
HAF 2025–26 Local Authority Annual Report

Kent County Council

Highlights

Funding

In 2025–26, **£5,470,128.32** was invested in the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme. Funding was primarily allocated to the direct delivery of activities across three holiday periods, with a proportion used for programme administration, in line with the permitted 10% threshold.

Delivery Partners

Provision was delivered through a wide network of schools, charities, community and sports organisations, leisure centres, early years and childcare providers, and Kent County Council (KCC) services.

Easter 2025

- **152** programmes delivered
- **22,922** places available
- **19,069** places attended
- **4,625** children and young people in receipt of FSM who attended.
- **950** children and young people not in receipt of FSM attended.
- **1,607** participants with SEND

Summer 2025

- **138** programmes delivered
- **101,782** places offered
- **68,311** places attended
- **9,575** children and young people in receipt of FSM who attended.
- **3,597** children and young people not in receipt of FSM attended.
- **4,038** participants with SEND

Christmas 2025

- **115** programmes delivered
- **15,523** places offered
- **11,430** places attended
- **4,494** children and young people in receipt of FSM who attended.
- **767** children and young people not in receipt of FSM attended.
- **1,593** participants with SEND

Steering Group

The steering group includes representatives from KCC, The Education People (Early Years & Childcare), Safeguarding, Schools, Integrated Children's Services, Early Years and Childcare settings, and Public Health.

Key Priorities for 2026–27

The focus for 2026–27 is to embed new commissioning processes for HAF programme provision and strengthen partnership working across services and delivery organisations. We are focused on ensuring the changes to Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility will be communicated clearly and timely to delivery partners and families.

Through our place planning and mapping, we strive to increase available places at HAF Programmes in areas of need, reach more eligible families and reduce non-attendance. Places will be planned in line with levels of FSM and in conjunction with the development of the School Aged Childcare Strategy.

Monitor the number of new participants in the HAF Programme. Providers should strengthen engagement with families of younger children, as some of the current cohort is approaching the programme's upper age limit.

Children and Families Feedback

Information about the HAF Programme was promoted via schools, services working with families the programme website, social media channels, and KCC web pages.

Feedback from children and families continues to inform programme development, below is some examples of feedback we have received.

"Confidence Building: Children reported feeling more confident, especially after taking part in activities that encouraged teamwork and leadership, like the Green Team FC workshop. They enjoyed the opportunity to develop new skills and were proud to share their learning with parents and guardians at the end of each day."

"That was the best day ever – I've never played laser tag before!"

"I made new friends, and I loved coming every day. Can I come back next time?"

"I really liked the crafts. I got to take my bird feeder home and now birds come to my garden!"

"A new place, new people, he went into year 7 in September and has struggled socially. You're understanding and support after just one day is phenomenal, thank you so much."

"I've never seen [my daughter] so happy and confident. I honestly can't thank you enough for what you've done for her. It means the world to us. THANK YOU!"

"This is the first holiday programme that hasn't banned [my son]. He struggles in social situations, but music is his passion, and the other children made him feel welcome like never before."

Families gave very positive feedback, saying the programme gave their children a safe, fun, and supportive place to be during the holidays. Parents and carers appreciated the variety of activities on offer and how inclusive the sessions were. Several families mentioned that their children came home excited to talk about what they had done each day, which showed the impact on their confidence and wellbeing. Families also valued the daily feedback we provided, which helped them feel reassured and involved.

"It was such a relief knowing my children had a safe, happy place to go every day, with a hot meal provided too."

"The recipe card that came home was a lovely touch – we made the wraps together as a family, and it really helped us talk more about food and eating healthily."

In another example, during the Plant, Grow, Eat workshop, a young participant who had never gardened before planted cress and lettuce seeds and carefully took their seedling home. A few weeks later, their parent shared that the child had continued to water and nurture the plant daily, and was proudly explaining the importance of eating fresh, home-grown food to their siblings. This demonstrates how our sustainability strand not only built environmental awareness but also empowered children to make healthy lifestyle choices at home.

"My child came home excited every day throughout the Christmas holidays. They learned about healthy eating, even with festive treats, and I've noticed they're making better food choices at home." – Parent of a 9-year-old

"I've seen a big boost in my child's confidence. They were shy at first, but the Christmas activities helped them join in with everything, from team games to arts and crafts." – Parent of a 10-year-old

"We loved that the whole family could get involved. The healthy festive recipes sent home inspired us to cook together, which was a lovely way to spend time during the holidays." – Parent of a 7-year-old

"The Christmas Holiday Club was such a reassurance for us. My child loved every day, and I felt confident knowing they were in a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment." – Parent of a child with SEND

We are really pleased to hear some so much positive feedback from families and will continue to ensure the voice of the family and child is incorporated in to planning and development of the HAF Programme

Food Provision

All programmes were required to provide at least one nutritious meal per day. While hot meals remained the expectation, flexibility was introduced to allow a mix of hot and cold meals where appropriate, such as during trips or in hot weather.

Meals were delivered through a range of approaches, including on-site cooking, third-party catering, school catering services, and food preparation activities involving children and young people.

Feedback indicated that some families preferred packed lunches or bringing their own food. Providers responded creatively to encourage meal take-up, and flexibility will continue to be balanced with the promotion of nutritious hot meals.

At Christmas, some programmes provided in addition to their face-to-face session's food and activity hampers. These enabled families to have the opportunity to cook together and engage in shared activities, particularly where programmes operated reduced delivery models due to bank holidays.

Enriching Activities

Programmes delivered a varied programme of enrichment activities, including arts and crafts, music, drama, outdoor learning, sports, wellbeing activities, creative play and STEM activities including coding and robotics.

Family days and trips were also provided by some programmes; these were popular and gave children and families the opportunity to access activities and experiences that may have not previously been able to.

Observations and feedback highlighted the positive impact of these activities on children and young people, particularly in providing new experiences and opportunities for personal development.

We also funded KCC Family Hubs and Short Breaks services to deliver HAF programme activities across some of the holidays, and this gave families more opportunities and access to different activities.

Physical Activities

Programmes delivered age-appropriate physical activity in line with national guidelines. Activities included team sports, swimming, outdoor learning, circus, aerial skills, skating, skateboarding, cycling, dance, yoga, and inclusive physical play.

Physical activity was a consistently strong feature of delivery, offering children regular opportunities to stay active, develop skills, and try new sports in a supportive environment.

Nutrition Education and Healthy Lifestyles

Programmes incorporated nutrition education through workshops, cooking activities, physical activity sessions, information resources, and creative activities focused on healthy choices.

Families were engaged in a range of ways, including shared meals, cooking sessions, breakfast activities, and access to information on nutrition and healthy living. Feedback suggests that participation improved children's understanding of healthy lifestyles and encouraged repeat engagement across holiday periods.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

All providers are required to meet the needs of children and young people attending their programmes. An increase in pre-delivery engagement with families was observed, supporting effective planning and reasonable adjustments. Inclusion audits and national resources were provided to support delivery.

2025 SEND Funding

- **623** children and young people supported with additional SEND funding.
- **4%** of those did not attend any sessions.
- **63%** attended all booked sessions.
- **33%** attended some sessions.
- **16%** only attended a SEND specialist Programme.
- **1.6%** attended a mixture of SEND specialist and non-specialist Programmes.

Attendance rates indicate that additional SEND funding supports effective inclusion and family confidence. Many children accessed provision consistently across holiday periods. SEND engagement was further extended through Short Breaks Programmes and Family Hubs.

We have seen an increase in programmes who offer SEND specialist places and these providers are working directly with families who may have previously had challenges in accessing a place for their child.

Key Challenges

Key challenges included ensuring equitable access for all eligible children, particularly relating to location, SEND provision, secondary-age places, timing, and capacity at popular sites.

Progress has been made in expanding secondary-age and SEND-specific provision. Reduced availability at Christmas due to bank holidays was mitigated through alternative delivery models. Providers were encouraged to manage non-attendance through controlled overbooking where appropriate.

Marketing and Communication

A structured communications approach supported engagement with families and partners, including newsletters, network meetings, website and social media updates, school communications, direct email and telephone support. We encourage providers to maintain regular contact with families, so they can support them with bookings for each holiday. Providers are asked to carry out their own marketing strategy in their catchment areas, to ensure that the families and other local organisations are aware of their offer and how to find out more information.

Additional Resources and Partnerships

While no additional local authority funding was accessed, many providers developed partnerships with local businesses, charities, and supermarkets. These partnerships contributed food, resources, expertise, and experiences. Providers were encouraged to link with existing community support networks to promote sustainability and joined-up working. The team organise regular network meetings that designed for partners to share information around HAF Programme delivery and elements and encourage partnership working.

Additional Information

Providers were supported through safeguarding e-learning training and encouraged to link with Family Hubs, District Councils and use the [ReferKent](#) platform for referrals and signposting.