10 days	32%	16%
Seven to 10 days	38%	36%
Six or fewer days	31%	49%

Source: Family survey. Base: 534

Parents were asked how many hours their children typically attended on the days that they attended the club. Table 2 shows the number of hours spent at clubs on the days children attended, with more than half (54%) of children typically attending for a greater number of

hours per day than suggested in the 4x4x4 model:⁵ including 40% attending for 5-6 hours per day and a further 14% attending for 7+ hours per day. There was feedback from some parents/carers that they wanted sessions to run for longer so their children could increase their participation.

Table 3: Hours typically spent at clubs on attendance days⁶

No. of hours spent at club	% of children attending
More than seven	14%
Five to six	40%
Three to four	36%
Two or fewer	6%
Could not remember	3%

Source: Family survey. Base: 533

As noted in section 4.8 (4x4x4 model and implementation), 70% of LAs and 70% of clubs said they were able to offer a place at a HAF club for four hours a day, four days a week, for four weeks. A higher percentage of clubs (78%) offered at least 64 hours of provision over the summer holidays (the equivalent number of hours to a 4x4x4 approach) through, for example, running for three weeks but opening for more than four hours a day.

2.1.3.1 Overall demand and the effects of COVID-19 on demand

The majority (56%) of the 402 clubs surveyed were able to provide sessions for every child entitled to FSM who wanted them and had additional available sessions, while 22% were able to provide sessions for all eligible children who wanted them but had no additional sessions available. An additional 22% had to turn some FSM-eligible children away. This suggests there was some unmet demand at a sizeable minority of clubs.

Nearly one third (32%) of clubs surveyed who had run HAF prior to summer 2021 said the number of children attending their club through HAF-funded places decreased considerably or slightly because of the pandemic, a similar proportion (28%) said they stayed the same, and the remaining 40% said numbers increased slightly or considerably (n=209). As mentioned below, the increase may be due to people feeling that HAF clubs were a safe place to begin to socialise again.

Large clubs (those with attendance above the median) formed a higher proportion (60%) of those reporting an increase in attendance due to the pandemic compared to a decrease (44%). Together, these findings suggest **the pandemic may not have had a notably negative effect on attendance of HAF funded children**, and may have had a slight positive effect although it is difficult to be definitive due to the self-reported nature of the data and as changes in attendance due to the pandemic may have led to some clubs becoming

⁵ The 4x4x4 model assumes that children might attend for 4 hours per day, 4 days per week, for 4 weeks over the summer holidays.

⁶ Data does not add to 100% due to rounding

classified as large or as small. Some parents/carers were still nervous about socialising, but many felt HAF was a safe place to start re-socialising their children, as noted below in the paragraph on attitudes towards COVID-19.

Among providers who were interviewed, **reported levels of attendance varied** from almost no no-shows and lower uptake than expected to providers struggling with high numbers of children booking and not attending. There was a perception among providers that although parents/carers highly valued the free provision, families were not aware that sessions were limited, places could not be taken by another child at short-notice and that food could end up being wasted. Where they had the capacity, providers called or texted families when children did not show up. In a few areas, children lost their HAF place if they missed several consecutive sessions. In one area, the coordinator paid providers for each HAF participant attending as a way of encouraging providers to follow up with families of children who did not attend. A strong theme was that areas ended up offering more spaces and for longer periods than they had originally planned because demand was higher than expected (section 4.8). There was a perception (backed by FSM data)⁷ that the number of children entitled to FSM increased during the pandemic, and families were not always aware of the support available or felt embarrassed asking for help.

“The pandemic has made things worse as there are lots of new families coming through who are struggling to support their children. It was heart-breaking doing some of the conversations at sign up. We had parents saying they felt that they were failing because they can’t afford to give their children the basic necessities in life.” – *Lead provider*

Parents’ attitudes towards COVID-19 differed considerably. A few families at case study clubs expressed concerns about the safety of clubs, especially those with clinically vulnerable children or children with SEND who may have been shielding. However, many parents felt HAF clubs provided a safe place for children to get used to socialising again, with this potentially increasing attendance. Coordinators and providers talked about HAF’s role in helping to restore a sense of normality and said it was very important for children struggling with anxiety and other mental health issues to have fun and socialise.

Nearly all (98%) clubs planned COVID-19 safe delivery approaches in case these were needed. Because of COVID-19, more activities were delivered **outdoors** than may otherwise have been the case, for example in parks, school outside spaces and outreach work. COVID-19 also meant many providers limited the number of children they allowed to attend or kept them in bubbles.

⁷ The proportion FSM eligible children increased from 17.3% in January 2020 to 20.8% in January 2021 (<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>)

2.1.4 Prior attendance

Of the children attending HAF (n=559), 26% of them had previously attended a holiday club during the summer holidays where some sessions were provided to them for free, while 70% had not (the remaining 4% could not remember). This suggests that **HAF reached substantial proportions of children who had not had the opportunity or wished to take part in similar provision before.**

2.2 Attendee characteristics

- Most clubs catered generally for primary school age children, with 76% of all attendees being primary school aged and 24% being secondary school aged
- Two-thirds of attendees lived in one of the 30% most deprived areas
- Just under a quarter (23%) of those attending had SEND
- Around half of parents/carers whose children attended HAF (49%) were in full or part-time employment (16% full-time, 33% part-time)

2.2.1 Age

Table 4 shows the relationship between the youngest and oldest ages allowed to attend clubs, as reported in the club survey.

Table 4: Youngest and oldest ages allowed at clubs

	Oldest age				
Youngest age	7-11 years	12-15 years	16-18 years	18+ years	Total
Under 5 years	8%	10%	6%	2%	27%
5-7 years	17%	19%	19%	1%	56%
8-12 years	0%	4%	11%	1%	17%
Total	25%	33%	37%	5%	100%

Source: Ecorys club survey, 2021. Base size: clubs providing both minimum and maximum age (n=423). Percentages may not sum due to rounding.

This data shows that **clubs most commonly had a starting age of 5-7 years (56%)**, with these clubs split fairly evenly between those with oldest ages of 7-11 years (17%), 12-15 years (19%), and 16-18 years (19%). Most commonly clubs **had an oldest age of 12-18 years (69%)**. This suggests that clubs covered a wide range of ages, and while most provision covered primary age, only one quarter (25%) excluded secondary school aged children (over 11). It is likely that provision over the age of 16 was for young people with SEND or paid for places, as HAF only covered school-aged children (5-16 years).

The generally younger focus of clubs reported in the club survey (Table 4 above) is supported by coordinator data from the ODR, which showed that 76% of all attendees were primary school aged and 24% secondary school age (Table 5).

Table 5: Attendance by funding source and age

	Primary school aged	Secondary school aged	Total
Total attendees	556,000 (76%)	174,000 (24%)	730,000 (100%)
HAF funded	464,000 (64%)	152,000 (21%)	616,000 (84%)
Non-HAF funded	92,000 (13%)	22,000 (3%)	114,000 (16%)
Eligible for FSM	382,000 (52%)	116,000 (16%)	498,000 (68%)
SEND	48,000 (7%)	19,000 (3%)	67,000 (9%)

Source: ODR, 2021. Numbers are rounded to the nearest thousand. Base: total 730,000 face -to-face attendees from 151 LAs. SEND includes SEND children who were eligible for FSM. As LAs could use up to 15% of their funding to provide free places for children not eligible for FSM, eligible for FSM does not add up to HAF funded.

The family survey looked at a sample of families across sixteen LAs, capturing answers from both HAF summer club attendees and those who had not attended a HAF club. Results showed that **children attending HAF across these sample LAs were on average 10 years old** (n=557).

2.2.2 Gender

Family survey results showed that **54% of HAF attendees were boys** and 46% were girls (n=529). Of those who didn't attend a HAF club 50% were boys and 49% were girls. A minor theme among providers interviewed was that the focus on delivering sports activities attracted more boys than girls, particularly at secondary school age.

2.2.3 Ethnicity

According to the family survey, **most children attending in the family survey areas were ethnically White-British** (53%), with smaller representation reported for Black African (9%), Pakistani (5%), Bangladeshi (5%), White and Black Caribbean (5%), and less than 5% from other ethnic groups (n=533). These proportions are very similar to the survey responses for children who did not attend HAF (51% being White-British). In the case study areas, one coordinator had linked HAF providers into their wider LA race action plan, and had specialist BAME providers, so that the offer would be inclusive to all ethnic groups.

2.2.4 SEND

Just under a quarter of children attending HAF (23%) were recorded as having special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) in the National Pupil Database (NPD), from which the family survey sample was drawn . The proportion SEND was the same for those in the family survey who did not attend HAF (23%).

The family survey data records a greater (23%) proportion of children attending HAF as having SEND than the ODR, which reports that 9% of children attending HAF had SEND

(67,000). This could be due to the specific family survey areas targeting this group more although this was not mentioned in interviews and these areas were sampled to be as representative of England as possible⁸ – as a result, it is likely that the ODR results underestimate the number of SEND children attending HAF, given that the SEND status recorded in the family survey is based on robust data from the NPD that not all LAs or clubs will necessarily have.

2.2.5 Deprivation

Two thirds (67%) of families in the family survey with a child attending HAF had a home address in one of the 30% **most deprived areas** (last 3 deciles) on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (n=533). This confirms that HAF had successfully reached families living in deprived areas.

We can assess whether HAF reached proportionally more people who lived in deprived areas than would be expected given the targeting of FSM-eligible participants by comparing deprivation levels for HAF families to non-HAF families. This shows that similar levels of both groups (67% for HAF compared with 69% for non-HAF) had an address in the 30% of the most deprived areas. This suggests that HAF successfully targeted people living in deprived areas, but this was largely due to the eligibility criteria as opposed to any specific geographic targeting. This may have been expected given the focus of the programme on ensuring that all eligible children could engage, regardless of where they lived.

2.2.6 Parental age and employment

The family survey showed that most parents/carers whose children attended HAF were between the ages of 30-44 years old (67%), with 5% under 30 and 28% aged 45 and older (n=533). Almost half of parents/carers attending HAF (49%) reported that they were engaging in full-time or part-time employment (with 16% in full-time work and 33% in part-time work), while 19% were unemployed (and looking for work) and 24% economically inactive (not employed and not looking for work). The remaining 8% were either retired or in full time education.

A comparison to those who did not attend HAF shows a very similar breakdown across both age and work status, with 64% of parents/carers aged between the ages of 30-44 years old (n=4,464). Almost half (49%) were in employment, (with 20% in full-time work and 29% in part-time work), 18% were unemployed (and looking for work) and 27% were economically inactive (not employed and not looking for work) (n=4,464). The remaining 7% were either retired or in full time education.⁹

⁸ There may possibly be response bias in the family survey results if parents who had children with SEND and attended HAF were relatively more or less likely to take part in the survey than other HAF parents

⁹ Figures do not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table 6: Parental age and work status, HAF and non-HAF

Age	HAF parents	Non-HAF parents
Under 30	5%	6%
30-44	67%	64%
45+	28%	30%
Work status	HAF parents	Non-HAF parents
Employed full-time	16%	20%
Employed part-time	33%	29%
Unemployed looking for work	19%	18%
Economically inactive	24%	27%
In full time education or retired	8%	7%

Source: Family survey. Base: HAF (n=533), non-HAF (n=4,464).

2.3 Activities

- Almost all clubs reported that they provided physical activities every day (89%), around half (51%) provided enriching activities¹⁰ every day, and 33% provided nutritional education every day
- Activities were largely tailored to the specific needs of participants, often in terms of age but also other characteristics, e.g., SEND status
- Qualitative research suggested that children and parents welcomed the range of activities available
- Nearly all clubs (97%) stated that they provided information and support to parents/carers, including two-thirds (69%) signposting them to relevant services

This section of the report outlines the scale of HAF club provision, the range of activities on offer, and what motivated children to take part. About half of all summer clubs (51%) were run by voluntary and charity sector organisations (VCSOs) with the rest run by private organisations (22%), schools (15%), LAs (6%), or other organisations (6%). This represented a similar profile of club types to that seen at Easter 2021, suggesting that any scale-up in Summer did not require significant increased involvement of certain types of providers. Coordinators were asked how many providers were involved with HAF, with the term provider referring to the organisation running the club. Feedback from certain areas suggested that some providers delivered multiple clubs. Based on the coordinator post

¹⁰ Examples of enriching activities provided in the club survey were putting on a play, drumming workshops; or experiences such as a nature walk, visiting a city farm.

summer survey (n=112), 6% of areas had between 3-10 providers, just over a third (35%) had 11-30 providers, 29% had 31-50, 15% had 51-70, with the remaining (14%) having more than 70 providers.

Coordinators, providers, and staff interviewed in the 10 case study areas said clubs tended to offer a **variety** of activities to respond to children's needs and interests, including a **mix of structured and less structured** sessions for different age groups. There were clubs that focused on one activity (e.g., football) but most offered a mix of sports and enriching activities. Providers often adapted delivery in response to children's reactions or gave children a range of activities to choose from.

"My kids really like interacting with the staff here. The staff are down to earth, they are really friendly. They also really value the opinion of the children." - *Parent*

Clubs aimed to give children opportunities to take part in many different activities and try things they had not done before.

"We managed to get [clubs] across the vast majority of the [area]. We got all different sorts of activities, there was drama, there was sports, there was more education, there was one older nursery where kids were just playing with clay and sort of musical instruments. We had pretty much everything that we could think of, and for different ages as well. We had a club for everyone from like 4 to 17." – *Coordinator*

Providers and staff described making efforts so the programme was **inclusive** so that all children, including those with SEND, would feel welcome (see Chapter 5).

Trying new engaging activities was one of the **main factors that parents/carers and children said motivated children** to attend. Also appealing to parents/carers were clubs that matched their child's talents (e.g., music, sports). Another important reason for attendance was to **have fun**. Children generally thought HAF would be exciting and ward off boredom in the summer. They liked being able to attend with siblings or friends and said this made new clubs and activities less daunting. Parents/carers frequently said they wanted their children to **develop their social skills** and were keen for their children to meet new people. Parents/carers with a disability or children with SEND wanted their other children to be able to have fun, play with friends and get respite from their caring responsibilities. **Respite** for parents/carers and carers of children with SEND in particular was also an important motivating factor.

A strong incentive among parents/carers interviewed was that **HAF offered free access to summer holiday activities** that were not affordable for all. The provision of free **lunch was also a common draw**. As some parents/carers explained, choosing to register their children for free HAF provision helped to free up their limited finances for weekend activities and household costs. There was however a perception among providers that free

sessions were sometimes less valued than paid-for provision, despite the provision being high-quality (see Chapter 5).

2.3.1 Physical activity

Clubs were required to provide activities that met the UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines¹¹ daily. This required at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity on average for all days across the week, involving a variety of types and intensity of activity, and minimising sedentary time. Nearly nine in 10 clubs surveyed (89%) offered physical activities every day, 5% offered them most days, 3% offered them some days, and 2% did not offer them (n=421).

Much of the physical activity delivered in the case studies was delivered outdoors, with children spending a large part of the day on their feet running, jumping, and playing. Clubs offered a wide range of **active play**, including relay games, water games, Zumba, circus skills, dodgeball, different types of dances, obstacle courses, inflatables, and trampolines.

There was a **strong focus on providing a variety of sports** in many clubs, including football, rugby, badminton, basketball, cricket, tennis, swimming, gymnastics, climbing, volleyball, athletics and more. At times, providers and staff started the day with physical activity sessions and warm-up activities. A common theme was that providers tried to expose children to sports they would not usually practice, for example organising 'mini-Olympics'.

"I play rugby and football, so have tried to do activities based around those, and we have just had a mini-Olympics putting them all into teams, with certificates and medals." – *Staff member*

2.3.2 Enriching activities

Holiday clubs were expected to provide 'fun and enriching activities that gave children opportunities to develop new skills or knowledge, consolidate existing skills and knowledge',¹² and try out new experiences. More than half of all clubs (51%) that responded to the survey offered enriching activities every day, a further 15% offered them most days, 21% offered them some days, and 13% did not offer them (n=420). The examples of enriching activities provided in the survey deliberately excluded physical activities (following definitions used in the standard contractual agreements between DfE and LAs), making it likely that clubs that did not offer enriching activities were very focused on physical activity and sport.

The case study interviews found that **the enriching activities varied greatly across clubs**. There were arts, crafts, pottery, mask-making, drawing, painting, music (singing,

¹¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/832868/uk-chief-medical-officers-physical-activity-guidelines.pdf

¹² This definition of enriching activities is taken from the grant determination letter

playing instruments like guitar, piano and drums), reading, storytelling, magicians, science sessions and an inflatable obstacle course. Other examples included themed days (such as fancy dress), nature activities, trips to local attractions (e.g., the seaside) and activities like litter picks, fire-building, putting on musicals, and producing films. A small number of clubs delivered themed activities each week (e.g., drama, adventure, animals), which involved a mix of physical and enriching activities.

A main theme from providers was using engaging activities to develop **teambuilding**, including both group games and team sports, to help children get to know each other and develop teamworking skills. Staff members said they paid attention to the group dynamics, appointing children who were quicker to learn specific tasks as “assistants” and encouraging them to help those who were struggling.

In a small number of the case study areas, coordinators and providers offered activities aimed at directly supporting children’s **mental health** and wellbeing. There were sessions on understanding and talking about emotions, drama, wellness sessions, equine therapy and a therapy dog designed to help reduce anxiety, and support from empowerment coaches. Activities such as yoga and guided mediation were sometimes used to bring energy levels down at the end of the day.

2.3.3 Nutritional education

Providers were expected to include an element of nutritional education each day aimed at improving the knowledge and awareness of healthy eating for children. These did not need to be formal learning activities and could include activities such as getting children involved in food preparation and cooking, growing fruit and vegetables, and taste tests. **One third of clubs surveyed (33%) offered nutritional education to children every day**, a further 27% offered it most club days and three in 10 (30%) offered it some club days. One in 10 (10%) did not offer nutritional education (n=411).

One approach that was taken was delivering **direct nutritional education** sessions, including talks about how food fuels the body, food groups, and learning how to read food labels. Children played games such as food word associations, healthy food word searches and quizzes, and drawing or colouring in healthy foods. Staff modelled healthy eating behaviours and discussed the food they were eating with children, taking a less directly educational approach than may have been taken in school.

A separate approach was using food or cooking as a way of developing **nutritional education indirectly**. Where clubs built in nutritional education, they commonly offered sessions on how to **grow food**, and involved children in **cooking**, for example making pizza, fruit kebabs, paninis, or smoothies, which were new experiences for some children. A theme among staff interviewed was that they cooked simple food in these nutritional education sessions so the children could make meals again at home with their parents/carers.

2.3.4 Engaging older children

Clubs took different approaches to **engaging older children**, who tended to be less frequent attenders compared to younger children (see previous section). This included offering aerobics, High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) classes and games, as well as giving them passes to use the gym and pool at the local leisure centre. A minor theme among providers was that older children were more interested in sport than in other activities.¹³ Some staff reported reaching more older boys than older girls, particularly for sports provision with one sports provider linking this to wider issues around female participation in sports.

LAs coordinators and providers felt that a **major barrier to attendance for secondary school-aged children was that they preferred to be with friends** (who were not FSM eligible and therefore not able to attend HAF) rather than at a HAF club. They also felt that older age groups may have been more reluctant to engage in structured activities. One approach to involving older children was to give them mentoring roles for younger children or run leadership courses that offered qualifications.

“We're running a Level 2 activity leadership course for Key Stage 4 young people. [...] They do a load of physical activity or some other things, but they also gain a qualification, so they are volunteering on programs later in the week. [...] For 15–16-year-olds, it's really not cool to say: 'I'm going to a camp', but if they're going to the camp to actually work in it, that for me is learning and development and enrichment”. – *Coordinator*

2.3.5 Activities for parents/carers

Parents/carers were not always involved in HAF activities, with activities generally focusing on children only. There were several reasons for this: clubs were not used to delivering activities for families, there were challenges around COVID-19 restrictions (see Chapter 2), and there were extra logistical requirements if parents/carers participated, most notably around providing extra food.

Signposting

Holiday clubs were expected to provide information, signposting or referrals to other services and support that would benefit the children who attended and their families. It was expected that this could include sessions provided by Citizen's Advice, school nurses, dentists or other healthcare practitioners, family support services or children's services, housing support officers, Jobcentre Plus and organisations providing financial education.

Based on the club survey, 97% of clubs stated that they provided information and support to parents/carers, and nearly seven in ten (69%) signposted them to relevant services, for

¹³ Referred to as 'enriching activities' during data collection

example, health, employment, and education. More than half (54%) offered information on nutrition, 41% on buying, preparing, or cooking affordable healthy food and 18% on food budgeting. Additionally, 41% offered information on other relevant issues, for example, health, employment, and education, and 3% provided other support, including SEND identification support and parent/carer support groups (n=367) (see Chapter 3).

Qualitative research found that generally, the case study **clubs focused their support to parents/carers on signposting** them to other services, such as food banks, family hubs, wellbeing organisations, CV writing workshops, or volunteering opportunities. Nearly six in ten (58%) clubs found providing signposting and referrals for families very or quite easy, compared to 30% who found it neither difficult nor easy, and 12% who found it very or quite difficult. There was little evidence in case studies that direct learning sessions or support was offered consistently. **Coordinators tended to feel basic signposting was the most that providers could realistically offer**, given their available resources.

“You have to decide, do you want this to be high-quality childcare provision with some additionality, or do you want it to be your all singing all dancing family provision.” – *Coordinator*

Family activities

In several cases, providers said they aimed to **support the whole family** and organised events involving parents/carers. Examples included inviting children’s authors to run workshops, running family garden days, offering transport to take part in an activity at an equestrian centre, distributing sensory activity packs, and supporting parents/carers to become more physically active, for example by providing links to YouTube videos and sharing information on healthy lifestyles.

Parents/carers in several case study areas attended events like family barbeques and celebrations to have fun together, although HAF clubs mainly focussed on children’s activities. One club encouraged parents/carers to attend events so they too could socialise and help build a sense of community.

“Get the community involved and all the local children - give pride in the community.”
– *Parent*

Food education for families and carers

The HAF guidance on food education for families and carers was that providers must include at least weekly training and advice sessions for parents/carers or other family members and that these sessions should provide advice on how to source, prepare and cook nutritious and low-cost food.

In total, 62% of clubs surveyed offered nutritional education for parents/carers, while **38% did not offer it** (n=414). Signposting to nutritional advice and information was more common. Nutritional education involved teaching about cooking, food preparation, growing fruit

and vegetables or food budgeting. Nearly one third of providers (31%) offered training and advice sessions for parents/carers, or other family members on how to source, prepare and cook nutritious and low-cost food at least once a week, 23% offered them once every two weeks or less, and **almost half (46%) did not offer them** (n=415). As children could attend more than one club, it is possible that parents/carers may have received nutritional education from other clubs even if certain clubs did not provide this HAF element.

Although nutritional education was not provided in every club, the case studies provided examples of how clubs tried to engage parents/carers in relevant activities, both in person and remotely. Examples included distributing recipe cards and nutritional information, offering online sessions on healthy shopping and meal ideas on a budget, inviting parents/carers to join their children in cooking sessions. Nutrition workshops on offer in certain areas attracted parents/carers who wanted to learn how to cook HAF food options at home at the request of their children. Club staff and families who were interviewed talked about take away resources including one example of 'meal packs' which provided ingredients to make a picnic or a full meal. Two parents/carers interviewed had attended online sessions about healthy eating offered by one club. They found the sessions a useful way of sharing ideas and experiences with other parents/carers.

A minor point was coordinators and staff mentioning **supporting parents/carers to buy groceries**, by providing ingredients or supermarket food vouchers (for example to cover the cost of food for children with SEND who would not eat at all in front of other people), or by linking them with local food pantries, where they could shop for groceries once a week. The food pantry then charged the club for the cost of the groceries. Several clubs also sent families home with food parcels which parents/carers valued, particularly those accessing food banks or using FSM vouchers, because they were able to use these for other meals or freeze the ingredients. It is possible that clubs used non-HAF sources of funding to purchase food vouchers, as HAF funding could not be used for this purpose.

2.3.6 Remote/online approaches

While activities were predominantly face-to-face, feedback from coordinators in the ODR showed that other forms of remote provision were widespread. Just over half (56%) of the 151 LAs delivering HAF used their HAF funding to offer provision that was fully face-to-face, with the remainder (44%) offering a mix of face to face and remote provision. In total 108,000 children attended some remote HAF sessions over the summer, while 730,000 attended face-to-face provision. These two groups were not mutually exclusive however, and children may have attended both remote and face-to-face provision.

Just under a quarter of all LAs (24%) offered remote sessions as a direct result of COVID-19, with reasons centring around staff shortages and children not being able to attend sessions in person, due to staff or children having COVID-19 and/or needing to self-isolate. The remaining 20% who offered remote sessions did so to extend their provision, but not as a result of COVID-19. Table 7 shows the different kinds of remote support LAs provided.

Table 7: Remote support provided

Remote support provided	LAs
Access to online content or via other methods e.g., TV	71%
Signposting to nutritional advice and information	70%
Food parcels/hampers/recipe boxes	68%
Signposting to other services	68%
Support for health and wellbeing	52%
Safe and well checks with parents/carers and children	44%
Other	11%

Source: ODR. Base: LAs providing remote support (66).

Nearly three quarters of those LAs that offered remote support provided access to online content (71%) and signposting to nutritional advice and information (70%). The ODR findings broadly align with the club survey results (see Chapter 2) which indicate that around seven in ten (71%) of all clubs signposted parents/carers to relevant services.

Just over two thirds (68%) of LAs that provided remote support provided food parcels, hampers or recipe boxes, which on average contained nine days of food. HAF also aimed to increase children and family's confidence in accessing support services from the LA, following reduced contact with services during lockdown. Online signposting to other services was also provided by around two thirds (68%) of LAs who offered remote provision, similar to the results of the club survey for signposting among all clubs (69%). Approximately half (52%) provided support for health and wellbeing. Just less than half (44%) provided safe and well checks with parents/carers and children, either by telephone or by doorstep visits. Roughly a tenth (11%) provided other support, including social media connection services, and providing secure digital devices and/or data for families.

The club survey found that when clubs supported activities remotely, they often took creative approaches, with Figure 1 providing an example of how one club adapted to remote delivery by providing meal packs and arts and craft packs for use at home.

Figure 1: Remote support approaches



2.3.7 COVID-19 preparations

While COVID-19 directly led to around a quarter (24%) of LAs providing remote services there was no evidence that the pandemic negatively affected attendance. However, there were wider ways that the pandemic impacted on delivery. Due to COVID-19, provision took a **different shape** compared to previous years. A theme among coordinators interviewed was that it was difficult to plan provision as **COVID-19 restrictions changed** between when the funding was announced and when delivery started. Additionally, HAF teams in LAs had to carry out **risk assessments** for providers and liaise with Public Health England around requirements, adding extra requirements and reducing the time available for other planning.

Many providers implemented additional precautionary measures beyond the Government requirements at the time, such as delivering activities in bubbles or limiting the total number of children who could attend. These were often implemented to increase safety and confidence in provision among families.

“We were very clear that actually we wanted this provision to be safe. There would be nothing worse for children than starting something and then because we haven't mitigated the risks, having to close it. It is much better that we do it, and we do it safely, and we do it with masks, and we do it with social distancing, and we put those mitigations in place so that it can continue, so that we're not having to then take it away from children and families.” – *Coordinator*

Case study research highlighted some occasions where COVID-19 resulted in provider, catering, and other staff shortages. One provider also said that getting children to follow basic COVID-19 safety rules, like handwashing, could be a challenge. Coordinators reported that children or families self-isolating was a barrier to some children attending. There were also examples of parents/carers who had booked holidays and did not want their children to attend HAF a week before travelling, to reduce their risk of infection, while others were not going abroad because of the pandemic and wanted their children to attend holiday clubs.

2.4 Facilitators and barriers to attendance

- The main factors encouraging attendance were being familiar with the venue, a convenient location, and the friendliness of staff
- The most common reason given for non-attendance in the family survey was a lack of awareness of clubs (34%), with a further quarter of parents (29%) citing cost as a prohibitive factor

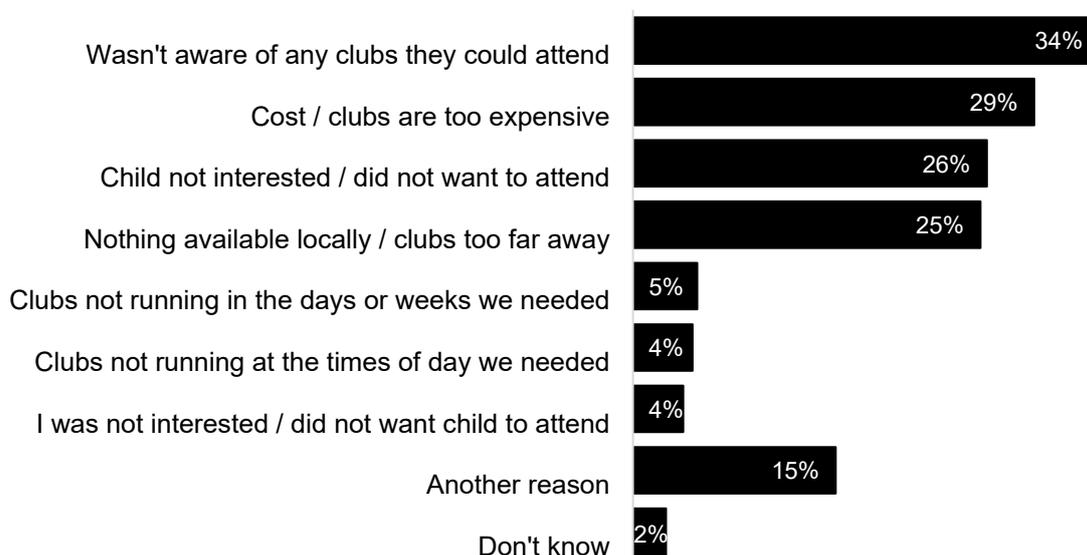
The case study interviews with coordinators, providers, children, and families found that delivering HAF clubs during the COVID-19 pandemic worked well when they were delivered under the following conditions:

- Delivered at **familiar venues** (e.g., schools, community settings) **and through known providers**, although providers noted that due to COVID-19, schools were not always able to provide venues in the summer. School-based provision also helped support children with transitions to new schools.
- Based at a **convenient location**, that was within walking distance or with good transport links. Parents/carers interviewed stressed the practical benefits of being able to share pick-ups and drop-offs with other parents/carers. In several areas, coordinators and providers said take-up was affected as some families did not travel outside of their immediate neighbourhood. A quarter of parents/carers (25%) who responded to the family survey reported that they didn't attend a club as one wasn't sufficiently close (see Figure 2). An additional minor theme outlined by providers was that some families could not afford public transport costs, with limited transport options being a particular concern in rural areas.
- Run by **friendly and approachable staff** who made children and families feel welcome. **Diversity and community representation** within staff teams made families feel comfortable and built trust. For example, one club had a member of staff who spoke Urdu and was able to translate for parents/carers.
- **Able to meet the needs of children with SEND** (see also HAF implementation and effectiveness – inclusive provision).
- Had an **effective referral system**, including advertising and marketing the programme so that children and families were aware of provision.

- Used an **effective booking system**. LAs reported fewer ‘no-shows’ when they had booking systems which could stop parents booking simultaneous activities for the same child, send email and text message reminders, and had user-friendly cancellation options. They noted that these systems required a level of organisation, access to computer and internet resources, IT literacy and English reading skills. To mitigate this barrier, some LAs and providers reported that social workers or provider staff registered children onto the booking system; others offered the option to book in person.

The family survey collected data on possible reasons why FSM-eligible children did not attend a holiday club (covering HAF and non-HAF clubs) during the summer holidays (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Reasons for non-attendance



Source: Family survey, those not attending a club (n=3865). Figures add to more than 100% because respondents were allowed to select more than one answer

The **most common reason given for non-attendance** in the family survey was a **lack of awareness of clubs** (34%). Parents/carers interviewed said poor communication and marketing were key barriers for families who simply did not know about the HAF offer (see Chapter 5).

A high proportion of respondents to the family survey reported that they did not attend as they felt holiday clubs were too expensive (29%), highlighting the continued need for free access holiday provision provided by HAF and awareness raising activities to ensure eligible families know that free HAF provision is available.

As noted in the previous section, a quarter of surveyed parents/carers (25%) felt clubs were too far away. A similar proportion reported that their child did not want to attend (26%). The case study research also found that despite the wide range of activities being available, some children decided HAF was not for them, in one case because they thought it

would be like school. Providers reported that in some cases parents/carers had booked their children onto the provision, but the children subsequently refused to attend, preferring to be at home and doing their usual activities, e.g., gaming. In addition, a small proportion of parents/carers who responded to the family survey indicated that they were not interested/ did not want their child to attend (4%).

Some additional barriers were highlighted by case study interviewees:

- **Household and practical barriers** were cited as reasons for non-attendance in the case study areas. Providers spoke about children living in ‘chaotic’ households, parents/carers forgetting they had booked sessions, particularly those with multiple children of different ages. Parents/carers experiencing mental health difficulties also found it difficult to support their child to attend regularly and manage early starts (e.g., 9am); providers said children sometimes arrived up to two hours late. Non-attendance at sessions was considered a potential safeguarding flag in some LAs. Providers were required to contact families to check-in; however, these calls were not always answered.
- **COVID-19** was another key barrier mentioned by coordinators across the case studies (although, as noted, this was balanced by evidence that the pandemic led to improved attendance in some areas). As reported earlier, some LAs and providers delivered activities remotely or created home-activity packs in anticipation of this (see Chapter 5).

Potential ways to overcome these barriers were suggested, with coordinators and providers believing non-attendance could be addressed in part by providing help with transport when needed, later start times and incentivising attendance. Some coordinators implemented measures to increase take-up where it had initially been low, for example adding provision in areas with limited attendance so that families would not have to travel outside their neighbourhood.

Chapter 3 - Outcomes and impact

This chapter explores the extent to which the programme improved outcomes for children, parents/carers, and local organisations. It concludes by considering the effect of the programme on the local area and labour market.

Summary

The impact analysis found that parents reported HAF attendees were significantly more likely to engage in physical activity than non-HAF attendees. This was true for the primary outcome of at least 30 minutes of activity (92% compared with 87%) as well as the target of at least 60 minutes which clubs were expected to deliver (77% and 67%). HAF children also reported significantly higher levels of participation in both outdoor and indoor sports and games when compared to the levels of participation among their non-HAF peers during a normal week.

No impact was detected on healthy eating when HAF attendees were compared to non-HAF attendees using parental reporting on nutrition (potentially due to recall issues), but children attending HAF were significantly more likely to feel that they ate healthy foods over the summer than their non-HAF peers.

A key outcome was that HAF enabled parents/carers' respite over the summer, with parents/carers reporting that the HAF programme's free activities and meals brought financial relief. Parents/carers of HAF attendees found it slightly easier than those of non-HAF attendees to find suitable childcare over the holidays, but the family survey showed holiday childcare remained a challenge.

Children enjoyed attending HAF, ranking their club enjoyment as 8.5 out of 10. Additionally, 81% of HAF attendees reported that the club made them feel safe, helped them be more active and make new friends, with large majorities also saying that the club made them feel more confident (77%) and that they learnt something new (71%).

The main outcomes reported by participating organisations were increased capacity, including improved policies/procedures (58%) and greater confidence running similar programmes (88%). Nearly all coordinators surveyed (99%) were very or quite satisfied with how HAF went in their area in Summer 2021 and most clubs (91%) were very or quite satisfied with their experience of running a club as part of HAF.

Our recommendations based on these findings are that clubs ensure signposting to other support is provided systematically, and links to health and employment options. LAs should draw on local support and on the steering group to increase the reach and effectiveness of signposting.

Clubs should also assess how nutritional education can best be built into ongoing delivery, including providing the opportunity to engage both children and parents in activities.

3.1 Children

- Parents reported that HAF attendees were significantly more likely to engage in physical activity than non-HAF attendees. HAF children were 5 percentage points more likely than their non-HAF counterparts to have undertaken 30 mins of exercise; and 10 percentage points more likely to have undertaken 60+ minutes of exercise.
- Children also reported significantly higher levels of participation in both outdoor and indoor sports and games than their non-HAF peers during a normal week.
- No impact was detected on healthy eating when HAF attendees were compared to non-HAF attendees using parental report (potentially due to recall issues).
- Children attending HAF were significantly more likely to feel that they ate healthy foods over the summer.
- Evidence also suggests HAF helped children feel more socially connected, taught them new things, and that they felt safe.
- Children enjoyed attending HAF, ranking their club enjoyment as 8.5 out of 10.

3.1.1 Overview

Feedback from children through surveys and interviews consistently showed that they enjoyed attending HAF clubs and found them beneficial to attend.

The family survey showed that children **enjoyed attending HAF**, giving it a score of 8.5 out of 10 for enjoyment (n=439). **HAF attendees rated clubs very positively** in terms of having fun, learning new things, feeling safe, confidence, physical activity, socialisation, and being an outlet for children to try new things and activities. Four out of every five children attending HAF reported that the holiday club made them **feel safe (82%)**, helped them be **more active (81%)**, **helped them make new friends (81%)**, and gave them a **new thing or activity to do (81%)**. Just over three-quarters (77%) also felt they were **more confident** because of attending the holiday club, and 71% reported that they **learned something new** (n=431). Very few said that HAF did not help in these areas, ranging from 6% (not helping them feel safe) to 17% (not learning something new), with the remaining respondents not knowing.

3.1.2 Increased physical activity

Evidence collected from the family survey **indicates that HAF led to an improvement in physical activity for children compared to those not attending.**

The main physical activity outcomes examined in the impact analysis were whether children took part in at least 30 minutes or 60 minutes of physical activity a day (on the basis

that a four-hour club session may contribute significantly to meeting the 60 minutes requirement). These results showed that HAF participants were statistically significantly¹⁴ more likely than non-HAF participants to take part in physical activity. The results show that parents/carers reported **HAF children were more likely to engage in at least 30 minutes of physical activity** (92%, n=501), **compared to children who did not attend HAF** (87%, n=486). This increase is particularly notable given that the high initial endorsement for engaging in this level of exercise made a five-percentage point increase more difficult than if the initial endorsement had been lower. **HAF children were also 10 percentage points more likely to engage in at least 60 minutes of activity** (77%, n=501), compared to children who did not attend HAF (67%, n=486). And **HAF children were 13 percentage points more likely to engage in more than 60 minutes of activity** (62%, n=501), compared to children who did not attend HAF (49%, n=486).

Table 8: Physical activity outcomes between HAF and non-HAF users

Physical activity outcomes	HAF users	Non-HAF users	Difference in percentage points (IPW estimates)
Physical activity (at least 30 min daily)	92%	87%	5.0***
Physical activity (at least 60 min daily)	77%	67%	9.8***
Physical activity (more than 60 min daily)	62%	49%	12.7***

Note: the symbol “***” indicates statistical significance at the 1% level

The positive participation in physical activity was backed up by evidence from the children’s survey. **Those who attended HAF had higher levels of self-reported physical activity than their non-HAF peers, both for outdoor sport and exercise** (79% compared to 53%), **and indoor sport and exercise** (64% compared to 28%).

The high levels of participation are directly connected to the large-scale physical activity provision offered by clubs. Many clubs (89%) reported that they offered at least one hour a day of moderate or vigorous physical activity every day, and an additional 5% offered it on ‘most’ club days (n=422).

“We were very, very clear with delivery partners that they need to adhere to the ‘at least 60 minutes of physical activity’ and actually it’s ...beyond the 60 minutes. It’s a very broad offer, we’ve got the traditional ones like football, basketball, running and athletics... the not-so-traditional ones like the juggling and the theatre.” – *Coordinator*

A vast majority of LAs rated their providers as being excellent or good in relation to meeting the standards on physical activity (93%). In the case study areas, children, parents/carers,

¹⁴ The impact analysis on food outcomes and physical activity report statistically significant differences only. Values from the family survey are not tested for statistical significance but are weighted with inverse probability weighting to ensure close comparisons.

and staff agreed that children had been more active than they otherwise would have been, had they not been at the clubs.

“You are barely ever inside here, you are always outside doing sports and stuff.” - *Child*

“[Child was] definitely more active than if at home.” – *Parent/carer*

Parents/carers felt HAF had led to increased physical activity which was particularly important to “get back on track” after lockdown, when children had been less active. The emphasis on physical activities during HAF was felt to have helped children improve their fitness, with one parent/carer noting that after having attended a HAF club their child no longer got out of breath on the walk to school. Children talked about wanting to keep playing new sports they had tried but did not think this would be possible if there was a cost. Through wide ranging active play, HAF was also felt to have provided families living in small or overcrowded homes with an opportunity to access child-friendly spaces and for children to exert their energies.

“We climbed trees, we did den building, we went on walks, went to the park, we went down the canal and fed the ducks last week. So, it wasn’t just sports. We had some free time too where we could get all the gymnastics stuff out.” - *Child*

3.1.3 Increased nutritional meals

Based on the club survey, more than nine clubs in ten (93%) provided at least one healthy meal (meeting the School Food Standards) every club day (n=419).

LAs rated their providers highly in terms of meeting the standards on food quality with 83% of providers rated as excellent or good, although this was not as high as for physical activity standards (93%) and enriching activities (91%).

One of the major intended outcomes from HAF was to improve nutrition, with the Theory of Change for the programme covering intermediate outcomes of increasing the proportion of children receiving nutritional meals, and ensuring that children ate more healthily over the summer. This outcome was measured in three separate ways through the family survey:

- Child having/being offered healthy foods at lunch (parental report of club days and non-club days)
- Child having unhealthy foods at lunch (parental report on summer holidays in general)
- Rating of healthiness of lunches (child report on club days and non-club days)

All three approaches compared results for those attending HAF (consumption on a day they attended HAF) with those who did not attend HAF (consumption on a normal summer day).

These three separate questions were asked to give a complete picture of nutritional intake. Parents/carers reported in cognitive testing that they knew what food the clubs served and what their children ate but this is open to bias, as is children's recall, and their perception of what counts as healthy eating. As a result, these three questions were used to assess nutritional outcomes from HAF.

The results show a complex picture. At the simplest level, children believed they had healthier lunches on club days, but parents/carers reported that their children both ate less healthy types of food and less unhealthy types of food when attending HAF. The discrepancy between child and parental findings clearly raises questions about how much the parents knew about the reality of food available at the holiday club (recall), their knowledge about 'healthy food', and the potential bias in reporting the food consumed by their child at home on days they were not attending the club. These separate questions are dealt with in turn in the remainder of this section.

Child consumption of healthy foods

Parents/carers were asked whether their child had or was offered a range of healthy foods during lunch on days they attended HAF (for parents/carers of HAF attendees) and normal summer holiday days (for parents/carers of non-HAF attendees).

Overall, there was no difference between children attending HAF and those who did not attend HAF in their consumption of fruit, wholemeal pasta or bread, or fresh water. HAF parents/carers were however less likely to report that their child had consumed vegetables (by 10 percentage points), meat, fish, eggs, or beans (by 10 percentage points), and milk or cheese (by 15 percentage points) on the days they attended the HAF club compared to non-HAF attendees (See Appendix C).

While parents/carers suggested during cognitive testing that they had a good understanding of their child's consumption patterns at holiday clubs, responses to this question largely relied on child feedback. It is reasonable to assume that parental knowledge of what children ate on club days would be less detailed than on non-club days (when parents were providing food). This is particularly likely given the level of detail required on specific food-stuffs in the survey. Responses to the family survey shows that recall of what children ate on days they attended a HAF club is lower than on days the child did not attend a HAF club. For example, 15% of parents/carers responded that they did not know if their child ate at least one portion of vegetables on a day they attended a HAF club, compared to 8% on days the child did not attend a HAF club.

Children were asked different questions on their perception of healthy eating depending on their situation:

- Those attending a club: “Thinking about the days you had lunch at the holiday club, how healthy were the lunches you had on a scale of 1-10?”
- Those not attending a club: “Thinking about a normal day in the summer holiday, how healthy were the lunches you had on a scale of 1-10?”

Results suggested that HAF attendees were positive about club lunches. The mean rating of club lunches was significantly higher for HAF attendees (mean of 7.8) than the rating for non-attendees of their normal holiday lunches (mean of 7.4). There was a similar significant difference in the proportion giving a score of 10 out of 10 (27% for HAF attendees compared to 19% of non-attendees). As this question is asked directly of children it is unlikely to be affected by recall issues in the same way as parental questions, providing confidence that children attending HAF perceived their lunches to be healthier compared to those who didn't attend (although there is possible bias if children were told by parents/carers they would receive a healthy meal at the holiday club).

Child consumption of unhealthy foods

Parents/carers were also presented with a list of less healthy food and drink items and asked how often their child consumed any of these at lunch during the summer holiday, with options ranging from every day to never. This question therefore differed from the previous question on healthy food as it asked about the summer holidays in general rather than specifically on club days.

As discussed in the previous section, HAF parents/carers were less likely to report their child had consumed certain healthy food groups compared to non-HAF parents/carers; however when looking at unhealthy foods, a greater proportion of HAF parents/carers reported that their children never ate unhealthy food during the summer holidays compared to non-HAF parents/carers. This was the case for all categories of unhealthy food, including sugary or fizzy drinks (41% of HAF parents/carers reporting that their child never consumed these compared to 26% of non-HAF parents/carers), deep fried, battered, or breaded food (29% compared to 17%), processed meat (24% compared to 12%), and crisps, chocolate, biscuits or sweets (20% compared to 18%).

The fact that HAF parents/carers reported lower consumption of healthy foods and also lower consumption of 'unhealthy' foods (in conjunction with the data earlier on higher levels of don't know responses among HAF parents) suggests that data are affected by recall issues. In addition, as HAF clubs provided nutritional education to both children and parents, it is plausible that the lower reported levels of unhealthy food in the HAF group arises in part from social desirability bias, i.e., the tendency of respondents to answer questions in a way that is considered more socially acceptable. Another reason for this could be that

HAF parents, due to the holiday club intervention, were now more aware of what healthy food is, and thus more discerning or accurate in their assessment.

Increased nutrition

As noted, these results on nutritional eating present a complex picture. Whilst this does not necessarily mean the food met School Food Standards, most children liked the food at clubs although this was not always the case. Where this was not the case, it was often due to a lack of variety or alternatives available, for example children not wanting either vegetarian or meat-only meals or preferring hot meals to cold. When children did not enjoy the food, some parents/carers gave children a packed lunch, although this was not commonly reported. Parents/carers were pleased with the nutritional quality of the food provided which included fruit, vegetables, jacket potatoes, pasta, savoury pies, yoghurt, and sandwiches. Parents/carers appreciated that culturally familiar food had been available at the clubs, such as jollof rice and halal food.

Qualitative evidence suggests that parents/carers and staff felt that children had eaten healthily whilst attending the clubs, and children believed they ate healthier food than they normally would. Children tried new, nutritious foods which led some to request these foods from staff and parents/carers.

“[If they weren’t at the club] I’ll probably be eating unhealthy to be honest with you. When I go to [HAF club], they have healthy meals and it’s been encouraging me to tell my Mum to cut down on the bad stuff.” – *Child*

These perceptions are supported by some of the quantitative results, including those showing children attending HAF felt they ate healthily, and parental reports that children ate less unhealthy food across the summer (with it being reasonable to assume that provision at HAF clubs contributed towards this).

Nearly three-quarters (74%) of clubs surveyed found implementing the food quality standards either very or quite easy. One in ten (10%) said it was quite or very difficult. Most clubs (93%) reported that they offered at least one healthy meal which met the School Food Standards every club day, and a further 3% offered one on most days (n=420). Nearly half of all clubs (47%) outsourced the preparation of all meals, while 38% prepared them all in-house, and 13% offered a mix (n=420). Just under one third of clubs (30%) offered only cold meals, and a similar proportion offered only hot meals (29%), and the rest offered a combination of hot and cold meals (41%) (n=420).

Qualitative data shows that where food was prepared in house, some clubs asked children to help with cooking, setting the tables and clearing up. Where food was purchased from local restaurants or catering companies, it created jobs and supported the local economy.

Providers delivering activities outdoors with no access to a kitchen found serving hot meals challenging, and sometimes offered only cold meals. One approach that was taken to

reduce potential stigmatisation was a provider providing cold packed lunches to all attendees so HAF children would not feel different to those paying who brought in packed lunches.

3.1.4 Increased knowledge, awareness and understanding of nutrition

As chapter two explained, providers were expected to include an element of nutritional education for children each day. Nine in ten clubs did provide some nutritional education, albeit not every day. Just over one third of clubs (34%) offered nutritional education for children every day and more than one quarter (26%) offered it most club days, 29% offered it some club days and one in ten (10%) did not offer it (n=412).

Clubs and coordinators generally reported that clubs were working well to meet the standards, albeit with lower endorsement than for the other quality standards. More than half of clubs surveyed (56%) said they found providing food education for children and families very or quite easy, with 15% stating it was very or quite difficult. The remaining 29% found it neither difficult nor easy. LAs rated approximately two thirds (65%) of their providers as being excellent or good at meeting the food education standards, with a further 30% rated as acceptable and 5% rated as poor or very poor.

The family survey found that a fifth (20%) of children who attended HAF reported that they learned about food on the days they attended a HAF club (n=436), compared to 11% of non-HAF children who reported that they learned about food during an average week in the summer holidays (n= 3,104). This suggests that HAF made a notable difference in providing nutritional education (particularly as the comparison is HAF days to an average week) although the fact only a fifth remember receiving nutritional education fits with the evidence that this was not always systematically provided. Staff provided examples of where they could see that nutritional education had been successfully integrated into meals:

“They will look at their plate and they will see that they have their protein, their carbohydrates, their dairy and their water. It is really good because a lot of the children didn’t know that before.” – *Staff member*

Children had healthy snack alternatives, and cut and stuck pictures of food to a ‘balanced plate’.

“Some food we cut away, and if they were unhealthy, we put them away. We were doing basically science. So, biscuits and chocolate or pizza were not healthy, but you can have it sometimes.” - *Child*

However, while staff felt children had learned about food, they were somewhat sceptical in interviews of the extent to which this increased knowledge would lead to changes at home.

3.1.5 Enriching activities

Family survey results showed that **HAF attendees took up a vast range of activities** offered by holiday clubs. On the 9.6 average number of days children attended a HAF club, the majority of HAF attendees did outdoor and indoor sport or exercise (79% and 64% respectively – as seen earlier), while more than half of respondents did arts and crafts activities (Figure 2.1). A large proportion of respondents (48%) were also involved in games (quizzes, board games, etc.), as well as music, dance, and drama activities (34%). Just under a quarter (23%) of respondents took up activities such as trips out and cooking, and 20% learned about food.

HAF children were asked whether they had taken part in a range of activities while attending HAF; they were then asked about participation in the same activities when not attending HAF. Given the average number of days that children attended HAF (9.6 days representing only 23% of a six-week holiday) the expectation would be that HAF children had more opportunity to participate in these activities on non-HAF days, all else being equal, as non-HAF days accounted for a greater proportion of the school holidays. However, data reported by children in the family survey suggests that HAF enabled children to take part in enriching activities that they otherwise would not have taken part in. Despite only attending HAF on 9.6 days on average, when attending a club:

- HAF children were more likely to take part in sport and arts and crafts than when not attending HAF. Specifically, outdoor sport and exercise (79% compared to 53% on non-HAF days), indoor sport and exercise (64% and 28%), and arts and crafts (56% and 43%).
- HAF children were equally likely to take part in games (48% compared to 49% on non-HAF days), music, dance or drama (34% and 29%) and learning about food (20% and 22%) as when they were not attending HAF.

HAF children were less likely to take part in trips (23% on HAF days compared to 55% on non-HAF days), cooking (23% compared to 43%) and organised internet activities (7% and 30%) compared to when not attending HAF.

Children and staff also spoke about the range of activities being key.

“Playing tennis was new to me because I had never done it before, and it was really fun. I am trying to get my mum to get me a tennis racket. She can’t get me one, but she does want to. I don’t think she has enough money because they are really expensive.”- *Child*

“[Activities] like archery, if they didn’t get it here, then where else would they get it?”
- *Staff member*

LAs rated their providers highly in terms of meeting the standards on enriching activities (91% rated providers as excellent or good in this regard), with most clubs (89%) saying they found delivering enriching activities very or quite easy.

3.1.6 Socially connected

Overall, the family survey analysis provided evidence that **children were more socially connected through taking part in HAF**. Just over a third (35%) of parents/carers reported that their child who attended HAF saw or played with their friends most days of an average holiday week, compared to 21% of parents/carers whose children did not attend. A similar pattern was seen among children, with 26% who attended HAF stating they saw or played with friends very often compared to 18% of those who didn't. Only 22% of children who attended HAF said that they saw their friends 'not very often' or never, compared to 33% of children who didn't attend HAF. This supports the self-reported evidence from children that HAF helped them make new friends, with 81% of children stating this was the case.

These findings reflect a main theme in the case studies. Children, parents/carers, staff and LAs talked about how the HAF programme had increased children's social connectedness, by playing with friends and meeting new people, leading to improved social skills.

"New friends because I am home-schooled." - *Child*

"I love coming and have made new friends." - *Child*

Parents/carers liked that their children had mixed with children of different cultures and ages.

"He always felt like one of those children that can never fit in, he has young emotions so he is not always on the same wavelength with his peers at school – at the club he can mix with a wide range of age groups [...] and made friends with the younger children there." – *Parent*

"They come home, and they say, 'oh Mummy, I made some friends.'" – *Parent*

3.1.7 Had fun

As reported earlier, children enjoyed attending HAF, giving it a score of 8.5 out of 10 for enjoyment (n=439) in the family survey on average. Having fun at HAF clubs was also a strong theme in the qualitative research.

"My favourite activity is when we go to the park because it's a break and is good fresh air and people get to clear their mental space as well. And it's not always being in front of a TV screen the whole summer, but you get to go out and make good friends as well and spend some time in the playground." - *Child*

“Me and my friends, we have enjoyed it so much we never want to leave.” – *Child*

Providers and staff highlighted the importance of children being able to go back to school and tell their friends that they had **done something exciting** during the holidays.

“[Parents/carers] can't necessarily afford to send [their children] to another camp. So, it's more financially inclusive, which is a weight off their shoulders. It means parents can still go to work and know their kids are somewhere safe. Also, you don't want your kids to go back into school after summer and go: ‘Yeah, I didn't really do anything’, so, I think for families as well, it's something like: ‘Wow, my kids done laser tag, my kids done DJing, dancing, crafts’. They've come back with something tangible that they can show and say: ‘Look, this is what I did in the summer’.” – *Provider*

Figure 3: Club enjoyment

The form is titled "When you come here..." and contains several sections for children to write or draw in. The sections and their handwritten responses are:

- What do you do?**: "We do a lot of sports and activities."
- What do you like best?**: "The thing I liked best was laser tag I really liked it a lot."
- How do you feel?**: "I Feel Happy at camp a lot."
- What would you change?**: "I wouldn't change anything because I think the camp is cool!"

There are also three cartoon illustrations of children's faces. To the right of the form, there are two small boxes: "Age" with the number "8" and "Club" with "Hearns Farm" written in it.

Source: Participatory tool (primary school-aged version)

Parents/carers were generally very pleased with the provision and recognised how much their children enjoyed the clubs.

“They love it, they love going.” - *Parent*

“Every child walks outside with a smile on their face.” - *Staff member*

Coordinators and staff felt that ‘having fun’ at the HAF clubs was an important outcome, particularly in the context of reduced socialisation during COVID-19 related lockdowns. A minor theme was that staff and coordinators felt this might then impact on families through

having happier children at home, although this was not spontaneously reported by parents/carers.

3.1.8 Increased confidence

Three in four children (77%) felt more confident because of attending the holiday club. Frequently, interviewees in the case study areas reported that children grew in confidence over the course of the HAF programme, through participating in activities and socialising with others.

“Normally, I keep to myself and not talk to anyone, and since I’ve been here like I’ve spoken to almost everyone.” – *Child*

One parent/carer felt this increased confidence would set their child up well for upcoming school examinations.

3.1.9 School readiness

Although school readiness was not a central focus of the case study visits or the evaluation, there were positive outcomes reported by participants that could potentially help support school readiness, including the main themes of **improved social connections**, and **increased confidence**. While these reported outcomes are important, there is no hard evidence to substantiate the extent that they occur and whether they would be at a sufficient level to improve school readiness.

A minor theme was some clubs taking a direct approach to improving school readiness. It was reported in some interviews that children gained new skills, which had the potential to support school readiness. These included public speaking and woodwork through participating in new enriching activities including theatre workshops, music lessons, trips to the zoo, crafts, and science classes. It was also mentioned that many children spoke English as an Additional Language in certain areas, and attending clubs helped improve their English language skills.

One case study highlighted a direct approach to improving school readiness, with a school-based club targeting children due to start reception class in the next academic year, enabling those children to familiarise themselves with the school setting and meet other children due to enrol.

3.1.10 Safe

As noted, 82% of children attending HAF said that the club made them feel safe, with continual feedback that children felt happy and enjoyed attending also suggesting they felt safe at HAF clubs. Coordinators, staff, and parents/carers said that the clubs offered a safe space for children to interact. Children interviewed at clubs did not identify safety as a

particular benefit of the club, suggesting that many may have taken it for granted that provision was safe. In total, 6% of children said that attending HAF did not make them feel safer. This may be as children already felt safe (and hence HAF could not make them feel safer), but the potential that some may have felt unsafe highlights the need to ensure everyone at the club feels fully safe.

3.2 Parents/carers

- Around a quarter of employed parents/carers whose children attended HAF said that childcare enabled them to keep working the same hours (26%) or to stay in work (25%).
- Around a fifth (18%) of employed parents/carers whose children attended HAF said that childcare meant that they were able to work more hours per week; and 14% said it enabled them to change the shifts they worked to fit better with looking after children.
- HAF parents/carers were more likely than their non-HAF counterparts to receive information on buying, preparing, or cooking healthy food (37% compared to 29%), education, volunteering and training opportunities (28% and 22%), and childcare services (19% and 12%). They were not more likely to receive information on health services (35% and 31%) or employment opportunities (18% and 20%).
- Evidence from the family survey suggests that HAF made it easier for families to access affordable childcare.
- Feedback suggested HAF provided some parents with valuable respite over the summer period.

3.2.1 Advice and support received

Most club survey respondents (71%) felt that HAF had a large positive or positive impact on the level of support and advice provided to parents/carers, although one quarter (24%) thought it had no impact. This tallies with coordinators being less likely to feel that clubs met the signposting requirements to an excellent or good standard (59%) than they did for other quality standards.

Whether parents/carers received advice and support was analysed in two separate ways, which involved examining whether parents/carers received information on various subjects and whether this information was directly from a club.

Unsurprisingly, data in Table 9 shows that HAF parents/carers overall received more information than non-HAF parents/carers during the summer on holiday clubs (69% compared with 31%), and local sports clubs (47% and 30%). HAF parents/carers were also slightly more likely to receive information on buying, preparing, or cooking healthy food (37%

compared to 29%), education, volunteering and training opportunities (28% and 22%), and childcare services (19% and 12%). HAF parents/carers were not notably more likely to receive information on health services (35% and 31%) or employment opportunities (18% and 20%).

It also showed that a small minority of non-HAF attendees claimed to have received information from clubs, potentially due to picking up broader messages disseminated by clubs. The proportion for each group receiving information from a club was generally in line with the total figures for HAF and non-HAF parents/carers. Parents/carers in interviews rarely reported being directly provided with advice and support about other local services or support available to them by the HAF clubs, with staff noting that any information provision or signposting was relatively small-scale.

A small proportion of parents/carers whose children did not attend HAF also received information from clubs, ranging from 7% receiving information on employment or childcare services from a club to 20% receiving information on a holiday club from a club. This may have either been from widespread publicity from HAF clubs or receiving information from non-HAF provision.

This data provides evidence that HAF parents/carers were receiving signposting information more than those not attending HAF, and that this was often directly from the club (excluding club information, this was mainly on healthy food, educational opportunities, and childcare). However, feedback suggests clubs did not consistently adopt widespread signposting and that more concerted approaches could have reached even more families.

Table 9: Information received during Summer Holiday

	HAF	HAF	Non-HAF	Non-HAF
	Total receiving	From a club	Total receiving	From a club
Holiday clubs	69%	50%	31%	20%
Local sports clubs for children	47%	30%	30%	17%
Buying, preparing, cooking, healthy food	37%	20%	29%	14%
Health services	35%	24%	31%	16%
Education, volunteering, and training opportunities	28%	16%	22%	9%
Childcare services	19%	13%	12%	7%
Employment opportunities	18%	10%	20%	7%

Source: Family survey. Base: HAF n=559, Non-HAF n=2345

3.2.2 Childcare – access and payment

Evidence from the family survey suggests that provision of HAF made it easier for families to access affordable childcare.

In total, 62% of parents/carers whose child attended a HAF club used some form of childcare over the summer holidays (n=599), compared to 41% of other parents/carers (n=2,345). Of those who did attend a HAF club, 38% responded that they received childcare from a holiday club compared to 10% of those who didn't attend HAF clubs (potentially from non-HAF clubs). These results suggest that parents/carers did not automatically consider club provision to be childcare (otherwise all HAF parents/carers would have said they used some form of childcare) indicating parents/carers defined childcare subjectively according to their circumstances. It should be noted that parents/carers were not asked if they felt they required childcare with this potentially acting as a confounding factor in analysis across the two samples.

HAF parents/carers were less likely to pay for any form of childcare, with 51% noting that all childcare they received over the summer was free, compared to 44% of other parents/carers. HAF parents/carers were also far more likely to state that the reason their childcare was completely free was because their child attended a free holiday club, at 28% compared to 2% of other parents/carers, with large proportions also looking after their child themselves (75% of HAF users, compared to 83% for other parents/carers) or getting help from family or friends (17% and 22% respectively). This suggests that HAF made a notable contribution to allowing families to access free childcare.

HAF parents/carers who paid for childcare also said they found it easier to cover the cost of childcare than non-HAF parents/carers (16% saying it was easy or very easy compared to just 7% of other parents/carers). This reduced financial burden could have been achieved through parents/carers not having to pay for any childcare or requiring less paid provision over the summer holidays. When asked whether they had claimed back any childcare costs, HAF parents/carers who paid for childcare were more likely to report they had claimed back through Universal Credit than non-HAF parents (26% and 12% respectively) and a similar proportion of HAF and non-HAF parents reported claiming back costs using Tax-Free Childcare (4% and 5% respectively). Parents/carers whose children attended HAF also found it easier to find suitable childcare, with 25% saying this was very easy or easy (n=137), compared to 17% of parents/carers whose child didn't attend a HAF club (n=111). This may have partly been due to HAF itself and partly to HAF parents/carers having been more likely to be signposted childcare information than non-HAF parents/carers.

No parents/carers said that their childcare was free as it could be claimed back through Universal Credit or Tax-Free Childcare (very possibly as they may have felt this counted as paying for childcare and hence were not asked this question). However, of those parents/carers who said they did not pay for childcare due to costs, most were aware that they

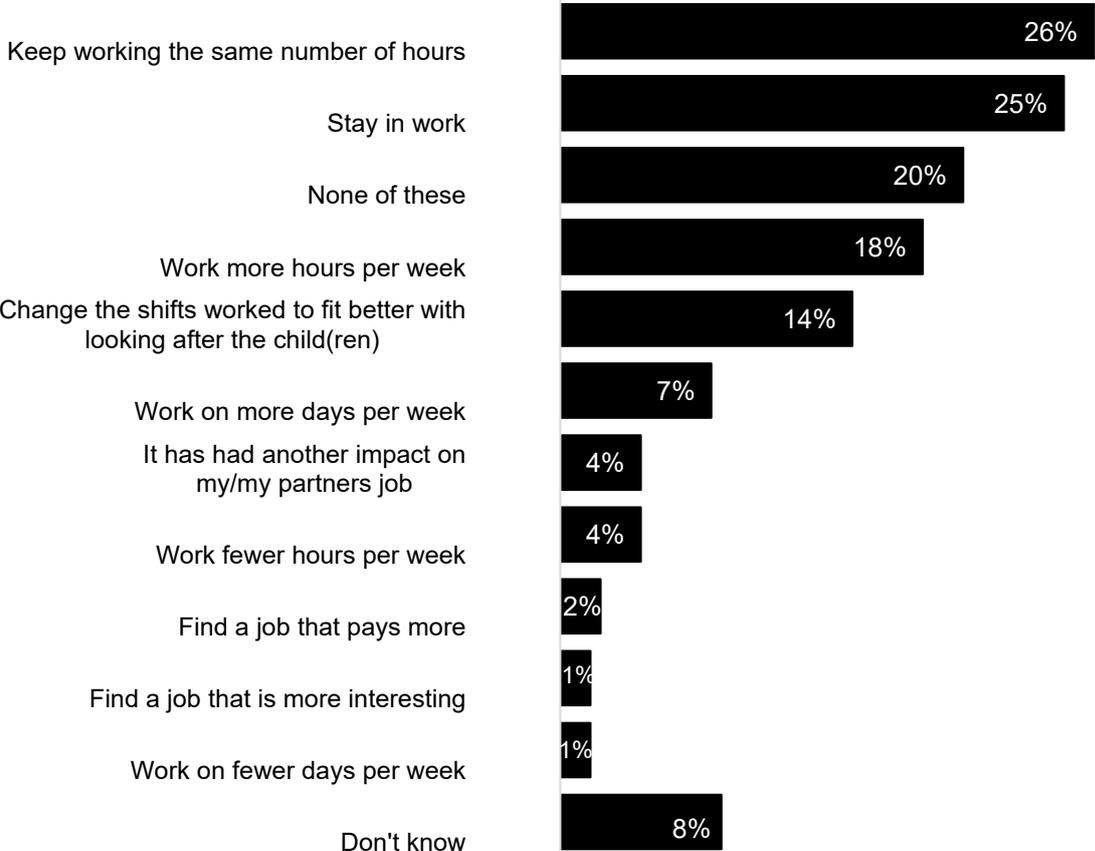
could claim back costs this way (77% of HAF parents/carers and 68% of non-HAF parents/carers). According to LAs and providers who were interviewed, HAF brought financial benefits to parents/carers by providing free, high-quality childcare, and peace of mind that their children were in a safe environment with caring staff. Because HAF was free, parents/carers of children entitled to FSM said they were interested to find out more about what activities were available. Previously they would not have explored provision as they would not have paid for it.

3.2.3 Childcare and labour market participation

All those who accessed childcare over the summer holidays were asked the extent that it meant they or their partner were able to take certain steps to secure or move into the labour market.

Data from the family survey indicates that there were key benefits to HAF parents/carers that were in employment and accessed childcare (Figure 4). Around a quarter of employed parents/carers whose children attended HAF said that childcare enabled them to keep working the same hours (26%) or to stay in work (25%). For just under a fifth (18%) childcare meant that they were able to work more hours per week, with 14% saying it enabled them to change the shifts they worked to fit better with looking after children. This suggests that HAF contributed to supporting working parents/carers. In total, 57% noted some benefits from childcare support over the holidays, with just under half (43%) of parents/carers whose child attended a HAF club feeling that childcare did not affect their labour market participation. This likely reflects the fact that parents/carers were in different stages of employment (as outlined in the attendance and attendees section).

Figure 4: Benefits of receiving any form of childcare support over the holidays (HAF parents/carers in employment)



Source: Family survey data. Base: Employed HAF attending parents/carers (n=203)

Providers and staff interviewed believed that HAF helped support moves into employment by providing childcare, reducing stress, and by adjusting their drop-off and pick-up times where possible to fit around working patterns. Coordinators also felt HAF had a beneficial effect on the wider labour market by employing provider staff, catering companies, drivers, and others (see section 3.4). Parents/carers reported in interviews that HAF provision made it easier for them to go to work and do household duties, or to arrange childcare while at work.

There were no reports in interviews of parents/carers taking clear, direct steps towards the labour market, facilitated by the HAF clubs, potentially as around half of all unemployed parents/carers were not looking for work. However, some parents/carers volunteered or supported the implementation of the HAF clubs. After recently experiencing marital breakdown and losing their job during the pandemic, one of the parents/carers volunteered at the club in an admin role, which staff felt was positive for their mental health.

“This was one of those unexpected outcomes where you could actually see that [the parent’s] wellbeing was being positively influenced by the HAF scheme.” – *Coordinator*

3.2.4 Respite

A main theme for interviews with coordinators, clubs and parents/carers is that the HAF programme enabled **parents/carers’ respite over the summer**.

“I don’t have anyone, so I just needed someone to give me a bit of a break over the summer...also our finances aren’t great, so I’m really limited on what we can do.” – *Parent/carer*

For some parents/carers, this was especially welcome after a challenging lockdown period.

“We didn’t cope well with lockdown 24/7 on top of each other. Home-schooling was hard work and not being able to meet friends. [...] He gets overstressed when he has to stay indoors and has tantrums or punches me, I’m trying to work through that. Him being in the club is really good for both of us.” – *Parent/carer*

Parents/carers used their free time to do housework, food shopping, in one case to have a pre-operative procedure carried out, and for another parent/carer who worked nights to sleep during the day, which was not otherwise possible when children were at home. Parents/carers and staff noted the real ways that HAF provided vital respite:

“Financially, it’s not great, being a single parent, especially with three children with additional needs and a poor network, it’s exhausting. And sometimes your patience runs a little bit thin, and I do have days where I have just locked myself in the toilet and cried because I’m so exhausted 'cause they don’t sleep. And to have somewhere to take them, to give me a bit of a break for my own mental health is really helpful. But also, to be able to do things that I can’t do when I’ve got them with me. Like I know this sounds really silly, but I can’t go food shopping with the three of them because, people look at me in absolute disgust when I take my children shopping, but they don’t understand that you can’t contain them.” – *Parent*

A minor theme was that parents/carers made **new connections other parents/carers and providers, increasing their connectedness**. Parents/carers met other parents/carers at pick-ups and drop-offs and through their children becoming friends, taking contact details to arrange playdates outside of the HAF setting.

3.2.5 Financial benefit/relief

HAF provision of free activities and meals brought financial relief, which was considered a vitally important outcome by parents/carers in particularly challenging financial situations.

“It is costing me so much to buy my child’s secondary school uniform, so my last wage went on that. I couldn’t take them anywhere, so they have got out of the house, as they would be stuck in the house [without HAF provision].” – *Parent/carer*

Parents/carers found summer to be an expensive time, as children do not receive FSM during the holidays, and parents/carers may incur childcare costs, therefore they couldn’t necessarily afford to pay for their children to do activities during the summer, particularly given more immediate needs such as food shopping. There was a widespread view that if the children had not attended a HAF club, they would have spent more time at home with their families, been less active, had more screen time, or in the words of one child interviewed, they would have been “bored doing nothing”.

“It gives them something to do rather than staying in and watching Netflix. And money is tight with three kids at home.” – *Parent/carer*

Some parents/carers reported that knowing that their children were having a substantial meal at the clubs reduced pressure on them and, for one parent, reduced feelings of guilt for providing a simple, low-budget meal at home. Leftover food or food parcels were well received by families on low-incomes, reliant on FSM vouchers through the lockdown, or using food banks:

“A lot of the kids would take some [food] home and be like ‘I’m gonna take this home for dinner, I know my mum can’t cook tonight’. So, it’s good that they have the option to take food home.” – *Staff*

“All the kids who access these clubs got fed at least one good meal a day and with kind of poverty on the back of the pandemic being as it is, you know, that is an impact. That saved the family a good meal a day.” - *Coordinator*

3.2.6 Nutritional food preparation

As noted in section 3.2.1, 37% of HAF parents/carers reported that they received information about buying, preparing, or cooking affordable food during the summer holidays (20% receiving information from clubs), more than the 29% among non-HAF parents/carers (14% receiving information from clubs). This suggests that parents/carers were receiving information on healthy eating, although earlier evidence suggested that this was not being as widely delivered by clubs as may have been possible.

Overall, HAF parents/carers who responded to the family survey ranked their confidence in preparing and buying healthy meals at an average of 7.9 out of 10 (n=558), suggesting that they felt reasonably confident in cooking. Although non-HAF parents/carers reported the same level of confidence (7.9, n=4,430), as parents/carers were not asked about prior levels (and hence were not matched on this variable) this can only be taken to indicate confidence at the end of the holidays and does not measure the effect HAF had on cooking confidence. Social desirability bias may also have affected responses, with parents/carers wanting to show they can provide healthy food for their family.

A minor theme in the case study interviews was that children who enjoyed new foods at the HAF clubs had requested that families eat these foods at home, and parents/carers reported that children showed them how to make some meals including jacket potatoes. One of the clubs had recipe cards and nutritional information available for parents/carers to take home with them, which one parent/carer reported using.

“They have some really good ideas in them, and they are really easy to make.” -
Parent/carer

There was little feedback from parents/carers suggesting that any provision of nutritional information was linked to increases in confidence around nutritional food preparation or changes in parents/carers' knowledge, awareness and understanding of health. This may be as most activities that aimed at increasing knowledge, awareness and understanding of health were targeted at children.

3.3 Organisations

- Most clubs received at least two-thirds of their funding from HAF, with over a third (37%) getting all their funding from HAF.
- Nearly all coordinators surveyed (99%) were very or quite satisfied with how HAF went in their area in Summer 2021 and most clubs (91%) were very or quite satisfied with their experience of running a club as part of HAF.
- Coordinators and staff welcomed HAF funding and felt it played a key role in setting up and/or maintaining provision.
- Particularly key was the large proportions of coordinators reporting improved policies/procedures (58%) and greater confidence running similar programmes (88%) following Summer 2021.

Overall, nearly all coordinators surveyed (99%) said they were very or quite **satisfied** with how HAF went in their area in Summer 2021 (n=116), with club respondents (91%) having similar levels of endorsement (n=420). The main reasons for this were the reach of the programme and level of uptake, the range of providers and activities, the positive feedback

from providers, children, and parents/carers, the quality of delivery and the fact they offered provision to children entitled to FSMs. This shows the overwhelming positivity that staff had towards the programme, based on the delivery in their areas.

3.3.1 Increased scale and scope of activities

HAF funding formed a substantial part of summer holiday funding for many clubs, playing a **crucial role in enabling clubs to operate over the summer 2021**. As noted in Table 10, most clubs received at least two-thirds of their funding from HAF, with over a third (37%) getting all their funding from HAF.

Table 10: Proportion of summer holiday club funding provided by HAF

	Percentage
All funding from HAF	37%
At least two-thirds but not all funding from HAF	25%
Around half of funding from HAF	20%
Up to one-third of funding from HAF	18%

Source: club survey. Base: 424

Coordinators and providers clearly **welcomed and valued the HAF funding**, particularly after 18 months of the pandemic during which the amount of activities they could deliver was greatly limited, and many staff did not work. The youth work sector was badly hit by the pandemic, with research by charity UK Youth showing that youth organisations of all sizes have been negatively affected by COVID-19, as they faced increased demand, the need to adapt their services and reduced income/increased costs. This led to 64% of organisations reporting they were at risk of closure in the next 12 months (UK Youth, 2021).

HAF funding allowed coordinators to reinvest in local services by supporting small and local providers. Funding was felt by providers to have driven up the quality of their clubs, with exactly eight in ten (80%) clubs surveyed stating that HAF had a large positive or positive impact on the quality of their provision (a further 16% thought it had no impact).

The interviews indicate that HAF funding allowed providers to plan their summer holiday offer more strategically.

“[HAF funding has] made a real difference to us because we can be a bit more strategic about things. And generally, you know, funding is a little bit piecemeal for us as a charity, we get a bit here and a bit there. But it's nice to think that you can get a group of young people and, you know, over the summer, meet them every week.”— *Lead provider*

A key theme among coordinators and providers was that, without HAF funding, LAs and clubs would not have been able to provide the same **scale and variety** of activities, and would not have reached children entitled to FSM.

“[We would have offered] sporadic, very sparse provision for specific groups, but none of it would have included food and very little of it would have included children who couldn't afford to pay.” – *HAF coordinator*

One coordinator said HAF had enabled them to **re-start the childcare sector** and therefore offer employment and support children and families.

“[Without HAF funding] it wouldn't have looked nearly as busy. You wouldn't have had a fraction of the provision available because we wouldn't have been able to offer the free places. We were able to kickstart the sector again, which has made a massive difference. And that's why I'm so passionate about making sure that we can continue this provision in the future because it's made a massive difference to the childcare sector, but also to vulnerable children and families.” – *Coordinator*

3.3.2 Increased reach

There was a shared perception among coordinators, providers, and staff that, thanks to HAF, **new children and families, including children with SEND, engaged** with summer holiday provision.

HAF allowed providers to **continue supporting vulnerable families** by enabling them to reopen after lockdown, or to expand their offer. HAF offered additional income and allowed providers to employ staff for the entire summer.

“It's actually been sort of the difference between, like, falling behind on their bills and carrying on. The voluntary sector really suffered over COVID.” – *Coordinator*

Providers and staff interviewed said HAF allowed children entitled to FSM to attend their clubs, which was not the case previously. In absence of HAF funding, they felt that many of the children who took part **would not have participated** in summer activities, supported by the family survey finding that 70% of HAF attendees had not previously attended a holiday club (n=559).

3.3.3 Capacity building

A key theme among coordinators was that the **organisational capacity building** element of HAF was successful, and greatly needed since the pandemic. Most respondents to the club survey (58%) reported it had a large positive or positive impact on the policies and procedures they used, and 37% said it had no impact. The qualitative research found that providers delivering holiday clubs for the first time received support to develop policies, while existing clubs updated or quality-assured their policies and procedures. Providers also reported that they benefitted from the training offered by coordinators.

The vast majority (88%) of clubs surveyed believed HAF had a **large positive or positive impact on their confidence in running similar programmes** in the future. In the small

minority of cases where people felt less confident about the future it was generally related to the set-up requirements. One coordinator feared that the application process and implementation may have put VCOSOs off from running similar programme in the future.

“I’m worried that this process has perhaps put a few people off doing it in the future just because of how it’s been with us. However, that said, we have had some feedback that, you know, forms were too long and it’s also actually kickstarted a massive conversation about how we do governance for smaller voluntary sector providers.”

– *Coordinator*

HAF was felt to have helped with the **professional development** of staff, especially since many staff had not been able to work throughout the pandemic. Nearly seven out of ten clubs surveyed (69%) said it had a large positive or positive impact on staff skills. One case study club even had ‘junior leaders’, namely volunteers who helped with programme delivery and were former students of the school. One staff member valued going back to coaching and youth work through HAF.

“I think for us it’s been really amazing to finally get back to coach in and get out into the community.” – *Staff member*

By taking part, several providers said they became more aware of the realities of some families in their area. HAF also allowed new providers to deliver summer holiday clubs, as well as expand delivery to different locations, thereby allowing children from different areas to attend.

Staff interviewed said they benefited from working with a wider range of children and delivering a greater variety of activities.

“I’ve learnt more about needs of different ages and how some need much more support. Especially when giving instructions out, and how some say they understand when actually they don’t understand. So that will help me when I go back into the classroom next year, to think about how we give instructions and [levels of] understanding.” – *Staff member*

A major theme among staff interviewed was that they really **enjoyed delivering HAF**. They liked seeing the sites busy and new children having a good summer, as well as building relationships with the children. One provider said the play lead in the club was given considerably more responsibility through the expansion of her usual paid summer club through HAF, and really thrived on this.

3.4 Local area and labour market

- ▶ Coordinators felt HAF helped them establish new relationships, bring communities together, and helped provide some additional employment opportunities.

Coordinators interviewed said families developed new, trusted **relationships** with providers, and there was an improved sense of community among providers, children, and families, benefitting their local area. In the case study areas, there was a common perception from coordinators and staff that the wider community valued the local investment and thought it helped to bring **communities together**. They reported that local people had said it was fantastic and reassuring to see children engaged in positive activities during the school holidays.

“From that community perspective, if you are seeing groups of kids being engaged, it has such a wide reach of benefits beyond just those families to the wider community.” – *Staff member*

Coordinators and providers mentioned HAF enabled them to use **buildings** that had been closed to the public due to COVID-19, showing there was a need for them, and that the buildings could benefit the local community.

Various coordinators felt HAF had a beneficial effect on the local labour market opportunities, by providing employment to many who would not have had any income over the summer. This included provider staff, but also catering companies preparing the food and drivers transporting it. They felt HAF was instrumental in creating local employment opportunities and guaranteeing jobs throughout the summer. HAF allowed providers to employ people looking to enter the youth work sector, such as university graduates looking to gain work experience, or people who had participated in similar programmes in the past.

“[Providers have] been able to employ people, they’ve been able to employ young people who are looking for their first job in working in the sector. I mean, what a massive outcome that is, that we were able to provide paid opportunities to young people!” – *Coordinator*

Although viewed positively, there was a concern around whether any increases in local employment through HAF could be **sustained** in the absence of continued funding.

Chapter 4 - Coordinator and provider models

This chapter covers the type of approach adopted by coordinators and providers, the history of HAF, views on the application process, FSM eligibility, HAF budget, mapping activities, the way that providers and clubs were selected, and approaches to the 4x4x4 model.

Summary

HAF coordinators were typically LAs (84%), with a small proportion being VCISOs (12%). Responsibility for HAF within LAs commonly sat within Children and Young Peoples' services (43%) but this varied. LA staff across the case studies consistently saw the coordinator role as essential for strategic planning and operational delivery. As noted, LAs could allocate 10% of HAF funding to administration and coordination.

About half (49%) of clubs started in summer 2021 (n=421), with the remaining half starting earlier, suggesting that HAF helped establish considerable amounts of new provision. Most, but not all, clubs worked to identify gaps in provision prior to delivery (87%), with a large majority of coordinators and providers feeling this helped delivery. This often involved formal mapping and data processes, with informal feedback also widely used. A consistent finding across LAs was the tight timeline for programme set-up, which often proved very challenging. Despite these pressures, most clubs felt that the processes by which they were commissioned to deliver HAF were excellent or good (76%).

Seven in ten (70%) LAs were able to offer a place for four hours a day, four days a week, for four weeks of the summer holidays to every FSM eligible child who wanted a place.

In total approximately £129 million of direct HAF funding was used across the 151 LAs over Easter and summer 2021, with additional spending incurred in delivering HAF clubs over Christmas 2021. The majority of this HAF funding (83%) was spent on face-to-face holiday club provision.

Our recommendations for future years of the HAF programme include supporting LAs to implement robust booking systems, that support delivery and MI collection, recognising that every LA set up differs and therefore a standardised system may not be appropriate. We also recommend mapping local childcare sufficiency planning, considering how provision might be available beyond HAF hours, and how such provision is communicated to HAF parents to support them to work or look for work. Finally, LAs should continue to provide guidance on School Food Standards, particularly around how to meet these when cold food is provided.

4.1 Coordinator model

- Most (84%) coordinators were situated within LA structures, with the majority delivering the project with other partners (93%) and having a steering group in place (95%).
- Three-quarters (75%) of coordinators rated their steering group as very good or good.
- LAs generally employed staff on short-term contracts but would have liked to have extended contracts.

4.1.1 Leads

Local authorities received grant funding for the programme and were responsible for the delivery of HAF in their area. Each LA was asked to appoint a HAF coordinator. The coordinator role involved being the key point of contact for DfE, setting up strategic steering and working groups, planning HAF provision, overseeing procurement of providers, ensuring quality assurance processes were met, developing communications strategies, and supporting local evaluation and learning. LA staff across the case studies felt the role was essential for strategic planning and operational delivery.

Just over three-quarters (84%) of coordinators were based in LAs, with most of the remaining coordinators (12%) being VCOSOs, with 3% private and 1% other (n=116). In areas where HAF was coordinated by the LA, the coordinator survey found that the department most commonly responsible for this was Early Years, Children and Young People (43%), followed by Education (17%), Public Health (11%) and Community (8%) or Family Services (8%). More than one in ten respondents (13%) said multiple departments coordinated HAF (n=88). Feedback from case study areas suggested that HAF did not always fit neatly within an existing LA department's remit as it covered a broad age range and was not universally based in schools.

4.1.2 Structure

There were three different models to the HAF coordination that were identified through the interviews with coordinators, as shown in Figure 5. LAs' capacity to appoint providers, manage the programme and quality assure delivery affected their choice of models.

Figure 5: HAF coordinator models

LA (84%)	LA + VCISO partner (12%)	Outsourced (4%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAs led HAF coordination fully • LA staff generally worked on HAF alongside their usual responsibilities • Some LAs appointed new staff to support delivery on short-term contracts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAs partnered with a VCISO umbrella organisation to coordinate HAF • LA staff generally worked on HAF alongside their usual responsibilities • VCISO partner added capacity to LA team and links to local VCISO providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAs outsourced day-to-day HAF coordination for efficiency • These LAs were typically small or did not have prior holiday provision to build on • LAs retained strategic programme oversight and their usual responsibilities

Source: Coordinator survey. Base: 116

Feedback suggested that LAs generally preferred to coordinate services themselves, particularly where they could resource staff themselves to run HAF successfully. They often recruited new staff on short-term contracts and would have liked to retain them beyond the summer holidays, given their investment in recruitment and training. LAs that outsourced coordination (either by partnering with a VCISO or completely outsourcing) did so as they did not have the staff resource to cope with the workload for delivering HAF.

LA staff across coordinator models said that they retained their usual responsibilities alongside HAF. LA leads regularly stated that they would have benefited from a larger team with more capacity, as their staff teams felt overstretched and worked excessively over the summer but were limited by funding.

Most coordinators surveyed (93%) had delivered HAF in partnership with other organisations. These included organisations focusing on sport and leisure (96%); community and volunteering (82%); outdoor learning, activities, and nature (82%); food and nutrition (81%); and creativity and reading (79%). A small proportion (6%) partnered with other organisations (n=116).

4.1.3 Steering groups

Part of the coordinator role was to establish a steering group to support implementation and delivery. The steering group included representatives from a wide range of local bodies, including local police and other uniform services, local public health officials, school leaders, youth service and social services, charities, and the voluntary sector.

Almost all (95%) of LAs followed DfE recommendations and ensured there was a steering group in place. They also involved a wide range of sectors in their group. More than four in five (81%) included local public health officials, about three quarters included charities or VCISOs (78%), or Youth Services (72%), 57% included social services, 56% included school leaders and 22% included the police or other uniformed services. Nearly one in four (39%) included other organisations such as sports, culture, or leisure organisations; communications, finance, or legal experts; LAs; parents/carers; housing associations; and local private organisations (n=114).

Three quarters (75%) of the 151 LAs who responded to the survey, rated their steering group as excellent or good, based on regularity of meetings and stakeholder involvement and coordination. Just under a quarter (22%) rated it as acceptable, while 3% rated it as poor. The main reason why respondents felt their steering group was only acceptable or poor was that there were few meetings where all members were present, with this representing a lost opportunity to make full use of the steering groups knowledge and expertise.

4.2 History of HAF provision and focus of HAF 2021

- About half (49%) of all clubs started in Summer 2021, suggesting HAF helped set up considerable amounts of provision.
- Based on the club survey, one in four clubs (41%) started running earlier than 2020, 5% started in 2020, 5% started in 2021 before summer, and nearly half (49%) started in summer 2021 (n=421). This suggests that HAF provision led to a significant increase in provision across the surveyed areas.

Generally, LAs and providers offered limited holiday club provision before HAF 2021 due to a lack of funding. Where provision was in place previously, it had been delivered at a smaller scale. Prior provision tended to be for children whose families paid to access it and free provision was targeted for children most adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic or at-risk of youth offending for example. HAF often enabled this to be expanded. In one example, the LA extended its current holiday provision through its Early Help offer which involves preventative services set up to take action to support a child or their family early in the life of a problem or as soon as it emerges.

Coordinators reported getting involved in HAF for several reasons. They hoped HAF would help them offer healthy food and physical activities to address childhood obesity, improve socialisation and children's mental health, and offer free childcare to families with low income. As a minor theme, some LAs saw HAF as means to reduce the risk of child criminal exploitation. Other local priorities included educating families around health and nutrition, improving support networks, encouraging social mobility, and strengthening provision for children with SEND.

4.3 Application process

- Most clubs (76%) felt the commissioning process was excellent or good, with 84% of coordinators rating how they commissioned HAF provision as excellent or good.
- Feedback suggested that staff felt lead-in times were not long enough.

A consistent finding across LAs was the tight timeline for programme set-up. LA leads felt that DfE announced the funding late and May 2021 local elections then caused further delays, as did lengthy internal LA cabinet approvals before the funding could be spent. This meant that LAs were sometimes unable to start provider procurement processes until late June/early July 2021, which left a very short time for programme set up, brought capacity challenges, and left some providers feeling underprepared. Across the case studies, coordinators explained that provider procurement was resource and time consuming. Completing due diligence checks and setting providers up on payment systems took time. In one LA, they estimated it took 30 days to set-up a new provider on the LA systems.

These delays had implications for clubs, with 45% saying that the amount of time they had to prepare for HAF was excellent or good, 28% saying it was acceptable, and 27% poor or very poor (the lowest rankings given for any HAF element). Clubs still generally felt that the processes by which they were commissioned to deliver HAF and received funding were positive, with 76% and 75% respectively stating they were excellent or good. They were similarly positive (83% excellent or good) about the delivery requirements.

Based on the ODR, 84% of LAs rated their commissioning process to deliver the HAF programme as either excellent or good, with the remaining 16% rating it as acceptable. A similarly high proportion (83%) rated their own process in distributing funding to providers as excellent or good, with 4% saying it was acceptable, and 3% as poor. LAs giving an acceptable or poor rating cited that the tight timescale for understanding, planning, and implementing the HAF programme negatively impacted their ability to commission providers and distribute funding as promptly as they had originally planned.

The 10% administration funding provided was used by coordinators to fund a range of HAF elements including a booking system (micro-site), appointing and training staff, developing a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) offer for all partners, and setting up other IT and food requirements.

All LA case study areas had quality assurance procedures in place when appointing HAF providers to check whether providers met the required standards. Coordinators stressed that completing all due diligence checks during the application stage took a lot of time and resources, especially if LAs did not have a prior offer and providers did not have relevant information available (e.g., up to date safeguarding policy). Certain LAs gave examples where providers did not meet the standards during the application process, including insufficient safeguarding policies, staff not being on the DBS checking system and poor

governance structures. LAs typically provided tailored support in these circumstances to help providers meet the requirements for delivery. In one LA, a member of LA staff took on a mentoring role with the provider lead so that standards could be met on application.

4.4 HAF budget and expenditure

- 54 LAs accessed additional funding to supplement the HAF funding from DfE, with 44% of these receiving additional funds from their LA/council.
- The majority of this HAF funding (83%)¹⁵ was spent on face-to-face holiday club provision. A further 8% was spent on management and administration of the programme by the LA. The remaining 9% included spending on activity packs and food parcels, publicising clubs, transport, and staff training.
- Some LAs bought places or funded whole club provision from private suppliers. In certain cases, this was a practical decision because of limited availability of public provision, or to bolster available places.

Approximately two thirds of LAs (64%) only used direct HAF funding to deliver their holiday clubs across Easter and Summer according to results in the ODR. In total, approximately £129 million of direct HAF funding was used across the 151 LAs, with additional spending incurred in delivering HAF clubs over Christmas 2021. The majority of this HAF funding (83%) was spent on face-to-face holiday club provision. This included spending on holiday club staff, venue costs, activity costs, and food/meal costs. A further 8% was spent on management and administration of the programme by the LA. The remaining 9% included spending on activity packs and food parcels, publicising clubs, transport, and staff training.

In total, 54 LAs (36% of the 151 surveyed in the ODR) stated that they accessed additional funding to supplement the HAF funding from DfE. Of these 54 LAs, 44% received additional funds from their LA/council, while around a quarter received funding through COVID-19 support grants (26%), and from local organisations (24%), including housing associations, universities, and supermarkets. Other funding sources included Sports England (13%), providers themselves (6%), the European Social Fund (2%), and Lottery funding (2%). Of the 39 LAs providing information on the amount of additional non-HAF funds accessed, the total amount received by the LAs varied largely depending on the relevant FSM-eligible population in each area from just under £2,500 for very small areas to over £1 million for larger areas. Around a third of LAs (36%) received additional funds totalling £100,000 or more.

LAs used their additional funding in a variety of ways. Approximately one third (32%) provided additional provision for vulnerable children who were not eligible for FSM. Just over a fifth (21%) used the funding to provide meals, food parcels and/or food vouchers to

¹⁵ The figures describing how spending breakdowns into the different spend categories are based on data provided by 149 of the 151 LA's.

attendees. Other common uses included staff training/salaries (19%) and marketing of HAF clubs (17%).

Case study data provided information on how LAs used match funding data to meet client needs. One LA accessed matched funding from Public Health England linked to containment of a local outbreak of COVID-19 and one provider combined it with Children in Need funding. Matched funding sources were used to extend provision beyond the DfE criteria, e.g., for children who were not eligible for FSM, a wider age range (under 5s and over 16s), and to provide inclusive delivery for children with SEND and specific dietary needs (funding 1-2-1 support in mainstream provision, and buying food vouchers so families could meet specialist dietary needs).

LAs had different views on buying private places. Some LAs bought places or funded whole club provision from private suppliers. In certain cases, this was a practical decision because of limited availability of public provision, or to bolster available places. These LAs negotiated the cost of places and supplied a cold packed lunch to minimise the differences among attending children and reduce stigmatisation. Conversely, other LAs chose not to fund private places because they could be more expensive, they did not always meet all the DfE criteria, and they did not want to create a divide between those who received a HAF meal and those who did not.

4.5 Mapping and planning

- Most coordinators were very positive about their mapping and planning, and the extent to which it facilitated delivery.
- Visual/geographic mapping was felt particularly useful in helping to identify areas of need.
- Most clubs (87%) also worked to identify gaps in provision in their area, taking a mixture of formal mapping approaches and relying on informal feedback to identify potential gaps or opportunities.

Mapping provision and demand in the LA was a key element of the coordinator role, with this feeding into local delivery plans. Coordinators were expected to use data to map the location of FSM-eligible children, and ensure provision was targeted at the right areas and supported those in greatest need, including across different age ranges and providing particular types of provision where required.

The nature and extent of mapping and planning activities varied depending on whether LAs had been involved with HAF before, how well established their local holiday club offers were and the resources they had in the available preparation time. Key learning was that mapping activities should be proportionate to the amount, range, and quality of holiday provision LAs had prior to HAF 2021 funding, build on and not duplicate existing

knowledge, and take place as early as possible after funding announcements to ensure the findings are useable and LAs have sufficient time to implement emerging actions.

Strategic planning took place at a coordinator level, focusing on planning and mapping activity at LA level so that eligible children could access HAF and provision was focused in the areas with most need. The majority of LAs (88%) surveyed in the ODR rated their mapping as either 'excellent' or 'good' in terms of ensuring that the programme was targeted in communities where eligible FSM children lived. The remaining 12% rated this as acceptable. Most coordinators (92%) also rated their local plan to ensure sufficient high-quality provision as either excellent or good. An additional 7% rated this as acceptable with just 1% rating it as poor.

In some case study areas, coordinator teams led mapping exercises to inform their HAF planning for summer 2021. However, not all LAs undertook specific mapping exercises in preparation, and instead these LAs planned their offer by referring to existing Childcare Sufficiency Assessments or using their local knowledge or information from community link organisations.

Where focussed mapping exercises were undertaken, LAs built on similar, smaller-scale exercises developed prior to the pilot (2019) and Easter (2021) HAF delivery. They analysed data to locate the schools with the highest proportion of pupils eligible for FSM, developed a better understanding of where families (eligible for FSM) lived, and assessed fit with existing provision. One LA also included food insecurity¹⁶ data and food bank locations in their planning. The activity was led by the coordinator team with input from partners including colleagues from LA education and public health departments and VCISO leads. The output was often then presented to steering groups to sense-check the findings and identify potential gaps based on their expert knowledge of the local area and population. The LAs that carried out more systematic mapping found it useful to access institutional data, however others felt that they knew the area and the level of provision well and did not need to carry out a full mapping exercise.

Coordinators commonly reported that they and their steering groups found visual mapping exercises helped them identify areas of need. Specific benefits noted by some coordinators included identifying unexpected need in affluent areas, gaps in provision, and an increase since the pandemic in the number of pupils eligible for FSM. Coordinators also used this type of data to adapt delivery, for example by adding new clubs in areas where data showed that families were not taking part in the programme, because there were no clubs in their neighbourhood.

Some LAs then talked to providers, children, and families to explore their needs (e.g., via a Parents and Carers Forum). For example, in one LA, consultations with children about

¹⁶ Food insecurity refers to a lack of access to enough good, healthy, and culturally appropriate food

the provision resulted in the local name of HAF being changed to a name suggested by a child.

While high-level mapping took place at a coordinator level, 87% of clubs also worked to identify gaps in provision in their area, compared to 13% that did not. Clubs took different approaches to identifying gaps, such as examining data (59%), having informal discussions (57%), and receiving information from their coordinator (47%). A small proportion (4%) took another approach (n=418).

4.6 Provider selection, engagement, and models

- Almost half (44%) of clubs were run by VCSOs, with about a third run by private organisations.
- LAs mainly commissioned existing providers, with strong track delivery records and the ability to mobilise quickly in the short timeframe available.

Close to half of all clubs (44%) were run by VCSOs, and just over one third (34%) by private organisations. The rest were run by schools (10%), LAs (9%), churches/faith groups (2%), housing associations (1%) and other organisations (1%) (n=424).

Whilst only 10% of clubs were directly run by schools, data from the ODR suggested that HAF clubs utilised school premises for some activities. Almost all LAs (98%) reported that primary schools operated or provided access to premises to deliver HAF; the majority of LAs (85%) reported that secondary schools were also involved in this way; and a smaller proportion of LAs (43%) reported that special schools were involved.

Club survey data showed that clubs were split almost equally between those that started for Summer 2021 (49%) and those whose provision had started earlier (51%). In the case study areas, HAF was delivered by a mix of existing providers who delivered their standard offer, existing providers who added some elements to their provision, and new clubs. Coordinators commissioned existing providers for the most part, with strong track delivery records and the ability to mobilise quickly in the short timeframe available. LAs generally aimed to commission a range of local providers, across VCSO, private and LA sectors. New providers did feature, making up about a fifth of provision in one LA and around half in another.

A key theme for LA case study interviewees was ensuring the funding was invested in local organisations to support COVID-19 recovery (also a main outcome). LAs commonly took an 'on your doorstep' approach, with local plans designed to ensure a geographic spread of providers across the LA. Coordinators hoped this would mitigate the need for families to rely on private or public transport and avoid associated costs.

4.7 Delivering activities

- LAs took into account provider experience in meeting the needs of the target age group, having suitable premises, and being able to provide a range of activities.
- Various approaches were taken to meeting food requirements.

LAs met their aspiration to offer a mixture of clubs providing a wide range of activities with a key theme being improved choice for children, parents/carers, and carers (outlined in Chapter two).

Providers with expertise and suitable activity offers across the target age range were appointed. One LA described having to undertake a second round of provider procurement, as the first left gaps in provision across the LA and insufficient provision for older age groups. Similar multi-stage procurement processes were not generally required elsewhere, and most LAs were able to successfully appoint providers with relevant expertise.

To meet the required food provision, LAs generally used a mix of the following four basic approaches:

- appointing providers who could cater themselves without outsourcing;
- engaging large-scale school meals providers, largely to ensure they could deliver at scale and meet the requirements;
- developing links with local caterers and cafes, as the cost per meal was cheaper and this approach led to more investment in the local economy;
- developing links with supermarkets to provide food vouchers, hampers, and deliveries to people's homes (this may have been funded through non-HAF money as HAF funding could not be used for food vouchers).

Clubs selected an approach depending on their premises and staff availability, and all approaches were reportedly successful in providing healthy meals to participants.

Clubs were overwhelmingly happy with their plans to deliver high-quality provision, with almost all (97%) rating this as excellent or good, and 2% as acceptable.

4.8 4x4x4 model and implementation

- Seven in ten (70%) LAs and seven in ten (70%) clubs said they were able to offer a place for four hours a day, four days a week, for four weeks.
- Many coordinators surveyed (88%) said that eligible children were allowed to access clubs for additional sessions beyond the 4x4x4.
- Longer provision was often provided to help meet the needs of working parents, with clubs being flexible where possible.

The HAF programme expected LAs to provide places for a minimum of four hours a day, four days a week, for four weeks (the 4x4x4 model) of the summer holidays to every FSM eligible child who wanted a place. It was not obligatory for clubs to each individually provide a 4x4x4 service as long as places were available to children, potentially across multiple providers, although it was anticipated this would usually be achieved by individual clubs.

Seven in ten (70%) LAs responding to the coordinator survey were able to offer a place for four hours a day, four days a week, for four weeks (n=115), and 70% of clubs also said likewise, with this being higher among private clubs (81%) than VCSO (68%) and other (58%) types of club. The main reasons some LAs were not able to offer 4x4x4 were not having enough available places, followed by not having enough providers, and not all providers offering 4x4x4. Some areas referred to a 'HAF light' which did not have the 4x4x4 requirement and enabled smaller providers to deliver a few hours of activities every day. When demand was high, LAs capped the amount of provision clubs could offer individuals, while where it was not so high, clubs could offer as many sessions as they wanted.

While 70% of clubs reported meeting the 4x4x4 standard, a higher percentage of clubs (78%) offered at least 64 hours of provision over the summer holidays (the equivalent number of hours to a 4x4x4 approach) through, for example, running for three weeks but opening for more than four hours a day. Other notable information from the club survey included:

- Nearly half of all clubs (48%) were open for four weeks during summer 2021, an additional 19% were open for five weeks and 17% were open for six weeks or more. Sixteen percent were open for three weeks or less.
- The vast majority of clubs (86%) were open at least four days a week.
- More than nine in ten (93%) clubs offered at least four hours a day of provision: of these 39% offered four hours a day, 27% offered five or six hours a day, and 27% offered six or more hours a day (n=422).

The majority of coordinators surveyed (88%) said that eligible children were allowed to access clubs for additional sessions beyond the 4x4x4 (n=115). Nearly three quarters of families (73%) did not have to pay for additional sessions, compared to 23% who had to pay for some of them and 3% who had to pay for all of them (n=155). Where the cost of these sessions was not paid for by the families, it was usually subsidised by the clubs themselves.

As reported earlier, a common theme among case study interviewees was that providers offered more than the 4x4x4 model as a direct way to support working parents/carers, including longer sessions (five or six weeks over the holidays), or longer days.

“Four hours a day for four weeks [...is] not good enough if parents are trying to work. So, we've kind of gone with a range of provision, so some of the provision will only be available for four weeks, but some of it will be available for six weeks. So again, you know, if a child desperately needs a place for the whole six weeks, they could

go to somewhere for four weeks and another place for two weeks. So, if parents are trying to get back into work, or you know, need that support, we can help with that, and I think that that's important.” – *Coordinator*

A strong theme among coordinators was that they would have liked more flexibility, with this being primarily to allow providers to specialise in their areas of expertise rather than having to meet all the HAF quality standards as opposed to needing more flexibility due to the constrained set-up time in HAF 2021.

“[Providers] managed to meet all of the criteria the program, but it was a lot of pressure put onto them. By and large, I think what happened was they had enough contacts to be able to quickly get registered food providers, or quickly get venues for activities. So, it's not been a massive issue, but the problem was just making sure that all those boxes were ticked.” – *Coordinator*

Clubs were flexible in meeting different needs such as shorter sessions for children with SEND and younger children, longer sessions for KS4 children taking part in leadership training, or flexible access to the local pool and gym, with lunch included, for older children. Where providers combined HAF and catch-up premium funding¹⁷ for children receiving pupil premium, they delivered activities including school sessions. One provider interviewed offered morning sessions to primary and afternoon session to secondary school age children, with an overlap at lunch.

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/catch-up-premium-coronavirus-covid-19>

Chapter 5 - HAF implementation and effectiveness

This chapter covers what worked well and less well in terms of marketing, booking, registration and monitoring, training and support, policies and procedures, and inclusive provision.

Summary

HAF areas used a combination of universal marketing and direct targeting of eligible children via LA websites, social media, newsletters, schools, and other services. Clubs did their own marketing as well, including through social media. The ways in which parents/carers heard about HAF reflected the marketing approaches. Around three-quarters (72%) of clubs advertised via schools, but only half (47%) of the 151 LAs rated their engagement with schools in marketing or identifying potential attendees as excellent or good (46% acceptable, 7% as poor), potentially explaining why 60% of coordinators rated their overall communications plan as excellent or good, and 38% as acceptable.

About half of coordinators surveyed (52%) said participants had to book set sessions in advance for all providers and 47% said participants had to book for some providers. Just under half (49%) of LAs rated their registration and monitoring systems as being excellent or good for families. Coordinators would have liked more support from DfE around procuring a centralised booking system. Some staff questioned whether obligatory booking enabled disadvantaged families to access clubs.

HAF led to joint working and learning among LAs, with large proportions of coordinators stating it helped them set up informal (71%) as well as formal (15%) partnerships, networks, or links. Around half (54%) said the programme helped them establish new processes and protocols, although cross-border working protocols (18%) and clear plans to share learning (18%) were less prevalent. LAs also reported that they strengthened their collaborative working with other local services and agencies.

All coordinators (100%) used the weekly comms and cluster meetings, and nearly all (98%) used the HAF guidance and bitesize sessions. More than half of clubs (53%) had accessed training or support from their HAF coordinators, while 16% had received training/support from another local organisation or HAF provider. Clubs were overwhelmingly positive about the support they received, with most saying that each type of support was either very or quite helpful.

Overall, there was a concerted effort to develop inclusive provision for children with SEND, and providers had prepared extensively to cater to specific needs. Parents/carers agreed that clubs catered well to different age groups and physical abilities.

5.1 Marketing and engagement

- Over half (60%) of coordinators rated their communications plan as excellent or good, and 38% rated them as acceptable.
- Around three-quarters (72%) of clubs advertised via schools, but only half (47%) of the 151 LAs rated their engagement with schools in marketing or identifying potential attendees as excellent or good (46% acceptable, 7% as poor).
- LA websites, social media, newsletters, and word of mouth were common marketing channels
- A minor theme was that providers needed more support around marketing and advertising, and coordinators could have helped to ensure that messaging was consistent. There was a perception amongst certain staff interviewed that the marketing targeted children, rather than whole families or parents/carers.

Marketing and engagement of the HAF programme is an essential part of ensuring eligible families attend HAF, reflected by the fact that the **most common reason eligible families gave for not attending HAF** in the family survey results was a **lack of awareness of clubs** (34%), a theme also reflected in the case study research.

Of the 151 LAs surveyed in the ODR, **60% rated their communications plan** as excellent or good in terms of how well they promoted and advertised the programme to parents/carers, community groups and other stakeholders, (including engaging with under-represented and/or BAME groups). Just over a third (38%) rated it as acceptable, while the remaining 2% thought their planning was poor. As chapter two explained, LAs tended to market HAF either **universally** to all families or **directly targeted** only eligible children and families. Where coordinators directly targeted only eligible families, this was to avoid any stigma associated with FSM eligibility, and to avoid non-FSM eligible vulnerable families questioning why they could not access HAF. Where HAF was marketed universally, it was often listed **on the LA or coordinating organisation's website**, highlighting that provision was for FSM eligible children only.

Other universal marketing approaches to promote HAF included mentions in **LA newsletters** distributed to all residents, on **social media**, especially via local community groups on Facebook and providers' own pages, at community events, through posters in the local area and billboards on buses, and on the radio. A strong theme among coordinators and providers was that **word of mouth** among parents/carers was very effective as it was felt to be particularly trustworthy.

DfE provided a communications toolkit to LAs, including template materials, to support their local communications with parents and on social media. In some areas, coordinators distributed **marketing templates** to providers to use online, on social media, on posters and banners. Coordinators often adopted this approach as it would ensure coherent branding.

Where this did not happen, coordinators felt it would have been beneficial. DfE also promoted the use of #HAF2021 on social media so clubs could showcase and promote their activities.

Direct marketing was usually done **through schools**, typically by emailing parents/carers of children eligible for FSM or sending paper leaflets home with children. More than seven in ten clubs (72%) advertised via schools. Although clubs were advertised via schools, this did not mean parents/carers necessarily received any information. One theme among parents/carers was that they were often not told about HAF by their children's schools or support workers and found out about it by chance. Parents/carers had stumbled across HAF and knew of eligible families who had not heard about HAF. Coordinators were aware of this, but they often had limited time to advertise through schools. As mentioned above many providers advertised on their own social media pages if they had empty spaces.

Parents/carers suggested schools and social workers should have proactively communicated the provision to parents/carers. As reported in Chapter two, coordinators highlighted that there was limited time to engage schools and make sure they were able to relay the offer to parents/carers. Providers advertised through their own channels and reached out to eligible families they knew, to fill any free spaces. One parent/carer said that the HAF offer for children with SEND was not promoted via the LA 'local offer' page, which was a missed communication opportunity. A strong theme among parents/carers whose children attended HAF was that they were very happy with the offer and told friends about it, who then signed up their own children, backing up the suggestion from staff that word of mouth worked well from their perspective. Community Facebook pages were also felt to be an effective marketing tool.

When asked to rate their engagement with schools in promoting the programme and securing their support in identifying children who would benefit from the provision, around half (47%) of the 151 LAs rated it as excellent or good, a further 46% rated this as acceptable, and 7% rated it as poor. While this suggests that beneficial links took place, there may be room for increased joint-work with education to promote and market HAF and identify attendees. COVID-19 was perceived as having a negative impact on engagement with schools, as schools had additional pressures to cope with and so reduced resources to devote to engaging with HAF. COVID-19 related school closures were also felt to have delayed sharing marketing materials with schools and pupils.

Advertising through schools also allowed clubs to target children who were FSM eligible but did not claim FSM. Various areas saw HAF places being booked up quickly, with staff feeling this suggested marketing was effective. A theme among coordinators in interviews and the ODR was that with more time they could have developed more targeted approaches through engaging more schools and social services to promote the programme. A few coordinators mentioned that there were concerns about advertising HAF too much and then not being able to offer places to all interested children.

HAF was also advertised through a range of **services for children and families**, particularly where this might help reach non-FSM eligible vulnerable children who qualified for HAF-funded places. Services used to promote HAF included social services, children's centres, children's homes, youth offending teams and specific services for children with SEND, young carers, and foster carers.

"The numbers [of vulnerable children] are not huge, but where those children accessed places, we know the massive difference it has made. It's kept some of those children really safe and it's kept families together." – *Coordinator*

Clubs did their own direct marketing, typically through **social media**. More than three quarters of clubs surveyed (76%) marketed their HAF provision through social media, with staff feeling this helped to reach parents/carers where traditional marketing had initially failed. Other routes involved **emailing** families, newsletters, posters, and phoning or speaking to parents/carers, which helped where parents/carers had limited English or low literacy.

"We do lots of posts on Facebook and Twitter already and have posters in local shop windows. We have a text messaging service, which we don't use all the time but just for those not on social media, [...and] word of mouth. And schools were pretty good at communicating things to families." – *Provider*

Additionally, 60% of clubs advertised on their own website, and 46% advertised in local services such as children's centres, parks, and libraries. Just over one in ten (12%) marketed themselves through other means, for example distributing brochures, leaflets, or posters (n=415). Of those who had operated a club prior to summer 2021, 69% marketed their HAF club to children or parents/carers who had previously attended the club, indicating that this could be built on in future by more widespread targeting of previous attendees.

The ways in which **parents/carers heard about HAF** reflected the marketing approaches adopted by coordinators: through emails from school, directly from providers, through social workers and searching online for summer holiday activities in their area. Parents/carers did not feel that one direct communication route was more effective over the others, and they did note that they did not always receive communications via school.

A minor theme was that providers needed more support around marketing and advertising, and coordinators could have helped to ensure that messaging was consistent. There was a perception amongst certain staff interviewed that the marketing targeted children, rather than whole families or parents/carers, and that this might have partially explained the low take up of activities by parents/carers.

5.2 Booking, registration and monitoring

- A mix of booking systems were used, with three-quarters of coordinators saying participants registered in advance via club systems, a third (35%) via a central

booking system, and a third (32%) turning up on the day (multiple options could be selected).

- Clubs were split in their views of registration systems, with 49% rating them as excellent or good, 46% as acceptable, and 5% as poor, although coordinators were slightly more positive (59% excellent or good for staff, 57% excellent or good for families).

About half of coordinators surveyed (52%) said participants had to book set sessions in advance for all providers, while 47% said set sessions had to be booked in advance for some providers. Only 2% said participants did not have to book set sessions in advance (n=114). Coordinators used a mix of booking systems and often took multiple approaches, with around three quarters (78%) saying participants registered in advance through the club's booking system, over a third (35%) saying participants registered in advance through a centralised booking system, and one third (32%) saying participants did not register in advance but turned up on the day. Additionally, 11% said that participants registered using another approach, such as paper-based registration forms from providers, signing up by telephone or social media, and referrals.

Just under half (49%) of LAs rated their registration and monitoring systems as being excellent or good for families; 46% of LAs rated their systems as acceptable; and 5% rated them as poor. Views were slightly more positive among clubs, with 59% of clubs saying the systems were excellent or good for staff using them, and 57% that they were excellent or good for families. A small, but important, minority of clubs felt that they were poor or very poor both for staff (14%) and families (15%) suggesting scope for further improvement.

Where there was a central booking system generally in place across an LA, it was not always used by all clubs in that area. This could be confusing for parents/carers – especially if they wanted to book their children onto activities with different clubs. A minor theme was that where there was no central booking system, coordinators did not have real-time attendance data, making it difficult to regularly monitor delivery. A more prominent theme was that some booking systems did not have the functionality to send text message reminders to prevent children not showing up for sessions they had booked, which was a barrier to wider engagement (see chapter two).

One theme was that certain LAs **required families to book HAF places in advance online and this was not inclusive** of the most disadvantaged families, who tended not to have wi-fi and used pay-as-you-go data. The online booking systems could also be challenging for some to navigate. Some LAs felt that booking in advance required a level of planning that did not suit more chaotic households. To respond to this challenge, one provider developed a booking system that released spaces gradually throughout the week, to allow less organised families to access spaces shortly before the sessions took place. Providers also mentioned reserving places for families they knew would not be able to navigate the online booking system. Generally, parents/carers with a low level of English, low digital

literacy or limited access to the internet struggled with online bookings and preferred to book in person or by telephone. Providers tended to offer in person and phone bookings to support families who could not book online.

5.3 Joint working, support, and guidance

- HAF strongly contributed to establishing shared processes and protocols, as well as partnerships, particularly in informal ways.
- Most clubs (65%) surveyed thought HAF had a ‘large positive impact’ or ‘positive impact’ on their links with other organisations or clubs, and 29% said it had ‘no impact’.
- More than three quarters of coordinators accessed training/support (79%) from Childcare Works, and more than half (56%) from DfE. Just over one-third (34%) received training/support from the HAF Alliance and 22% received training/support from someone else.
- Coordinators were very positive about the training/support they accessed from each national provider, with high proportions stating that they found the training to be ‘very useful’ or ‘quite useful’. This was felt to be most useful for LAs newer to HAF and less beneficial for LAs running more established HAF or holiday programmes.
- A range of suggestions were made for further improving support, for example broadening content and access to training, and recording sessions.

5.3.1 Working in partnership

All coordinators were asked in their survey to state the extent to which that they had undertaken joint-working activities with other LAs (n=114), and with local services and agencies (n=115).

Table 11: Activities undertaken by coordinators as a result of HAF

Activity	With other LAs	With local services/agencies
Established informal partnerships, networks, or links	71%	76%
Established formal partnerships, networks, or links	15%	57%
Established new, shared processes and protocols	54%	53%
Shared learning and good practice at the end of summer 2021	52%	55%
Established clear cross-border working protocols	18%	n/a
Developed a clear plan to share learning & good practice before the end of HAF funding	11%	40%

None of the above	16%	4%
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Source: Coordinator survey. Base for with other LAs is 114, and for with local services/agencies 115.

Results show that HAF strongly contributed to establishing shared processes and protocols, as well as partnerships, albeit more often informal than formal. More than half of all respondents had already shared learning and good practice at the end of summer 2021 (54% with other LAs, 53% with other services), with some having developed plans to share more widely, albeit more with local services (40%) than with other LAs (11%). In total, 16% of LAs had not undertaken any activities to link with other LAs, suggesting there was scope for further cross-area working.

Most clubs (65%) surveyed thought HAF had a ‘large positive impact’ or ‘positive impact’ on their links with other organisations or clubs, and 29% said it had ‘no impact’. The case study interviews suggested this was mainly through linking with other clubs for sharing delivery. While some clubs delivered all activities through internal staff, others also brought in external providers to deliver specific activities, such as healthy food sessions, science lessons, magic shows, bouncy castles, and DJs.

Clubs surveyed had shared, or were planning to share, learning from their experiences of delivery in a range of ways, including through learning events/meetings (57%), on social media (43%) and by sharing learning materials online or in person (32%). One in ten (10%) were not planning to share learning (n=418).

5.3.2 LA’s views on support and guidance

In the period following Easter, coordinators accessed training or support from a range of organisations: more than three quarters (79%) from Childcare Works, and more than half (56%) from DfE. Just over one-third (34%) received training/support from the HAF Alliance and 22% from someone else. A very small proportion (3%) said they did not access any support (n=131).

Coordinators were very positive about the training/support they accessed from each national provider, with high proportions stating that they found the training to be very or quite useful.

Table 12: Coordinators’ rating of training or support received

	Childcare Works	DfE	HAF Alliance	Others
Very useful	33%	30%	37%	76%
Quite useful	57%	58%	56%	24%
Not very useful	10%	12%	7%	0%
Not at all useful	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Base (received support)</i>	103	73	43	29

Source: Coordinator survey

Coordinators were also asked about a range of forms of support specifically provided by DfE and/or Childcare Works, with uptake of these generally being high. All coordinators (100%) used the weekly comms and cluster meetings, and nearly all (98%) used the HAF guidance and bitesize sessions. The only resources used by less than three-quarters of coordinators were the National Stakeholder Resource pack (56%) and the helpdesk 1-2-1 call (38%).

Table 13: Coordinators accessing support from DfE/Childcare Works in Summer 2021

	% accessed
Cluster meetings (Childcare Works)	100%
Weekly comms e-mail (DfE)	100%
HAF guidance, including FAQ (DfE)	98%
Bitesize sessions (Childcare Works)	98%
Communications toolkit (DfE)	92%
Weekly check-in during summer holidays (Childcare Works)	83%
Knowledge hub (Childcare Works)	76%
PHE Disney resources (via DfE)	75%
National Stakeholder Resource pack	56%
Helpdesk 1-2-1 calls (Childcare Works)	38%

Source: Coordinator survey. Base: 104-111

Coordinators were asked how helpful they found certain elements of support, with the following table showing the proportions rating support at each of the different levels provided.

Table 14: Coordinators support rating by type of support accessed

Type of Support	Very helpful	Quite helpful	Not very helpful	Not at all helpful	Base
HAF guidance	46%	49%	6%	0%	109
Helpdesk 1-2-1 calls	44%	46%	5%	5%	41
Weekly comms e-mail	41%	51%	8%	0%	111
Bitesize sessions	40%	49%	9%	2%	107
Cluster meetings	39%	47%	12%	2%	110
Communications toolkit	24%	62%	13%	2%	102
Weekly check-ins	21%	54%	17%	8%	92
Knowledge hub	18%	57%	23%	2%	83
National Stakeholder Resource pack	17%	67%	16%	0%	58
PHE Disney resources	14%	38%	29%	20%	80

Source: Coordinator survey

Coordinators clearly found types of support helpful, albeit at least a fifth found the knowledge hub (25%), weekly check-ins (25%), or Disney resources (49%) either ‘not very helpful’ or ‘not at all helpful’. Evidence from case study interviews suggests that where staff did use the knowledge hub, they found it very valuable, giving them the chance to review and adapt other LA resources, such as quality assurance checklist and nutritional education session plans and ideas, with this helping improve their service and make it more efficient.

Generally, the support provided was felt to be most useful for LAs newer to HAF and less beneficial for LAs running more established HAF or holiday programmes. LAs who accessed direct support from Childcare Works reported positive experiences, namely responses to LA and provider questions.

While coordinators accessed training and support felt it was generally useful and found specific elements of support very or quite helpful, there were suggestions as to how support could be improved. Some staff felt that DfE training for LAs could have been rolled out to clubs, or alternative centralised training provided. There were suggestions that DfE were sometimes slow to respond to clarification questions about participant eligibility, with this causing delays. Others, who may not have been aware of content on the knowledge hub, requested centralised resources with example templates for documents such as consent forms and service level agreements.

Coordinators would have liked more support from DfE around procuring a centralised booking system and providing guidance on consent forms and other policies.

“I think what I’m surprised about is the lack of central resources. We are 151 local authorities, going out trying to procure online booking systems. [... DfE] should have done that initial procurement of online booking system. Or you know, tells us what does a consent form look like? What does a service level agreement look like? There are 50 organisations wrestling with that.” – *Coordinator*

In addition, not all LAs were able to use the DfE issued COVID-19 guidance, as they had to meet more restrictive local guidance where there were high infection rates.

It was also felt that meetings could have been scheduled further in advance and not last as long, potentially taking a thematic focus so LAs could attend only those of interest. Coordinators generally valued the regional LA cluster meetings and the opportunity to hear from neighbouring LAs about their models. One LA reflected that it would have been helpful to have a contact list of all LA HAF leads, to facilitate informal information sharing and partnership working.

“It is actually practitioners talking to other practitioners, which is valuable. That cross fertilisation between different local authorities about what people are doing. And obviously if you’ve got a similar sized operation – it’s really useful.” – *Coordinator*

Coordinators suggested several other ways that support could have been enhanced:

- **Training:** coordinators found the bitesize training helpful and suggested that providers could have also been invited, and sessions recorded to form a long-term resource. Additional training topics suggested by coordinators, included: the benefits of play for child development, rules of running Ofsted registered provision, behavioural science evidence about effective community engagement, example nutritional education sessions that could be delivered for children.
- **Partnerships with schools:** DfE could have raised awareness of HAF directly with schools and encouraged school Pupil Premium leads to support LAs to identify the target groups. While LAs generally had established partnerships with maintained schools, DfE input would have been particularly helpful to engage academies.
- **Guidance:** The food standards guidance could have been clearer, particularly around meal requirements, with some clubs thinking it was obligatory to provide hot food. Guidance on suitable online booking systems to purchase would have been valued.
- **Youth engagement:** Appointing a Youth Sector lead alongside Childcare Works to support LAs to develop their secondary school offers.

There was evidence that HAF delivery was positively supported within wider local authority structures. Almost all LAs (89%) rated the engagement and support they received from senior management in their own LA as either as excellent or good in the ODR. A further 10% rated this as acceptable, while 2% rated it as poor or very poor.

5.4 Training, support, and guidance provided to clubs

- ▶ Around half (53%) of clubs accessed training from their coordinator, and 16% from elsewhere, with 68% accessing at least one type of training
- ▶ A wide range of training was accessed by clubs, with safeguarding (38%) and health and safety (31%) taken up by around a third.
- ▶ Coordinator teams in case study areas reported conducting quality assurance checks, without identifying issues.

The vast majority of clubs (90%) provided their coordinator with formal information about their training, support, and guidance needs. More than half of clubs (53%) accessed training or support from their HAF coordinators, while 16% had received training or support from another local organisation or HAF provider. Very small proportions received training or support from other sources: 5% from the HAF Alliance, 1% from Childcare Works, and 6% from elsewhere (n=424).

LAs offered various forms of training and support to help providers meet quality standards. The offer and mode of delivery varied across LAs, depending on the availability of time,

resources, and expertise. Training was generally led by subject experts. In one LA, the HAF coordinator delivered child safeguarding training. Another LA involved their Public Health team to run nutrition training. LAs also outsourced specialist training, such as awareness of SEND.

Clubs received a variety of types of training and support, as shown in Table 15.

Table 15: Proportion of clubs that received training/support

Topic	Proportion of clubs that received training/ support		
	All clubs	Running before summer 2021	Clubs starting in summer 2021
Safeguarding ¹⁸	38%	39%	36%
Health and safety	31%	32%	29%
Nutritional education	28%	31%	25%
Dealing with COVID-19	27%	29%	26%
Marketing and promotion	26%	24%	26%
Food hygiene	25%	28%	23%
Physical activity sessions	22%	24%	20%
Enriching activity sessions	21%	26%	15%
Inclusion/accessibility	20%	21%	20%
First aid	19%	21%	16%
Developing relevant policies and procedures	17%	18%	16%
Involving children/parents/carers in preparing food	10%	10%	9%
Delivering virtual sessions	3%	3%	3%
Other	1%	1%	0%
None of the above	32%	31%	33%

Source: Club survey, Base sizes: all clubs (400), clubs running before summer 2021 (201), clubs starting in summer 2021 (196). Not all clubs provided a start date.

On average, clubs accessed 2.9 different forms of training and support, with 68% accessing at least some training and 32% not accessing any. Clubs were most likely to say that they received training on key legal requirements, including safeguarding (38%), health and safety (31%), dealing with COVID-19 (27%), and food hygiene (25%). Specific training on delivery aspects was slightly lower, with around a fifth receiving training or support on physical activity sessions (22%), and enriching activity sessions (21%), and a tenth (10%) receiving training on involving children/parents/carers in preparing food. There were no

¹⁸ HAF coordinators were responsible for safeguarding, including ensuring that providers had appropriate systems and providing training where needed.

signs that new clubs systematically accessed more training than those that started before Summer 2021, with the possible exception of greater proportions of newer clubs taking up training on nutritional education (31% compared to 25%) and enriching activities (26% compared to 15%).

Interviews suggest that coordinators offered a wide range of training and support, and providers were able to select those most relevant to them, with all providers having access to the same training. Feedback suggested that sometimes lack of time or staff availability meant providers did not attend as much training as they would have liked, and a longer lead-up period would have allowed for a more comprehensive and better attended training programme. LAs found that some providers needed more support than others, for example those needing to ensure vulnerable children and families were properly safeguarding. There was a minor theme of clubs feeling that information had not necessarily been cascaded more widely among project staff, and that they were not aware of any centralised HAF training offer or quality assurance resources.

LAs gave providers physical or digital resources to help with delivery. For example, one LA gave all providers a physical 'vulnerable children' pack, to help navigate safeguarding concerns and signpost families as needed. Another LA distributed a document outlining the minimum standards for HAF. LAs commonly uploaded quality assurance resources to their HAF microsites for providers to access as needed.

All coordinator teams in the case study areas conducted quality assurance spot checks during delivery, with LAs reporting that these did not identify quality assurance issues. This may in part have been due to the number of spot checks that LAs could implement, with one LA saying they would have liked to conduct more.

Clubs were generally positive about the training and support they received, with 54% rating it as excellent or good, 26% as acceptable, and 8% as poor or very poor. A major component of the positive response was the training and support clubs received from the HAF coordinator, with 79% rating it as excellent or good and 99% of those receiving coordinator support saying it was very or quite useful (n=220). This was backed up by findings from coordinators, where 78% felt the training, support, and monitoring they provided to help providers meet the framework was either excellent or good, and 21% felt it was acceptable (1% rating it as poor). Almost all clubs rated the support they received from another local organisation or HAF provider as very or quite useful (95%, n=68).

A common theme among coordinators, providers and staff interviewed was that the ability to provide training was affected by the lack of set-up time before delivery started. Staff members commented that with more time, they would have benefited from one day of all-staff training to give them ideas about activities to run. Coordinators planned to support providers with family engagement to ensure that families are engaged as much as possible during the Christmas holidays.

5.5 Policies and procedures

LAs and clubs generally reported that providers were able to meet the key standards for HAF. On average, LAs thought that most providers in their area were excellent or good at meeting the standards on health and safety policies and procedures (92%), insurance policies and procedures (92%), safeguarding standards (93%), and accessibility and inclusiveness (82%).

From the perspective of clubs, they generally found it relatively easy to meet the official requirements around safeguarding, health and safety, and insurance (n=414-419): more than nine in ten found it very or quite easy to implement health and safety policies (93%), to meet quality standards around insurance policies and procedures (93%) and to meet the safeguarding standards (92%). Eighty-seven percent of clubs found it very or quite easy to meet the standards around accessibility and inclusiveness. Their perceptions of how well they met official requirements broadly mirrored the responses of the LAs.

Children and parents/carers generally felt happy with these policies and standards, although one parent/carer noted that they would have felt more comfortable if there was an emergency contact number available for them to use if required.

5.6 Inclusive provision

- Coordinators and providers felt that they provided inclusive provision, and reflected on deliberate efforts that they made, often relating to engaging with SEND attendees, with a broad range of approaches being taken.
- Parents/carers generally thought clubs catered well to different age groups and physical abilities. Parents/carers of more than one child found it helpful being able to drop off children of different ages together at clubs.

5.6.1 LA level

A main theme was that coordinators generally felt that they made a concerted effort to develop inclusive provision for children with SEND, building on their learning from Easter 2021 delivery and feedback from specialist SEND schools and providers. Providing a comprehensive SEND offer was felt to have been helped by having representatives from special schools or SEND specialists on LA steering groups, with these individuals providing support and challenge about HAF delivery plans. These LAs also enlisted the support of specialist providers to deliver SEND awareness training and ad-hoc support for providers during delivery to manage issues as they arose. Coordinators appointed specialist providers for specific conditions, for example one LA appointed a specialist provider for deaf children. They also appointed mainstream providers with experience of supporting children with SEND.

Coordinators felt there were certain barriers that may have stopped children with SEND from engaging, namely:

- specialist providers had funding from multiple sources and were therefore not always able to take-up HAF funding;
- many children with SEND were shielding and not able to take-up offers out of their home;
- HAF funding requirements did not lend themselves to meet very specific food needs of some children with SEND, e.g., those who required percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy (PEG) feeding;
- provision of transport was vital to facilitate attendance for these children and may have imposed an additional barrier;
- it was not always possible for children with SEND or social and emotional needs to attend four hours for four days per week, with fewer days or hours being more suited to their needs.

While it did not appear to affect provision, LAs also noted that specialist SEND providers could be more expensive than mainstream providers, and that they had to account for this when budgeting.

One LA reflected that their initial mapping activity lacked sufficient information about needs and provision for children with SEND. The LA had assumed that mainstream providers would have inclusive offers to meet a range of children's needs, but this was not the case. As a result, they believed their offer had gaps for children with SEND. LA teams across case study areas identified that mainstream providers needed training and support to feel confident in supporting children with SEND.

Coordinators across LAs noted that parents/carers were not always forthcoming with information about their children's needs, particularly those with behavioural needs and without a formal diagnosis. Coordinators and providers noted that this often made it challenging for providers to cater for the child's needs. Certain LAs and providers suspected that parents/carers withheld this information because they were worried that their child would be refused access to HAF as a result. LAs reflected that they could help parents/carers in these circumstances by asking for this information at the point of registration rather than earlier in the process.

5.6.2 Provider level

A strong theme among providers was that they too felt their offer was **inclusive** for children with SEND, and they had prepared extensively in advance to cater to specific needs. An example was that, on arrival, each child was greeted by staff with a personalised greeting

chosen by the child, such as high-five, fist bump, dance-off. Several clubs had welcome activities, such as 'circle time' or icebreakers, and new starters were made to feel part of the group, as well as singing together at the beginning and end of the day.

Examples of ways in which providers made their offer inclusive were:

- understanding children's individual needs and adapting activities accordingly;
- making sure there were no physical barriers to attending;
- offering a BSL interpreter;
- providing an additional staff member for one-to-one support (not always paid for by HAF);
- having a small number of providers which offered **specific SEND provision**.

Providers said that some parents/carers and children were anxious about attending new provision and meeting new people. There were examples of providers encouraging attendance by allowing parents/carers and children to observe HAF activities before signing up.

"I was worried about him going to somewhere on his own and having to sort of fend for himself. But he's loved it. He goes twice a week and he's really enjoyed making new friends. He's enjoyed the challenges and the activities." – *Parent/carer*

There were individual cases where staff from clubs that welcomed children with SEND found it difficult to cater to all their needs, especially where the level of SEND was high. For example, there were accounts of physical barriers to access premises, activities being offered that were not suitable for children with certain physical disabilities, or a lack of capacity to offer one-to-one support if needed.

Where providers identified special needs, they typically discussed with parents/carers how to best support the child. Coordinators and providers said in future they would emphasise that provision is inclusive of all and rethink how to discuss individual child needs with families.

Generally, staff were knowledgeable and experienced in supporting children with SEND. Some coordinators offered training to providers on how to be more inclusive, while others mentioned that in the future, they would offer training on how to identify and support children with additional needs before starting provision. However, one parent/carer had a negative experience where they felt that inadequate care was shown to their child who had SEND at a SEND-specific club. In response, the coordinator helped to move the child to an alternative inclusive provision, which the parent/carer was satisfied with.

More generally, parents/carers generally thought clubs catered well to different age groups and physical abilities. Parents/carers of more than one child found it helpful being able to drop off children of different ages together at clubs, however when this was not possible parents/carers found it challenging to manage multiple drop-offs.

Chapter 6 – Sustainability Summary

Nearly all LAs (95%) had already begun discussing how to make provision sustainable and how to provide similar or wider programmes going forward, by formalisation or developing partnerships, improving processes and identifying other funding sources.

All co-ordinators surveyed said they were very likely (97%) or quite likely (3%) to run HAF again in 2022 if funding were available. Coordinators and providers were keen to run the HAF programme again if funding were available and families expressed interest in future provision. Only 10% of LAs and 59% of clubs said they were very or quite likely to run a similar programme without HAF funding, further illustrating the importance of HAF as a funding source.

Coordinators and clubs reported having taken various steps which could ensure sustainability. These most frequently involved informal networks that had expanded due to HAF, although there was evidence that others took concrete steps including accessing new or potential funding, developing processes, and identifying gaps in the market.

Providers felt they had been upskilled through training provided by the LA to meet DfE's eligibility criteria, and now have due diligence procedures in place. Although coordinators highlighted that retention of upskilled staff is dependent on future funding and longer-term funding cycles.

By September 2021, nearly all LAs (95%) had already begun discussing how to make provision sustainable and how to provide similar or wider programmes going forward. In total, 60% of LAs reported having held initial discussions, with a further 35% having developed specific plans on how to achieve sustainability.

While 35% of LAs had developed plans, results suggest that LAs had taken numerous other concrete steps to ensure the sustainability of HAF-funded activities. Around two-thirds (65%) had developed new formalised networks or partnerships, and 61% had standardised requirements or systems across clubs and providers. More than half (52%) had investigated additional funding streams, and one third (33%) had accessed additional funding streams. Only 10% had not done any of these activities, with the range and detail of actions taken showing that the majority of clubs had taken clear steps that would enhance sustainable delivery in the future (n=113).

Clubs felt that HAF had helped them take various steps that would improve their future sustainability. Steps taken included making better links with LAs or other organisations (76%), identifying gaps in the local market (44%), developing new processes and protocols (37%), developing new fundraising opportunities or accessing significant new funding (36%), establishing partnership agreements (32%), and accessing new training and guidance (26%). Fewer than one in ten (8%) had not done any of these (n=420). This suggests

that clubs now have a better understanding of provision in their local area and are better equipped to collaborate with others for future delivery. They are also more resilient as organisations, thanks to better internal systems and processes.

In two case study areas, additional funding had already been sought and secured for future provision of holiday activities. One LA had been able to harness the evidence base developed through HAF to approach other funders. One provider had also secured additional funding through Arts Council England, The National Lottery, and a local funder, to provide dance classes and music scholarships to children engaged in HAF.

A key theme among coordinators was that, through HAF, connections between the LA and the local VCSO network have been newly formed, or where this relationship was already established, it has been strengthened. One coordinator also reported an increased awareness of providers established in the local area.

At the provider level, one interviewee reported a strengthened network between their organisation and other organisations in the local area who they had worked with to deliver HAF activities. They reported plans to continue working with organisations they had developed new relationships with, outside of the HAF programme.

All coordinators surveyed said they were very likely (97%) or quite likely (3%) to run HAF again in 2022 if funding were available (n=114). This suggests a very high level of satisfaction with the programme and with their capacity to provide similar delivery in the future. Similarly, nearly all clubs surveyed (98%) said that they were likely to run a club again if HAF funding were available for 2022. The main reasons given by the seven clubs who said they were not being likely to run a club again even if funding was available included poor signup and attendance in 2021, the fact they found delivering HAF very challenging and stressful for staff, and complaints around the booking system not being fit for purpose and causing problems for both staff and children.

The provision of HAF funding was incredibly important to clubs feeling able to run a similar programme in the future. Without HAF funding, only 10% of LAs (n=114) said they were very or quite likely to run a similar programme, with 59% of clubs saying likewise (n=421). This suggests that while coordinators are very unlikely to provide widespread HAF provision coordinated at an area level, many clubs still felt they could provide a similar basic service, although a large minority still felt this would be unlikely, suggesting a clear decrease in provision without similar HAF funding.

More broadly, interviewees felt HAF was needed beyond the summer term, particularly as other COVID-19 related support for families, such as the uplift in Universal Credit, would be ending. Some did question whether Christmas provision was suitable as their clubs generally had lower engagement over this period. If the level of funding available for HAF could not support delivery across the school year, a coordinator suggested spreading the current level of funding over time to meet needs beyond the summer holidays.

“Kids are hungry outside of the four weeks of August. We have to feed these kids and feed these families and give them something to come and do.” - *Staff*

Coordinators also felt the lack of certainty around funding made it difficult for them to plan staff workforce development to increase sustainability. Recruiting staff to short-term funded positions for HAF posed a considerable challenge for coordinators who expressed preference for longer-term contracts to facilitate recruitment, retention and training the HAF workforce. Without this, coordinators felt that HAF staff who had been trained through HAF would move on from the programme.

Providers felt their services were now more sustainable due to having more highly skilled staff because of training provided by the LA to meet DfE’s eligibility criteria. Providers and staff also felt that, through HAF, staff developed competencies in working with a range of children of various ages. One club reported that staff had been given the opportunity to take on more responsibility through the expansion of their regular summer activities. These new capabilities position providers well to run future after-school and summer activity programmes, including future HAF provision, although coordinators felt retaining newly trained staff was dependent on future funding and longer-term funding cycles. Providers also felt that HAF had helped them implement due diligence procedures which would increase sustainability.

A minor theme was that HAF kickstarted important conversations within the LA around governance and addressing local need that could support the sustainability of holiday club provision. Within one case study area, the lead provider felt that HAF had helped start conversations about poverty and disadvantage within the LA. For another LA, coordinators said that the challenges faced throughout the commissioning stages of HAF had led to conversations at senior levels of the LA around governance when working with VCS organisations. Coordinators supported these conversations by encouraging VCS providers to share feedback on their experiences within the LA, with this feedback linking into decision-making around governance.

“It’s actually kickstarted a massive conversation about how we do governance for smaller voluntary sector providers.” - *Coordinator*

Perceptions about the sustainability of providers beyond the HAF programme in the case study areas varied across LAs and provider types. One LA characterised by high levels of deprivation shared concerns about the lack of sustainability within the VCSO sector in their area. Some providers felt they would survive without HAF funding but would need to reduce the scale of their activities and adapt their models. Adaptations suggested by providers in the absence of future HAF funding included not providing food or transitioning from a paid employment model to a volunteer-led model. Other providers had less confidence about their sustainability outside of HAF. By contrast, larger, private providers did not report any concerns about their long-term sustainability.

Coordinators emphasised the importance of continued funding to sustain outcomes. A major concern was managing expectations for future holiday provision, as without HAF funding provision would be far more limited. Club staff wanted to re-engage families they have been working with over the summer through future HAF provision, funding dependent, to build on the progress they had made together. One coordinator suggested a three-year funding cycle, with other suggesting larger-scale funding, allowing spend on children under five, and more advance noting of funding to enable improved planning of HAF.

As noted in the introduction, subsequent to the evaluation, the Government announced funding of HAF would continue for a further three years, with funding over £200 million per year.

Chapter 7 - Recommendations

Key recommendations for future delivery include:

- Develop more **centralised guidance**, particularly around compliance and other policies.
- Support LAs to implement **robust booking systems** that support delivery and links to MI collection, recognising that every LA set up differs and therefore a one size fits all may not be appropriate. DfE and Childcare Works should build on their ongoing work to showcase different options to LAs to make informed choices about the booking system they choose.
- Ensure that **signposting to other support** is provided systematically, particularly in linking to health and employment options. LAs should draw on local support and on the steering group to increase the reach and effectiveness of signposting.
- **Effective marketing and communication strategy** in each area to ensure visibility of opportunities for all users and to improve attendance.
- Assess how **nutritional education can best be built into ongoing delivery**, including providing the opportunity to engage both children and parents in activities. This will need to account for different age groups, primarily that it may be more difficult to engage older children in family activities alongside their parents.
- Continue to **provide guidance on School Food Standards**, particularly around how to meet these when cold food is being provided, and ensure providers are clear on the circumstances under which hot and/or cold food is permitted.
- Continue rolling out **high-quality provision with relevant training and support**, including all mandatory expectations, such as safeguarding.
- Support parents by **mapping local childcare sufficiency planning**, considering provision available beyond HAF hours, and how such provision is communicated to HAF parents supporting them to work and look for work.
- Offer a diverse range of activities to attract and engage children of different ages, including working with secondary schools aged children to develop activities that are tailored to their needs.

Learning from the evaluation suggests it will be especially important to:

- **Give LAs and providers more notice and lead-in time for future years of HAF.** In 2021, the tight timeline for programme set-up often proved very challenging. Key learning was that:
 - mapping activities should be proportionate to LAs' starting points for holiday club provision, build on and not duplicate existing knowledge, and take place as early as possible to enable actions to be taken in good time.

- DfE and/or Childcare Works should facilitate closer working arrangements with schools and social services (for examples), to ensure the programme is marketed effectively.

Issues relating to lead-in time may be at least partly addressed by DfE already having announced (subsequent to data collection finishing) that three-year funding will be available from 2022 onwards. This was announced in the Autumn 2021 budget, stating that over £200m per year for the next three years would be available for the HAF programme. The greater security for the programme should facilitate LAs' longer-term planning. LAs were informed of their HAF fundings allocations for the financial year 2022/23 in December 2021.

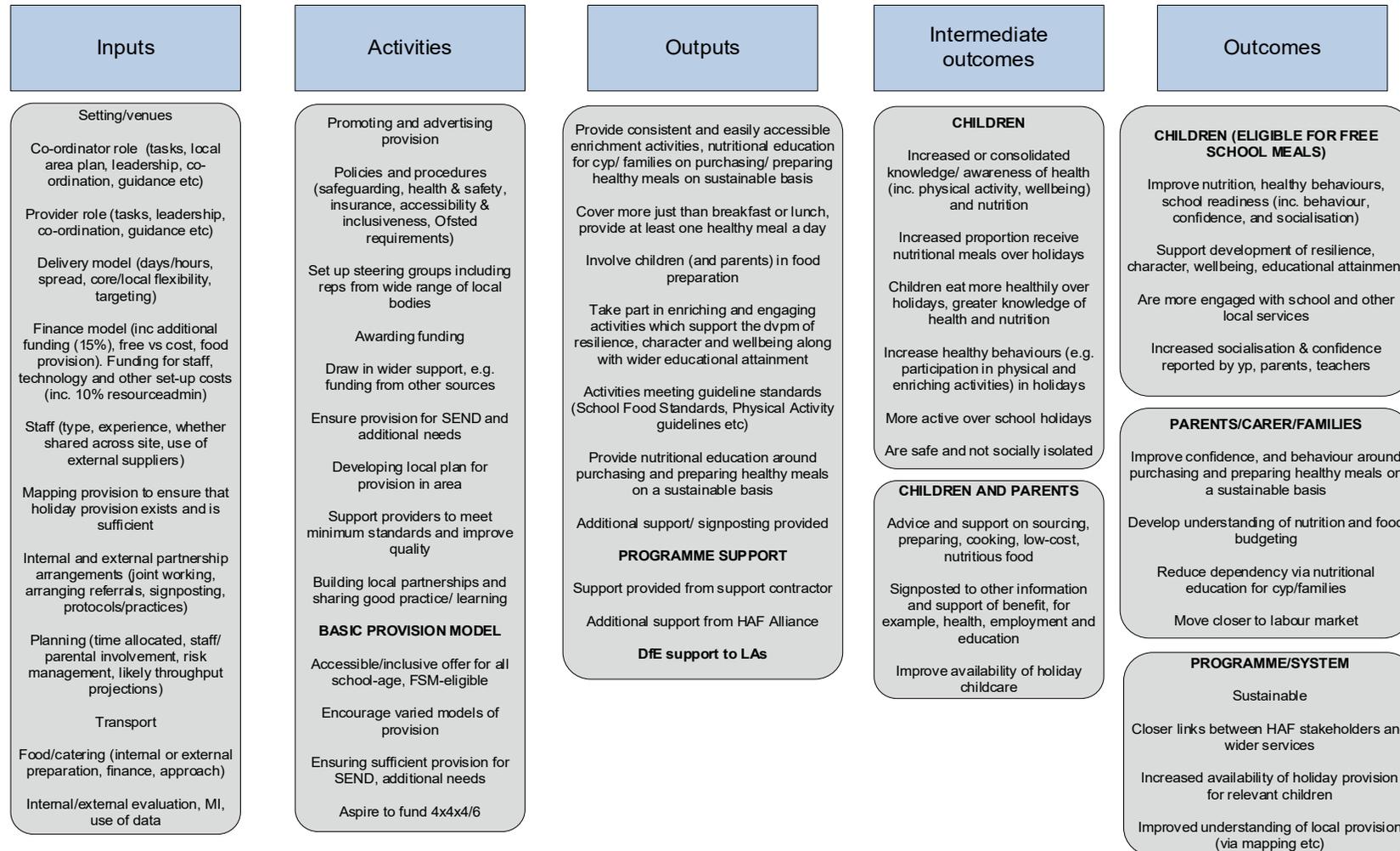
- Consider where and how **more flexibility** might be offered e.g., around the eligibility criteria, bearing in mind that any increase in eligibility flexibility could impact on existing recipients (for example, if increased demand makes it difficult for some eligible individuals to attend).
- **Maintain core standards** around providing activities, a healthy meal and nutritional education, while allowing more flexibility around the type and duration of activities delivered, enabling providers to focus on their areas of expertise, and respond to local needs.
- Ensure that set-up concentrates on **links with possible referral organisations** (particularly schools and social services), while encouraging previous attendees to attend again.
- With long-term funding in place, encourage coordinators and clubs to **consider how HAF can be built upon in each successive year** (e.g., maintaining/updating participant contact lists, developing more comprehensive mapping, creating systematic cross-provider links).

With staff, children, and parents being very positive about the perceived benefits of holiday club provision, the new three-year funding gives areas and clubs the stability they have been requesting. This also places an onus on the DfE and, particularly, those delivering HAF to take advantage of this situation by undertaking serious planning for sustainability so that similar provision continues in the future.

Local authorities and clubs should be encouraged to **undertake sustainability planning** from the start of new provision, basing their plans on a worst-case scenario that similar, large-scale funding may not be available at the end of the three years. Consideration should be given to obligating areas to provide regular updates on the concrete steps they are taking to embed sustainability. Opportunities should be built in for areas and clubs to share learning and experiences, taking a peer-to-peer approach where possible.

Appendix A: Theory of Change

Key evaluation aim is: to “evaluate the impact of HAF 2021 on programme aims (impact evaluation) and to understand whether it is being implemented as intended (process evaluation)”



Appendix B: Technical Report

This section contains separate subsections covering the methodology used for the process evaluation strand and the impact evaluation strand of the evaluation.

Process evaluation

As noted in the main body of the report, a wide range of different data collection approaches were taken as part of the process evaluation, including pre-delivery coordinator interviews, a set of case studies during provision (interviews with staff, young people, and parents/carers), and post-delivery coordinator and strategic lead interviews.

This section outlines the sampling approach that formed the basis for selecting LAs across the process evaluation, before examining each separate data collection approach in turn.

Overall local authority sampling

The process evaluation data collection took place in ten local authorities. The ten local authorities were sampled from a sampling frame consisting of 147 of the 151 local authorities, with York, North Lincolnshire, Bradford, and Sheffield being excluded due to a separate evaluation being conducted in those areas.

The sampling frame for the 147 LAs included criteria on the proportion of children eligible for Free School Meals and the number of 5–18-year-olds in each area. Local authority areas were sampled at random from this sampling frame with targets set based on an equal binary split for each criterion. The target sample and achieved sample are shown in Table 16.

Table 16: Process evaluation LA sampling approach

	Target no. LAs	Achieved no. LAs
Free School Meal percentage		
Top 50%	5	6
Bottom 50%	5	4
5-18 Population		
Top 50%	5	5
Bottom 50%	5	5
Total	10	10

The ten case study areas were also checked to ensure they were generally representative in terms of geographic spread, rural/urban split, whether areas had been involved in HAF previously, and whether areas had applied for the extra 15% funding available.

Case studies took place in one club in each of the ten local authorities. Each LA provided details of all HAF clubs in their area, providing information on:

- Type of club (organisation running the club): LA, private, school, VCISO, other.
- Estimated total number of young people attending during the summer holidays at each club: less than 50, 50-100, more than 100
- Main focus of club: arts and crafts, food preparation, outdoors activity, physical activity/health, general, other

The information on type of club and estimated number of young people attending was used to set quotas to ensure that the ten case study clubs matched the spread of HAF clubs across these two variables. Information on the main focus of the club was used to check there was no systematic bias on this variable. The one club in each LA was selected at random, along with a small number of reserve clubs. The selected club was then checked with the coordinator to make sure that a case study visit was viable – this was the case in nine of the 10 areas, with a reserve club being substituted in the one case where a case study was not possible at the originally selected club due to logistical difficulties. This process resulted in the following number of interviews across quotas:

Table 17: Process evaluation club sampling approach

	Target no. clubs	Achieved no. clubs
Type of club		
Local Authority	0	0
Private	3	3
School	3	3
VCISO	4	4
Other		
Total	10	10
Size of club		
Less than 50	4	4
50-100	3	3
More than 100	3	3
Total	10	10

Following the selection of clubs, club leaders were contacted to arrange the case study interviewees. Further details of the case study interviews and the pre- and post-delivery interviews are contained in the following sections.

Coordinator interviews (pre-delivery)

July/August 2021. Target: 10. Completed: 10.

A set of telephone or online interviews at pre-delivery stage with local area coordinators. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. Interviews covered the interviewee role and responsibilities, the background to HAF in their area, the coordinator model, the design and set-up phase, how HAF was being put into practice, the effectiveness of HAF arrangements to date, and the implementation of quality standards. Ten interviews were conducted, one with the coordinator in each of the ten process evaluation LAs.

Young people interviews (during delivery)

August/September 2021. Target: 45. Completed: 60.

A set of telephone or online interviews during delivery with young people attending HAF provision. All interviews were arranged with the assistance of club staff, with permission sought from parents/carers for any interviewees aged under 16. As interviews often took part during club delivery, interviews lasted approximately ten minutes and covered frequency of club attendance, activities undertaken, and perception of activities.

Parent/carers interviews (during delivery)

August/September 2021. Target: 40. Completed: 34.

A set of telephone or online interviews during delivery conducted with parents or carers of young people attending HAF provision. All interviews were arranged with the assistance of club staff. Interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes. Interviews covered the frequency of attendance by them and their children, rationale for club attendance, perception of the club, views on outcomes for their children and family. Thirty-four interviews were conducted across the ten local authority areas.

Club staff interviews (during delivery)

August/September 2021. Target: 40. Completed: 51.

A set of telephone or online interviews during delivery with staff working during the summer at clubs delivering HAF. Interviews lasted for approximately 45 minutes and covered the interviewees background and role in the club, the club set-up and approach, support and

training received, approach to supporting healthy eating/physical activity/enriching activities, enablers and barriers to effective delivery, perceived outcomes, and sustainability.

Participatory tools (during delivery)

August/September 2021. Target: none. Completed: 60.

Two separate participatory tools were developed based on similar tools used in the 2019 HAF evaluation. One was a single A4 sheet for five- to ten-year-olds asking them what they did in their club, what they liked best, how they felt, and what they would change about the club. The other was a more detailed version for those aged eleven and older asking more detailed questions about what they did, what they found most enjoyable, what changed for them as a result, what they would change about the club, and any other relevant feedback about the club.

The tools were designed as a prompt in interviews, facilitating discussion by allowing interviewees to talk about what they had written, and as a direct source of feedback. They were distributed across all case study areas. In total, 69 of the five- to 10-year-old tools were completed and returned, and four of the eleven and older tools.

Coordinator and strategic lead interviews (post-delivery)

September/October 2021. Target: 15. Completed: 15

Follow-up interviews were conducted with each of the ten coordinators who were interviewed in the pre-delivery phase. Additional interviews were also conducted with five strategic leads in three of the ten case study areas. Strategic leads were individuals who were not coordinators but were involved in the strategic delivery of the programme in that local authority, for example members of HAF steering groups.

Interviews covered the interviewees reflections on their role, how the delivery model worked in practice, whether the programme objectives were met and barriers/facilitators, the effectiveness of arrangements with providers/clubs, the implementation of quality standards, perceived outcomes for young people/families/staff, and sustainability. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes.

Club survey

An online survey was distributed to clubs in 32 Local Authorities. The 32 LAs included all ten local authorities that participated in the case studies, with an additional 22 to maximise number of responses. These 22 additional LAs selected were those that had been contacted as part of the initial feasibility study. A target was set to achieve 400 fully completed responses. Data was received from all coordinators on the type and size of all clubs in their area, with this being used as the target sample and for weighting purposes.

Table 18 shows the approach taken to sample LAs for the club survey.

Table 18: LA sampling approach for club survey

	Target no. LAs	Achieved no. LAs
Free School Meal percentage		
Top 50%	16	16
Bottom 50%	16	16
5-18 Population		
Top 50%	16	19
Bottom 50%	16	13
Total	32	32

Coordinators in each of the LAs were asked to disseminate the survey to all the clubs in their area, with responses being monitored regularly and coordinators requested to send reminders if response rate fell below anticipated levels. The survey was to be completed by a person in charge of the holiday club who could provide information on the club's reach, delivery, and their ongoing plans. The survey covered respondent details, the HAF application process, initial preparations, the nature of delivery, quality standards and activity, training and support, and sustainability. Questionnaires could be completed on any relevant device, including PCs, laptops, tablets or on mobile phone.

The survey was distributed towards the end of provision (30th August) rather than at the end of the holidays to avoid the possibility that staff would not be able to access the survey if their contract finished at the end of HAF or they were on holiday. The survey closed on September 9th, with staff being asked to complete it at the end of the holidays.

In total, 424 completed questionnaires were received from the 1,064 total sample (a response rate of 40%), meeting the 400 target. Responses were weighted to ensure they were representative of the overall proportion across the 32 LAs in terms of local authority area and the original sampling criteria of type of club.

Table 19 shows the proportion of clubs in each LA in the original sample, the proportion achieved in the unweighted data, and then the proportion in the final weighted data.

Table 19: Target and achieved sample for club survey (LA)

	Total sam- ple %	Unweighted data %	Weighted data %
Barking and Dagenham	1.8%	3.3%	3.4%
Barnet	3.8%	4.0%	3.6%
Bedford	2.9%	3.1%	3.6%
Blackburn	0.7%	0.9%	0.8%
Burnley	1.8%	3.1%	2.9%
Croydon	4.7%	0.2%	0.3%
Derby	1.7%	3.1%	3.0%
Gloucestershire	4.9%	4.5%	4.1%
Hull (Kingston upon Hull)	5.0%	2.8%	2.6%
Hyndburn	1.7%	2.1%	2.4%
Kingston (Kingston upon Thames)	0.9%	0.5%	0.6%
Lambeth	7.4%	6.4%	5.5%
Lancaster	1.0%	1.7%	1.8%
Luton	3.5%	3.3%	3.7%
Manchester	9.2%	11.1%	10.7%
Norfolk	3.9%	7.8%	8.2%
Oxfordshire	4.7%	1.2%	1.4%
Pendle	1.1%	1.4%	1.6%
Ribble Valley	1.4%	1.4%	1.7%
Rossendale	2.0%	1.2%	1.1%
Sandwell	3.9%	6.1%	5.7%
Southend	1.7%	1.2%	1.3%
Southwark	3.4%	4.2%	4.0%
Staffordshire	2.2%	4.7%	5.2%
Stockton	2.9%	4.2%	4.3%
Sunderland	3.8%	3.8%	3.6%
Tameside	4.6%	0.2%	0.3%
Thurrock	2.3%	2.4%	2.5%
Tower Hamlets	3.9%	1.7%	1.5%

West Sussex	4.2%	1.7%	2.0%
Wigan	1.2%	2.8%	2.9%
Wolverhampton	1.9%	2.8%	2.7%
LA not stated in survey response	n/a	1.2%	1.4%
Total	1,064	424	424

Source: Club survey and coordinator feedback

Table 20 shows similar data for the size of club. Local Authorities, schools, and other types of clubs were grouped together due to the relatively small proportions of each in the sample and club population.

Table 20: Target and achieved sample for club survey (type)

	Total sam- ple %	Unweighted data %	Weighted data %
Type of club			
VCSO	46%	57%	46%
Private	34%	26%	34%
LA/School/Other	20%	17%	20%
Total	1,064	424	424

Source: Club survey and coordinator feedback

Coordinator survey

An online survey was sent to the named coordinator in all 151 Local Authorities. The survey lasted approximately 15 minutes and covered views on HAF during Summer 2021, how HAF was implemented, the delivery model adopted for HAF, the training and support accessed, the number of different types of clubs delivering in Summer 2021, and joint working and learning. As with the club survey, questionnaires could be completed on any relevant device, including PCs, laptops, tablets or on mobile phone.

Survey fieldwork ran from the 6th to 17th September, meaning that all surveys were completed once holiday provision had completed. In total, 116 completed questionnaires were provided, representing a response rate of 77%. Due to the high response rate, data was not weighted.

Data cleaning, and analysis

All interviews were recorded and then analysed using NVivo. Survey data for the process elements was cleaned, weighted, and analysed in Excel.

Management Information

Management Information from the October Delivery Report was processed and analysed in R, with the data being linked to responses from the coordinator survey to provide a single dataset consisting of all relevant summative data collection with coordinators.

The October Delivery Report was a census of all coordinators conducted by the DfE at the end of the summer holidays, with data received by DfE from all 151 Local Authorities. Information was provided on the implementation of the programme during summer, the impact of COVID-19 on provision, expenditure, planning and quality standards for Christmas delivery. As the October Delivery Report provides data from all coordinators, it is used in this report as the main source of data from coordinators on attendance, quality standards and expenditure.

Feasibility and Impact evaluation

The impact evaluation included two separate phases, an initial feasibility study, followed by the selected feasibility option, a single point in time family survey.

Feasibility study

The feasibility study took place in June and July and examined four separate empirical approaches:

- 1) Linking MI to the NPD
- 2) Linkage MI to Universal Credits data
- 3) Comparing HAF attendees to those on HAF waitlists who did not attend HAF
- 4) A dose-response approach

The first three options listed were based on comparing a treatment group (FSM-eligible HAF club attendees) to a comparator group (FSM-eligible young people who did not attend HAF clubs) to assess changes in outcomes such as knowledge of healthy food, eating habits, and physical activity levels. The dose-response would have involved a treatment only group and compared outcomes for those attending different numbers of sessions.

The feasibility study showed that Universal Credits data was not available in time, areas were not employing waitlists, and a dose-response approach would not provide a true counterfactual. As a result, the best possible option was using the NPD to provide a sample frame for a detailed survey.

An initial option was considered which would have allowed HAF participants to be recorded in local authority management information, identified in the NPD and then sent a

questionnaire as part of the treatment group. Those who did not attend HAF clubs could also be identified in the NPD and be sent the same questionnaire and form a comparison group. This approach would have been particularly cost-effective as identifying HAF attendees in advance would remove the need to conduct a sufficiently large-scale survey among eligible families to identify both the small proportion of HAF attendees (treatment) and the larger proportion of non-attendees (comparison group). This option did not prove feasible as there was insufficient time to work across local authorities to ensure that standardised management information could be collected with relevant permissions to share and link to the NPD.

As a result, an alternative NPD-based option was adopted as outlined in the following sections.

The feasibility study also showed that it was not practically possible to conduct a pre- and post-study within the existing study timelines and budget. While this approach would have been ideal, it would have required an additional questionnaire being developed, cognitively tested, and implemented before holiday provision started, with a sufficiently large sample size to account for potentially high levels of attrition between the pre and post waves.

Impact evaluation

The impact evaluation was based on a single point in time family survey, with the survey sent to a representative spread of 16 Local Authorities where the nature and branding of HAF provision made it easy for participants to identify whether they had attended HAF clubs or not. NPD data was used to draw up the sample, with an invite to take part in the online survey sent to 50,000 participants. Completed responses were then split into treatment and comparison groups according to whether respondents had attended a HAF club or not. The following sections provide more detail on the methodology used.

Local Authority Sample

A sampling frame was developed based on the proportion of children eligible for Free School Meals and the number of 5–18-year-olds in each of the 151 LAs. A long list of 27 LAs was developed to provide a potential sample, with the four areas where a separate evaluation was commissioned (York, North Lincolnshire, Bradford, and Sheffield) being excluded as in the process evaluation.

The coordinators at all 27 Local Authorities were contacted to discuss provision in their areas, particularly whether the nature and branding of HAF would make it easy for participants to identify whether they had attended HAF clubs or not. Local authorities were selected for the final sample if their mapping of provision showed that all or almost all of the free provision in their area was HAF provision. This meant that anyone stating that their child attended a free place at a club during the summer could be included in the treatment

group, with information provided on the name of the club they attended also being used to check whether they could be allocated to the treatment or comparison group. Almost all local authorities (21 out of the 27 contacted) stated that this approach was suitable, therefore reducing (but not eliminating) the possibility that this approach introduced considerable bias through selecting only a certain subgroup of LAs.

Following this stage, 16 Local Authorities were selected to form the final sample, with the spread of FSM eligible and 5-18 population shown in the table below.

Table 21: Impact evaluation LA sampling approach

	Target no. LAs	Achieved no. LAs
Free School Meal percentage		
Top 50%	8	10
Bottom 50%	8	6
5-18 Population		
Top 50%	8	6
Bottom 50%	8	10
Total	16	16

Due to the need to focus on areas where HAF provision could be clearly identified, the final sample of 16 areas was slightly biased towards areas with higher proportions of pupils being eligible for Free School Meals, and smaller areas. The final sixteen case study areas were also checked to ensure they were generally representative in terms of geographic spread, rural/urban split, whether areas had been involved in HAF previously, and whether areas had applied for the extra 15% funding available.

Sampling Families

National Pupil Database data was accessed for all Free School Meal eligible children in the 16 Local Authorities aged 8-15, with there being 120,830 eligible children across the 16 areas. Several steps were then taken to develop the final sampling frame:

Firstly, families were defined as children with identical first lines of address and postcode. This is a standard approach although it is possible that errors in recording addresses or children staying at multiple addresses may have affected overall accuracy. One child was excluded from the sample as they did not have an address recorded. The remaining 120,829 children being split into 82,665 family units.

Addresses were then divided into strata based on the number of eligible children living at each address, so that households with more children were more likely to be selected in the sample than those with less children. If this step was not taken and addresses were chosen

at random, families with only one child would be over-represented. The following number of addresses were selected:

- 24,880 from addresses with only one eligible child about (45% of all these addresses)
- 18,418 from addresses with two eligible children (89% of these addresses)
- 4,985 from addresses with three eligible children (99% of these addresses)
- 1,717 from addresses with four or more eligible children (100% of these addresses)

This approach meant that households with two eligible children were about twice as likely to be selected as households with one eligible child. Children from larger households were slightly under-represented as there were fewer of these available in the sample, with this being corrected for at the later weighting stage.

Out of the 82,665 families, 50,000 were sampled (60% of the total), with 35,000 allocated to the main sample and 15,000 to the reserve sample. Although a very high proportion of eligible families were included in the sample, an implicit stratification approach was used to make sure a representative spread of respondents was achieved across key NPD characteristics. Addresses were sorted by LA, IMD decile, whether or not there was at least one child with an ethnicity other than white, and whether or not there was at least one child with an identified SEN. The sampling algorithm then chose every nth address from a random starting point.

Developing and conducting the family survey

The final family survey was designed as a fifteen-minute online survey, with the first ten minutes being completed by the parent and the second five minutes by the child. An initial questionnaire was developed, cognitive testing undertaken, then the final content approved.

Initial development and cognitive testing

An initial survey was developed at the start of July, consisting of approximately fifteen minutes of questions for parents and around ten minutes of questions for children. The questionnaire at this stage was deliberately longer than the final version so that different question options could be considered and removed if required.

Cognitive interviews took place between 19th and 23rd July, with parents/carers of children aged 8-15, who had attended a holiday club recently and were in receipt of benefits relevant to receipt of free school meals. Nine interviews were carried out, with six of these including parents/carers and children, with three solely including parents/carers. Families were paid an incentive of £40 to aid recruitment and as a thank you for their time. Interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and involved going through all draft survey questions

with cognitive probes to understand how parents and children were answering and to identify questions that needed refining or could be removed.

Feedback from participants suggested that:

- Parents were knowledgeable about the nature of clubs they attended, including the activities their children did and the food provided. Some younger children struggled to remember or articulate similar information
- Participants did not feel that questions were overly intrusive or judgemental – this was important given questions around food being offered at home and interest/confidence in healthy eating
- The questionnaire could be simplified, mainly removing certain questions (mostly where different approaches to capturing similar constructs were being tested), and changing wording, most notably the introductory wording for certain rating scales and some of the text in the child section of the questionnaire. Simplification was important as feedback suggested the child section was too long, with children often spending considerable time on individual questions, particularly those requiring detailed recall or rating various options

A final questionnaire was then developed following discussions with DfE and the input of the expert group. The parent section of the questionnaire included questions on the name and details of clubs their child attended, reasons for non-attendance, child and family demographic details, engagement and attendance at the club, childcare provision during the holidays, child healthy eating and physical activity during the holidays, parental knowledge and attitudes to healthy eating and signposting to additional information. Children were asked whether they enjoyed attending the club, activities they took part in, the impact of the club on healthy eating, contact with friends/peers, and their overall views on the club.

All parents/carers were asked at the end of their section of the interview to consent to their responses being linked back to the National Pupil Database so that information on their NPD records could be linked to their survey responses. Those who did not consent were asked to provide relevant demographic details so that their data could still be used for analysis purposes without being linked to the NPD.

Fieldwork

All 35,000 families in the main sample were posted an invitation to take part in the 15-minute online survey. A letter was provided which included information summarising the study and providing a log-in to access the online questionnaire. It also included some FAQs covering how and why families were selected as well as more detail on data protection and the anonymisation of information. Two reminder letters were also issued which also included a leaflet explaining the rationale for the study in more detail as well as further information about what would happen to the results of the survey.

Fieldwork ran from the 9th September to the 18th October for the main sample, with two reminders (17th and 27th September). As initial monitoring showed response rate was below projections, the reserve sample was issued with fieldwork running from 30th September to 18th October, with one reminder (8th October). When fieldwork closed, there were 4,996 responses in total. In some cases, the parental section of the questionnaire was completed, but not the child section of the questionnaire. In these cases, the parent section was still used to maximise the sample size and as many of the key study outcomes were in this section. This resulted in 4,996 completed parental surveys and 3,949 child surveys.

Treatment and Comparison Groups

Final data was cleaned, checked, and weighted so that the achieved sample closely matched the profile of the eligible children in the 16 selected LAs. The weighting took into account two reasons why profile of the achieved sample might differ from the profile of the population. Firstly, as only one child per family was sampled, different children had a different probability of being sampled (based on the number of children in the household). Secondly, different types of families were likely to have different probabilities of responding to the survey (e.g., families were more likely to respond when the sampled child was younger than when the sampled child was older).

As a results, weights were applied based on a combination of the probability of a child being selected from the NPD and sent a survey, along with a modelled probability of that family then responding to the survey. The weights were calculated as the inverse of the product of these two probabilities. In practice, this means that cases with lower probabilities are assigned higher weights, reflecting the fact that these cases are relatively under-represented in the final achieved sample.

The probability of being sampled (given the number of eligible children in the household) was calculated directly from the NPD. The probability of responding to the survey was estimated using a logistic regression modelling the odds of response as a function of characteristics available in the NPD or derived as part of the sampling process:

- Characteristics of the selected child (school year, gender, ethnicity, SEN status)
- Deprivation (IMD decile)
- Rural/urban classification of the recorded home address
- Number of eligible children in the household
- Whether the sample was originally selected for the main sample or the reserve sample

With these weights, the achieved sample is representative of the population of eligible children in the 16 LAs, at least with respect to the characteristics listed above. A small adjustment was made to the weight so that the proportion of respondents in each LA matched exactly the proportion of the population in each LA.

Table 22 below shows the profile of the population of eligible children, and the profile of the sample before and after applying the weights.

Table 22: Population and sample profiles

	Population (%)	Unweighted sample (%)	Weighted sample (%)
Gender of child			
Female	49%	48%	49%
Male	51%	52%	51%
Age of child			
8	14%	16%	14%
9	14%	15%	13%
10	13%	14%	13%
11	13%	14%	14%
12	12%	12%	13%
13	12%	11%	12%
14	11%	9%	11%
15	10%	9%	10%
Ethnicity of child			
White	57%	46%	56%
Mixed	9%	9%	10%
Asian	17%	20%	17%
Black	12%	17%	12%
Other	5%	8%	6%
SEND status of child			
No SEN status	71%	74%	71%
Any SEN status	29%	26%	29%
No. eligible children in household			
1	47%	51%	47%
2	33%	36%	34%
3	12%	9%	12%
4 or more	7%	3%	8%

Impact analysis required respondents to be allocated to either treatment (child attended HAF club) or comparison (child did not attend HAF club) groups depending on their response to initial questions on holiday club participation. This involved several steps as outlined below:

- All those stating that they received a free place at a club due to their child being eligible for FSM were allocated to the treatment group. This is because all the 16 LAs sampled noted that only HAF clubs were offering free provision based on FSM eligibility.
- For the LAs that stated that the vast majority of free clubs in their area were HAF funded, parents reporting that their child received a free space/some free sessions at a summer club were included in the treatment group. This is because these LAs noted that any free provision outside of HAF was either non-existent or very minimal.
- For the small number of parents who were unsure if they received a free space at a club (2.4% of family survey respondents), the club name parents included in the survey was compared to a list of club names provided by each coordinator, to determine if the child attended a HAF club. Where no club name was given by the parent, the child was placed in the comparator group.
- For the LAs that stated that some other free provision was available, where parents included a club name that matched a name on the list of HAF clubs provided by coordinators, the child was placed in the treatment group. Where a match was not found or where parents did not provide a club name, the child was placed in the comparator group.
- Parents noting that they paid for their children to attend a club were placed in the comparator group.

Those who did not attend any clubs were placed in the comparator group. This process resulted in the following number of child and parent responses by group:

Table 23: Maximum number of child and parent responses

Survey respondent	HAF users (treatment)	Non-HAF users (comparator)	Total
Parent	559	4437	4996
Child	469	3703	4172

A further stage involving Inverse Probability Weighting (IPW) was required to ensure that the treatment and comparator groups had a similar profile, with this aiming to facilitate accurate comparison across HAF and non-HAF users.

A randomisation check, using a logistic regression, was run to assess the specific characteristics that might affect whether a respondent ended up in the treatment or comparison group. This check included the below characteristics:

- Healthy food types eaten by the child before the summer holidays
- Child's level of physical activity before the summer holidays (more or less than 30 minutes a day)
- Child's age
- Parents age (over/under 40)
- Child's gender
- Child's ethnic group
- IMD decile (score 1-10)
- Child's SEND status
- Parental work status (if the parent was unemployed and looking for work)
- Parental education level (if the parent had any formal qualifications)

This resulted in a list of three characteristics where the treatment and comparator group different significantly (according to both logistic regression and balance checks), namely physical activity levels before summer, child age and IMD score, with only minor differences across other characteristics. All ten variables were then used in the IPW to ensure that the profile of treatment and comparison group matched. A final balance check showed no significant differences in characteristics between the treatment and comparator groups after the IPW had been applied. The IPW and randomisation analysis was conducted in R. The effective sample size (taking into account the effect of applying IPW) for the comparator group was 2,345, while the treatment group is 559.

Analysis

A Generalised Least Squares (GLM) regression was conducted using the weights constructed by the IPW to compare the treatment and comparator groups across the main outcome measures (food types and physical activity). Secondary outcomes were also analysed using the IPW weights to produce proportions for the treatment and comparator group (e.g., childcare and information support). Characteristics of the treatment and comparator groups presented in the report use the survey weights only (not the IPW).

The results of the IPW regression on the main outcomes (food types and physical activity) were also triangulated with results from a basic ordinary least squares (OLS) regression on the "unweighted" data. The results were very similar to the IPW results confirming the robustness of the model, as the signs and statistical significance were the same in both models, and across all outcomes. The main difference observed is that IPW findings generally showed smaller effects in size, which could suggest that the IPW model is successfully controlling for the identified imbalances in characteristics and is isolating the effects of HAF from external factors as much as possible. All the analysis was conducted in R.

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Appendix D: Family Survey Questionnaire

Welcome to the Summer Holiday Activities and Food Survey which we are carrying out on behalf of the Department for Education. The survey should take around 10 minutes to complete. The results from this research will help the Department for Education understand how young people have found their summer holidays this year. The results will be published online on gov.uk.

Thank you for taking part!

Q1 Before we start the survey, please could you confirm that you are the parent or carer of [named child]? This survey should be completed by a parent or carer.

When answering the following questions, please only think about [named child].

Q2 Thinking about the summer holidays that have just finished, did [named child] attend any holiday clubs?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

If 'Yes' selected at Q2, please go to Q3. Otherwise please go to Q6.

Q3 Please write in the name(s) of any holiday club [named child] attended.

Q4 Which of the following best applies to the holiday club(s) that [named child] attended this summer (single response)?

- It was free for them to attend
- They had to pay to attend
- It was free for some sessions, and they had to pay for some sessions
- Don't know

Q5 Were any of the summer holiday clubs free for [named child] to attend because you are able to claim free school meals (single response)?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Q6 For children that did not attend a holiday club, why didn't [named child] attend a holiday club this summer? Please choose all that apply.

- Nothing available locally / clubs too far away
- Cost / clubs are too expensive

- Clubs not running in the days or weeks we needed
- Clubs not running at the times of day we needed
- Child not interested / did not want to attend
- I was not interested / did not want child to attend
- Wasn't aware of any clubs they could attend
- Another reason (please write in)
- Don't know

Q7 For children that did attend a holiday club, how old was [named child] when they started to attend the holiday club during the summer holidays that have just finished?

Q8 Before this summer holiday, had [named child] ever attended a holiday club where any of the sessions were free for them to attend?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know/ can't remember

Q9 Including yourself, how many individuals aged 16 or over live in your household?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8 or more
- Prefer not to say

Q10 Including [named child], how many children aged 15 or under live in your household?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8 or more
- Prefer not to say

Q11 Do you (or your household) own or rent the home that you live in?

- Own home outright (no mortgage to pay off)
- Own home but with a mortgage to pay off
- Part own and part rent (shared ownership)
- Rent privately
- Rent from council or local authority
- Rent from housing association, housing co-operative, charitable trust or registered social landlord
- Live rent-free (including living rent-free in a friend's or relative's property)
- Something else (please write in)
- Prefer not to answer

Q12 Which of the following best describes the current working status of the main income earner in the household? Paid work includes being employed or self-employed.

- Full-time paid work (30+ hours per week)
- Part-time paid work (8-29 hours per week)
- Part-time paid work (Under 8 hours per week)
- Retired
- Still at school
- In full-time higher education
- Unemployed (looking for work)
- Not in paid employment (not looking for work)
- Prefer not to say

Q13 Do you have any formal qualifications? This could include qualifications from school like GCSEs or A levels or from college or university such as BTECs or NVQs.

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

If 'Yes' at Q13, please go to Q14. Otherwise please go to Q18.

Q14 Have you achieved a qualification at degree level or above?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Q15 Have you achieved an NVQ or equivalent qualification?

- NVQ level 3 or equivalent (for example, BTEC National, OND or ONC, City and Guilds Advanced Craft)
- NVQ level 2 or equivalent (for example BTEC General, City and Guilds Craft)
- NVQ level 1 or equivalent
- None of these apply
- Don't know

Q16 Have you achieved an AS, A level or equivalent?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Q17 Have you achieved a GCSE or equivalent, for example Basic Skills course, O levels or CSEs?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Q18 How old are you?

- 24 or younger
- 25-29 years
- 30-34 years
- 35-39 years
- 40-44 years
- 45-49 years
- 50-54 years
- 55-59 years
- 60-64 years
- 65 and over
- Prefer not to say

Q19 Can we check, is [named child] eligible for Free School Meals?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Q20 If Yes to Q18, has [named child] received Free School Meals in the last 12 months?

- Yes

- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Q21 For children that attended a holiday club, thinking about the holiday club that [named child] went to in the summer holidays that have just finished, how many days did [named child] attend this holiday club over the summer holiday? Please provide an estimate if you are not completely sure

Q22 On days when [named child] attended this holiday club how many hours did they typically spend there?

- Less than 1 hour
- 1-2 hours
- 3-4 hours
- 5-6 hours
- 7-8 hours
- More than 8 hours
- It varied a lot
- Don't know / can't remember

Q23 Now thinking about the summer holiday that has just finished as a whole, including the holiday clubs we have already asked you about, did you ever use any of the following types of childcare for ANY of your children? If you have used any other types of childcare please include each one in one of the separate boxes provided. Please select all that apply.

- Holiday clubs
- Childminders
- Nursery
- Family members or friends
- Other (please type in)
- None – received childcare for free
- Don't know

If you selected 'none' or 'don't know', please go to Q28, otherwise please go to Q24.

Q24 Which of the following types of childcare that you used did you have to pay for? Please select all that apply.

- Holiday clubs
- Childminders
- Nursery
- Family members or friends

- Other (please type in)
- None – received childcare for free
- Don't know

Q25 Thinking of the childcare that you paid for, did you, or will you, claim back any of the costs through Universal Credit or Tax Free Childcare? Please select all that apply.

- Yes, through Universal Credit
- Yes, through Tax Free Childcare
- No, I did not know that I could claim back costs
- No, I did not need to claim back costs
- No, I am not eligible to claim back costs
- Don't know

Q26 How easy or difficult was it to cover the cost of the childcare that you paid for over the summer holidays?

- Very easy
- Easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Difficult
- Very difficult
- Don't know

Q27 How easy or difficult was it to find suitable childcare over the summer holidays?

- Very easy
- Easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Difficult
- Very difficult
- Not applicable - did not need to use childcare
- Don't know

Q28 You said you didn't pay anyone to care for your child / your children over the summer holidays. Why was this? Please select all that apply (only asked if selected 'none' in Q23).

- I looked after my children myself
- I have family and friends who looked after my children for free
- My child/children attended a free holiday club
- The cost of childcare was too high

- I could take my children with me to work
- I claimed back the cost through Universal Credit or Tax Free Childcare
- Another reason (please write in the space below)
- Don't know

Q29 Before today, were you aware that parents can claim back some of the cost of child-care if they are eligible for Universal Credit or Tax Free Childcare?

- Yes
- No

Q30 Would you say that the childcare that you used during the summer holidays meant that you or your partner were able to do any of the following? Please select all that apply (only asked if childcare options were selected in Q24).

- Work more hours per week
- Work fewer hours per week
- Work on more days per week
- Work on fewer days per week
- Change the shifts worked to fit better with looking after the child(ren)
- Stay in work
- Keep working the same number of hours
- Find a job that pays more
- Find a job that is more interesting
- It has had another impact on my/my partners job (please specify) *Open
- None of these
- Don't know

The next few questions are about the types of food that your child had during the summer holidays.

Q31 Thinking about what your child had for lunch during an average day in the summer holidays, did they have, or were they offered (only asked if answered 'No' to Q2):

	Yes	No	Don't know
At least one portion of fruit			
At least one portion of vegetables			

Wholemeal (brown) pasta or bread			
Some meat, fish, eggs or beans			
Some milk or cheese			
Fresh water			

Q32 Thinking about what your child had for lunch during an average day in the summer holidays when they attended the holiday club, did they have, or were they offered (only asked if answered 'Yes' to Q2):

	Yes	No	Don't know	Not applicable - did not have lunch at the club
At least one portion of fruit				
At least one portion of vegetables				
Wholemeal (brown) pasta or bread				
Some meat, fish, eggs or beans				
Some milk or cheese				
Fresh water				

If you're not sure what your child had for lunch at the holiday club, you could check with them. If your child didn't have lunch at the club, please select 'not applicable'.

Q33 Thinking about what your child had for lunch during an average day in the summer holidays when your child did not attend the holiday club, did they have, or were they offered (only asked if answered 'Yes' to Q2):

	Yes	No	Don't know
At least one portion of fruit			

At least one portion of vegetables			
Wholemeal (brown) pasta or bread			
Some meat, fish, eggs or beans			
Some milk or cheese			
Fresh water			

Q34 During the summer holidays, how often did [named child] have the following food and drink for lunch?

	Crisps, chocolates, biscuits or sweets	Sugary or fizzy drinks (excluding fruit juice)	Deep fried, battered or breaded food	Processed meat (e.g., burgers, sausages, meat pies, sausage rolls etc)
Every day				
Most days of the week				
Once or twice a week				
Less than once a week				
Never				
Don't know				

Q35 Now thinking about what your child had for lunch during an average weekday during term-time before the summer holidays, did they have, or were they offered:

	Yes	No	Don't know
At least one portion of fruit			
At least one portion of vegetables			

Wholemeal (brown) pasta or bread			
Some meat, fish, eggs or beans			
Some milk or cheese			
Fresh water			

Q36 During the summer holidays, in an average week, how often did your child see their friends, or play with children their own age?

- On 7 days of the week
- On 6 days of the week
- On 5 days of the week
- On 4 days of the week
- On 3 days of the week
- On 2 days of the week
- On 1 day of the week
- Less than once a week
- Don't know

Q37 During an average day in the summer holidays, how much physical exercise would you say that your child did? This could include things like going for a walk, going to the park, playing football, going swimming, dance classes, or any other kind of physical exercise (only asked if answered 'No' to Q2).

- Less than 10 minutes
- Less than half an hour
- About half an hour
- About three-quarters of an hour
- One hour
- More than an hour
- Cannot give estimate

Q38 During a day in the summer holidays where your child attended the holiday club, how much physical exercise would you say that your child did? This could include things like going for a walk, going to the park, playing football, going swimming, dance classes, or any other kind of physical exercise (only asked if answered 'Yes' to Q2).

- Less than 10 minutes
- Less than half an hour
- About half an hour
- About three-quarters of an hour

- One hour
- More than an hour
- Cannot give estimate

Q39 During a day in the summer holidays where your child did not attend the holiday club, how much physical exercise would you say that your child did? This could include things like going for a walk, going to the park, playing football, going swimming, dance classes, or any other kind of physical exercise (only asked if answered 'Yes' to Q2).

- Less than 10 minutes
- Less than half an hour
- About half an hour
- About three-quarters of an hour
- One hour
- More than an hour
- Cannot give estimate

Q40 Now thinking about an average weekday during term-time before the summer holidays, how much physical exercise would you say that your child did, including time at school? This could include things like going for a walk, going to the park, playing football, going swimming, dance classes, or any other kind of physical exercise.

- Less than 10 minutes
- Less than half an hour
- About half an hour
- About three-quarters of an hour
- One hour
- More than an hour
- Cannot give estimate

Q41 On a scale of 1 – 10, with 10 being very confident and 1 being not at all confident, how confident are you that you can purchase and prepare healthy meals for you and your family?

- 1 - Not at all confident
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8

- 9
- 10 - Very confident
- Prefer not to say

Q42 Over the summer holidays, did you see any information about buying, preparing or cooking affordable healthy food?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know / can't remember

Q43 Did you see or hear about this from a holiday club? This could include seeing information online or in a leaflet (only asked to those answering 'Yes' to Q42).

- Yes
- No

Q44 Over the summer holidays did you see or have access to any information about any of the following:

	Yes	No	Don't know/ can't remember
Employment opportunities			
Education, volunteering and training opportunities			
Local sport clubs for children			
Holiday clubs			
Childcare services			
Health services			

Q45 Did you see or hear about this from a holiday club? This could include seeing information online or in a leaflet.

	Yes	No	Don't know/ can't remember
Employment opportunities			
Education, volunteering and training opportunities			
Local sport clubs for children			

Holiday clubs			
Childcare services			
Health services			

Q46 The Government’s Department for Education holds information about your child and their education. Do you give us your permission to link this information to your survey answers?

This includes information about your child’s ethnicity, gender, the area where they go to school, any special educational needs and periods of free school meals eligibility. If you would like to know more about how the Department for Education uses personal information, please find their personal information charter here.

We would like to add this information to your survey answers to create a more accurate picture of your child’s life and experiences. This information will only be used for research purposes.

Your information is confidential: this means that your name and address will never be included in the results. To add this information, we need your permission to create a link between your child’s education information and the survey answers you’ve just provided. The linking will be carried out by Kantar.

You can change or withdraw your permissions at any time by contacting the research team at summersurvey@kantar.com or by calling 0800 206 2183. If you withdraw your permission, data that has already been linked will be retained but no future linking will take place.

- Yes
- No

If you selected Yes to Q46, please go to Q50, otherwise please go to Q47.

Q47 Is [named child]:

- Male
- Female
- Other (please write in)
- Prefer not to say

Q48 How old is [named child]?

Q49 What is [named child]’s ethnic group? Please choose one option that best describes your child’s ethnic group or background.

- White English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British
- White Irish
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Any other White background
- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other mixed / multiple ethnic background
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Any other Asian background
- African
- Caribbean
- Any other Black / African / Caribbean background
- Arab
- Any other ethnic group (please specify) *Open
- Prefer not to say

Q50 The Department for Education would like to link other information that is in the National Pupil Database (NPD) to your survey answers in the future. This would include information about your child's participation and achievement in school and further education as well as details about their school, college they attend.

Do you give your permission for your child's name and your survey answers to be passed to the Department for Education so that your records can be identified in the future to add on information from the National Pupil Database (NPD)?

Adding in these extra details to your survey answers opens up possibilities to understand the experiences of young people. This information will only be used for research purposes. To add this information, we need your permission to create a link between your child's education information and the survey answers you've just provided.

- Yes
- No

Q51 Thank you for your answers so far. We now have some questions that we'd like [named child] to answer. It should only take less than 5 minutes. If it is difficult for [named child] to take part on their own then you can complete the questions together.

Please could you confirm that you are happy for [named child] to take part? If now is not a good time you can come back later using the log-in details on the letter.

- Yes
- No
- Please enter your Full Name
- Please enter your Relationship to [Named Child]

The next few questions are for [named child] to answer.

Hello! You have been invited to take part in a survey about what you have been doing over the summer holidays. Your help will help us to improve school holidays in the future!

Before you start, here are some things you should know:

- It will take about 5 minutes
- Taking part is up to you, and there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers
- Your information is private, and no-one apart from our researchers will see what you type. The only exception is if you type something that makes them concerned that you or somebody else is at risk of harm. We would have a duty to report this, to keep you and others safe.
- The final results of this research will be sent to the Government, but they will not be able to know what you have said.
- Your parent or carer has been asked if they agree for you to take part. It is still your choice whether you want to take part in the research or not. You do not need to tell them any answers you have given us unless you want to.

Q52 Are you happy to continue?

- Yes
- No

Q53 How much did you enjoy taking part in the holiday club that you went to this summer? You can answer 1 to 10, where 10 means "enjoyed a lot" and 1 means "did not enjoy at all" (only asked if answered 'Yes' to Q2).

- 1 - did not enjoy at all
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8

- 9
- 10 - enjoyed a lot

Q54 Which of these did you do on the days that you went to the holiday club? Please choose all the things that you did (only asked if answered 'Yes' to Q2).

- Outdoor sport or exercise
- Indoor sport or exercise
- Games (quizzes, board games etc) you do sitting down
- Arts and crafts
- Cooking
- Learning about food
- Trips out
- Music, dance or drama
- Organised activities over the Internet while at home
- Something else (please write in)

Q55 Which of these activities did you do on the days that you DID NOT go to the holiday club? Please select all of the things that you did on the days you did not go to the club (only asked if answered 'Yes' to Q2).

- Outdoor sport or exercise
- Indoor sport or exercise
- Games (quizzes, board games etc) you do sitting down
- Arts and crafts
- Cooking
- Learning about food
- Trips out
- Music, dance or drama
- Organised activities over the Internet while at home
- Something else (please write in)

Q56 Which of these activities did you do in a normal week during the summer holidays? Please select all of the things that you did in a normal week (only asked if answered 'No' to Q2).

- Outdoor sport or exercise
- Indoor sport or exercise
- Games (quizzes, board games etc) you do sitting down
- Arts and crafts
- Cooking
- Learning about food

- Trips out
- Music, dance or drama
- Organised activities over the Internet while at home
- Something else (please write in)

Q57 Thinking about the days you had lunch at the holiday club, how healthy were the lunches you had? You can answer 1 to 10, where 10 means “very healthy” and 1 means “not healthy at all” (only asked if answered ‘Yes’ to Q2).

- 1 - not healthy at all
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 - very healthy
- Not applicable, I wasn't offered lunch
- Don't know

Q58 Thinking about a normal day in the summer holiday when you did not go to the holiday club, how healthy were the lunches you had? You can answer 1 to 10, where 10 means “very healthy” and 1 means “not healthy at all” (only asked if answered ‘Yes’ to Q2).

- 1 - not healthy at all
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 - very healthy
- Not applicable, I wasn't offered lunch
- Don't know

Q59 Thinking about a normal day in the summer holiday, how healthy were the lunches you had? You can answer 1 to 10, where 10 means “very healthy” and 1 means “not healthy at all” (only asked if answered ‘No’ to Q2).

- 1 - not healthy at all
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 - very healthy
- Not applicable, I wasn't offered lunch
- Don't know

Q60 Over the summer holidays, how often did see your friends, or play with people the same age as you?

- Very often
- Often
- Some of the time
- Not often
- Never
- Don't know

Q61 Do you think that the holiday club (only asked if answered ‘Yes’ to Q2):

	Yes	No	Don't know
Has taught me something new			
Has helped me make new friends			
Has made me feel safe			
Has made me feel more confident			
Has given me new things or activities to do			

Has helped me to be more active (e.g., running, playing sport)			
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You have completed the survey. Thank you for your time.



Department
for Education

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