

Cambridgeshire Holiday Activities and Food Programme

Annual Report 2023



Foreword

The Cambridgeshire HAF Programme launched in April 2021 with 18 holiday schemes providing places for 249 children and young people. In 2023 we worked with over 145 holiday schemes offering enriching experiences to a total of 7,700 children and young people. This significant growth demonstrates the fantastic offer we have built for Cambridgeshire families. Our survey responses from families demonstrate the huge value given to the programme.

We complete robust safeguarding and quality checks with our registered HAF

providers and offer a wide range of funded training courses, networks and annual monitoring visits to maintain this. Many of our providers have registered with Ofsted as an additional means of ensuring safeguarding remains a high priority. We thank all our HAF providers for their efforts in offering high quality experiences to children and young people. Their dedication and passion shines through and we are proud of this.

Our HAF Programme continues to evolve year on year with continued breadth of our offer planned for 2024.

Annette Brooker

*Assistant Director Education (Interim)
Head of Early Years, Childcare and School Readiness Service
Children, Education and Families Directorate
Cambridgeshire County Council*

“ I enjoyed all of it apart from when it was home time ”



Introduction

Since 2018, the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme has provided support to children in receipt of benefits-related free school meals through the Easter, Summer, and Christmas school holidays. This includes healthy meals, enriching activities, and funded childcare places to children, benefiting their health and wellbeing.

The HAF programme has provided **10.7 million** HAF days to school aged children and young people in England.

A total of **5.4 million** HAF days were provided between Christmas 2022, Easter, and summer 2023.

Benefits for children who attend the HAF programme include:

- receiving healthy nutritious meals
- maintaining a healthy level of physical activity
- being happy, having fun and meeting new friends
- developing a greater understanding of food, nutrition and other health related issues
- taking part in fun and engaging activities that support their development and well-being
- feeling safe and secure
- accessing the right support services
- returning to school feeling engaged and ready to learn



“ I loved doing things that seemed scary but getting the confidences to do it ”

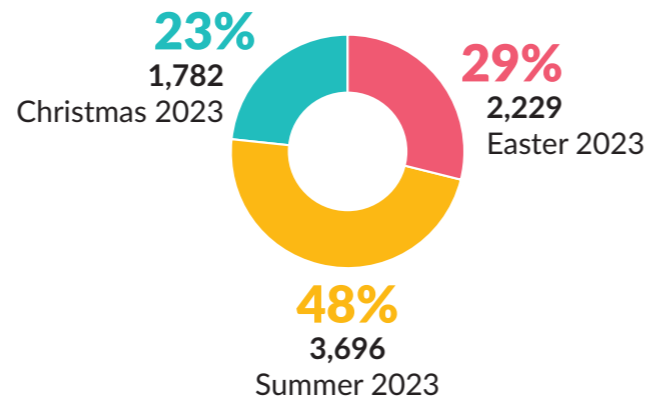
Cambridgeshire HAF Programme 2023

Total unique children who engaged in 2023

7,707

The greatest demand for the HAF Programme is during the summer school holidays with 48% of unique children attending.

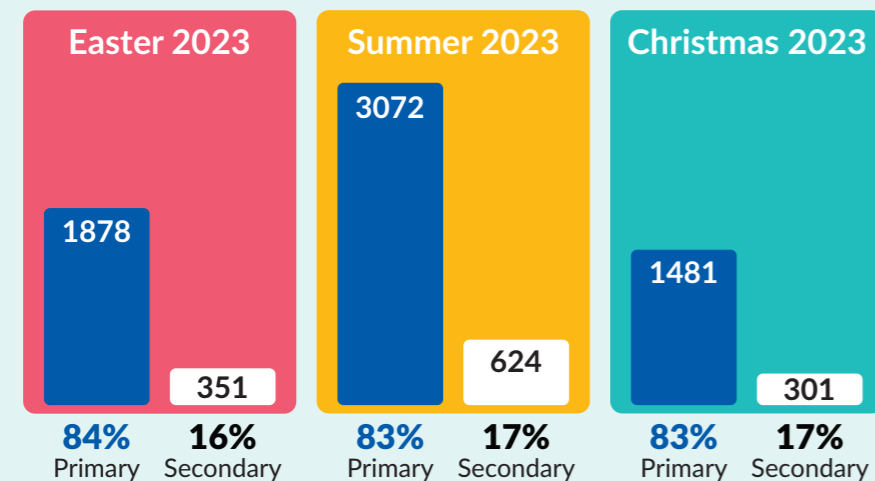
The total unique children attending in 2023 compared to summer 2022 increased by 11%.



Engagement by primary and secondary school aged children

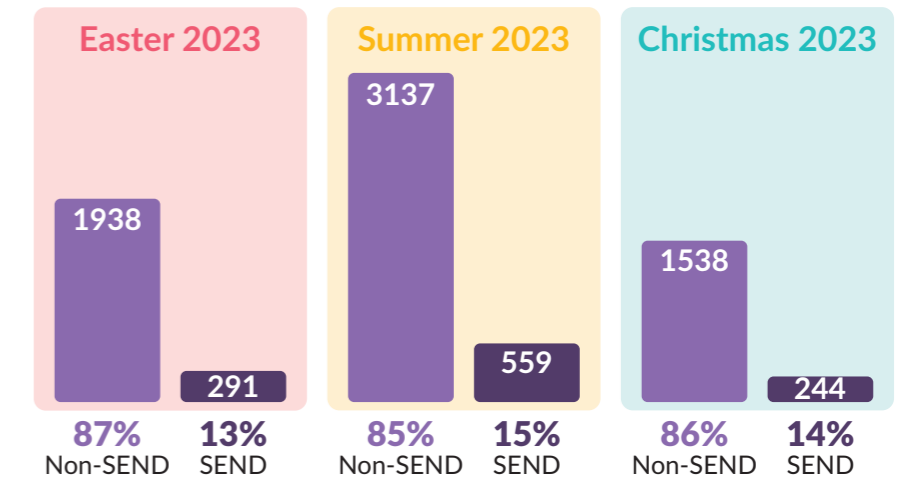
Most children attending the HAF Programme in Cambridgeshire were of primary school age.

The HAF Team are continuing to focus on increasing engagement of secondary school young people.



Engagement of children with SEND or additional needs

There has been expansion of SEND provision within mainstream and specialist HAF holiday schemes during 2023. This has almost doubled since Easter 2022 (8%) and is a continued area of focus into 2024 as new provision is sourced.

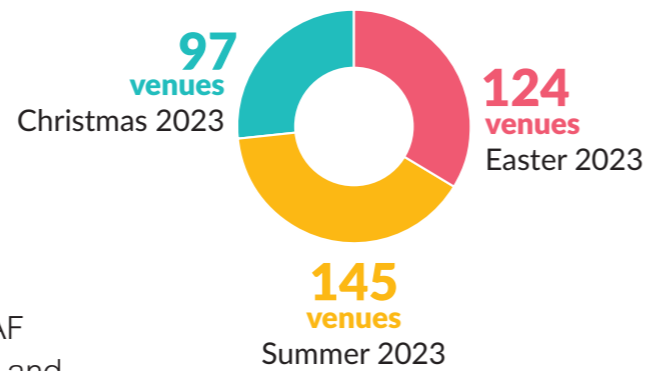


“My son has autism and bosh have been amazing to help my son have routine and have helped him learn to make friends be able to be away from me while helping him learn life skills I never thought he could”

Cambridgeshire HAF programme providers

We had the pleasure of working with a wide range of different HAF providers during 2023. Many of whom had multiple venues. Each provider offered a range of enriching experiences.

Cambridgeshire County Council **thank all HAF providers** for their support of the HAF Programme during 2023. Their dedication and ability to exceed expectations for individual families has been recognised and valued.



“ It takes a burden of one meal three times a week which slows down food consumption in the home making our family food shop lower ”

Barracudas
 Bassingbourn OSC
 Burwell House
 Butterflies Forest School
 Cambridge Kids Club
 Cambridge Russian School
 Cambridge Ice Arena
 Cambridge Junction
 Cambridge United Camp
 Cambridgeshire Music
 CamPlay Holiday Club
 Careclubs Holiday Club
 Come and Play
 Crosshall Kids Club
 Dawn until Dusk
 Fireflies Forest School
 Football Fun Factory
 Foxes Holiday Club
 Fun Times Holiday Club
 Fusion Youth Projects
 Grafham Water Centre
 Grow With Us
 Happy Hens Childcare
 Head in the Clouds
 Inspire Holiday Clubs
 JG Next Generation
 JLR Play

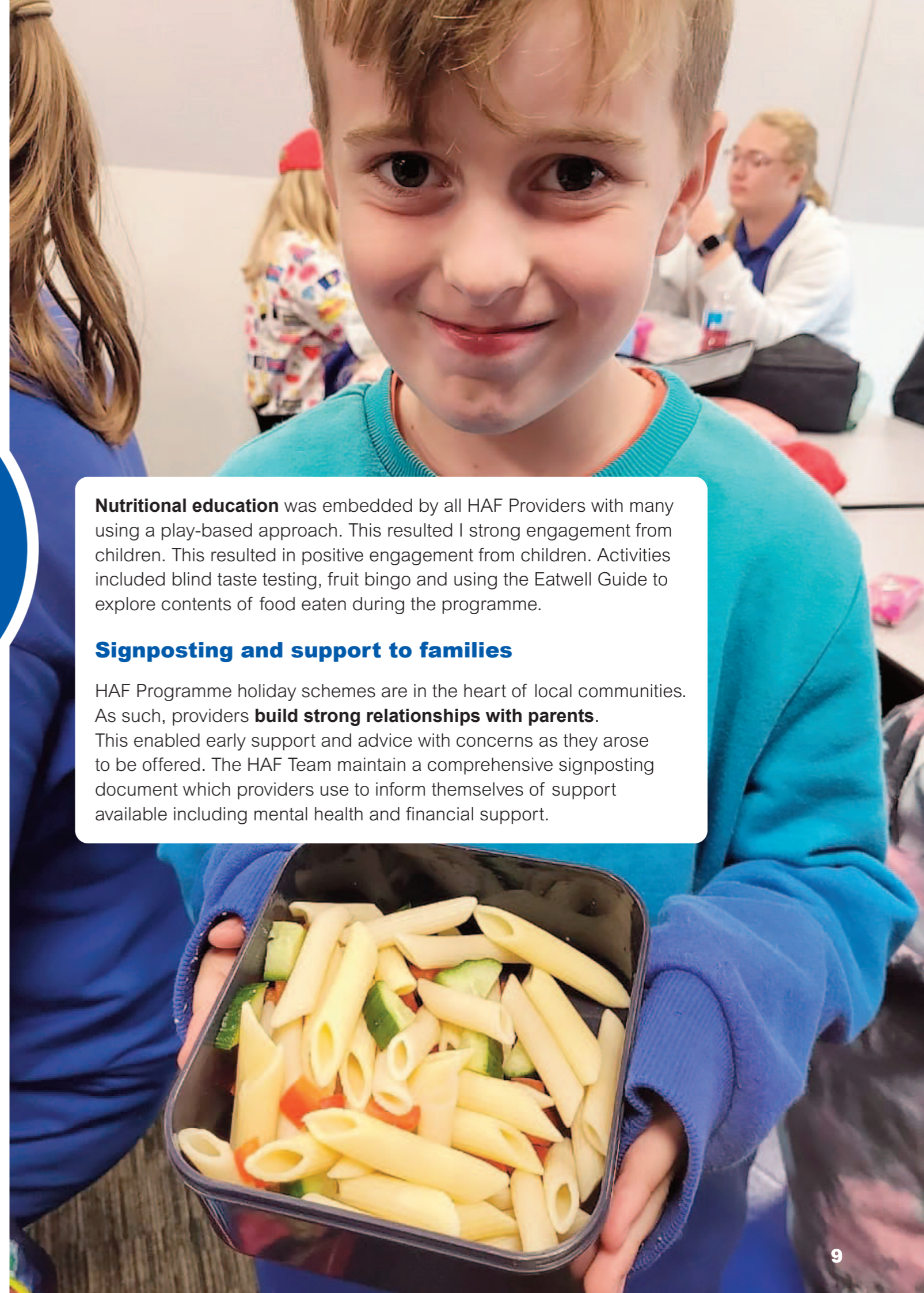
JS Sports & Education
 Just Do Sport
 Kids Club Ely
 Kids R Us
 KidsZone
 Lighthouse Programme
 Limitless Sports
 Little Hands
 Little Miracles
 MACCA Sports
 Make Lunch Linton
 Morley Holiday Club
 Next Thing Education
 North Cambridge Academy
 Norwich City Football Club
 Oak Activities
 Owlets Holiday Club
 Parkside Pool
 Premier Education
 Prestige Sports Camps
 Ramsey Neigh Trust
 Romsey Mill
 Sandy Hill Project
 Smarties Holiday Club
 Splatx Holiday Club
 Sport2day
 The DX Club

The Fitzwilliam Museum
 The Hive Leisure Centre
 The Kite Trust
 The Library Presents
 The Newcroft Club
 TJ Kids
 University of Cambridge
 Playscheme
 Waterbeach Play Scheme
 Waterbeach Youth Club
 Wisbech Adventure Playground
 Yaxley Out of School Club
 Young Technicians
 Youth Dreams
 Youths of Fenland

Nutritional education was embedded by all HAF Providers with many using a play-based approach. This resulted in strong engagement from children. This resulted in positive engagement from children. Activities included blind taste testing, fruit bingo and using the Eatwell Guide to explore contents of food eaten during the programme.

Signposting and support to families

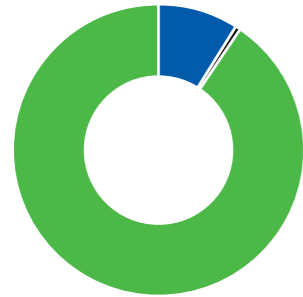
HAF Programme holiday schemes are in the heart of local communities. As such, providers **build strong relationships with parents**. This enabled early support and advice with concerns as they arose to be offered. The HAF Team maintain a comprehensive signposting document which providers use to inform themselves of support available including mental health and financial support.



Grant funding

2023–2024 HAF budget spend

Grant funding of **£1,874,650** was allocated by the Department for Education.



9% **£167,008** was spent on administration and coordination of The HAF Programme, of which:

Office furniture	£148
Professional development	£600
Travel and subsistence	£814
Staffing	£165,446

1% **£14,850** funded resources for the inclusion of children with SEND such as fidget toys, ear defenders, sensory boxes, and quiet spaces

90% **£1,692,792** was allocated to funding HAF places for eligible families



The HAF Steering Group

- Early Years, Childcare and School Readiness Service: Senior Management Lead
- Finance Lead
- Place Planning Children, Education and Families Education Welfare Benefits Lead
- Families Information Service Lead
- Communities Service Lead
- Communications and Information Team Lead
- Public Health Lead

“ I can work and not worry about the cost of childcare otherwise I wouldn't be earning any money and be in debt ”

CASE STUDIES

Working with 12 to 16-year-olds

Fireflies Forest School

The 2023 Cambridgeshire HAF Programme focussed on increasing engagement with young people (YP) attending secondary school. Historically, engagement of this age group has been challenging but unique and interesting ideas have always been popular. The widely understood narrative that the natural environment offers a sense of calm in our busy world seemed a logical place to focus on.

The HAF team worked with an established Forest School to fund Bush Craft sessions for YP. Engagement was strong from the start with 30 YP attending over this summer. There was positive impact observed on the mental health of many YP.

Jessica, Fireflies owner, shared her reflections: ‘one young person, aged 14, who attended hadn't left her house in 6 months due to significant anxiety. She really engaged with the sessions and enjoyed cooking round the fire and collaborating with others. Some days she attended for an hour and others for longer; we supported this as she was in control of her participation.

Two sisters attended, both autistic with a difficult emotional sibling relationship. Both girls engaged with the tool area, using draw blades, and carving in the same space. This really helped them work through their disagreements and see each other's point of view.’



This unique outdoor environment nurtures children and young people and offers opportunities to learn about themselves, reflect on their feelings as well as learning new skills.

Working with 12 to 16-year-olds

CRUNCH Holiday Scheme



Ramsey Neighbourhood Trust operate a holiday scheme called CRUNCH for secondary age young people. The CRUNCH scheme supports and encourages young people to develop themselves, build self-confidence and eventually become part of the staffing team should they wish to. CRUNCH offer stability and support where this is not always available within the home

environment. RNT support YP from low-income households with attending CRUNCH, in addition to the HAF funded hours, through a volunteering scheme which removes financial barriers to year-round participation.

This approach has been observed to have a significant impact on the lives of many. A YP who volunteered with CRUNCH now works for the organisation throughout the year. He saved his wages for driving lessons to help him become more independent; something he would never have been able to do otherwise.

Another YP suffers from severe anxiety and very often didn't feel comfortable joining in with the CRUNCH sessions. Staff supported her by offering responsibilities alongside the staff team, such as helping to set-up and serve on the food counter.

The aim was to build self-confidence, encourage her to take a risk and try new experiences within a supportive group. The YP grew in confidence and completed a Youth Work course and an early years and childcare qualification at college.

They remained employed with CRUNCH whilst completing the courses before progressing to full-time employment in a local nursery.

Increasing SEND-specific HAF provision

Limitless Sports Holiday Scheme

This new summer holiday scheme offered 28 places to 4 to 14-year-olds. It was aimed at children attending Castle School, a special school in Cambridge all of whom have global learning delay and are autistic.

Specialist staff were employed by the holiday scheme from several SEND schools; this was key to ensuring children's safety and needs were appropriately met. The limited numbers of children attending ensured that staff could promote a calm environment where noise levels were low. Staff planned enriching child-led activities including cooking, arts and crafts and bouncy castle fun.

The HAF Team worked in partnership with specialist inclusion advisers from the Early Years, Childcare and School Readiness Service (EYCSR) at Cambridgeshire County Council and intensively supported Limitless Sports to ensure the scheme was appropriately planned and prepared. The scheme was a success and children were described as 'thriving' by staff.

Holiday scheme staff observations

Clare, a level 4 TA at Castle School: 'Children developed their coping skills during transition times such as arriving and departing from the scheme and moving between activities.'

Mary, also a level 4 TA at Castle School, noted: 'The summer holidays are long for children with additional needs, being at a scheme made coming back to school in September less distressing and I noticed the children settled back to the school routine with more ease. Some of these families struggle financially so parents were less stressed as their children had food in their stomachs so took the worry and pressure away.'

Parent feedback: 'My child struggles without the routine of school and so attending Limitless really helped with this. Attending the scheme provided a break, allowing us to spend quality time with our younger children, this wouldn't have happened without the HAF programme.'

“As a single parent it has provided fun activities, food and allowed my children to make friends and social interactions during the holidays which I wouldn't normally have been able to afford”

