HAPpy FAQs for Parents

and guardians of children

Hertfordshire's Holiday Activity Programme

HAPpy

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All you need to know about the HAPpy: Holiday Activity Programme

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Section 1 – About HAPpy

What is the HAF programme?

The holiday activities and food (HAF) programme provides support to children from low-income families during school holiday periods.

In Hertfordshire HAF is known as the **HAPpy: Holiday Activity Programme.**

What is the aim of the HAF programme?

The aim of HAF is to support children from low-income families during school holidays by providing:

- **Hot healthy meals** – ensuring children who normally receive free school meals still get nutritious food outside term time.
- **Enriching activities** – such as sports, arts, trips, and learning sessions that promote physical and mental wellbeing.
- **Social opportunities** – helping children stay engaged, make friends, and avoid isolation during breaks.
- **Support for families** – including advice on nutrition, budgeting, and accessing local services.

When does the programme run?

The programme runs in the three main school holiday periods – Spring (Easter), Summer and Winter (Christmas).

How long do camps last?

Camps last a minimum of 4 hours. Some camps run for just one day, others for multiple days.

What kind of activities will my child do?

All camps offer some type of physical activity, enrichment and provide a hot meal.

My child's school isn't hosting a HAPpy camp; can we attend other camps nearby?

If your child is eligible, you can book a HAPpy camp at any venue which are suitable for the child's age and needs.

Section 2 - Eligibility

Who is eligible to attend the HAPpy programme?

School age children from **Reception to Year 11** who attend school in Hertfordshire and are in receipt of **Targeted free school meals (T-FSM).**

> **From September 2026 there are national changes to the benefits related free school meals system.**
>
> Children from all **households receiving Universal Credit** are eligible for free school meals (FSM). When registered, the children will fall under two categories:
>
> > **Targeted FSM -** Free school meals for children in households with **household income below £7,400** per year. **This group remains eligible for HAF/ HAPpy camps.**
> >
> > **Expanded FSM -** FSM will also be available to all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit who have a **household income of more than £7,400** per year. **This group is not eligible for HAF/ HAPpy camps.**

If you have **questions about your child's free school meal eligibility, please contact the child's school.** The school can check if your child is properly registered and help you to register if needed.

These FSM eligibility changes mean some children who previously attend will no longer be eligible for HAPpy from September 2026 if their family circumstances mean they no longer meet the Targeted FSM threshold. See **Sections 6 & 7** of this document for support if your child is no longer eligible for the HAPpy programme.

Detailed information about free school meals can be found on the Hertfordshire County Council website.

My child is in Key Stage 1 and gets free school meals – are they eligible?

All children in reception, year 1 and year 2 (key stage 1) regardless of family income or benefits, automatically receive **Universal Infant Free School Meals** (UIFSM).

To access the HAPpy programme, pupils in Key Stage 1 who receive a free meal under UIFSM must also be registered for Targeted Free School Meals. **Only children successfully registered and in the Targeted FSM category will be eligible for the HAPpy programme.**

If your household is in receipt of Universal Credit, you should register your child for benefits-based free school meals. If you are unsure if your child has been registered already or would like to verify what category they fall under (Targeted or Expanded), please **contact the child's school office**.

Key Stage 1 pupils who register successfully for Targeted FSM, can access the HAPpy programme and will also bring additional government funding to their school via the **Pupil Premium** for disadvantaged pupils.

Does a child who has diagnosed SEND, an EHCP or an additional needs support plan, automatically qualify for the HAPpy programme?

The automatic qualification for the HAF programme is children in receipt of Targeted free school meals. If a child has an EHCP or SEND but is **not in receipt of Targeted free school meals**, then they would **not automatically qualify to access the HAPpy programme.**

Please see Section 6 of this document for information on non-eligible access to the Hertfordshire HAPpy programme.

Can you explain FSM eligibility in a simpler way?

This image shows the **household income thresholds** for the different types of free school meals (FSM) and eligibility for linked benefits in Hertfordshire. **A printable version can be found here:** https://bit.ly/4zGYirU

Changes to Free School Meals Eligibility

From September 2026 the eligibility for free school meals (FSM) has changed. Children from households in receipt of Universal Credit will be entitled to receive FSM. Check your child's FSM eligibility and additional benefits below.

Questions about FSM? Contact your child's school



	Targeted free school meals (T-FSM)	Expanded free school meals (E-FSM)	Universal Infant free school meals (UIFSM)
Benefits-based	✓	✓	✗
Eligibility Check for Pupils	In households in receipt of Universal Credit, with **annual household earnings of £7,400 or less.**	In households in receipt of Universal Credit, with **annual household earnings over £7,400.**	No eligibility checks are required for UIFSM *
The child will get Free Meals at School	✓	✓	✓
Registration required on Local Authority website	✓	✓	✗ **
Other benefits or entitlements for the child	Herts Card and HAPpy: Holiday Activity Programme	Herts Card	Must register for T-FSM or E-FSM to receive benefits **
Pupil Premium Funding for the child's school ££	✓	✗	✗

* All pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2, in state-funded schools, regardless of household earnings, are entitled to UIFSM.

** If the household is in receipt of Universal Credit, then eligibility should be checked for T-FSM or E-FSM and a registration made.

Other households may also be entitled to FSM (if receiving income-related Employment and Support Allowance, the guaranteed element of Pension Credit, or families with no recourse to public funds). If this applies to you, please contact your child's school office for advice.

HAPpy: Holiday Activity programme

To access the HAPpy holiday programmes, children must now meet the new **Targeted FSM threshold**.

The FSM eligibility change means some children who previously accessed the HAPpy: Holiday Activity Programme will no longer be eligible to attend after Sept 2026.

Visit HAPpy

Herts Card

This card gives discounts to children from low income families for lots of activities and days out that they might not be able to access otherwise.

Visit Herts Card

Need Help to Manage the Cost of Living?

For help and advice please visit the Help to manage the cost of living page on the Hertfordshire County Council website.

Visit Cost of Living

Information applies to residents of Hertfordshire only | Source: UK Government | Published: Nov 2026 for HAPpy: Holiday Activity Programme

Section 3 – Getting your booking code & registering

How do eligible families receive information about the programme?

If your child meets the eligibility criteria for HAPpy (receiving Targeted FSM), you will **receive a unique HAPpy Booking Code by email** from **Happy@hertfordshire.gov.uk**. HAPpy Booking Codes are updated before each holiday period.

The email will also explain how to register your child for the holiday programme and how to book activities. These messages are sent approx. 5 weeks before each holiday period.

How do I register my child for activities?

In the email with your unique booking code, there is a link to the **HAPpy Booking system**. If you have not already done so you will need to **create a 'parent account'** and **add your dependent children with their unique booking code**(s) before bookings open. If you have already created a parent account (since July 2026), then you should **use the same account again** – see below.

Booking System Link: https://hertfordshire.zipporah.co.uk/Events.HAF.Live/

Already Registered?

If you created a parent account (since July 2026) then you are already on the New HAPpy Booking system. You should log into this account and **update your child's unique booking code** to proceed. You should also **check and update** and the child's personal information and contact details at this time.

At this time, you can also **add a new child** if they have become eligible.

If you can't access the account you created in summer 2026 then please use the link on the booking system to reset your password. If this doesn't resolve the problem, complete our support form.

Booking Support Form link: https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/WKXqjKe180

What if I haven't been sent any information?

You should look out for your booking code emails from up to 5 weeks before the holidays start. If you don't receive the booking code email(s), **please check all your email accounts and check your junk or spam mail**. You can contact the HAPpy Camp Team for help using the Booking Support Form detailed above.

We will ask you for personal details to confirm your child's eligibility for HAPpy. If our records show that your child is eligible for the HAPpy programme, then we will be able to issue you a booking code.

If our records show your child is not eligible for Happy Camps, then we will signpost you to other support for families in Hertfordshire – please see Section 7 of this document.

There are limited opportunities for a child who doesn't meet the HAPpy eligibility criteria (see Section 2 – Eligibility) to access the HAPpy programme. Places are allocated by referral and assessed on a case-by-case basis. For more information, please see Section 6 of this document.

What if there is no HAPpy record for my child

If the HAPpy Camp Team cannot find a record for your child, then we will direct you to Hertfordshire County Council for an eligibility check. **HAPpy Eligibility checks can take up to 5 working days.**

You will receive an email response directly from Hertfordshire County Council explaining your child's FSM status and whether they are eligible for HAPpy. The email will include any instructions or next steps if needed.

The cut-off date for **HAPpy eligibility checks** is **Friday 18 December 2026** - checks requested after this date will not be processed before the Winter HAPpy programme.

The cut-off date **new FSM registrations** is **Friday 18 December 2026** – you can still register for FSM after this date, but children registered for FSM after this date will not be able to access the Winter HAPpy programme.

Section 4 – Making & managing your bookings

How do I book activities?

In the email with your unique booking code, there is a link to the **HAPpy Booking system**. When bookings open, at **12noon on Thursday 26 November 2026**, you will be able to search and book activities via this page. We cannot share information about activities before this date.

Can I register my child's details when I book an activity?

Short answer – NO

With the new HAPpy Booking system, you must register the details of your child/ children **before** you start to book a HAPpy Camp. You will need their unique HAPpy Booking code to register a child.

When should I register my child's details?

We recommend **you do this immediately when you get the child's unique booking code**. This will save time when bookings open and allow us to help you in good time if there is any difficulty.

Can my child attend more than one camp?

A child can attend as many days as you wish **however they cannot attend more than one camp per day.**

Our preferred activity is fully booked – what can we do?

Popular activities can become full booked quite quickly. Please use the waiting list function on the booking page to register your interest in the activity. If a place becomes available, you will be notified and will have the opportunity to book.

How will I know/remember what camps/dates I have booked?

You will receive a **confirmation email** from **Happy@hertfordshire.gov.uk** any time you book or cancel an activity. This email will contain details of the bookings you made you have made or cancelled.

You can login to your account on the HAPpy Booking system at any time to see and manage your bookings in '**View a Child's Booking History'**.

I no longer want my booking, so would like someone else to benefit from it. What do I do??

You can cancel any bookings before the date they are due to take place. Cancelling allows someone on the waiting list to be notified and allows them to book an available space.

How do I cancel my booking?

You will receive a Booking confirmation email from **Happy@hertfordshire.gov.uk** any time you book an activity. In this email there will be a link to the HAPpy Booking system where you can cancel the booking.

Alternatively, you can login directly to your account on the HAPpy Booking system at any time to see and manage your current bookings in '**View a Child's Booking History**'.

Section 5 – Special Needs & Disabilities (SEND)

My child has SEND and their additional needs are low - can they attend any camp?

Yes - Please read the camp description **carefully to consider if the environment will be suitable for your child's needs**. If you are unsure, camp organisers welcome discussion with parents before a booking is made.

When booking online, make sure you detail your child's needs fully on their booking form. This will help providers of the camps to manage any adjustments that may be needed to make sure your child has a positive experience.

My child has SEND with higher levels of additional need - what camps can they attend?

Several organisations run camps for children with higher levels of additional needs. The names of these camps start with 'SEND' or 'SEN'. On the booking system, you can **type 'SEN' in the search box to filter** for these activities.

Please read the camp description **carefully to consider if the environment will be suitable for your child's needs**. If you are unsure, camp organisers welcome discussion with parents before a booking is made. You should detail your child's needs fully on their booking form. This will help organisers of the camps to manage any adjustments that may be needed to make sure your child has a positive experience.

Please note, SEND specific camps offer high ratios of supervision but they **cannot offer 1:1 support**. Children should expect to participate in **group activities**. Camp organisers may need to arrange additional staffing to support a specific need a child may have. SEND specific provisions will do their best to work with families to provide the necessary means for them to take part but this is not guaranteed. HAPpy Camps are unable to offer any personal care, e.g. assistance with going to the toilet.

My child has SEND and their additional needs are complex

HAPpy camps are unable to support children with very complex additional needs.

The HAPpy programme funds additional holiday activities during the Easter and Summer holidays for children who require specialist support through SEND specialist organisations in the Short Breaks Local Offer (SBLO). For further information, please contact your local offer provider directly or email SBLO.Online@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Section 6 – Children not automatically eligible for HAPpy

Can I attend a camp in Hertfordshire if my child attends school outside of the county?

If you live in Hertfordshire but your child accesses education outside of Herts, you will not automatically receive the booking information. Government funded HAF activities take place across England. If your child is eligible (registered for Targeted FSM), you will receive information about HAF activities **in the local authority where your child attends school**. Your child is eligible to book and attend these activities.
If your child attends school outside the county but would benefit from attending a Hertfordshire camp, **please read the next point for information on non-eligible access to the Hertfordshire HAPpy programme.**

My children don't automatically qualify, is there a way for them to access the programme?

There are limited opportunities for a child who doesn't meet the eligibility criteria (see Section 2 – Eligibility) to access the HAPpy programme. Places are allocated by referral and assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Applications may be considered from but not limited to include children who are vulnerable or in need, looked-after, on child protection or support plans, with SEND, or supported by family services. Priority for referrals is given to children from low-income families who cannot afford to pay for holiday provision. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, a referral request will only be considered if the child is **eligible and registered for free school meals under the new Expanded category (see section 2 - Eligibility)**.

Only a professional working with the child or family can make a referral. We do not accept referral requests from a parent or guardian. Please contact the HSP Team via haf@herts.ac.uk to discuss submitting a referral.

For the 2026 Winter HAPpy programme the **deadline for receipt of Referral requests will be Wednesday 16 December 2026.** We regret that we will not be able to process referral applications received after that date.

Section 7 –Support

Cost of Living Support

For help and advice please visit the **Help to manage the cost-of-living** page on the Hertfordshire County Council website. This page includes contact details for **Herts Help** where trained advisors will offer free, confidential assistance. They can put you in touch with relevant services and local support.

https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/news/cost-of-living/help-to-manage-the-cost-of-living.aspx

Support services and advice to help you and your family

On this page you can find links to **support in your local area** and links to suggested **Free or low-cost activity ideas for families in Hertfordshire.**

https://sportinherts.org.uk/cost-of-living-support-n320

Section 8 - Further information & contact details

Is my child registered for FSM or eligible for HAPpy camps?

If you want to check whether your child is registered for free school meals (FSM) **please speak to the school office**.

Your child's school can tell you everything you need to know:

- Is your child registered for FSM?
- What category of FSM the child receives?
- Is the child eligible for other benefits such as HAPpy camps?

Questions about HAPpy camp or need help to book?

For more information about HAPpy Camps, visit: https://sportinherts.org.uk/happy/booking

If **your child is eligible (receiving Targeted FSM)** and **you have a question about HAPpy Camps**, please complete our **Booking Support Form**. The booking support form allows us to understand your question and respond promptly. This is the best way to contact us.

Use this simple form for help with:

- Access to the Booking System
- Registering on the Booking System
- Finding or Booking a HAPpy Camp
- Changing or cancelling your booking

Booking Support Form link: https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/WKXqjKe180

In Hertfordshire, the HAF programme is coordinated on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council by the Herts Sport & Physical Activity Partnership (HSP).

Email: HAPpyCamps@herts.ac.uk or Telephone 01707 284 229