

Derby HAF Annual Report 2025-26



Contents

Page

3	Introduction
4	Governance and Structure
5	Partnership working
6	Case study: Derby Theatre & University of Derby's Recognising Potential Programme
7	Finance and Impact
8	Marketing and engagement
9	HAF Providers for 2025-26
10	Supporting children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
11	Case study: Roll With Us CIC
13	Quality assurance and training
14	Food provision
15	Nutrition and healthy lifestyles
16	Case study: Community One
18	Physical activity
19	Enrichment
20	Signposting
21	Plans for the 2026-27 HAF programme



Introduction

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme is a UK government initiative that provides free holiday club places to children from low-income families during the major school holidays. Funded by the Department for Education (DfE) and coordinated by local authorities, the programme provides free nutritious meals and enriching experiences to eligible children.

In 2024/25, 27.9% of children in Derby (aged under 16) were living in relative low-income families compared to 21.5% in the East Midlands and 19.3% in the UK.¹

Growing up in poverty can have a significant impact on children's health, education, wellbeing and future opportunities. Children living in poverty are more likely to experience poor physical and mental health, limited access to nutritious food, unstable housing and reduced opportunities to take part in social, cultural and recreational activities.

Financial pressures within families can also lead to increased stress and anxiety, affecting children's confidence, behaviour and emotional development. In education, poverty can contribute to lower attainment, reduced school attendance and fewer resources to support learning at home, which can widen inequalities over time. Socially, children may feel excluded from their peers or lack opportunities to build friendships and develop important life skills, potentially affecting their aspirations and long-term outcomes into adulthood.

School holidays place significant financial and emotional strain on low-income families. This creates a 'holiday experience gap,' where children from disadvantaged backgrounds face:

- Limited access to enrichment
- 'Unhealthy holidays' in terms of physical health and nutrition
- Social isolation.

There are numerous benefits for children who attend the HAF programme, and as part of our commitment to the Derby Poverty Strategy, we are working to ensure that all HAF providers deliver a high-quality experience which provides opportunities for children and young people to receive a regular nutritious meal, connect with others, and stay active in safe and supportive environments whilst also learning the importance of nutrition and healthy lifestyles.

"Derby City Council is proud of the continued success and growth of the Holiday Activities and Food programme, which provides valuable support to children, young people and families across the city during school holidays. Working with a wide range of local partners, we are able to offer inclusive, high-quality activities alongside healthy and nutritious meals, helping children stay active, build friendships and enjoy new experiences in a safe and welcoming environment."

"The programme supports the ambitions of the Derby Promise by helping to give every child the best possible start in life, while also contributing to the goals of the Derby Poverty Strategy. By reducing barriers to opportunities, supporting family wellbeing and strengthening community connections, the HAF programme is making a positive and lasting difference for families across Derby."



Paul Hezelgrave
Cabinet Member for Children,
Young People and Skills

¹ Percentage of children (aged under 16) living in relative low-income families, Before Housing Costs, by Local Authority, FYE 2025. [Department for Work and Pensions \(DWP\)](#).

Governance and Structure

The HAF Programme Board meets quarterly and is responsible for steering and monitoring the work of the HAF programme for Derby.



**HAF Strategic Lead /
Senior Programme Manager**
Derby City Council (Chair)



HAF Co-ordinator
Derby City Council



Chief Executive Officer
Community Action Derby



Operations Director
Community Action Derby



**Communications and
Marketing Officer**
Derby City Council



Group Accountant
Derby City Council



**Childcare, Family
Information Service &
SEND Manager**
Derby City Council



**Head of Climate and
Environment**
Derby City Council



Public Health Manager
Derby City Council



**Wraparound
Programme
Manager**
Derby City Council



Head of Early Help
Derby City Council



**Children and
Young People's
Strategic Lead**
Active Derbyshire



**Secondary School
Headteacher**

The HAF programme is embedded in the wider work of the Learning, Inclusion and Skills Department of Derby City Council, providing opportunities for connections with early years providers, schools, wraparound provision and the city wide Local Area Inclusion Partnership.

Partnership working

The continued collaboration with Community Action Derby continues to be a key factor in the success of the HAF programme. By partnering closely with Derby's Voluntary and Community Sector, activities were delivered in settings that were accessible, local, and familiar to families. Working with organisations that are already well-established and trusted within their communities helped to ensure that provision felt welcoming and relevant. As a result, the programme continued to improve its inclusivity and alignment with diverse cultural needs, whilst also linking families to a wider range of community-based support services.



"The HAF programme has been more than just holiday provision, it has been a vital support system for families facing rising cost of living pressures. By providing nutritious meals, safe spaces, and meaningful activities, we have not only supported children's wellbeing and development but also eased financial strain on households and strengthened community connections. The impact extends far beyond the child, reaching entire families and reinforcing the importance of accessible, community-led support that families are connecting into all year round."

Amjad Ashraf

Co-Founder / Operations Lead,
Community One

Throughout the 2025–26 period, the HAF programme invested more than £1.2 million into Derby's Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector. This local investment has helped to bolster organisational sustainability, as well as creating new jobs and volunteering roles. In addition, this funding has allowed local community organisations to further increase their impact by facilitating essential staff training and securing key accreditations, such as food business certification and OFSTED registration.



"We are proud to continue our partnership with Derby City Council in delivering the Holiday Activities and Food Programme. The growing number and diversity of community providers across the city has strengthened the HAF offer significantly; extending the impact into a wider range of communities and ensuring inclusive access to engaging activities and nutritious food during the school holidays. We greatly value the organisations and volunteers, whose ongoing commitment is essential to delivering this vital support within our communities."



Kim Harper

CEO of Community
Action Derby

Case study

Derby Theatre & University of Derby's Recognising Potential Programme

Derby Theatre's winter provision hosted a collaboration with the University of Derby's medical department and their Recognising Potential Programme, an innovative outreach programme designed to widen participation and support and develop aspiring doctors and healthcare professionals across Derbyshire, particularly those from backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in medicine.

A team of healthcare students provided interactive workshops on dental hygiene, mental wellbeing and basic life support, alongside discussions about careers in the NHS. The programme was extremely well received by both young people and organisers, with some of the attendees reporting that they subsequently felt inspired to follow careers in the NHS.



"Over the past five years, our HAF provision has supported sustained engagement, with children, siblings and families accessing further opportunities beyond each holiday programme. We are also proud to be part of the wider community movement in Stockbrook, led by local community leaders who consistently go above and beyond to support families in the area."

Tom Craig

Community & Learning Producer,
Derby Theatre



"Through this work, we aim to help young people to see medicine and healthcare as achievable career pathways, and it is our wider civic responsibility to support the long-term health, wellbeing and prosperity of Derby and Derbyshire.

By engaging with children and young people early, building confidence, and providing authentic experiences and role models, we aim to develop a future workforce that is rooted in, understands, and is committed to serving our local communities. We are proud to work alongside Derby City Council and our regional partners to support social mobility, improve health outcomes, and inspire the next generation to recognise their own potential."

Dr. Runa Saha

Founding Dean of Medicine,
University of Derby



Finance and impact

Derby City Council receives funding for the HAF programme from the Department for Education. The Department for Education has invested over £200 million each year nationally, for the three years of the HAF programme. The funding is allocated to local authorities based on the number of children who receive benefits-related free school meals.

For the 2025-26 financial year, Derby was awarded £1,464,681

Direct grants to HAF providers	£1,238,621
Administration Derby City Council	£73,238
Administration Community Action Derby	£73,238
Other costs Marketing, communications, transport, provider training, booking systems	£79,584

Impact

5553	4,318	1041
children supported	primary aged	of which had special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
1235	308	47
secondary aged	of which had special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)	providers funded and supported
558	Working with professional partners across the city, including social workers, family support workers, and school SEND teams, we supported an additional 558 children and young people who may otherwise have been isolated or at risk during the holidays; including children in care, refugees and asylum seekers, and children with additional needs	



Marketing and engagement

The HAF programme continues to benefit from engagement across Derby through branding and marketing; utilising lamppost banners and digital billboards that are strategically positioned along main transport routes throughout the city. Derby City Council's marketing team also supports the programme through targeted social media activity, with individual providers also working tirelessly to promote their activities within their local communities.

During 2025 and the early part of 2026, the HAF team had a presence at a range of events to facilitate meeting with partners and families to champion the HAF programme. These included; Derby City Inclusion Partnership conference, School Roadshows, Derby Promise events, Derby Homes events, and a number of targeted school workshops and other community activities.

For the Easter 2025 HAF delivery period and beyond, we introduced the Holiday Activities booking system. This system allows for greater accuracy in identifying HAF eligibility, as it takes Free School Meals (FSM) data directly from each school's information system and issues each eligible child with a booking code. These codes link families directly into the system, where they can view and book HAF activities across the city. Providers can add descriptions and images to market their holiday clubs, as well as having access to unique URL links and QR codes that they can use within their wider marketing. These direct links can also be sent to schools who can then share them via their messaging platforms.



"Being able to engage with young people and their families within local communities, gives us the invaluable opportunity to hear first hand what they need from the HAF programme in our city."

Derby HAF Team



"Since the Holiday Activities system was introduced, Soccerstars has reached a much wider audience. We've welcomed children who had never attended one of our Holiday Clubs before, and many have gone on to re-book because they enjoyed the course so much. We believe this increased reach is thanks to the new system, which has helped us connect with more parents than ever before."

SoccerstarsUK



HAF Providers for 2025-26

We are proud to collaborate with a diverse range of providers, from local community groups to schools, leisure centres and the football club, allowing the HAF programme in Derby to offer a variety of engaging opportunities for all children.

During 25/26, we also worked with six organisations who delivered provision specifically for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).



Supporting children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Demand for holiday club places for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) remained high. The majority of the professional referrals into the HAF programme during 2025-26 were made in support of children and young people with additional needs who were not eligible for free school meals but would be vulnerable or isolated during the holidays without some additional support.

During the 2025/26 HAF delivery period, we were privileged to collaborate with a range of specialist SEND providers in Derby, each dedicated to supporting children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities:

In addition to specialist provision, many of our HAF providers employ experienced, qualified staff who facilitate the inclusion of children with additional needs within mainstream settings. These inclusive environments foster social integration and provide vital opportunities for children to build confidence alongside their peers.



Photo courtesy of SoccerstarsUK



"I feel so proud that my child has been able to attend for the whole 4 hours. He has lots of anger and anxiety. Thank you for giving him the chance and I'm so pleased he felt safe enough to do the whole session."



Photo courtesy of Flourish & Thrive



"My child has never been able to attend any clubs before, to see him with other children makes me so happy. He's had a fab day."



"The HAF scheme is a lifeline for me allowing me to continue to work through the holidays, as other holiday clubs are not able to meet need."



Photo courtesy of Mr G's Holiday Club

Case study: Roll with Us CIC



A unique and imaginative offer within the HAF programme captured the attention of young people through the world of Dungeons & Dragons. Delivered in small, supportive groups, this provision created a space where participants felt comfortable expressing themselves, building friendships and developing confidence in a way that more traditional activities may not always allow.

For many of the young people attending, this was their first positive experience of a holiday club. Some had previously found it difficult to engage in larger or more structured environments, but the welcoming and flexible nature of the sessions helped remove those barriers. The small group setting encouraged meaningful interaction, giving participants the time and space to share ideas, collaborate on storytelling and truly feel heard.

Dungeons & Dragons provides more than just entertainment. Through character creation, problem-solving and collaborative storytelling, young people develop communication skills, creativity and resilience. The shared interest in the game also helped foster a strong sense of belonging, with participants connecting over a common passion and forming friendships that extended beyond the sessions themselves.



“To see the change from when I dropped them off to when I picked them up was mind blowing, totally unexpected.”

Case study: Roll with Us CIC

One of the most encouraging outcomes was the enthusiasm shown by attendees to take their involvement even further. Several young people expressed a desire to start their own Dungeons & Dragons groups or clubs, keen to introduce others to the game and build their own communities. This sense of ownership and leadership is a powerful reflection of the confidence they gained through the provision.

Parents and guardians also noticed a significant difference. Feedback highlighted improvements in mood, increased energy levels and a greater willingness to engage socially. Many shared how their children looked forward to attending each session, with some describing a renewed sense of excitement and purpose during the holidays.

This Dungeons & Dragons provision demonstrates how offering diverse and inclusive activities within HAF can open doors for young people who may otherwise feel excluded. By creating a safe, engaging and interest-led environment, it not only supports wellbeing and social development but also empowers young people to explore their identities, build connections and shape their own future opportunities.



“My child had never played before and now they want to join the school club.”



“I wish my school had a D&D club, I wonder if I could ask my teacher to help me set one up?”



“There’s a club at my school, this does make me think maybe I can join.”



“You sure you’ve not given me another kid! Seriously, the change, they’re happy?!”



Quality assurance and training

Maintaining high standards and ensuring our HAF offer is tailored to the specific requirements of Derby's young people is fundamental to the programme's success.

During 2025 HAF delivery, all Derby city HAF providers were visited at least once by members of the HAF team. These Quality Assurance visits ensured that all required standards were being met but also offered a chance to support providers in any areas where they needed advice or guidance.

Providers were assessed against the Department for Education's Framework of Standards, which cover:

- Food provision
- Awareness and understanding of healthy eating
- Signposting and referrals
- Enriching activities
- Physical activities
- Policies & procedures
- Safeguarding
- Accessibility and inclusiveness.

We ensured consistently high standards by offering HAF providers access to a range of targeted training sessions and courses, including:

- Basic sports first aid courses
- Level 2 Food Hygiene online training
- Designated Safeguarding Officer course (in-person)
- Safeguarding online training
- Nutritional education / activity workshops
- Neurodiversity in HAF workshop.



"The training programme has contributed significantly to reducing stigma surrounding neurodivergence and mental wellbeing, while also increasing the depth of knowledge and understanding among participating providers."

Rosemary Peberdy
ID Derby



Food provision

Every participant who attended the HAF programme was provided with a nutritious meal, with a focus on offering a hot food option whenever possible. To achieve this, HAF providers cooked their own meals on-site in some cases, whilst others collaborated with various community-based food partners to deliver high-quality, culturally appropriate menus.

Many programmes successfully integrated children into the food preparation process, offering interactive experiences to build essential life skills and a greater understanding of nutrition. Our winter family offer also provided an additional opportunity for eligible families to experience festive activities and enjoy a meal together.

Throughout HAF delivery in the city, our providers offer a range of healthy snacks in addition to the main meal and regularly go above and beyond to provide food parcels to take home at the end of sessions. Providers will also connect families with support services in the city, including food banks and warm hubs.



“My kids tried food they won’t eat at home.”



“The red ones [strawberries] are yummy!”



“I loved the strawberries and watermelon we had every day!”



“I really appreciated that food was halal and healthy. It takes a lot of pressure off families during the holidays.”



“The food was really yummy - can we have it again?”

**Over 26,000
meals served**



Nutrition and healthy lifestyles

Our HAF providers excelled in planning innovative and exciting ways to incorporate nutritional education and the promotion of healthy lifestyles within their HAF clubs.

The range of engaging activities on offer included:

- **Hands-on nutrition:** Planting fruit and vegetables, smoothie contests, and 'bush tucker' trials, giving children the opportunity to try new foods.
- **Creative food play:** Building fruit kebabs and rice cake faces allowed children to have fun with a range of healthy foods.
- **Science in action:** Exploring models of the digestive system, supported by medical professionals.
- **Being inspired:** designing meal plans, learning from professional athletes, creating social media reels showing their creations.

Providers working with older children were also able to integrate wellbeing sessions into their HAF activities, covering topics such as mental health, online safety, and drug and alcohol awareness.



"We made poo, it was disgusting but I learnt about the digestive system which was so cool."



"I played games, drew pictures, and learned about healthy food. I didn't know sugar was in so many drinks!"



Photo courtesy of Bridge the Gap



St Werburghs Church

Case study: Community One

From Derby Public Health Annual Report to Real-World Impact

(Author: Celia Edwards-Grant, Public Health Support Officer)

When Derby's Director of Public Health's Annual Report focused on climate change and its health co-benefits, the ambition was to spark collective action – to turn evidence and recommendations into meaningful change across our city. Seeing this vision come to life through the HAF programme at the Derby Pakistan Community Centre was a powerful reminder of what can happen when system-wide priorities ripple into communities.



Case study: Community One

Over summer 2025, children immersed themselves in activities inspired directly by the report's themes. Across year groups, the programme combined fun, learning, creativity, and hope – all rooted in understanding how we can take better care of both our health and our environment.

- **Environmental learning for all ages:** Children explored the links between human behaviour and environmental impact; from the air we breathe to the food we eat.
- **Experiencing nature first-hand:** Children visited Allestree Park with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, learning about protecting biodiversity and the simple but profound benefits of being outdoors for wellbeing.
- **Future Derby projects:** Children designed visions of a 'Green, Sustainable City' with eco-friendly transport, renewable energy, rooftop gardens, locally grown food, and healthier lifestyles. Their ideas echoed the report's messages: active travel, clean air, and climate resilience.
- **Creative innovation:** Children designed eco-buggies and sustainable vehicles, tackling pollution and extreme weather with imagination and ingenuity – turning climate challenges into opportunities for innovation.
- **Digital futures:** Linking sustainability with skills for tomorrow, pupils used AI and coding to create apps and games, including one to reduce online bullying. The recognition that most of their future jobs don't yet exist shows the importance of preparing young people with both environmental and digital literacy.

- **Cultural and community enrichment:**

Experiences like African drumming and trips to the seaside broadened perspectives, built confidence, and deepened connections.

What was striking was how children translated the technical language of climate change and sustainability into accessible, everyday actions: walking instead of driving, recycling properly, eating local food instead of takeaways. These are the very recommendations made in the annual report – brought to life, owned by the next generation.

The HAF programme shows that when system partners act on shared priorities, real change can happen. The report set out a vision; the community translated it into lived experience.



Physical activity

Physical activity remains a central element of the HAF programme and during the year, children and young people in attendance had the opportunity to take part in an ever-growing variety of exciting sports and physical activities, including:

- Football
- Boxing
- Netball
- Swimming
- Cricket
- Basketball
- Dodgeball
- Wrestling
- Football Darts
- Axe Throwing
- Gymnastics
- Bikes
- Scooters
- Obstacle courses
- Dance
- Orienteering
- Archery
- Touch Rugby
- Athletics
- Trampolining
- Ice skating



"My son enjoys football, so he liked attending the holiday football club he always had a smile when I collected him."



"I never normally get to go swimming because no one gets time to take me I really loved it."



"This was the first time I rode a bike that was my size!"

Enrichment

The 2025/ 26 HAF programme has continued to offer the children and young people of Derby access to an exciting variety of enriching activities, including:

- Music lessons
- DJ workshops
- Indoor climbing
- Graffiti art
- Music production
- Escape rooms
- Theatre trips
- Cinema trips
- Pantomime trips
- Small animal handling
- Wildlife walks
- Theme Park trips
- Ten pin bowling
- Science experiments
- Paintballing
- Museum Trips
- Animal Encounters
- Woodwork
- Slime making workshops
- Henna art
- Tie-dyeing



"My child cannot believe that they had a Santa visit and a trip in the same day!"



Photo courtesy of Flourish & Thrive



Photo courtesy of Derby City Boxing Academy



"I held a massive python with my friends, it took 5 of us to hold it and it was still too long."



"It was a pleasure for my boys to take part in the woodwork activity! They really enjoyed it!"



"DJ lessons were so good, it was really fun."



"This programme has been amazing for my children. We wouldn't normally be able to afford trips like ice skating or the cinema, so this meant a lot to our family."

Signposting

The strong partnership between Derby City Council and Community Action ensures that HAF providers have access to a wide range of information and support.

Community Action continues to offer a citywide Cost of Living website providing a central hub for providers to signpost families to essential support services. Community Action also coordinates the city's Community Asset Network, with over 50 community venues that offered residents Warm Hubs to enjoy a hot meal and access practical support such as energy and food vouchers throughout 2025 and into the early part of 2026.



“Our HAF programme has had a massive impact on the community. Throughout the school holidays, we have seen more and more families coming forward who are relying on support for food and meals.

The programme is doing far more than simply providing activities — it is helping to reduce food insecurity, support children's wellbeing, and relieve some of the pressure many parents are currently facing during difficult times.

At Flourish and Thrive, we feel incredibly honoured to be able to support these vulnerable children and their families, and to provide a safe, welcoming environment where families feel valued, supported, and cared for.”

Gill Studdard

Flourish & Thrive

HAF providers in Derby utilise a range of resources to signpost families to further support services, such as those offered by Community Action as well as links to other city-wide offers. Many have posters on display which contain this useful information, whilst others add to this by sending information out by email at the end of their HAF days. A large number of organisations that deliver HAF have strong connections with their communities, and families feel confident to ask for this support where needed.



“I had no idea some places offered free or £1 meals for kids, this really helped us out over the holidays!”



“We received a lot of positive responses to the further signposting information we've been emailing out at the end of each day. One of the most popular resources shared was the list of places where children can eat for free or for just £1.”

SoccerstarsUK



Plans for the 2026-27 HAF programme

The confirmation of a further three years HAF funding from April 2026, allows us the opportunity to expand and develop the HAF programme within Derby. We are excited to further build on the existing successes of the programme, with plans to:

- Strengthen links between the HAF programme and the Best Start in Life strategy, through the delivery of more early years HAF provision within the city.
- Working on targeted projects to support children and their families during the transition into school.
- Connect with the Crisis and Resilience Fund programme in order to ensure support to families in need is effectively co-ordinated.
- Improve links between HAF and school aged childcare, including the wraparound childcare programme and breakfast clubs.
- Build on the links between HAF and special schools across the city.
- Connect HAF with the Derby Promise – an initiative that enables Derby’s children and young people to access careers experiences, build their skills, and explore the future of work.
- Continue the support and capacity of the voluntary and community sector to ensure future sustainability.



Photo courtesy of Derby Theatre

We can give you this information in any other way, style or language that will help you access it. Please contact us on **01332 956839** or **derby.gov.uk/signing-service**

Punjabi

ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਅਸੀਂ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਵੀ ਹੋਰ ਤਰੀਕੇ ਨਾਲ, ਕਿਸੇ ਵੀ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਬੋਲੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਦੇ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ, ਜਿਹੜੀ ਇਸ ਤੱਕ ਪਹੁੰਚ ਕਰਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੋਵੇ। ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਇੱਥੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ: **01332 956839** ਜਾਂ **derby.gov.uk/signing-service**

Polish

Aby ułatwić Państwu dostęp do tych informacji, możemy je Państwu przekazać w innym formacie, stylu lub języku. Prosimy o kontakt: **01332 956839** lub **derby.gov.uk/signing-service**

Slovak

Túto informáciu vám môžeme poskytnúť iným spôsobom, štýlom alebo v inom jazyku, ktorý vám pomôže k jej sprístupneniu. Prosím, kontaktujte nás na tel. č.: **01332 956839** alebo na stránke **derby.gov.uk/signing-service**

Urdu

یہ معلومات ہم آپ کو کسی دیگر ایسے طریقے، انداز اور زبان میں مہیا کر سکتے ہیں جو اس تک رسائی میں آپ کی مدد کرے۔ براہ کرم **01332 956839** یا **derby.gov.uk/signing-service** پر ہم سے رابطہ کریں



Derby City Council

Derby City Council
The Council House Corporation Street Derby DE1 2FS
www.derby.gov.uk