

Standards for holiday provision

We have developed a framework of standards to provide a benchmark of what we expect from those delivering the holiday, activities, and food programme.

One of the key roles of the local authority will be to:

- improve the quality of provision across the local area
- ensure that providers are supported to meet the high-level framework of standards

Framework of standards

This section sets out the standards we expect for HAF funded providers. We expect local authorities to make best use of the variety of local and national organisations who are available to support them and their providers in the delivery of these aspects of the HAF programme.

It is the local authority's role to ensure standards are met across the programme and to support local providers who do not meet them to ensure they are adequately supported through training, support, and partnerships.

Not all providers have to deliver all aspects of the programme, but our clear expectation is that where possible, all participating children should benefit from all aspects of the programme. This might mean that local authorities adopt a blended approach to ensuring children can access different aspects of the programme through different providers.

Provision for all

We strongly encourage local authorities to ensure the clubs and providers they fund are open to all children, not just to those who received a place funded by the HAF programme.

Food provision

All providers must provide at least 1 meal a day (breakfast, lunch or an evening meal) and all food provided at HAF clubs (including snacks) must meet [school food standards](#).

For some children, the opportunity to enjoy a hot meal at a HAF club is important and our aspiration is that providers should, where possible, try to offer hot meals to children attending HAF clubs. However, we acknowledge that this is not always possible and that alternatives to hot meals can sometimes be more suitable.

To ensure that all children receive a high quality and stigma free experience, if a provider is open to both HAF-funded and non-HAF-funded places, it is vital that all of

the children attending are provided with an identical food offer and that HAF funded children are treated equally.

If children on non-HAF-funded places are given the option to bring a packed lunch, then we expect the local authority and the provider to work together to ensure that children attending through HAF have the same choice. This could be fulfilled through the provider and the local authority making arrangements to provide packed lunches for HAF children. All packed lunches must meet the school food standards.

Alternatively, for providers who provide meals on-site, they could consider making the same healthy food available to all children, but with an additional charge for those non-HAF funded places.

All food provided as part of the HAF programme must:

- comply with regulations on food preparation
- take into account allergies and dietary requirements (see the [allergy guidance for schools](#))
- take into account any religious or cultural requirements for food

There is flexibility in the design of the food provision which should always be tailored to ensure that all food meets the dietary needs of the children and families who attend. The food served should also be appropriate for the nature of the session, for example, offering cold packed lunches for parks or outdoor venues or for day trips.

While there can be benefits to using a central food service to provide meals to HAF clubs, we expect local authorities to carefully consider whether using a central food service is the right approach for providing high quality, attractive and tailored meals for those attending the HAF programme.

Providing food on site can provide an opportunity to engage children and families in food preparation and nutrition. Providers have reported that when children are involved in designing menus and the preparation of food, they are more engaged and more willing to try new and healthier food.

We recommend that local authorities consider the provision of the food element of the HAF programme, in particular, in making sure that providers and children are involved in the planning and preparation of food. Such a developmental approach can be key to effecting long-term change in engagement with food and nutrition.

There are also environmental factors to consider when planning the food provision. Local authorities should consider whether clubs preparing food on their own premises would produce less food and packaging waste and result in fewer food-miles than off-site, centralised provision.

Food providers

Local authorities should ensure that the providers they work with are, where applicable, registered as a food business. This provides reassurance to all of those involved that food safety standards are being met.

A food business is defined as anyone preparing, cooking, storing, handling, distributing, supplying or selling food. Further information is available on [food business registration](#).

Local authorities are responsible for enforcing food hygiene laws and can inspect any registered food business at any point in the food production and distribution process. We recommend that HAF coordinators within each local authority are in regular contact with their food safety inspectors to ensure that HAF providers are fully compliant.

Food information regulations - Natasha's Law

From 1 October 2021, changes to the Food Information Regulations 2014 came into effect, adding new labelling requirements for food that is pre-packed for direct sale (PPDS).

Local authorities should read the [guidance on the Food Standards Agency website](#) and ensure that all food provision for the HAF programme meets these requirements.

Enrichment activities

All HAF-funded provision must provide fun and enriching activities that allow children to:

- develop new skills or knowledge
- consolidate existing skills and knowledge
- try out new experiences
- have fun and socialise

This could include but is not limited to:

- physical activities, for example, football, swimming, table tennis or cricket
- creative activities, for example, putting on a play, junk modelling or drumming workshops
- experiences, for example, a nature walk or visiting a city farm
- free play, for example, fun and freedom to relax and enjoy themselves

We expect all HAF providers to provide a balanced programme. For providers whose primary focus is set around a specific activity or sport, we expect them to ensure that children attending their provision benefit from a holistic and varied experience.

Physical activities

Holiday clubs must provide activities that meet the [physical activity guidelines](#) on a daily basis.

In line with those guidelines, we expect:

- all children and young people participating in the HAF programme should engage in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity for an average of at least 60 minutes per day
- children and young people participating in the HAF programme should engage in a variety of types and intensities of physical activity to develop movement skills, muscular fitness, and bone strength
- children and young people should aim to minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary, and when physically possible should break up long periods of not moving with at least light physical activity

Meeting the physical activity requirement does not have to be in the form of a structured activity session, but might include active travel, free play and sports.

Increasing awareness of healthy eating, healthy lifestyles, and positive behaviours

We expect providers to incorporate helping children to understand more about the benefits of healthy eating and nutrition into their programme. These do not need to be formal learning activities. This could include:

- getting children involved in food preparation and cooking
- growing fruit and vegetables
- taste tests
- discussing food and healthy eating during mealtimes
- including food and nutrition in other activities

Offering positive learning and development through HAF activities creates stigma-free opportunities to support children and young people in learning about healthy lifestyles and exercise. This could cover, for example, the use of vapes, cigarettes, drugs, and how this can lead to issues including:

- economic
- social
- personal safety
- exploitation
- criminality

Signposting and referrals and supporting families

HAF providers should be able to offer information, signposting or referrals to other services and support, that would benefit the children who attend their provision and their families. Other services and support could include:

- Citizens Advice
- school nurses, dentists, or other healthcare practitioners
- family support services or children's services
- housing support officers
- Jobcentre Plus
- organisations providing financial education
- early years and childcare, including help to pay for childcare (for example, [Tax-Free Childcare](#))

There are many ways that providers can meet this element of the programme, for example, through trained and knowledgeable staff engaging with families during drop-off and pick-up times.

We know that many HAF providers have worked to provide weekly training and advice sessions for parents, carers or other family members. We encourage providers who want to do so to continue to offer those sessions.

These sessions could provide advice on how to source, prepare and cook nutritious and low-cost food. This could be combined with the increasing awareness and understanding of healthy eating aspect of the programme, for example, by inviting children and their families to prepare and eat a meal together at a HAF session.

There are alternative ways of delivering this, for example, by providing participating children with ingredients and recipes to take away and try at home with their families.

Example

In Lambeth and Southwark, they worked with the Kitchen Social programme to incorporate the 'take and make' into their Summer of Food and Fun HAF programme. Participating children received a box of ingredients and recipe cards to take home so that families could cook and eat healthy meals together at home.

The boxes, which were designed with nutritionists:

- met school food standards
- were low cost
- took under 30 minutes to make
- were 'low cook', which aimed to ease financial constraints and build families confidence in cooking

The boxes also included healthy eating and physical activity challenges and information to support children learning and being active at home.

Policies and procedures

There are a wide variety of organisations and individuals involved in the delivery of the holiday, activities and food programme including:

- schools
- colleges
- nurseries
- private providers
- charities
- youth clubs
- community groups

All organisations delivering the HAF programme must be able to demonstrate that they have in place relevant and appropriate policies and procedures for:

- safeguarding, including the recruitment of staff and volunteers
- health and safety
- relevant insurance policies
- accessibility and inclusiveness

Ensuring providers meet the programme standards

Local authorities should have in place a system to monitor the HAF providers they fund so that they can be assured that they meet the expected standards for the programme and are providing a high quality and fun experience for children. Having an assurance process in place will provide reassurance to all involved.

Local authorities will also need to ensure that robust due diligence checks are carried out on each provider they fund through the HAF programme.

It is expected that local authorities will carry out visits to the providers they fund in order to be satisfied that the provision is suitable, and that the provider has everything in place to deliver a high-quality programme. We recognise that each local authority will develop an individual approach and a proportionate system to monitor their HAF providers.

It may not be necessary or proportionate to visit every provider during every holiday period and there are many ways that local authorities can keep in regular contact with providers. As a minimum, it is expected that an assurance visit would normally be made to new providers or to providers that have not been visited for more than 12 months.

We expect all providers who are funded through the programme to meet our framework of standards. We expect that assurance visits focus on ensuring that providers can meet the HAF programme standards.

Food provision

Check:

- what plans the provider has in place to provide high quality and nutritious food
- how will they ensure that the food served will meet the school food standards
- if they have talked to children and families about the food they will serve
- if they have a robust system in place to ensure the food they serve takes into account dietary, religious or cultural requirements
- if they have a robust system in place to manage allergies
- if they are open to both HAF-funded and non-HAF-funded children, and how they ensure that all children get the same experience

Awareness and understanding of healthy eating

Check:

- if the provider will run specific sessions on healthy eating
- what activities or sessions the provider has planned that support children in making good decisions about food
- how they plan to incorporate the theme of healthy eating and healthy lifestyles into their HAF provision

Signposting and referrals

Check:

- how the provider engages with the families of the children who attend their provision
- what the provider has in place to guide and advise children and their families to ensure they are aware of and, where appropriate, referred to other services and agencies

Enriching activities

Check:

- what enrichment activities will be on offer
- why the provider has chosen them
- if the activities on offer are age appropriate

Accessibility and inclusiveness

Check:

- if the provider has a bespoke offer for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) that is clearly highlighted
- how the provider will ensure that the needs of children with SEND are identified
- how the provider will ensure that all staff are appropriately trained to deliver high quality, accessible and inclusive provision

Safeguarding

Check:

- if all staff have received safeguarding training
- if all staff been checked and vetted by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), where appropriate
- what policies the provider has in place to ensure safeguarding incidents are dealt with robustly and rapidly

Health and safety policies and procedures

Check what health and safety procedures and policies the provider has in place.

Insurance policies and procedures

Check if the provider has up to date and appropriate insurance policies in place.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. We want every HAF club to be a safe and happy place for children, and for parents, carers and families to feel confident that their child is well looked after and that robust safeguarding arrangements are in place.

Local authorities are statutorily responsible for safeguarding in relation to children in need, under statute 17 of the Children Act 1989, and looked after children under statute 20 of the Children Act 1989.

We encourage all local authorities to work closely with their local safeguarding children partnership to:

- make them aware of the HAF programme and what it can offer
- ensure that they can support the programme to put safeguarding arrangements in place

As set out in [working together to safeguard children](#), safeguarding is defined for the purposes of this guidance as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action if you identify children to be at risk of harm

Local authorities should ensure that their local safeguarding partners understand the holiday, activities and food programme and those working on the delivery of the programme are familiar with the [working together to safeguard children](#) guidance.

There are a number of accredited organisations who can provide safeguarding and child protection training courses for those involved in working with children. We expect local authorities to be able to demonstrate that those involved in the delivery of the holiday, activities and food programme in their area are competent and have received adequate training and support.

We expect every local authority to produce and maintain a central register of all the providers they fund through their HAF programme and to put in place a system for inspecting each provider and ensuring all adhere to the standards set out in this guidance.