



#TeamBolton
Holiday Activities
& **Food #HAF**



Annual Report

2025



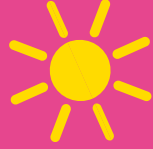
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UK Government

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What we did...

Bolton's 2025 Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme primarily supported children and young people who received benefits-related free school meals.

Funded by the UK Government, the program provided children and young people with the opportunity to take part in free physical and enriching activities for four hours a day for four days a week, alongside a substantial meal.

The funding covered four days of delivery over Easter, 16 days of delivery over summer and the equivalent of four days of delivery over the winter holidays.

During 2025, the number of children and young people receiving benefits-related free school meals in Bolton increased to just over 14,500 with no increase in national funding.

2025 HAF bytes...



52+

Local delivery providers



6,491

Individual FSM children took part



12,298

Children participated in total



£1,434,510

Allocated to Bolton's HAF Programme



2,393

Individual children with SEND



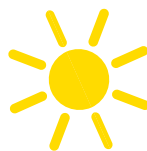
1,127

Children under social care



1,903

Eligible children over Easter and October



3,736

Eligible children over Summer



1,943

Eligible children over Winter

How we did it...

Bolton's HAF delivery model

We continued to adopt a five-strand delivery model for HAF in 2025, ensuring decisions were data driven, set within a Bolton context and prioritised local service providers.

Strand ONE focused on services delivered by the council's play, youth and library teams, as well as local schools.

Strand TWO made use of Bolton's strong Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector. A grass roots grants programme through Bolton Community and Voluntary Services and a commissioned approach via the umbrella organisation, Bolton Together, ensured local groups were able to support local communities.

Strand THREE sought the support of private out-of-school clubs and sports camps, often with great links to schools and the flexibility to fill gaps in provision.

Strand FOUR focused on the food element of the programme working in partnership with Bolton's biggest food charity, Urban Outreach. The charity provided lunches, food education & demos as well as liaising with local food businesses and supermarkets to ensure an adequate HAF supply chain.

Strand FIVE was reserved for HAF innovation and support. This covered provider training, marketing and additional enriching opportunities for HAF providers through our menu of activities. Strand five also facilitated pop-up HAF HUBs over summer across Bolton's biggest parks. Here families and HAF providers could access support, advice and guidance from partner agencies as well as access the key elements of the HAF programme.

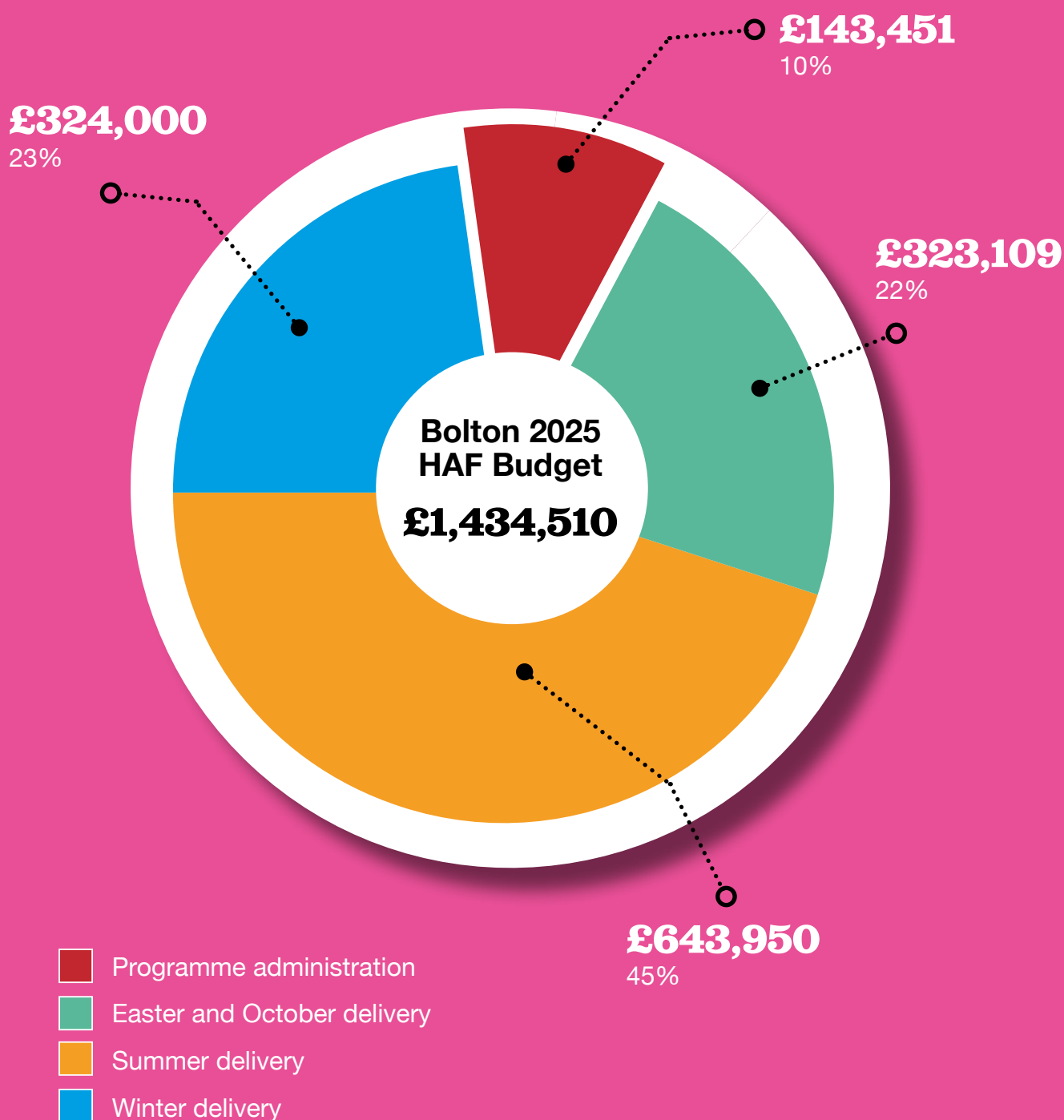


Budget

In 2025 we spent our allocated budget totalling £1,434,510.

This was made up of £1,291,059 on programme delivery and £143,451 (10%) on the co-ordination and administration of the programme as per the DfE guidance.

Late programme approvals from the DfE resulted in a reduced programme over Easter and a subsequent underspend. To rectify this, permission was granted by the DfE to expand the 2025 HAF programme to include four days at October half term.



Meeting the HAF criteria

Bolton continued to ensure children and young people accessing the HAF programme could take part in physical and enriching activities that matched their interests and hobbies.

The HAF team created a menu of activities that HAF service providers could access, including outdoor adventure centres, trampoline parks and digital arcade arenas.

Our HAF HUBs provided daily events for families that offered cooking sessions, activities and an opportunity to signpost families to local support services.

Click here: [#TeamBolton's Summer HAF 2025](#)



Physical activities

With a mixture of sports camps, forest schools and youth clubs, physical activities continued to be at the heart of Bolton's HAF offer.

The HAF team ensured that activities were varied, accessible and safe, with a focus on creating as many local, new and unique experiences as possible.

As well as access to traditional sports, our 2025 programme gave children and young people the opportunity to access trampoline parks, local leisure centres and sessions with Bolton.

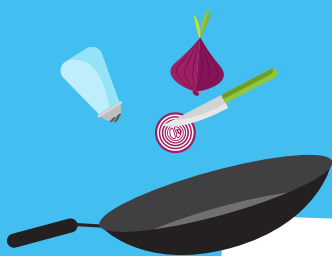
Wanderers Football Club all with the aim of promoting and facilitating positive physical health.



Enriching activities

Our 2025 menu of activities allowed HAF participants to access a wide range of unique and enriching trips and workshops allowing children and young people enjoy new experiences and gain new skills. First aid courses, mental health workshops and cooking sessions were all up for grabs as well as visits to local attractions and shows!

One lucky group of teenagers had the privilege of surviving the night at the famously 'haunted' Smithills Hall where they came face to face with some horrible history and delightful characters of the past!



Food education



Food education continued to be a priority for Bolton's HAF programme with access to training for providers, hands on cooking sessions for children and young people and large food demonstrations at our pop up HAF HUB sessions. Bolton based organisations including Classroom Kitchen, Cooking Wizards, Urban Outreach and Chefs 2 Go ensured food education was of quality, accessible and varied.

HAF participants also got the chance to cook with celebrity chefs at Bolton's world famous food and drink festival over summer!

Family support

Bolton continued to take a two-pronged approach to family support. We digitally signposted families to services through our microsite, while also bringing services to local communities via our HAF HUB family events.

We invited some key local services alongside our activities and food offer to provide practical support, advice and guidance beyond HAF. Services included family hubs, health, social housing, money skills, targeted early help, active lives and mental health support.



Can't click the video links?
Scan here instead...



HAF Easter
2025 YouTube



HAF Summer
2025 YouTube



Marketing and communication

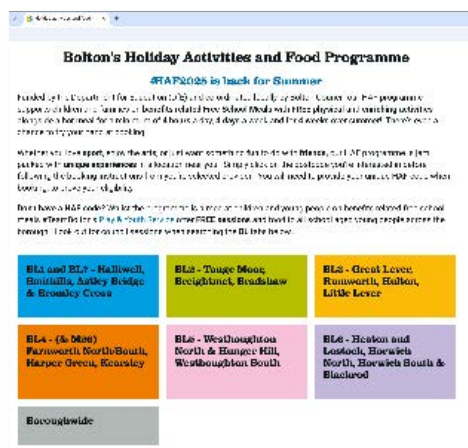
Our marketing in 2025 continued to use our vibrant HAF branding, which is now well recognised by families, professionals and partners.

Our HAF website provided details on all HAF sessions plus information about additional services and support for HAF families and beyond. For accessibility the website also has a translate and read aloud function.

Every eligible child received a VIP invitation letter providing them with a unique code to use when booking.

To help promote the sessions, service providers were given editable branded templates for leaflets and posters, along with flags and banners to display on site.

HAF was also marketed through schools, social housing providers and the council's social care department via face-to-face briefings and digital channels.

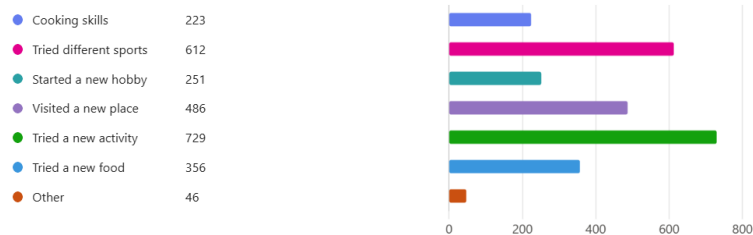


Feedback and reflections

All ten Greater Manchester local authorities continued to work together to gather the thoughts and reflections of parents and carers whose children had taken part in HAF activities. It allowed us to gather local feedback as well as identify commonalities that we could share with the DfE.

In Bolton, 169 parents took part in the survey, more than any other GM authority. Below is a snapshot of those results as well as how children and young people rated the activities and food on offer.

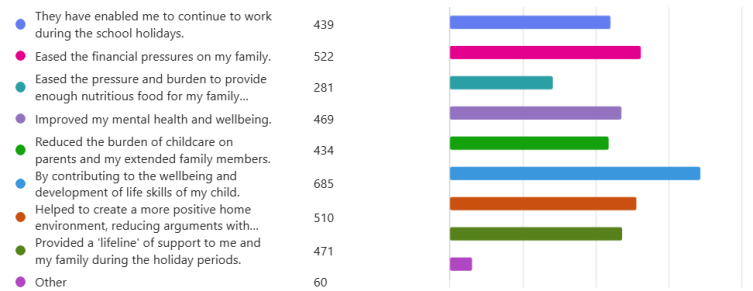
9. Has your child accessed opportunities or experiences they wouldn't have had without a HAF holiday club? Select all that apply.



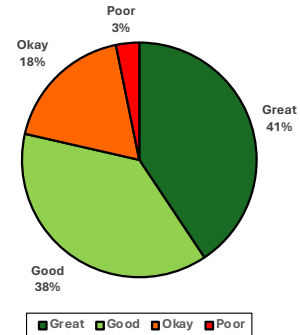
Children's view of HAF Activities



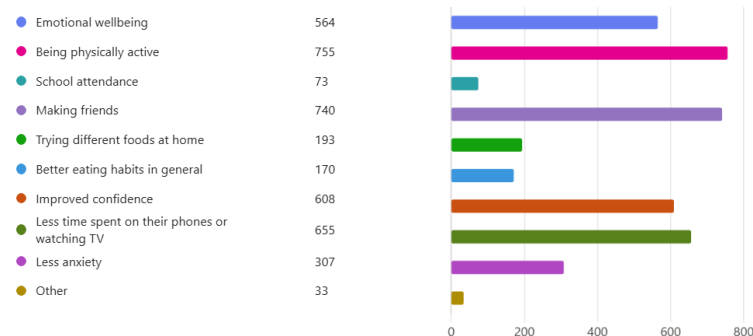
4. How have the HAF holiday clubs supported you as a parent? Select all that apply.



Children's view of HAF Food



8. Have you noticed a positive difference in your child since they've attended HAF holiday clubs? Select all that apply.



Partnership working

Team Bolton's HAF steering group

- **Urban Outreach** – food charity
- **Family Hubs** – early years support
- **Bolton Together** – third sector
- **Bolton at Home** – social housing
- **Active Lives** – public health
- **Social Care early help**
- **Schools**
- **Bolton Council marketing and communications service**
- **Bolton Council play and youth services**
- **Bolton Wanderers in the Community** – football club



Key strategic HAF partnerships

- **Family Hubs** - events, signposting and wraparound offer
- **Social Care** - targeted early help and referrals
- **Cost of Living** - housing support fund / Urban Outreach
- **Public Health** - Active Lives, Bikeability and healthy eating
- **Greater Manchester** - HAF co-ordinator Network

Supporting the most vulnerable

Although the HAF programme primarily focuses on children and young people who receive benefits-related free school meals, the DfE does offer some flexibility to support other vulnerable children.

These include (but are not limited to) children with special education needs, looked after children, children in need, targeted early help children and those under child protection plans.

Given the limited resources, rather than prioritise one group, we continued to assess these individual needs on a case-by-case basis via professional referrals, such as a teacher or social worker.

HAF again extended its offer to the Targeted Early Help team to identify a number of children at risk who would benefit from the programme over the summer holidays, supporting school readiness and subsequent attendance.

HAF 2025 also used additional funding from the Crisis Resilience Fund (CRF) to support those just outside of the eligibility criteria.

Challenges and ambitions

Poor weather



As well as effecting outdoor activities and services it deterred traveling parents dropping off.

To mitigate this, we asked service providers to consider back-up venues and better contingencies.

Cancellations



Cancellations and 'no shows' continue to affect final numbers.

To mitigate this, service providers are funded based on average daily attendance to reduce wasted places.

Eligibility



Although limited, there continues to be some pushback against HAF's targeted approach.

To mitigate this, the council's play and youth service will continue to deliver a universal offer alongside the HAF programme supported by CRF funding.

School holidays



Services provided by schools were inconsistent over Easter and Christmas, affecting HAF delivery.

To mitigate this, service providers were given extended holiday periods from which they could run their HAF provision.

Ambitions

With funding now confirmed for the next three years, our plan is to continue to build on the things we do well, such as our partnership approach and innovative delivery. A review of our steering group membership and chair will take place to ensure we have the appropriate representation around the table not only ensuring our programme is efficient and accountable, but delivers for children, young people and families.

We will continue to support providers with opportunities such as staff training, our menu of activities to enhance the offer, and develop closer links to wraparound childcare. We will continue to make the programme as accessible as possible particularly for hard to reach groups like older young people and SEND.

Our five-strand delivery model will continue to ensure that Bolton's 2026 HAF programme is delivered locally, within a Bolton context, and is data driven in its decision making. Our focus will be on better links with schools and social care services ensuring that our most vulnerable children and young people are safe and supported.

We hope to create a lasting impact in the sector. This will be achieved by continuing to support local providers with training opportunities, as well as ensuring minimum standards of delivery via robust application processes and quality assurance visits. Providers will be supported to forge better links with local schools and each other through the local consortium Bolton Together and Bolton Community and Voluntary Service.

In addition, providers will be asked to actively demonstrate better value for money and proactively reduce wasted places. The HAF team will continue to explore complimentary opportunities for funding, strategic alignment to the 'best start in life' agenda and purposeful collaboration locally, regionally and nationally.



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Bolton Council Play and Youth Service



Play & Youth Bolton



@TeamBoltonYouth



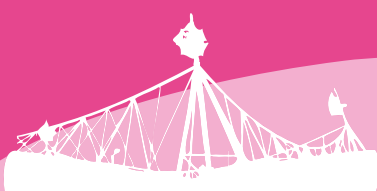
@TeamBoltonYouth

Special thanks & acknowledgement to Bolton Together, Bolton CVS & Urban Outreach

Bolton Together



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