

Funding Policy

Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF)

June 2026

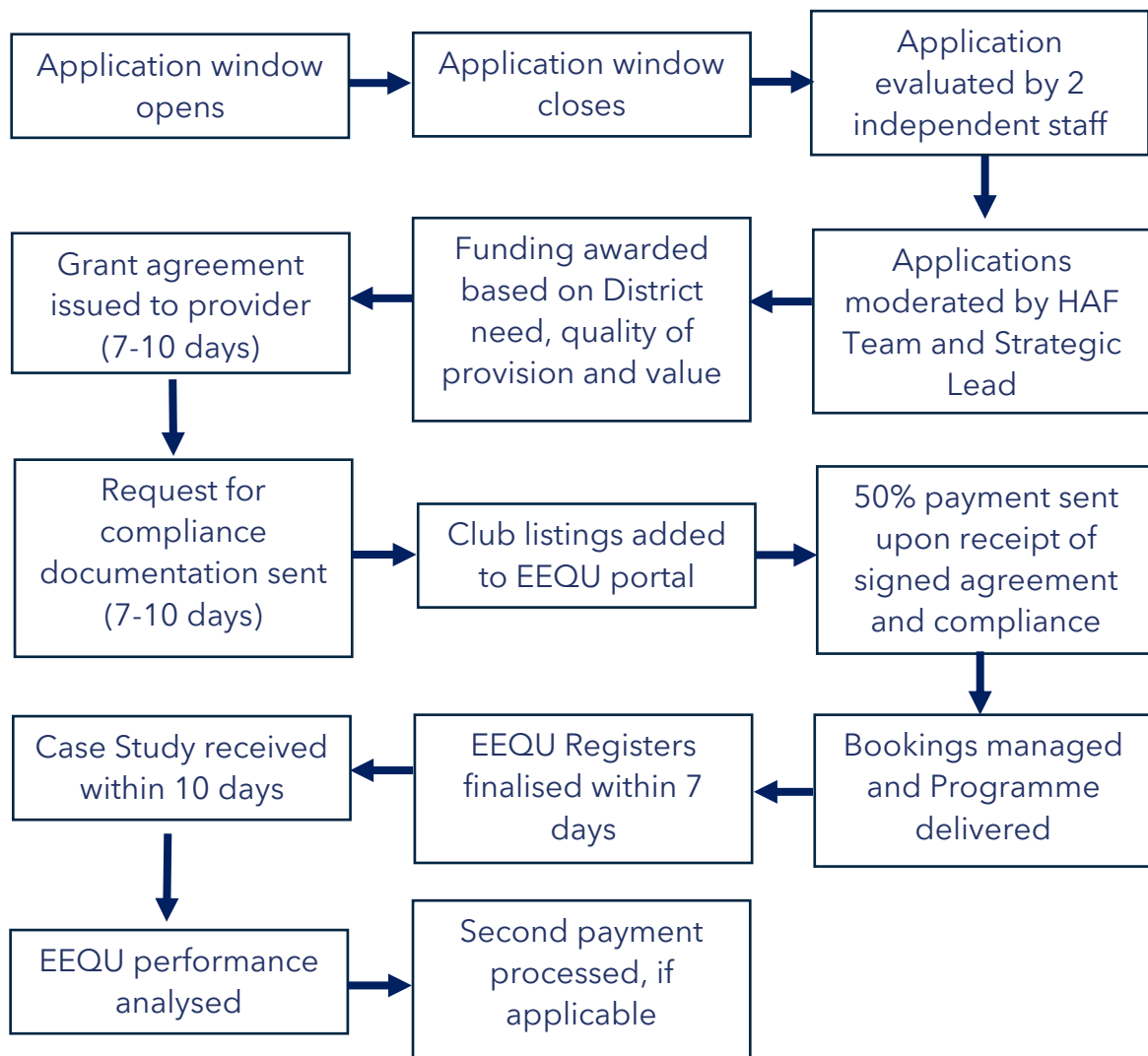
Staffordshire County Council



This document outlines the funding, compliance, and delivery requirements for organisations delivering the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme on behalf of Staffordshire County Council.

The policy sets out how funding is allocated, the expectations placed on providers, and the processes to ensure high-quality, safe, and effective delivery in line with the Department for Education (DfE) framework.

Application and funding process map



Application scoring

All applications will be assessed through a robust and transparent evaluation process to ensure fairness, consistency, and alignment with the Department for Education (DfE) Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme framework (see: [Holiday activities and food programme 2026 to 2027 financial year - GOV.UK](#)).

Each application will be independently reviewed by two assessors who will evaluate submissions based on:

- The quality and completeness of responses provided within the application form.
- The accuracy, value for money, and appropriateness of the accompanying costing document

Applications will be scored against the key criteria outlined within the DfE HAF framework, including (but not limited to):

- Programme delivery and safeguarding.
- Enrichment activity offer
- Nutritional standards
- Targeting and inclusion of eligible children and young people
- Organisational capacity and experience
- Value for money

Scores from both independent assessors will be reviewed and moderated where necessary to ensure consistency. Final funding decisions will be made based on combined scores, available budget, and the overall balance of provision across the programme.

Activity Proposal and Planning - 20%

Assessors will look for evidence that the activity has a clear aim and purpose and has been thoroughly planned. The project should be achievable within the timescales of the HAF Programme, with defined milestones and deliverables. Assessors will also consider the number of children and young people who will benefit, and how the project will meet the needs of the target beneficiaries, particularly those from priority groups and areas of greatest need.

Activity and Food Standards, Nutritional Standards, Policies, Procedures and Guidance - 30%

Assessors will expect clear and well-articulated evidence demonstrating how the activity aligns with and meets the Standards Framework set out by the Department for Education. This includes standards related to Food, Enriching Activities, Physical Activities, Nutritional Education, Food Education for Families, as well as Signposting, Referrals, and appropriate Policies, Procedures, and Guidance.



Safeguarding - 20%

Assessors will expect clear, detailed, and well-articulated evidence demonstrating how the activity will effectively safeguard children, young people, and their families throughout their participation. This should include robust safeguarding arrangements, clear policies and procedures, and defined roles and responsibilities for staff and volunteers.

Evidence should also outline established referral and reporting pathways, including how concerns will be identified, recorded, escalated, and reported in line with local safeguarding requirements. This includes processes for raising concerns, responding appropriately to disclosures, and ensuring timely referrals to relevant agencies where necessary.

In addition, applicants should demonstrate how they will promote a safe and inclusive environment, ensure staff are appropriately trained, and maintain ongoing monitoring and oversight of safeguarding practices.

Partnership Working - 15%

Assessors will look for evidence of how others, such as volunteers, partners, and the wider community, are actively involved in the delivery of the activity. Consideration will also be given to how the funding will add value to the community, including strengthening partnerships, building local capacity, and creating wider benefits beyond the immediate participants.

Value for money (based on total project costs) - 15%

Assessors will evaluate whether the project represents good value for money, considering the number of people who will benefit, and any additional funding secured from other sources. Costs should be reasonable and proportionate, with management and overhead expenses kept to a minimum.

Applications achieving an overall score of less than 60% against the assessment criteria will be unsuccessful.

Awarding funding

The allocation of funding is informed by a range of strategic and performance-based considerations to ensure equitable distribution, value for money, and alignment with programme priorities. Key factors include:

- Provider submissions in response to the application process
- Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility levels across each district

- Historic FSM take-up rates within each district
- The sufficiency and spread of provision within each district, with a focus on minimising over-saturation.
- Overall funding availability for the delivery period
- Provider performance during previous programmes, including delivery against funded attendance percentages and previously awarded place allocations.
 - For example: If a provider achieved 75% funded attendance in a previous programme (based on an allocation of 100 places), they would be awarded 75 places in the subsequent programme. Providers may request additional places where they can demonstrate demand through bookings and interest on the waiting list exceeding their allocated capacity.

In addition:

- A proportion of funding has been ringfenced to accommodate additional places requested through variation agreements, subject to demonstrated booking performance and waiting list demand.
- New providers have been allocated a proportionate number of places to support market development and help establish their delivery capacity within the HAF programme.
 - During their initial delivery period, new providers will not be eligible to request additional places, as their provision must first undergo Quality Assurance to ensure it meets the requirements set out in the DfE framework.
- Consideration has been given to balancing larger, established providers with smaller SMEs and private providers, ensuring a diverse and sustainable delivery market.

This approach supports a fair and evidence-based allocation of resources, while promoting both programme growth and long-term market development. By aligning the number of places awarded with prior provider performance and identified district need, it aims to minimise funding spent on unfilled places and maximise the efficient use of budget, enabling greater investment in future programme delivery.

Grant Agreement Letter

As part of the HAF funding award, providers will receive a Grant Agreement Letter (GAL) detailing the funding allocation and the number of places awarded.



Providers are required to carefully review the contents of the GAL to ensure full understanding. The signed agreement must then be returned to the HAF inbox within 7-10 days of receipt. Failure to return the GAL within this time may result in a delay to the initial grant payment.

New providers working with Staffordshire County Council will be required to complete a new provider information request, supplying full company details and bank information. This is necessary to enable the Council to set you up as a supplier on its financial system and facilitate HAF payments.

In addition, providers must submit either a template invoice or a company letterhead displaying their organisation name, email address, and contact number. These details must align with the information held by the provider's bank to ensure accurate and timely payment processing.

Compliance requirements

To ensure full compliance with Department for Education (DfE) requirements, and to prioritise the safety of children and the quality of provision, all HAF providers delivering on behalf of Staffordshire County Council are required to submit a set of key documentation as part of the funding process.

These documents enable the Council to verify that appropriate safeguarding arrangements, operational standards, and governance measures are in place prior to programme delivery. This is essential to maintaining a safe, high-quality, and compliant HAF programme across all providers.

All requested documentation must be submitted to the HAF inbox within 7-10 days of the request. Providers are expected to ensure that documents are up to date, accurate, and reflective of current practice.

Failure to provide the required documentation within this time may result in a delay to the initial grant payment and may impact the provider's ability to commence delivery as planned.

The documents required are:

- Complaints Policy (excluding safeguarding or allegations-related matters)
- Enhanced DBS information for staff supporting delivery of the provision
- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) training certificates (Level 3 required)
- Employers' Liability Insurance
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy
- Food Hygiene training certificates (minimum Level 1 for all staff involved in food preparation or support on the HAF programme)



- Food provider details
- Food Safety Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Information Sharing Agreement
- Lockdown Policy & Risk Assessments where required
- Public Liability Insurance
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Safeguarding Policy

EEQU Listings

Following confirmation of your grant award, providers are required to create and publish their club listing(s) on the EEQU booking platform. Listings should include:

- clear, accurate descriptions of the provision
- supported by photographs of the actual club where possible (rather than AI-generated images), to give parents and carers a realistic understanding of what to expect.
- Bookings open date to comply with the HAF programme (bookings open) date

It is the provider's responsibility to ensure that the number of available places listed aligns with the allocation set out in the Grant Agreement Letter and does not exceed the awarded capacity. All listings must also include a waiting list function, allowing parents and carers to register interest for any places that may become available.

Initial grant payment

The initial payment process will be initiated, only on receipt of the signed Grant Agreement Letter and all required compliance documentation, and your listing has been reviewed and approved by the HAF Team,

This first payment will be 50% of the total funding value as outlined in your Grant Agreement Letter. The HAF Team will complete and verify the payment request, which is then subject to approval by the relevant Strategic Lead before being submitted to the Council's Finance Team for processing.



Following financial approval, payment will be made via BACS, typically within five working days. Providers should ensure that all submitted details are accurate to avoid any delays in processing.

Bookings and programme delivery

Bookings & Inclusion Policy

All bookings for the HAF programme will be managed within the EEQU portal. Successful Providers will receive full training in using EEQU.

Providers should review all bookings and contact parents or carers where further discussion about a child's needs is required.

Providers are expected to make reasonable adjustments to support all children.

If a child has an additional need and a provider considers 1-2-1 support would be required, you may invite the parent to attend with the child, or request funding for 1-2-1 support prior to acceptance of the booking by contacting the HAF team and subject to budget availability.

Where they are unable to meet a child's needs safely, they should discuss this with the parent or carer and consider suitable alternative options before declining any bookings.

If a provider is unable to accept a booking, they should send a polite and informative message to the parent or carer via the EEQU platform as part of the decline decision.

An eligibility checker is built into the system to identify children eligible for the HAF programme within Staffordshire. Eligible bookings are automatically forwarded to providers for approval. Children accessing provision through the professional referral process, or where booking details do not match the eligibility checker - the Schools Data Team will review these bookings before sending them to providers.

If eligibility cannot be confirmed, the booking will be declined and the person who made the booking will receive an email from SCC explaining the reasons.

Providers that achieve 100% booking capacity and can demonstrate demand for additional places through the EEQU waiting list may request a variation to their places from the HAF team. The variation order must be approved, signed, and returned before any additional places are advertised on EEQU.

Variations operate on a payment-by-results basis. This means additional funding will only be paid for places attended above the original allocation, up to the agreed maximum.



For example:

- Original places awarded: 100
- Additional places approved: 10
- Total places available: 110
- If attendance remains at or below 100, no additional funding will be paid.
- If attendance exceeds 100, additional payments will be made per attended place above the original allocation, up to a maximum of 110 places.

Low Bookings

Where booking levels are low in the lead-up to a programme delivery period, providers may be required to review their proposed delivery structure. This could include:

- combining bookings with other sessions
- consolidating delivery dates
- adjusting provision to ensure effective use of resources.

Recording attendances

An individual register is available within EEQU for each delivery date of the HAF programme. Providers are required to complete registers as soon as possible, ideally as part of the daily sign-in process. It is essential that registers are accurate, as attendance data is reported to the DfE at the end of each programme.

All HAF sessions should be pre-booked. In exceptional circumstances, providers may process a walk-in booking. Walk-ins must have a valid HAF code and can only be used once per child within a delivery period. Any further attendance must be booked in advance.

Registers must be finalised within 7 days of the end of the delivery period. A snapshot of attendance will be taken at the published deadline, and final attendance figures will be based on this. No additional attendees, walk-ins, or professional referrals can be added after this deadline.

Case Study

The DfE require Providers to complete a case study at the end of the delivery to demonstrate the impact their provision has on children and families.



A template and guidance will be shared at the start of the programme, and this can be updated throughout the delivery period. Completed case studies should be submitted to the HAF inbox no later than 10 days after the end of the programme.

Marketing, performance and final payment

Providers are required to actively promote their provision, manage bookings effectively, and maintain accurate attendance records throughout delivery to maximise funded attendance and ensure compliance with programme expectations.

Staffordshire County Council will also undertake countywide and focused marketing of HAF clubs to support the take up places along with all partners including Schools, Family Hubs, Social Care teams etc.

Providers are encouraged to contact the HAF team if you are struggling to fill your places so that we can work in partnership to improve your bookings.

Following the registers taken at the end of the programme, providers who achieve a funded attendance rate of 60% or above will receive the second 50% of their grant payment in full. Funded attendance is calculated based on the number of funded places attended, rather than the number of bookings made.

Where providers do not meet the 60% funded attendance threshold, the second 50% grant payment will not be paid. The initial 50% payment will not be recovered; however, no further payment will be made.

Providers who do not meet the required attendance level may be asked to re-submit a full application for future HAF programmes. Previous delivery performance, including attendance levels, quality of provision, and compliance with programme requirements, will be considered when awarding any future grant funding.

