

# Holiday Activities and Food Programme

A toolkit for engaging and supporting children with  
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

June 2022



# Introduction

Data from the HAF programme delivery during 2021 showed that the proportion of disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs (SEN) participating in HAF activities has varied significantly across the country.

There are a number of challenges and barriers to participation that have been identified by HAF coordinators and providers



This toolkit is designed to share information, tools and learning from local authorities and HAF providers to enable eligible disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs (SEN) to be as involved as possible in the HAF opportunities in their local area.

# Methodology

CDC facilitated a virtual co-production workshop with input from a small group of HAF coordinators, and building on learning from CDC's Short Breaks and Local Offer communities of practice, to co-produce this HAF and SEND toolkit at three levels:

- Support for HAF Coordinators
- Support for HAF providers
- Tailored information for families

The toolkit includes the following products:

- SEND Checklist for HAF coordinators and providers;
- Example of information for the SEND Local Offer;
- Example booking form questions that promote inclusion;
- Learning from Northumberland, Portsmouth and Staffordshire.

## What did we hear from HAF coordinators and providers?

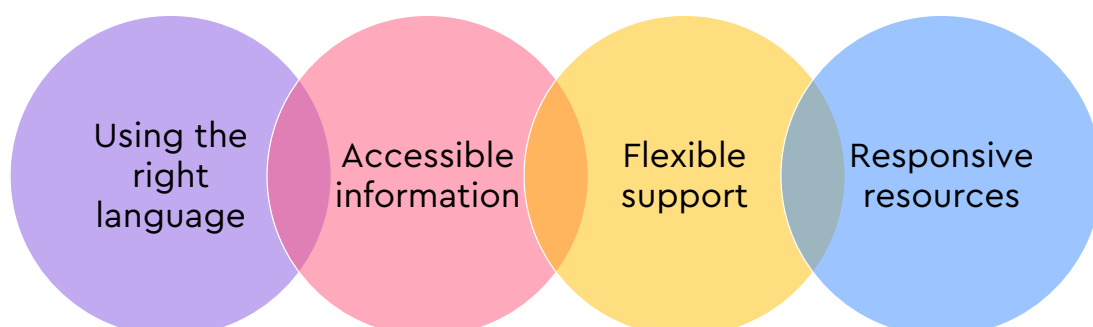
To ensure that families feel confident that the support available is inclusive and that their children and young people will be welcomed and supported some of the local authorities we worked with talked about the 'first 12 steps' approach. This is based on the idea that, in a physical location, within the first 12 steps you can see yourself represented in the environment. This could be through images, photo boards or accessible equipment. The purpose is to ensure that families feel welcome and all children and young people feel included.

This toolkit seeks to recreate this concept through the design of information and resources as well as just the physical environment, for example a 'first 12 clicks' approach.

In addition, a key message from CDC's previous work on adapting short break provision during the first pandemic lockdown highlighted that risk assessments should be used as an enabler to providing support rather than a barrier.

"Risk assessment which supports effective risk management and creative thinking led to different approaches to face-to-face support rather than support being withdrawn especially for children, young people and families who were particularly vulnerable or at high risk of going into crisis."

The key aspects considered in this tool kit are:



# Checklist for HAF coordinators and Providers

The checklist below identifies some of the key areas of activity in planning and delivering inclusive, accessible support for disabled children and their families. Alongside each theme there are suggested tips or activity that can be carried out by both HAF Coordinators and HAF providers and a final column to record actions and details of the approaches taken locally

Themes	HAF Coordinators	HAF Providers	Actions and approaches taken
<b>Building Trust with parent carers and families</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide SEND specific information early, including on the SEND Local Offer</li> <li>• Encourage providers and local parent carer forums to raise awareness with families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include the message that support is available in marketing to reassure families that provision is for them</li> <li>• Consider a group meeting before the holidays if possible for coffee and chat with everyone</li> <li>• Consider offering short visits to settings as part of the booking process</li> <li>• Keep dialogue and conversations open throughout and beyond activities – The child and family are in a new setting and it's important to be ready to adapt</li> </ul>	
<b>Supporting Staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put together a training package to upskill staff and plan ahead building on support from the VCS including volunteers with existing experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand that the children and young people may be very different in different settings</li> <li>• One method doesn't fit all – what works for one young person may not work for another</li> <li>• Be consistent with the format of activities and session structure – Stability and familiarity are key</li> </ul>	



<b>Specialist support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be the conduit to connect providers with specialist support and advice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with those that already have the relationships with the children and their families to understand the support they need (teacher, family support worker, friend)</li> </ul>	
<b>Planning for the unexpected</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be responsive to late requests</li> <li>• Be flexible, keep lines of communication open with providers and consider having some contingency funding available</li> <li>• Create links with VCS and SEND specialist providers and volunteers who might be able to help</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask the right questions as part of the booking process to support effective planning</li> <li>• Be flexible, keep lines of communication open with HAF coordinators</li> <li>• Consider purchasing a range of supportive tools that can be used as needed e.g. a sensory toolkit – ear defenders, blankets, tent, fidget toys</li> </ul>	
<b>Effective use of resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with short breaks teams, partners and families to understand and map potential barriers (e.g. transport) and allocate funding accordingly</li> <li>• Consider ringfencing part of the HAF budget for additional support when needed</li> </ul>		

# Tailored information for families

The information shared about the HAF programme is crucially important in ensuring that families know that their children and young people are welcome in settings and to ensure they have confidence that they will be well supported.

Information provided to families should be available from a range of places:



The information shared should include:

- What is the HAF programme?
- Who is eligible for HAF activities?
- What activities are available?
- How disabled children and young people and those with SEN will be supported?
- How to book?

The language and approach should be:

- Welcoming
- Inclusive
- Strength-based
- Accessible

# Information Example for the SEND Local Offer

## What is the Holiday Activities and Food Programme?

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme is an inclusive programme open to all eligible children aged 5–16.

The HAF programme provision and activities are inclusive of all children and young people, including those who may have a disability or who have Special Educational Needs.

## Aims of the programme are for children who attend this provision to:

- 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 educational attainment
- Be safe and not to be socially isolated
- Have a greater knowledge of health and nutrition
- Be more engaged with school and other local services.

## How will your child be supported at the Holiday Activities and Food Programme? *[NB – to be tailored to your local authority arrangements]*

- Staff and providers will receive SEND training to ensure that they have a basic understanding to help them to support the children and young people they are working with.
- Families are welcome to stay for a short period of time on the first day to settle children and young people into the environment.
- HAF providers will aim to keep meal times, breaks and activities as structured as possible and in the same surroundings.
- HAF providers will have a quiet space for children and young people to use if needed.
- Your local SENDIAS service may be able to signpost you to a provider who might best meet the needs of your child.

## An example from Portsmouth



### Holiday Activity and Food Programme Pompey

Portsmouth City Council are delighted to be delivering the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme during the Easter, Summer and Christmas 2021 school holidays. Funded by the Department for Education, funds have been made available to provide free holiday provision, including healthy food and enriching activities, for children aged 5-16 who are eligible for benefits related free school meals.

PCC are working in collaboration with a wide range of providers to create a fantastic programme of activities and events for this Summer. The programme includes a wide range of activities from sport to performing arts, day trips to art workshops, water sports to cooking classes. It also includes events where the whole family can get involved.

To find a full list of activities on offer and to book a space follow this link to the main HAF website – <https://www.pycportsmouth.co.uk/haffunpompey/>

In Portsmouth City we have been working closely with our activity providers to make sure they are as inclusive and accessible as possible. We even have SEND specific activities on offer!

By mentioning that they are working with the providers to be as inclusive and accessible as possible, and highlighting SEND specific activities, it is immediately clear to families that their children are welcome to participate.

### Frequently Asked Questions

How does the HAF programme support children with Special Educational Needs?

My child has 1-to-1 support, can they still go to HAF activities?

Their FAQs include specific questions in relation to how children will be supported at the top of the list of questions so that this information is easy for families to find and include detailed answers and signposting to further information including how to book.

# Provider Booking Form

In addition to the information provided it is also important that booking forms use supportive, strength-based language that emphasises a willingness to be flexible to meet the needs of disabled children and those with SEN. This will encourage families to share the right information so that providers can work with HAF coordinators and with families to plan effectively.

## Example Questions

1. So that we can best support your child for the duration of the holiday activities, please tell us if they have a special educational need or disability?
2. What specific activities does your child enjoy doing the most?
3. What specific activities does your child least enjoy doing?
4. What specific activities does your child enjoy that they may need extra support with to fully participate?
5. If your child requires support with any of the activities listed below, please let us know what we can do to support them?
  - Eating
  - Drinking
  - Using the toilet
  - Participating in drawing/writing activities
  - Participating in physical activities
  - Participating in other activities, for example games
  - Socialising with other children
6. If your child needs support with any other activity not listed above, please tell us what it is and what we can do to support them?
7. What are the best approaches to use to help your child to feel nurtured, safe and secure if they get distressed during the day?
8. So that we can provide a nurturing environment for your child, please let us know if there are any specific triggers for them and what we can do to support them.



# Learning from Local Areas

The Council for Disabled Children (CDC) have worked with three local areas, Portsmouth, Staffordshire and Northumberland, to explore their approaches to providing an inclusive and supportive HAF programme for children with SEND and their families.

This section of the toolkit shares contributions from each of the local area.

## Shared aims and clear purpose

All three local areas described the need to have clear commitment to developing inclusive approaches for children with SEND across the HAF programme. This started with strong partnerships and agreement on shared aims.

**"Northumberland** Holiday Provision is a partnership approach to deliver holiday activities in Northumberland and includes, Northumberland Communities Together (NCT/NCC), Leading Link and Thriving Together Northumberland. With support from our funders, Department for Education (HAF) and The National Lottery Fund, through North East Child Poverty Trust.

Our strength and success is down to local partners delivering activities that they understand will work in their area and we have had some outstanding contributions to date.

The short term goal is to provide high quality provision in the School holidays across Northumberland, with long term goals of sustainability and to continue to expand the provision beyond the school holidays."

**Portsmouth** has had the ambition of being a needs-led city and providers will have been focusing on inclusion for some time now. This has enabled the HAF programme to work closely with SEND partners because of the strong foundations in existing local partnerships.

## Working with partners

The partnership behind the **Northumberland** Holiday Provision meet on a fortnightly basis to look at the development of the programme and stretch and challenge the provision. This is to ensure it is continuously meeting the needs of families, young people and the communities.

Roadshows are delivered across areas in the County and are attended by local organisations, Businesses and VCSE who are looking to support the delivery of the Holiday Provision. The roadshows help give an insight into how the provision works, what's involved and encourage partnership working to ensure there is a strong offer within the community. It also helps existing delivery partners to share their tips for success, as well as any challenges/barriers that they have overcome.

## Developing provision

In **Staffordshire** a review of their provision, with 18 providers engaged, suggested there was a gap in provision for children with SEND. This led to some dedicated work with their Aiming High Short Breaks Team to encourage Short Break providers for children with SEND to offer HAF activities. Due to a short turnaround time before the Christmas Break they focused on working with 2 providers to pilot the 'HAF light' programme (2 days, 2 hours per session) specifically for children with SEND.

Between Christmas and Easter the Aiming High team worked with all Short Break providers to support them to develop HAF applications for the Easter break which has continued to extend the number of children with SEND who can access HAF support.

In **Portsmouth**, a local specialist SEND provider, Enableability, was funded to provide training for other HAF providers through the 'other' budget strand of the HAF funding (training is indicated as a possible use for this in the guidance). They also have an online training module for providers which gives an introduction to SEND. As well as the SEND specific training, they also provide Mental Health First Aid training to support all providers to be able to meet the needs of a wide range of children and young people.

As part of the ongoing support beyond the training Enableability staff agreed to be directly contactable to providers who completed the training to help them to overcome any SEND-related challenges that arose during the delivery of the activities.

In **Northumberland**, Providers who express an interest in delivering on the holiday provision must meet a list of essential criteria this includes:

- having the correct training in place
- offering a programme of fun, exciting, multi activities on offer to include a daily offer of physical activity, art and enrichment (this can include trips out locally to showcase our Northumberland)
- offering good quality hot food.

If a provider doesn't meet all of the essential criteria, they will work with the partnership, to understand how they can use their strengths to partner with other organisations or what they would need to be able to meet the essential criteria going forward.



## Delivering HAF activities for children with SEND

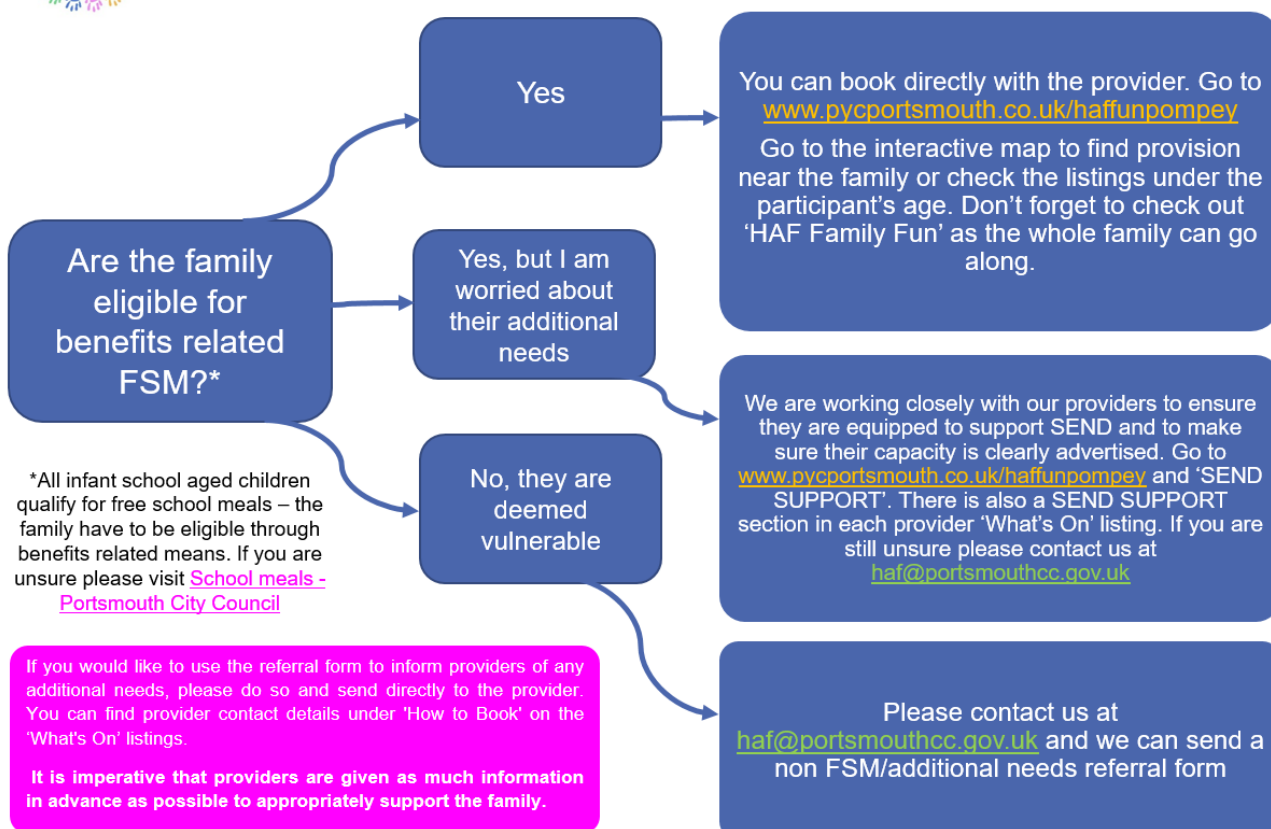
The local areas had differing approaches to referrals and bookings but had all considered how to make these inclusive.

**Staffordshire** has a central online booking system for Aiming High Short Breaks and HAF that is linked together enabling families to book on to HAF activities and then be shown what might be available through Aiming High. In addition, they are running a combined communications programme across HAF and Aiming High to raise awareness with families of the opportunities and eligibility in each programme.

In **Portsmouth**, the referral and booking processes are held by the providers however on the website there is a provider advert template which they are required to complete. This asks about providers SEND support and where providers respond to say they can not support young people with SEND the HAF team contacts them to discuss training and support needs to enable this to happen.



## HAF Fun Pompey Referrals



## Understanding and meeting children's needs

Some of the challenges raised by providers have included the challenges in meeting children's needs when they are not always clearly shared or easily understood from paper or online booking forms.

As part of the Enableability booking process in **Portsmouth** there is a compulsory home visit from staff to get to meet the young person and their in advance which gives a much greater insight into how to meet their needs.

There is also consideration of matching attendance days and times with children and young people's existing friendship groups where others they know are also enrolled to attend activities.

HAF Fun Pompey also has a referral form in place for professionals to refer children that are not FSM eligible and deemed vulnerable, as well as children that are FSM eligible and attending HAF Fun Pompey with additional needs.

Sections on the form include identifying:

- Do they have 1 to 1 support at school?
- Transport Required

These questions help HAF Fun Pompey to plan ahead in terms of arranging additional 1 to 1 support and transport. Some transport options have to be funded by other means and so collating this information beforehand ensures that they can evaluate further options.

In **Northumberland** there is a clear commitment to ensuring providers have a choice of trips and activities planned which can accommodate young people with additional needs and disabilities. They also ensure that, once a family has registered their interest in taking part in family activities, they give them a call and talk through the activities and trips on offer. This also helps the families to feel confident and reassured, especially around any additional requirements they may have.



## Inclusive provision

The **Northumberland** Holiday provision, includes camps being delivered right across the county by a range of fantastic local providers, these include, community groups, youth organisations and local schools. The camps are delivered to a high-quality standard and include a range of exciting activities such as, sports, music, arts and crafts, bushcraft and so on. There is also a family offer available, where families can access a range of funded trips and activities throughout the holidays including, trips to Northumberland Zoo, Alnwick Gardens, Trekking with Alpacas, local leisure centre passes for swimming and clip and climb and also water sports including, kayaking and surfing.

There is an offer for all families and they work with providers to ensure the camps are inclusive and support with any training needs that may be required.

Feedback from a parent who attended a family trip to clip and climb:

**"I just wanted to thank you and your team for the family days out you have been organising. We had a fantastic day at clip and climb today and a lovely lunch next door. My youngest Penny who despite having spina bifida and 13+ operations since birth managed to climb up those walls."**

In **Portsmouth** they were able to use their HAF capital funding to provide sensory kits and tents to providers. You can find out more about Portsmouth's HAF Fun Pompey activity programme from a provider perspective here: <https://youtu.be/wHrLVp722ts>.

It is important to remember that some children and young people may find it challenging to engage with the activities. A quiet room can be useful in situations where a child or young person finds the activity or session overwhelming, a staff member should take the child or young person to this room to talk to them and to stay with them to ensure they do not feel excluded. You should encourage the child or young person to return to participate in the activity but only if they are happy to do so. Here is an example of HAF Fun Pompeys' success with engaging a child:

"A majority of the service users struggle with parties, there was one child in particular. He would prefer to be reclusive and not interact. He has to sit at a distance with worker he has a good relationship with. He refused to see Santa. He asked to go to the time out room when Santa arrived. The worker managed to persuade him to stay because the person who played Santa managed to de-sensitise the child to everything about Santa and with the support of the worker (who is usually the only person he'll speak to) he sat next to Santa. He chatted to Santa for a while. The child has a lot of sensory issues which impacts on his interactions. Christmas is an ordeal for him and causes many meltdowns. This interaction at the party made the staff's Christmas."



**Northumberland's** Young Leaders Programme for young people aged 16 – 22 play a key role in helping the delivery of the camps, by working with the organisations to support the younger participants to feel comfortable and confident in undertaking new activities.

Young Leaders are seen as the key to many of the camps successes in Northumberland. They are an amazing team who said they feel like one big, happy family! They get a lot of opportunities to try new things, go on residential and receive training that will help them get ready for the world of work and beyond. The current Young Leaders said they love the social aspect, many finding lifelong friends, as well as building confidence to be the best they can. One of Northumberland's favourite statistics from Summer 2021 was that 77% of children attending one of the camps said they wanted to become a young leader!

Lots of great feedback was received regarding the young leaders during Summer 2021, especially around the ability for young leaders to recognize if any young people were feeling overwhelmed or needing to have space away from the activities, the young leaders were there to undertake an activity away from the group such as, kicking a football or drawing, until they felt confident to return to the group activity.

## Top tips for HAF Coordinators and Providers

### 1. Accessible information

Provide SEND specific information early, including on the SEND Local Offer, and encourage Short Break providers and local parent carer forums to raise awareness with families (this could include offering short introductory visits to settings at the start of the holidays).

### 2. Specialist SEND support

Put together a training package to upskill staff and plan ahead building on support from the VCS including volunteers with existing experience.

Consider ringfencing part of the HAF budget for additional support when needed.

Be the conduit to connect providers with specialist support and advice.

Be consistent – Stability and structure are key!

### 3. Flexibility

Be responsive to late requests, keep lines of communication open with providers and consider having some contingency funding available. Create links with VCS and SEND specialist providers and volunteers who might be able to help.

### 4. Resources

Work with short breaks teams, partners and families to understand and map potential barriers (e.g. transport) and allocate funding accordingly.



## United for disabled children

The Council for Disabled Children brings people and organisations together to drive change in society and deliver a better childhood for disabled children the UK. We interrogate policy, uncover evidence and develop more effective ways of supporting disabled children and their families. Together with National Children's Bureau we are united for a better childhood.

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