

Holiday Activities and Food Programme

2025 Service Specification for Prospective Delivery Partners



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Holiday Activities and Food Programme – Overview

Since 2018, the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme has provided support to children in receipt of free school meals through holiday periods. Following successful pilots between 2018 and 2020, the Department for Education (DfE) have committed over £200 million each year since 2021. The HAF Programme has now been extended to cover 2025 with [updated guidance](#).

The funding provided to Croydon Council requires the local authority to coordinate and provide free holiday provision, including healthy food and enriching activities. The Holiday Activities and Food Programme must be delivered during the Easter, Summer and Winter holidays.

The HAF programme funding is primarily for school aged children from reception to year 11 (inclusive) who receive benefits-related free school meals (FSM). Benefits-related free school meals are available to pupils if their parents are in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits and have a claim verified by their school.

Please Note: Since September 2023, all children in London state-funded primary schools now receive a free school meal under the universal infant free school meals (UFSM) policy. Pupils who receive a free meal under UFSM must also be in receipt of benefits-related FSM to be able to access a place on the HAF programme.

All HAF providers should deliver a high-quality experience that will result in children:

- receiving healthy and nutritious meals
- maintaining a healthy level of physical activity
- being happy, having fun and meeting new friends
- developing a greater understanding of food, nutrition and other health-related issues
- taking part in fun and engaging activities that support their development
- feeling safe and secure
- getting access to the right support services
- returning to school feeling engaged and ready to learn

Introduction to the Holiday Activity and Food Programme 2025 - Croydon

The HAF Programme in Croydon provides grant funding to organisations able to deliver holiday provision to children in receipt of benefits-related free school meals in Croydon.

Since 2019, Croydon Council have been delivering the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme on behalf of the Department for Education. The DfE initially chose Croydon as a pilot LA for the programme, before a national roll out in 2021.

Croydon Council has collaborated with schools, community groups, faith-based organisations, voluntary service entities, and childcare services providers to deliver the HAF programme in previous years. This service specification lays out the details for 2025 which a prospective delivery partner for the HAF programme should be aware of including details on how to apply for the programme and outlining the subsequent steps required for participation.

For 2025, Croydon Council seek applications for the delivery of provision for the Summer and Winter holiday periods. The deadline to apply for both holiday periods is: 23.59 on the 18th May 2025. Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application ahead of each respective holiday period. Late applications will not be accepted.

Croydon Council seek applications from delivery partners able to offer 'mainstream HAF provision' and/or a SEND specific provision to support children with medium-high additional needs.

Croydon Council continue to seek Delivery improvements year upon year. For 2025 a strong emphasis will be placed around the following focus areas:

- Attendance (and Non-attendance rates) of children and young people
- Open access provision where HAF spaces are offered alongside other attendance opportunities.
- Additional SEN Availability across Croydon
- High-quality venues which offer the best opportunities for all attendees
- High-quality staff and volunteers for all provision.

Croydon Council want to continue to work with the very best partner organisations in delivering the HAF programme, and welcome applications from both previous delivery partners and those who have not delivered in Croydon before. Details of how organisations will be marked and selected is given in Appendix 1) Marking Criteria.

Holiday Activities and Food Programme – Croydon Requirements

Dates of Delivery

Summer Dates

For Summer 2025, Croydon require all providers to deliver for four consecutive days per week, across a 1, 2 or 4 week programme. If delivering a 2 or 4 week programme, it must be run on consecutive weeks.

Clubs can choose to run from Monday – Thursday or Tuesday – Friday between the Monday 28th July 2025 and Friday 29th of August 2025. All clubs delivering in the final week of August will be required to run from Tuesday-Friday due to the bank holiday on Monday 25th August.

Provision must be for a minimum of four hours a day.

Winter Dates

For Winter 2025, all providers must deliver 4 days' worth of provision between Monday 22nd December 2025 and Friday 2nd January 2026. Provision must be for a minimum of four hours a day.

Spaces Allocation

All applicants must state the number of holiday club spaces they intend to offer at each club/session.

Organisations which are new to delivery in Croydon or have not delivered after Easter 2023 will initially be able to apply for a maximum of 35 daily spaces.

Croydon Council reserves the right to adjust any organisation's requested space allocation if the application reflects unrealistic projections with reference to previous delivery or in relation to any other significant concern.

Programme Standards

All clubs must meet the programme standards outlined below:

1. Healthy Food/Meals

Each Holiday Activity and Food Provider across Croydon must provide at least one main meal which meets the [school food standards](#) during each session. Croydon Council have an expectation

that **hot meals** will be provided throughout the programme, with cold food provided only in exceptional circumstances and agreed by the HAF Team.

All food must meet with food preparation regulations, taking into account allergies, dietary requirements, and religious and/or cultural requirements.

Croydon Council welcome organisations who are able to deliver more than one meal per day to children and young people attending HAF provision.

2. Enriching/Physical Activities

Holiday clubs must provide fun, enriching and age-appropriate activities that equip children with opportunities to develop or consolidate skills or knowledge and to try out new experiences. Holiday Clubs are required to deliver the equivalent of at least one hours' worth of Physical Activity per day across their programme, that meet the [Physical Activity Guidelines](#).

3. Nutritional Education and Healthy Lifestyles

Holiday clubs are encouraged to include nutritional education as a key component of their programme and be aimed at improving the knowledge and awareness of healthy eating for children. For example, this can be in the form of workshops, and could include activities such as getting children involved in food preparation and cooking, growing fruit and vegetables, and taste tests. Where appropriate, opportunities to support children and young people in learning about healthy lifestyles could cover, the negative impact of vapes, cigarettes, drugs, etc.

4. Signposting and Referrals

Holiday Activity and Food Providers must provide information, signposting or referrals to other services and support that would benefit the children who attend their provision and their families. Providers must also ensure that children and families are aware of the breadth of other Holiday Activity and Food programmes they could attend within Croydon.

5. Accessibility and Inclusiveness

All holiday club providers must ensure their programmes are inclusive and accessible to children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Providers delivering mainstream provision are expected to cater for children with low to medium level needs and must make reasonable adjustments in their programmes to support their full participation. Providers should make every effort to adapt activities as needed and ensure staff are appropriately trained to support a range of additional needs.

6. Environment and Sustainability

All organisations delivering the programme should consider how their provision can be more environmentally friendly and sustainable. For example, providers may wish to consider:

- minimising the use of single-use plastics
- where possible using locally sourced food and ingredients
- making use of food surplus organisations
- ensuring there is a wide range of recycling and compost facilities for waste
- growing fruit and vegetables and showing how they can be used and cooked
- encouraging uniform banks and exchange schemes

It is recommended that all applicants consult the latest HAF Programme guidance issued by the Department for Education prior to making an application [updated guidance](#).

Programme eligibility for children and young people

The HAF programme offers holiday places primarily for children living or attending a school in Croydon who are in receipt of benefits-related Free School Meals. A small percentage of places may also be made available to children not in receipt of Benefits-related free school meals, and this process is administered by the child's school and through professional referrals.

Additionally, Croydon Council also encourages providers to make holiday provision available to children not eligible for free school meals, who can pay to attend. This might be through operating a HAF club as bespoke provision, or as part of already existing holiday provision in the area, with a likelihood of a mixed arrangement depending on the local supply and demand for provision.

SEN/Additional Needs

Applications from organisations able to deliver specialist SEN provision are warmly welcomed.

The Council's expectation is that all applicants will be able to support children with low-medium levels of SEN and/or disability, and children should be considered on a case-by-case basis. It is understood that not all children will be suitable for some programmes, but every effort should be made to be inclusive wherever possible.

Where children require further support on a programme, small, additional SEND payments can be sought from the HAF programme to cover the cost of a 1:1 worker through the Additional Support Fund.

In addition, Croydon Council are seeking specific programmes across the borough who could cater for children with medium/high levels of Special Educational Needs. The Council recognise there is a greater cost attached with running this type of provision and would expect this to be focused

entirely on catering for additional needs, with higher staffing ratios, use of appropriate accessible venues, and a tailored programme to suit those attending.

Booking System

Croydon Council partner with HolidayActivities to manage eligibility, take bookings, and provide attendance data on the programme.

All Croydon schools allocate vouchers to children in receipt of benefits-related free school meals plus 15% of discretionary vouchers. Parents/families of eligible children will receive and email/text with a unique voucher code for their child, giving access to the Booking Platform. Parents can book up to 16 sessions for Summer and up to 4 sessions for Winter.

All providers are required to use HolidayActivities to administer bookings, and on-boarding [support](#) is available as part of this.

Application Process

Eligibility

Grant funding for the Holiday Activities and Food programme is available to community and voluntary organisations, not-for-profit companies, registered charities, constituted organisations, social enterprises, schools, and private companies operating in Croydon.

As part of the application process, and to confirm your eligibility to receive public money, you will be required to submit the following:

- Copy of Public Liability Insurance documentation (minimum £5 million)
- Copy of Employer Liability Insurance documentation (minimum £1 million)
- Safeguarding Policy
- Recruitment Policy
- Health and Safety Policy including Food Handling Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Privacy Policy/GDPR policy

In addition, all successful applicants must submit the following risk assessments ahead of delivery

- Venue Risk Assessment
- Programme Risk Assessment

Croydon Council expect all provision to be supported by relevant and up to date policies and procedures that are adhered to by all staff who will be involved in the delivery of HAF provision. All submitted policies should be dated and signed within the last 3 years.

Our expectation is that all delivery staff are inducted and trained in accordance with the policies and procedures to ensure the highest of delivery standards, especially for safeguarding, DBS checks, health and safety and equal opportunities.

Applications that do not include the required supporting documents will not be considered. If any documentation submitted is deemed insufficient this may also result in an application not being considered.

Please note: if you are a Croydon maintained school or academy, you only need to submit the following supporting documents from the above checklist along with your application:

- Programme Risk Assessment
- Food Handling Policy (if using alternative caterers to normal school provision)

Applications and any submitted supporting documentation must be the applicant's own work. Content produced using artificial intelligence should not be submitted without proper review. We reserve the right to reject applications that we believe rely on artificial intelligence tools without meaningful human input and oversight.

To receive HAF funding from Croydon Council, a project must:

- Take place mainly within the borough, and benefit children and young people who live or go to school within Croydon.
- Be inclusive and accessible to all children receiving benefits-related FSM and have regard to protected characteristics, including children with SEND.
- Be delivered for the equivalent of at least 4 hours a day for 4 days a week during Winter, and for 4, 8 or 16 days in the Summer.

HAF grant funding is public money. HAF funding will not support projects or activities that cannot evidence how they will meet the identified needs of the beneficiaries.

Furthermore, funding cannot be used for:

- Projects which are purely research based or not focused on direct delivery.
- Costs of ongoing staff who are not working directly on the project – including salaries of permanent or fixed term staff.
- Costs incurred in putting the application together.
- VAT that you can recover.
- Loans or interest payments.
- Purchase of alcohol or illegal substances.

Funding Available

For 2025, organisations will have the opportunity to apply for a maximum of £30,000 for Summer 2025, and up to £7,500 for Winter 2025. **These are the maximum grant amounts available for the total application for each holiday period and cannot be exceeded.**

Funding limits are based on the length of delivery as follows:

- 1 week (4 days): up to £7,500
- 2 weeks (8 days): up to £15,000
- 4 weeks (16 days): up to £30,000

Organisations can only submit one application per holiday period. The only exception to this will be where an applicant can deliver specific SEND provision on the programme, in addition to a mainstream offer.

How to Apply

To submit an application, all interested organisations must complete the [online application form](#) [here](#) and submit the required supporting documentation to:

HAFprogramme@croydon.gov.uk
by
23.59pm on Sunday 18th May 2025.

During the application process you will be asked to provide the following detail:

- Details about your programme, including venue location, chosen dates of delivery and session lengths
- The total number of holiday spaces (no. of days x spaces per day)
- How your programme will meet the HAF Programme Standards
- How your programme will support children with additional needs
- How you will reach eligible children and families on FSM to attend your programme
- Safeguarding arrangements
- The total funding you are requesting, including a budget breakdown

Whilst the council encourages providers to work together in the setup of their own programmes, applications from multiple organisations for the delivery of one camp are not currently sought.

Provisional HAF 2025 timeline

Activity	Date
Applications for 2025 open	Monday 28 th April 2025
Applicants Engagement Event	Wednesday 30 th April at 11:00-12:00 via Microsoft Teams

Application Deadline	23.59 Sunday 18 th May 2025
Summer Decision communicated	Early June 2025
Summer Provision	28 th July 2025
Winter decision communicated	Late October 2025
Winter Provision	W/C 22 nd December

Outcome of your Application

Following a successful grant application, Croydon Council will issue a conditional offer letter and service level grant agreement for prospective providers to sign and return. This will set out the terms and conditions for which funding has been awarded.

Following an unsuccessful application, Croydon Council will inform applicants at the earliest opportunity. Croydon Council anticipates funding many organisations across the borough and, therefore, formal feedback may not be possible for all unsuccessful applications.

There is no appeals process for unsuccessful applications, though you can make a complaint via the council's formal complaints procedure if you believe due practice has not been followed.

Payments / Terms

Grants will be paid based on an 80-20 split per holiday. The grant payment schedule for each successful organisation will be:

Payment One – Up Front Payment

- Payment date: (upon receipt of a signed agreement)
- Value: 80% of the grant total

Payment Two - Post Delivery

- Payment date: (upon satisfactory project completion and timely submission of completed programme monitoring/evaluation report)
- Value: 20% of the grant total

Any unspent funding will have to be returned to Croydon Council. The second payment may be adjusted based on bookings achieved and/or to take into account any underspend. If the underspend exceeds the second grant payment, Croydon Council will require the return of the funds.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Providers will need to complete a programme evaluation which will include confirmation of how grant funds were spent and outcomes achieved. Croydon Council reserve the right to request invoices or receipts to evidence that HAF funding has been spent for the purposes intended. For the same reason, Croydon Council reserve the right to audit project delivery in relation to funds spent.

Information required may include, but is not limited to:

- Outcomes/records of activities (organisations will be asked to evidence how delivery has met the programme standards)
- Participants/parental feedback
- Case studies and photographs of activities (where possible, and relevant approval has been sought)
- Completed HAF Programme Budget Monitoring Spreadsheet
- A breakdown of any unspent grant funding

Croydon Council carry out robust monitoring of provision, with regular visits to providers. All providers must be available for a visit when requested.

All data and information collected by providers should be collected in strict adherence to GDPR.

Marking Criteria

All applications will be scored against the below HAF Programme standards.

- Daily healthy (preferably hot) food offer for children that meets the school food standards - [School food standards: resources for schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/school-food-standards)
- Enriching activities that allow for children to have new experiences and develop new skills, have fun and socialise.
- Daily physical activities that meet the physical activity guidelines for children of at least one hour per day of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity - [Physical activity guidelines for children and young people - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/physical-activity-guidelines-for-children)
- Nutritional education for children 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, taste tests, discussing food and nutrition or including food and nutrition in other activities

Price

The cost will be calculated on a 'per child per day' basis by dividing the total grant requested by the total number of places offered by the applicant. While value for money remains an important consideration, it is acknowledged that some providers may incur higher costs in order to deliver high-quality food and activities.

To ensure fairness, the cost element of your bid will be scored based on where it sits compared to all other bids. The 10% of bids with the lowest cost per child per day will automatically receive full marks (25) for value for money. All other bids will receive proportionately fewer marks depending on how their cost per child per day compares, with higher costs receiving lower scores. This method helps us balance affordability with quality while making the process transparent for everyone.

Applications with a cost per child per day that exceeds 40% above the average (mean) of all submissions received will not be considered for funding.

Each applicant will be required to submit a financial breakdown in the form of estimated costs to demonstrate how the grant is to be spent as part of the application process. The cost per child per day figure will account for 25% of the overall score.

SEND/Additional Needs

Applicants delivering specialist provision for children with SEND/Additional needs where over 85% of places are for children with medium-high level of need (where children hold an EHC plan) will be grouped separately from mainstream providers based on the higher cost needed to accommodate this cohort (see information below). These applications will be evaluated against one another to encourage good value for money in the service being offered.

All applicants are expected to cater for children with Additional needs.

Applicants will receive a score based on their approach to SEND, and the plans put in place to cater for those with additional needs throughout their delivery.

The Council have ringfenced funding to go towards SEND provision during 2025.

Croydon Council recognise the shortage of providers available to deliver specialist SEND provision, and in this circumstance only, will accept a second application from an applicant who plans to deliver mainstream provision on the HAF scheme at the same time.

Outreach/Promotion

Applicants must demonstrate how they will appropriately reach out and promote the HAF programme to the correct cohort. Croydon Council will be looking for providers who have links with local schools/groups which support families where there will be a high number of children receiving FSM. Croydon Council are keen to understand how you will promote the programme to these families and ensure that those attending your provision are eligible for the programme. Demonstrating previous experience would be advantageous. A score around outreach and promotion will also take into consideration the numbers of places an applicant intends to run, with a more detailed plan required for those organisations looking to deliver for higher numbers of children.

References

All applicants require a reference for the delivery of the programme in 2025. Previous Delivery Partners who have delivered a HAF programme in Croydon since (and including) Summer 2022 will be assessed using a reference score provided by the Local Authority. Where the organisation has not delivered the HAF programme previously in Croydon but has done so for another Local Authority, a reference from another Local Authority should be given. If the provider has not delivered HAF previously at all, a reference from a professional external evaluator of other programmes run by the organisation in relation to children's work/food provision will be sought.

Croydon Council continue to seek provision where OFSTED registration has taken place, which will further support the reference process.

When evaluating references, the council will be looking for ability to deliver the programme, registered organisation status and knowledge/previous delivery of the HAF programme. This will include, for example, ability to reach target numbers, venue suitability, and programme quality.

Community Value

Providers should inform Croydon Council of the value of their programme to their local community; specifically, the added value that a programme will bring, and how this will support attendees. There will be a focus on how providers are able to deliver a programme which meets the local need and shows there is a good understanding of their community, which offers opportunity for sustainability in the programme beyond the holiday period, and the lifespan of the Holiday Activity and Food Programme.

Alongside the council's own evaluation of local need, when evaluating community value, Croydon Council will be looking for applicants' understanding of the community (at ward level) they will deliver in, and how individual provision is tailored to meet 'need' in that specific area.

Safeguarding

All organisations delivering HAF programmes must operate in a safe, responsible, and legally compliant manner. This requirement reflects our commitment to protecting children, young people, and vulnerable adults. All organisations will be expected to demonstrate robust safeguarding policies and procedures in their application, including staff training, reporting mechanisms, and ongoing risk management. The safeguarding questions will form part of the evaluation process to assess an organisation's readiness in delivering safe services to children and young people in Croydon.

Marking Process

Applicants must ensure they answer each question on the application form. Failure to do so will result in the application not being considered.

Applications will be assessed against a fair and transparent scoring procedure by an internal team at Croydon Council (The Evaluation Panel).

The Evaluation Panel will meet to discuss individual bids and make recommendations for award based on the published specification. The Evaluation Panel decisions will be moderated by colleagues within the council, via a randomly selected sample of applications.

Price	Weighting: 25%
HAF Programme Standards	Weighting: 25%
References	Weighting: 20%
Community Value, Outreach, and Promotion	Weighting: 10%
SEND/Additional needs provision	Weighting: 10%
Safeguarding Arrangements	Weighting: 10%

Questions and method statements will be evaluated as per the following:

Score	Reasoning
5	Excellent
4	Good
3	Acceptable
2	Poor
1	Very Poor
0	No score Possible

Each applicant will be required to score a minimum of 3 per service specific / method statement question, otherwise the council may reject the application.

Implementation and Approvals

Croydon Council intend to offer funding to give the widest coverage of provision during the Summer and Winter holiday periods. Those meeting the minimum quality and price requirements and projects that fall within the funding available will be put forward for recommendation to deliver the programme.

There is a limited amount of funding available for each holiday period. Should the bid values exceed the total funding available, providers with the highest scores will be prioritised to ensure the programme remains in budget.

The following five applicants not automatically funded will then be informed of an unsuccessful application but invited to join a waiting list should any provider not be able to deliver the programme at the award stage. All other applicants will be informed of an unsuccessful application.