



Hertfordshire HAF Summer 2023 Case Study

Demonstrating the power of HAF in Hertfordshire

Theme: SEND children

Saracens Foundation

“One of our participants lives with a hearing impairment and relies on British Sign Language (BSL) or PECs cards for communication. His encounter with our camp on the first week, facilitated by our coach who is fluent in BSL, led to a transformative experience where he not only found inclusion but also an avenue for meaningful engagement in all camp activities.”

What is the opportunity or issue?

The HAF grant has provided our beneficiaries with a transformative opportunity to foster not only their foundational physical skills but also to nurture their social abilities and cultivate lasting friendships. Our aim was to facilitate skill development and grant them ownership over specific aspects of the camp, fostering a sense of accomplishment.

How have you capitalised on the opportunity and/or overcome the issue?

SM lives with a hearing impairment that requires him to navigate his world through BSL and occasional Picture Exchange Communication (PEC) cards. His nonverbal nature requires alternative communication methods, and other camps are not always able to provide the necessary support. When Sam, a member of the Saracens Foundation staff, welcomed SM using BSL on arrival, any feelings of apprehension about attending soon faded. SM's subsequent integration into camp activities, from Uno to football was remarkable, signalling not only his active engagement but also his newfound connection with peers. Sam's presence and expertise created a unique platform of understanding and support for SM.

What has been the impact?

The commitment to inclusion was taken a step further as SM's presence triggered the idea for a BSL workshop. Led by Sam, the workshop aimed to equip participants with basic BSL skills, fostering a shared pathway of communication. The workshop's focus on weather, seasons, and animals sparked interest in the group and laid a foundation for continued curiosity of BSL amongst the group.

SM's journey at our Summer Camp shows the importance of inclusivity and how powerful it can be. His growth from anxiety to confidence shows the importance of communication support. The praise from SM's parents highlighted the great impact of a camp that celebrates diversity and empowers all participants.

How do you plan to build on this?

Through our experience with SM we plan to upskill all staff with basic BSL and continue to engage participants in workshops while at camp, to not only educate them but also breakdown barriers and allow participants to form strong bonds.