

Holiday Activity and Food Programme

Frequently Asked Questions - 2026



General

If we think we can deliver for 5 days a week, can we do this within the funding envelope?

Providers must deliver four days per week.

If we think we can deliver for more than 4 hours a day, can we do this within the funding envelope?

Providers must deliver for a minimum of four hours per day.

Regarding the 4 hours / 4 days / 1 week or 4 weeks – does this mean that the same children should attend for all of this time?

Families and children will be able to book places on any provision so in reality the same children will not necessarily book places on any one provision throughout any holiday period.

Why is it that free places do not cover all school holidays?

The Department for Education provides funding for free places for children on benefits-related free school meals during what is considered the longest holiday periods – Easter, Summer and Christmas only.

The programme is designed to work in conjunction with the existing childcare offers across government. This includes the Universal Credit childcare scheme and Tax-Free Childcare. Eligible parents can top up their free hours using these other, existing childcare offers.

Those who claim Universal Credit but do not claim FSM can access holiday or wraparound childcare provision and potentially claim back up to 85% of the cost through the Universal Credit childcare element – the ability to claim will depend on the provision itself.

Further information about universal credit can be found here: <https://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/new-to-universal-credit/children-and-childcare/>

Will there be any specific requirements on the types of activities provided or will this be flexible for each programme to decide what works best for their children and families?

All clubs must offer age-appropriate, fun and enriching activities that provide children with opportunities to develop new skills or knowledge, to consolidate existing skills and knowledge, or to try out new experiences. Whilst there are no requirements on specific activities, providers should consider the range of activities available, with consideration to age, location and accessibility.

For any further information around the expectations set by Department for Education, please visit: [Holiday activities and food programme 2026 to 2027 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/holiday-activities-and-food-programme-2026-to-2027)

Do I need to register my organisation with Ofsted?

Organisations interested in delivering a HAF programme in Croydon must be on the voluntary Ofsted register unless you are exempt. Information on how to apply for Ofsted registration is available here: [Childminders and childcare providers: register with Ofsted - Guidance - GOV.UK](#)

Food

What are the expectations around the provision of food?

All holiday clubs must provide at least one hot, healthy meal a day (breakfast, lunch or tea) and all food provided at the holiday club (including snacks) must adhere to school food standards. Information about school food standards can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standards-for-school-food-in-england>

Can I deliver the HAF programme without providing food?

No, the provision of food is an essential part of the programme. Holiday club provision must include food as well as enriching and physical activities.

Can our holiday club serve cold food?

The expectation is that all holiday clubs are offering at least one hot meal a day.

We are interested in delivering the HAF programme, however we will need an external caterer to deliver the food element. Can we apply under these conditions?

Yes, providers are permitted to outsource the food element to an external food business or caterer. Previous HAF providers have provided food through a variety of arrangements, for example, using school or community kitchens, food delivered and prepped at the club and the use of food intervention charities. If holiday club providers are working with another organisation who will be providing the healthy food element, they must ensure that organisation is a registered food business and that they meet all programme standards/requirements, including the School Food Standards. In addition, the food provider must also take account of allergies, dietary requirements and any religious or cultural requirements for food.

What certifications are required to deliver the food element in-house?

Holiday club providers who are preparing and providing their own healthy meals for children must be registered as a food business and hold relevant Food Hygiene Certificates (achieved within three years of the start of the programme delivery).

How do we register as a food business?

Details on how to register as a Croydon food business can be found here: <https://www.croydon.gov.uk/business-licences-and-tenders/health-and-safety-and-food-safety/food-safety-and-food-hygiene/food-premises-registration>

Food business registrations need to be complete at least 28 days before holiday clubs start.

Programme Standards

What are the expectations around physical activities?

Clubs must provide a minimum of one hour of physical activity each day in line with the [Physical Activity Guidelines](#). This can be through a range of sport or play and the expectation is that all physical activity sessions are structured.

What are the nutritional education requirement?

Clubs must include an element of nutritional education each day aimed at improving the knowledge and awareness of healthy eating for children. For example, this can be in the form of workshops and could include activities such as getting children involved in food preparation and cooking, growing fruit and vegetables, and taste tests.

Clubs may also include training and advice sessions for parents, carers or other family members, which provides advice on how to source, prepare and cook nutritious and low-cost food.

Application Process

Can I submit a PDF application via email?

No – all applications must be submitted through the online Microsoft Form. Under no circumstances will any other application be accepted. The online form will promptly close at exactly 23.59pm on Wednesday 28th January 2026. Submissions cannot be made after this time.

Can I submit multiple HAF applications?

The Council will consider one application per organisation for each delivery period. The Council will accept a second application for each delivery period where a provider proposes to deliver specialist SEND provision alongside a separate mainstream provision.

I want to submit an application for one holiday period (i.e Summer) however I am undecided on submitting an application for Christmas. Will applications re-open at a later stage?

We do not plan to re-open our application process ahead of each delivery period. Providers interested in delivering during multiple holiday periods should submit their application form for all relevant delivery periods ahead of the Wednesday 28th January deadline.

I want to submit a joint application in partnership with another local organisation to deliver the HAF programme. Is this allowed?

We are not seeking joint applications for the delivery of one holiday club.

Can I sub-contract another organisation to deliver on the HAF programme on my behalf?

The expectation is that providers who apply for the HAF programme will deliver the programme themselves. Where a larger organisation is successful in receiving funding, we expect delivery to be through the organisation, with staff employed, DBS checked, and adhering to all policies and procedures of those submitted to Croydon Council at the time of application.

Can I apply for more than the funding cap for each delivery period?

Applications which exceed the funding cap for each delivery period will not be considered.

We would like to apply for HAF funding; however, we want to deliver more than one holiday club. Can we deliver at two or more different locations?

Yes, it is possible to apply with the intent of delivering multiple holiday clubs in different locations. Please be reminded of the maximum amount of funding available for each holiday period and that all clubs must meet the HAF standards as outlined in the service specification.

Can we deliver multiple sessions at one holiday club? For example, we want to run one session from 10am-2pm and another session from 2pm-6pm?

Yes, it is possible to deliver multiple sessions at your holiday club. Each session is required to run for a minimum of 4 hours and must cater for a completely different set of children.

Are there any funding restrictions in terms of the splitting our costs between food and activities?

It is up to providers to determine their costings for each dimension of their HAF programme and to budget accordingly for each programme element in a proportionate manner. We understand that different types of holiday club provision will have different costs and we recognise the need for flexibility in relation to this. We are looking for holiday club provision that represents good value for money that will deliver the required quality and outcomes. All applicants are asked to provide a high-level budget breakdown as part of the application process.

Can the funding be used to support other initiatives alongside food and activities that provide support to families to help raise them out of poverty (e.g. welfare rights and money advice in venues)?

Part of the role of HAF involves working with other local services and agencies to ensure a holistic approach, including asking clubs to signpost families to support, help and resources. In the past, some HAF clubs have also run sessions for families including work on budgeting, offered volunteering opportunities for family members, worked with local

support networks, signposted to citizens advice, engaged with Jobcentre Plus and more. Such initiatives would be welcomed.

Please can you provide an example of the pricing methodology?

1. Applicants will be ranked by the calculated cost per child per day: total grant amount ÷ (HAF spaces x days of provision)

Applicant	Cost per Child per Day ranked from lowest to highest
1	£14.50
2	£15.30
3	£15.90
4	£17.80
5	£18.20
6	£20.00
7	£21.55
8	£25.30
9	£25.65
10	£28.30
11	£35.10
12	£45.50
MEAN AVERAGE:	£23.50

We use a centile-based scoring system to assess the value for money of applications. Each applicant's "cost per child per day" is compared with all other bids we receive.

The lowest 10% of bids (those with the most competitive costs) will automatically receive full marks for the cost element of the score.

For all other bids, a proportional scoring system is applied: the higher the cost compared to the 10th percentile threshold, the fewer marks are awarded.

This means that as costs increase above the top 10% threshold, the score gradually reduces down to zero for the highest-cost bids.

This method ensures that bids offering better value for money are recognised, while still allowing flexibility for providers whose costs may be slightly higher due to the nature or quality of their programme.

Scores which fall above the 40% mean average will not be considered for being too highly priced. In the example above, Applicants 11 and 12 would not be considered.

If you have any further questions or queries, please contact

HAFprogramme@croydon.gov.uk