Guidance
Holiday activities and food programme 2021

Updated 19 April 2021

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Overview

This document provides information for local authorities delivering the holiday activities and food programme in 2021.

The holiday activities and food programme announced that the holiday activities and food programme would be expanded across the whole of England in 2021. The programme has provided healthy food and enriching activities to disadvantaged children since 2018.

The programme will cover Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021.

We will make up to £220 million available to local authorities to coordinate free holiday provision, including healthy food and enriching activities. The programme will be available to children in every local authority in England.

Background

School holidays can be particular pressure points for some families because of disruption to routines, and because they can be more expensive than term time. Participation that can lead to a holiday experience gap, with children from disadvantaged backgrounds:

- less likely to access organised out-of-school activities
- more likely to experience 'unhealthy holidays' in terms of nutrition and physical health
- more likely to experience social isolation

Free holiday clubs are a response to this issue and evidence suggests that they can:

- improve children's health and attainment and people and that they want their kids to:
- provide consistent and nearby accessible enrichment activities;
- cost more than pre-breakfast or lunch
- involve children (and parents) in food preparation

Who the programme is for

This holiday provision to children who receive benefits-related free school meals.

Local authorities are asked to ensure that the offer of free holiday clubs provision is available for all children eligible for and in receipt of free school meals in their area. This includes those who are home schooled.

The free holiday clubs provision must be targeted at children who are eligible for and receiving benefits-related free school meals.

We also encourage local authorities to make the holiday clubs available to any children not eligible for and in receipt of free school meals, who can pay to attend. This might be through commercial:

- top up payment
- for part of already existing holiday provision in the area
- a mixed arrangement depending on the local supply and demand for provision

Other children and families with need

Local authorities must get children approved from an by a user-friendly portal to those or subsidised holiday club places for children who are not in receipt of benefits-related free school meals.

We'll consider requests to top up or fill, if your programme funding is used to provide for children who are considered by the local authority as vulnerable or in need of this provision. This may include, for example:

- children assessed as being in need
- children in care
- children with an EHC plan (education, health and care)
- children assessed as otherwise vulnerable
- children some in need of other support

You must be able to demonstrate that you are:

- offering the programme requirements across the full geographical area
- fully meeting demand from free school meal-eligible children in the area

Aims of the programme

As a result of this programme, we want children who attend this provision to:

- eat more healthy meals over the school holidays
- be more active during the school holidays
- take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience, character and wellbeing along with their wider educational attainment
- be safe and supported during the holidays
- be more socially active and better socialised
- be more engaged with school and other local services.

We want to ensure that the families who participate in this programme:

- develop their understanding of nutrition and food budgeting
- are signposted towards other information and support, for example, health, employment

What's involved

Some local authorities may coordinate in Christmas, and others may choose to work with another organisation to coordinate the provision on their behalf.

We recognise and greatly value the important role that community and voluntary organisations play in providing holiday activities for children. We want local authority facilitators to work with a wide range of partners in the delivery of this programme.

Where local authorities work with community and voluntary organisations whether as a provider or as a coordinator, we expect to see a high level of local community involvement. This is so that these organisations are fully funded for the work they undertake.

Coordination of local programmes

The role of coordinating the programme includes:

- mapping the holiday provision in your area in order to ensure that holiday provision exists and is coordinating the areas of local need and gaps
- establishing a steering group to support implementation and delivery that should include representatives from the following groups of local bodies, including:
  - local public and other authorities
  - local public health officials
  - local providers
  - youth services
  - social services
  - charities and the voluntary sector
- drawing in wider support to enhance the local programme, for example bringing in local food retailers, food manufacturers/distributors, sponsors, food banks/food hubs, or supermarkets and local businesses
- developing a local plan for provision in your area, based on what you know about local need and what is available locally
- ensuring that sufficient, adequate provision is available across all eligible children with SEND or additional needs
- working with local holiday providers in order to ensure there is enough provision to meet demand
- supporting all providers to meet our framework of minimum standards including safeguarding and food
  - meals that meet national standards
- supporting all providers to improve the quality of their provision
- working with families to reduce dependency by providing nutritional education for children and educating families around purchasing and preparing healthy meals on a budget
- promoting and advertising provision, including working with local schools and other agencies to encourage the most at-need children to attend
- ensuring that the provision is inclusive and that children feel welcomed and an efficient approach, for example, signposting and sharing resources
- building local partnerships and sharing learning and good practice among local partners

Some areas will already have well-developed models for coordinating holiday provision and may not need to take all of these steps.

Funding

Local authorities will receive grant funding to deliver the holiday activities and food programme in their area.

Our grant funding is informed by the:

- numbers of children eligible for and in receipt of free school meals in your area
- overall levels of participation experienced in our previous programmes from 2018 to 2020

What the funding covers

The funding (local authorities receive is to cover the:

- provision of free holiday places
- coordination of the programme locally

The aim of the programme is to make free places available to children eligible for and in receipt of free school meals for the equivalent of at least 4 hours a day, for at least 4 weeks a year.

This would cover 4 weeks in the summer and a week's worth of provision in each of the Easter and Christmas holidays in 2021.

Local authorities and their providers will have flexibility about how they deliver this (and how they organise their provision). For example, providers may choose to offer longer days. Or, we'll be flexibility to how the programme can be delivered to older children.

Example

In the Christmas and Easter holidays, local areas could spread a week's worth of provision across 2 weeks period.

In the summer, you may want to spread the equivalent number of hours over a longer period.

Families may be eligible for tax-free childcare or the childcare early element of Universal Credit, through which families may be able to claim back up to 85% of their childcare costs.

Administrative costs

We know that there are administrative costs associated with setting up and running the holiday activities and food programme and ensuring you have sufficient staff.

As set out in the grant funding letter, we expect that local authorities will spend no more than 10% of the total funding allocated on the costs associated with running the programme.

The remaining 90% should be used to pay for places for children eligible for and in receipt of free school meals, and for food and facilities.

Funding can be used to support:

- a comprehensive, inclusive and accessible offer, for example:
  - setting up new provision where needed
  - paying for additional staff to expand existing provision
  - providing additional support for additional needs
  - paying transport for children and young people
  - bringing in activity providers such as sports coaches
  - establishing partnerships with catering organisations

Purchasing equipment

Funding can also be used to purchase equipment for the programme, for example, to improve the quality of provision and provide an individual child with a piece of equipment, such as a pair of glasses they need, or a bicycle to attend provision. The amount you spend on this should be limited to 5% of your overall programme expenditure.

Capital expenditure is classed as:

- individual assets worth over £12,500
- a group of assets purchased at a similar nature that are purchased at the same time, which cost £12,500 or more overall
- bulked assets, for example, a bulk purchase of equipment where the value of the individual item is below the set value, which cost £12,500 or more overall

Capital expenditure does not meet this criteria, will not be classed as capital expenditure or charged to the 5% cap.

Payments and reporting

Local authorities will be responsible for gathering management information from the providers and claim the funds based the children and families they have provided. Following each holiday period (Easter, summer and Christmas) we will ask local authorities to report on their activity over the holiday period.

The requirements for local authorities are set out in the grant determination letter. We will provide further information on reporting at a high level.

Local authorities can use other performance indicators to measure their own performance or that of partners.

Payment schedule

March 2021

Payments made upon satisfactory receipt of a delivery plan from the local authority by 16 February 2021. The plan sets out the intended scale and reach of their programme for Easter 2021.

June 2021

Payments made in 50% of the 2021 to 2022 allocation will be made upon satisfactory receipt by 19 May 2021 of:

- a report detailing the delivery of the programme at Easter 2021
- a delivery plan for summer 2021

November 2021

Payments of up to 30% of the 2021 to 2022 allocation will be made upon satisfactory receipt by 29 January 2022 of:

- a report detailing the delivery of the programme at Christmas 2021
- the final report for the whole 2021 programme
- a certificate of expenditure or statement of grant usage

Data collection

The reports will include data on children attending holiday clubs and their families.

All of the data and information collected by the holiday clubs and providers should not be collected in which adherence to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Evaluation

An evaluation will be undertaken this year to evaluate the impact the programme has had and will focus on delivery across the summer.

This will be undertaken by a national provider and will be subject to a tendering process.

We expect all local authorities to cooperate with the evaluation of the holiday activities and food programme.

Support for local authorities

Local programme implementation teams will support local authorities in delivering the holiday activities and food programme. Focusing initially on the Easter holidays.

Each local authority will have access to a named contact who they will be able to contact with queries and requests for support. We will use the package of support, prior to Easter, to inform communications and the sharing of resources with local authorities and facilitators.

We are also procuring a national support contract which will be in place from April 2021 to provide further support to local authorities and providers delivering holiday activities with ensuring holiday provision is inclusive and high-quality.

We encourage local authorities to work closely with neighbouring local authorities and local education sites (cross-border and providers). This will help to ensure that adequate provision and support is offered to children from surrounding local authorities.

Standards for holiday provision

We have developed a framework of standards to provide a benchmark of what we expect from those delivering the holiday activities and food programme.

One of the key elements of the role of a holiday activities and food programme coordinator will be to:

- improve the quality of provision across the local area
- ensure that providers are supported to meet the high-level standards

Programme coordinators will be able to assist funding to providers that don't meet the standards, for example, by providing training or support to staff, or by working with them to ensure that the standards are met before the start of the holidays.

We expect all providers who are funded through the holiday activities and food programme to meet our framework of standards.

Framework of standards

These are the standards we expect for 2021 providers:

Food

Providers must provide at least one meal a day (breakfast, lunch or tea) and at least one healthy snack, in accordance with the School Food Standards.

Our expectation is that the majority of food served by providers will be hot. However, we acknowledge that there will be occasions when this is not possible and a cold alternative may be used.

All food provided must be of the highest must:

- comply with regulations on food preparation
- take into account allergies and dietary requirements (see the allergy guidance for caterers)
- take into account any religious or cultural requirements for food

Enriching activities

Local authorities will provide and enriching activities that provide children with opportunities to:

- develop new skills or knowledge
- consolidate existing skills and knowledge
- try out new experiences

This could include:

- physical activities, for example, football, table tennis or cricket
- creative activities, for example, putting on a play, pick modelling or drumming workshops
- experiences, for example, a nature walk or visiting a city farm

Local authorities should set out how they can support providers to deliver a rich and varied offer of enriching activities, including how they will support providers to ensure that these are considered how they might encourage the continued use of free holiday clubs over the holiday periods.

Physical activities

Holiday clubs must provide activities that meet the physical activity guidelines on a daily basis.

Nutritional education

Providers should provide an element of nutritional education each day aimed at improving the knowledge and awareness of healthy eating for children. These do not need to be formal learning activities and could for example include activities such as:

- getting children involved in food preparation and cooking
- growing fruit and vegetables
- home tasks

Food education for families and carers

Providers must include information on healthy eating and advice sessions for parents, carers or other family members. These should provide advice on how to source, prepare and cook nutritious and cost-friendly food.

Signposting and referrals

Providers should share information, signposting or referrals to other services and support that would benefit the children and their families. This could include sessions provided by:

- Citizen's Advice
- school nurses, dentists or other healthcare practitioners
- local authority children's services or children's centres
- housing support officers
- Jobcentre Plus
- organisations providing financial education

Policies and procedures

There are a wide variety of organisations and individuals involved in the delivery of the holiday activities and food programme including but not limited to:

- schools
- colleges
- providers
- private providers
- charities
- youth clubs
- community groups

Each of these will have its own policies and procedures, all of these groups must be able to demonstrate that safeguarding procedures and checks that they have in place for the holiday activities and food programme.

They must have relevant and appropriate policies and procedures for:

- safeguarding, including the recruitment of staff and volunteers
- health and safety
- relevant insurance policies
- accessibility and inclusiveness

Where appropriate, holiday clubs must also be compliant with the Ofsted requirements for working with children.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. We want every holiday club to be a safe and happy place for children to be with their parents, carers and families to feel confident that their child is well looked after and that robust safeguarding arrangements are in place.

Local authorities are statutorily responsible for safeguarding in relation to children in their area, as set out in Section 10, Section 11 and amended after children's act 2004 of Children Act 1989.

As set out in working together to safeguard children, safeguarding is defined for the purposes of this guidance as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's health and physical health or development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action if you identify children to be at risk of harm

Local authorities should ensure that their local safeguarding partners understand the local landscape and ensure that the local offer is in place. Local authorities and their programme are familiar with the guidance working to safeguard children and keep children safe in education.

There are a number of accredited organisations who can provide safeguarding and child protection training courses for those involved in working with children. We expect local authorities to be able to demonstrate that those involved in the delivery of the holiday activities and food programme in their area are competent and have received adequate training and support.

Holiday clubs in school settings

We know that schools are safe places and have robust safeguarding arrangements in place.

Where activities are provided by the governing body or proprietor of a school, under the direct supervision or management of their staff, school staff the school's child protection policy will apply.

Where the activities are provided separately by another body, the governing body or proprietor should seek assurance that the body concerned has appropriate safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures in place.

We recommend that anyone involved in the delivery of a holiday club in school settings is familiar with part 1 of keeping children safe in education.

Holiday clubs in out of school settings

By out of school settings we mean organisations or individuals that provide tuition, training, instruction or activities to children in England without their parents' or carers' knowledge. Such are not:

- schools
- colleges
- education settings providing alternative provision
- 16 to 19 academies
- providers caring for children that are registered with Ofsted or a childminder agency

These settings generally provide tuition, training, instruction or activities outside of school hours or during school holidays. Some of these settings may also operate in these same settings are can parties during school hours to help meet the needs of those in home education.

The guidance for providers running out of school settings on keeping children safe provides information on the DBS checks, safe recruitment, safeguarding and child protection and procedures providers should have in place for health and safety, safeguarding and child protection, staff suitability, and governance.

Volunteers

We know that in some settings, volunteers can play an important role in the delivery of holiday clubs.

Under no circumstances should a volunteer be left in charge of children or be left unsupervised with children.

programme in holiday clubs, this work will be done regularly and considered to be regulated activity. This means they will be subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check with barred list information.

There may be a very small number of volunteers who do not regularly carry out this role, and so it may not be considered as regulated activity. This means they may not be required to have an enhanced DBS check.

The guidance on regulated activity in relation to children contains definitions of what we mean by regular and regulated activity.

> **Example**
> A guest speaker or presenter visits a holiday activities and food programme club to deliver a talk on nature.
>
> The guest is escorted by staff at the club (who are DBS checked) while on the premises and is not left unsupervised with children at any time. In these circumstances, we would not expect a DBS check to be carried out.

To provide reassurance to parents, families and carers, we strongly recommend that **all** volunteers who are involved in the delivery of the holiday activities and food programme in holiday clubs should have an enhanced DBS check (which, where applicable, should include children's barred list information).

We do not recommend holiday clubs using volunteers that are not DBS checked, but if this occurs, it is the responsibility of the local authority to ensure that volunteers are not left alone and unsupervised with children in holiday clubs.

Other workers

All staff who are employed by holiday club providers funded through the holiday activities and food programme should be subject to an enhanced DBS check with barred list information.

Part 3 of keeping children safe in education sets out a clear process for safe recruitment. We recommend local authorities and holiday cubs providers follow this best practice when recruiting volunteers.

Ofsted registration

Holiday clubs may need to register with Ofsted but it is not a requirement for clubs and providers participating in the holiday activities and food programme. Guidance on the exemptions to Ofsted registration is available.

Families may be eligible for tax free childcare or the childcare costs element of Universal Credit. Through this families may be able to claim back up to 85% of their childcare costs if they are attending and paying for extra childcare at Ofsted registered settings.

Impact of coronavirus (COVID-19)

The delivery of the programme at Easter could potentially be impacted by coronavirus (COVID-19). Face-to-face delivery of holiday clubs may not be possible in the local authority's area and remote delivery of the programme may, in some circumstances, be more viable.

If the local authority cannot hold face-to-face holiday clubs as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19), the local authority may operate flexibly to ensure that eligible children still receive the type of support detailed in the aims of the programme.

For example, this may involve children receiving food parcels that provide healthy meals and activity packs along with access to online support if they are unable to congregate in holiday clubs due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

Our programme implementation team will work with local authorities to keep them up to date on the impact of changes as the programme progresses.

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