

# Tower Hamlets Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme

Annual Report 2023-24



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## Introduction

School holidays can be pressure points for some families because of increased costs (such as food and childcare) and reduced incomes - issues that have been exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis. For some children that can lead to a holiday experience gap – with children from low-income households less likely to access organised out-of-school activities, more likely to experience ‘unhealthy holidays’ in terms of nutrition and physical health, and more likely to experience social isolation.

To address this, Tower Hamlets Council £1,776,780.00 has been given to coordinate a holiday programme that provides healthy food and enriching activities to benefit children entitled to Free School Meals during the Easter, summer, and Christmas Holiday periods over the fiscal year of 2023-2024.

With the funding, Tower Hamlets commissioned a rich and diverse programme of holiday activities offering food delivered by organisations from the private, voluntary, and public sector that respond to local need.



### What do we know about children in Tower Hamlets and Free School Meals (FSM)?

According to the school census (Autumn 23), 17,333 children and young people in Tower Hamlets were identified as being eligible for HAF based on their

benefits-related FSM status and their age.

We know that there are specific areas with greater numbers of families with children and young people receiving free school meals. The three wards with the highest number of residents eligible for the programme were:

**Lansbury – 1,651 eligible**

**Mile End – 1,475 eligible**

**Bethnal Green – 1,251 eligible**

Looking back at the HAF Programmes conducted in 2023, we were proud of the high-quality provision and support offered to our young residents by our funded providers. Their response in providing targeted provision in areas of high need in the borough was commendable. Amidst ongoing challenges, initiatives like HAF served as vital platforms for bringing young people together and promoting healthy lifestyles.

As the number of benefits-related FSM recipients continued to rise in the borough, it was imperative that we continued to deliver initiatives like HAF to ensure that every child in Tower Hamlets has access to nutritious meals and enriching activities, regardless of their financial circumstances.

# Summary of Key Outcomes

In the fiscal year 2023/24, our initiative received total funding of £1,776,780.00.

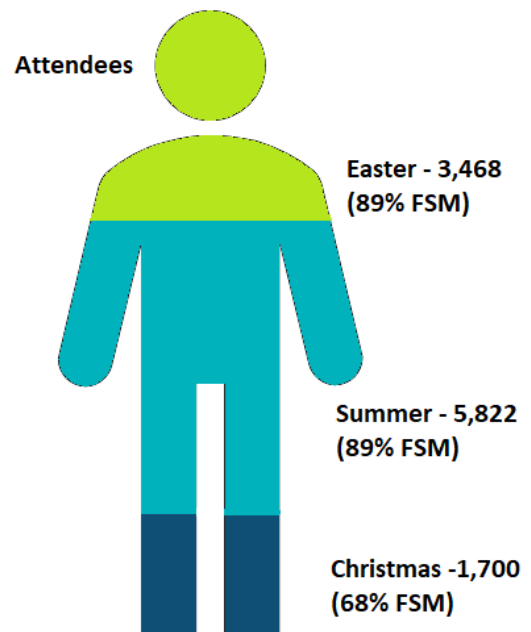
## Delivery Format

Local authorities must offer at least 6 weeks of holiday provision annually. However, recognising the demand for additional support throughout the year and utilising our strong ties with community groups in the borough, we managed to stretch our funding to extend and enhance the provision, resulting in:

- Easter: 8 - day programme
- Summer: 16 - day programme
- Christmas: 8 - day programme

## Significant Programme Outcomes

- Total number of attendees: **11,170**
- Number of attendees eligible for Free School Meals (FSM): **9,493**
- Number of attendees SEND or identified as having severe needs: **560**
- **85%** of attendees were FSM eligible
- **89,184** attendances reported overall



## Quality Assurance



Like previous years, Tower Hamlets engaged an external organisation to enhance our processes and ensure quality:

- **Quality assurance support:** Street Games was contracted to provide quality assurance support, which involved providing on-the-ground advisors for clubs, conducting site visits, running workshops, and collecting feedback, all aimed at maintaining high standards and continuous improvement.

## HAF Providers

Throughout the 23-24 Programme year, we collaborated with various organisations, schools, charities, and community groups, funding them to deliver holiday clubs which offered a diverse range of activities including sports, cooking, and educational catch-up sessions, all designed to meet the framework of standards and cater to the holistic development of the children involved.

We worked with over 41 providers over 2023-24. The Table below show the types of providers we funded.

HAF HOLIDAY PROVIDERS					
 <p>6 Schools</p>	London Islamic School	Manorfield Primary School	Bygrove Primary School	Kobi Nazrul School	Stebon Primary School
	Phoenix Special School				
 <p>35</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Groups</li> <li>• Charities</li> <li>• Sports clubs</li> <li>• CIC's</li> </ul>	AC SSC LIMITED (Sports Cool)	Beyond the Bias	Bromley By Bow Community Organisation	Canary Wharf Football Academy	Capital Kids Cricket
	FILM SKOOL DELUXE	First Kicks Sports LTD	Glamis adventure playground	Greenwich Leisure LTD	Half Moon Young People's Theatre
	Junior Adventures Group	Leaders in Community	Learning Hive LTD	London Jaguars Community Association	London Sportif
	Newark Youth London	Newham Sports	Ocean Youth Connexions	Olive Tree Education	PCC of All Hallows Bromley by Bow
	Purple Moon Drama	SAMA Centre	SimpleGifts: Unitarian Centre for Social Action	Sisters In Business	Society Links
	SOUL	St. Andrews Youth Development Trust	Stifford Centre	Tower Hamlets Youth League United	Trapped In Zone One
	Udichi Shilpi Gosthi	Vallance Community Sports Association	Weavers Adventure Playground	Wise Youth Trust	London Borough of Tower Hamlets Council SPA Team

# HAF 2023–24 Programme Overview

## Tower Hamlets HAF Offer

Tower Hamlets wanted to provide a wide range of opportunities for children and young people to engage in an offer that is within walking distance of where they live, offering; face-to-face provision providing a range of activities throughout the day for children to engage with – targeted at children aged 5 to 16 for at least four hours for four days a week per child with a healthy meal.

## Minimum standards for Quality Provision for the Programme:

### Each Programme offered...

- Provision of healthy food adhering to school food standards and Natasha’s Law
- Enriching Activities
- Physical Activities
- Nutritional education and Healthy lifestyles
- Signposting and referrals
- Policies and procedure
- Safeguarding

## Building in flexibility for our most vulnerable residents:

For each of the 3 programmes, eligible children identified through the school census received a letter from the council informing them of the HAF offer as well as their unique code which granted them access to a free space at a HAF club. Over 40,000 letters were sent over the year.

In addition to this, 15% of the awarded funding was built in to support those not eligible but individuals who were identified by clubs and the council as vulnerable. These groups included, but were not limited to:

- Young carers
- Children on CP/CIN
- Children open to Early Help
- Children with EHCP
- Refugees

To ensure there was something on offer for everyone during the summer, HAF was marketed under the wider council ‘Summer of Fun’ Programme. This ensured that the HAF programme was advertised efficiently to those eligible, and children could be signposted to other clubs, activities, and events if they were not able to obtain a HAF place during the most popular HAF period.



Full address  
Postcode

**Summer Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF)**

Dear Parent/Carer,

Great news! Because your child receives benefit-related free school meals, your child can claim a free space at a HAF holiday club in Tower Hamlets this Summer holiday.

Tower Hamlets Council is working with local organisations to put on HAF clubs across the borough that combine tasty and healthy food with exciting activities and opportunities for fun and learning during the holiday.

Clubs will run from Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> July to Friday 1<sup>st</sup> September. Children will receive a free meal at every session, while club programmes will offer a range of sports, arts, and drama activities in a fully supervised environment.

To find out more about clubs and for booking information, please visit [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk) and typing in HAF 2023.

To secure a priority free place, please print this letter with your child's [unique club code](#) to your chosen club when registering. This code can be found at the top left-hand side of this letter.

We hope to see you at one of our HAF clubs this Summer!



Tower Hamlets Council  
Tower Hamlets Town Hall  
300 Whitechapel Road  
London E3 3BQ

## Physical activities

All daily physical activities offered, met the [Government's Physical Activity guidelines \(for children and young people from 5 -18 years old\)](#).

During each Programme cycle, there was a wide range of physical activities offered during each holiday period. These included:

- Football
- Basketball
- Taekwondo
- Table Tennis
- Dance
- Gymnastics
- Cycling
- Water Sports
- Boxing
- Ice Skating
- Bowling
- Rounders
- Orienteering
- Badminton
- Tennis
- Athletics
- Female only sports activities

Our providers leveraged their understanding of sport not just to encourage healthy lifestyles, but as a powerful social tool for change, and for creating opportunities. These programmes ensured that children and young people have access to local facilities, such as leisure centres and sports pitches, which might otherwise be financially out of reach. And beyond merely providing access, many of our providers actively collaborate with local sports clubs, athletes, and teams, fostering partnerships which brought high-quality activities to the Tower Hamlets Programmes and created pathways for further participation in sport during term times.

Several of our club providers also dedicated time to facilitating sports leadership pathways. They empowered their young participants to take on volunteer teaching and leadership roles within sports activities, fostering a sense of responsibility and personal growth.

## Enriching activities

There were a wide range of engaging and enriching activities during HAF delivery. These included:

- Photography
- Film making
- STEM
- Crafts
- Learning about London Transport
- Board games
- Police workshops
- Cooking
- Food growing
- Esports
- Coding
- Drama
- Trips & excursions



## Food

### Meals provided

The programme provided nutritious hot meals to the children and young people who attended our clubs. While the focus was primarily on lunch, some of our providers understood the importance of offering options for breakfast and dinner instead.

Across our network of clubs, attendees could enjoy a diverse range of meals, like spaghetti Bolognese and flavourful vegetable curries. Due to the logistical constraints of many club facilities, a significant number (30) relied on sourcing food from external providers. These partnerships with local businesses, cafes, kitchens, and restaurants enabled our programme to maintain a high standard of meal quality while ensuring affordability, with an average expenditure of approximately £5 per head.



11 clubs had the capacity to prepare meals onsite, which not only allowed for greater control over ingredients and portion sizes but also fostered a sense of community as club members engaged in meal preparation together.

#### Food considerations:

- Surplus food from both the programme and surplus food aid charities, such as the Felix Project was distributed to families in need. This proactive approach not only minimised food waste but also reinforced our dedication to supporting the wider community.
- During periods such as Ramadan, when a significant portion of attendees observed fasting, our providers demonstrated flexibility and empathy in their food offerings. Recognising the importance of respecting religious practices, our providers ensured that children participating in our Programme had the option to take their meals home, allowing them to break their fast in the comfort of their own surroundings.

### Nutritional education and healthy lifestyles

Our clubs were dedicated to not only providing nutritious meals but also educating children and young people about healthy eating and lifestyles. To achieve this, various strategies were employed across our network. One approach taken by many of our providers involved incorporating interactive nutritional education sessions into the club activities. These sessions, facilitated by teaching staff or guest experts, covered topics such as the importance of balanced diets, understanding food labels, and the benefits of incorporating fruits and vegetables into meals. Through engaging discussions, games, and hands-on activities, participants gained practical knowledge about making healthier food choices.



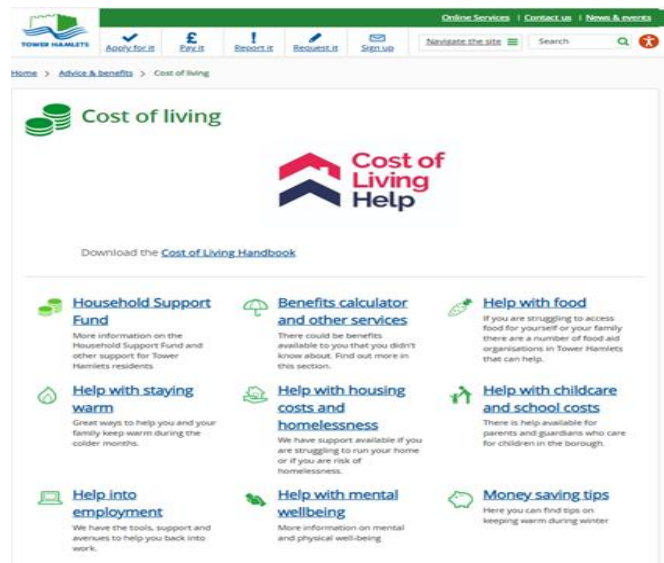
# Signposting

HAF Clubs played a crucial role in signposting families to services within the borough by acting as trusted points of contact and information hubs. They provide families with information about available services, ranging from health and education resources to recreational activities and social support programmes.

To ensure that clubs were to be capable of performing this role, we incorporated specific requirements into the application process. Applicants were asked to detail their plans for signposting families to local services, strategies for identifying need, and establishing referral pathways. This allowed us to assess their readiness and capability to support families effectively and identify gap for support.

As part of their programme offer, some providers ran workshops specifically to explain the resources and support available to families, offering detailed guidance on accessing various services. Others facilitated an open-door policy, engaging in one-on-one conversations with families to provide personalised support and ensure that individual needs were met. Additionally, many clubs distributed printed materials and resources for families to take home, ensuring that essential information was accessible even outside of the club environment. These efforts were particularly important for families needing information translated or those facing digital poverty, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility.

Throughout the year, the council also maintained a cost-of-living web page, which offered comprehensive advice, links, and support information for those struggling financially. This website served as a vital resource, providing up-to-date information on available services and assistance programmes. By combining these efforts, we ensure that families receive the support they need through multiple channels, making our programs more effective and far-reaching.



# Easter Highlights

We offered 8 days of Easter club provision and activities from **Monday 3 April until Friday 14 April 2023.**

## Key Outcomes:


We spent **£356,777.60** on grants.

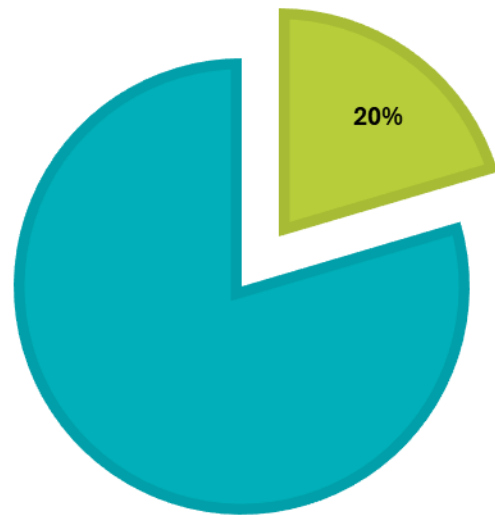
- We funded **30** external providers.
- **47** clubs were funded. Some providers were funded to deliver multiple clubs.
- **4** were specialised SEND clubs.
- **236** sessions were delivered .
- **7** Local businesses partnered with clubs as food suppliers to the programme.
- **3468** children and young people attended the Programme.
- **2728** were primary school children.
- **920** were secondary school children.
- **131** were of the SEND cohort.
- **48%** Female and **52%** male.

## Local facilities used to host HAF clubs:

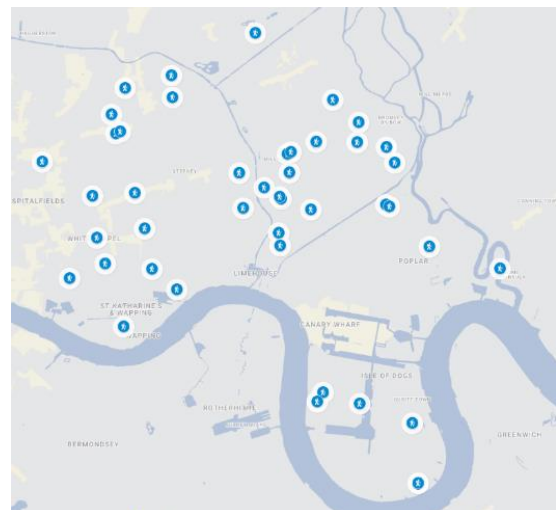
- Schools: **7**
- Community type Centres: **15**
- Park and Open Spaces: **4**
- Sports Pitches/Facilities: **6**
- Leisure Centre: **2**
- Other: **13**



**21,475** attendances   
**23,100+** meals were provided



Funding allowed for us to achieve a reach of 20% of the eligible FSM children and young people in Tower Hamlets during in the Easter Holiday 2023.



Tower Hamlets Easter Holiday club locations



*“I’m on benefits so it’s so great that you offer free school child places and free hot meals. This means I don’t have to worry about them not having lunch.”*

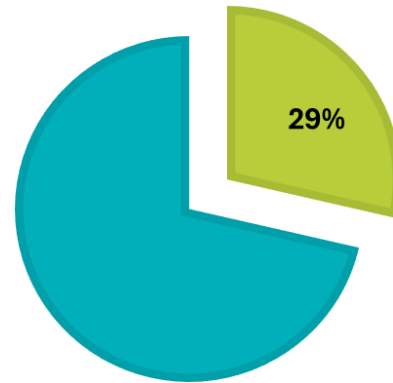
**Parent of attendee of an Easter club**

# Summer Highlights

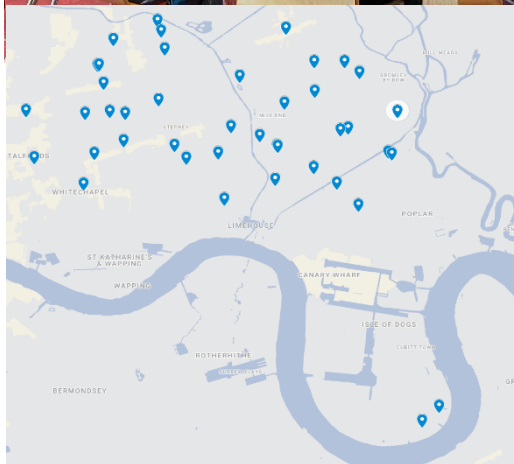
Clubs' dates varied to make sure provision was available throughout the summer holiday, but all provision took place between, **Saturday 22nd July until Friday 1st September 2023**. Clubs were capped at offering a maximum of 16 days of HAF funded activities, to ensure a varied offering.

**57,295** attendances 

**58,000+** meals were provided



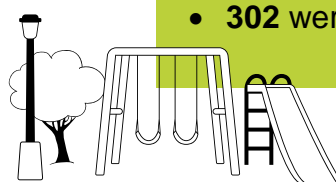
Funding allowed for us to achieve a reach of 29% of the eligible FSM children and young people in Tower Hamlets during in the summer Holiday 2023.



Tower Hamlets Summer Holiday club locations

## Local facilities used to host HAF clubs:

- Schools: **5**
- Community type Centres: **15**
- Park and Open Spaces: **10**
- Sports Pitches/Facilities: **11**
- Leisure Centre: **2**
- Other: **5**




## Key Outcomes:

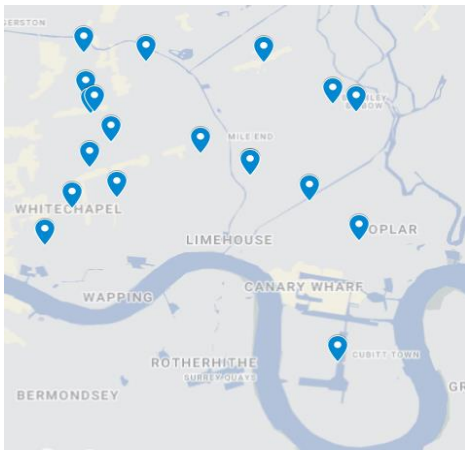
We spent **£909,968.41** on grants.

- We funded **39** external providers.
- **47** clubs were delivered. Some providers were funded to deliver multiple clubs.
- **5** Specialised SEND clubs
- **585** sessions were delivered
- **7** Local businesses were active food suppliers to the Programme
- **5822** children and young people attended the programme.
- **4326** were primary school children
- **1426** were Secondary school children
- **302** were of the SEND cohort.

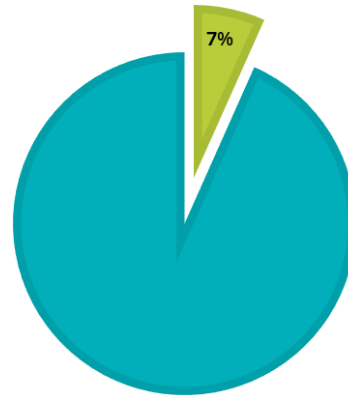
# Christmas Highlights

We offered 8 days of Christmas club provision and activities from **Wednesday 27th December 2023 until Friday 5th January 2024**

**11,355** attendances   
**12,000+** meals were provided



Tower Hamlets Christmas Holiday club locations



Funding allowed for us to achieve a reach of 7% of the eligible FSM children and young people in Tower Hamlets during in the Christmas

## Local facilities used to host HAF clubs:

- Schools: **2**
- Community type Centres: **8**
- Park and Open Spaces: **3**
- Sports Pitches/Facilities: **2**
- Leisure Centre: **2**
- Other: **2**



## Key Outcomes:

- We spent **£277,079.90** on grants.
- We funded **19** external providers.
- **26** clubs were funded. Some providers were funded to deliver multiple clubs.
- **3** Specialised SEND clubs.
- **143** sessions were delivered.
- **7** Local businesses were active food suppliers to the Programme.
- **1,700** children and young people attended the Programme.
- **1,064** were primary school children.
- **636** were Secondary school children.
- **112** were of the SEND cohort.
- **42%** Female and **58%** male

*“From all my family, from all our hearts a big thank you to you and your lovely Team for an amazing job that you do for children with disabilities. I am so grateful for your individual approach to my son and doing a great job to include him and support him without him feeling any different to the children without disability. There is absolutely nothing in Tower Hamlets to support children like my son, you were first to meet his needs and there must be some ongoing provisions as yours on a continued basis. You have my absolute support on everything that you do to make vulnerable children happy, healthy, and active.”*

**Mum of 9-year-old attendee of a Christmas club**

## Shared Learning

In our borough, the provision of Universal Free School Meals (FSM) to all families represents a significant commitment to ensuring that every child has access to nutritious meals. However, our key focus for the upcoming year will be to encourage those who qualify to apply for Benefits-related FSM status, which also qualifies families for additional programmes and support.

It can be very confusing for families to distinguish between the two FSM systems, and the enrolment process can be particularly difficult for households where English is not the first language. Additionally, families are sometimes unaware that each individual child must be registered for Benefits-related FSM. This oversight leads to children not being included in the Census and missed off mailing lists. Consequently, although these children are entitled to a free placement on the programme, they do not flag as eligible and are not registered with a HAF code.

### Goals for 2024-25:

#### Educating Families



One of our primary objectives is to inform families about the distinct benefits of enrolling in the Benefits-related FSM Programme. We recognise that many families may not be aware of the eligibility criteria or the advantages that come with Benefits-related FSM enrolment. To address this, we will implement a communication strategy that includes:

**Information Campaigns:** We will develop clear, concise informational materials that explain the differences between Universal FSM and Benefits-related FSM. These materials will be distributed through schools, and online platforms to ensure wide reach.

**Multilingual Resources:** Understanding the number of languages spoken in our borough, we will ensure that all informational materials are available in multiple languages to cater to families who do not speak English as a first language.

**Provider Training:** We plan to educate providers about the Benefits-related FSM registration process and council forms so they can either complete the forms on behalf of consenting families or guide them through the process.

#### Shout About Success and Encourage Self-Evaluation

Another key plan for next year is to promote a culture of self-evaluation and celebration across our clubs. We aim to "shout about success" by encouraging clubs to regularly

assess their progress, celebrate their achievements, and share their success stories. This initiative will involve:

- **Showcasing Success Stories:** Using newsletters, social media, and community events to highlight the accomplishments of clubs and individuals.
- **Providing Evaluation Tools:** Offering tools and resources to help clubs conduct self-evaluations and track their progress over time.
- **Hosting Celebratory Events:** Organising events where clubs can come together to share their successes, learn from each other, and build a sense of community.

### Preparing for the Future

We also want our providers to start thinking about the future beyond 2025, especially if funding may not continue. This includes:

- **Long-Term Planning:** Encouraging providers to develop sustainable plans that ensure the continuity of support and services.
- **Diversifying Funding Sources:** Assisting providers in exploring alternative funding sources to maintain their Programmes.
- **Family Empowerment:** Working with families to prepare for future challenges and opportunities, ensuring they have the knowledge and resources to thrive independently.



### Governance – HAF Steering Group

Next year, our focus will be on retaining our members and increasing involvement in the steering group to further develop our Programme. Our steering group, consisting of members from diverse backgrounds such as Public Health, the Volunteer Center, VCS Management, Sport and Leisure, the Grants Team, the Children's Team, and the Mayor's Team, has been instrumental in shaping our strategies and initiatives.

## Represented Services

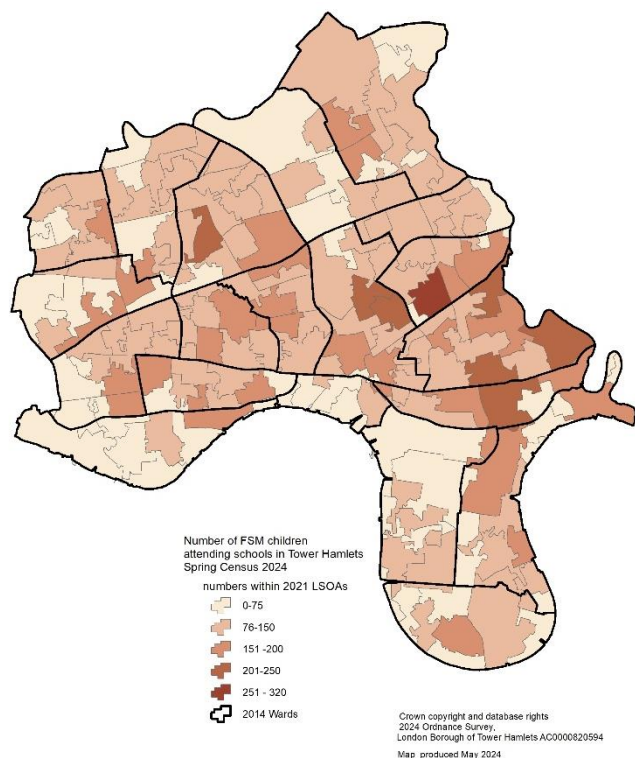
- Tackling Poverty Team (Programme Lead)
- Public Health Team
- SPA Team
- Grants Team
- The Mayor's Office
- Schools and Families Team
- The Volunteer Centre

# Ambition for 2024-25

## What will next year look like

Next year’s programme anticipates a high level of engagement, with significant ambitions to increase participation in free school meals (FSM). While there are challenges associated with the in-sourcing of the application process for providers, we aim to continue to deliver the programme to increased numbers of residents. Additionally, our efforts to communicate the importance of families revisiting for benefits-related reasons are expected to increase demand. However, our funding from has decreased, which may limit the extent of our reach. Despite these challenges, we aim to achieve an 85% engagement rate in FSM participation and hope to maintain a similar attendance level of 50,000 across the year.

In terms of provider scalability, our goal is to collaborate with and fund a comparable number of providers in 2024-25. Through our promotional efforts regarding the grants, we aim to engage more organisations, recognising the importance of expanding our partnership list and reaching new children. We will utilise our existing data sources to map out needs and align our findings with research to guide programme strategies. From the spring census, we have already identified areas with higher needs and mapped these out to effectively support the placement and resourcing of clubs.



## Conclusion

Our ambition for 2024-25 is to create a well-informed and empowered community where families fully understand the resources available to them and can access the support they need. Through strategic communication, cross-team collaboration, and community engagement, we aim to significantly increase enrolment in the Benefits-related FSM Programme. Additionally, by promoting self-evaluation, celebrating successes across our clubs, and preparing for the future, we hope to foster a positive and proactive community spirit. This combined approach will ensure that every FSM child in our borough can succeed and thrive.



**Thank you to all those involved in the HAF  
2023-24 programme!**

