

Dorset Council

Holiday and activity food report 2024-25

# HAF Annual Report 2024/2025

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## Overview

The [Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/holiday-activities-and-food-programme/holiday-activities-and-food-programme-2021) is a government programme that aims to provide healthy food and enriching activities to children and young people aged 5 to 16 who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals. HAF is funded by the Department for Education. The programme has provided healthy food and enriching activities to eligible children since 2018 and has ensured that during the school holidays more children in Dorset have:

* eaten healthily
* been active
* taken part in engaging and enriching activities
* been safe and less socially isolated
* developed a greater knowledge of health and nutrition
* been more engaged with school

The programme includes the delivery of enriching activities and nutritious food during the Easter, Summer, and Christmas school holidays. We also piloted delivering HAF activity during February Half Term

In Dorset during 2024/2025 this has meant:

* 73 providers delivered a variety of activities including sports, cultural, forest school/outdoor education and food nutrition across Dorset
* 203 HAF events took place over the three holiday periods
* Over 2100 eligible children took part in Summer 2024
* just over 26,000 hot nutritious meals were served across the year
* activities took place across Dorset in all the towns and some rural locations such as Sandford, Sixpenney Handley and Alderholt
* 1005 food and activity kits were delivered in partnership with the Friendly Food Club

## 2. Funding

In the 2024/25 financial year, Dorset Council received £954,750 from the Department for Education (DfE) to support the HAF programme. Additionally, the Council secured:

Covid Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) £174,500

Ukraine Response Tariff grant £10,000

Household Support Fund £10,000

John Lewis Partnership £700

To further address the Cost-of-Living crisis, the Council also allocated £20,000 from its reserves.

£62286 (5.3%) was spent on administration costs. This funded 1 part time Programme Co-ordinator and 1 part-time Business Support Officer.

## 3. Provisions

We worked with the following organisations and partners to deliver the Dorset HAF programme in 2024/2025.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **360 Degree Sports Coaching Dorset LTD** | **M N W F Ltd - MINI BALLERS** |
| **3d Health & Fitness Wey Valley School** | **Mini Athletics West Dorset** |
| **Action Van** | **Mini Professors** |
| **Activate Management Ltd (Activate Camps)** | **MW Tennis Services** |
| **Activate Performing Arts** | **MYTIME Young Carers** |
| **Active Dorset** | **North Locality Team** |
| **Adventure 4 All Ltd.** | **PESSPA Education & Play** |
| **AJM Sports Coaching** | **Poole Forest School** |
| **Andrew Simpson Centre Portland** | **Premier Education**  |
| **Artsreach** | **Primary Sports and Education Ltd** |
| **Artz+** | **Prime time kids Club**  |
| **Bridport Leisure Centre** | **Pro Coaching** |
| **Bridport Youth & Community Centre** | **Purbeck Sports centre** |
| **Buckland Newton Rural Family Hub & Youth Club** | **Purbeck Youth and Community Foundation**  |
| **Carey Camp** | **RiversMeet Leisure Centre** |
| **Cumulus Outdoors** | **Sandmartins Activity Club** |
| **Dorchester Arts** | **Sherborne school**  |
| **Dorchester Town Community Football Club** | **Shining Stars** |
| **Dorchester Youth and Community Centre** | **St Nicholas Church** |
| **Dorset Music Hub** | **Stars Holiday Club** |
| **Dorset Wild Ones** | **StreetLight Project** |
| **Educamps Ltd** | **Supastrikers Bridport** |
| **Explorers Childcare Group** | **Swanage Town and Herston FC** |
| **Farmer Palmers** | **Swanage youth Club** |
| **Globe Fit Ltd.** | **The Blackmore Vale Charity, The Vale Pantry** |
| **Globe Fit (Bovington Academy)** | **The Official Test Centre (THE OTC) Portland** |
| **Help and Kindness** | **The Samurai Fitness Group** |
| **Houseworks Dorset CIC** | **The Talk About Trust** |
| **Islanders Club for young people** | **Treads young People's Advice & Information Centre** |
| **JA Teaching and Coaching** | **Walford Mill** |
| **Laserguys Limited** | **Waterside Weymouth Community Forum** |
| **Leeson House Field Studies Centre, Dorset Council** | **Weymouth and Portland Adventure - Weymouth College** |
| **Let’s Get loud** | **Weymouth Outdoor Education Centre** |
| **Library Services** | **Wonderland Day Nursery** |
| **LYD Sports** | **Z and S Linked Ltd T/A Happy Healthy Kidz** |

## 4. Statistics and trends

There was a slight decrease in the number of children recorded as attending the programme over the Easter and summer holidays in 2024. However, this was due to the implementation of stricter verification procedures to ensure that only genuinely eligible children were included. As a result, the overall numbers declined, but the data became more accurate.

The increase in numbers during the winter period can be attributed to a well-attended family fun day held at Farmer Palmers in Wareham, which drew over 200 children to the event.

The number of eligible children reached in each holiday period:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Holiday period** | **Primary-age HAF funded** | **Secondary-age HAF funded** | **Total HAF funded** |
| Easter 2023 | 1120 | 217 | 1337 |
| Summer 2023 | 1617 | 435 | 2052 |
| Winter 2023 | 842 | 141 | 983 |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Holiday period** | **Primary-age HAF funded** | **Secondary-age HAF funded** | **Total HAF funded** |
| Easter 2024 | 760 | 266 | 1026 |
| Summer 2024 | 1356 | 553 | 1909 |
| Winter 2024 | 928 | 212 | 1140 |
| Feb 2025 (new) | 476 | 107 | 583 |

There is a significantly higher number of primary aged children accessing the programme compared to secondary aged. This is largely due to the need for childcare for the younger aged cohort and their willingness to attend holiday club type activity. Although the number of secondary aged young people accessing the programme has increased by 50 % during the Winter 2024 holiday period

The proportion of primary age and secondary age children who have participated in the programme**:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Period** | **Primary-age HAF funded** | **Secondary-age HAF funded** |
| Easter 2023 | 84% | 16% |
| Summer 2023 | 79% | 21% |
| Winter 2023 | 86% | 14% |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Period** | **Primary-age HAF funded** | **Secondary-age HAF funded** |
| Easter 2024 | 74% | 26% |
| Summer 2024 | 71% | 29% |
| Winter 2024 | 81% | 19% |

There is a considerable proportion of children with special educational needs and disabilities who are also eligible for free school meals. It is essential that we continue to ensure providers are inclusive in their approach and support them to do this through access to additional funding and training opportunities.

The number of children with additional needs and, or a disability who have participated in the programme:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Period** | **HAF-funded with SEND**  |
| Easter 2023 | 30% |
| Summer 2023 | 42% |
| Winter 2023 | 38% |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Period** | **HAF-funded with SEND**  |
| Easter 2024 | 36% |
| Summer 2024 | 35% |
| Winter 2024 | 37% |
| Feb 2025 (new) | 33% |

The programme is growing in popularity, and the number of sessions attended each holiday period is also increasing. Feedback from families suggest that the participants enjoy their time at the provision and return attendances are good.

Total number of sessions attended:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Period** | **Primary sessions attended** | **Secondary sessions attended** | **No of sessions / meals served** |
| Easter 2023 | 4547 | 672 | 5219 |
| Summer 2023 | 13950 | 2565 | 16515 |
| Winter 2023 | 3242 | 460 | 3702 |
| **Total** | **21739** | **3697** | **25436** |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Period** | **Primary sessions attended** | **Secondary sessions attended** | **No of sessions / meals served** |
| Easter 2024 | 3896 | 1142 | 5038 |
| Summer 2024 | 11555 | 3455 | 15010 |
| Winter 2024 | 3308 | 815 | 4123 |
| **Feb 2024** | **1551** | **293** | **1866** |
| **Total** | **20310** | **5705** | **26037** |

## 5. Demographics

In January 2025, according to the most recent census, Dorset has 9609 children eligible for free school meals, the map below shows the geographical area where the greatest number of children eligible for benefit related free school meals live.



\*Taken from January 2025 Census

Areas where there is a high number of children eligible for benefit related free school meals include:

• Littlemoor West

• Shaftesbury Christy's

• Fortuneswell North

• Westham North Westhaven

• Littlemoor East

• Ferndown Tricketts Cross East

• Gillingham Town

• Poundbury North

• Westham West St Augustines

• Sturminster Newton Town

## 6. Steering Group

To support the delivery of the programme and ensure that the right partners continue to be engaged with and supportive of the programme we set up a steering group with representatives from the following teams:

* Locality Teams
* Education
* Culture, Leisure, and Outdoor Education Services
* Public Health Dorset
* Communications
* Early Years
* Dorset Parent Carer Council
* NHS Dorset
* Youth Voice
* Active Dorset

## 7. Extending our offer

Nearly 37% of Dorset children who are eligible for Free School Meals also have a special educational need or disability (SEND). This is slightly less than recorded in 2023- 2024 (40 %). However, this means that our providers must continue to be inclusive in their approach to delivering activities. We help providers do this by offering free training and ringfencing funding so that providers can employ additional support staff as required on a demand basis. We also engaged with three Short Breaks providers to offer additional specialised activities for children with more complex needs across the county.

## 8. Feedback from children and parents

We conducted a customer experience survey after the summer holidays on the benefits of the HAF programme to the families that took part. We found out that in line with last year's trends:

* 55 % of parents said that their children felt less socially isolated over the summer holidays, this was an increase from 38% in 2022/2023
* The most significant outcome was that children had made new friends (61%)
* 37% of parents/ carers felt that their children settled back to school or college easier because of the HAF programme

## 9. Quotes from parents/ carers

* *We are so* *very grateful for this service. Our son has severe learning difficulties, and he has thoroughly enjoyed* *a number of activities. It has also acted as respite care for us and made the summer holidays more enjoyable for all of us. Thank you so much.*
* *My son absolutely loved the activities run at Redlands by Dorchester Tennis Club. He particularly enjoyed roller blading, which he has now taken up as a hobby*
* *We only managed to access one of the camps as the others I'd enquired about were fully booked as soon as released, which was a shame as the others were art centred and that would of suited little one better as that is her interest (she has additional needs), but the club she did attend for 1 week at prince of Wales School run by Premier education was great and the staff were lovely and reassuring and little one really enjoyed herself. This is the first time I've accessed the summer in Dorset but will* *definitely be using again if this fabulous scheme still runs in the next terms, it helped her socially as well as me being able to have a break.*
* *I really need these sessions as I'm a lone parent. My daughter is awaiting an assessment for autism, ADHD & post-traumatic stress disorder. She has severe anxiety about going out of the home. I have bowel cancer & I'm my mum's primary carer who has dementia & stage 4 lung cancer.*
* *I am sending this referral as a professional who helped some families to register for HAF and book activities. They report the best summer ever, lunch included was great (and healthy), meeting new people and making friends, developing skills (football, art, dance), and not being bored. Two of the children have previously struggled at the start of autumn term as they have previously lost all routines, this year the parents and school report that the children have been enthusiastic and keen to engage in learning and have settled quickly. The parents were impressed by the understanding nature of the activity providers;* *all of the children I'm referring to have some emotional support/anxiety needs. One of the mothers felt that attending certain activities with her child also helped her to be less socially isolated. A huge thank you to everyone for their hard work.*
* *Without summer in Dorset the children would not have left the house due to the extra costs of family activities and days out… many thanks*

## 10. Case Studies – Echo Fest and The Friendly Food Club

**Case Study: Echo Fest 2024**

**Event Overview:** Echo Fest was a youth arts festival held at Carey Camp on August 8, 2024, from 1pm to 5pm. The event aimed to:

1. Provide accessible activities for young people aged 11-16 year as part of the HAF Programmes.
2. Serve as a platform for consulting with young people for Strategic Alliance Partners.
3. Offer young singers and bands the opportunity to perform to an audience.

**Organisers:** The festival was organised by Dorset Council – Youth Voice team, Dorset Music Hub, Carey Outdoor Education Centre, and the Holiday Activity and Food Programme team.

**Objectives:**

* **Accessible Activities:** The festival featured a variety of activities designed to engage young people, including arts and crafts, archery, low ropes, music tech, DJing, and a glitter tent.
* **Consultation Platform:** Partners such as The Big Conversation team and East and Purbeck Locality Youth team were present to discuss youth-related issues with attendees.
* **Performance Opportunities:** Young singers and bands had the chance to perform both scheduled and impromptu sets, showcasing their talents to an audience.

**Attendance:** Over 120 young people attended the event, engaging in the activities and interacting with the partners.

**Feedback:** Feedback from attendees was largely positive, with a significant percentage stating the event met or exceeded their expectations. Popular activities included food, arts and crafts, and music. Suggestions for future events included climbing, more sports activities, and circus-type drop-in activities.

**Venue:** Carey Outdoor Education Centre provided an exciting setting with accessible facilities. Onsite tents offered shelter from the rain and space for activities, contributing to the festival atmosphere. Limited parking was managed with minibuses from Leeson House and Weymouth Outdoor Education Centre.

**Food:** The food, provided by the chef at Leeson House, was of excellent quality. The menu included baked potatoes and wraps with healthy fillings. The Friendly Food Club facilitated cooking sessions, allowing young people to make fruit and pasta pots.

**Activities:** A range of activities were offered, including arts and crafts, archery, low ropes, music tech, DJing, and a glitter tent. Performances by young singers and bands were well-received, with attendees engaging positively throughout the day.

Our survey also indicated that if children were not participating in this event, they would be engaged in passive solo activities at home such as playing computer games. This suggests that this event has been a success in enabling these children to participate in active movement and social activities.

1. It also gave children an opportunity to explore different expressions of art and wellbeing. Young People expressed their feelings through positive affirmations on a wall of positivity:

“Being different is a good thing”

“Remember the sun comes after the rain”

“Just be you”

**Future Considerations:**

* Increase the availability of sports activities.
* Consolidate activities to create a busier and more vibrant festival atmosphere.

**Resources:** The event was primarily funded by HAF and supported by partners. The organising team demonstrated strong teamwork and dedication, ensuring the event ran smoothly.

**Future Considerations:**

* Explore additional funding sources to continue the event in other areas of Dorset, potentially linked to Local Action Groups (LAGs).
* Identify local partners to deliver the event in their areas, building on the Echo Fest model.
* Understand event timings vs competition of other similar events such as, Bestival, Purbeck Folk festival and Dorchester anonymous festival
* Setting and environment was ideal for atmosphere, venue space and facilities, but location (in the countryside) was limiting for parking and transportation. Where children could attend without parental chaperones a more accessible location by public transportation would be desirable.

**Objective Evaluation:**

* **Accessible Activities:** Successfully provided a variety of engaging activities for young people aged 11-16 years.
* **Consultation Platform:** Enabled partners to consult with young people, although NHS and Police partners were unable to attend.
* **Performance Opportunities:** Offered young singers and bands the chance to perform to an audience, fulfilling this objective.

Echo Fest 2024 was a successful event that met its objectives and provided valuable experiences for young people in Dorset. Future events can build on this model to continue engaging and consulting with youth in the region.

**Secondary impact:**

As well as meeting objectives of HAF this event also raised the profile of the programme by having good media coverage of the event on social media with event listings and post creation. The event was also covered on Eventbrite and local event listings sites and news such as ‘What’s on in Dorset’ and ‘Dorset Echo.’ A review of ‘search engine results when looking for local events showed the event appeared with HAF in results as top and third listings.

The festival name is the same as another popular larger festival so that also appears in search results, but good key words use in Dorset Echo listing has helped boost the SEO to top result.

Print material was also shared with leaflet drops in the local areas and at local events such as Wareham carnival (with permission from organisers) and received a very positive reaction.

**Future Considerations:**

Re-naming the festival with consideration to user journey and thought process with search engine results.

Partnering with other providers to piggyback comms and messaging.

**Case Study: THE FRIENDLY FOOD CLUB**

During 2024 The Friendly Food club delivered 60 cooking and healthy eating workshops, reaching 2872 attendees across the county. In partnership with the HAF team they also put together and delivered 1005 Activity and Recipe bags over the Christmas holidays.

**Key comments from Providers:**

The friendly food club is always a popular activity. Being able to offer it as part of HAF has meant that many of the young people that attend are from low-income households where variety of food is restricted. Some young people come from families where parents have mental health problems meaning that daily routines such as cooking is difficult. Some young people with SEN find trying new foods difficult, but by taking part in a group activity with others they are more inclined to try new foods. It allowed us to get the children to make their own lunches with suitably trained and experienced staff, which is difficult for us to do as our staff are coaches not cooks/chefs!

**Comments from children/young people:**

'I am going to make this for my mum'.

'We've never had enough money to buy a Chinese takeaway, but now I know how to make one at home'

'I have never cut vegetables before, but now I know how to do it'

'I'm not allowed to cook at home'.

**Feedback from parents**

On collection some parents were very surprised at some of the food their children had tried and liked and seemed excited to have recipes the children wanted to try.

The majority of parents were delighted their children were given the opportunity to prepare, cook and try oriental food which was healthy and easy to make.

**Activity and Recipe Bags**

The Friendly Food Club worked with the HAF team to put together 1005 food and activity kits which were distributed to children attending HAF provision across the county. The following video tells the story of this initiative involving 26 volunteers and 350 hours of preparation and delivery.

[HAF Christmas Activity Bags 2024 v2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fGND8uM46Q)



##  11. Online information, statistics, and branding

In Dorset, we categorise our offer into three distinct segments:

1. Easter in Dorset
2. Summer in Dorset
3. Winter in Dorset

Each holiday period has its own dedicated webpage and accompanying promotional materials, which parents and young people are directed to throughout the respective holidays.

From website analytics we can see sharp boosts of page activity that coincides with the promotional activity we have run, so we can determine that we are delivering this traffic to the pages.

This graph shows google analytics of HAF programme page from March 2024 to April 2025



The first spike in summer can correlate to an email and print campaign to schools to share with parents on 6th June. The second spike we could attribute to the mail out direct to HAF parents on June 20th. November spike is when we opened the listing page for Winter in Dorset and sent out communications to all HAF parents.

Our communication list of active HAF parents is now at an audience of 2,605 recipients since Easter in Dorset 2025 with a growth of 54% (LY Easter in Dorset 1,186).



## 12.Opportunities for improvement and future plans

**The 2024 – 2025 delivery of HAF was** **a great success however we are always keen to make it even better. Next year we will focus on the following areas of improvement**

* Improve opportunities for families living in remote rural areas to access HAF provision
* Continue to develop the SEND offer
* Develop new partnerships with food retailers to enhance the programme
* Research and develop a mechanism to measure the impact of HAF, in particular school attendance and children’s health and wellbeing

## 13. Action Plan for 2024- 2025

**Outcome1:** Improve opportunities for families living in remote rural areas to access HAF provision

* Work with new and existing service providers who deliver activities in rural areas to try to increase the number of HAF opportunities in villages across the county
* Encourage providers and locality teams to access funding for travel to allow families to attend town-based activities if they have no means of transport
* Consider delivering a series of pop-up activities in village halls and rural schools using existing HAF providers

**Outcome 2:** Continue to develop the SEND offer

* Ensure that all providers identify the level of support they can offer in their listing on the Help and Kindness website
* Work closely with the Wraparound Programme and Families First to encourage HAF providers to be inclusive in their provision
* Work in partnership with Short Breaks providers to increase the number of specialised HAF places across the county

**Outcome 3: Develop new partnerships with food retailers to enhance the programme**

**Action:**

* Encourage providers to establish relationships with their local supermarkets to request free food items to give to the children who attend their provision
* Make stronger links with local food banks to ensure that HAF families are aware of their services and know how to access them.
* Research ways in which other local authorities are working with local supermarkets to enhance provision and establish a “How to …” guide to enable providers to build relationships with local supermarkets

**Outcome 4: Research and develop a mechanism to measure the impact of HAF,** **in particular school attendance and children’s health and wellbeing**

* Explore and examine research already carried out by other local authorities that has measured the impact of the HAF programme in their area
* Continue to collect qualitive data from families who have participated in the programme
* Work with our education partners to determine how attendance at HAF has influenced school attendance