London Borough of Croydon

Holiday Activities & Food Programme Annual Report







April 2025 - March 2026

Department for Education

CROYDON
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Croydon Education Partnership

CROYDON HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND FOOD

Foreword from our Mayor

Croydon's Holiday Activities and Food programme has become an important part of the support we provide to children and families during the school holidays, and I am pleased to introduce this report on progress throughout 2025.

Over the year, the programme has given thousands of eligible children and young people access to free, nutritious meals alongside a wide range of fun and engaging activities, during the Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays. With the better use of local information, the Council has targeted provision where it is needed most, making the best possible use of funding available.

I am particularly pleased that our partnerships with schools have continued to strengthen during 2025. Better information has helped us understand where families are taking part and where more encouragement is needed, ensuring that support reaches as many children as possible.

This success would not have been possible without the commitment of our, schools, Voluntary, Community and Faith Sectors, activity providers and Council officers. Together they have created a programme with a broad reach, rooted in local communities and increasingly informed by evidence and local need.

My thanks go to everyone who has contributed throughout the year, and especially to the children and young people whose enthusiasm brings the programme to life. The progress made during 2025 provides a strong foundation to build on, helping us reach even more families, and ensuring that Croydon's children and young people continue to have opportunities to enjoy, learn and thrive during the school holidays.

Jason Perry
Executive Mayor of Croydon







Foreword from our Director of Education

School holidays should be a time when children and young people can enjoy new experiences, spend time with others and continue to feel supported. I am pleased to introduce the 2025 Annual Report for Croydon's Holiday Activities and Food programme, which shows how this support was provided to families across the borough.

Throughout Easter, Summer and Christmas, the programme gave eligible children and young people access to nutritious meals and a wide variety of activities. From sport, cooking and creative arts to science, wellbeing and personal development, children were able to explore their interests, develop new skills and enjoy positive experiences outside the classroom.

For many families, HAF also provides reassurance during the school holidays. It offers safe and welcoming places for children to spend their time, helps them remain active and connected, and reduces some of the additional pressures that families can experience when schools are closed.

During 2025, closer links with schools helped more families hear about the opportunities available to them. Provision was also planned to reflect patterns of local demand, helping children access activities within their communities. A consistent three-day programme at Christmas ensured that children could take part in face-to-face activities, share meals and spend meaningful time with others.

I would like to thank the providers, schools, community organisations, volunteers and Council teams who made this possible. Most importantly, I would like to thank the children and young people whose participation, ideas and enthusiasm continue to shape the programme.

Shelley Davies
Director of Education



Contents

Foreword	2	Food	15
Director of Education message	3	Physical activity	16
Introduction	5	Enriching activities	17
Overview	6	Food education and healthy lifestyles	18
Funding and allocation	7	Signposting and referrals	19
2025 highlights and achievements	8	SEND and additional needs	20
Programme offer and take-up	9	Parent feedback	21
Children supported	10	Children's feedback	22
Eligibility	11	Reflections	23
Promotion and routes into the programme	12	Delivery partners	24
Planning provision and reaching families	13	Contact	26
Our standards	14		



Introduction

The Holiday Activities and Food programme provides free holiday activities and nutritious meals for eligible children and young people during the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays.

Funded by the Department for Education, Croydon's programme is primarily available to school-aged children who receive benefits-related free school meals. Places are delivered by a network of local voluntary and community organisations, schools, sports clubs, specialist organisations and other activity providers.

During 2025, programmes operated across locations throughout the borough and offered a range of activities, including sport, arts and crafts, cooking, music, dance, educational activities and opportunities to support children's wellbeing and personal development. Each funded programme was required to provide an appropriate meal alongside its activity offer.

Delivery took place during all three funded holiday periods. Easter. Summer and Christmas provision offered families a choice of programmes across the borough. Whilst it had been hoped delivery would be possible during the half-terms; this opportunity has not yet been made available to the Local authority in a way which would suitably provide for families. The Local Authority are keen to continue exploring this.

The programme was promoted through schools, providers, Council communications and Croydon's online booking platform. Participation and booking information was used throughout the year to support the planning and location of places.

This Annual Report covers April 2025 to March 2026. The delivery data and programme outcomes presented relate to the three HAF holiday periods held during the 2025 calendar year: Easter, Summer and Christmas.





Free activities, food and enriching experiences for eligible children and young people.

Overview

Croydon is one of London's largest and most diverse boroughs, with an estimated population of 409,342 in mid-2024. Around 83,000 children and young people were aged 0–15, representing just over one fifth of the borough's population. This large and diverse younger population brings a wealth of potential, alongside a responsibility to ensure that every child has the opportunity to thrive, whatever their background or circumstances.

Around 16,000 children in the borough were eligible for benefits-related free school meals during 2025. Although Croydon ranks 18th most deprived of London's 33 boroughs in The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025, this masks significant local inequality. Eight Neighbourhoods are among the 10% most deprived nationally including one in the most deprived 1%. These indicators highlight the importance of targeted support during the school holidays, when many families experience additional financial pressures and children may have less access to food, activities and enriching experiences.

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme is a key part of Croydon's response. Funded by the Department for Education, HAF supports school-aged children and young people aged 4–16 who receive benefits-related free school meals by providing access to free activities and food during the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays.

The programme offers

- **Free, nutritious and tasty meals**
- **Physical activities that promote movement, teamwork and confidence**
- **Creative, educational and cultural experiences, workshops and trips**
- **Food education and healthy eating opportunities**







83,000
children aged 0-15

16,000
FSM eligible

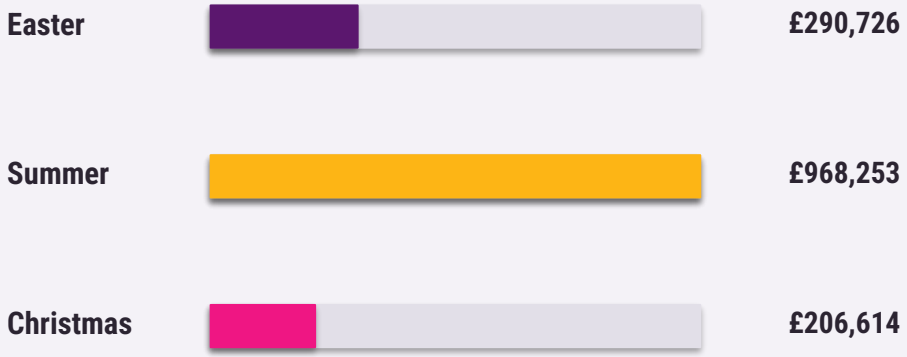
4-16
HAF age range

Funding and allocation

Croydon received a £1.67 million HAF grant in 2025, allocated across delivery, publicity, management and other programme costs.

Cost area	Amount
Face-to-face holiday club delivery	£1,465,593
Publicising the programme to eligible families and other communications	£3,990
Management and administration of the programme	£166,380
Other costs	£31,597
Total	**£1,667,560**

Face-to-face delivery by holiday period



£1.47m spent on face-to-face holiday club delivery

Programme interest and delivery partners

The Croydon HAF programme attracted strong interest from both local and national organisations, with 97 applications submitted to deliver activities in 2025.

Following a thorough selection process, 62 organisations were confirmed as delivery partners. These included schools, after-school clubs, local churches and faith groups, childcare providers, private companies, and voluntary and community sector organisations operating across both local and national levels.

97 applications

62 partners

£1.67m total grant

2025 Highlights and Achievements









62
organisations

80
locations

175
clubs

49,105
day places offered

98%
places booked

78%
places attended

In 2025, Croydon's Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme delivered a more targeted, efficient and accessible offer for children, young people and families across the borough. Across Easter, Summer and Christmas, 49,105 day places were made available through 175 clubs, delivered by 62 organisations from 80 locations.

Demand remained exceptionally strong. In total, 48,004 day places were booked, representing 98% of all places offered, compared with 86% in 2024. Attendance also improved significantly, with 38,299 attended days and 78% of available places used, up from 64% the previous year. This meant Croydon supported almost the same level of attendance while offering nearly 13,000 fewer day places.

These results reflect a more focused approach to planning provision. Improved mapping, booking and attendance data helped ensure that places were located and commissioned in line with local demand, while stronger engagement with schools improved the programme's visibility and helped more eligible families access the support available.

Christmas delivery was strengthened through a consistent three-day, face-to-face model across all funded provision. The offer achieved a 95% booking rate and supported 1,526 children and young people—more than in 2024—providing structured activities, nutritious meals and valuable opportunities to connect with others during the festive period.

Together, these achievements demonstrate Croydon's ability to deliver a well-used, responsive and high-quality programme that makes effective use of public funding while continuing to meet the needs of children and families.

HAF programme offer and take-up in 2025

	Easter 2025 (2024)	Summer 2025 (2024)	Christmas 2025 (2024)	2025 total (2024)
Providers	48 (55)	52 (53)	38 (35)	62 (59)
Holiday clubs	65 (75)	64 (69)	46 (44)	175 (188)
Locations	59 (68)	61 (64)	44 (41)	80 (86)
HAF day places offered	9,548 (11,517)	34,420 (42,596)	5,137 (7,916)	49,105 (62,029)
HAF days booked	8,719 (8,679)	34,420 (38,786)	4,865 (6,124)	48,004 (53,589)
HAF days booked %	91% (75%)	100% (91%)	95% (77%)	98% (86%)
HAF days attended	7,087 (6,658)	27,373 (28,725)	3,839 (4,601)	38,299 (39,984)
HAF days attended %	74% (58%)	79% (67%)	75% (58%)	78% (64%)

Note: 2024 comparator shown in brackets.

Children supported through face-to-face holiday clubs

	Easter 2025 (2024)		Summer 2025 (2024)		Christmas 2025 (2024)	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
FSM eligible / no identified SEND	1,191 (1,349)	379 (330)	1,570 (1,900)	435 (704)	770 (772)	219 (226)
FSM eligible / SEND in universal settings	267 (211)	74 (59)	540 (340)	146 (128)	219 (154)	94 (52)
FSM eligible / SEND in specialist provision	40 (26)	9 (9)	64 (42)	16 (17)	43 (31)	2 (9)
Non-FSM eligible / no identified SEND	201 (173)	82 (44)	290 (355)	83 (141)	66 (107)	40 (41)
Non-FSM eligible / SEND in universal settings	67 (44)	20 (7)	112 (74)	33 (34)	44 (34)	14 (13)
Non-FSM eligible / SEND in specialist provision	13 (9)	5 (1)	21 (26)	12 (7)	14 (13)	1 (5)
Total HAF funded attendees (split)	1,779 (1,812)	569 (450)	2,597 (2,737)	725 (1,031)	1,156 (1,111)	370 (346)
TotalHAF funded attendees	2,348 (2,262)		3,322 (3,768)		1,526 (1,457)	
% with SEND	21% (16%)		28% (18%)		28% (21%)	
% primary / secondary	76% (80%)	24% (20%)	78% (73%)	22% (27%)	76% (76%)	24% (24%)

Notes:
FSM eligible: School aged children and young people from reception to year 11 (inclusive) who receive benefits-related free school meals.
Non-FSM eligible: Other HAF-funded children and young people funded on basis of need (maximum 15% of total).
SEND: Total numbers of children and young people with SEND/additional needs attending holiday clubs as universal settings or specialist provision.

Eligibility

The Croydon Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme is primarily for children and young people aged 4 to 16 who receive benefits-related free school meals (FSM). In line with national Department for Education (DfE) guidance, they are entitled to fully funded places during school holiday periods. Children must either live in Croydon or attend a Croydon school to be eligible for the programme.

In addition to this core eligibility, schools are able to allocate 15% of their HAF places to support other children who do not receive benefits-related free school meals but would benefit from access to the programme.

15%

school-discretionary places



A professional referral process was also in place to identify and refer children who would benefit from the HAF programme. In 2025, this included children with special educational needs and disabilities, looked-after children, refugee and asylum-seeking children, and young people affected by challenging circumstances such as exposure to youth violence.

The discretionary allocation and professional referral routes help ensure that the programme reaches disadvantaged children and families through a range of appropriate referral mechanisms.



Promotion and routes into the programme

Croydon continued to use its central booking system, HolidayActivities, to manage access to the programme. Now embedded within the delivery model, the platform is familiar to schools, providers and families. Schools used the system to issue vouchers to children receiving benefits-related free school meals and to allocate their 15% discretionary places directly, helping to extend the programme's reach to other children who could benefit.

For each holiday period, an interactive brochure was produced to help families explore the holiday clubs available. Clubs were presented by ward, with information on age ranges, activities and delivery locations. The brochures were promoted through the Council's website, schools, professional networks, providers and community organisations.





Interactive brochures by ward

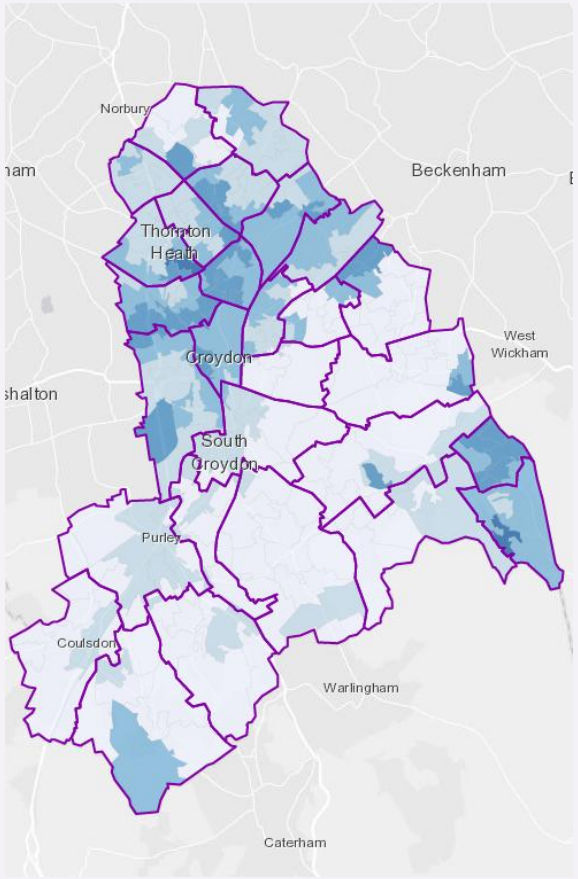
Promoted through schools, providers, community organisations and Council channels.

Planning provision and reaching families

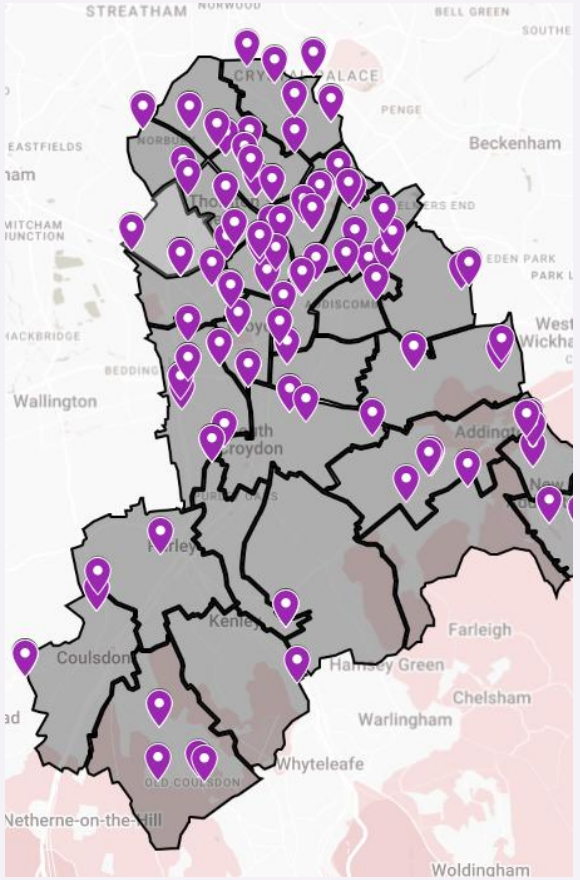
Mapping continued to play an important role in planning Croydon's HAF programme during 2025. Data on deprivation, benefits-related free school meal eligibility, previous bookings and attendance was reviewed to identify where demand was likely to be highest and where additional holiday clubs might be required.

This information was considered alongside the locations proposed by providers, helping to create an appropriate spread of holiday clubs across the borough. Particular attention was given to communities with higher levels of need, while recognising that eligible children and families live throughout Croydon.

Together, this data-led approach contributed to a closer match between supply and demand, with 98% of available day places booked and 78% attended during 2025.



Index of Multiple Deprivation



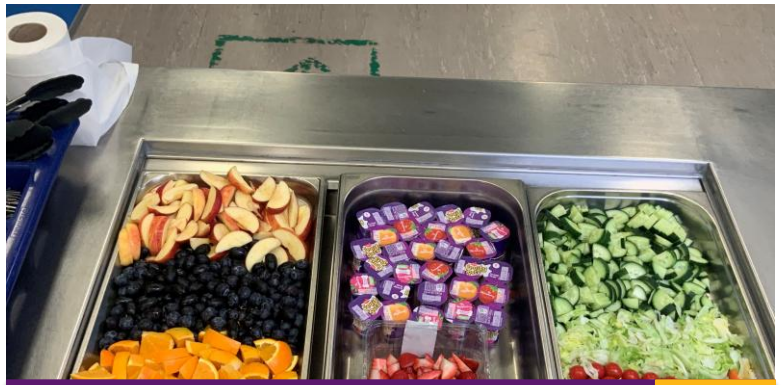
Club locations

Source: Croydon Observatory - Deprivation map

98%
available day places booked

78%
available day places attended

Our Standards



Food ›



Physical activity ›



Enriching activities ›



Food education & healthy lifestyles ›



Signposting & referrals ›

Food

DfE standard

Providers must serve at least one meal each day (breakfast, lunch or an evening meal), and all food provided at a holiday club, including snacks, must meet the school food standards. Food must comply with food-preparation regulations, be prepared by a registered food business and take account of allergies and dietary, religious and cultural requirements.

From HAF kitchen to London finalists

During the 2025 HAF programme, Good Food Matters in partnership with Knowledge and Practice, went beyond simply providing healthy meals by placing children and young people at the heart of preparing them. With support from staff, participants developed practical cooking skills, worked together in the kitchen and helped create the food they would later sit down and enjoy.

The experience then grew into something even bigger. A team of young people progressed through the Jack Petchey Taste the Future Challenge, powered by the Mayor's Fund for London - a citywide cookery competition celebrating culture, creativity and teamwork through food. After reaching the final, the team delivered an outstanding performance and finished as runners-up.

This achievement demonstrated how food provision within HAF can provide far more than nutrition: building confidence, independence and practical skills, giving young people the opportunity to represent their community on a London-wide stage.



2nd

London finalists

Physical activity

DfE standard

Providers must ensure that all children and young people engage in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity for an average of at least 60 minutes each day.

Raising the standard of physical activity

Throughout 2025, Croydon's HAF providers continued to strengthen the quality of physical activity delivered across the borough.

The proportion of assessments rated good or excellent increased from 86% in 2024 to 91% in 2025, while almost half of all assessments received the highest possible rating. No provision was rated poor or very poor for this standard during the year.

This progress reflects an increasing focus not simply on providing the required amount of physical activity, but on ensuring sessions were engaging, inclusive and appropriate for children of different ages and abilities. Providers offered structured opportunities for children to develop skills, build confidence and experience the enjoyment of being active.

The results demonstrate growing consistency across Croydon's HAF offer and the continued commitment of providers to making high-quality physical activity a central part of every programme.



91%

Programmes delivering good or excellent Physical Activity

Enriching activities

DfE standard

Providers must offer fun and enriching activities that give children and young people opportunities to develop new skills or knowledge, consolidate existing skills or knowledge, try new experiences, have fun and socialise.

Enriching experiences across the borough

Enriching activity remained one of the strongest areas of Croydon's HAF programme in 2025. Around 96% of provider assessments were rated good or excellent, while the proportion rated excellent increased from 42% to 48%, showing that more providers were delivering beyond the programme's core requirements.

Children and young people accessed a broad range of cultural, creative and practical experiences, including visits to the Horniman Museum, Sky Studios, cinemas and Merky Day at Merky HQ. Martial arts sessions combined physical activity with cultural learning, while swimming provision at GLL leisure centres introduced many children to an activity not widely available elsewhere and proved exceptionally popular.

Together, these opportunities enabled children to explore new interests, build confidence, develop skills and enjoy memorable experiences they may not otherwise have accessed during the school holidays.





96%

good or excellent



48%

excellent

Food education & healthy lifestyles

DfE standard

Providers must incorporate opportunities for children and young people to learn about the benefits of healthy eating and nutrition into their programme. This may include involving children in food preparation and cooking, growing fruit and vegetables, taste tests, and discussions about food and healthy eating during mealtimes.

Bringing nutritional education into HAF clubs

During the 2025 HAF programme, a partnership with Chartwells enabled clubs to benefit from the expertise of a dedicated nutritionist. As a school catering provider working across Croydon, Chartwells was able to bring practical knowledge of healthy eating directly into HAF settings.

The nutritionist visited clubs and delivered engaging sessions to children and young people, helping them understand the importance of a balanced diet and the role food plays in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Information was presented in a clear, accessible way, allowing children of different ages to take part and build their understanding.

Through practical discussions and easy-to-remember guidance, children developed skills they could use beyond the programme when making everyday food choices. The partnership strengthened the food education available through HAF and demonstrated the value of connecting clubs with specialist expertise from across the borough.



Signposting & referrals

DfE standard

Providers should offer information, signposting or referrals to services and support that would benefit the children and young people attending their holiday club and their families. This could include Citizens Advice, school nurses, dentists and other health practitioners, family support services, children and young people's services, housing support and Jobcentre Plus.

Connecting families with ongoing support

During 2025, the HAF programme strengthened its partnership with Croydon's Family Hubs, helping families connect with support that continued beyond the school holidays.

HAF sessions were delivered from one of our Family Hubs and associated community spaces, bringing holiday activities into familiar, accessible settings. Family Navigators were also kept informed about the programme, enabling them to promote available clubs and help eligible families understand how to access places.

In turn, HAF providers encouraged parents and carers to engage with the wider services available through the hubs. These included information, advice and support relating to parenting, health and wellbeing, finances, housing and special educational needs and disabilities.

By connecting holiday provision with Croydon's wider family-support network, HAF strengthened partnership working and supported family resilience. It created an additional route through which families could access trusted advice, build relationships with local services and receive coordinated, ongoing support when needed.





SEND and additional needs

In 2025, Croydon's HAF programme continued to strengthen access for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Building on progress made in previous years, the number of specialist SEND providers increased from three in 2024 to five in 2025, broadening the range of tailored holiday opportunities available to children and families.

Participation by children with additional needs increased during every holiday period. Children with SEND accounted for 21% of HAF-funded attendees at Easter, compared with 16% in 2024, and 28% of attendees during both Summer and Christmas, compared with 18% and 21% respectively in the previous year. This reflected increased specialist capacity, growing awareness among families and the improving ability of providers to respond to a wider range of needs.

Specialist programmes offered tailored activities, enhanced staffing ratios and additional support for children with more complex needs. Alongside this, universal providers supported increasing numbers of children with SEND to participate within their wider programmes, enabling children to access provision alongside their peers where appropriate.

Additional funding was made available to help providers put suitable staffing arrangements in place for individual children. Providers were also expected to give families clear information about the support and adjustments they could offer, helping parents and carers identify the most appropriate programme for their child.

The expansion from three to five specialist providers, together with increased participation across universal settings, created a broader and more flexible offer. This enabled more children to enjoy enriching holiday experiences while providing valuable practical support and reassurance for parents and carers during the school holidays.







3 → 5
specialist providers

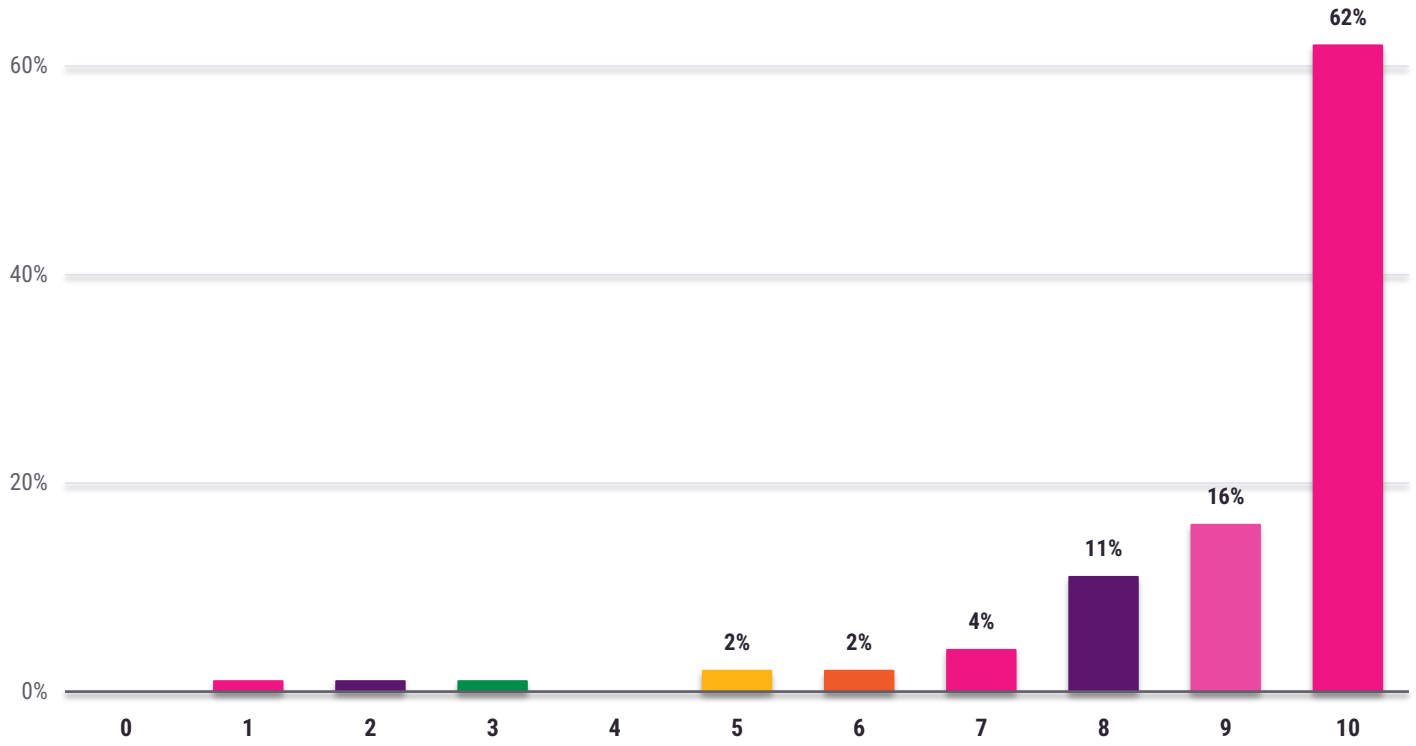
21%
Easter SEND

28%
Summer & Christmas

Inclusive universal provision and specialist support

Parent feedback

Please give the HAF programme a rating out of 10



Percentages are rounded.

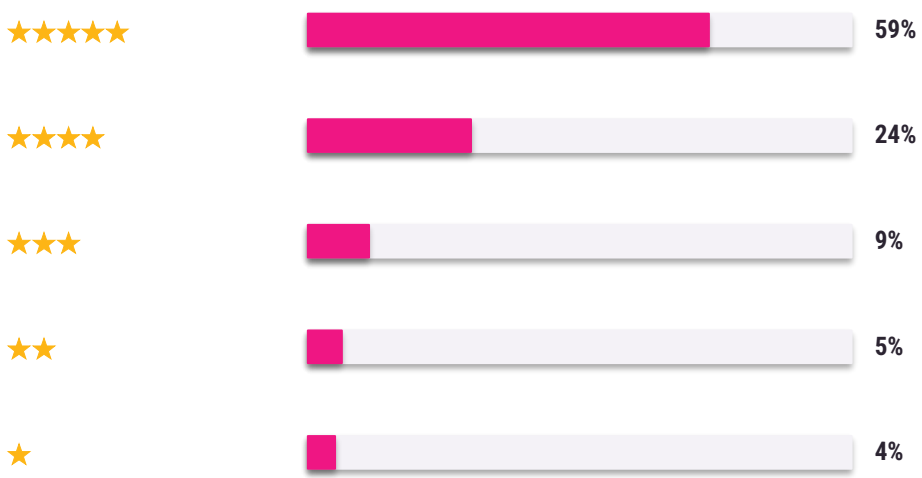
9.1/10

average overall rating

Parents shared positive feedback about the HAF programme, with many highlighting the safe and supportive environment it provided for their children. A common theme was appreciation for the opportunity to access free, enriching activities that might otherwise be unaffordable. Several parents also expressed gratitude for the respite it gave them, allowing time to rest or continue working during the holidays.

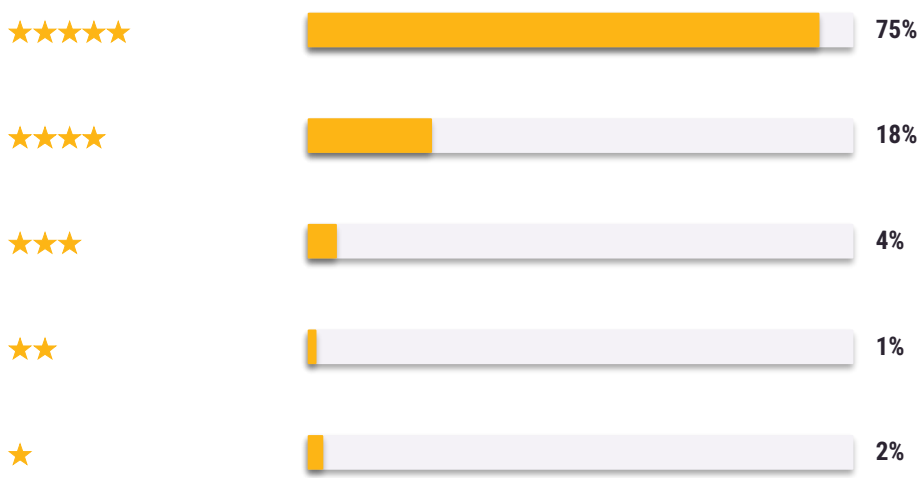
Children's feedback

How would you rate the food?



4.2/5
average

How would you rate the activities?



4.6/5
average

Children spoke positively about their experience with the HAF programme, particularly enjoying the variety of activities available and the chance to try new sports and experiences. Many also highlighted the social aspect of the club, saying it helped them to make new friendships during the holidays.

Percentages are rounded.

Reflections

The 2025 HAF programme demonstrated that success is not simply measured by the number of places made available, but by whether those places are accessible, well used and provide meaningful experiences for children and families.

Throughout the year, the programme became more closely aligned with patterns of local demand. This resulted in a more focused offer, stronger use of available capacity and greater confidence that resources were being directed where they could have the most impact. The year also reinforced the importance of clear information, accessible booking routes and strong relationships with schools, providers and community partners.

Feedback and participation data continued to show the value of offering families a varied programme, including both inclusive universal activities and specialist provision where this was required.

The progress made in 2025 provides a strong foundation for the next phase of the programme. With funding secured for 2026–2028, Croydon can take a longer-term approach to planning, partnership working and provider development. The focus will now be on sustaining strong participation, continuing to improve the quality and consistency of provision, and ensuring the programme remains responsive to the changing needs of Croydon's children, young people and families.







With thanks to…

The Croydon HAF programme is made possible by the work and professionalism of the organisations commissioned to deliver across the borough. Delivery partners include schools, after-school clubs, faith and community groups, childcare providers, private companies and voluntary organisations.

Easter 2025

Advance Care Limited
Aim High Dance Academy
All Heads Recognized CIC
All Saints' C of E Primary School
Arisekidz
BB Soccer
GLL / Better Leisure
Camp Glide
Church of God (UK) Croydon
Croydon Cougars Basketball Club
Croydon Youth Engagement Team
Fit 4 Future Foundation
Floating Counselling Community
Footy Fun 4 Kids
Globe Fit
Good Food Matters
His Grace Evangelical Outreach
Jam Coding Croydon
Kinetic Foundation
Knowledge and Practice
Legacy Youth Zone
Lives Not Knives
Majestic Community Care Services
Minichampions Club Limited
Moving Matters
OurParks
Palace for Life Foundation
Play Place Innov8 CIC
Playzone Out of School Care
Progressive Sports
Project 4 Youth Empowerment Reaching Higher
Simply Kids
Solidrock Academy CIC
Sports Attack
Spread Ur Wings CIC
St Joseph Federation BASC
Supreme Camps
Supreme Education
Surrey Rams Basketball Club
Syrus Consultancy
Scopes Academy
The Science of Sound
The Upper Norwood Library Trust
Yovela Education & Training Centre
4Every Child (SEND)
Bright Futures 4 All (SEND)
Palace for Life Foundation (SEND)

Summer 2025

Advance Care Limited
Aim High Dance Academy
All Heads Recognized CIC
All Saints' C of E Primary School
Arisekidz
BB Soccer
GLL / Better Leisure
BlueOrKidz Ltd
Communities First Foundation
Croydon Cougars Basketball Club
De Yin School
Fit 4 Future Foundation
Footy Fun 4 Kids
Globe Fit
Harris Invictus Academy
His Grace Evangelical Outreach
Holistic Wellbeing Hub
Jam Coding Croydon
KG Doodles Ltd
Kinetic Foundation
Knowledge and Practice
Legacy Youth Zone
Lives Not Knives
Majestic Community Care Services
Minichampions Club Limited
Mula Cake Kids Club CIC
Next Thing Education Camps Ltd
OurParks
Palace for Life Foundation
Play Place Innov8 CIC
Playzone Out of School Care
Pro Touch SA CIC
Progressive Sports
Project 4 Youth Empowerment CIC
Reaching Higher
Simply Kids
Small Explorers Ltd
Solidrock Academy CIC
Sports Attack
Spread Ur Wings CIC
St Mark's CofE Primary Academy
Supreme Camps
Supreme Education
Surrey Rams Basketball Club
The Science of Sound
The Upper Norwood Library Trust
UK Latin Community CIC
4Every Child (SEND)
Bright Futures 4 All (SEND)
Grow Wild Outreach (SEND)
Palace for Life Foundation (SEND)
St Chad's Catholic Primary School (SEND)

Christmas 2025

Aim High Dance Academy
All Heads Recognized CIC
All Saints' C of E Primary School
Arisekidz
BB Soccer
GLL / Better Leisure
BlueOrKidz Ltd
Communities First Foundation
Croydon Cougars Basketball Club
Fit 4 Future Foundation
Footy Fun 4 Kids
Globe Fit
His Grace Evangelical Outreach
Jam Coding Croydon
KG Doodles Ltd
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Sports Attack
St Mark's CofE Primary Academy
Supreme Camps
Supreme Education
Surrey Rams Basketball Club
The Science of Sound
UK Latin Community CIC
4Every Child (SEND)
Bright Futures 4 All (SEND)

For more information about this report or the Croydon HAF Programme, please contact the HAF team.

Email us

Department for Education

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Croydon Education Partnership

CROYDON HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND FOOD