



Isle of Wight

# Holiday activities and food programme

## Annual report

April 2024 to March 2025



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# Welcome

Funded by the Department for Education (DfE) the holiday activity and food (HAF) programme offers free activities and nutritious meals during the main school holidays to eligible children and young people. (those in receipt of income-related free school meals). Spaces are also made available for other children that we as a local authority feel would benefit from attending. This report celebrates the achievements of our HAF programme here on the Isle of Wight over the past year.



The number of eligible children on the Island rises each delivery period and school holidays can be a pressure point for families with increased costs for food and childcare. The HAF programme offers an opportunity for children to be active and creative and receive a free meal whilst socialising with their peers. Our HAF delivery team have continued to ensure a diverse activity programme, with new activity providers joining each time meaning children attending benefit from different experiences and new opportunities.

Our HAF delivery team have developed a quality assurance scheme which looks at aspects of activity providers delivery including safeguarding, health and safety, food provision and inclusion ensuring that the programme is of a high standard.

The HAF programme brings together many community-based organisations from across the island, it is also promising to see the Hampshire based providers continue to offer HAF activities on the island. With everyone working together to support children and their families the HAF programme makes a huge difference.

During the summer I was able to visit one of the HAF activities and got to speak with staff and children attending. It was great to hear their stories and what attending HAF had meant to them. I was able to see what they had been up to, with children showing me their artwork about looking after the environment before I joined them in building Lego and playing some board games.



I would like to thank all our HAF providers for all they do for children on the Island and recognise their hard work and dedication to the HAF programme.

**Ashley Whittaker**  
**Strategic Director of Children's Services**

# Background

Our holiday activities and food (HAF) programme on the Isle of Wight has continued to grow and develop, bringing children together within their communities.



We are so lucky that across the Isle of Wight our HAF team commissions a variety of providers from both the Island and the mainland. These providers deliver a wide range of funded activities during the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays for children and young people who receive benefits-related free school meals. We are privileged on the Island to have many providers rooted in their communities who engage children and young people in activities which build confidence and help them to meet new friends and develop new skills. The HAF programme provides these children and young people with holiday access to healthy food whilst taking part in these purposeful activities, helping to reduce the pressure on local families. Activities include sports and other physical challenges, team building, horticulture and animal care, helping our children and young people to gain a better understanding of the world around them.

Feedback about HAF from parents, children and young people is overwhelmingly positive. During 2024 to 2025, HAF delivered 8,713 spaces to eligible children and young people. A recent parental survey has helped highlight the benefits of children and young people attending HAF:

- 84 per cent said children and young people made new friends.
- 66 per cent reported their children and young people had less screen time as a result of attending HAF.
- 91 per cent said that children and young people tried new activities.

Parents speak positively about the HAF Programme saying: "Attending HAF meant we did not have to worry about the expense of food with the cost of living."

The Isle of Wight Council is lucky to have a dedicated HAF team who undertake robust monitoring of the quality of all provisions. Last summer I had the privilege of visiting one of the providers and seeing for myself the excellent work going on. We are lucky to have such a knowledgeable team who work closely with all providers to ensure the Isle of Wight has the right level of support with a range of activities and locations to suit the needs of all children and young people.

I am very proud of the HAF programme and the work all our providers do for our children and young people. I am also proud of the HAF team for coordinating all the work and ensuring we monitor the quality of our offer. I look forward to watching the Programme develop with 2025 to 2026 being our biggest year yet!

**Naomi Carter**  
**Service Director of Education, Inclusion and Access**



# Aims of the programme

The holiday activities and food (HAF) programme on the Isle of Wight aims to improve outcomes for children. The programme supports the Isle of Wight education strategy supporting the development of the curriculum outside of school, with providers using the natural environment and linking with local communities.

Recognising that school holidays can be a pressure point for families, the HAF programme provides healthy meals, enriching activities and free childcare places to children from low-income families in receipt of free school meals (FSM), benefiting their health, wellbeing and learning.

The HAF programme aims for children attending HAF activities to:

- receive healthy and nutritious meals;
- maintain a healthy level of physical activity;
- be happy, have fun and meet new friends;
- take part in engaging and enriching activities which support their development and wellbeing;
- develop a greater understanding of food, nutrition and other health-related issues;
- feel safe and secure;
- gain access to the right support services;
- return to school feeling engaged and ready to learn.

**"I love how inclusive this program is. It's not just about food; it's about bringing people together and creating a sense of community."**



# Summary of the year – challenges and achievements

## Easter 2024

The Easter holidays 2024 were the last delivery period under the Hampshire County Council framework. Some of the providers who had previously travelled over to the Island from the mainland decided not to continue coming over, resulting in fewer providers for this delivery period. Two new Island-based providers were welcomed onto the programme. A pilot workshop ran in partnership with a local museum, Brading Roman Villa, which offered an outreach session at the venue of one of our HAF providers.



## Summer 2024

The summer HAF programme was our biggest activity offer to date, with 28 different venues available. 11 of the venues were new provisions, including new providers or existing providers delivering in new areas, with the development of our first specialist SEND activity. We were able to build on the pilot museum workshop from Easter HAF (see above), partnering with the Isle of Wight Council's heritage and library service who offered outreach workshops from six different museums. The schools mental health team also offered some workshops to support self-esteem at HAF activities. Attendance during the summer was impacted by national events, illness and new providers needing time to develop their offer.

## Christmas 2024

Christmas can be a difficult delivery period due to the way dates fall, and which venues are available, with many providers also choosing to close for the festive period. This Christmas we were able to enhance our offer with a remote offer for children attending those activities which could only run for two or three days. The remote offer was made up of two parts – firstly, an activity bag which included a seed kit to 'grow your own pizza toppings', activities from our heritage and library service, a swimming or gym voucher, a dental kit and cost of living support information. The second part was delivered by a local company 'Four Seasons Cookery Academy' which delivered bags with the recipe for a main meal and a dessert and the ingredients to make them.



**"M and A really enjoyed their day with you. We are going to be seed planting and baking rock buns Sunday afternoon with the gift of ingredients and seeds."**



# Commissioning

## Children eligible for free school meals

Easter 2024 **3,826**

Summer 2024 **3,887**

Christmas 2024 **4,018**

# 11,090

spaces commissioned

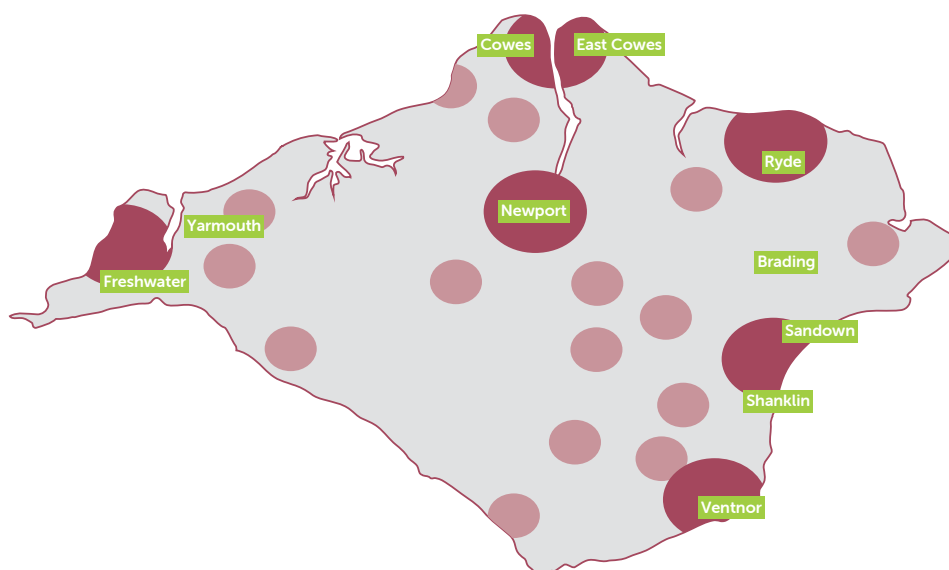
HAF spaces are available to children in receipt of income-related free school meals (FSM), each local authority has the discretion to use up to 15 per cent of funding to support children who are not eligible for income-related FSM but would benefit from attending. Here on the Isle of Wight we set the criteria for these spaces as:

- Children with and education health and care plan (EHCP);
- children under early help;
- children in care;
- children assessed by the local authority as being at risk or in need.

Activity providers are invited to apply to deliver activities for each delivery period. The panel reviews the suitability of providers who have applied, considering their safeguarding and health and safety policies, activities on offer, ability to meet HAF requirements and if applicable, their previous HAF delivery outcomes.

FSM data is mapped out across the Island, the panel then splits the Island into areas and the percentage of children in receipt of FSM is then calculated for each area. The budget for each delivery period is then divided per area using this percentage of FSM children, enabling the panel to ensure that spaces are fairly allocated across the Island.

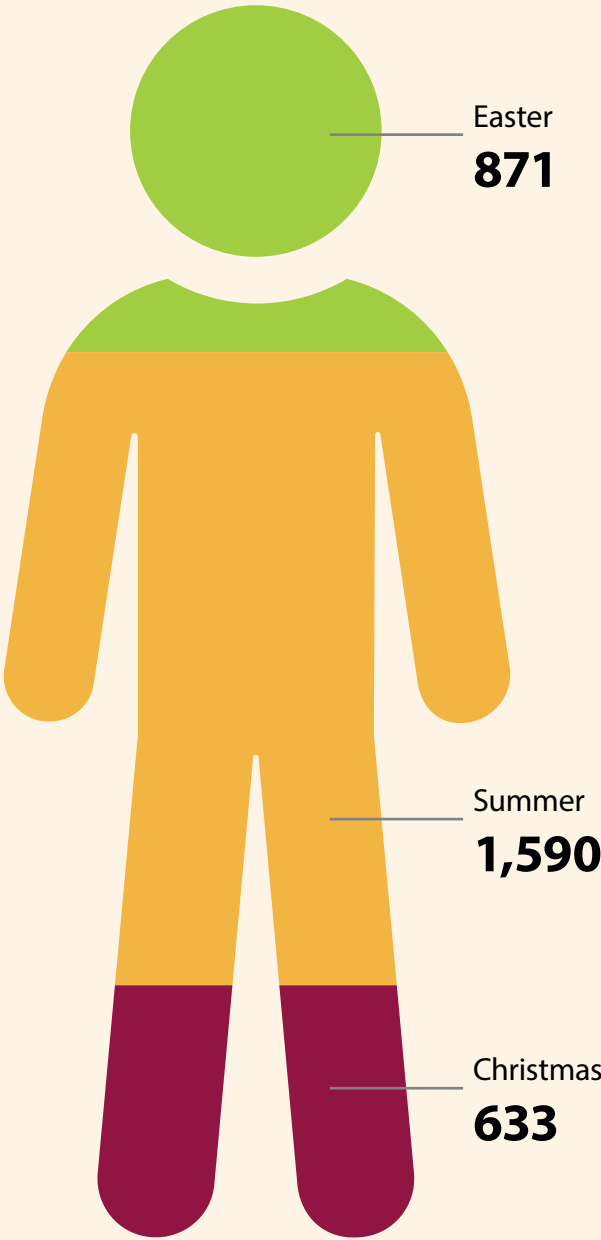
## Free school meals hot spot map





# Headline achievements

## Eligible children attending

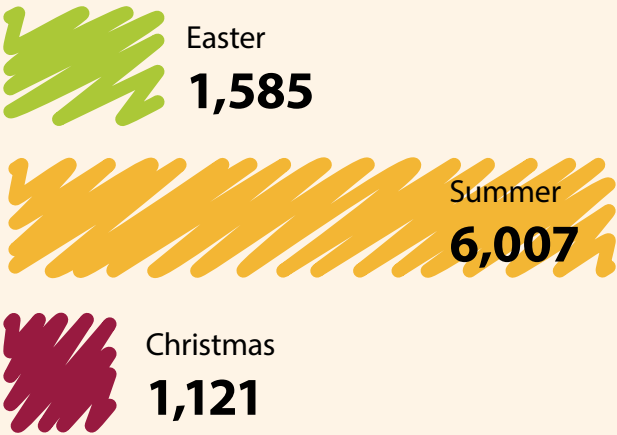


8,713

## Hot meals provided annually

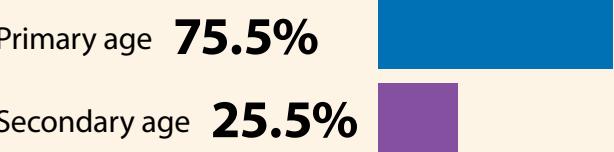


## Holiday club places attended



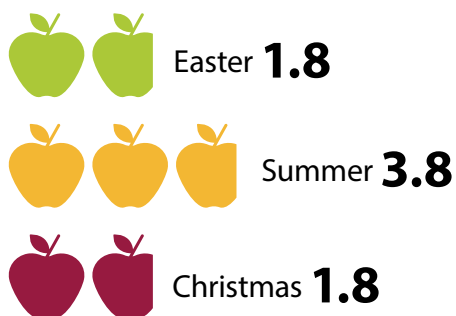
## Attendance

Of the unique children attending:

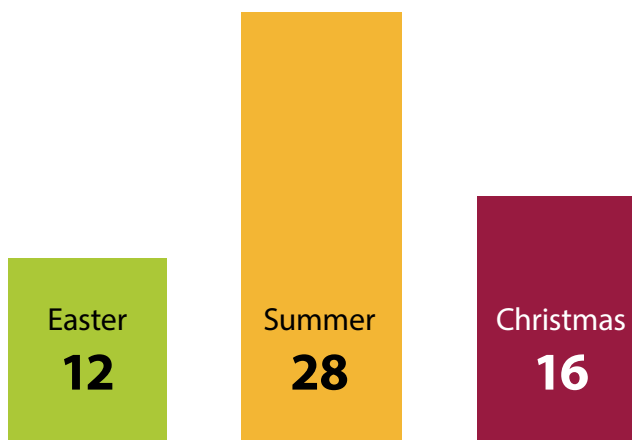


# Delivery highlights

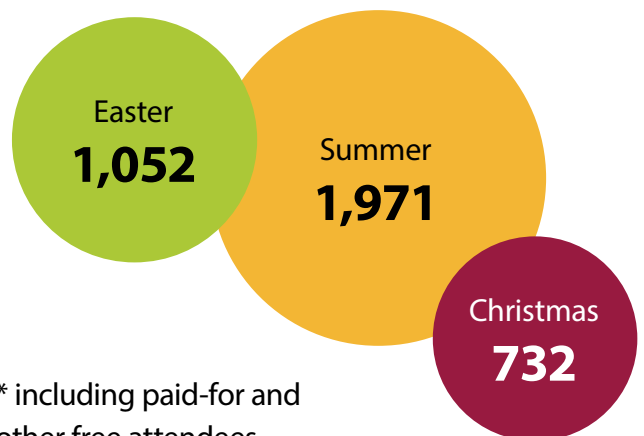
## Average sessions attended



## Holiday schemes

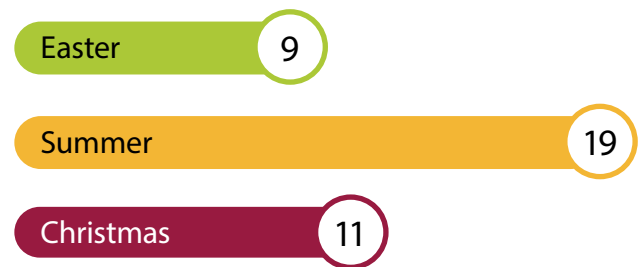


## Total attendees\*

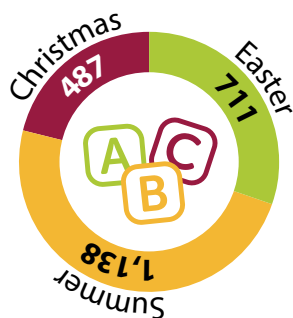


\* including paid-for and other free attendees

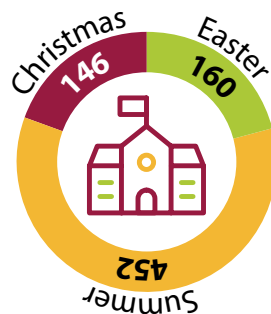
## Activity providers



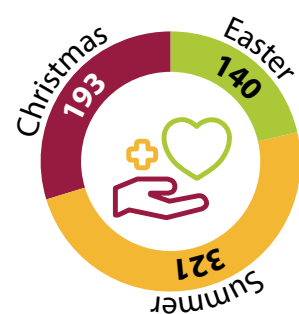
## Primary age



## Secondary age



## Children with SEND



# Quality of providers

We are required to have a system in place to monitor the HAF providers on the island to ensure they meet the expected standards for the programme and are providing a high quality and fun experience for children.

Before a provider delivers HAF activities, due diligence checks are carried out on policies and procedures; providers are also asked to complete a safeguarding audit and a pre-delivery questionnaire which asks them to explain how they will meet the HAF standards.

During delivery periods members of the HAF team visit providers, this is to check how they meet the HAF standards in practice. We assess and score the HAF providers in the following areas:

These areas are scored as **met** or **not met**:

- Safeguarding
- Health and safety policies and procedures
- Insurance policies and procedures

These areas are scored on a five point scale ranging from **very poor** to **very good**.

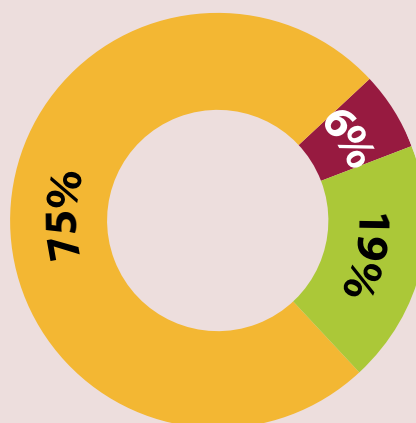
- Healthy food provision
- Awareness and understanding of healthy eating and lifestyles
- Signposting and referrals
- Enriching activities
- Accessibility and inclusiveness
- Physical activity
- Environment and sustainability

**19 per cent of schemes were rated very good**

**75 per cent of schemes were rated good**

**Six per cent of schemes were rated adequate**

**No schemes were rated very poor or poor.**



# Food, nutritional education and the promotion of healthy living and lifestyles

All children attending the HAF programme are offered a healthy, nutritious meal and healthy snacks throughout the session. Providers work with local food suppliers to either make the meals themselves or have the meals delivered; some providers are fortunate to have a restaurant or café onsite to provide their meals.

At some of the activity providers, children and young people attending can take part in preparing the food, whereas other providers offer cooking activities to support the development of cooking skills and promote healthy eating.

HAF activity providers also encourage healthy living and lifestyles through activities such as taste tests, quizzes and growing fruit and vegetables.

## Easter highlight

Youths attending CM Foundation enjoyed cookery workshops where they made a two-course lunch and baked something to take home. Homemade burgers and meatballs were popular choices – while learning about the benefits of certain ingredients.

**"Attending HAF meant we did not have to worry about the expense of food with the cost of living"**



## Summer highlights

Children attending Open Minds enjoyed cooking their lunch on the campfire each week, on one of the days this included making chips from potatoes they had dug up onsite.

The kitchen support team at Brading Community Partnership is made up of a different group of children each day, they help prepare food and lay the tables for lunch – receiving a big thank you round of applause.

## Christmas highlight

Families attending Isle of Wight Rare Breeds learnt about healthy foods for animals as well as humans. Children were able to feed the chickens, goats and lambs. With one of the children being able to feed a lamb its first ever banana.

**"My favourite thing has been learning new recipes and eating them"**



# HAF activities

## Physical activities

All HAF activities provide at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day, with many of our activities providing a lot more than this. Providers talk with children and young people attending about the importance of keeping active.

Some of the ways we got active this year:



**"In our parental survey, 66% of parents said that their children had less screentime during the school holidays because they attended HAF activities."**

## Enriching activities

We are fortunate to have a really varied programme on the Island where activities aim to support children and young people attending HAF to:

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

### Easter highlight

Children attending Wildheart Animal Sanctuary enjoyed getting to know the animals, their stories and making them enrichment activities.

### Summer highlights

Children and young people attending Island Riding Centre were able to work towards official Pony Club wellbeing and grooming badges.

Children attending fun club at West Wight Nursery worked towards earning Blue Peter badges.

**"91% of parents said that their children tried new activities when attending HAF"**

### Christmas highlight

Children attending Football Fun Factory enjoyed a visit from Team GB, Olympic discus thrower Nick Percy who delivered an activity session and spoke about his experiences. This raised their awareness of different sports and possible new hobbies.

**"HAF is amazing. Without it we would be lost. This is a great opportunity for children and teens to do things they wouldn't."**

**"My favourite memories of HAF during the summer are the activities, playing with friends, making new friendships, learning new skills, trying different foods and feeling independent."**

# Partnerships

Partnerships continue to support the delivery of the HAF Programme, with HAF providers building on local links they have and the local authority HAF team forming some new partnerships with local and national organisations to enhance the programme.

## New partnerships

Highlights of new partnerships formed include:

- Active SEN donated £500 to the HAF programme which was used to support children and young people accessing HAF activities.
- SNG Housing Association donated £3,000 to support the summer HAF period; this meant additional spaces were made available in highlighted areas.
- Heroes Comic Shop located in Newport donated comics for providers to give out to children and young people attending HAF activities: some providers used these while they were waiting for their food to be delivered.
- The NHS schools mental health team extended their term-time offer to HAF providers, offering workshops on improving self-esteem and self-worth.
- For Easter 2024, we partnered with the museum educator from the organisation 'Inspir Ed' and with a local museum (Brading Roman Villa) to offer a free outreach session at one of our providers as part of the 'My Museum' project.
- The Isle of Wight Council heritage and libraries service offered outreach sessions during the summer with museums such as Brading Roman Villa, Dinosaur Isle and Dimbola visiting HAF providers with resources and activities.





## Supermarkets and food distributors

HAF providers use both local and national suppliers to source the food on offer. This year some supermarkets have been able to donate to HAF activities, including;

- At Easter, Asda donated Easter eggs to one of the HAF providers for an Easter egg hunt.
- During the summer, Tesco donated some surplus food to one of the providers, who did some taste tests and distributed the food to families attending their activity.

## Sports and leisure organisations

Many of our HAF providers are qualified sports coaches or employ qualified coaches to deliver their activities such as paddleboarding, sailing, rock climbing, roller skating and skateboarding. HAF Providers also link with local sports agencies to deliver their programme, including the use of local clubs as HAF venues, accessing activities at sports and leisure centers, and hiring equipment from sports and leisure clubs.

## Arts and cultural organisations

Some HAF providers incorporate trips to arts and cultural organisations as part of their programme, including trips to local art exhibitions and to the pantomime at Christmas. HAF providers have also invited arts and cultural organisations into their provision, including a circus skills workshop, and a pottery workshop delivered by Isle of Wight Pottery.

# Signposting



This year we increased our signposting offer by building stronger links with local agencies. The HAF team resourced providers with leaflets and posters from local agencies including but not limited to:

- Isle of Wight Council initiatives and projects, e.g. Cost of living support.
- Adult community learning programmes including maths and cooking on a budget.
- Public health programmes including free parenting courses.
- Isle of Wight family centre programmes.
- Dentaïd mobile dental service.
- Isle of Wight libraries summer reading challenge.
- School uniform swap shop.

Activity providers also linked with agencies local to their provision to enhance their signposting offer.



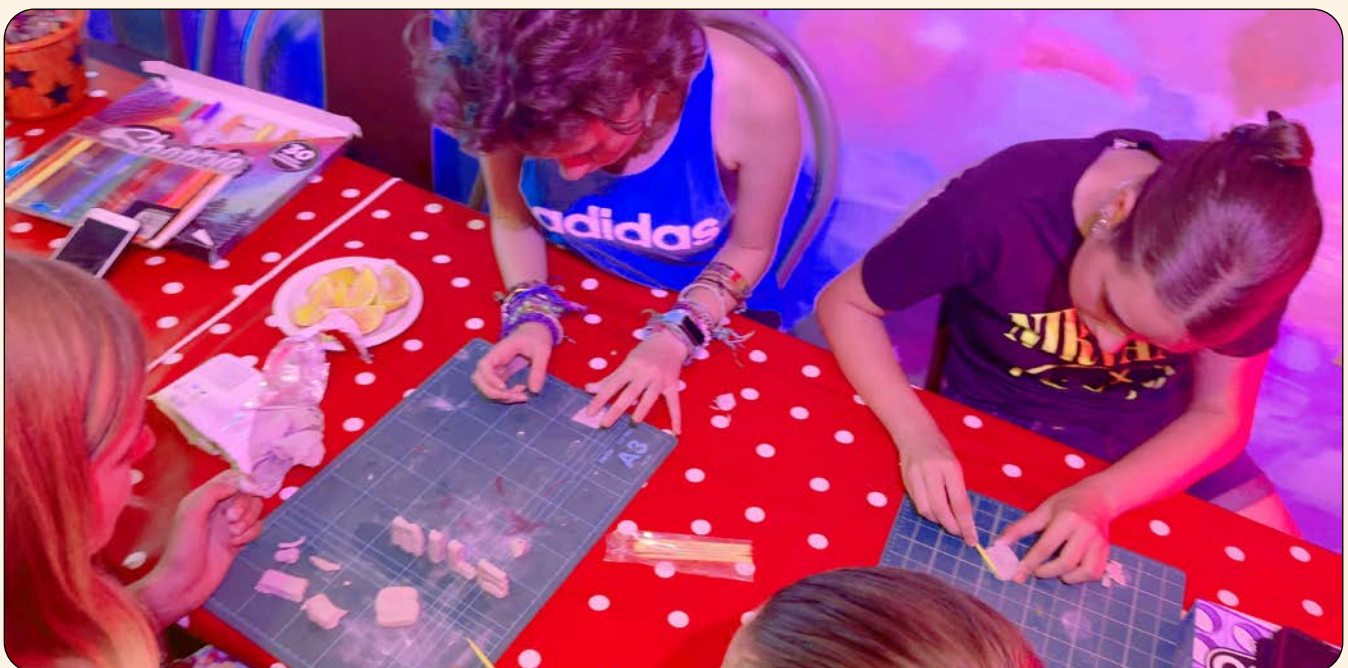
# Case study

## West Wight Nursery – HAF, partnerships and the community

**West Wight Nursery offers school-age children a fun club during school holidays. The club offers a varied programme which makes the most of links within the local community, and HAF places are funded each HAF delivery period.**

There is plenty of outside space available: as well as use of the school playground, the nursery has a three-acre field, with an outdoor classroom and bike track. The club has weekly forest school sessions where children get to cook their lunch on the fire or barbeque. Children enjoy growing fruit and vegetables in the greenhouse, caring for the chickens who live onsite and collecting their eggs to use for cooking activities or to take home.

The nursery manager uses her local knowledge and directory of contacts to deliver a HAF scheme that meets the needs of this rural community. The nursery has an onsite allotment, and the manager has made this part of the local time bank scheme, where local people can bank the time, they give to support the allotment and can then access another service from the time bank, for example free legal advice from a lawyer. Parents and carers are encouraged to make use of this scheme by giving their time to the allotment. The manager has volunteered to build up some of her own time in the time bank to support families who access her provision should the need arise.



A partnership with the local community connector has built on the signposting support offered to families. Since offering HAF spaces, the nursery has partnered with the community connector to offer English lessons for Ukrainian children who attend. Also, having offered swimming as part of their HAF activity programme, they identified children who were unable to swim and so partnered with the community connector to offer a week of swimming lessons for these children on the last week of the summer holidays. Being on an island surrounded by water, this is a vital skill for the children to learn.

The nursery has partnered with the local Co-op supermarket to donate surplus food to families accessing HAF activities and has previously been part of the local Tesco's charity token scheme to fund additional activities during HAF delivery periods. When planning activities, the manager works with local businesses to negotiate discounted rates for trips and resources, for example using the local leisure centre for swimming or their rock-climbing wall. Children are supported to understand their impact on the local community: as well as paddle boarding, trips to the beach include activities such as leaving happy stones for others to find and a beach clean to learn about the human impact on the environment.

The manager utilises contacts from within the school to build the HAF activity programme, making use of their skills, such as teaching assistants who are 'bikeability' instructors, and trampoline coaches have been hired to deliver sessions. The school chef helps with preparing meals as well as delivering cookery sessions with the children who will proudly tell you about the chicken kiev and pasta dishes they have learnt to make from scratch. This year the manager has developed a HAF account on her 'tapestry' system where parents can access a wealth of information about signposting and local support, recipes, healthy eating and lifestyles and what the children have been up to while at HAF.

The manager has also harnessed expertise from the nursery's committee – one member who is a dentist brought some resources in to talk about dental health and was able to give out toothbrushes and toothpaste to families attending HAF.

West Wight Nursery shows how knowing and utilising your local community can develop an impactful HAF scheme.



# Case study

## Emma's\* story – Aspire waves of wellness summer 2024

(\*Name has been changed for anonymity)

**Emma, a 13-year-old girl, struggled with anxiety and low self-esteem, which had worsened since the COVID-19 pandemic. Her family was going through financial difficulties and Emma relied on free school meals. She felt isolated at school, had trouble making friends and rarely participated in physical activities. As her mental health declined, so did her academic performance and overall wellbeing. Emma's parents grew increasingly concerned.**

When Emma was told about the waves of wellness (WoW) HAF project by her teacher at school, her parents were hesitant. Emma had never participated in water sports before, and her confidence was at an all-time low. However, with encouragement from Aspire staff and her teacher, Emma attended her first session.

From the start, the project's supportive environment helped Emma feel at ease. She was introduced to kayaking and paddleboarding by friendly and understanding instructors, and the presence of other young people who shared similar struggles made her feel less alone. By the end of her first session, she had accomplished something she never thought possible: standing on a paddleboard for the first time.

Over the course of the four-weeks of WoW HAF provision, Emma's confidence grew. She eagerly participated in paddleboarding and kayaking, showing enthusiasm for each new challenge. The combination of physical activity and time spent by the sea helped reduce her anxiety. The calmness of the water, coupled with the structured guidance of the instructors, helped Emma feel a sense of control that she hadn't felt in a long time.

Each session also included a nutritious meal, which gave Emma the energy to fully participate. The meals were a highlight for her, not only because they were delicious, but also because they gave her the chance to socialise with other young people.

By the end of the holidays, Emma had made friends, her self-esteem had improved, and her anxiety was significantly reduced. She felt stronger, more capable, and proud of her accomplishments. Emma's teachers noted an improvement in her anxiety upon returning to school and reported this back to Aspire.

The Waves of Wellness Project not only gave Emma physical skills but also provided her with emotional resilience, friendships and confidence in acquiring some difficult skills. Emma now loves the water and wants to do more paddleboarding and surfing when there are waves.

# Communications and marketing

The Isle of Wight Council communications team launch the HAF programme each delivery period through a press release, and information is also sent to schools, town and parish councils.

Posts are also made on the council's social media pages including Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat. Adverts are placed on the Family Information Hub social media pages, with both general posts about the programme and specific provider posts which is useful if we need to target a particular area.

During summer 2024, we made a video of some of the HAF activities including comments from parents and children which was used to help promote Christmas HAF activities and now sits on our HAF webpages.

HAF providers were also supplied with banners which they could display outside their venue.

We have built networks with local services and agencies working with families; sending them information to share with their mailing lists; these include early help, public health, adult community learning, family centres and the Mental Health Alliance.



# Finance and governance

## Budget and expenditure

Isle of Wight Council received a grant of £427,210 from the Department for Education (DfE) to deliver the HAF programme on the Island. The grant is calculated based on the number of children eligible for income-related free school meals on the Isle of Wight.

The grant is used to cover the coordination of the programme, the provision of free spaces, advertising the programme, provider training and if required up to two per cent on equipment to support delivery of the programme.



Department for Education grant	£427,210
Programme expenditure	£352,526.71
Capital expenditure	£6196.80
Administrative expenditure	£50,000
Other expenditure	£8,398
End of year position	£417,122.15

# Programme management

The HAF programme sits within the early years team, which is part of the education, inclusion & access service within children's services at the Isle of Wight Council.

The HAF team meets regularly and shares feedback on the HAF programme with the service director, and all key decisions are signed-off by the cabinet.

## Steering group

The HAF programme on the Isle of Wight is supported by a steering group, made up of local stakeholders, which ensures the right partners are engaged with and supportive of the programme.

The steering group is made up of representatives from:

- Barton Primary School
- Isle of Wight family centres
- Sovereign Network Group
- New Carnival (local charity)
- Early help
- Youth justice support team



# Thank you

We would like to say a big 'thank you' to our HAF activity providers in 2024 to 2025 who have worked so hard with us to give Island children a memorable and enjoyable holiday experience:

**Aspire Ryde**

**Brading Community Partnership**

**CM Foundation**

**CM Sports Ltd**

**Football Fun Factory**

**Independent Arts**

**Island Riding Centre**

**Isle of Wight Rare Breeds**

**John Cattle Skate Club CIC**

**Kingswood- Inspiring Learning**

**LJR Coaching**

**Network Ryde**

**Open Minds Isle of Wight Ltd**

**Personal Best Education**

**Premier School Sport Coaching**

**Ryde Lawn, Tennis and Croquet Club**

**Quay Arts (Steve Ross Foundation for the Arts)**

**The Starlight Academy**

**Theatretrain**

**Theatre Educational**

**West Wight Nursery**

**Wildheart Animal Sanctuary**



# Quotes from parents about our providers

**"Thanks as always for a great experience. The children love seeing the team and said that the trip to panto was amazing. They thought it was the best day - thank you for your hard work"**

**"The staff are so friendly, polite and professional. I would love for this club to run in the future. Both children came home happy and said they had a lovely day. Thank you to all the staff for making my girls time in club the best time."**

**"Knew they were happy, well looked after and having fun"**

**"The staff and volunteers have been amazing as the children have a great bond and all look forward to coming each day. This youth club is the heart of the village."**

**"The fun club was faultless this summer"**

**"Such lovely helpers, always on hand, long may it continue."**

**"Thank you all for being such amazing people and making a huge difference and impact on us."**

And lastly, thank you to all the children, young people and their families who have attended the HAF Programme in 2024 – we hope you continue to enjoy the programme in 2025



For more information, visit:

[www.iow.gov.uk/HolidayActivities](http://www.iow.gov.uk/HolidayActivities)

Get in touch

[holidayactivities@iow.gov.uk](mailto:holidayactivities@iow.gov.uk)

