

Holiday Activities Programme 2025/26

#BlackpoolHAF



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Background

Context

In November 2020, the Government announced that the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme, which had provided healthy food and enriching activities to disadvantaged children since 2018, would be expanded across the whole of England in 2021. The Department for Education would provide funding for a Programme of activities, including a food provision to cover the Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays.

Blackpool had operated a holiday provision since 2019 and had an established partnership in place to deliver such a programme. The partnership agreed that our holiday provision should be provided throughout every school holiday and therefore developed a programme that would be delivered within the half term holidays in addition to Easter, Summer and Christmas.

The HAF programme is for children who are in receipt of benefits-related free school meals. The funding provided cover for:

- The provision of free (fully-funded) holiday places, which includes a food provision.
- Coordination of the programme at a local level.

Background

The school holidays can be a particularly difficult time for families due to increased costs and reduced incomes. Many children can experience holiday hunger and learning loss during the school holidays and children from low income families find it more difficult to afford activities outside of the home during holiday time. These children are less likely to access organised out of school activities, and more likely to experience 'unhealthy holidays' in terms of nutrition and physical health and more likely to experience social isolation. Free holiday provision is a response to these issues and evidence suggested that it can have a positive impact on children and young people.

To help combat holiday hunger and learning loss during the school holidays, holiday activity and food programmes are offered across the UK, by a variety of educational, charity and community sector organisations. The type of programmes offered vary between areas and settings. They provide learning and socialising opportunities for children during the school holidays as well as providing food. The evidence for these types of provisions on what does or doesn't work is limited, however, the evaluation of government-led programmes reported that children and young people enjoyed attending and parents felt their children achieved positive outcomes.

Levels of Social deprivation within Blackpool are particularly high. Blackpool has the highest level of deprivation of all Local Authorities in England, with neighbourhoods in Blackpool accounting for eight of the ten most deprived neighbourhoods nationally (Index of Multiple Deprivation 2021). Children face particular high levels of poverty, with 41% of children living in income deprived households. Given these high levels of deprivation, children in Blackpool are particularly vulnerable to holiday hunger and learning loss during the school holidays. The schools, pupils and their characteristics: Academic Year 23/24 Report highlighted there were c8,100 pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (FSM) across both our primary and secondary schools. There is a clear need to support children in Blackpool during the school holidays by offering holiday activity and food programmes.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme is to deliver a free holiday provision to children eligible for benefits related free school meals for the equivalent of at least four hours a day, four days a week for 6 weeks. This covers four weeks in the Summer and a week's provision in both the Easter and Christmas holidays – this provision is fully funded by the Department for Education.

The partnership in Blackpool also agreed to deliver a free holiday provision to these children in the February, May and October half terms following the same model as the HAF, meaning the total provision covered a minimum of 9 weeks – the extra weeks of provision being solely funded by Blackpool Council.

The aim of the programme was to ensure children who attended the provision:

- Eat more healthily over the school holidays.
- Be more active during the school holidays.
- Take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience, character and wellbeing along with their wider education attainment.
- Be safe and not socially isolated.
- Have a greater knowledge of health and nutrition.
- Engaged with school and other local services.

Eligibility Criteria

The focus of the programme was to provide provision to school aged children eligible for benefits related Free School Meals (FSM). The local authority had to ensure that the offer of free holiday provision was available for all children eligible for FSM in the local authority area. However, this did not mean that all children were required to attend as the provision was voluntary. The local authority also had the flexibility to offer free places to children who were not eligible for FSM but were considered as vulnerable or in need of the provision, and were able to use up to 15% of the funding for these places.

Coordination of the Programme

Coordination of the HAF was taken back in-house by Public Health in September 2022, having been previously contracted out to Blackpool Football Club Community Trust (BFCCT) in 2020 and 2021 whilst the Public Health team were under pressure leading on the towns COVID-19 response.

Once returned to Public Health's control, a new open framework was created that allowed us to build a consortium of Providers that met both the Department for Education (DfE) and Blackpool Councils' requirements for the HAF Programme. The open framework enables providers to join during the life of the contract, at specified periods determined by the Authority, allowing the HAF to benefit from new entrants to the market throughout the year.

Three successful Tender exercises were undertaken during 2022 - 24 to increase the wealth and diversity of provision available. It further ensured we also had a SEND specific programme catering to children with mild or moderate needs. There are now ten contracted providers on the framework.

Steering Group

To support delivery of the programme a steering group was established with representatives from a wide range of local bodies, including:

- Representative for Youth Services
- Head of Service – Children's Services
- Early Intervention and Safeguarding Officer for Blackpool Schools
- Community Safety representation – Lancashire Constabulary
- School Improvement Consultant
- Early Help and Children Services
- Virtual School – Education Officer for Disadvantaged Children

Delivery Partners

Blackpool has been operating a Holiday provision since the summer of 2019 and has a strong partnership in place which consists of the Council, schools and voluntary and community sector. The delivery partners involved are:

- Blackpool Football Club Community Trust (BFCCT)
- Active Blackpool
- Park Rangers
- The BoatHouse Youth
- Boys and Girls Club
- House of Wingz/Skool of Street
- Magic Club
- Groundworks – @The Grange
- Dealmaker Ltd
- Blackpool Carers Centre

Delivery partners were required to provide a holiday activity programme that met the following core aims and objectives:

- The provision of at least one healthy meal a day and meet the School Food Standards throughout the provision.
- Delivery of enriching activities.
- Provision of physical activities which meet the physical activity guidelines on a daily basis.
- Provision of nutritional education.
- Signposting and referrals: provide information, signposting or referrals to other services and support that would benefit the children who attend their provision and their families.
- Appropriate safeguarding arrangements in place along with policies and procedures relating to health and safety, insurance, accessibility and inclusiveness.
- Concise record keeping, with registers of attendance shared with the coordinators, allowing for precise evaluation and reporting of the HAF programme.

The provision is required to meet the following core aims:

- Healthy meals that meet the school food standards
- Enriching activities
- Nutritional education
- Signposting and referrals
- Policies and procedures

Marketing and Communication

Our Providers who run the HAF club promote the programme via social media/internet and also directly in the community and schools with posters, flyers, school assemblies. Council colleagues are also part of our strategy to encourage participation in the programme; social workers, virtual school and family workers all help to promote HAF whenever possible. The HAF Coordinator has also attended local safeguarding, head teacher and SEND meetings to promote HAF with local professionals.

With the help of our providers, we produced a short YouTube video (<https://youtu.be/RZ-mT3tz5eY>) showcasing our HAF and including comments from participants and providers.

Department for Education Funding

Blackpool Council received grant funding for the 2025 to 2026 financial year from the Department for Education (DfE) for the mandatory Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays of £839,530

A breakdown of this expenditure is shown in the table below: -

Administrative Expenditure	83,953
Capital Expenditure	
Programme Expenditure (cost of providing free HAF places, including payments to providers and third parties for services provided)	746,492
Other Expenditure (Data system costs, Promotional material, Webpage and Video design/media production)	9,085
TOTAL EXPENDITURE (for 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026)	839,530

N.B The additional half term holidays were funded by Public Health at Blackpool Council

Easter Provision

The Blackpool Holiday Activity and Food programme (HAF) supported 1412 unique participants, across nine providers. 84% of participants being children on free school meals (FSM) and 16% being targeted through other vulnerabilities.

All delivery venues provided inclusive and accessible environments for children with low to mild additional needs. In addition, three specialist SEND programmes were delivered by our partners BFCCT, Active Blackpool and Boathouse Youth, supporting children and young people with mild to moderate additional needs.

Providers delivered a diverse programme of activities, incorporating Easter-themed sessions such as egg hunts and Easter bonnet making alongside a broad range of sports, games, arts and crafts, dance, and cookery activities. Participants also benefited from educational and cultural visits to local museums and attractions across the town. One provider organised a Blue Plaque Walking Trail, enabling young people to explore Blackpool's rich heritage while visiting landmarks including Central Pier, Blackpool Tower, Grundy Art Gallery and Central Library, covering an impressive 13,000 steps.

Cooking and healthy eating remained a strong feature of the programme, with several providers delivering cook-and-eat sessions. One provider extended participation to entire families, who worked together to prepare and share a healthy meal. To maximise resources and reduce the costs associated with external trips, some providers transformed their own venues into cinemas, complete with homemade tickets, refreshments and ice cream.

A particular highlight was a visit to the Imperial War Museum North in Manchester organised by the Boys & Girls Club. The trip was entirely planned by the young people themselves, who researched train schedules, budgeted for the excursion, planned packed lunch menus and managed the overall costings, demonstrating excellent teamwork, independence and organisational skills.

SEND-specific provision was fully booked and exceptionally well attended. Across all delivery sites, participation by children and young people with SEND was 19%.

Targeted provision for secondary-aged young people was delivered at a variety of times, including evening sessions and flexible programme lengths, to maximise engagement and provide positive activities in areas experiencing higher levels of anti-social behaviour.

While some partners experienced instances of non-attendance, waiting lists were maintained across the programme, ensuring that available places could be offered to other eligible participants. The main reasons cited for non-attendance included family holidays, illness and adverse weather conditions.

The HAF programme was delivered through 33 clubs located across schools, parks, community centres and youth venues throughout Blackpool, enabling accessible, community based provision for our young people. Participation increased from 1,353 unique attendees during the Easter HAF programme in the previous year to 1,412 this year. Average attendance across all provision remained high at 93%, demonstrating strong demand and sustained engagement with the programme.

May/June Half Term Provision

The Blackpool Holiday Activity and Food programme (HAF) supported 1135 unique participants, across eight providers. 84% of participants being children on free school meals (FSM) and 16% being targeted through other vulnerabilities.

Three dedicated SEND programmes were delivered by our partners BFCCT, Active Blackpool and Boathouse Youth, providing tailored opportunities for children and young people with mild to moderate additional needs. The programmes offered a range of sports, creative and enrichment activities, with delivery adapted to individual needs to ensure that participants could engage, develop confidence and enjoy positive holiday experiences in a supportive environment.

Across the wider HAF programme, children and young people were able to access a diverse range of activities, including sports, arts and crafts, yoga, breakdancing, slime making, kickboxing, talent competitions, gardening, mindfulness, cookery, board games and Lego craft. A programme of local and wider trips also provided opportunities for participants to experience new environments and attractions beyond their usual communities.

Nature and science-based learning were particular highlights of this delivery period. Participants took part in practical gardening activities, planting and caring for a variety of vegetable and flower seeds to take home and continue growing. They also created bird feeders and grass heads and explored local wildlife, helping to develop their understanding of nature and biodiversity within their gardens and local parks. Science-based activities provided further opportunities for children to learn through practical experimentation and play. One provider delivered a 'Silly Science' project, where younger participants created erupting volcanoes, edible slime and Oobleck (a fascinating mixture of cornflour and water that behaves like a solid when squeezed in the hands but flows like a liquid when released). For other participants, science came to life through an action-packed visit to the Manchester Science and Industry Museum.

The HAF programme continued to provide accessible, community-based opportunities across the town, with clubs delivered in schools, parks, community centres and youth centres. Although attendance was affected by periods of extreme weather during the HAF delivery period, resulting in a higher than anticipated number of cancellations and non-attendances, overall engagement remained strong. Average attendance across the programme was 92%, demonstrating continued demand for the range of activities and opportunities provided.

Summer Provision

The Blackpool Holiday Activity and Food programme (HAF) supported 2001 unique participants across 9 providers with 80% of participants being children on free school meals (FSM) and 20% being targeted through other vulnerabilities.

Throughout the summer, the programme successfully engaged both new and returning participants, offering more than 1,500 places each day across 55 clubs operating from 32 locations throughout Blackpool. A total of 2,001 unique eligible children and young people participated, a figure comparable to the previous year's 2,022 participants. Despite the slight reduction in unique attendees, overall attendance increased significantly from last year's 16,732 to 17,141 sessions, demonstrating the continued popularity of the programme and the strong levels of repeat engagement among participants.

Dedicated SEND provision remained a key feature of delivery, with three providers operating specialist clubs exclusively for children and young people with mild to moderate additional needs. In addition, one provider once again delivered a summer residential experience tailored specifically to this cohort, providing valuable opportunities for personal development, independence and social interaction.

Alongside a wide range of traditional sports, games and arts and crafts activities, participants were able to access an extensive programme of enrichment opportunities including breakdancing, music production, cookery, meditation, forest school, yoga, fishing and birdwatching. Providers further enhanced their offer by working with specialist organisations to deliver activities such as snow sports, "Creepy Crawly Roadshows" and music tuition.

Educational and recreational visits formed an important part of the summer programme, with trips to both local attractions and destinations further afield. These included visits to Liverpool World Museum, Ninja Warrior Manchester, Williamson Park in Lancaster and Bolton Abbey, providing children and young people with new experiences and opportunities to explore beyond their local communities.

Several providers delivered residential programmes featuring camping and a range of outdoor adventure activities, including ghyll scrambling, abseiling and paddleboarding. Family engagement remained a strong aspect of delivery, with Cook and Eat sessions proving particularly popular. These sessions enabled families to prepare healthy, affordable meals together while developing practical cooking skills. Other family-focused events, including talent shows and sports days, provided opportunities for shared experiences and were reported to have a positive impact on family relationships and wellbeing.

Our Children and Young People's Mental Health Team worked closely with providers throughout the summer, delivering workshops that promoted awareness of mental health and emotional wellbeing. In response to ongoing financial pressures, providers also collaborated creatively, sharing resources and supporting activity delivery across clubs to ensure that as many children and young people as possible could access a broad and varied programme of activities.

Targeted provision for secondary-aged young people was once again delivered at a range of times and in flexible formats to maximise engagement. Activities were specifically designed to appeal to this age group and included e-gaming, music production and digital content creation. These targeted approaches proved successful, with secondary-aged participants accounting for 25% of overall engagement. In addition, a Friday evening pop-up sports club at Stanley Park, an area known to experience higher levels of anti-social behaviour, attracted 469 attendances throughout the delivery period, providing positive and accessible opportunities for local young people who may otherwise have had limited options for structured activities.

The summer programme continued to grow in both scale and impact. Partnership delivery expanded, and participation levels remained strong compared with the previous year. Average attendance increased from 88% to 91%, reflecting the effectiveness of targeted engagement strategies and the continued commitment of providers to delivering high-quality, accessible provision for Blackpool's children and young people.

October Half Term Provision

The Blackpool Holiday Activity and Food programme (HAF) supported 1239 unique participants, across eight providers. 82% of participants being children on free school meals (FSM) and 18% being targeted through other vulnerabilities.

Our October provision had a Halloween theme, participants enjoyed pumpkin carving, spooky crafts, Halloween parties, ghost trails, and themed baking sessions. Alongside these, a wide variety of non-themed activities were available, including lego building, swimming, graffiti art, forest crafts, and urban creative arts such as skateboarding and free running, along with the usual diverse mix of sports and arts and crafts. Participants also benefited from a range of trips and experiences beyond their regular club settings, including visits to Blackpool Pleasure Beach and the cinema, as well as two residential opportunities. These experiences provided children and young people with opportunities to develop confidence, independence and social skills while creating positive memories during the school holidays.

A particular highlight was the four-day residential experience organised by Blackpool Carers Centre for ten young carers aged 12–16 at YHA Edale in Derbyshire. The programme provided participants with a much-needed opportunity to take a break from their caring responsibilities and enjoy a range of new experiences in a supportive environment. Activities included an adventurous night hike, archery, crate stacking and rock climbing, with the young people embracing each challenge with enthusiasm, determination and resilience. The residential provided more than an opportunity for adventure as it gave young carers time to relax, build confidence, strengthen friendships and experience being young without the responsibilities they often carry at home. Recognising that the demands of caring responsibilities meant not all eligible young carers were able to attend the residential, alternative activities were also provided. These included a 'Taste of Autumn' Cook and Eat session, where young carers prepared nutritious hot meals for themselves as well as larger family-sized dishes to take home, supporting both practical cooking skills and wider family wellbeing.

Three dedicated SEND programmes were again available, providing a broad range of sports, creative activities, crafts and themed events tailored to the individual needs, abilities and interests of participants. These specialist provisions continued to provide smaller, supportive environments in which children and young people with additional needs could participate confidently and experience activities that might otherwise present barriers to engagement.

Building on the success of the previous year, our partner Boathouse Youth once again delivered a residential canal boat experience for participants from its SEND programme. Supported by youth work apprentices, the group spent five days navigating the Grand Union Canal, travelling from Braunston Marina to Stoke Bruerne and back and successfully navigating 21 locks along the route.

The canal boat experience provided a unique opportunity for participants to develop practical life skills and independence. Young people took an active role in steering the boat, operating the locks and preparing meals, while working together to overcome challenges throughout the journey. The experience demonstrated exceptional teamwork, resilience and growing confidence, while providing participants with a memorable and inclusive adventure.

October HAF provision was delivered across the town through 34 clubs, located in schools, parks, community centres and youth centres, ensuring that opportunities remained accessible within local communities. Average attendance reached 95%, representing a 7% increase on the previous year's October provision. This strong level of attendance reflects the continued popularity of the programme and the success of providers in delivering engaging, inclusive and varied activities that children and young people want to return to.

Christmas Provision

The Blackpool Holiday Activity and Food programme (HAF) supported 897 unique participants across 7 providers with 85% of participants being children on free school meals (FSM) and 15% being targeted through other vulnerabilities.

The Christmas programme faced a number of operational challenges due to the timing of the school holidays, which significantly reduced the available delivery window. Several providers and venues, including Blackpool Council, remained closed until after the New Year. In addition, some school-based venues were unavailable throughout the entire holiday period due to staff leave arrangements and increased heating costs. As a result, several providers were unable to deliver provision from these locations.

These constraints inevitably affected the scale and distribution of delivery, with providers adapting their programmes to maximise the opportunities available. Many organisations split delivery across different dates throughout the holiday period, while others supplemented face-to-face provision with remote activities to maintain engagement with children and families.

Despite these challenges, attendance remained strong across the programme. While some outdoor activities and events were affected by adverse weather conditions, providers reported high levels of participation overall. The most common reasons for non-attendance were illness and family commitments during the festive period.

Participants enjoyed a varied programme of activities, including sports, arts and crafts, skateboarding, dance, e-sports and cookery. Seasonal activities were a particular highlight, with Christmas parties, pantomime visits, trips to our own Blackpool Illuminations and visits to the Winter Village providing memorable festive experiences for children and families.

A standout feature of this year's programme was a partnership with the Blackpool Tower, which enabled HAF families to attend the award-winning High Jinx Magic & Illusion Show at Blackpool Tower Circus as fully funded VIP guests. Although many of our HAF participants live under the shadow of Blackpool's most iconic landmark, most have never ever visited it, the cost of a visit significantly outside of their budgets. This initiative provided families with a unique opportunity to experience a premium local attraction and create lasting memories during the Christmas holidays. Feedback from participants highlighted this as one of the most valued experiences of the programme.

We again commissioned Recipe boxes for a family orientated remote delivery activity, having successfully used these for the last 3 years. This year we worked with our Provider Dealmaker Ltd to create some recipes for their "Dish Up" Recipe box initiative and provide a fun family based food provision activity. We commissioned 463 recipe boxes, and these were delivered to HAF families across Blackpool as an additional extra to our face to face delivery. Each box fed a family of 4 having both a main meal and a dessert with all the ingredients included, alongside a recipe card and a QR code link to a recipe video if needed. The result was some delicious bespoke, low-cost energy recipes, especially made for our HAF participants which they absolutely loved.

Despite the challenges associated with the shortened delivery period, the programme successfully engaged 897 unique children and young people across 21 clubs, maintaining participation levels consistent with the previous year. Average attendance across all provision was 84%, demonstrating continued demand for high-quality holiday activities and support during the festive period.

February Half Term Provision

The Blackpool Holiday Activity and Food programme (HAF) supported 1319 unique participants, across nine providers. 80% of participants being children on free school meals (FSM) and 20% being targeted through other vulnerabilities.

Our February delivery saw a wide variety of fun physical and creative activities from craft workshops, skateboarding, karaoke, cookery, circus skills, and Nerf battles to gardening, swimming, badminton, football, Dungeons & Dragons, frisbee skills and street dance. In addition to on-site activities, there were trips to the Anderton Outdoor Learning Centre in Chorley, Sealife Centre in Manchester, Funtazia in Blackburn, and a residential canal boat experience.

Providers continued to use flexible delivery models to maximise participation, offering a combination of daytime and evening clubs to accommodate different ages and preferences. Shorter pop-up sessions were also successfully delivered in areas experiencing higher levels of anti-social behaviour. These targeted sessions provided positive activities within local communities and successfully attracted new participants to the HAF programme.

Seasonal and cultural celebrations formed an important part of the February programme. Valentine's Day activities proved particularly popular, with participants creating cards, love bugs, bracelets and cookies as gifts, alongside dedicated Valentine's parties. Chinese New Year was also celebrated through a range of creative and cultural activities. Young people made vegetable sushi, learned to use chopsticks, took part in karaoke, created origami animals and sampled a variety of traditional foods including noodles, dumplings and fortune cookies. Participants also created 'kindness pebbles' for members of the local community to discover, encouraging positive messages and acts of kindness beyond the HAF setting.

A particular highlight was a residential canal boat experience for a group of secondary-aged participants along the Grand Union Canal. Young people learned practical skills including navigating locks and tunnels, operating paddles and gates, and understanding how to stay safe while living and travelling on the canal.

Despite challenging weather conditions, participants demonstrated considerable resilience, teamwork and determination throughout the experience. One of the most significant outcomes was the friendships formed between young people from different communities. Through shared challenges and working together as a team, participants were able to develop greater understanding of one another, challenge preconceptions and build relationships that continued beyond the residential experience.

SEND-specific provision continued to provide a broad and varied programme of sports, cookery, arts, crafts and themed activities tailored to the individual needs and abilities of participants. One of the highlights was a circus skills workshop, where young people had the opportunity to learn and practise new skills including plate spinning, juggling and walking on stilts. The circus workshop generated considerable enthusiasm, with participants displaying confidence, perseverance and a willingness to challenge themselves. There was plenty of laughter and enjoyment throughout the session, with plate spinning proving particularly popular and providing an opportunity for young people to practise a new skill while celebrating their achievements.

The February HAF programme was delivered through 33 clubs across Blackpool, operating from schools, parks, community centres and youth centres. Despite periods of poor weather, attendance remained exceptionally strong at 94%, demonstrating the continued popularity of the programme and the commitment of providers to delivering engaging, accessible and inclusive activities for children and young people across the town.

Food

Providing healthy, nutritious food is a core element of the Blackpool Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Programme. All participants received at least one meal per session, with all food provision meeting School Food Standards. Where the nature of the venue or activity prevented the provision of a hot meal, a range of nutritious cold meal alternatives was offered.

The majority of providers sourced, prepared and cooked meals on site, ensuring high-quality food provision tailored to the needs and preferences of participants. Where necessary, meals were safely transported to delivery venues across the town. Throughout the year, providers worked closely with participants to develop menus that offered a balanced range of hot and cold meal options, snacks and refreshments that were both nutritious and appealing to children and young people.

Feedback

- *“The recipe boxes were massively appreciated; we had 100% positive feedback with families calling them wonderful, sharing that they took the opportunity to cook with their children and said they would make the recipes again.” – **Provider***
- *“I ate all the food and tried new things to get a sticker. I got a sticker every day.” - **Participant***
- *“The food is amazing and we get to learn how to cook it.” **Participant***
- *“It helps me financially in the holidays knowing that they are getting full healthy meals like they would at school and because I have five of them it really adds up.” **Parent***

As highlighted earlier in this report, we once again partnered with Dealmaker Ltd to deliver the successful “Dish Up” Recipe Box initiative as part of our Christmas programme. Designed specifically for HAF families, each recipe box contained all the ingredients required to prepare a nutritious main meal and dessert for a family of four, together with recipe cards and QR codes linking to instructional videos.

The recipes were developed to meet School Food Standards while remaining affordable, practical and easy to prepare at home. They introduced families to a variety of global cuisines, encouraging cultural awareness and broadening food experiences. A total of 463 recipe boxes were distributed to HAF families across Blackpool, providing an additional layer of support alongside face-to-face delivery.

The initiative also demonstrated a strong commitment to sustainability. Ingredient pods were manufactured using 40% recycled materials and were fully biodegradable, while all packaging was recyclable. Families were encouraged to repurpose the boxes through creative reuse ideas printed on the packaging. Furthermore, all Dish Up recipes were vegetarian or vegan, promoting healthy eating while supporting longer-term environmental sustainability through reduced carbon emissions associated with food production.

Nutritional Education and the promotion of healthy living /lifestyles

Promoting healthy eating and positive lifestyle choices continues to be an integral part of the HAF programme. Providers use mealtimes as opportunities to engage participants in discussions about nutrition, healthy food choices and the importance of maintaining a balanced diet.

Many providers incorporate food preparation and cooking activities into their programmes, enabling children and young people to learn practical skills while developing a greater understanding of nutrition. Taste-testing activities, discussions around healthier snack alternatives and conversations about the role food plays in supporting physical and mental wellbeing are routinely embedded within delivery.

Several providers delivered dedicated cookery sessions involving both children and their families. These sessions encouraged participants to prepare and enjoy healthy meals together, while also developing confidence in preparing affordable, nutritious food at home. Other providers distributed recipes, healthy eating guides and information promoting low-cost meal options for families.

The Christmas Recipe Box initiative further supported these objectives by encouraging families to cook together at home and explore affordable plant-based meals from a variety of cultures.

Feedback from providers suggests that participants are becoming increasingly aware of the relationship between food, health and wellbeing. Many have reported positive changes in eating habits, with children becoming more adventurous in their food choices and, in some cases, sharing their knowledge and encouraging healthier eating habits within their own families.

*“We feel we can help young people change their perceptions of the food they are eating by helping them to understand the benefits of healthy eating, and by leading by example. We are embedding conversations around healthy eating in our projects, and each project includes a rap with the lyrics encouraging healthy eating.” **Provider***

*“We wanted to really encourage the young people to build on skills they already have and skills they will continue to use throughout their lives. We introduced the ‘make your own lunch’ model. Each day, young people were given the tools to successfully make their own lunches which they would then eat together around a table. This consisted of sandwiches, wraps, beans on toast and homemade pizza! It was amazing to see the confidence of preparing a meal for themselves grow day by day, and them taking ownership of the food they were about to eat. We saw young people go from not being able to butter bread at the start of the week, to being able to butter toast and correctly use a knife at the end of the week! We are so proud of this achievement and will continue to use this model moving forward.” **Provider***

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

In addition to ensuring that all HAF provision remains inclusive and accessible, three providers delivered specialist SEND programmes specifically designed to support children and young people with mild to moderate additional needs.

Boathouse Youth’s Pathway Provision focuses on building confidence, independence and self-esteem through tailored group work activities delivered within enhanced staffing ratios, including one-to-one support where required. The programme also provides door-to-door transport, significantly reducing barriers to participation for families. Residential opportunities are also on offer, with extensive adjustments and support measures in place to enable participants to safely access offsite activities and overnight stays.

The BFCCT SEND Camp provides a wide range of physical, creative and enrichment activities within a supportive environment designed specifically for children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities. Smaller group sizes, highly trained staff and dedicated quiet spaces enable participants to engage confidently at their own pace. Many attendees are already known to the Trust through its work with local SEND schools, helping to build trust and confidence among participants and their families, particularly for those attending holiday provision for the first time.

The Active Blackpool team run a sports and physical activity camp for 5–18 year olds who have mild to moderate additional needs. Sessions provide an opportunity for young people to experience a diverse range of different sporting activities, both indoor and outdoor and seasonal challenges to develop their physical, emotional, and social

skills. Again, groups are smaller with additional fully trained staff in attendance. The Club is hosted at our Stanley Park Sports centre, which is situated within Stanley Park, voted the UK's best park, with 390 acres of gardens, woodlands, recreation and sports facilities all utilised by the team.

The demand for specialist SEND provision continues to grow, with SEND participants now representing 13% of the overall HAF cohort. All SEND programmes were consistently well attended throughout the year, highlighting the importance of maintaining and expanding these opportunities in future delivery.

"This camp is particularly beneficial as it allows young adults to socialise with peers of similar ages and interests, addressing a significant need for more social and physical opportunities for young adults with SEND in Blackpool. It provides them with the opportunity to make new friends away from their education setting, as young adults with SEND they can easily become isolated during academic breaks." **Provider of 15+ SEND Camp**

"We know other sports camps have had difficulties in accepting our children onto their camps, especially due to their inability to communicate verbally This is a godsend for us." **Parent**

Signposting and Referrals

A significant strength of the Blackpool HAF programme is the local knowledge and the community connections of our delivery partners. As all providers are based within Blackpool, they are well placed to identify emerging needs and offer information, advice, signposting and referrals to appropriate support services for children, young people and their families.

Providers engage regularly with families during drop-off and collection times, through digital communications and via ongoing relationships developed throughout programme delivery. This trusted position enables them to identify concerns early and connect families with additional support where needed.

To strengthen this approach, providers participated in Early Help workshops delivered by experienced Early Help Link Workers, alongside safeguarding training specifically tailored to the HAF environment. Regular communication also ensured providers remained informed of wider local support initiatives, including Warm Hubs, Food Banks, Household Support Fund schemes, energy advice services and cost-of-living support programmes.

Services commonly promoted or accessed through HAF signposting included:

- Citizens Advice
- Housing support officers
- School nurses
- Warm Hubs
- Family support services
- Early Years
- Jobcentre Plus
- Foodbanks
- Household Support Fund

Challenges and Highlights

Despite continued financial pressures and reductions in Department for Education funding, we have strived to strengthen both our framework of provision and partnership collaboration, resulting in an expanded reach and a deepened commitment to supporting our eligible children and families.

Our framework currently includes ten contracted providers, all of whom have demonstrated continued growth in attendance and delivery. Provision has been strategically located to ensure that children and families living within areas of highest need have accessible, local opportunities to access to HAF activities and nutritious meals (see Appendix 1 – FSM Areas and HAF Locations Maps).

Attendance remains a key performance indicator, and providers have implemented a range of successful engagement strategies including waiting lists, follow-up communications and improved booking processes. These measures have contributed to an overall annual attendance rate of over 91%. Whilst attendance will always be influenced by adverse weather conditions, providers consistently adapt by offering a variety of activities to maintain engagement.

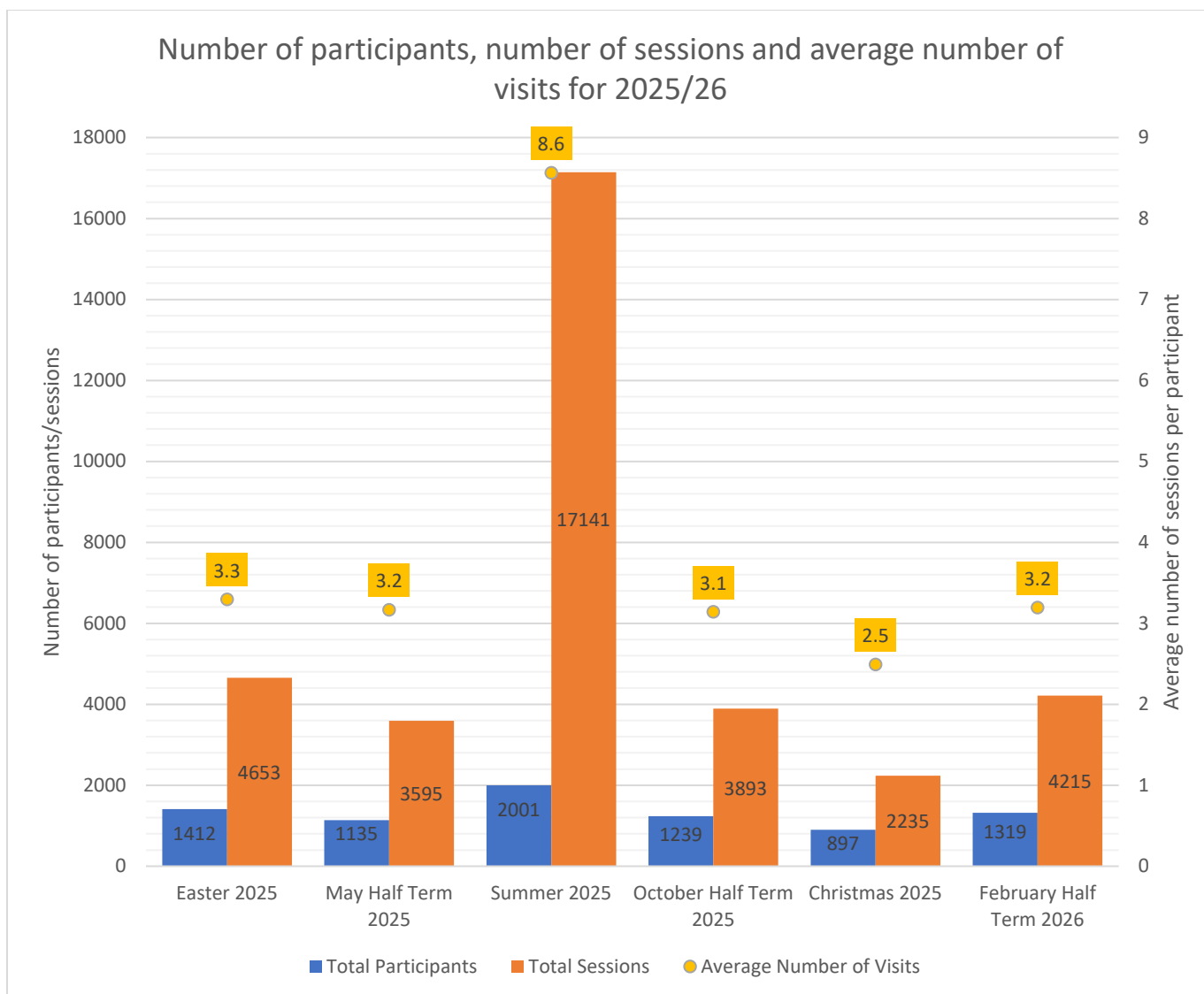
Our inclusive mainstream HAF provisions continue to serve many children and young people with SEND; however, the need for more SEND specific programmes was evident for those requiring smaller, more personalised group settings. Currently, three providers deliver specialised SEND clubs catering solely to children with mild to moderate needs, which are extremely popular and well attended. Our SEND reach is now 13% of our total HAF cohort.

While participation remains strongest among primary-aged children, engagement from secondary-aged young people has been sustained at an average of 23% throughout the year. Providers continue to adapt their delivery models to meet the needs of this age group by offering targeted activities, flexible session lengths, accessible community locations and evening provision.

Our Summer HAF programme alone supported 2,001 unique eligible children and young people, providing a safe environment to be active, learn, and enjoy enrichment activities, all alongside healthy meal provision. This represented 24.5% of our Free School Meal (FSM) cohort. Across all holiday periods, attendance data demonstrates exceptionally strong repeat engagement, with children attending an average of 4 sessions per holiday programme. During the summer programme, this increased to an average of 8.6 sessions per participant, reflecting the sustained appeal and quality of provision on offer.

Despite operating within a reduced funding envelope, the Blackpool HAF programme has nevertheless continued to grow. Total attendances increased from 33,912 in the previous year to 35,732 this year, demonstrating both increased reach and stronger participant engagement. Alongside these quantitative achievements, significant progress has also been made in the quality, diversity and inclusivity of activities, food provision and family support.

These achievements reflect the dedication of our delivery partners, staff and volunteers, and most importantly demonstrate the lasting positive impact that the HAF programme continues to have on Blackpool's children, young people and families.



Social Media Links and Feedback

Blackpool HAF Video: - <https://youtu.be/RZ-mT3tz5eY>

Blackpool Boys & Girls Club: - [Blackpool Boys and Girls Club Facebook Share](#)

Boathouse Youth: - [Boathouse Youth facebook share](#)

House of Wings /Skool of Street: - [House of Wings / Skool of Street Instagram reel](#)

Blackpool Park Rangers: - [BlackpoolPark rangers facebook share](#)

Magic Club: - [Magic Club facebook share](#)
[Magic Club facebook share 2](#)

BFCCT: - [BFCCT facebook share](#)

@theGrange: - <https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1BdRJZozx4/>

Feedback

Participants

- *"I LOVED it today; I've loved everything and getting to bring my bug house and butterfly creation home"*
- *"I wish we could be here every day"*
- *"I liked making new friends and having fun things to do, my favourite thing was when you fall off the skateboard they show you how to be brave and everyone cares about you"*
- *"I've enjoyed getting out of Blackpool and having a break away from home. It's so peaceful"*
- *"I had a lot of fun at Blackpool Dungeons, it was thrilling, and I made new friends I could spend time with"*
- *"This has been loads better than sitting at home alone on my PlayStation"*
- *"I have had fun today as I've got out of the house and I've spent time with other young carers and I'm thankful that you brought me"*
- *"I liked the museum, I did not know all this about Blackpool, it's really cool"*
- *"I really enjoyed learning how to cook all together from scratch and working together as a team."*
- *"I just LOVE it here"*

Parents/Guardians

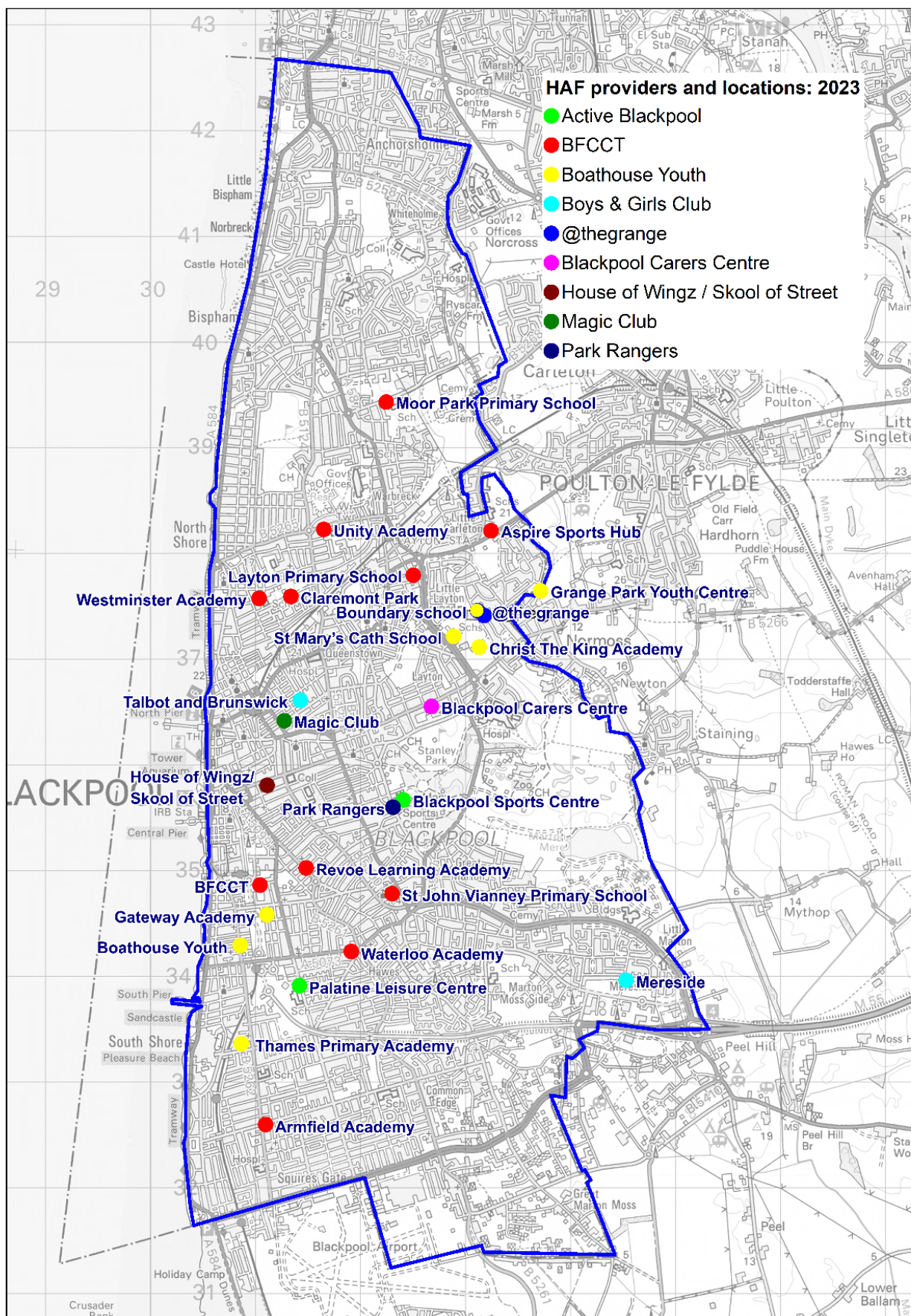
- *"I don't know what I would do without this club, thank you".*
- *"We really value being able to send our children to a space where their needs are taken into account. They enjoy being able to use the sensory space and really value the certificates that are given out."*
- *"Whatever you've fed them this week they have not shut up about it, loved the food and loved the dancing and it's nice to have them sent home worn out helps me a lot"*
- *"I cannot thank you enough, HAF is a lifeline for us"*
- *"We really appreciated the trip as it's something we just couldn't spend the money on. He keeps talking about a fire breathing lady".*
- *"The highlight was the full club trip to Blackpool Tower. The members enjoyed treats at the Tower and were blown away by the show itself. They were amazed by the magic, one member said that her "mind" was blown! " She just can't understand how they did it! The juniors were animated and excited throughout, and it was an absolutely awesome experience for our members and the team alike!"*

Appendix 1

Proportion of FSM by school: 2024/25



HAF Providers and Locations: 2023



Active Blackpool

1. Blackpool Sports Centre
2. Palatine Leisure Centre

Blackpool Football Club Community Trust

1. Armfield Academy
2. Aspire Sports Hub
3. Blackpool FC Community Trust Bloomfield Road
4. Claremont Park
5. Layton Primary School
6. Moor Park Primary School
7. Revoe Learning Academy
8. St John Vianney Catholic Primary School
9. Unity Academy
10. Westminster Primary Academy
11. Waterloo Primary Academy

Boathouse Youth

1. Grange Park Youth Centre
2. Boundary Primary School
3. St Mary's Catholic Academy
4. Christ The King Catholic Academy
5. Blackpool Gateway Academy
6. The Boathouse Youth Bloomfield
7. Thames Primary Academy

EPSCIC (Boys and Girls Club)

1. Talbot and Brunswick
2. Mereside

1. House of Wingz / Skool of Street***2. Magic Club******3. @thegrange******4. Park Rangers******5. Blackpool Carers Centre***

We would like to thank all of the partners who have worked with us to make Blackpool's 2025/26 HAF Programme a success.