

Annual Report 2024

Cambridgeshire Holiday Activities and Food Programme

Foreword

The 2024 Cambridgeshire HAF Programme continued to evolve and offer high quality HAF schemes to meet the needs of local families.

We endeavoured to increase support to families of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) by increasing HAF Programme opportunities. For 2024 this included funding more HAF places at specialist SEND schemes such as Little Miracles (see case study) and a new SEND offer at the Clip 'n' Climb Climbing Wall. The total children with SEND who accessed the HAF Programmes during 2024 increased to 1288. We will continue to focus on supporting all families and HAF providers during 2025 to increase inclusion for all children.

The case studies included within this report highlight the dedication of Cambridgeshire HAF Providers. This includes Come and Play in Whittlesey who offer exceptional support and signposting to local families, This includes one parent who received support to ensure their children attended the summer HAF programme and signposting to the local food banks and church. This provider also went to great lengths to ensure the same family were supported by delivering clothing, toys and food to their home. The HAF Team recognise and value the engagement of HAF providers with local families.

Our focus during 2025 will continue to be on ensuring providers meet and exceed the HAF Framework of Standards. This will happen through support and challenge from our team of specialist HAF advisers and the dedication of providers to ensure families receive the best possible care and support. We look forward to building on our offer and ensure more opportunities are available to children and young people who participate in the HAF Programme within Cambridgeshire.

Annette Brooker

*Head of Early Years, Childcare and
School Readiness Service
Children, Education and Families
Cambridgeshire County Council*

“The school
holiday event exceeded
expectations!

A job well
done by the event
organisers!”



Introduction

Since 2022, the HAF programme has provided **15.6 million HAF days** to children and young people in England. Across the 2023 to 2024 academic year, almost 5 million HAF days were provided during winter, Easter, and summer delivery.

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme provides healthy meals, enriching activities, and funded childcare places to children (reception to year 11) from low-income families, benefiting their health, wellbeing and learning.

Primarily aimed at children in receipt of benefits-related free school meals (FSM), Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) also offer further funded places. They allocate up to 15% of their annual HAF grant, to a wider range of families who are experiencing financial challenges currently. Please visit our Parents HAF [webpage](#) for further details.

There are many benefits for children who attend the HAF programme which include:

- receiving healthy and 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
- getting access to the right support services
- returning to school feeling engaged and ready to learn

Please watch our HAF video!



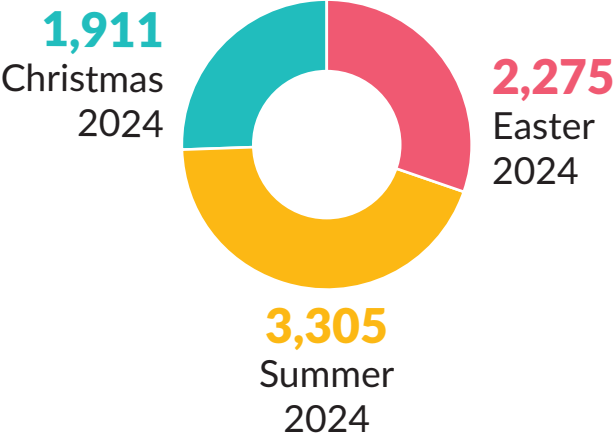
“It’s good to do stuff like this.

I wasn’t sure I wanted to go but I will go again”



Cambridgeshire HAF Programme 2024

As with previous years, the greatest demand for the HAF Programme from local families is during the summer school holidays with **3305** unique children attending for up to **64 hours** each.



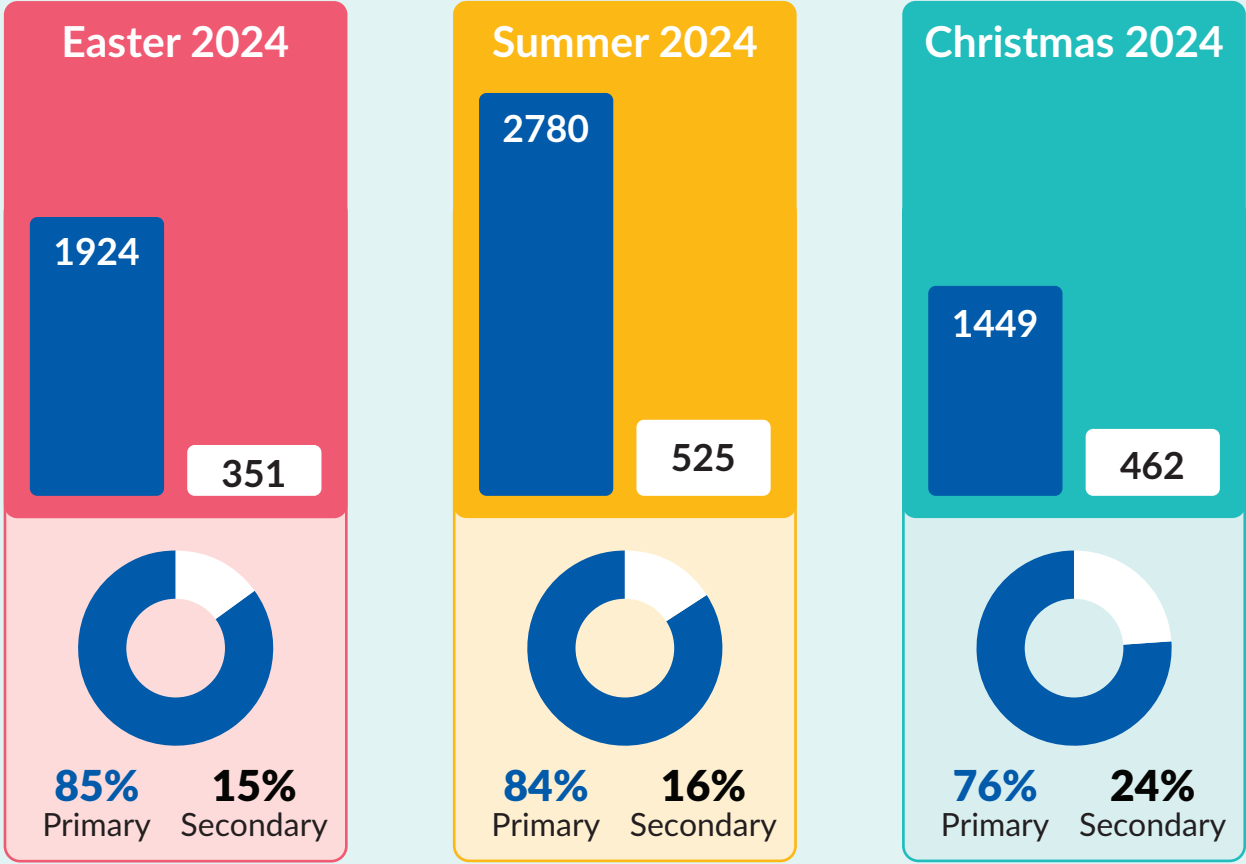
The **Christmas 2024 HAF Programme** offered the broadest range of family experiences yet including swimming, ice skating, roller skating, an animal park, pantomime and climbing walls. Feedback from families suggested these were welcomed, especially at this time of year and offered an enriching experience for the whole family to enjoy. Plans are developing to offer similar for Christmas 2025.

“Incredible forest school session, a fantastic day, filled with so many fun activities, and I was really impressed by how they managed to create such an engaging and enjoyable experience, especially with winter in full swing!”

“My holiday allocation doesn't cover all the holidays, sometimes I must take time off nonpaid which can then make me struggle money wise. The HAF Programme helps me to manage this more effectively.”

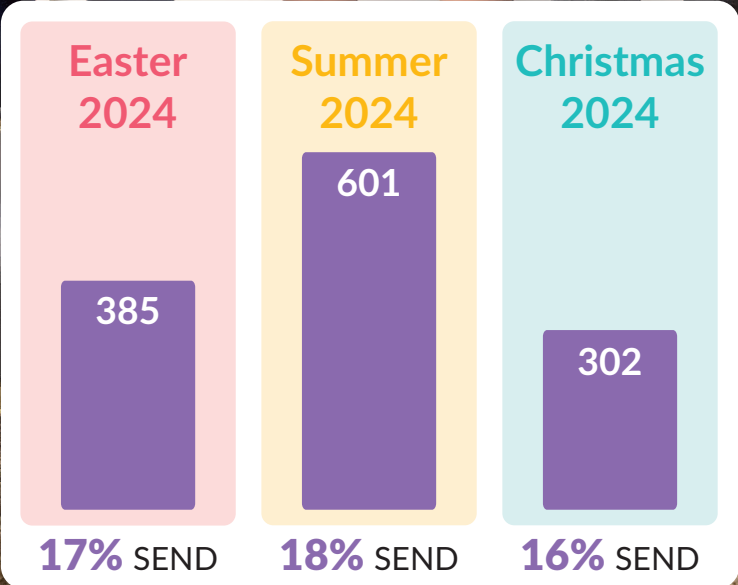
Participation of primary and secondary school children

Participation within the Primary age range continues to be high. Young people aged 11 to 16 enjoyed the range of Christmas experiences on offer that they could often attend independently. This increased their participation to 24% compared to 14% for Christmas 2023. This is an age range that we will continue to look for alternative experiences that will appeal and engage throughout the year.



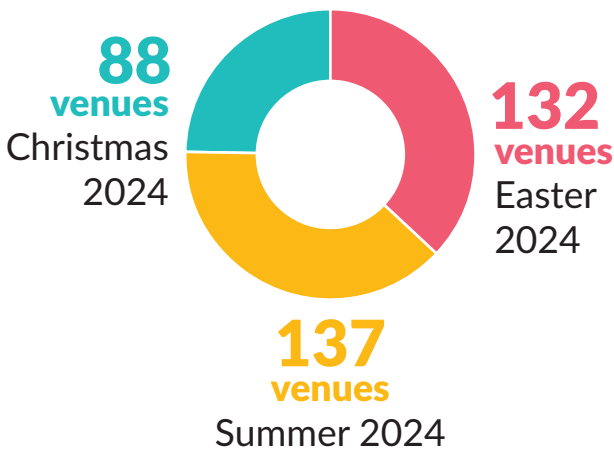
Participation of children with SEND or additional needs

The development of Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) places within mainstream and specialist HAF schemes has continued to increase year on year. We continue to support all families to access HAF provision where possible. Additional funding is given to HAF providers where needed to support the inclusion of children.



“ My son is non-verbal so can’t tell me whether he has a good time. But he returned well-regulated and wants to go back which tells me he had a good time, and his needs were met.”

Providers delivering the HAF Programme



One area of focus for 2024 was to increase diversity of HAF provision available to local families. This has been achieved by registering more family experiences for the Christmas HAF programme and partnering during Easter, Summer and Christmas with organisations such as Cambridgeshire Music, Cambridgeshire Libraries and childminders who provide a unique HAF offer to families.

Cambridgeshire HAF providers demonstrate that they are willing to go to great lengths to support families and we thank them for this.



“ There was a great atmosphere during the show in Cambridge Junction; my child is still practicing various tricks and has involved his classmates who are learning to juggle. Very nice service and tasty snacks! ”

- Abington Annex Club
- Barneys Club
- Butterflies Forest School
- Cambridge Ice Arena
- Cambridgeshire Music
- Clip n Climb
- Crosshall Kids Club
- Football Fun Factory
- Foxes Holiday Club
- Grafham Water Centre
- Head in the Clouds
- Just Do Sport
- Kids R Us
- Little Hands Bourn Holiday Scheme
- Make Lunch Linton
- Norwich City Football Club
- Parkside Pool
- Ramsey Neighbourhood Trust
- Shepreth Wildlife Park
- Skaters Wisbech
- The Kite Trust
- TJ Kids
- Waterbeach Youth Club
- Young Technicians Academy
- 20Twenty Productions
- Active Play Education
- Barracudas
- Cambridge Kids Clubs
- Cambridge Junction
- CamPlay Holiday Clubs
- Come and Play
- Dawn until Dusk
- Freedom Leisure
- Fun Times Holiday Club
- Grow With Us
- Inspire Holiday Clubs
- KD Theatre Productions
- KidsZone
- Little Miracles Charity SEND
- Morley Holiday Club
- Oak Activities
- Premier Education
- Romsey Mill
- Smarties Holiday Club
- The DX Club
- The Library Presents
- University of Cambridge Holiday Playscheme
- Childminders across Cambridgeshire
- Youth Dreams Project
- All Seasons Children's Play
- Bassingbourn OSC
- Cambridge Russian School
- Cambridge United Camp
- Careclubs Holiday Club
- SplatZ Holiday Club
- Fireflies Forest School
- Fourfields Primary
- Fusion Youth Projects
- Happy Hens Childcare
- JS Sports & Education
- Kids Club Ely
- Limitless Sports
- MACCA Sports
- Next Thing Education
- One Leisure
- Prestige Sports Camps
- Sandy Hill Community Project
- Sport2day
- The Fitzwilliam Museum
- The Newcroft Club
- Waterbeach Playscheme
- Yaxley Out of School Club
- Youths of Fenland

“ It was great doing something active in the Christmas holidays. And it was all day! ”

Food education

Throughout 2024 HAF providers raised awareness of healthy eating and lifestyles in their day-to-day practice. Play-based providers planned playful, child-led activities such as encouraging children to try different whole foods, visiting local supermarkets and markets to purchase fresh fruit and vegetables to eat at snack and lunchtimes, using simple recipes to make delicious, nutritious food cooked from scratch. Providers reported that children engaged well with this approach and parents welcomed updates at the end of the session on what their child now enjoys and the recipes they can try at home. Children also benefited from spontaneous and planned discussions with staff around sugar and fat content in many ultra processed foods and food miles for certain items purchased.

Supporting and signposting parents

Cambridgeshire is compiled of a mix of urban and rural areas. By funding local HAF providers who know their area and the services available to families, they can signpost effectively when parents ask for support. The HAF Team maintains a comprehensive signposting document which builds on the knowledge of providers and informs them of the support available by local and national organisations. Please read the case study below which offers further insight into the level of support our HAF providers, specifically Come and Play in Whittlesey provide.



2024 HAF budget spend

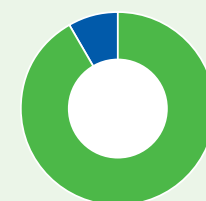
HAF **grant received** from the Department for Education:

£1,927,940

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Overall **expenditure** for the Cambridgeshire HAF Programme:

£1,927,940



The proportion of funding spent on Administration:
£173,198
(9% of The HAF grant)

Breakdown of administrative spend:

Staffing	£171,342
Travel and subsistence	£524
Professional development	£825
Office furniture and telephony	£507

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



“ My child had an amazing time, helped build confidence and socialise outside of school with peers. Also helped with ability to try new things. She said the staff were amazing and friendly. ”



Little Miracles

Supporting children with SEND

Little Miracles is a charity that supports families who have children with additional needs, disabilities and life-limiting conditions. It recently featured on BBC's Strictly Come Dancing through the DIY SOS work Nick Knowles achieved with the Charity.

During the Summer Little Miracles has supported a host of families. However, one family in particular stands out. The family have joined Little Miracles and taken part in various activities, trips and visits such as Stanwick Lakes and Skegness. During the day, parents are provided with much needed rest bite care by pairing the children with Youth Workers. This has given the staff at Little Miracles the opportunity to chat to the family and offer further signposting to local food banks, counselling services and other support agencies.

Little Miracles have offered the older 'young' people the opportunity to work on a music project as part of a local youth club. This has supported the families with much needed breaks and allowed the parents to take part in some parent led activities. As such, the parents have created new social networks with other service users and been given the time to pursue their own

hobbies and interests in an environment that is secure and free of judgement.

When asked about the impact Little Miracles have made through the HAF programme, the family said:

"Thank you so much without **Little Miracles** I don't know where I would be, Little Miracles are a complete lifeline! And support us no end. The kids and I have made some amazing friends along the way and Little Miracles has now become our second family! We appreciate all the time and effort that goes into every single activity! So, from the bottom of our hearts **THANK YOU**"



“It was a nice thing to do instead of being bored as my family can't afford to do a lot in the holidays”

Come and Play

Supporting and signposting families

Come and Play is a playscheme in the Fenland district of Cambridgeshire and has worked with the HAF programme for three years.

Come and Play are exceptional in building relationships with local families and supporting their needs. They have been working alongside a local family with six children during summer 2024. The parent struggled to bring her children to the setting in the morning. To support the family who are at risk of social exclusion, Come and Play offered to collect the children from home to enable them to engage fully with the HAF programme. This resulted in their full attendance at the scheme throughout the summer.

The eldest child attended Come and Play's daily swim sessions and although very apprehensive at first, quickly made friends who encouraged him to join them which resulted in him enjoying it so much that he didn't want it to end! The

children expressed to staff that they thoroughly enjoyed the activities offered including trips to the swimming pool, soft play and the petting farm, enjoying an ice-cream van visit, and participating in many games.

Come and Play worked with this family to identify their needs ensuring these could be supported. The setting has gone above and beyond in signposting them to additional support in the form of food banks and connecting with the local Church, even collecting items such as clothing, toys and food and delivering them to the family home. Come and Play identified the embarrassment the parent felt asking for help and were quick to reassure the family. The parent commented:

"I was in tears when Come and Play delivered the food bags to my door. Their support in offering food, toys and clothing has been huge."



Partnership working with a childminder

Let's Cook project

Joanna Bucka is a Childminder in South Cambridgeshire and worked with the HAF programme for several years. As part of the HAF offer, Joanna takes the children in her care to local enriching activities.

Joanna heard about Let's Cook Project through a local school and decided to book onto the sessions with some of the children aged 5 to 10 years attending her setting. Let's Cook Project is social enterprise who believe that learning to cook is the gateway to eating well and enjoying good food. They have a team of chefs, nutritionists and home economists that provide training and support for local communities to cook fresh homemade meals and reduce food waste.

The children attended Let's Cook Project with Joanna over 3 days and during the sessions received a recipe card and the ingredients to make several dishes from pasta and curry with homemade peach chutney to healthy puddings.

Initially, Joanna noticed that the children were quite reserved and although they enjoyed chopping fresh garlic, vegetables and spinach and adding it to their meal, they were very vocal about not wanting to try any of it 'urgh I hate mushrooms'. However, when the finished dish was plated up all the children tried the food and they loved it! Some of the

children were so proud of the meal they had made that they saved a portion to take home for their mum.

Joanna and the children used the skills they had developed during the Let's Cook Project back to the setting and encouraged other children to help make lunches. Joanna commented:

"The recipe cards were simple to follow and the ingredients easy to obtain that we cooked the lunches a number of times and the children really enjoyed this. Taking part in the project has really encouraged the children to become actively involved in cooking at home."





**“Easter party
was absolutely
amazing!!**

**Best day we’ve ever
had out and was
such fun.”**