

Shropshire Holiday Activities & Food (HAF)

Programme Overview & Evaluation 2021



Department
for Education



1. Introduction

This report provides an overview and evaluation of the Shropshire HAF (Holiday Activities & Food Programme) 2021.

The report includes data taken from questionnaires, quotes, case studies and interviews with core provider leads, staff, children and young people (CYP) and parents/carers during the summer and winter HAF programmes 2021.

The report highlights the huge achievements of the programme in Shropshire and recommends important areas that we can build on and improve.

Films: A series of films were commissioned, which highlight the huge range of activities which took part across the county and the positive impact the HAF programme had on CYP and their families. To watch the films, please follow these links:

[Shropshire HAF Summer Activities Celebration Film](#)

[Shropshire HAF Winter Activities Celebration Film](#)

[Shropshire HAF Spring 2022 Celebration Film](#)

[Activity Providers talking about Summer HAF programme](#)

[Phil Wilson talks about HAF](#)

Thank you to everyone who has made the 2021 Shropshire HAF programme such a success.

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Contents

	Page
What is HAF?	3
Key Statistics Infographic	4
What HAF Looked Like in Shropshire During 2021	5 – 8
Positive Outcomes Achieved	8 – 10
Challenges and Barriers to Engagement	11 – 12
Recommendations and Future Shropshire HAF	12 – 14
National Picture	15
HAF Budget 2021/22	15

1. What is HAF?

HAF - The Holiday Activities and Food Programme has been supporting vulnerable CYP and families in the school holidays since 2018 and was significantly expanded during 2021 in light of the pandemic.

During 2021, the Department for Education (DfE) invested a total of £220 million into the programme. All 151 local authorities in England received funding, to run clubs in the spring, summer and winter holidays. In Shropshire, the council received £ 682,770 to manage and deliver the programme.

The programme allows CYP aged 5 to 16, who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals (FSM) to access free holiday activity. There are currently over 6,000 CYP in Shropshire eligible for FSM, a number which is rapidly growing, as families face increasing financial challenges.

HAF aims to improve outcomes for these CYP, including healthier eating and increased activity during the school holidays, participation in enriching activities which support school-readiness, increased safety and social inclusion, greater nutritional knowledge, engaging families in nutritional education and further engagement with school and other services.

In the Autumn 2021 Spending Review, the government announced that the HAF programme will continue to be funded across all local authorities for a further three years, until Christmas 2024. We were thrilled the government made this commitment to the programme.



Shropshire HAF (Holiday Activities & Food) 2021 Overview



During **2021**
Shropshire council commissioned

68 organisations, to run an exciting programme of activity during the Easter, Summer and Winter holidays.



Children and young people aged **4 to 16** took part in fun enriching activities, including: sports, music, arts, cooking, gardening, forest schools, child led play and trips to cultural venues.

39 children and young people with SEND participated in the programme.



1,594 Activity Packs were distributed to primary children.

7,501 Total number of children and young people who took part - both FSM and non

Core providers worked with **174** local businesses



3,363
Were aged 5 to 12

Free nutritious meals were provided at each session, with many children and young people having the opportunity to cook their own food, as well as information on nutrition to benefit the whole family.

1,404
Were aged 12+

4,767

FSM Children and Young People took part in the programme



Alongside the core programme, **2,530** children and young people participated in bespoke workshops delivered by **16** local arts and cultural organisations..



35,270

meals were provided to children and young people over the summer and winter holidays.



6,259

Places were available on the programme for children and young people, who are eligible for free school meals (FSM)

38 of the providers ran inclusive activity, with places available for children and young people with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities).

From **3,867** children and young people taking part in programme, 94% strongly agreed that they had lots of fun taking part in the activities and 93% want to attend more holiday clubs in the future

2. What HAF Looked Like in Shropshire during 2021

Core Provision & Engagement Levels: During 2021, Shropshire Council commissioned 68 organisations from the private, voluntary and public sectors, to run an exciting programme of activity during the Easter, Summer and Winter holidays.

6,259 places were available on the programme for eligible CYP. 4,767 CYP aged 5 to 16, took part in the programme, which is over 75% of the eligible CYP in the county. Participants engaged in fun enriching activities, including sports, music, arts, cooking, gardening, forest schools, child led play and trips to cultural venues. The 942 activities on offer responded to local need and engaged with the wider community.

3,363 of the children were aged 5 to 12 and 1,404 were aged 12+.

The total number of CYP who took part in HAF during the year, including both those who were eligible and those who paid or were funded as part of another programme was 7,501.

These numbers relate to individual CYP, they have not been multiplied by the sessions or number of weeks. The numbers of CYP who participated in the summer programme, exceeded the original expectation. With it being the first year Shropshire Council has run a programme like this, these figures are very encouraging.

Participant Quote: *'I like coming here to chill out and speak to other people. To come here is amazing. You get to meet new people.'*

Parent Quote: *"I think the scheme is brilliant, my children never would have tried so many different activities. I also think giving everyone a hot meal is amazing especially in the winter, it saved me a lot of money".*

Parent Quote: *"My boys have never been to a holiday club before. They have loved all the activities they have done; it's given them loads of confidence to go somewhere without me!"*





Food: Free nutritious meals were provided at each session, with many children and young people having the opportunity to cook their own food, as well as information on nutrition to benefit the whole family. 35,270 meals were provided to CYP over the summer and winter holidays.

Participant Quote: *'I enjoyed the cooking – it's a great life skill'.*

Take & Make Food Packs: During the summer, Shropshire Council partnered with The Midcounties Co-operative to provide 2,800 meals to vulnerable families as part of a pilot initiative in Whitchurch and Market Drayton to help tackle food poverty.

The Co-op created meal boxes to feed a family of four for upto four nights and delivered them to the local community libraries, where they were then distributed to

local families. HAF core providers, partners and local food banks supported the delivery of the packs.

The fresh, vegetarian meals were designed in partnership with qualified nutritionist and in-store chef Judy Cheyne, who also developed recipe cards and videos that the CYP followed at home and are available on the Shropshire HAF website.

Participant Quote: *The sweetcorn and sausages were my favourite foods, I didn't like the peppers or carrots, but I did eat lots of fruit so I am very healthy".*



Enrichment Programme: Alongside the core programme, 2,530 CYP participated in bespoke workshops delivered by 16 local arts and cultural organisations. Workshops engaged participants in activities such as: music, dance, ceramics, clay, visual arts, creative writing, drama, storytelling, environmental and social media awareness.

Two storytelling workshops and performances were also held at

Bridgnorth Castle Gardens and Whitchurch Civic Centre. These were delivered by local storyteller Jake Evans and were supported and promoted by Shropshire Library Service and attended by 120 people.

The enrichment programme helped break down barriers to engagement in arts and cultural activity for our CYP. For many of the children and young people, this was the first time they have had the opportunity to work with professional artists and experience these types of activities outside of school.

Working in this way also allowed us to harness the skills and expertise of our colleagues in the Council's Culture, Leisure and Tourism Team to deliver workshops and to work in partnership with the fantastic cultural and arts sector we have in the county.

New partnerships and links have been forged, in particular between the sports and arts sector, with new work for the future already being planned.



The feedback we've received from CYP and their families, core providers and enrichment providers has been excellent, the enrichment programme has been a hugely successful part of HAF in Shropshire and an element that will continue to be developed.

Feedback from Organisation re Clay In A Box Workshop: *'I think it's the most professional and high-quality experience I've seen! Really excited by this project and grateful of the opportunity to collaborate together'*.

Participant Quote: *'This has been one of the greatest days of my life'*.

Activity Packs: Alongside the core and enrichment activity, 1,594 Activity Packs were distributed to primary aged children. Designed by a local CIC and the Shropshire Museum Service, the packs included fun activities, materials and resources.

Families in Market Drayton and Whitchurch also received a Reading Challenge Activity Pack from Shropshire Libraries, to encourage children to join in with reading activities. More activities and support was offered in these areas as they have particularly high numbers of FSM CYP.

12+ Engagement: Core providers took different approaches to engaging older children. This included outreach activity at parks, playing fields and on the street; targeted youth support; trips and visits to local venues; football and offering multi activities as part of an existing youth club. Some older children were involved in leadership courses that offered qualifications.

SEND (Special Educational Needs & Disabilities): 38 of the providers ran inclusive activity, with places available for CYP with SEND.

Shropshire Council are working in partnership with the Actio Consortium to improve and increase opportunities for engagement in the county for CYP with SEND. Actio are responsible for commissioning, promoting and monitoring Shropshire Council's 'All In Short Breaks' – a menu of accessible and unique activities for CYP with SEND. Actio is supporting the HAF programme and promoted the inclusive activities.



Parent Quote: *'We love how welcoming you all are. Both children have come home telling us about their day and are super excited about what they will be doing the next day. They've already asked if they can come again on the next holiday? I really hope that HAF continues, so our children could continue to come to you.'*

Training and support for Core Providers: Core providers were invited to attend four training sessions to support their delivery of the HAF programme. The training was developed in response to feedback from core providers. Training included: Effective Monitoring & Evaluation; Safeguarding for Children and Young People; Introduction to Food Safety and overview of Shrewsbury Town In The Community Lenny The Lion Lifestyle Project.

The training and support of the HAF Co-Ordinators was felt to have helped with the professional development of staff, especially since many staff had not been able to work throughout the pandemic.

Core Provider Quote: *'The HAF coordinators gave us great support along the way of delivering this scheme'.*

3. Positive Outcomes Achieved

Children and Young People:

- Over 4,766 CYP took part in HAF during 2021, which is over 75% of the eligible children and young people in the county. 93%* of the CYP participating in the programme reported wanting to attend more holiday clubs in the future and were keen to hear if they would be able to attend HAF activities in 2022.
- CYP had fun and enjoyed attending HAF, with 94%* of participants reporting they had lots of fun taking part in activities.
- The core providers reported it was fantastic seeing CYP take part and fully engage in activities, particularly those they haven't tried before and seeing the satisfaction, excitement and sense of achievement they experienced at having completed an activity. 84%* of CYP reported learning new skills during the holidays.
- Activity was delivered across the county, from villages to our market towns. Utilising our unique spaces and venues such as parks, leisure centres, schools, football stadiums, stately homes.
- Core provider staff, parents/carers and CYPs teachers reported seeing an increase in confidence in participants. This was also reported by participants themselves with 82%* saying they felt more confident as a result of the programme.
- From a school's perspective, teachers have reported that CYP have come back into the classroom, easier, more self-confident and feeling proud of their achievements over the holidays. Some of the more vulnerable CYP seem more focused in class and settled down quicker than usual when returning from the holidays.



- The findings show that attending the HAF programme increases the level of physical activity FSM-eligible CYP take part in during the holidays. 81%* of participants said they had been more active and enjoyed playing sports more than they had before the holidays.

- Findings also showed that CYP who attended HAF became more socially connected, with 93%* of participants saying they enjoyed spending time with friends and 78%* reporting making new friends during the holiday.



- Over the course of the programme CYP tried new foods. Many learnt the basics of cooking and food hygiene as well as how to find out the nutritional value of the foods they eat. 81%* of participants reported they had learnt more about eating a balanced diet and taking care of themselves. 75%* say they now know where to find information on nutrition.

Responding to Local Need / Activity Location:

- HAF clubs worked particularly well when they were delivered at familiar, convenient venues and in particular schools, run by friendly, approachable staff and able to meet the needs of CYP with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). 91%* of participants reported feeling welcome at the holiday club and 89%* that they can 'be myself here'.

Marketing & Publicity, Shropshire HAF Brand:

- The Shropshire HAF programme has a high profile locally, as well as strong links to the national programme, through use of social media and Co-Ordinator attendance at national and regional cluster meetings. The Leader of The Council and Portfolio Holder for Children and Education are fully supportive of HAF and fantastic advocates.

- The Shropshire HAF brand is very distinctive, colourful and fun. Our marketing and publicity materials, which include What's On Guide, information postcard, flyers, website, e-newsletters and social media have been shared by DfE with other local authorities.

Local Economy:

- After 18 months of the COVID-19 pandemic, HAF funding was felt to have played a crucial role in enabling holiday clubs to operate during 2021. Without HAF funding, organisations

would not have been able to provide the same scale and variety of activities and would not have reached the same level of CYP entitled to FSM. There is positive evidence that HAF provision in the county also helped boost the local economy, through the creation of jobs and direct investment into local businesses. 115 local businesses were involved in the programme, providing services such as food, venue hire, marketing and publicity, materials and resources. 260 paid staff were employed to develop, run and manage holiday clubs and 67 new staff were recruited specifically for the programme.

- Alongside the paid posts, the programme was supported by 56 volunteers who worked 1,123 hours between them.

Partnership Working:

- The programme allowed us to successfully work with over 90 partners from the private, voluntary and public sectors. Our joint aims of ensuring our children and young people are safe, engaged in positive activity, feel valued and have their wellbeing supported was achieved through partnership working.

- By taking part, several providers said they became more aware of the realities of some families in their area. HAF also allowed new providers to deliver holiday clubs, as well as expand delivery to different locations, allowing children from new areas to attend. There was an increase of 15 new core providers from spring/Easter to the summer programme and a further 6 new core providers from summer to winter.

Core Provider Satisfaction:

- All core providers interviewed were very likely (97%) or quite likely (3%) to run HAF again in 2022 if funding were available, suggesting a very high level of satisfaction with the programme. This creates a solid foundation for the future delivery of HAF in the county given recent Government commitments to continue funding the programme.

** from a survey of 3,867 children and young people taking part in the programme during 2021.*



4. Challenges and Barriers to Engagement:

The main barriers to attendance were lack of awareness of the HAF programme and the activities available, eligibility limits, COVID-19, household practical barriers and operating hours of activity not always being practical for some working parents/carers (the DfE Funding covers 4 hours of provision a day).

Numbers of FSM children in county: The number of children and young people eligible for FSM was higher than anticipated and didn't accurately reflect the latest statistics provided from the school's census. This was even the case when 10% was added to the figures.

Transport: Working in a rural and very large county, with very limited public transport meant there was a high reliance on families to transport children and young people to and from activity. Many families didn't have cars, and some could not afford public transport costs.

In some areas, core providers said take-up was affected as some families did not travel outside their immediate neighbourhood.

Booking Systems: Not having a centralised booking system and relying on core venues to take all bookings. This meant data, trends in bookings etc were not readily available to the Co-Ordinators and had to be collated from over 30 partners, which was time consuming for everyone. Information was often provided retrospectively, meaning the Co-Ordinators couldn't respond as quickly as they would have liked.

One Booking Code was used for the whole of Shropshire, rather than individual codes for venues / schools / individual children and young people etc. Again, this meant it was harder to see trends in bookings quickly and some families who weren't eligible for FSMs took advantage of the programme.

No Shows & Low Take Up: Bookings didn't always translate into attendance. For some core providers, they experienced high numbers of no shows, which was a challenge. Some providers had to turn people away at the booking stage but not all who booked turned up.

A number of families also booked onto more than one provision for the same day and chose on the day which one to attend.

Providers spoke about children living in 'chaotic' households and parents/carers forgetting they had booked sessions, particularly those with multiple children of different ages. Parents/carers experiencing mental health difficulties also found it difficult to support their child to attend regularly and manage early starts (e.g. 9am); providers said children sometimes arrived up to two hours late.

Providers were required to contact families to check-in; however, these calls were not always answered.

Take up was low in some areas, particularly where provision was new and core providers didn't have an established relationship with the community. E.g. Bridgnorth and Ludlow.

Unmet Demand: Some core providers experienced a level of unmet demand, where eligible children were not able to access places and waiting lists were operated.

Limited Provision: There was limited provision in some areas of the county, in particular the South (Bridgnorth, Ludlow, Church Stretton and Bishops Castle) and pockets of the North (Whitchurch and Wem).

Schools: It was difficult to know 100% that the FSM children were targeted sufficiently and effectively. There has been a huge reliance on schools to get the information out to FSM families and on time. Schools have been solely responsible for distributing What's On Guides, voucher/s, information, etc. Many schools were fantastic at sharing information about HAF, others struggled to distribute everything needed.

COVID-19: Covid was another key barrier to attendance, particularly during the Winter HAF programme, when many families were worried the virus would impact on their Christmas plans. A number of core providers cancelled sessions during the winter programme, as a result of staff members testing positive for COVID. Providers delivered activities remotely or created home-activity packs in anticipation of this.

Nutritional Education: Providers were expected to include an element of nutritional education for children each day, which was not consistently achieved.

Provision for 12+: There was not enough provision across the county for young people aged 12+.

Core providers felt that a major barrier to attendance for secondary school-aged children was that they preferred to be with friends and may have been more reluctant to engage in structured activities.

Delivery Timescales: The timescales between the government announcing funding for HAF and the programme being implemented were very short. Providers reported it was a challenge to develop a high-quality programme of activity, recruit staff and carry out effective publicity in under two months.



5. Recommendations & Future Shropshire HAF

The conversations and feedback from core providers, CYP and families found that the HAF programme worked well when activities were delivered in the following ways:

- Delivered at familiar venues (e.g. schools, community settings) and by known core providers, who had an existing relationship with families. School-based provision also helped support children with transitions between the holidays and school terms.
- Programmes of activity based at a convenient location, that was within walking distance or with good transport links. This is particularly important in communities where families don't

want to travel outside their neighbourhood. Core providers reported the practical benefits of Parents/carers being able to share pick-ups and drop-offs with other parents/carers.

- Run by friendly, approachable and adaptable staff who made children and families feel welcome. Diversity and community representation within staff teams made families feel comfortable and built trust.
- Able to meet the needs of children with SEND.
- Have effective advertising and marketing in place, so that children and families are aware of provision.



Areas of Development:

With long-term funding for HAF now in place, the programme can be built upon in each successive year. The following are priorities for the next 12 months.

- **Annual Grant Application Process:** Launch a new application process in April, based on feedback from core providers and responds to changes in criteria introduced by the DfE in 2022. Organisations will be invited to apply for combined funding for both the summer and winter holidays in 2022, rather than applying for funding on a holiday by holiday basis. In 2023 they will be invited to apply for funding for Easter/Spring, Summer and Winter holidays combined.

This new approach will make the application process more streamlined, ensure there is a cohesive HAF offer across the whole county and reduces fluctuations in the programme. It also allows commissioned organisations to use HAF funding to apply for other external funding, to allocate more staff time all year round to HAF, implement HAF programmes in new areas, grow delivery, build relationships with communities and develop partnerships.

Each funding round the HAF Co-Ordinators are working with new providers to introduce new activity in areas of the county with limited provision. These include areas in the south of the county, in particular Bridgnorth and Ludlow and the north in Whitchurch and Wem.

- **Increase in Provision for CYP aged 12:** Offering more provision for young people aged 12+ is a priority. Meetings have been held with specific youth organisations in the county and they have been invited to apply for funding, to deliver a diverse range of HAF activity over the summer and winter holidays.

- **Booking & Information Management System:** A centralised booking and information management system is being introduced for the summer holidays, which all core providers will be expected to use. The system, which has been specifically designed for HAF and trialled in Huddersfield will help reduce the number of 'no-shows', stop parents booking simultaneous activities for the same child, send email and text message reminders, and has user-friendly cancellation options.

The system will provide the HAF Co-Ordinators with vital information for the effective delivery and management of the HAF programme in the county.

The system will require a level of organisation for families and core providers, access to computer and internet resources, IT literacy and English reading skills. To mitigate this barrier, we are working with Shropshire Libraries. Library staff will help register children and make bookings on the system. We will also offer the option to book in person at core provider venues.

- **Nutritional Education Programme:** Phunky Foods, have been commissioned to support core providers in delivering nutritional education for CYP, a key criterion of HAF. Phunky Foods have designed a nutritional education programme specifically for HAF, which has been successfully used by several other local authorities.

The programme, which will be introduced for the summer holidays includes core provider training, one to one workshop on site with core providers and resources for providers, CYP and families. The programme focuses on key areas including; School Food Standards; healthy eating messages for school-aged children; how to deliver a fun, nutrition education session and skills and practical considerations (including health and safety) for delivering food preparation sessions.

- **Training for Core Providers:** Continue to support core providers through a programme of training and support. Training planned for 2022 includes; Food Nutrition Education Programme; use of the new centralised Booking and Management System; Stigma Training; Manual Handling and Personal Care and Shropshire Libraries Summer Reading Challenge.

- **Marketing and Communications:** A new communications and marketing strategy will be developed, ensuring effective marketing is in place across all areas of the county. There will be an increased focus on the use of social media, as well as maximising local, national and regional press opportunities.

- **Enrichment Programme:** As highlighted earlier in the report, the enrichment programme played a fundamental part of HAF during the summer and winter/Christmas holidays and core providers want to see more enrichment activity in the future. Securing investment from external grant funders to support an enrichment programme is a priority.

- **Peripatetic Bus:** Secure funding for a peripatetic bus, which will tour rural areas where there is currently little or no HAF provision.

- **Shropshire Libraries Summer Reading Challenge:** Shropshire has been chosen by the [Reading Agency](#) to be a pilot area offering the national [Summer Reading Challenge](#) as part of the HAF activity programme.

6. National Picture

Nationally HAF Co-Ordinators reported that almost three-quarters of a million (730,000) children attended a 2021 HAF summer holiday club in person.

The majority of attendees were primary school aged (76%). Data from parents found that children attended for 9.6 days on average in the summer holidays. Of those attending, 70% had not attended HAF or similar free provision before, suggesting that HAF successfully expanded provision.

Clubs offered provision for a range of ages, with most provision targeted to primary age children. Family survey data found that just under a quarter (23%) of HAF attendees were recorded as having SEND in the National Pupil Database (NPD) – higher than the 9% reported by co-ordinators.

There was a mixed pattern in the extent to which clubs offered certain types of activity, with almost all clubs reporting they provided physical activities every day (89%), around half (51%) providing enriching activities every day, and 33% providing nutritional education every day.

Children mainly attended HAF clubs to try new and engaging activities. Most clubs (62%) offered nutritional education for parents/carers. Parents/carers were also widely supported through signposting to other services.

Full report can be found [here](#)

7. HAF Budget 2021/22

DfE Grant Total - £682,770

Administrative Expenditure	£ 39,936.65
Capital Expenditure	£ 684.23
Programme Expenditure	£ 588,141.41
Publicising the scheme to eligible families and other communications	£18,199
Booking facilities for holiday club places or deliveries	£16,000
Translations & Provider Staff Training	£3,161.5
Nutritional advice/information	£15,629
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£681,901.79
Underspend	£868.21*

*Due to a lower than expected salary expenditure