



Guidance

Holiday activities and food programme 2021

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Overview

On 8 November 2020, the government announced that the holiday activities and food programme will 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 the 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 increased costs (such as food and childcare) and reduced incomes. For some children that can lead to a holiday experience gap, with children from disadvantaged families:

- 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 have a positive impact on children and young people and that they work best when they:

- provide consistent and easily accessible enrichment activities
- cover more than just breakfast or lunch
- involve children (and parents) in food preparation

Who the programme is for

This holiday provision is for children who receive benefits-related free school meals. It will of course be optional for eligible children to attend this provision if they wish.

Local authorities are asked to ensure that the offer of free holiday club provision is available for all children eligible for free school meals in your area. We would not expect all eligible children to participate.

We also encourage local authorities to make the holiday clubs available to any children not eligible for free school meals, who can pay to attend.

Funding

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

Our grant funding will be informed by the:

- numbers of children eligible for 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 free school meals for the equivalent of at least 4 hours a day, 4 days a week, 6 weeks a year.

The funding should cover 4 weeks in the summer and a week's worth of provision in each of the Easter and Christmas holidays. This is an extension on the 4 summer weeks offered in our 2018 to 2020 holiday programmes.

Local authorities and their providers will have flexibility about how they deliver this level of provision to best serve the needs of children and families in their area. There will also be flexibility in 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 a 2-week period.

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

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

What's involved

Some local authorities may coordinate it themselves, 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 have played in this programme over the last 3 years. We encourage all local authorities to work with a wide range of partners in the delivery of this programme.

We will work with local authorities and other local and national partners over the coming months and will consider the support, guidance and best practice that we can make available based on our pilot phase.

Co-ordination of local programmes

The role of coordinating this holiday provision involves:

- mapping the holiday provision in your area in order to ensure that holiday provision exists and is supporting the areas of greatest need
- establishing a steering group to support implementation and delivery that should include representatives from a wide range of local bodies, including:
 - local police and other uniform services
 - local public health officials
 - school leaders
 - youth services
 - social services
 - charities and the voluntary sector
- bringing in wider support to enhance the local programme, for example drawing in funding from other sources such as philanthropists, sponsors, food providers as well as supermarkets and local businesses
- developing a local plan for provision in your area, based on what you know about local supply and demand
- ensuring that sufficient, adequate provision is available across your area for children with SEND or additional needs
- awarding funding to holiday club providers in order to ensure there is enough provision to meet demand
- supporting all providers to meet our framework of minimum standards including:
 - safeguarding requirements
 - meals that meet school food 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 sustainable basis
- promoting and advertising provision, including working with local schools and other agencies to encourage the most at need children to attend;
- working with other local services or agencies to ensure a joined-up and efficient approach, for example, signposting and sharing resources
- building local partnerships and sharing learning and good practice among local partners

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

- eat more healthily 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 not to be socially isolated
- have a greater knowledge of health and nutrition
- be more engaged with school and other local services

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