

Holiday Activity Fund – an overview for Scrutiny Committee

Background to the programme

The [Holiday Activity Fund](#) (HAF) programme began back in 2018 when the Department for Education (DfE) started to invest in local projects to deliver free holiday clubs and food to children in the summer. In 2018, they invested £2 million in seven summer holiday pilots across England. In 2019 and 2020, this increased to a £9 million investment in 17 local authority areas.

In 2021, the DfE expanded the project so that all children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) would be offered free healthy meals and activities during the Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays – through the Holiday Activity Fund programme. The total budget for this is £220 million per year.

Before the programme became universally available, Nottingham Forest Community Trust led on consortium bid to the DfE to be one of their funded summer holiday projects.

Key aims and core offer

The DfE have established the following key aims for the programme:

- The programme aims to provide free school holiday places for children who are eligible for Free School Meals
- 15% of the budget can also be used to provide places to other vulnerable children and Local Authorities can determine who to include in this 15%
- Children who attend the clubs will eat a healthy meal whilst they are there
- They will take part in enriching or physical activities
- The funding must be used to deliver six weeks of activities – for a minimum of four hours per day for four days per week, which is 24 days in total.
- In Nottingham we deliver activities for a week at Easter, three weeks in the summer, a week in October and a week at Christmas
- Food nutrition lessons or workshops should be part of the programme
- Families should be signposted to where they can access more support

2021/22 delivery

Nottingham City Council was allocated £1.929 million in 2021 to deliver the HAF Programme at Easter, over the summer and at Christmas. (The change to include October half term only came about in 2022.)

As the Council had never delivered a programme like this, on this scale, the first few months were spent speaking to internal and external stakeholders to determine how the programme should be delivered. The programme was managed by the Education Division with representatives from across the Council involved in the initial planning and throughout in a key stakeholder group.

Due to their history with previous bids to the DfE, a decision was made to work closely with Nottingham Forest Community Trust to deliver the project and the Trust received funding to deliver holiday clubs across the city.

Easter 2021

At Easter, a small scale project ran with some schools and Nottingham Forest Community Trust as a pilot. This was due to ongoing Covid restrictions at that time.

How was the funding allocated?

Funding to deliver the programme was awarded through grants in three ways:

1. Nottingham Forest Community Trust were allocated £849,120
2. The Area Based Grant Leads in the city were awarded £200,000 and a formula was applied to split this between the wards based on how many FSM children are in each ward. (Appendix 1)
3. An open bidding round was held in May 2021 and £394,926 was allocated directly to community groups and schools to deliver holiday clubs, hampers or activity packs throughout 2021.

Summer 2021

Summer 2021 was the first time the programme ran properly in Nottingham and over the course of four weeks, 16,069 children attended clubs run by 23 holiday club providers. Included in this 23 are Nottingham Forest Community Trust and the Area Based Grant Leads who enlist many more community groups. NFCT were responsible for the delivery of activities across 14 sites daily and procurement of 3500 meals per day.

Seeing the programme in action was amazing and the feedback gathered from providers and parents was really positive. However, there were some key areas of learning taken from the summer specifically around the level of provision for children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) and the development of a more comprehensive training programme to support providers working in our communities.

Christmas 2021

Due to the rising levels of Covid in December 2021, HAF delivery was significantly reduced. All providers were asked to deliver activities outside only, to prevent the spread of Covid and many handed out food parcels to families or delivered online activities instead.

2022 delivery

In November 2021, the DfE announced the Holiday Activity Fund programme would be funded for three years (from 2022 – 2025) and Nottingham was allocated £1.8 million in the first year.

In January 2022, we ran an open bidding round to find a lead partner for 2022 delivery and Nottingham Forest Community Trust were successful in their application.

The following is a list of requirements for a lead provider:

1. The lead provider must deliver school holiday activities across the city, with locations in all of the most deprived areas of the city
2. The lead partner must be a local organisation based in Nottinghamshire only.
3. The lead partner must aim to attract c. 3,000 - 4,000 children per day to their holiday clubs - although we appreciate there may be mitigating circumstances that impact on this
4. Market specifically to families where children are eligible for Free School Meals
5. Adhere to all of the requirements for the project set out by the DfE
6. Enlist multiple local providers to support with the delivery of the programme

In 2022, we have followed a similar funding model to the previous year, awarding grants in three ways:

1. Nottingham Forest Community Trust were allocated £902,000 to fulfil the role of lead partner
2. The Area Based Grant Leads in the city were awarded £350,000 and the same formula was applied to divide this between the wards. The amount of grant funding allocated to the Area Based Grant Leads has been increased this year to allow them to direct more provision locally to meet the needs of their bespoke communities.
3. An open bidding round was held in April 2022 and £350,000 was allocated directly to community groups and schools to deliver holiday clubs throughout 2022.

Easter 2022

This Easter, we worked with 42 different providers to put on four days of activities, which were attended by 4,200 children.

Plans for the future

With a full time Project Manager, Declan Barker, now in post for the duration of the Holiday Activity Fund lifecycle and we will be looking at how to develop the programme as well as increasing participation in the clubs.

Key items on the agenda for the future of HAF are:

- Continuing to develop the training offer for providers across the city to support capacity building of smaller community based providers and groups.
- Strengthen relationships with more schools – as venues for delivery and identifying/signposting activities and services for children in need.
- Develop the SEND offer further to ensure further provision is available for children with additional needs
- Evaluate the project fully – we are partnering with Nottingham Trent University to help us do this focusing on measuring the impact the programme has on the lives on children and families during and post programme.
- Invest in a booking system which identifies FSM children and markets to eligible families specifically.
- Develop a multi agency signposting presence
- Create and develop a local community organisation scrutiny working group funded by Nottingham Forest Community Trust to ensure collaboration and representation across all local communities.
- Attract significant private sector investment to support sustainability of the HAF programme during and beyond 2023.

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Appendix 1 – allocation of funding by ward for the Area Based Grant leads in 2021

Area	Ward	% of total FSM numbers	Amount by ward
1	Bulwell	8.58	17,168.17
	Bulwell Forest	3.51	7,016.31
	Bestwood	7.61	15,213.72
2	Basford	6.13	12,260.97
	Berridge	5.22	10,433.07
	Sherwood	3.02	6,032.06
3	Aspley	14.55	29,091.68
	Bilborough	8.06	16,113.61
	Leen Valley	2.11	4,218.22
4	Castle	0.19	379.64
	Hyson Green & Arboretum	5.91	11,825.08
	Radford	3.08	6,158.61
5	Lenton & Wollaton East	2.71	5,427.45
	Meadows	3.83	7,663.10
	Wollaton West	1.41	2,812.15
6	Dales	5.89	11,782.90
	Mapperley	3.63	7,255.34
	St Ann's	7.15	14,299.78
7	Clifton East	5.59	11,178.29
	Clifton West	1.83	3,669.85
			£200,000.00