



HAPpy

Impact Report 2023

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Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) funded Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) programme is known in Hertfordshire as the HAPpy. The HAPpy programme offers free holiday activities to children who meet all the following criteria:

- **Are school age (reception to year 11)**
- **Are attending school in Hertfordshire**
- **Are registered for benefits-related Free School Meals (FSM) with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)**

Under the DfE funding criteria, up to 15% of funding can be used to allow non-FSM eligible children to access the programme. In Hertfordshire, these places were offered via a referral process from professionals working with vulnerable children and their families.

The programme was co-ordinated on behalf of HCC by the Herts Sport & Physical Activity Partnership (HSP) and included the commissioned service of Hertfordshire Community Foundation (HCF) to undertake the grants application process.

During 2023, HSP worked with a number of local providers to offer a broad range of camps during the Spring, Summer and Winter holiday periods.

Project background

Research has shown that the school holidays can be pressure points for some families, and for some children that can lead to a holiday experience gap. Children from low-income households are:

- Less likely to access organised out-of-school activities
- More likely to experience 'unhealthy holidays' in terms of nutrition and physical health
- More likely to experience social isolation



The HAF programme is a response to this issue. Evidence shows that free holiday clubs can have a positive impact on children and young people. They work best when they:

- Provide consistent and easily accessible enrichment activities
- Cover more than just breakfast or lunch
- Involve children and parents in food preparation
- Use local partnerships and connections, particularly with the voluntary, community sector organisations

Since 2021, the HAF programme nationally has provided support to hundreds of thousands of children and their families throughout the Easter, summer, and Christmas school holidays.

The HAPpy programme has sought to offer eligible children a minimum of 4 hours of camp delivery, including a minimum of one hour of Physical Activity, one hour of Enrichment Activity, opportunities to promote Healthy Eating/Healthy Lifestyle and a hot meal. The exception to this

was delivery aimed specifically to support those with a recognised SEND need. In this instance, more flexibility was offered in the length of time and offer of food to support the needs of the children attending.

Implementation

In 2023, the HAPpy programme was delivered during the following three school holiday periods spring, summer and winter.

- Spring: 3rd April to 14th April (8 delivery days)
- Summer: 24th July to 31st August (25 delivery days)
- Winter: 21st December to 3rd January 2024 (7 delivery days)

Across the programme, over 400 different camps were facilitated during 2023, meeting the core HAF criteria by delivering an array of activities. These included STEM, Performing Arts and Multi Sport focused opportunities.

From its inception in 2021, HAPpy has continued to utilise a code system to establish eligibility. All activity bookings are made on the Playwaze online booking system. While the primary communications channel for codes is through schools, more and more professional/referrals are being made into the programme.



Professionals working with children and families are able to refer into the programme under the 15% non-FSM eligible allocation. HSP staff engaged with a number of local organisations and partnerships to make professionals aware of the HAPpy programme and explain the opportunities.

We offered camp providers ideas and resources to share with and support families

who attend their programmes, including: updates around the cost of living crisis and signposting to relevant help and support which can be accessed locally.

Providers were encouraged to link with services in their immediate communities, such as food banks, and to consider how activities they deliver can be sustainable outside of the HAF programme.

Following the 2022 delivery, it was clear there were still sections of those eligible for the programme who weren't yet accessing the opportunities. Whilst this could be for several reasons, it was understood that there was potentially a lack of opportunities for certain young people to engage. After consulting with HCC, it was proposed that two services – Short Breaks Local Offer (SBLO) and Services for Young People (SfYP) – should be directly awarded funds to support young people eligible for provision to access more specialist services.

In addition to this, HAPpy funded a Summer Parks Programme (4 weeks of provision across 5 parks) aimed at teenagers (*a further report can be found on this*).

The programme also offers providers with an extensive training programme (*a further report can be found on this*).

The promotion and advertising of the programme is critical to ensure that eligible families and professional referral bodies are aware of the opportunities on offer. As a result, the Partnership spends a significant amount of time on marketing and promotion of the programme.

Partnerships

76

Providers used

13

New providers

The HAPpy programmes successful delivery is, in part, due to the successful partnership between HSP and HCF to administer the programme across Hertfordshire. Key to this is the open communication and working practises to work through the requirements of the grant and delivery process in a methodical and stringent manner, to ensure there is accountability at all stages for all those involved – be it partner or provider.

The Partnership worked through 2023 to increase the reach of different referral partners which included organisations and workers from Families First, Food Banks, Herts Help and the Citizens Advice Bureau. Presentations were given as part of the 'Working together in Early Help' Families First area briefings, to extend the reach and understanding of referring to the HAPpy programme across the network.

The Partnership also worked hard on developing relationships with schools across the county to ensure that messages were reached, and also so that schools understood who we were and the support we offered.

The Partnership created a better working relationship with Hertfordshire County Council which ensured that their messaging was in-line with other marketing and communications that was being used.

Outcomes and Benefits

The 2023 programme offered 75,099 places across the three delivery phases (Spring (Easter), Summer and Winter (Christmas)). These places were split into a mainstream offer of 71, 559 (including 6,800 placed delivered by HCC's Services for Young People) and 3,540 places which were Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

All the key performance indicators set by the Hertfordshire County Council and all the criteria set by the Department of Education were met across all delivery phases, including:

- 85% bookings rate of proposed places offered was
- 70% Attendance based on bookings of the proposed places
- At least 85% of eligible families have access to a holiday provision that is with 10 miles of their family home

	Primary-aged	Secondary-aged
TOTAL number of attendees in Spring	2510	427
TOTAL number of attendees in Summer	3,643	923
TOTAL number of attendees in Winter	1,791	164
TOTAL	7,944	1514
GRAND TOTAL	9458	

Parent/Carer and Child feedback collated throughout the process, ensures the opportunities are meeting the needs of those attending the camps. This is done through Parent/Carer surveys post delivery and by capturing information from Providers and the Children directly.

94% of parents/ guardians surveyed in 2023 indicated that their child enjoyed their overall experience at the HAPpy Camps.

96% of respondents indicated that HAPpy Camps helped their family with costs of living during the school holidays.

An attendee at camp said;

“Making friends has been the best! I like the coaches! If I wasn’t here, I wouldn’t make new friends. I like everything about the camps because it’s so so so fun! And if I wasn’t here, I would be bored and doing nothing as my mum and dad work all the time!”

Quotes from Parents:

“I have 2 autistic children my 6 year old had no confidence at the start and left full of confidence and made friends she’s already asking when she can go back the team that run it was amazing and really looked after her and understood her needs CANT wait to send her again thank you”.

“They made a few new friends & although booked in for every other day asked to go everyday which was fantastic, it brightened their day & self esteem”..

Full case studies of the impact of the programme on parents/carers and the children can be found [here](#)

Key Learnings

Introduced an expression of interest form for new providers to understand their offer prior to making a full application.

To reduce the amount of administration for delivery providers plus benefiting both HSP and HCF a 'trusted provider' list was introduced for returning applicants.

Constant review of the parameters throughout the three delivery phases ensured that there was an equitable offer across the county. Introduction of a 'waiting' list on the Playwaze booking system provided a better booking experience for the users.

Sending the school code emails to school SENCO contacts to aid their awareness of the programme and create the line of communication and opportunity for referrals to be considered and submitted.

Communicating to schools the Gov Notify email address to expect the school code email, so it is easier to locate.

Significant amount of effort in promoting and encouraging families to cancel booking in advance to reduce wasted places.

Delivery providers marketing often has a better reach than centralised HSP marketing.

Trackable marketing material ensures that you have a better understanding of what works and what doesn't (e.g. bitly links).

Constant review of the types of activities being offered and ensuring there is equitable access for all to book – some niche camps book up quickly so parents do not get this opportunity.

Next Steps

1

Produce a **robust and detailed marketing strategy** for 2024.

2

Increase parents understanding and **importance for declaring SEND** at the point of booking.

3

Continuation of direct award to SBLO and SfYP



Conclusion

The HAPpy programme continues to be a vital source of support for eligible families. Through the audit and feedback process, it is clear that Providers of the scheme offer safe and engaging camps for children and young people to take part in a range of

opportunities through the programme. Hertfordshire continues to lead the way in finding new and innovative ways to reach eligible families not currently accessing the programme. Through the Marketing strategy in 2024, and the opportunity to work with further new providers, we are expecting to strengthen the success and outcomes of the programme.

28,000+

Young People on benefits related free school meals who are eligible to attend HAPpy Camps

Hertfordshire's Holiday Activity Programme



Department
for Education



Hertfordshire
Community
Foundation

