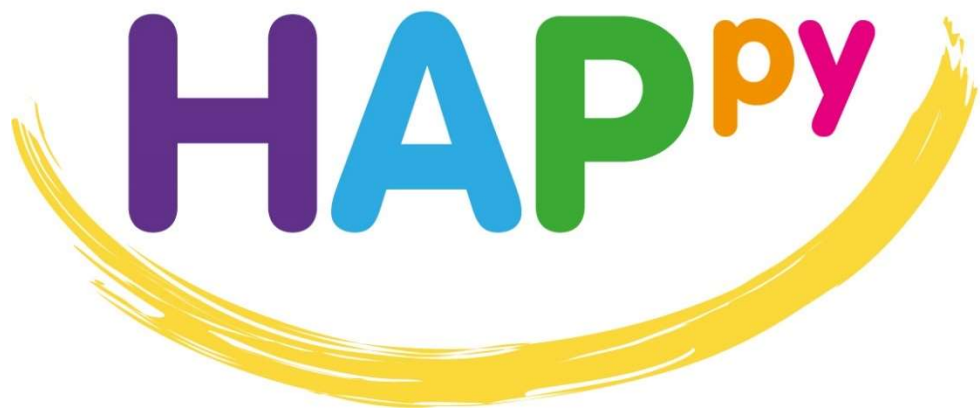


JUNE 30, 2025

# Hertfordshire's Holiday Activity Programme



**HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND FOOD PROGRAMME (HAF)  
HERTFORDSHIRE ANNUAL REPORT 2024**

**HAPPY: HOLIDAY ACTIVITY PROGRAMME**

**LOUISE GALLAGHER-SMITH  
& ORLA MOORE**  
HERTS SPORT & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PARTNERSHIP

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## **Overview**

### **The Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF)**

The Department for Education (DfE) funded Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) programme is known in Hertfordshire as the HAPpy: Holiday Activity Programme.

In 2024, the HAPpy: Holiday Activity Programme offered free holiday activities to children who met all the following criteria:

- Are school age (reception to year 11)
- Are attending school in Hertfordshire
- Are registered for benefits-related Free School Meals with HCC
- Referred into the programme if not FSM, from professionals working with vulnerable children and their families.

The programme was co-ordinated on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council (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.

The Herts Sport & Physical Activity Partnership (HSP) works strategically and collaboratively to improve the lives of the people of Hertfordshire, by using the power of sport and physical activity to tackle inequality and disadvantage.

Hertfordshire Community Foundation is an independent charity that aims to encourage local philanthropy, the giving of time, resources or both by local people to help support their local communities. Their expertise in grant giving is essential to the smooth running of the programme.

### **HAF in Hertfordshire**

#### **Strategic Partnerships Commissioning**

The Strategic Partnerships Commissioning Service within the local authority is responsible for commissioning the programme, undertake the main budget responsibility and contract management, working as a conduit between the Department for Education, other local authorities, Childcare Works, Local Authority senior management, elected members and HSP. The team are responsible for seamless communications directly with local schools and Children's Services partners, including responding to queries, to ensure families are kept informed of the release of booking codes and the opening of the booking system.

HCC work closely with the commissioned partners to strive towards a seamless experience for our children and families. The HCC Commissioning and Development Manager regularly updates HCC boards, feedback to the steering group and organises visits to HAPpy camp for Senior local authority officers, local councillors and Members of Parliament.

## Targets for the 2024 HAPpy programme

The 2024 programme proposed the offering of 76,854 activity places across the three delivery phases: Spring (Easter), Summer and Winter (Christmas). These places would be delivered via two methods:

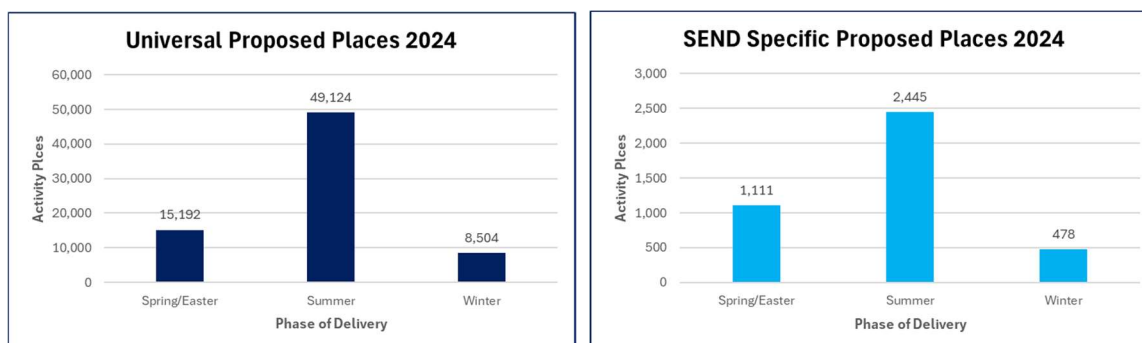
- Grant funded activities split into 69,220 universal (mainstream) places and 3,394 places which were specifically for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Direct Award of funding for 4,240 places to be delivered via Hertfordshire's Services for Young People (SYP) and Short Breaks Local Offer (SBLO).

Table: HAF places proposed in Hertfordshire in 2024

	Spring Places	Summer Places	Winter Places	Total Places Proposed
<b>UNIVERSAL*</b> (based on £30 per head)	14,392	46,324	8,504	69,220
<b>SEND SPECIFIC</b> (based on £70 per head)	1,011	2,005	378	3,394
<b>Funded Totals</b>	15,403	48,329	8,882	72,614
<b>Services For Young People (SYP)</b>	(UNIVERSAL direct award)			3,600
<b>Short Breaks Local Offer (SBLO)</b>	(SEND SPECIFIC direct award)			640
<b>Total Proposed</b>				76,854

*\*Camps delivered in a Universal setting are inclusive and can also accommodate young people with less complex needs who do not need the higher levels of support offered at a dedicated SEND camp.*

## Proposed SEND & Universal Provision across the year



As part of the contract agreement with HSP, the Local Authority stipulate the following Key Performance Indicators (KPI) through each delivery period, in addition to the national expectations which can be subject to annual review.

**Agreed KPIs**

- 90% delivery of above proposed funded places will be reached for each delivery period
- 85% booking of proposed funded places offered
- 70% attendance of the bookings of the proposed funded places
- At least 75% of eligible families can access holiday provision within 5 miles of their family home
- At least 85% of eligible families can access holiday provision within 10 miles of their family home

These indicators are monitored by the Commissioning and Development Manager from the Strategic Partnerships Commissioning Service and regular updates are presented in a report to the steering group at each meeting.

**Finance**

In 2024 the overall funding spent on the HAPpy programme in Hertfordshire: £2,936,010.00

The proportion of the funding that was spent on administration: £305,759.80

This amount continued to enable the commissioned services of HSP & HCF to deliver the programme on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council.

In Hertfordshire we allocate:

- Up to £30 per funded place for Universal camp spaces.
- Up to £70 for Special Educational Needs (SEND) camp spaces.

This is the same for the application based funding and direct award models to ensure consistency across the programme.

The remaining budget is used to subsidise marketing, booking systems, contingency funds, and equipment. It should be noted that the local authority does not receive any financial remuneration for its work or involvement in the programme.

## Governance

The overall governance of the programme is the responsibility of the HAPpy Steering group, chaired and facilitated through the Local Authority. The steering group continues to provide direction, guidance and support as part of the commissioning process.

In 2024, the steering group membership was as follows:

Name	Organisation	Role
Melany Knowles (Chair)	HCC	Head of Early Years
Sally Orr	HCC	Head of Family and Health Services Commissioning
Tina Powell	HCC	Senior Commissioning Manager
George Gearing	HCC	Commissioning Manager
John O'Callaghan	HSP	Director
Matt Rayner	HSP	Strategic Lead – People, Places, Programmes
Therese Antoine	HCC	Development & Commissioning Officer
Cllr Fiona Thompson	HCC	Executive Member for Children and Young People
Louise Gallagher-Smith	HSP	Children and Young Peoples Team Lead
Orla Moore	HSP	Project Lead - MELI
Paul Robin	HCF	CEO
Helen Doubal	HCF	Head of Grants
Katie Purcell	HCF	HAPpy Grants Manager
Holly Budgen	HSP	Marketing Associate
Emma Catlin	HSP	Project Officer – HAF Training
Peter Hosier	HCC	Services for Young People
Julie Reddish	HCC	SBLO
Debbie Pettit	HCC	Finance

There continues to be three funding application phases per year, administered by HCF and governed by the decision made by the Grant panel of key stakeholders.

Grant Panel key stakeholders:

Name	Organisation	Role
Sally Burton	HCF	Trustee (Chair)
Paul Robin	HCF	CEO
Matt Rayner:	HSP	Strategic Lead
George Gearing	HCC	Commissioning Manager
Ros Cramp	Herts Disability Sport Foundation	SEND Advisor

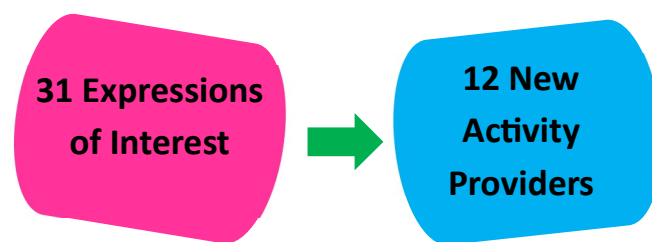
Both the steering group and grant panel stakeholders are vital in the decision-making process, ensuring funding is allocated to the areas of greatest need.

## The Funding Process

Building on the changes implemented in 2023, a phase-by-phase grant funding application process was maintained, with a review of the systems and parameters used for applications conducted after each phase.

### Expression of Interest

An expression of interest (EOI) form was created for new providers to better understand their offer prior to making a full formal application for funding through the HAPpy programme. This form was made available ahead of the Spring and Summer phases. This process enabled the continuation of new opportunities to be integrated into the programme, the aim of which to bolster provision in certain areas of Hertfordshire whilst maintaining the highest level of performance and quality. The decision was made not to open this for Winter, due to the uncertainty of future funding.



### Trusted Preferred Providers

The Trusted Preferred Provider list (TPPL) was continued for returning applicants. The TPPL consists of deliverers who have had a positive bookings/attendance and audit record and meant that they completed a shorter application and were fast tracked through the assessment and due diligence processes reducing the administration time required by both provider and HCF to complete and assess. Other providers who have previously delivered are able to still apply but the application process will be more stringent than for those on the TPPL list.

### Funding Parameters

We reviewed and regularly adjusted the funding application parameters for providers i.e. the number of places, days, or venues that they could apply to deliver. This helped to manage providers expectations around what funding they might receive and supported a more efficient mapping of desired provision against local need. This practice reduced the oversubscription issue in some districts and ensured that providers were better able to focus their applications in the areas of greatest need.

These parameters were reviewed prior to the application process for each phase to ensure there would be sufficient applications to deliver activities, without over-burdening the administration of the applications.



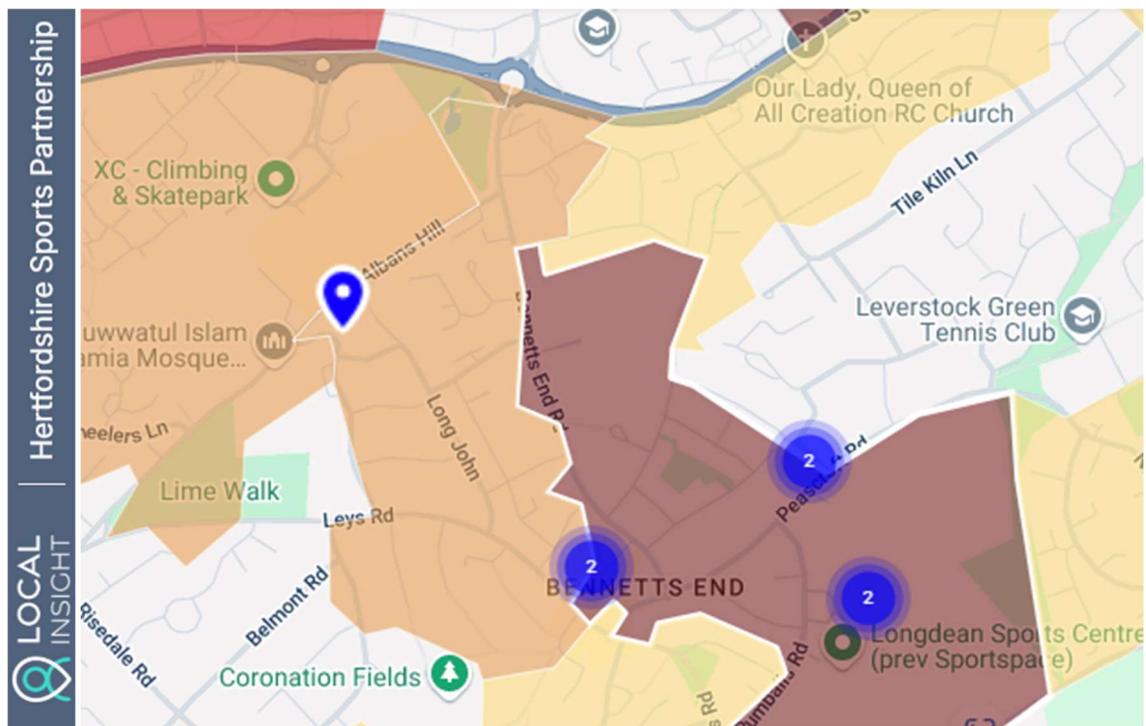
## Insight & Mapping

Throughout the 2024 programme, data and information continued to be collected, processed, and evaluated to support insight and intelligence led decision making. Information was gathered in many varied ways e.g. from the Playwaze booking system, parent feedback surveys, in-person audit visits, and post-delivery monitoring reports.

Learning and continual improvement are embedded in the work of the coordination team within HSP, who use bookings and attendance data alongside qualitative audit and monitoring results from previous phases help to determine the providers who should be funded for each phase.

Utilising mapping tools, such as Local Insight, are key to making processes more streamlined. For example, by overlaying the location of funding applications against mapped Local Authority Free School Meal (FSM) data, coordinators were able to ensure that camps were offered in the areas of greatest need. A sample is shown below.

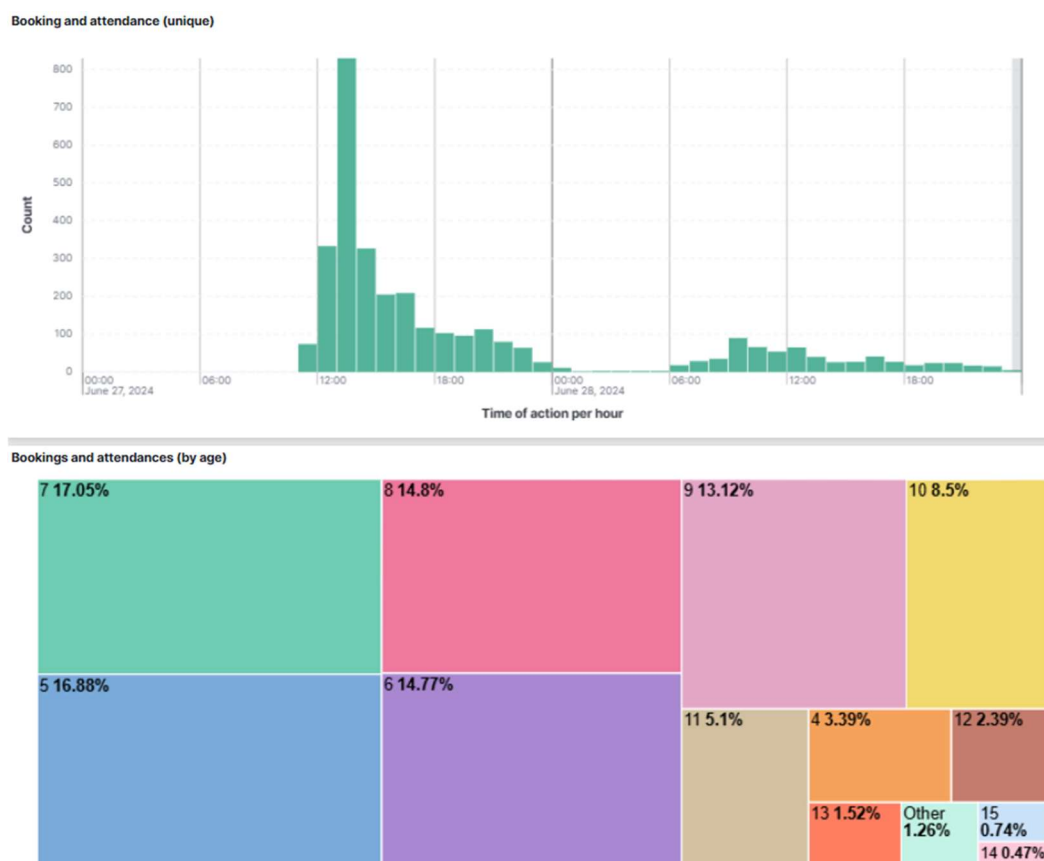
Local Insight Tool: Mapping of HAF provision v levels of FSM in Hertfordshire:



The Local Insight Map above shows a cluster of proposed HAPpy camps (blue pins) in darkest area of map where levels of FSM are highest.

Additionally, improvements in the Playwaze booking system allowed coordinators to view real-time analytics on bookings, cancelations, and attendance. This was valuable in targeting marketing or communications to boost engagement. Examples of the analytic dashboard are shown below.

Playwaze Analytic Dashboards: Realtime analytic dashboard of HAPpy bookings and attendance:



These screenshot of the Playwaze Analytics dashboard show two of the many elements monitored, the rate of bookings per hour and the breakdown of bookings by age.

## Due Diligence

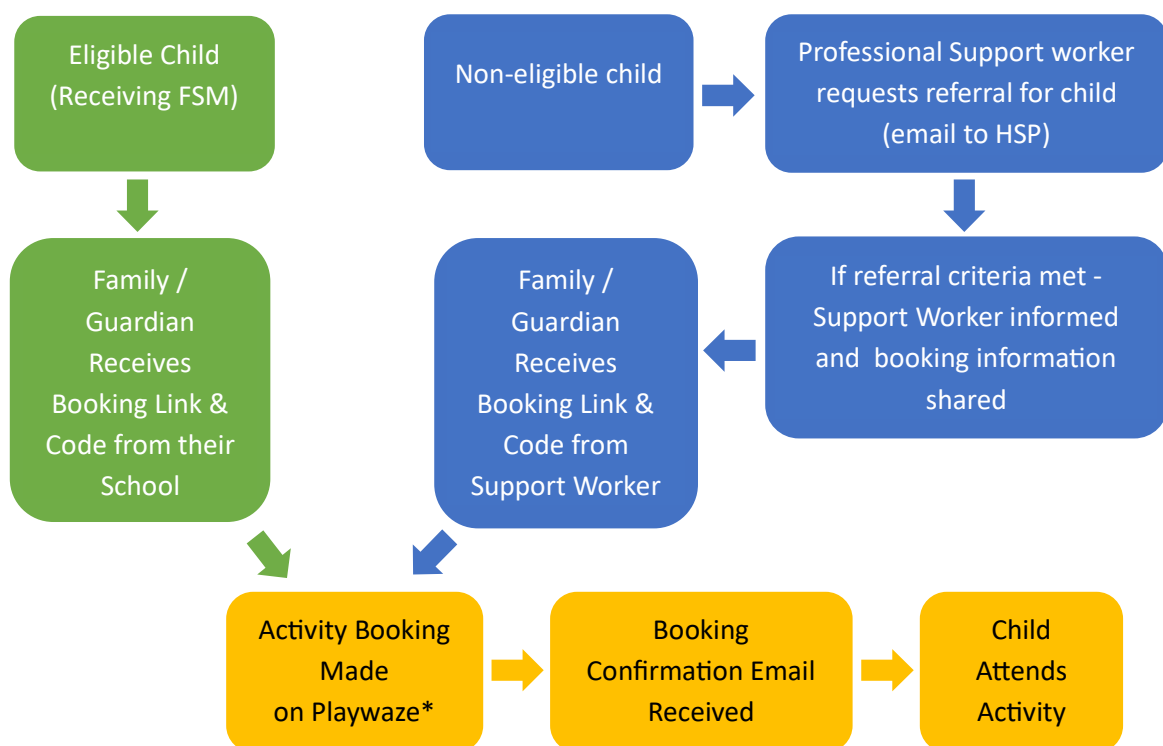
HCF conducted financial audits on a random sample of HAPpy programme providers selected to represent a range of delivery types and performance levels, including high and low attendances, multi-site providers and new providers. Each provider was asked to evidence their declared expenditure with receipts or other documentation, based on their submitted expenditure from the grant monitoring form. On average, most providers returned the necessary documents within three weeks. All providers sampled were able to evidence the costs reported and no concerns were found.

## Eligibility & Referral process

The HAPpy programme has continued to utilise a booking code system to verify HAF eligibility and enable booking of free places via Playwaze for each delivery phase in Hertfordshire. The codes were generated centrally and distributed by HCC to schools, along with programme information, to pass on to the eligible families within their school community.

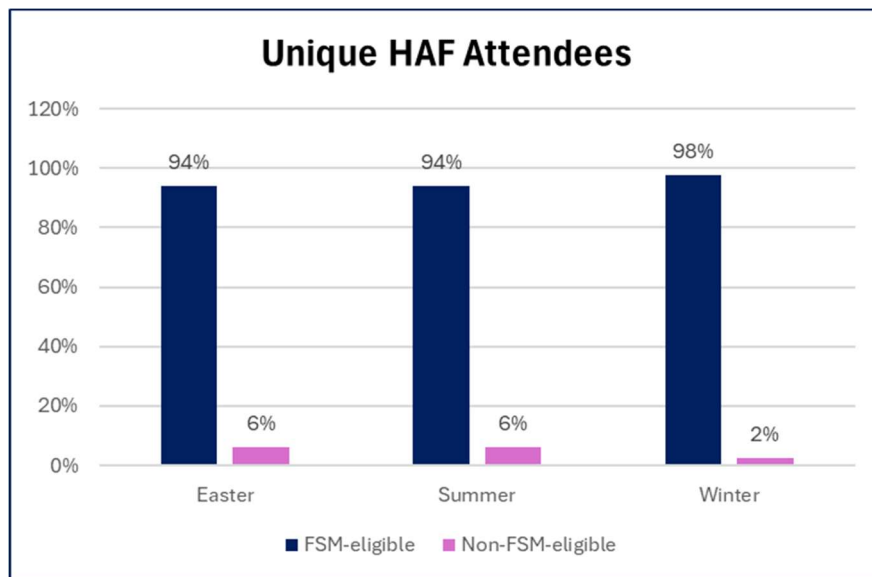
Professionals working with children and families not directly eligible for HAF were able to refer into the programme under the 15% non-FSM eligible allocation. During 2024, non-FSM-eligible attendees varied between 2% - 6% of unique attendees in each delivery phase.

### Booking process FLOW CHART



*\*This step can be supported over the phone by contacting the HAPpy coordination team at HSP*

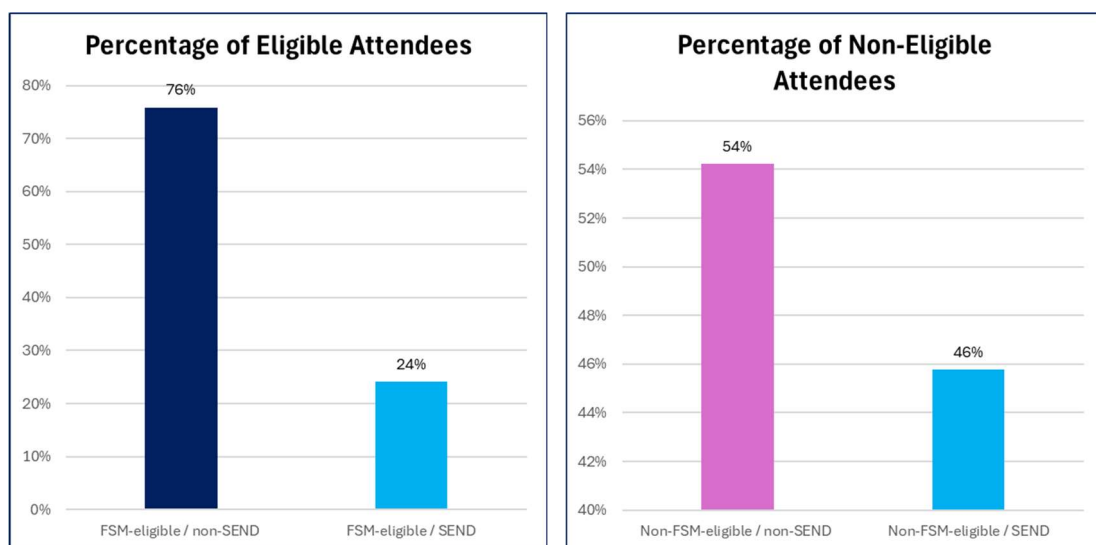
HSP engaged with several local organisations and partnerships to make professional support workers aware of the HAPpy programme. Professionals were asked to ensure that eligible families were aware of the programme and were informed of the opportunities for non-eligible families who they believe would benefit from attending via the 15% referral process.

**Breakdown of Eligibility in 2024 (unique attendees)**

Some key partner organisations included Families First, Food Banks, Herts Help and the Citizens Advice Bureau. Over the three phases, a database of referring professionals was collated and this enabled earlier messaging to be sent about re-referring young people to the programme when required.

A new link was created with the Hertfordshire Virtual Schools, which has enabled us to liaise with a new group of families and young people. This in turn opened links with other Local Authority departments including adoption/fostering services and care leavers.

Looking across all of 2024, children and young people who access HAPpy via the referral scheme are almost twice as likely to have SEND (46%) than children in the eligible cohort (24%).

**Proportion of Attendees with SEND (unique attendees)**

### **SEND: Top-Up-Funding**

Utilising returned monies and contingency funds; providers were able to access additional funding to enable them to offer additional specialist support for children or young people with SEND in some universal settings. This additional funding was bespoke to the needs of the children and the setting.

All providers are encouraged to check their bookings and register of attendees at regular intervals and, if SEND is declared, they are encouraged to speak directly with the parents/guardians to ensure there is understanding of the needs of the child. Where additional support would be beneficial, Providers were asked to detail the support required and the cost and evidence that the staff able to support had adequate training in supporting SEND needs.

### **Auditing**

Throughout the 2024 delivery, a robust audit process was undertaken – supported by staff from HSP, HCF, HCC and the Local Authority. Following feedback from providers, the decision was taken to introduce a Pre Audit process. Providers were able to submit answers to a number of fixed questions, previously asked as part of the physical audit, prior to delivery.

The rationale was to capture information that could be completed ahead of the audit, to allow the auditor to engage more effectively with the camp during the visit. Whilst administratively heavy, this meant that auditors could read and review this prior to attending and could then utilise the time at the camp to observe and engage more effectively.

Scenarios continued to form a key part of the in-person audit. From Summer, in addition to scenarios covering first aid and safeguarding, a further question was added relating to the process of supporting a child with declared SEND needs when arriving at camp.

### **Cost of living support**

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 have been provided with resources each phase to support their ability to help signpost parents and carers to advice, guidance and services to support them with pressures due to the increased cost of living. There is a dedicated area on HSP website with collated resources, COL notes on pre booking emails over summer period and information which is sent directly to providers to ensure there is a wealth of signposting and information that can be used when needed. As part of the Learn and Share there was also clarification on key support such as Families first and online support tools (including Sandbox) which could be accessed.

A non-HAPpy holiday activity resource was developed, which included, amongst other things, information about ParkPlay and junior parkrun events in Hertfordshire, as an additional *cost of living* resource which can be used for both HAPpy programme users and for those who are 'just about managing' but not eligible for HAPpy.

## **Safeguarding**

To streamline the safeguarding process, professionals from the Families First network have been enlisted to offer providers advice and guidance on any safeguarding questions or concerns. Families First offer the opportunity to access professional support and early help and often are found to have relationships with local families already. This has enabled the providers to gain practical tips and solutions which may avoid the need to complete a full referral. This has helped 'join the dots' with existing cases and helped families to gain further support quickly from professionals already working with the family.

The process for reporting a safeguarding concern formally to the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board changed during 2024 – with the introduction of an online only service. Providers were made aware of the key changes and reporting system as part of the face to face Learn and Share event in May, alongside reiterating the importance of gaining parental consent where a referral may be required.

## **2024 Programme**

### **Summary of Performance**

In 2024 the HAPpy: Holiday Activity Programme was delivered during the Spring (Easter), Summer and Winter (Christmas) school holiday periods.

HAPpy was delivered across three phases in Hertfordshire during 2024:

- Spring: 2 to 12 April 2024 (across 9 delivery days)
- Summer: 2 July to 30 August 2024 (across 25 delivery days)
- Winter: 23 December 2024 to 3 January 2025 (across 6 delivery days)

A Total of 513 individual HAPpy camps were delivered in Hertfordshire in 2024.



Delivery of the HAPpy programme was supported by 70 individual delivery partners and organisations across Hertfordshire.

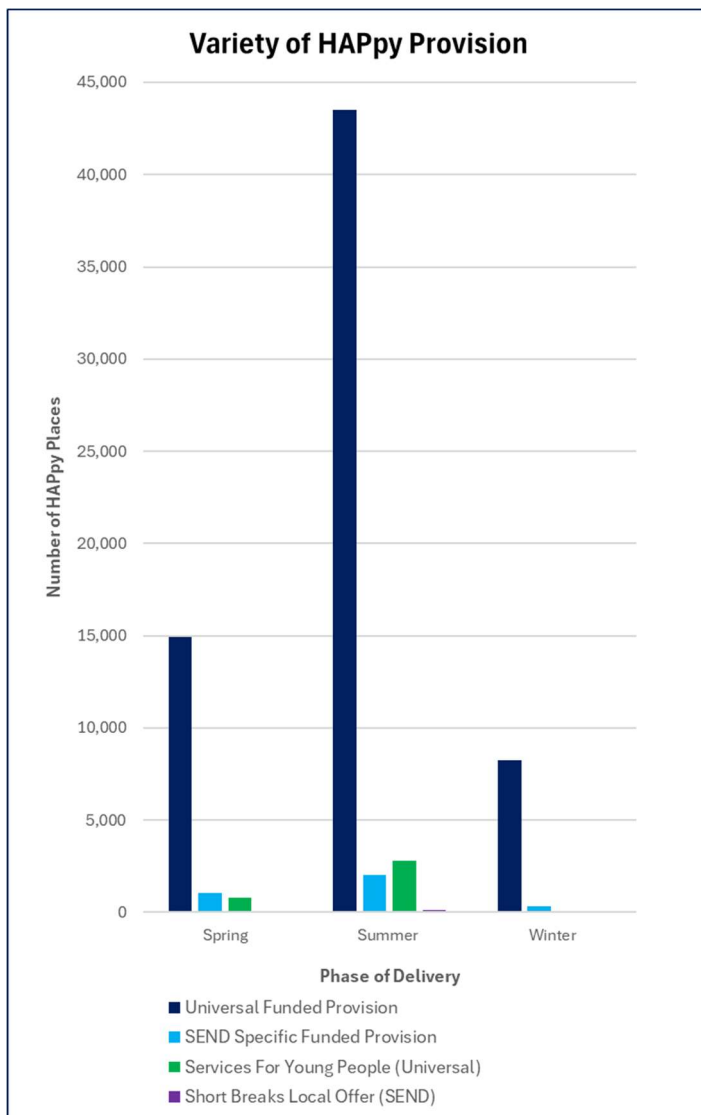
Table of all providers shown in Appendix 1

In 2024, HAPpy activities were offered through a mixture of funded and direct award provision.

- Total number of activity days offered in Hertfordshire in 2024 was 73,910
- 70,332 places were offered in Universal provision (Including SYP)
- 3,578 places were offered in SEND specific provision (Including SBLO)

Table showing Breakdown of 2024 HAPpy Provision:

Type of Provision	Number of HAF Places Offered			
	Spring	Summer	Winter	2024 Totals
<b>Universal Provision</b> (Funded provision)	14,935	43,524	8,273	66,732
<b>SEND Specific Provision</b> (Funded provision)	1,032	2,006	343	3,381
<b>Services For Young People (Universal)</b> (Direct award provision)	800	2,800	0	3,600
<b>Short Breaks Local Offer (SEND)</b> (Direct award provision)	77	115	5	197
<b>Total Places</b>	<b>16,844</b>	<b>48,445</b>	<b>8,621</b>	<b>73,910</b>



**HSP role was pivotal in ensuring that providers were supported from when their grant was awarded to delivery. The key elements to this include:**

- Supporting providers with using Playwaze
- Induction
- Training opportunities – both mandatory and non
- Signposting to support services if required
- Facilitation and administration of the audit process.

**Alongside this, the Team also**

- Responded to parental queries
- booking support via phone and email
- Managed the referral process with support from HCC colleagues where required.



## Attendance

Table of HAPpy Programme Attendance 2024

HAF 2024	Primary aged	Secondary Aged	Total
Total Activity Days Attended	43,597	6,606	50,203
% of Attendances by Age	87%	13%	-
% of Attendances with SEND	20%	5%	25%
% of Attendances with no-SEND	67%	8%	75%

Total number of HAPpy Activity Days attended in Hertfordshire in 2024 was 50,203

Total number of HAPpy  
Activity Days attended  
in Hertfordshire in 2024  
was 50,203

## **Meeting the core HAF criteria**

### **Expectations**

The HAF programme criteria states that all camps should offer a minimum of 4-hours of delivery per day, including one-hour physical activity, one-hour enrichment, support and opportunities to promote Healthy Eating/Healthy Lifestyles and the offer of a HOT meal.

There are many benefits for children who attend local HAPpy provision. These 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
- feeling safe and secure
- getting access to the right support services
- returning to school feeling engaged and ready to learn

Through the Hertfordshire HAPpy programme, all providers have continued to uphold these requirements throughout the three delivery phases. Some providers have chosen to utilise additional funds or the offsetting of costs through offering paid provision alongside, to extend the offer to HAF eligible families. All have ensured a hot meal has been provided wherever possible throughout.

Some providers were encouraged to adopt the practice of overbooking their provisions to make allowance for a percentage of children not attending on the day, thus aiding the provider to have a better utilisation of their funded places. Waiting lists were used by all providers. In addition to automated notifications when a place became available, there was the expectation of providers to contact the families when places became available to try and fill them ahead of delivery.

## FOOD

For 2024, All camps were expected to provide a hot meal unless SEND specific or on agreement from HSP in extenuating circumstances.

During 2023, and with the injection of new provision, there was a noticeable shift in the method and sourcing of catering across the programme. This has continued to develop in 2024.

The strength and the variation of providers offering food provision – Herts Catering Limited (HCL), Community provisions, in house catering and young person lead cookery – ensured that across the programme there were many positive examples of nutritious, varied and tasty hot food on offer at camps.

There has not always been the opportunity for auditors to see the food when arriving at camps, leading to an over-reliance on provider assessment of menus and food offered. Limiting staff to audit all at lunchtime period would be both difficult for time and efficiency and would be at detriment of reviewing the delivery of other elements of the HAF criteria. By asking specific questions in the pre audit and requesting menus as evidence, this enabled the auditor to understand what to expect and then lead questions from there. If it was then possible to see the food on offer at the camp, it helped to identify any concerns but also ensured that there was more of a rounded set of evidence to be seen.

Through the in-person audit, this continues to offer the opportunity to ensure that the food provided at all camps, met the requisite food standards - via observations, participant feedback and ongoing interaction with the providers. The Pre audit questionnaire has given the opportunity to gain a more comprehensive understanding of what the intended menu was to be at the camp ahead of delivery. This also ensured any concerns or issues could be discussed and addressed before the camp started.

Whilst most camps met the programmes' standards and expectations, there were a few providers that fell below the programme's expectations. HSP worked with providers to support and guide them to making changes which allowed the provision to meet the required standard.

### What the providers said...

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*"All children wanted seconds and more and couldn't wait for lunch to be served. It was very satisfying to be able to give them all a full belly and send them off :)"*

*"...an older boy of his own accord, encouraged a younger girl to try different foods by sharing his snack with her. A simple but effective gesture which our staff were so happy to see as the girl had SEND and had a very limited diet."*

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What the children said...

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*"The food has been the best bit! It's all home-made and yummy! We get to help cook... my favourite bit is cutting the carrots for the roast dinner! Parul's potatoes are really good!!!"*

*"We had burritos for lunch, and they were AMAZING I can't stop eating!"*  
*"If I didn't come here, I wouldn't know how to cook stuff. Katie taught me to cook pasta."*

*"I don't get the chance to cook much at home as my mum is always in a hurry."*

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*"Food is good, so different from what I have at home, there is stuff I've never tried before."*

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## PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES / ENRICHMENT

Whilst the programme has expanded its diversity of delivery during 2024, physical activity continued to be heavily weighted in the delivery seen throughout Hertfordshire.

Football continued to be the most popular, both as the overarching theme of the camp but also with camps where there was an advertised mixture of opportunities. During audit visits this was often seen used as part of free play sections (for example during the lunchtime period) and as soft start activities, where children are able to form into their own groups as they arrive at camps in the morning. Whilst a universal language of sport, it also could create negative experiences as well and some providers noted that there were challenges with some groups of young people when football was involved.

When analysing the activities seen on audits and quoted in timetables, it was pleasing to see some new activities being utilised. Archery was popular with providers – likely due to the rise in the availability of the 'rubber tipped' archery – but enabled most young people of all ages to participate together. It was also pleasing to see more unusual sports quoted as being delivered – including Danish longball, Pickleball and Curling – exposing the children and young people to activities with differing histories and backgrounds, all of which could be adapted for the audience.

Dance and Performing Arts increased in popularity with different offers available across the programme. There was an increased presence of theatre/ performance groups which not only brought a wealth of experience but also an activity which lent itself well to more of a mixture of age ranges.

What the children said...

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*"I picked this camp for myself; my auntie does yoga and I wanted to try it."*

*"Loved the activities outside."*

*"Never done gardening before so nice to do something different."*

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*"Musical games were cool as we got to choose different music."*

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## Enrichment

The programme now benefits from multiple providers who have IT, Science and outdoor adventure as their focus. This has led to a rise in the types and variation of opportunities which are available to the young people and the programme as a whole.

There has been a continued focus on trying to encourage providers with a 'sports focus' to consider the opportunities they utilise as part of their enrichment. Whilst Arts and Crafts still remains the top enrichment opportunity, there have been pockets of more unusual activities and trends starting to emerge.

By using online quiz methods, such as Kahoot and Mentimeter, as part of the Learn and Share events, providers have been encouraged to utilise different means to integrate quizzes and competitive opportunities into their enrichment. This has worked well for wellbeing and Healthy eating style opportunities.

Team building activities were quoted on a number of audit listings and this was equally pleasing as this offers the opportunity for positive characteristics to be emphasised as part of delivery including resilience, communication, trust and co-operation. One provider also offered some basic leadership courses in Tennis, Multi Sports and Football as part of the summer programme. The offer was open to those aged 12-16 and was facilitated by different tutoring methods - The sport specific courses being led by the National Governing Bodies (Herts FA and Herts LTA) and the Multi Skills being delivered by the director of the organisation, a trained Sports Leaders UK tutor. Whilst the numbers were lower than hoped, it gave the young people an additional opportunity to engage in opportunities to enhance their wider life skills and allow them to consider a path into sport and possible careers in the future.

### What the children said...

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*"We get to build Lego here that has motors in, and you can't even do that at Legoland."*

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*"I really like fossils they are so cool I want to make a big giant one next time."*

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## PROMOTION OF HEALTHY EATING AND HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

Many of the providers favour delivery of activities that are more focused on healthy lifestyle and wellbeing, with providers offering opportunities through different means.

Through their offer, **Feel Hot Yoga**, offer a more holistic approach through both their physical and enrichment-based activities linked to yoga. Alongside this, their food offer comes from the café on site, which is home cooked healthy foods. This gives the attendees the opportunity to try various different types of food as part of their daily delivery.

Using the power of the outdoors, **Out to Learn** create a programme of activities which include a variety of activities putting nature at the heart. The children help to cook their own food, often using campfires, and there are regular activities such as foraging, to promote an active healthy wellbeing and lifestyle.

As well as the programme providers own delivery, there was also the opportunity to engage with two further opportunities with external organisations during 2024.

### 1) itsu

itsu's Community Kitchen Project is active in schools across London, where children prepare their own veggie boxes. These 90-minute sessions teach children valuable lessons about healthy eating and food groups and focus on schools with a high number of students on Free School Meals (FSM), aiming to support those in need. HSP were approached to engage with the summer programme.

During the Summer, itsu piloted a new initiative: a session where children prepare a nutritious, balanced stir-fry for lunch. Itsu supplied the children with a variety of vegetables like spinach, edamame, carrot, pepper, beansprout, and coriander which they had the opportunity to cut, grate, or peel the vegetables to make a stir-fry for lunch. The children had the opportunity to add protein later, such as salmon, tofu, or just keeping it plain with noodles and sauce.

The itsu workshop was delivered at one provider's camp (Ferdinand Football) and was well received by the provider and the children.

### 2) Food & Mood

As part of the virtual Learn and share event, a workshop entitled 'Food and Mood' workshop was delivered by Food and Mood founder, Lauren Morley. The aim of the workshop was to make educating children on nutrition easy and simple, including practical tips to help build nutrition into HAF sessions, understand the link between food, mood and behaviour and help de-bunk some common food myths! The session was well received and several providers connected with Lauren following the session to continue the conversation and opportunities to integrate the concepts into their own delivery.

What the providers said about food creation opportunities...

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*“The children participated in healthy eating and healthy lifestyle discussions each day and had the opportunity to put what they had learned into practice by designing their own healthy fajitas. One child commented how they had never heard of fajitas, let alone made them, and it was the first time they had ever tried avocado.” – Apex 360*

*“At the end of each day there was sometimes perishable food left over including salad and fruit in addition to meals that could be frozen. If this was the case, we ensured it didn't go to waste by allowing parents the opportunity to take food home with them, which was essential especially during a cost-of-living crisis with some children only having one meal that day.” - Hemel ABC*

*“They got access to vegetarian food this time around which would have been a big change to how some of the children normally eat and possibly broaden their horizons and allow them to see how nutrition can be achieved in lots of different ways than what they may think.” – Non-stop Action*

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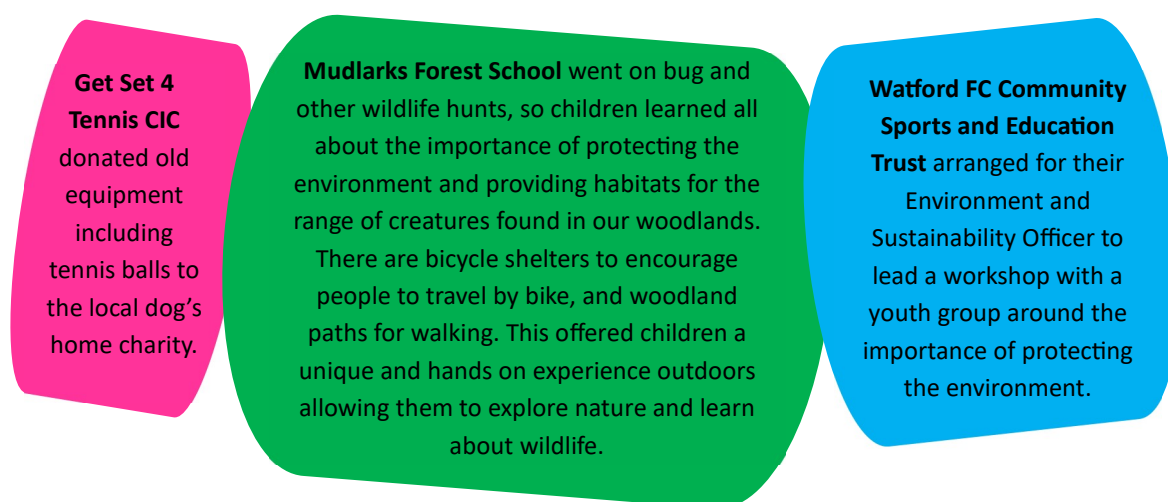
## Environmental Sustainability

During 2024, Environment & Sustainability was a core expectation from the DfE for HAF programmes. To support this, we included an Environment & Sustainability module at the summer'24 Learn & Share event for HAPpy providers. Following a short presentation, attendees broke into smaller groups to discuss how environmental issues affect their delivery and to share ideas on improving sustainability at their HAPpy Camps. This content was re-capped in the pre-summer online induction.

Over the summer, activity providers were surveyed on key environmental themes and observations were also recorded by the coordination team during in-person audit visits. Providers were asked to feedback on their organisation's strategy or policies on the Environment, Waste, Reuse, Paper, CYP Activities, Recycling, Food and Travel. A broad range of initiatives and measures were found to be in place. These included:

- 29% of providers had a written Environment & Sustainability Policy
- Many organisations had practices to recycle and reduce landfill by incorporating recycling and reusing materials in craft activities.
- 34% of providers said that their organisation had gone paperless, e.g. using online registers.
- 80% of camps had specific practices to raise environmental awareness among children, teaching them the value of recycling and sustainability.
- Some camps encouraged families and staff to consider active travel options, and some larger organisations scheduled staff to work nearer home to minimise journey times.
- Many groups had practices in place in relation to the production, preparation, consumption, and disposal of food in order to reduce waste.

Three providers in particular stood out in the unique way they approached this subject:



In addition to incentives at HAPpy Camps, the training on demand approach offered to HAPpy providers throughout 2024 put into practice the concept of reducing unnecessary travel. The utilisation of multiple online training platforms enables providers to access training without the requirement for journeys. All training providers delivering face to face training are requested to be mindful of the resources they are wanting to use.



## Targeted Outreach

Throughout the 2024 HAF programme, the Partnership continued to engage with the Hertfordshire Refugee and Asylum Seeker community, either via partners or directly with the contingency properties (temporary accommodation around the county where those arriving to the county currently reside).

According to the booking data and use of the “Recent Arrival” code, 50 individuals engaged with HAPpy across the year, possibly via the drop-in HAPpy Camp booking clinics that were delivered on site by a HSP Officer. However, only 18 of these individuals transitioned into actual camp attendances, which is disappointing, as this only resulted in 49 days of camp attendance across the year.

A few reasons for why the interactions may have not transitioned to attendance are listed below:

- Lack of understanding about HAF / HAPpy Camps
- Limited access to technology so unable to find camp booking details
- Family being moved on at short notice
- Complexity / lack of knowledge about needing to cancel (especially if they are supported with the booking)
- Lack of repercussions for not attending (a programme wide issue)

Nevertheless, the impact for attending the camps for these young people would have been positive and meaningful, so it is reassuring to know that some of them saw the benefit and were able to take up the opportunity fully. Yet it also highlights the need for more work to be done around communication and retention rates. Arguably, there may have been additional booking / attendances from the cohort if they used a relevant school booking code, but it is impossible to cross-reference this and delve into specifics.

Under the “Recent Arrival” code usage, FK Dance Academy, Holiday Activities @ The Hive and Next Thing Education Camps all had high interaction rates, possibly due to them being located within a 15-minute walking distance to one of the contingency properties and having access to suitable bus links. It is worth noting that these camps also saw high non-attendance rates too within this cohort, so moving forward we perhaps need to work closer with the camp providers to make them aware that children are often signposted to in these situations and help them develop their camp offer so that they can better accommodate individuals from this community (e.g. email reminder in different languages).

## **An Alternative approach: Winter 2024**

Previous winter delivery phases have been the lowest performing in terms of bookings against places offered, and attendance against bookings. To add to this, Christmas 2024 fell in the middle of the week, creating potential difficulties for both providers and the coordination team in engaging and encouraging attendance. As a result, the decision was taken to offer a variation of activities and approach across the Winter phase.

Winter 2024 Delivery took place over six main dates:

- 23 & 24 December – festival days only
- 30 & 31 December and 2 & 3 January – traditional camps

An initial Expression of Interest (EOI) for Winter was collated before summer delivery began. This helped understand of which of the three types of provision could be offered by an individual provider:

- ‘Traditional’ HAPpy camps
- Celebration/Experience/ Festival Days
- Off-site trips

Those who identified trips were contacted directly to discuss their proposed plans, and to determine whether their proposal would be practical and appropriate for the audience. Confirmation of funding for trips was fast-tracked (by separate approval from the grants committee) as it was recognised that there may be costs which would have to be fulfilled in advance of the usual grant award period.

### **Festival Days**

Festival Days were designed to be one off events to which providers could ‘upscale’ if appropriate. The aim was to offer experiences which their ‘traditional’ camps wouldn’t have had the resource to offer on a regular basis. Due to the time of year, many providers chose a festive/winter wonderland theme, including opportunities such as snow making, Santas grottos, themed craft and staff lead pantomime.

One provider, **Mad Science**, used an innovative approach to ensure that there was still a clear science theme running through each of the celebration days. They integrated the power of inertia into a staff lead pantomime, linking it to Santas sleigh. They also had science themed presents (periodic table posters) which were given to all children in Santa’s grotto.

**Apex 360** chose to add an extra dimension to their offer, linking with another local body, **Creative Herts**, for specialist enrichment. This enabled the children to take place in various music, art and craft activities, as well as having a go on the inflatables and sports themed opportunities on offer.

What the children said...

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*"I didn't want to leave the snow making because it was so much fun."*

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### What the Activity Providers said...

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*"We had a SEND participant attend our Lamex Day. They can find it challenging at times to attend places where there will be a lot of people and noise. I spoke to the parent ahead of 'Lamex Day' and made some adjustments to ensure that we could accommodate their needs as best as we could. They stayed for the full day, and their parent/guardian left the following comment on our Lamex Day wrap up that was posted on our socials: "My kiddo was one of them! She had an amazing time! Thanks to all your staff and everyone involved! You all do an amazing job and really appreciate everything you do"." – Stevenage FC Foundation*

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*"Our WINTER FEST day was a huge hit with many families; parents were amazed with some of the resources children left the provision with."*

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### Trips

Trips took place on dates between 21 December and 5 January at the discretion of the HSP team and provider directly.

Bookings were taken via Playwaze and limited to existing members of providers' communities.

In order to book, the parent or guardian needed their school code and additional unique trip code – which was distributed to those invited by the provider. This code was unique to the provider ensured only those families that were invited were able to book the trips. This process was decided after feedback from the providers stated the importance of knowing the young people that they are taking on the trips and being more prepared and able to manage behaviours should that be required.

Bookings for the trips opened slightly later than the main bookings. This enabled providers to have time to ensure all of the families they wanted to invite had time to get the correct information and have the ability to book.

### What parents said...

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*"My children enjoyed the HAPpy Trip; I wouldn't be able to afford to take them as I would need another adult with me too. I am very grateful for the camps and trips as my children wouldn't be able to join in activities as I wouldn't be able to afford to send them during school holidays. These provide them with fun activities and mix with other children as well as physical activities. My children love attending the HAPpy camps and HAPpy Trips."*

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## **Direct Awards**

Following the success of the direct award process for 2023, funding was made available for this process to continue in the 2024 programme. This direct funding was offered to Services for Young People and Short Breaks Local Offer and followed a similar format to that of the previous year's offer.

### **Services for Young People (SYP)**

Hertfordshire County Council Services for Young People delivers youth work projects and programmes, careers education, information, advice and guidance, work-related learning, outdoor education and other services to young people in Hertfordshire.

In 2024, the delivery was scaled back slightly from past years. This decision considered the performance of some sites from 2023, intelligence on key areas to deliver and the suitability of venues. By making these changes, it allowed SYP staff time to focus on engagement of the young people which in turn improved the overall performance of this provision in terms of bookings & attendance.

During Spring and Summer, 20 places per day were offered at 10 sites, for a total of four days in the Spring period and 12 days in the summer period at each site.

Due to oversubscription, additional places were funded in this provision, up to a total of 3,600 for the year. SYP provided an additional 60 places at their own expense. This is shown in the table below.

#### **Services for Young People (SYP) HAPpy 2024**

<b>HAF 2024 - SYP</b>	<b>Easter</b>	<b>Summer</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Places Offered</b>	860	2,800	3,660
<b>Days of Delivery</b>	4 days	12 days	16 days
<b>Total Activities Attended</b>	507	2,547	3,054
<b>% Places Attended</b>	59%	91%	83%
<b>% Places Attended by CYP with SEND</b>	40%	35%	36%

The provision had a proven track record of attracting young people who wouldn't necessarily attend provision in other older based opportunities (such as Summer Parks). In 2024, young people attending SYP activities were more likely to have SEND – 36% of those who attend SYP places declared SEND compared with 27% across the whole programme. This was a positive outcome in expanding the reach of the HAPpy programme

There was no delivery offered during the Winter phase. This did lead to a noticeable gap of secondary aged provision and engagement.

### Short Breaks Local Offer - SBLO

Short Breaks offer disabled children and young people the chance to spend time out with others socialising and doing fun activities, giving their families a break and providing them with the confidence their child is well supported by a trained worker. They include holiday and Saturday clubs, with activities ranging from Lego and computer skills to buddying sessions. Two organisations delivered the SBLO HAPpy offer:

**North Herts CVS** – delivered playscheme style provision in Stevenage, known as the Breakaway Play scheme. We provide short term respite for parents and carers of children with additional needs. Trusted by parents already, their playschemes offer stimulating play and quality care, tailored to meet the needs of children and young people.

**Space** – are an award-winning Hertfordshire based charity supporting families of children and young people who are neurodivergent (Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, Tourette's and other neurodiverse conditions.) They offer Hertfordshire wide delivery and provide an opportunity to engage in a breadth of different sessions across the county covering sport, physical activity, life skills, enrichment and more.

Following the initial teething problems with the food offer in 2023, providers continued to use the food voucher process to provide eligible families with the means to purchase food items, meaning there was still the opportunity for the family to benefit without having to overcome the complexities of offering food at the camp.

The monitoring process used ensured that the level of data needed was collated without the need to use the same booking system and process for the universal offer. By engaging with the programme, SBLO have now begun to collect further data, such as qualification for FSM, which has built up a wider picture for them of those using the service.

During 2024, SBLO re-tendered for their commissioned delivery providers. The process took longer than anticipated and this had a negative impact on getting any additional providers involved in delivering HAF opportunities. This will continue to be investigated and followed up for 2025.

#### SBLO 2024 HAF Key Stats



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*"We have been pleased to be part of the HAPpy programme. Capturing FSM data at the time of registration with SPACE has enabled us to make allocation of opportunities much more straightforward. Feedback from parents have been positive and families have shown their gratitude on having the food vouchers to help with their food shopping during the holiday periods. "*

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## **Summer Parks**

### **Background**

Following the success of the pilot in 2023, HAPpy continued to fund a Summer Parks Programme across five parks in Hertfordshire. The park locations used in 2023, which had been selected using FSM data within our Local Insight tool showing the highest proportion of children on benefits-related FSM, were reviewed. The decision was made to change two of the venues following feedback on success and ensuring there was the right facilities available to attract the age range of participants we had expected.

The programme was not bookable via same method as the main HAPpy programme, removing the issue of needing a code to book which may not have been passed on by schools. Participants were able to pre-register or arrive and register on the day, offering the young people more choice as to whether they attended and meaning that the numbers were in real time and not reflective of a drop in bookings to actual attendance.

### **Delivery**

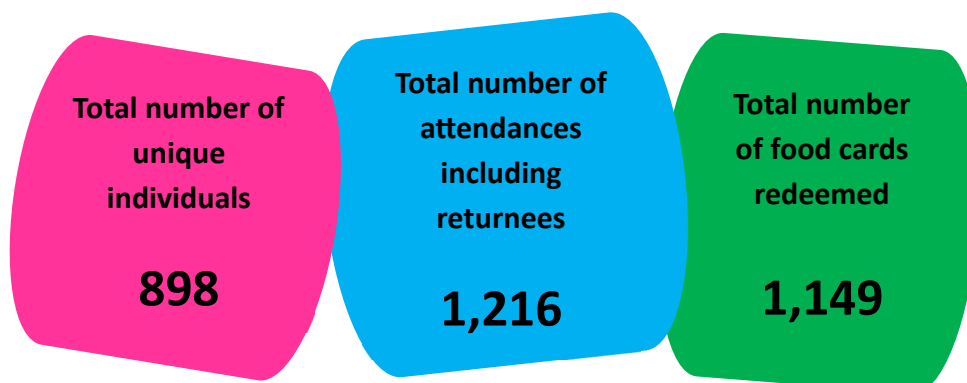
Based on feedback from staff who worked on the 2023 programme, the Sporting Inspirations delivery team expressed an interest in having more comprehensive training in the lead up to the programme. The improved training sessions focused on programme logistics, roles, responsibilities, discussions on safeguarding, first aid protocols and risk assessments, and finished with a practical delivery session.

Herts Summer Parks was successfully delivered on 15 out of the 15 planned delivery days between 5 August to 23 August 2024. The programme featured a range of sports, activities, arts and crafts, and provided food provision in the form of vouchers redeemable at food outlets in the local area.

### **Objectives**

One of the primary objectives for this year was to engage and collaborate with local organisations to contribute to the programme in addition to the core activities scheduled. An open invitation was extended to community organisations in the relevant areas, inviting them to participate by promoting their organisation or delivering sessions for the young people. This approach aimed to encourage community connections and showcase the local opportunities available to the young people. These included some existing HAPpy providers as well as some other community-based providers including Everyone Active and Watford Cycle Hub.

### **Attendance Figures:**



Total participant attendances split by park:

Park Name	Total Attendees
Borehamwood	131
Cheshunt	299
Watford	166
Welwyn Garden City	372
Stevenage	248
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,216</b>

As split by week (across all parks):

Week of Delivery	Total Attendees
Week 1	329
Week 2	432
Week 3	455
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,216</b>

Evidence shows that the programme continued to be well received with a number of positive comments including.

What the activity coaches said...

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*"Watching the children express their ideas and build confidence in their drawing and designing skills was incredibly rewarding. Furthermore, being part of a programme that promotes community engagement and fosters creativity in children was a fulfilling experience for all involved."*

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What Parents said...

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*"It's a really valuable scheme to provide opportunities for those that may not otherwise have any, thank you I am very grateful, my kids looked forward to it each week."*

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What the children said...

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*I liked that we got given food coupons as I could go and get myself a meal when I got hungry."*

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A video of the 2024 Herts Summer Parks Programme can be found here – [Herts Summer Parks 2024](#)

More information can be found in the [Herts Summer Parks Report 2024](#)

## **Training**

### **The Programme**

The 2024/25 programme provided an opportunity to strengthen partnerships developed in 2023/24 and adopt a more holistic and innovative approach to traditional training and workforce development.

Ensuring all providers meet the mandatory training requirements continues to be one of the key objectives of the training delivered. During 2024, HSP worked with HCF to create a more user-friendly spreadsheet to submit staff training information during each phase. From Summer, all providers offering SEND specific provision were required to detail the level and type of training/experience they have in working with children and young people with SEND needs, to evidence that they had what was to be perceived as greater knowledge and expertise and, as a result, higher confidence in the delivery to that particular cohort.

In the guidance notes, it was made clear the requirements for the training courses and how differing organisation training compared to another and whether it was deemed to cover all content required to meet the standards expected. Where this wasn't the case, IHASCO based courses were recommended to cover any gaps in learning and enable the member of staff to meet the expected level of training.

### **The Partnership coordinated the following areas of training in 2024:**

- 1) **iHASCO** – 20 on-demand courses providing a diverse range of courses to providers. As the most engaged training platform we offer courses around Food Hygiene Safety & Nutrition, Health & Safety Management, Safeguarding and Behavioural Support.
- 2) **First Aid** - Hertfordshire Sports Village (HSV) were commissioned again to deliver all First Aid course qualifications for the programme. The offer available was either the one-day Emergency First Aid at Work (EFAW) or one-day Emergency Paediatric First Aid (EPFA).
- 3) **Safeguarding** – whilst Safeguarding courses, covering both levels 1 & 2 and Care Certificate Standard 11, were available on our iHASCO platform this course does not fulfil the Minimum Operating Standards for some providers. As such we provided UK Coaching Safeguarding & Protecting Children Level 1 courses for 18+ and 16–17 age groups.
- 4) **Street Games** – funding was split into two areas, firstly four local FE colleges in Hertfordshire received a *Multi-Skills Activator* course for their students. Secondly, we invested into their Open Courses which allowed delivery providers to connect into a wide range of courses which were online/live courses.



- 5) **Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) Specific** – *Neurodiversity Awareness* and *Autism Awareness* were added to the iHASCO training platform. ADD-Vance was commissioned to deliver *ADHD Awareness and Autism Awareness, Understanding and Managing Challenging Behaviour and a face-to-face Understanding ADHD & Autism for Activity Coaches - Practical Support and an Understanding & Managing Challenging Behaviour*. Plus, Phoenix Group for Deaf Children & Young Adults (TPG) were commissioned again to provide bespoke *Deaf Awareness & British Sign Language* training.
- 6) **The Behaviour Bank** – the Partnership commissioned SPD Tuition & Coaching Ltd to provide access to delivery providers their innovative new on demand platform.
- 7) **Learn & Share Events** – two events (one virtual and one in-person) were delivered which provided the opportunity for delivery providers to come together as a group to reflect on past delivery, look ahead to the next delivery phase, react to any emerging trends or changes to processes in the sector and network with fellow providers.

## **Learnings**

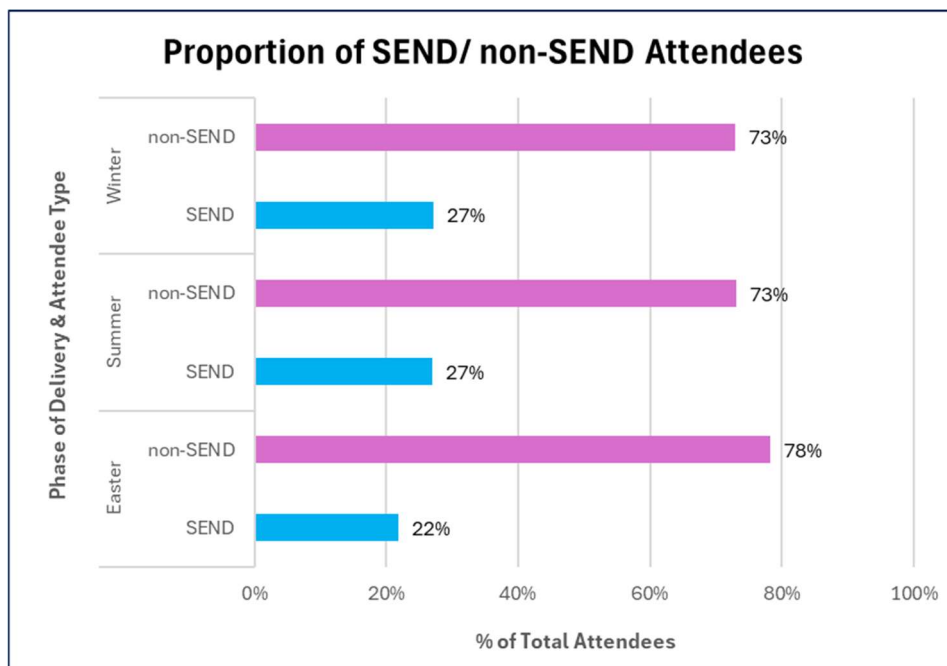
Throughout 2024 it became clear that having strategies in place for engaging providers effectively is vital for course attendance. Flexible delivery methods and the inclusion SEND training, as well as upskilling around ‘wellbeing-oriented’ activities, has played a pivotal role in ensuring that the programmes has been valuable to those attending. These learnings will inform further development of the programme; ensuring it adapts to community needs and continues to achieve meaningful outcomes. The experiences from this year serve as a solid foundation for ongoing success, fostering stronger collaboration and creating a positive impact in the year ahead.

## Send

### Key Outcomes

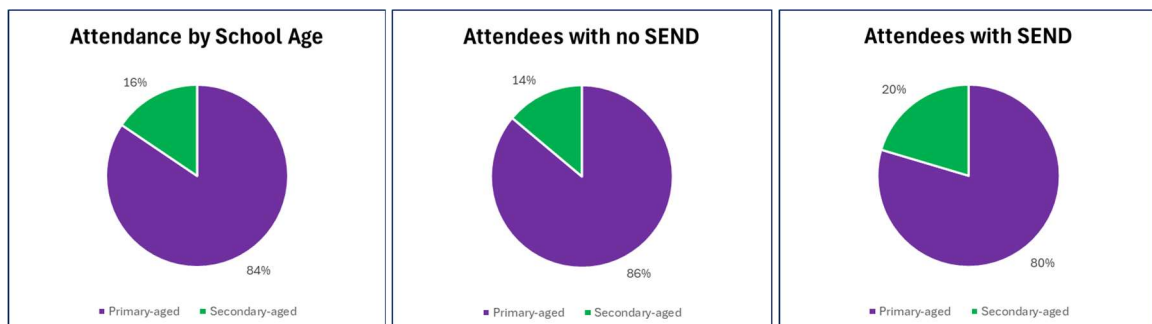
At the end of 2023, attendance by those with declared SEND had shown a marked increase from Spring (19.6%) to Winter (21.2%) delivery. This proportion of children continued to grow into Summer of 2024 and was sustained across the Winter programme. By the end of the year, 27% of attendees were indicating SEND when booking.

This chart shows the proportion of children declaring SEND when booking:



Booking data tells us that the proportion of secondary aged attendees grew from 12% in 2023 to 16% in 2024. The proportion of secondary age attendees with SEND has fallen to 20% from 23.8% last year, but it remains higher than that of secondary aged attendees with no additional needs (14%).

These charts show the breakdown of attendees by age and need:



## **Learning & Adapting**

As a result of the increasing demand for SEND provision, there was a conscious decision within each mapping phase to increase the ratio of universal and SEND specific. Whilst not being able to meet this need entirely, this action went some way to even out the provision and making it more accessible for those with the greater needs.

Alongside this, a number of key targeted interventions which were utilised across the year, to help, support and manage the process for those with SEND and for the providers response to supporting those with SEND more efficiently.

### **Revision of the booking form**

Despite the increase in declared SEND, providers were still consistently reporting incidents where additional needs were not being declared until challenged. To aid in the capture of this, a review of the questions asked on the booking form was undertaken to ensure:

- the language used was clear, concise and appropriate
- the questions gathering evidence were understandable and parents had examples of what sort of information to add
- There was a clear emphasis that the questions and information completed could be done so even before the 'formal' diagnosis was confirmed.
- There was clear messaging that disclosing SEND and details of support required would support, not exclude, the child and ensure they had a positive HAPpy experience.

## Support

To aid the process of understanding for parents or carers, Behaviour Bank founder, Samantha Dholakia, was enlisted to create a video aimed at explaining the importance of completing the booking form fully and declaring all SEND needs. As 'experts' in their own children's needs, parents completing this in detail gives all providers the knowledge and understanding required to adapt their provision to support the child's needs accordingly. The video was added to the code email sent to all schools to aid in its use and opportunity for parents to engage. Since the video has launched, there has been a marked increase in the information completed on the booking form, seemingly showing the video has made a positive impact.

Supporting video – [Help to book your child onto HAPpy Camps \(YouTube\)](#)

## Parental response

Having made significant progress pre-Easter, the message continued through the year for parents to ensure they were fully disclosing information regarding to their child's needs. This was evident in the number of bookings where the additional SEND details were disclosed. These answers have been increasingly populated by those with non-diagnosed but suspected SEND as well, giving insight into support which had been put in place within school settings etc which was equally valued and able to be used by providers to support their planning.

Analysis has identified the following categories:

<b>No SEND:</b>	CYP has no additional need declared at time of booking.
<b>Diagnosed SEND:</b>	CYP has a confirmed SEND diagnosis or disability at time of booking.
<b>Suspected SEND:</b>	CYP has indicated suspected additional need(s) at time of booking, and this is supported by notes indicating that referral process started, assessment in progress, or official diagnosis awaited.
<b>Unknown:</b>	SEND status not confirmed

## SEND support for Providers

Following two key incidents involving children with SEND and miss-management of their 'behaviours', it was crucial that providers were more informed and prepared about supporting young people with declared SEND. Whilst steps to make the information provided by parents more extensive was a key step forward, this needed to couple with training for staff at camps to ensure they were more confident in offering the right support during delivery. Through the training offer, the number and type of courses were extended in both the on demand and live courses.

## BEHAVIOUR BANK

Having run an online and in-person session aimed at both delivery and lead staff previously which focussed on *The Behaviour Balance Approach* concept of behaviour management, a decision was made to further develop this by commissioning SPD Tuition and Coaching Ltd (SPD Ltd) to provide access to their innovative new on demand platform *The Behaviour Bank* in March 2024.

The platform enables instant access to four 'vaults' of downloadable resources, bitesize clips and short course training from key experts to support with a 360 approach to behaviour management as well as the opportunity to log into free monthly live webinars and provide a forum to engage in their social media content and contact their specialist behaviour experts. New content was released on the platform every 3 months to build on foundation learning.

This opportunity was formally launched with providers on the spring 2024 induction where Samantha Dholakia (SPD Ltd CEO) provided a bespoke launch video and various supporting resources for the subscriptions made available to Herts HAPpy providers

### What Parents said...

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*"Spoke to a mum of two SEN boys who said it was a lifeline, allowed her to spend time elsewhere with younger one."*

*"My son has undiagnosed ADHD, and these camps help a lot because he is still in routine of getting up and going out the door early in the morning and he goes and does what he loves doing."*

*"Outdoor to learn is just what my son and I need. Mike is calm and caring confident and consistent. Everything my son needs. These well managed sessions allow me peace to work and are just a break for me and my very active boy."*

*"For us the value isn't in the money saved (though it helps) it's the provision of camps accessible to our child who has complex SEND."*

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## **Marketing**

### **Overview**

Marketing plays a vital role in the success of holiday activity programmes, helping providers raise awareness, reach target audiences, and maximise engagement. Effective marketing approaches typically include a mix of digital and traditional strategies, tailored to meet the needs of local communities and ensure inclusivity. From social media campaigns and email newsletters to printed leaflets and partnerships with schools and local organisations, a well-rounded marketing plan can significantly enhance programme visibility. Following the recruitment of a specialist marketing associate at the end of 2023, it was crucial to ensure this was considered throughout 2024.

### **Core Elements**

#### **Marketing Associate role**

During the Spring and Summer phases, the programme was supported by an external marketing associate. Prior to Spring, time was spent to analyse the intended outcomes of the programme and how marketing would be able to better influence this moving forward. Central to this was the creation of the Marketing plan. To better understand the target audience, time was spent creating personas which would identify the key characteristics and expectations and opportunities created. From this, it was possible to identify the key actions and opportunities to try and make the marketing and support as impactful as possible.

#### **VIP and High Sheriff interactions**

The General Election, which took place only weeks before delivery started, saw eight new MPs elected in Hertfordshire, some of whom requested a visit to their local programmes. Those visits - often facilitated at short notice - were well received, and feedback was positive.

- Three newly elected MPs attended programmes in Berkhamsted, Hitchin and Hatfield.

There were also visits facilitated directly through providers from the High Sheriff of Hertfordshire (Saracens, St Albans and Happy Hours Out of School Club, Birchwood) and the local MP for Welwyn Hatfield (The Craft Room, Hatfield).

All of the visits were successful in raising the profile of the programme to aid lobbying for future funding.

## **Emails to Schools**

Winter 2023 was the first opportunity there had been to change the narrative in the emails sent to schools which included the code for distribution to eligible families. With a minimum of four opportunities each phase to interact with schools and families, the messaging was built upon throughout each phase, offering the chance for families to be given more specific detail around how to make a booking, gain support if SEND needs were present, request a referral and to highlight where there were gaps which could still be filled prior to the delivery starting.

## **Tracking online interactions**

Bitly tracking links were embedded within each school email to help to gather intelligence as to which of the emails had been the most impactful and had been used by parents to access to the booking process. These links give us direct information about levels of engagement with the booking platform and direct provider booking URLs. Whilst it's not a given that these engagements will automatically result in a booking, they are a strong indicator of interest in doing so.

## **Key Marketing actions for 2024**

### **Social media**

Social media content was once again sent via both HCC and HSP accounts. Some content was also sent on to local councils for distribution. HSP led on content generation, and messaging tapped into key milestones in the booking journey, and the mindset of parents/carers surrounding the summer holiday. Tactical messaging was leveraged where appropriate.

Social media was also leveraged for gap-filling: specific content was pushed through both HCC's social media accounts and local Facebook groups to promote particular camps where booking was lower than average.

### **Marketing guides and 1:1 support**

A new guide to better Playwaze listings was produced with accompanying graphic templates for providers for the Summer. The aim was to make all listings appealing and visual for parents, whilst ensuring all of the relevant information was covered when parents landed on the individual activity page.

A further suite of marketing guidance and templates is in production for providers, to assist with the ongoing promotion of camps at a community level.

Marketing 1:1 support continued to help providers in identifying gaps and areas where they had not capitalised as part of their own marketing campaigns. It empowered them to consider different ways of thinking and explore avenues not previously utilised to help gather a following for their camp. This was particularly useful for new providers who joined the programme in Spring and Summer.

### **Advocate Signposting**

An advocate signposting sheet was developed to educate organisations working with low-income and vulnerable families about what HAPpy offers, and how families can engage with it. It was distributed to different organisations such as Families First and food banks to help explain the programme and the referral process more clearly.

### **Commissioned videographer/photographer**

A local videographer/photographer was commissioned over the course of the 3 delivery phases to capture content - both photo and video – which can be used as part of marketing collateral throughout the year. Creating a bank of new imagery has re invigorated the marketing collateral produced and enabled the capture of the programme in different and engaging ways.

### **Active Local**

HSP's place-based Active Local officers, embedded in several areas around Hertfordshire, were provided with flyers, posters, banners and advocate signposting sheets to spread the word in their communities. Two officers also held drop-in sessions in local venues to promote HAPpy and offer support with bookings.

### **Youth voice**

Several officers from the CYP and Active Local Teams were assigned specific opportunities to capture youth voice, over and above that of the audit. The officers attended camps for a longer period, focusing on getting involved with the camp delivery more closely and using this to build opportunity to engage directly with the attendees. Across the summer period, nine camps were visited and the data collated enabled a clearer picture and understanding of areas not normally covered by a general audit including who the children and young people thought paid for the camps they attended.

### **Highlights**

- Many said they enjoyed the camp they were attending and that they had been able to influence the decision to attend
- Mixture of answers as to who paid for the camp
- Lots called for longer hours and more activities

Capturing the feedback in this manner gave an alternative source of information which, added to the more established methods already available through auditing and providers own efforts. The purpose was to ensure the views could still be considered and take this forward for future programme provisions wherever possible.



## **Key Programme Challenges**

Throughout the 2024 delivery, there were several key challenges faced at both an operational and delivery level. Whilst every effort was made to limit the impact, some had outcomes which affected delivery throughout.

### **Late confirmation of funding for 2025**

HSP and HCF agreed that preparations would continue to be made on the basis that funding will continue in 2025, as it was the belief that opening the funding application window within the normal window was right thing to do for the programme and to be prepared for delivery should funding be approved. Should the DfE have made the decision not to fund the programme HCC, HSP and HCF had intended to make all applicants aware that there was no recourse to funds and their applications will be declared void.

This did cause a level of uncertainty for providers and, following the late confirmation of funding for the 2025 programme, this meant there was no opportunity to engage in new provider options for Spring 2025.

### **Playwaze load issues**

Sadly, on Bookings opening day there were issues experienced in all three phases. Whilst different on each, most were down to load and capacity of servers for Playwaze booking system. Quick action by HSP ensured that communications were clear and effective and that issues reported were rectified quickly. Ongoing work has taken place with Playwaze to improve booking opening reliability issues in the future. This included the waiting room functionality, which will now be triggered if the load reaches capacity.

### **People not booking on to correct type of camp**

Despite clear explanation on Playwaze, there continued to be incidences of Parents or guardians booking on to camps for the wrong age group (often too young), wrong type (generally where SEND needs were present) or booking on to unsuitable activities. This often led to additional admin, cancellations and unnecessary issues for staff and parents. The marketing guide on how to utilise the description of activities on Playwaze was key to giving parents/guardians the most information possible to aid them booking the correct activity. The filter function on the booking form was also used as well as the introduction of the SEND specific booking form for those camps which required it. All these actions were designed to limit the incidence of this occurring.

### **Non-disclosure of SEND**

Whilst SEND declaration improved in 2024, Parents/guardians still not declaring diagnosed SEND remained a concern for a few providers, often leading to there not being the right support in place for the young person. Providers have been encouraged to update booking information to ensure that records are complete for each child, to ensure that this follows them across any camps they book during the programme.

### **Expectation that SEND is an automatic qualification for referral**

Despite never being advertised, there has been a misconception that SEND needs mean that all children would automatically qualify for a referral. This has led to difficult conversations with parents where, whilst there is a need to be met and a perceived benefit to the child, evidence suggest that there is alternative the funds available to pay for suitable provision outside of HAF. Where possible, parents have been passed to other opportunities in the local area however, as these are sometimes lacking, it has been a source of frustration for all.

### **Changes to provider venues last minute**

Summer 2024 was the highest volume of post award venue changes experienced in the programme. Whilst these were largely out of providers control it often meant that replacement venues were not in the highest area of need. Additional deadlines have been placed on providers to limit the change in venue listings following the grant application. This improved dramatically for winter, and it is hoped this will continue for 2025.

### **Cancellation rates still high in the 48 hours prior to delivery**

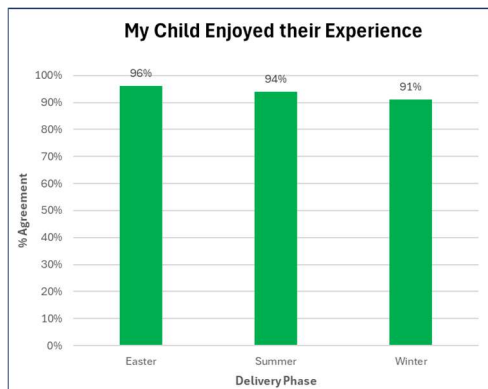
Empowering parents to manage their own bookings has both helped and hindered the programme in almost equal measures. Whilst allowing cancellations helps to free up unwanted places prior to the day of delivery, the spike in cancellations from 48hours before delivery often means that providers do not have the time to contact people from waiting lists to re allocate places. Even if they do, it is often the case that people have already made other plans or cancel places on other camps to attend the original '1st choice'

## Programme Feedback and Impact

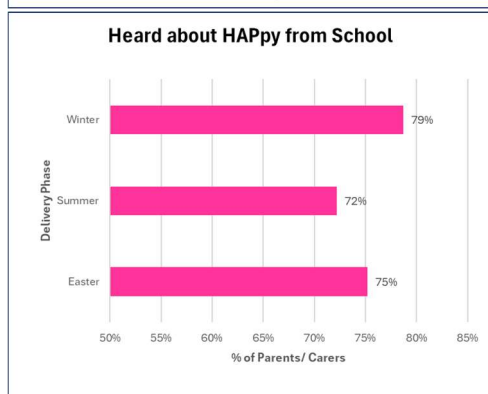
Demonstrating the impact of the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme on multiple levels is clearly evident within the feedback and information gathered after each programme. This is key in highlighting its broad and lasting value – particularly in the wider benefits for families, including reduced financial pressure and strengthened community connections. The opportunities the programme provides for activity providers, such as increased reach, collaboration, and professional development are equally key to ensuring that the right providers continue to offer HAPpy activities and that they are committed to supporting both in delivery but in their wider community as well.

### Feedback

Following each phase of HAPpy delivery, we ask parents and carers to complete a feedback survey of their and their child's experiences. Individual testimony and narrative feedback are key to demonstrating the outcomes of HAPpy and the impact on the young people who attend. The statistics and data from this survey help assess performance and guide future decisions.

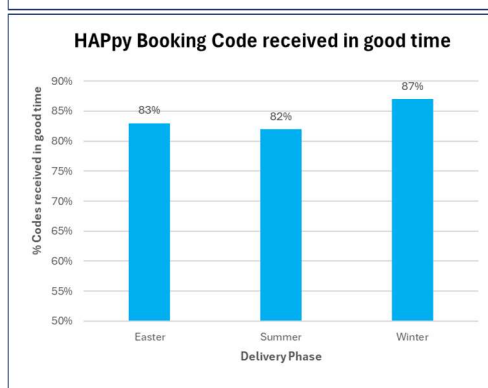


Overall satisfaction with the HAPpy Programme remained very high across 2024. When asked '***if their child enjoyed their overall experience at the HAPpy camp***', parents and carers responded almost unanimously in agreement.



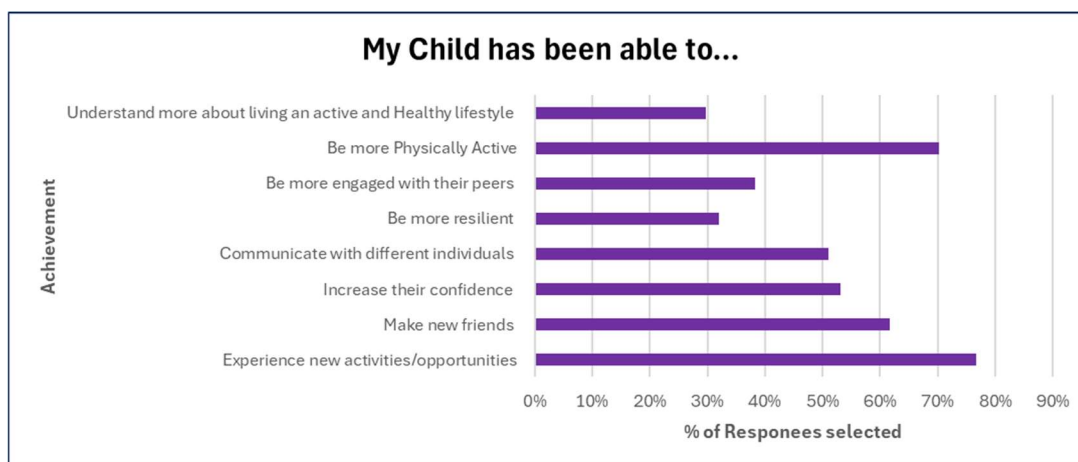
Our surveys confirmed that communication from schools continues to be the primary way in which families hear about the HAPpy programme.

The next most common ways for people to hear is directly from activity providers with whom their child has attended in the past or via notifications from the HAPpy coordination team.



Promisingly, as the coordination team continues to focus on communication of the programme, feedback tells us that communication from schools improved slightly over the course of the year with 87% of parents receiving their booking code in plenty of time for the winter programme, compared with 82% for summer.

Following the winter programme, we also asked parents and carers to share with us what they felt their child had been able to achieve as a result of attending a HAPpy activity. The results in the table below demonstrate the wide-ranging benefits of the HAPpy programme for the attendees in what they do during the holiday time and what they can take forward to life in general.



### Winter Special Activities

We conducted a separate survey after the alternative winter opportunities (festival days & trips) to focus on the impact of this change in approach. In addition to extremely high booking & attendance rates for this new provision, feedback from parents and carers was overall very positive.

We asked parents and carers to summarise their child's trip in a few words and the most mentioned themes were FUN, the SHOW, FOOD and the WHOLE EXPERIENCE.



100% said the FREE HAPpy Trip helped them with Cost of Living during the school holidays

65% said they would not have the means to provide their child with a similar experience if it wasn't FREE.

Feedback highlighted the new experiences that the trip provided for many of the children – attending pantomime and meeting the cast, visiting a restaurant, making pizza, going to the theatre and learning new skills. Lots of parents said their child had gained independence, built confidence and made new friends.

## **Impact**

### **Impact on the Children and Young People**

The key aim of the HAF programme is to ensure that children and young people are benefitting from the activities on offer. With a robust delivery process in place in Hertfordshire, the local authority and the coordination team have been able to focus on improving the quality and variety of activities on offer. The comprehensive HAPpy training programme, including behavioural management and SEND focused, has given staff in universal settings more confidence and enabled them to be even more inclusive, understanding and accommodating of children and young people with additional needs.

Increasingly there have been reports from providers about attendees who were anxious to attend and needed additional support to increase confidence and settle. One provider shared the following feedback in their monitoring from Summer 2024. It demonstrates the positive impact on a child when knowledgeable staff are enabled to adapt their delivery for an individual's needs.

#### **What Activity Providers said...**

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*"During the HAPpy camp, we worked with a young person who suffered from anxiety and found it difficult to participate in group activities. They were first unwilling to join, preferring to remain on the side owing to excessive stress in social situations. Our team recognised this and offered gentle support, allowing them to progress at their own rate, beginning with smaller, isolated activities. They gradually gained confidence thanks to regular encouragement and a relaxed environment. By the second day, they had become more involved in activities such as table tennis and arts and crafts, which allowed them to feel included without the burden of group dynamics. As the young person became more comfortable, they began to participate in team activities, including group swimming sessions. By the end of the camp, the young person was frequently participating in group activities, demonstrating substantial gains in confidence and social interaction."*

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Offering alternative opportunities and trips as part of the Winter HAPpy programme gave children and young people the chance to experience new activities and learn things that they may previously not had the means to do. In mastering or just experiencing something new, the children left with a sense of accomplishment and increased self-esteem, reinforcing their confidence and resilience to take on other opportunities and challenges.

#### What Parents said about Trips...

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*"My son has never been to the theatre and has never see a pantomime before, so this was a whole new experience for him."*

*"My son is waiting to be assessed for PDA autism & ADHD. He was refusing to go to the show because he was so anxious. Kerry is so good with my son. He found the courage and went to see the show.... came home with the biggest smile on his face. He said he loved the whole experience and asked me to take him back to see another show. I am so grateful."*

*"It was the first panto my girls attended out of school, and they really enjoyed it, they enjoyed the food, the independence of not being with parents, making new friends and going to a new place."*

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*"New venue, new attraction my son never tried before. He tried rollers and making pizza."*

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#### Impact on parents

Parental feedback continues to show largely positive experiences from the programme and the way in which it supports both the child/young person and the family. Throughout the year parents highlighted recurring impacts for themselves and their families, including:

- Financial relief
- Time flexibility
- Mental Health Benefits
- The joy of seeing their children happy during the holidays

Many parents mention they wouldn't be able to afford similar activities otherwise and the appreciate the time and flexibility to work or handle personal responsibilities that the programme allows - to go to work, attend appointments, or manage household tasks they couldn't do with kids at home. This is especially crucial for single parents or families with multiple children.

Having reliable, enjoyable activities for their children gave parents mental relief. Many expressed gratitude for the "break" it gives them and note how it improved their own mental health during high-stress periods.

Parents enjoyed seeing their children come home excited, talking about new friends, trying new things, and growing. It's deeply fulfilling for them to see their children included and thriving, especially when it's normally hard to achieve due to cost or personal circumstances.

Parents had peace of mind and trust the HAPpy camp environment. They felt confident leaving their children with caring and responsible staff, particularly important for those with SEN.

As speculation grew about the possibility of HAF not being re-funded, more parents began to vocalise how much they valued the programme, and the support it offers. This was particularly apparent in referral cases and often mentioned through conversations with parents when supporting them to book on to activities. One parent wrote:

Extract from parent feedback following Winter HAPpy...

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*"We really struggle with limited finances and the happy camps are a god send. It allows my children to go out and meet other children and try activities they would not be able to do otherwise. The free hot meal at lunch time helps as well. Please continue to offer them."*

*"If they stopped Happy camp the financially disadvantaged children would be affected as this helps not only with their physical health but also their mental health and wellbeing."*

*"It was a great opportunity for them to see new children from different schools and play with new pupils as well as build confidence"*

*"Honestly, this camp made my children's summer, they had such a great time and made new friends. All of the staff were supportive and put on fun activities every day. The staff were all very friendly/welcoming. My children loved the food provided and looked forward to it each day. My children had no complaints about behaviour issues or any problems, staff must have been really on top of things. I do really hope the York Meade camp is back on in the Easter hols 2025."*

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## Impact on providers

Joining the HAF programme supports providers in delivering meaningful, high-quality services that make a tangible difference in children's lives.

Concern for lack of future funding was evident from the Summer period. Some providers used this uncertainty positively, seeking alternative opportunities to continue offering activity in case of no HAF funding and in the other holiday periods.

Providers invested their own funds to support and bridge funding gap. This was evident in many of the winter festival day opportunities, where providers used their own funds to further enhance the opportunities offered. This included funding for additional activities such as Santas Grottos and presents for the children to take home. Many providers have also now embedded a model of integrating paid for and HAPpy funded places to their provisions to help ensure costs can effectively be met.

Providers continue to benefit from the comprehensive training offer that sits alongside the programme. Utilising the courses on offer to support the mandatory training needed for their staff continues to save a substantial amount for the providers. Accessing other opportunities, such as the SEND specific training, has also helped to upskill staff and benefitted many of the providers in their wider work.

One provider told us...

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*"We have loved the training offer again, this is always invaluable for us as an organisation as it saves the company a great deal of money and ensures staff can access trainings that we otherwise could not afford to provide. It allows my staff to access additional staffing hours and therefore benefit them financially at a time when the cost-of-living crisis is really impacting on the day-to-day life of everyone, and it has allowed us to offer jobs to more local people who otherwise would not have employment opportunities; particularly parents who struggle to find hours that work around their children."*

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## Impact on other HSP programmes

Through **Active Local**, our place-based approach to tackling physical inactivity and inequalities, we've been able to enhance the reach and impact of the HAPpy programme. With staff based directly in community locations, we've driven targeted sign-ups by reminding families that bookings are open. On the ground, our team identifies gaps in provision—bringing in new providers where needed—and ensures youth voice is heard to shape activities children genuinely want to attend. By supporting the Summer Parks programme, Active Local officers have also helped bridge the gap between local providers and the community, boosting participation in both existing and new sessions.

Through the commitment to signposting and offering support for families on the cost of living, there was the ability to signpost families to other free activities offer by HSP such as ParkPlay and junior parkrun.



## **Key Actions for 2025**

- Re-engage expression of interest to recruit new providers for the Summer 2025 phase
- Focus on ensuring the food quality is as high as possible – work linked to University of Hertfordshire (UH)
- Online referral process
- GDPR training for all Playwaze admins
- Higher percentage of SEND specific provision than offered in 2024
- Continue to use the audit process to gather feedback and insight from delivery providers on the ground regarding what training they are, or are not, accessing.
- Seek to expand the training programme to include areas that have been lacking or only loosely touched upon until now - initial proposals being explored include helping providers to incorporate Environmental Awareness into their physical and enrichment activities and provide more support around CYP mental health training and improving the food/healthy lifestyles element of the programme.
- Deliver a face-to-face *Learn & Share* event in May 2025 and then a virtual *Learn & Share* in November 2025.

## **Conclusion**

The HAPpy programme continues to be a highly valued opportunity for those eligible. Whilst frustrations remain with non-attendance of bookings, there continues to be a commitment to trialling new ideas and approaches to limit this further in the future.

By sharing evidence of improved child wellbeing, reduced food insecurity, and stronger community engagement, providers can influence policy decisions and highlight the real-world consequences of withdrawing support. Their advocacy helps ensure that the needs of vulnerable children and families remain a government priority, particularly during school holidays when support is most needed. Continued lobbying reinforces the value of HAF as a vital intervention that addresses both educational and nutritional inequalities, making a compelling case for sustained and expanded funding.

It is clear that the programme is a valuable asset for Hertfordshire families and, with this in mind, development of the programme will continue to be a priority into 2025.

## **Appendix 1 – List of Providers 2024**

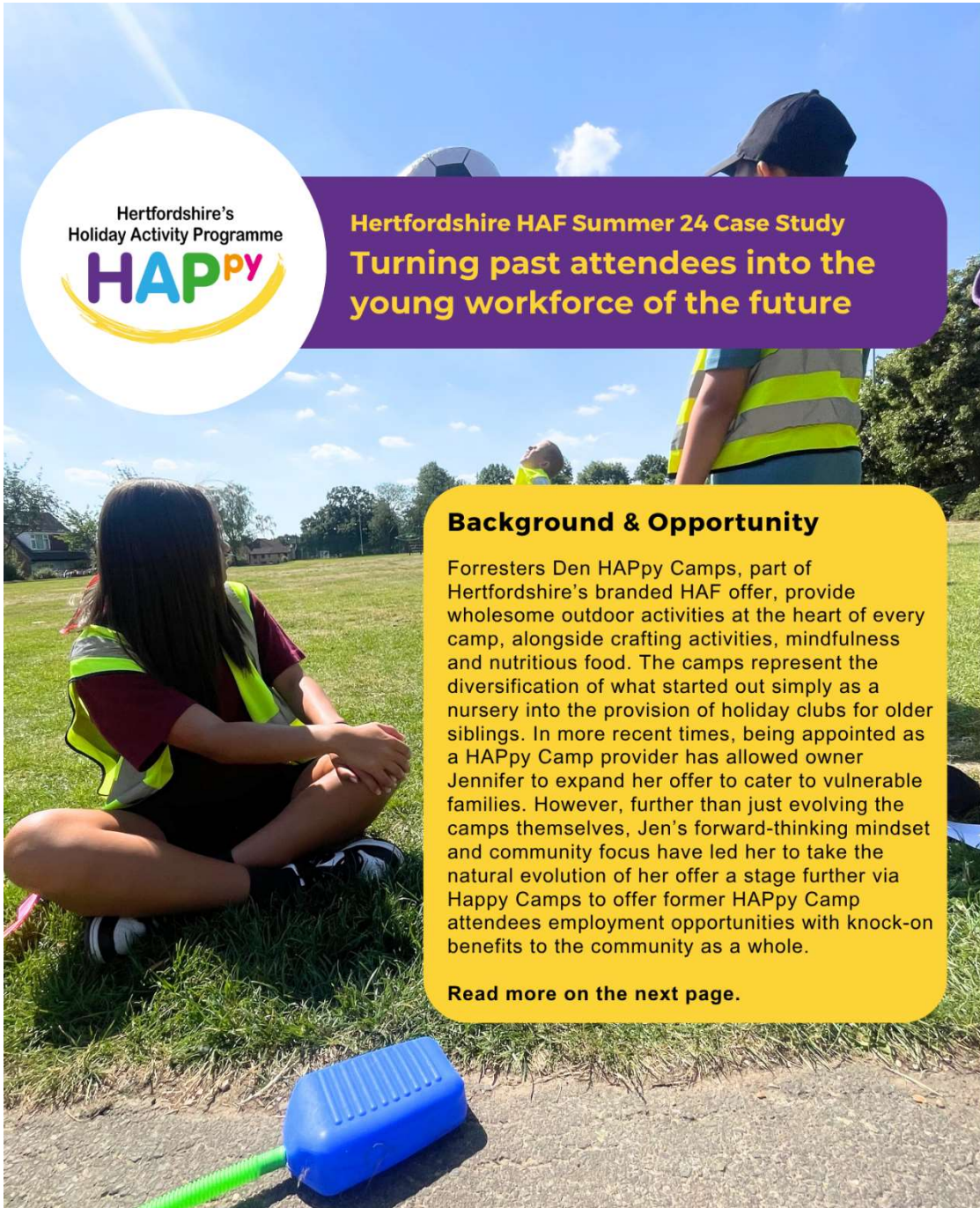
[orange = new provider for 2024]

[x = delivered in this holiday period]

Organisation Name	Spring	Summer	Autumn
Active Communities Enterprise CIC	x	x	x
Apex Multisports	x	x	x
Brighter Days Kids Club	x	x	
Broxbourne Borough Council	x	x	
Camp 4 Champs	x	x	
Christina Marks School of Performing Arts	x	x	x
CoachingMe Ltd.	x	x	x
Community Initiative	x		
Culturewood CIC Ltd		x	
Diamond Gymnastics Club		x	x
Digischool Ltd t/a ComputerXplorers Hertfordshire	x	x	x
Dolphina Gymnastic Centre Ltd	x	x	x
Drama Academy		x	x
Everyone Active	x	x	x
Feel Hot Yoga	x	x	x
Ferdinand Football Mid Herts		x	
FIT Bootcamp Limited t/a FizzBug	x	x	x
FK Dance Academy	x	x	x
Football Fun Factory	x	x	
Forever Young People	x	x	x
Get Set 4 Tennis CIC	x	x	x
Get With The Kids Vibe	x	x	x
GETGOLFING CIO		x	
Happy Hours Out of School Club C/O Birchwood Avenue Primary School	x	x	x
Hemel Hempstead Youth Rugby League Club	x	x	
Hemel Warriors ABC	x	x	x
Hertford Gymnastics	x	x	x
Herts Inclusive Theatre	x		
Herts Schools Outreach CLOSED 5/8/24	x		
Imagination Dance CIC	x	x	
Jam Arts		x	
Jam Coding Watford	x	x	
Jens Den Childcare Service Ltd	x	x	
Junior Adventures Group (formerly Fit For Sport)	x	x	
Kool Kidz Club Ltd	x	x	x

Lifestyle Studios and Healthy U Education and Well-Being Facility CIC		x	
London Holiday Camps Ltd		x	x
MC Inspire LLP t/a Mighty Netball	x	x	
Next Thing Education Camps LTD	x	x	x
Non-Stop Sports Education Limited	x	x	x
Out to Learn	x	x	x
Premier Agents LTD ta Premier Education	x	x	x
Premier Education - (Premier Schools Ltd)		x	
ProFormance Pathways CIC	x	x	x
Re:play Holiday Club	x	x	x
Sapphire Gymnastics Sports Centre	x	x	
Saracens Sport Foundation	x	x	x
SASA School of Performing Arts	x	x	
Science Atomic UK, CIC t/a Mad Science of Hertfordshire & Bedfordshire	x	x	x
SportsCool	x	x	x
Stevenage and North Herts Athletic Club	x	x	
Stevenage Cycling Hub CIC	x	x	
Stevenage FC Foundation	x	x	x
Stortford Gymnastics Club	x	x	x
Super Star Sport NWL LTD		x	x
The Craft Room	x	x	x
The Hive @ Jim McDonald Centre, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council	x	x	x
The Little Performers	x	x	
The Mudlarks Community	x	x	
The Pioneer Club	x	x	
The Swan Youth Project Limited (formerly Swan Youth Centre)	x	x	
Theatretrain Royston	x	x	x
Three Rivers District Council	x	x	
Time for change kids	x	x	x
Topkidz Out of School Hours & Daycare Group Ltd	x	x	
U Sports Limited (U Sports)	x		
Warriorz Performing Arts Academy		x	x
Watford Football Club Community Sport & Education Trust	x	x	x
West Herts Warriors Basketball Club	x	x	
Zenith Trampoline club	x	x	x

## Appendix 2 – Example of a HAF case study



Hertfordshire's  
Holiday Activity Programme

**HAPpy**

**Hertfordshire HAF Summer 24 Case Study**  
**Turning past attendees into the young workforce of the future**

**Background & Opportunity**

Forresters Den HAPpy Camps, part of Hertfordshire's branded HAF offer, provide wholesome outdoor activities at the heart of every camp, alongside crafting activities, mindfulness and nutritious food. The camps represent the diversification of what started out simply as a nursery into the provision of holiday clubs for older siblings. In more recent times, being appointed as a HAPpy Camp provider has allowed owner Jennifer to expand her offer to cater to vulnerable families. However, further than just evolving the camps themselves, Jen's forward-thinking mindset and community focus have led her to take the natural evolution of her offer a stage further via Happy Camps to offer former HAPpy Camp attendees employment opportunities with knock-on benefits to the community as a whole.

**Read more on the next page.**



## Approach & Impact

Jen observed that although some former HAPpy attendees had become too old to attend HAPpy Camps, they were still keen to be involved. She also knew that opportunities for young people in her area were few and far. On that basis, she decided to offer some young people from both previous Happy Camps and the local community a range of voluntary and paid employment opportunities working at the HAPpy Camps to build their future career prospects in a safe space.

She uses role play based on real scenarios from prior camps to train the young workers and helps them to give them a strong sense of purpose by providing uniforms and expecting them to arrive on time and behave appropriately in front of attendees. She pairs the young workers with specific children each day so that they can build up a rapport and learn to identify any triggers for the children attending. Using a firm but fair approach she builds their confidence and has also implemented a reward scheme for the young workers, with a £100 voucher going to the worker nominated by the most attendees in that delivery phase.



*images from Forresters Den HAPpy Camps.*

One young worker in particular has been with Jen for three years. Now almost 18, he began as a volunteer. Once old enough to undertake child protection training Jen was able to start him on paid employment. He has since gone on to undertake all of the HAPpy training courses available and also gone into sports coaching as a result of working in the holiday club setting. Jen has watched him transform and grow as an individual and he now holds an ambition to open his own club as soon as he's able to.

## Going forward

If HAF funding is renewed, the HAPpy Team would love to explore the possibility for bespoke training specifically designed for entry-level staff and volunteers to support providers to emulate Jen's model.

## Top tip for providers

- Consider who amongst your HAPpy attendee list and local community shows promise in terms of being your future workforce.
- Leverage the already sizeable suite of HAPpy training courses available online at <https://courses.sportinherts.org.uk> to develop your existing and emerging workforce, plus look out for new courses that we may be able to offer in future.

**[haf@herts.ac.uk](mailto:haf@herts.ac.uk)**