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Title of meeting:	Cabinet
Subject:	Holiday Activities and Food Update (HAF Fun Pompey)
Date of meeting:	1 st October 2024
Report by:	Sarah Daly - Director of Children Services and Education James Hill - Director for Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services
Authors:	Nicola Clannachan - Head of Housing Community Services Alison Critchley - Head of Sufficiency and Resources
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Suzy Horton - Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education.
Wards affected:	All

1. Requested by

1.1. This report was requested by Councillor Suzy Horton, Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education.

2. Purpose

2.1. To provide an update on the HAF Fun Pompey programme that has been running in the city since 2021 across the Easter, Summer and Christmas Holidays.

2.2. This report provides an update on activity since the previous report to Cabinet in November 2022, and therefore provides information about HAF activity in 2023 and 2024.

2.3. To highlight the use of Household Support Funding to extend the reach of HAF.

2.4. To record a note of thanks from Cabinet for the work of the HAF team working across directorates and with partners to deliver a successful HAF programme.

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3. Introduction

- 3.1. Following successful pilots between 2018 and 2020 on 27 October 2021, the government announced a 3-year funding settlement of over £200 million each year for the holiday activities and food (HAF) programme. The final year of this funding settlement is the 2024 to 2025 financial year.
- 3.2. The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme supports children eligible for benefits-related free school meal (FSM) families receive healthy food and take part in an enriching programme of activities. The Portsmouth programme is administered by the Play, Youth & Community Service (PYC) Housing Neighbourhood & Buildings Services, in partnership with Education and delivered through strong partnerships.
 - In 2021 PCC were awarded £953,060
 - In 2022 PCC were awarded £948,830 which was extended for additional winter delivery.
 - In 2023 PCC were awarded £971,450
 - In 2024 PCC have been awarded £966,340
- 3.3. The success of the programme requires partnership and collaborative working between the local authority, the voluntary and community sector and businesses across Portsmouth. Aware of the funding window, the HAF Fun Pompey team have always sought to maximise the impact of the programme for communities across Portsmouth and to create a HAF legacy in the city.
- 3.4. HAF Fun Pompey has the following aims:
 - to find ways of encouraging healthy eating.
 - to facilitate more active and enriching opportunities.
 - to make communities more resilient; create opportunities to promote and support wellbeing and character of the whole family.
 - to make communities safer, more sociable and combat isolation.
 - to have greater knowledge of what our communities and our families need; have those conversations with the beneficiaries.
 - to be more engaged with school and other local services.
- 3.5. The HAF report to Cabinet in November 2022 described how the scheme had developed to that point, referencing the strong partnerships and initiatives that were being delivered, and the positive impact of the provision on children, young people and their families, but also to city providers.
- 3.6. The report noted that there was a desire to improve reach to secondary aged children, and to increase take up of families in the north of the city, across Wymering and Paulsgrove. The report also noted the intention to commission a central booking system. Further actions identified from 2022 delivery was a desire

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to review the referral eligibility criteria for children who would benefit from HAF but were not FSM eligible, and to seek to extend the scheme further to non-eligible households through household support funding.

4. HAF 2023/24

- 4.1. 2023 HAF Fun Pompey worked with 45 providers across the city from across the public, private and voluntary sectors, to offer diverse activities that catered to every child's interest and makes the most of our location, including water sports, local museums, performing arts, sports, and specialised support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). 39 of the 45 were small local Portsmouth providers as opposed to larger operations.
- 4.2. 22,546 funded activity spaces were offered across the year, with a booking rate of 98% and an attendance rate of 76%
- 4.3. Over 40% of our providers in 2023 were qualified to support children with SEND, this included specialist SEND provision with provision run from specialist schools. Recognising their expertise in this field, and the role that they played in upskilling wider providers, the specialist provider Enable Ability received the Southeast division award at the HAF Awards 2023 for its outstanding and innovative care, receiving their award in an event held in the House of Commons.
- 4.4. 2023 HAF bookings were taken via a newly procured centralised booking system, Eequ, which has been positively received by families. Those seeking to find activities find listings all in one place and registration need only be input once, without having to contact the various providers separately and completing multiple forms. In a post-delivery survey parents/carers reported that they found the booking system generally easy to use, with over half rating the booking system as a 9 or 10, where 10 means 'extremely easy'. The new system has also improved the administration of the scheme and allowed the HAF Pompey team to better monitor and market activities on offer.
- 4.5. HAF promotional merchandise included recycled bottles, hi-vis jackets and t-shirts heightening the brand visibility in a way that the children receiving the items could benefit.
- 4.6. Recognising that the school holidays present an excellent opportunity to nurture family relationships, but that many families faced financial challenges during the cost-of-living crisis, HAF Fun Pompey opted to stretch support beyond just school-aged children and in 2023 hosted 44 family days, providing a range of events that included free, nutritious meals for families of all sizes. Wherever possible additionality was brought to the HAF activities by local partners, services and initiatives, such as a visiting library bus; money advice for families from a visiting

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cost of living officer and cycling proficiency skills from Bikeability attending events and family days.

- 4.7. HAF Fun Pompey also developed their relationship with the Household Support Fund to further stretch the HAF offer outside of main school holidays, attendees that didn't qualify for HAF, and extending family day events to households impacted by the cost-of-living crisis, but who did not meet the criteria for benefits related free school meals. Extending the model offer further the HAF team offered HSF funded "Let's Play Portsmouth" sessions in January and February 2024.
- 4.8. To address the lower take up in the PO6 area, a free community party, 60% funded by HAF, held in Paulsgrove increased awareness of HAF in the area, with over 1000 people attending. The event showcased the local partners, services, and HAF providers available to families in the city. Free food and activities on the day were exchanged for completed feedback surveys for HAF and wider partners wanting to consult with the community. Food offered was healthy and nutritious, including fruit salads, make your own wraps and pasta pots; and the smoothie bikes proved popular. Activities included archery, bounce boots, facepainting, basketball, badge making, planting, storytelling, arts and crafts and creating a digital artwork with the Aspex Art Gallery. Of the eligible families attending 33% didn't know HAF was free and 39% hadn't heard of HAF before the event. Teenagers and families with older children were less aware of HAF offerings, but interest grew after explanation.
- 4.9. Focusing on secondary school engagement and take up a survey was sent out to secondary school age children however there were no responses, so engagement and learning was channelled through existing youth providers. New marketing material was developed to target the age group - the 11–16-year-old poster for winter was branded as 'Festive Flex' with an addition of a 'set list' to showcase all the events. This was partly based on feedback from an UNLOC Youth event hosted at the University of Portsmouth with pupil representatives from the city's secondary schools. The Young Creatives young people film group were commissioned to capture young voices accessing HAF and to create media content. PCC's Play and Youth team also further developed their youth offer combining exciting trips with life skill training - for example Lymington Lido inflatable water course combined with a session on knife crime and emergency first aid skills delivered by Street Doctors.
- 4.10. To further promote HAF and make the most of the non-FSM referral process attendance at local multi-agency networking events saw the team raise the HAF profile and look to understand barriers to families accessing the scheme, in order to find solutions. The referral process has subsequently been reviewed, alongside the HAF steering group with new referral criteria applying from 2024.
- 4.11. Training and upskilling partners and providers has always been a priority for the HAF Fun Pompey team. An in-person provider event held in October included presentations from the city council's safeguarding team, the Local Authority

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Designated Officer, the neurodiversity team, and a communications officer. There was also a session looking at racism and language.

4.12. Seven free training courses were offered to providers in 2023:

- Youth mental health first aid two-day course
- Basic safeguarding training
- Safety box training
- Child exploitation
- Street doctors
- Parents against child exploitation
- Eequ booking system training

5. Monitoring and feedback

- 5.1. The HAF team have established a thorough reporting process which includes a RAG rated monitoring assessment alongside announced and unannounced monitoring visits by HAF team assessors. The process highlights the importance of evolving with the range of HAF criteria and supports the providers in offering improvements and celebrating achievements. HAF providers also are required to complete a provision report that includes data, evidence, feedback from families and participants, achievements and areas to improve.
- 5.2. 81% of providers were rated excellent or good in their 2023 monitoring visit, with the team meeting with providers post-delivery to offer feedback and support continued improvement.
- 5.3. Results of the HAF feedback survey showed that:
- 90% of parents would book on to the HAF programme again
 - 97% stated that their children enjoyed the activities.
 - Almost half said that their children would not have access to holiday activities if it wasn't for HAF.
 - Over two thirds found their children had greater knowledge of eating well and keeping active as a result of the HAF programme.
- 5.4. Feedback from parents and children included:
- *"My son absolutely loves the HAF days...he has made a lot of new friends outside of his friend circle and has experienced days out that I would not be able to afford."*
HAF parent

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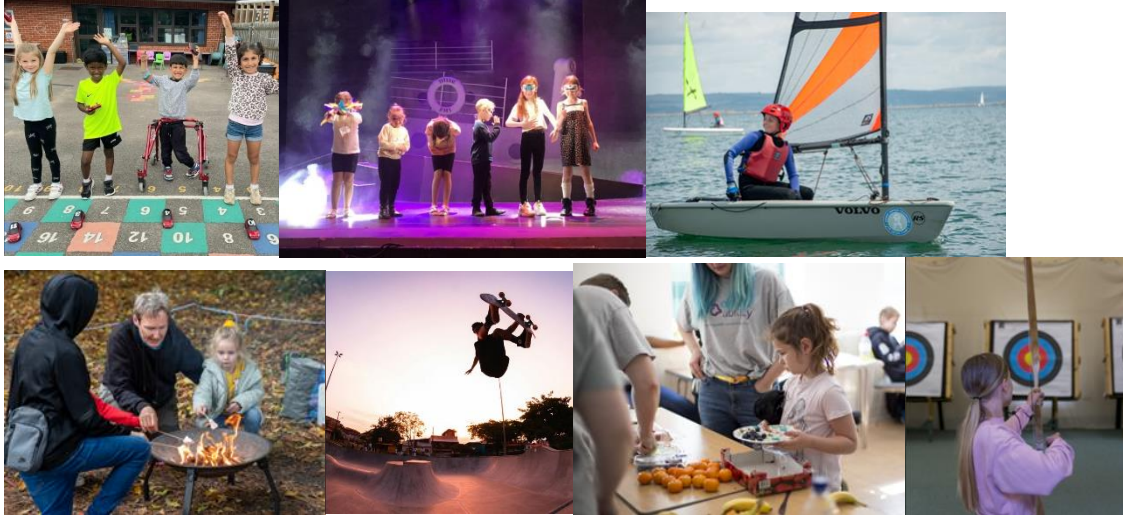
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- *"HAF has allowed me to continue working, whilst knowing my sons were safe and having fun. I would not have been able to work in the holidays if HAF was not an option." HAF parent*
- *"We used the HAF program under the vulnerable children category as my eldest son is a young carer to his younger brothers...it's impossible for me to take them anywhere. We really appreciate being able to book and it's a fantastic scheme." HAF parent*
- *"I didn't know how I was going to afford days out with my children this summer, but the children still need to have exciting stuff to talk about when they go back to school, and attending has helped out massively " (Parent/Carer) "*
- *"My son comes back from these sessions filled with joy, he is usually energetic and sometimes difficulty to direct, but he returns from the sessions and is so calm " (Parent)*
- *"[my child] is much more positive about himself and his capabilities." (Parent/Carer)*
- *"Thank you for this week. You made me laugh everyday!" HAF Young Person*
- *"So many favourite moments! Rock climbing, rifle shooting, laser tag, multisports...!" (Attendee)*
- *"[the children] are not usually able to do activities like watersports due to the lack of family finances. This has increased their confidence, given them priceless opportunities, a hot meal each day and helped them transition back to school more smoothly." (Parent/Carer)*
- *Parent: "We went to panto for free. I couldn't afford to take my daughter - meant a lot."*
- *"My son has autism so not really the right place. However rather than just saying no all the guys were just fantastically welcoming and adapted part of the day to suit. This meant that my son was able to attend for 3-4 hours per day".*
- *Parent: "They were exciting for my children - they tried activities that they would never have had access without HAF; going to the theatre and watching a pantomime; doing boxing; cooking days and accessing enthusiastic providers who had carefully thought about and planned the activities to be engaging."*
- *Child: "I like coming because I get to play with my friends. It's really nice food. If I wasn't here I'd be at home playing on my own"*

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- "This was the best day ever." HAF attendee
- "I cannot thank the government enough for this." HAF booker



5.5. 2023 HAF impact examples from providers included:

- One pupil booked to attend for one day. He is completely disengaged with school and his attendance is only 83%. He attended for the day and enjoyed it so much he asked for more days. This has had a positive impact on his engagement at school and he will often find the HAF staff team at school and chat about the great times he had. Before HAF he hardly spoke to anyone about anything. HAF school provider
- One family we have worked with is a single dad with no family support, limited literacy confidence and very limited funds. His child attended Christmas 2023 in same uniform each day. We sourced new and second-hand clothes for the family and gifted them for Christmas and continue to support them with paperwork, their wellbeing and finding additional support. Wrap Around Service
- There were a couple of parents who were delighted that they and their children would get a Christmas meal as it is something that they have been unable to have in recent years.
- "A young carer named L enjoyed paddle boarding and expressed interest in volunteering at the water sports centre. They have since been volunteering frequently and want a career coaching. Youth Charity
- A young boy with ADHD showed significant behavioural improvement, increased willingness to participate in sports, and better social engagement. Boxing Club

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- HAF enabled us to engage a young person at risk of child criminal exploitation, providing her and her mother with much-needed respite. This involvement has encouraged her regular participation, and we have completed a multi-agency safeguarding hub referral for further support. PYC
- Two participants from the Summer 2023 HAF event joined the arts academy and received scholarships, highlighting the programme's role in fostering long-term engagement in the arts. Kings Theatre
- Children tried new foods for the first time, including making pizzas and cooking on a BBQ, promoting dietary diversity. SEND Specialist Scheme
- Bikeability sessions taught children to ride bikes, and families enjoyed learning to sew, watching shows, and sharing meals together, enhancing family bonding and skill development. Charitable Foundation
- Children explored new foods, with one child discovering a new favourite. The library service saw high engagement, signing up many children for the summer reading challenge. Family Day and Library Service

6. Developments for 2024/25

6.1. Having reviewed the programme over the year, feedback from families, attendees, partners, and the HAF steering committee, in 2024 the HAF team identified further areas for development:

- Offer family days using Household Support Fund - expanding the inclusiveness of the family day offer.
- Non-attendance - look at a policy and strategies to minimise non-attendance and achieve a higher attendance rate of funded spaces.
- Youth engagement - continue to develop new strategies for increasing secondary school aged engagement.

7. This year's HAF programme (2024/2025)

7.1. The HAF programme is rich in different activities and well spread with the level of advance booking demonstrating that activity choices are meeting the demands and needs of families. The new referral process for non-FSM families has been adopted and is working well.

7.2. Moving to a model of overbooking and adopting a non-attendance policy has positively impacted the number of children attending their booked sessions. In the Easter delivery period 110% bookings was achieved and 94.2% attendance overall which was a significant increase in attendance from the 2023 average.

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7.3. The HAF team took part in a peer review quality assurance exercise with Swindon and gained a good insight into how another LA approaches HAF. It was observed in Portsmouth HAF has created a vast amount of the provision. Swindon admired the diversity of providers and types of activity including hosting family days and were also interested in adopting the Portsmouth commissioning model. It was also noted that Portsmouth HAF's monitoring of every provider each delivery period accounts for rigorous post-delivery evaluations but that the time taken stretches the team. Providers that have proved to be consistently excellent may not require a monitoring visit each delivery period.

7.4. Easter 2024

- Across the Easter programme we worked with providers to create 56 different clubs and made available 3301 universal HAF places and 440 SEND HAF places for children eligible for free school meals at venues across the City
- Provision was focused in areas with higher numbers of children eligible for free school meals.

Breakdown of children and young people attending HAF provision		
	Primary Aged	Secondary Aged
FSM eligible, non-SEND	562	196
FSM eligible, with SEND in universal provision	128	71
FSM eligible, with SEND in specialist provision	59	36
Non-FSM eligible (agency referred), non-SEND	15	13
Non-FSM eligible (agency referred), with SEND in universal provisions	16	9
Non-FSM eligible (agency referred), with SEND in specialist provision	11	13
TOTAL NUMBER OF HAF FUNDED ATTENDEES	791	338
Free spaces offered through other funding	105	95
Paid for spaces	591	272

7.5. Summer 2024

- Over the school summer holidays HAF Pompey worked to substantially increase provision.
- Delivery data is current and will be collated and submitted to the Department for Education.
- One significant success has been the development of the offer to senior school age children. Funded partly by HAF and partly by the HSF the city

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council's engagement team ran large-scale open access "Summer Sessions" events across the city, targeted at children aged 11-16. Blending funding meant that the offer could be extended to all young people in the city, removing barriers to attendance and benefitting all families whose financial circumstances mean that they struggle with costs of holiday childcare and entertainment.

7.6. Winter 2024

- HAF activities will be running during the Christmas Holidays, with sessions available for bookings listed on the PYC website <https://www.pycportsmouth.co.uk/>
- In addition to activities, some providers will be offering food parcels to the families of children and young people accessing their provision as an additional support during the winter months.
- HAF work closely with the cost-of-living support team to ensure that providers working over the Christmas holiday period are able to sign-post families attending to further support.

7.7 Household Support Funding (HSF) has been confirmed by the Government from October 2024 to end of March 2025. Subject to DWP publishing final HSF guidance for local authorities on the use of the funding, as part of the cost-of-living support offer, Cabinet have approved continued HSF contribution to the HAF programme, which would allow for the further extension of the offer to families on the edge of qualification for HAF.

8. The future

- 8.1. In October 2021 the government announced investment of over £200 million per year over the following 3 years for the holiday activities and food programme taking the holiday activity delivery period to the end of the financial year 2024/25. The Department for Education have yet to confirm whether HAF funding will continue in the future.
- 8.2. Given the current funding position of the local authority there is limited opportunity to continue to offer HAF provision in the city, without support from government grant. Funding spaces through private sponsorship from businesses and providers is challenging in the current economic climate. In view of this, and in recognition of the significant benefits of HAF for families in the city, and the risks posed if HAF were not to continue, the Cabinet has forwarded a letter to the Department for Education in support of the continuation of HAF and requesting clarification of future funding intention.
- 8.3. Aware of the potential for there to be no future HAF funding, HAF providers have been encouraged and supported locally to register with OFSTED / to register on the voluntary childcare register, if they qualify to do so. In doing so parents may be able

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to gain financial assistance with their childcare costs to continue to access any future provision. For example, parents can redeem employer-supported vouchers against childcare costs, families may be eligible for Tax-Free Childcare, or they may be entitled to the childcare costs element of Universal Credit (UC). Through UC, 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. In the HAF summer 2024 delivery period there were 28 OFSTED provider listings, which represented one third of the offer.

- 8.4. Many HAF providers have recognised the benefits of incorporating a food offer into their delivery therefore it is hoped that this will continue to be offered in the future. Resources provided to support HAF delivery, such as sporting equipment, laser quest kit, silent disco equipment and camping gear will continue to provide additionality to providers future offers, alongside a growth in provider confidence in taking groups of children out and about to access spaces in the city, such as the museums and adventure playgrounds and more widely into the Hampshire countryside.
- 8.5. It is hoped that the positive partnership networks fostered through HAF will continue, with shared vision around how we can best support children and families, and a partnership approach to maximising the benefits from any future funding opportunities, new initiatives and with shared use of resources in the city.

9. Summary

- 9.1 This is the final year that Portsmouth has been funded to deliver a Holiday Activities and Food programme. HAF Fun Pompey have worked with a very wide range of partners to put on a diverse and well-received programme of activities for Portsmouth children and young people and establish a strong sense of partnership and common purpose with and between partners. Use of the Household Support Fund has allowed for the extension of the HAF offer to families who do not qualify for the scheme, but who are impacted by the cost of living crisis.
- 9.2. The HAF team have been aware of the potential for funding to cease and their strategy has included upskilling providers, providing resources and building connections with complementary schemes and initiatives that will continue to benefit into the future.
- 9.3. The experiences offered and the exploration of spaces and places locally and further afield will be held in the memories of the children and families who may not otherwise had the opportunity to access all that is on offer, The additional education on the importance of physical activity and healthy eating, combined with the chance to eat and prepare a range of healthy food has the potential to positively impact future choices and benefit lives.

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9.4. We await any announcements on future funding intention and will continue to update Cabinet.

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Signed by James Hill - Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services

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Signed by Sarah Daly - Director of Children Services and Education

Appendices:

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
HAF Fun Pompey - Cabinet 13 th December 2022	HAF Member update November 22.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)
Holiday activities and food programme 2023 government guidance	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/holiday-activities-and-food-programme/holiday-activities-and-food-programme-2023
HAF Fun Pompey Annual Report 23/24	https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/10.945-HAF-Annual-report-2024-accessible-aa.pdf