

Tower Hamlets Council Guidance document for the Easter Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme 2026 Grant

Please read through the changes to Grant Guidance carefully before submitting an application as there have been changes to applicant eligibility criteria.

Introduction

School holidays can be pressure points for some families because of increased costs (such as food and childcare) and reduced incomes- more evidently with the current cost of living crisis. For some children, that can lead to a holiday experience gap – where some are 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, The Department for Education is providing funding to local authorities to coordinate a holiday programme that provides healthy food and enriching activities to benefit entitled Free School Meals recipients during the Easter Holidays.

Tower Hamlets want to commission 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.

If you are interested in delivering a HAF programme, please read the guidance below to see if you can meet the delivery requirements and complete a HAF Easter Application form by no later than **11:59pm Sunday 25th January**.

Delivery Dates: Delivery must fall within Saturday 28th March 2026 - Sunday 12th April 2026



General guidance

This part of the guidance sets out some of the key facts about the Department for Education Funded Holiday Activities Food (HAF) Grant Programme and some of the main points to consider before you decide to apply for funding.

Eligibility

The HAF Grant Programme is to fund the delivery of holiday activities/schemes and programmes that will benefit Tower Hamlets residents.

Funding is available to:

- voluntary and community organisations
- registered charities, including charitable incorporated organisations
- registered not-for-profit companies
- schools
- registered community interest companies
- faith-based groups, where the funding is for inclusive activity that is open to all

Funding is not available to:

- individuals
- sole traders
- profit making companies
- political organisations

Supporting Documentation:

To be eligible for grant funding, applicants must be able to provide the following supporting documents:

- Constitution or Articles of Association
- Approved Accounts or Record of Income and Expenditure
- Bank Statement dated within the last 3 months, displaying the account in the organisation's name, address, account number, and sort code.
- Up to date Equality & Diversity Policy relevant to the nature of delivery
- Up to date Safeguarding Policy relevant to the nature of delivery
- Up to date Health and Safety Policy relevant to the nature of delivery
- Insurance Policies, including:
 - Evidence of Employer's Liability Insurance £5,000,000
 - Public and Products Liability £5,000,000
 - Professional Indemnity £2,000,000 (if applicable)
- Accessibility and Inclusiveness Policy

- Ofsted Registration and Approval (if delivering to those under 8 years old and does not meet any exemptions)

Additionally, please be aware that organisations currently receiving similar funding from the Council may not be eligible to apply. Verify eligibility with the awarding grants team for that grant before submitting your application.

Please note, we will not be able to progress the following applications:

- X Applications proposing to partner with an organisation or individual that has also separately applied for LBTH HAF funding
 - X Applicant has previously failed to meet grant conditions (or has an ongoing dispute etc, has had funding withdrawn/requested to be repaid, etc)
 - X **Applicants who cannot demonstrate that they operate from a registered address in Tower Hamlets (PO boxes do not fulfil this criteria).**
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Purpose of the HAF Grant

The purpose of the grant is to make free places at holiday clubs available during the school holidays. This will be made available to children in the local authority area who are eligible for and receive benefits-related free school meals. (Children eligible for the programme in Tower Hamlets will be issued a HAF code by the Council and HAF providers will be required to collect these as part of the grant monitoring process).

All provision funded by the local authority through the HAF programme must meet the framework of standards and delivery expectations (as set out in this document) and meet the following core aims and objectives:

Core aims and objectives

(Refers to Experience and Delivery Plan section in the Application Form)

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

- eat healthily over the school holidays
- be active during the school holidays
- take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience, character, and wellbeing along with their wider educational attainment
- be safe and not to be socially isolated
- have a greater knowledge of health and nutrition
- be more engaged with school and other local services

We also want to ensure that the families who participate in this programme:

- develop their understanding of healthy lifestyles
- are signposted towards other information and support, for example, health, employment, and education

Grant funding amounts

Grants are available depending on the number of places **available each day** (this will be the club's average daily attendance target, and they will be expected to meet this each day of delivery). When applying for funding, please consider that there is a minimum expectation that 85% of your places each day must be filled by eligible children.

An increased grant amount is available to support groups providing SEND-focused Easter holiday activities to reflect the additional support required. **To claim the SEND rate, at least 50% of attendees must be SEND.**

Restrictions:

- **Applicants are limited to applying for a maximum of 50 places per day across all sites, SEND provision is limited to a maximum of 30 places per day.**

The maximum size of a Mainstream site is 50 places per day.

The maximum size of a SEND site is 30 places per day.

*Please note, due to budget constraints the Council will reserve the right to amend or reduce the number of places per day.

- Clubs can deliver up to a maximum of 2 sites.
- You must adhere to your venue's capacity.
- Applicants can only apply to deliver for a maximum of 8 days and a minimum of 4 days.

How much funding is available?

(Use the below table to calculate the overall funding amount applied for in your application)

Funding schedule tables

**The below funding levels may differ from what was available in previous rounds of delivery for the HAF programme in the expectation that cost will not be the same as previous.*

1. Mainstream

Number of children	Funding available per day of provision
25	£630.00
30	£720.00
35	£830.00
40	£930.00
45	£1030.00
50	£1,130.00

How to calculate how much funding to apply for:

Funding available per day of provision for the number of children x Number of days of proposed delivery (x by the number of sites if delivering multiple).

2. SEND Provision

*For applicants to apply for SEND funding MUST have at least 50% SEND attendees and you MUST provide attendees school details.

Number of children	Funding available per day of provision
10	£480.00
15	£655.00
20	£830.00
25	£1,005.00
30	£1,180.00
How to calculate how much funding to apply for: <i>Funding available per day of provision for the number of children x Number of days of proposed delivery (x by the number of sites if delivering multiple).</i>	

Budget Breakdown

(Refers to Full Project Breakdown of Budget in the Application Form)

As a part of the application process applicants will be required to provide a breakdown of your budget. You must provide a breakdown for the following:

- Staff Costs
- Volunteer Costs
- Operational/Activity Costs
- Office, Overhead & Premises Costs
- Capital Costs
- Reasonable Publicity Costs
- Food Costs
- Match Funding Amount

Below is an example of a budget breakdown for an 8-day programme, delivering at 1 mainstream site to 50 children. This is to give applicants an understanding of the expected level of detail that should be provided when outlining your budget breakdown in your application. Please follow the format of the Budget Breakdown below.

Fields	Breakdown	Requested Amount
Total Cost of the Project	£xx (Eligible for £xx for 1 mainstream club, 8 days of delivery, 50 places available per day).	£xx
Match Funding	£500 from Help HAF Charity	£500.00
Staff Costs		
- Salaries	Project/admin staff (2 staff x 8 days)	£xx
- Coaches	Coaches (3 mainstream coaches & 1 SEND specialist coach x 8 days)	£xx
Volunteer Costs		
- Training	Volunteer training materials	£xx
- Background checks	Background check fees	£xx
Operational/Activity Costs		

Fields	Breakdown	Requested Amount
- Specialised instructors/Activities	Gymnastics instructor and equip for 3 sessions (£xx) Computer coding teachers and hire of computer lab for 5 sessions (£xx)	£xx
- Venue Rental	Renting facility for activities – Community Hall	£xx
- Transportation	Bus rental for one field trip to Go Ape	£xx
Office/Overhead/Premises Costs		
- Booking system	Booking systems – GLP SPORTS booking	£xx
- Insurance	Liability insurance	£xx
Capital Costs (Equipment) *no more than 3% of requested grant		
- Sports Equipment	New rugby balls, nets, etc.	£xx
- Craft Supplies	Paints, brushes, paper, etc.	£xx
Reasonable Publicity Costs		
- Flyers	Printing flyers for promotion	£xx
- Banners	Large banner for events (1 for the community centre)	£xx
- Advertisements	Online and local ads	£xx
Food Costs		
- Supplier	XYZ Catering Company (Level 2 certified)	
- Lunch	Main Course: £4.50 per child x 50 children x 8 days	£xx
- Lunch	Side dish: £1.50 per child x 50 children x 8 days	£xx
- Lunch	Drink: £0.50 per child x 50 children x 8 days	£xx
Total Requested Amount		£xx

Department for Education Minimum Standards

All provision funded by the local authority must adhere to all of the framework of standards, as outlined below. Please ensure that your application addresses the following:

(Refers to Department for Education Minimum Standards section in the Application Form)

Please Note: If an organisation does not provide adequate answers to any part of the Department for Education Minimum Standards section of the application form then they will not be eligible for funding.

1. **Healthy Meals:** Holiday clubs must provide at least one healthy **hot** meal per day, meeting the [School Food Standards](#) and adhering to [Natasha's Law](#).
With the HAF Grant funding, clubs can use the funding to:
 - a) Produce healthy food in house (providing that all food hygiene and safety standards are met).
and/or
 - b) Source healthy food from a local provider.
2. **Enrichment Activities:** Holiday clubs must provide fun and enriching activities that provide children with opportunities to develop or consolidate skills or knowledge. Clubs must also provide physical activities which meet the [Physical Activity Guidelines](#) daily.
3. **Increasing awareness of healthy eating, healthy lifestyles, and positive behaviours:** We expect providers to incorporate helping children to understand more about the benefits of healthy eating and nutrition into their programme. These do not need to be formal learning activities. This could include:
 - getting children involved in food preparation and cooking
 - growing fruit and vegetables
 - taste tests
 - discussing food and healthy eating during mealtimes
 - including food and nutrition in other activities
4. **Signposting and Referrals:** Clubs must provide information, signposting, or referrals to other services and support beneficial for attending children and their families. This may include advice on sourcing, preparing, and cooking nutritious and low-cost food, along with increasing awareness of healthy eating. **Tower Hamlets Council has existing partnerships in place and will provide information on where families can be referred to, but providers should think how this element will fit with their delivery plan.**
5. **Policies and Procedures:** Clubs must demonstrate and explain their safeguarding arrangements. Relevant and appropriate policies and procedures should be in place for safeguarding, health and safety, insurance, accessibility, and inclusiveness. Where applicable, clubs must comply with Ofsted requirements for working with children.

(Refers to the Marketing & Recruitment section of the application form)

6. **Targeted Free Holiday Club Places:** Free holiday club places should be targeted at children (reception – Year 11 inclusive) who are in receipt of

benefits-related free school meals. Benefits-related Free School Meals are different to the Universal Free School Meals that every child in Tower Hamlets receives. Benefit-related Free School Meals must be applied for through either the Council's website or the child's school.

7. **HAF Codes:** The primary focus of the programme will be engaging and supporting children/young people in receipt of benefits-related Free School Meals; however, clubs will be able to offer 15% of their daily placements to non-eligible children.

Clubs must collect a Council-issued HAF code for each child that attends their programme (in some circumstances, confirmation received from the child's school or from the Council may be acceptable). This should be built into your registration/booking process and is **mandatory** to collect.

Clubs must also be open and accessible for those with additional needs or SEND and must (to the best of their ability) cater to all needs.

(Refers to the Local Presence section of the application form)

8. **Local Presence:** You will be asked to evidence that your organisation has a registered address in Tower Hamlets in the Attachment section of the application form.

Please note, only organisations who have a registered address in Tower Hamlets will be eligible for HAF funding.

Minimum delivery expectations

Below details the minimum delivery expectations which must be met. Applicants will be asked to demonstrate how these delivery expectations will be met in their application.

**If you feel you would be able deliver a HAF programme but may not be able to meet all the standards outlined, please contact The HAF Team at HAF@towerhamlets.gov.uk*

(Refers to Other Details section in the Application form)

1. **Eligibility & Paid Places:** Clubs must be free to attend for eligible children (children in receipt of benefits-related Free School Meals). Clubs can choose to offer paid places to non-eligible children if they wish, but every effort must be made to avoid stigmatising free attendees.
2. **Delivery Structure:** Clubs must deliver a minimum of 4 hours of in person activity per day for a maximum of 8 days (or a minimum of 4 days). (There may be some limited flexibility on the structure if the number of hours is met). **The delivery structure of SEND clubs can be adapted to suit the needs of the cohort.**
*Please note, due to budget constraints the Council will reserve the right to amend or reduce delivery periods.
3. **Delivery Dates:** Delivery must fall within Saturday 28th March 2026 - Sunday 12th April 2026

- 4. Monitoring & Evaluation Expectations:** To derive as much learning as possible Tower Hamlets Council will gather a range of information from funded activities. All HAF funded clubs must collect all of the following information for all individuals attending each session:

- **HAF Code**
- First name
- Surname
- Gender
- Date of birth
- Ethnicity
- Home postcode
- Dates of all sessions attended
- Special educational needs or a disability
- School name

- 5. SEND (Refers to the SEND section of the application form, and only needs to be answered if you are applying for SEND funding):** Clubs delivering SEND provision must prioritise places for SEND children and they must achieve a minimum of 50% SEND attendance for each day of delivery. SEND clubs must consider that the adaptations and needs of children will be more complex and should therefore take into consideration additional support, reasonable adaptations and suitable venues when applying.

Recruitment and registration strategies should consider the SEND cohort and incorporate necessary adaptations to plan for potential dropouts and make sure the needs of attendees are met. This should be in line and reflected in your Equality & Diversity Policies. This also applies to mainstream clubs.

- 6. Contingency:** Remote provision will not be funded. Clubs should consider contingency plans in case disruptions to delivery e.g. venue cancellations or poor weather conditions.

Other Considerations

Capacity: When applying for funding, clubs should expect to be operating at full capacity. It is expected that your average daily attendance will be the same as the number of places bid for in your application.

Equal Access: We expect applicants to prioritise equality of access to their programme including gender equality

Proof of Eligibility: You must keep records of proof of eligibility (HAF codes, letter/email from the relevant Council or School confirming receipt of benefits-related Free School Meals).

Capital costs: No more than 3% of the awarded grant total can be spent on capital items.

Payments: If awarded a grant, 75% of the payment will be made upon the start of the programme delivery and 25% after the programme end and dependant on

targets and conditions being met. **(Please consider this when applying as we cannot fund delivery prior to the delivery start date).**

Record of Expenditure: Clubs must be able to provide proof of expenditure for their HAF club if requested by Tower Hamlets Council.

Subsidy control: All organisations applying for HAF funding must adhere to the Subsidy Control Act.

Trips: Trips and excursions must meet the framework of standards and delivery format. Trips must not be offered in replacement of standards.

Delivering in park spaces: If you plan to conduct your HAF programme in a Tower Hamlets Park or open space, you must obtain permission by discussing your proposal with Steven.McEvoy@towerhamlets.gov.uk at least 6 weeks prior to delivery. Permissions are subject to availability and at the discretion of the Parks team, with no guarantee. Due to potential limitations, each park may allow only one club, so prepare a backup option when expressing interest.

Other Venue options: If you want to deliver but do not have a venue, you can find a list of venues that be hired on the Tower Hamlets website (see link for list of venues: [Premises](#)).

Volunteer Support: If you wish to receive support with sourcing and managing volunteers for your Holiday Activities and Food programme, we encourage you to register with the Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets (VCTH), who recruit volunteers for a wide variety of non-profit organisations in Tower Hamlets. To enquire, please email: info@vcth.org.uk.

What can the funding be used for?

HAF funding can be used to cover all the costs of delivering a project, including:

- Staff salaries and associated costs
- Activity costs (activities in line with the Framework of Standards)
- Room/venue hire
- Materials, and other project resources
- Food
- Reasonable and relative training
- Capital cost (including equipment) up to the amount of 3% of the grant awarded

Funding cannot be used:

- for capital works or major building works
- for general charitable appeals
- to pay back debt or cover past expenditure.

Projects will need to demonstrate that they will provide value for money.

What We Won't Fund

- activities where a profit will be distributed for private gain or projects that have no charitable or community element
- religious or political activity (we can fund religious organisations if they are providing benefit for the wider community)
- activity that replaces government funding or is a statutory responsibility, for example, we can only fund school activities that are additional to the curriculum
- activities that benefit individuals, rather than a wider community
- retrospective costs and loan repayments
- expenditure or activities that have already taken place outside of the funding period
- foreign travel
- Programmes, sessions or activities delivered online

How to Apply

Organisations can apply by completing a HAF Easter Application form by **11:59pm Sunday 25th January 2026**.

Notification of Application Outcome:

If your application is successful, the council will contact you for additional information and required documents. The timeframe for this process cannot be stipulated, but you will be promptly notified of the acceptance or rejection of your application.

If you have any questions about the programme, please feel free to contact HAF@towerhamlets.gov.uk.