

North Yorkshire Council

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee

21 June 2024

Update on the Holiday Activity and Food Programme in North Yorkshire FEAST (Food, Entertainment, Arts and Sport Together)

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Local Engagement)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide an overview and update about the operation and delivery of the Department for Education (DfE) funded Holiday Activity and Food Programme in North Yorkshire (FEAST).

2. Background

- 2.1 A Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) grant has been awarded since 2021/22 by the Department for Education to all upper tier authorities in England for the purpose of providing a programme of holiday activities and food for school age children, including those with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) during the main school holiday periods of Easter, Summer and Christmas.
- 2.2 Free places are offered to all means tested free school meal eligible school age children up to the age of 16. The programme should be inclusive and accessible and can include non-subsidised fee-paying places.
- 2.3 The DfE provides detailed guidance on how the programme should be delivered including the composition of the programme and standards. Provision should be delivered in line with the grant criteria:
- Easter - 4 hours per day for 4 days
 - Summer – 4 hours per day for 16 days
 - Christmas – 4 hours per day for 4 days

However, Councils do have the flexibility to enable providers to deliver in shorter or longer time blocks. This is particularly helpful for secondary age provision.

- 2.4 Following the initial year, a three-year funding settlement was agreed for all Councils in England by the DfE in 2022 and 2024/25 is the final year of that funding period.

3. Holiday Activities and Food Programme in North Yorkshire

- 3.1 In line with DfE requirements, a full impact report covering the performance of the programme from its start in 2021 to March 2024 has been produced, this is available as Appendix A to this report.

3.2 The impact report provides information on the following:

- North Yorkshire Council's arrangements for delivering HAF
- The reach of the programme
- Feedback from clubs, children and parents/carers
- Marketing and promotion activities
- Financial summary
- Governance arrangements
- Next steps

3.3 The impact report covers the period from April 2021 (the first year of HAF) to March 2024.

3.4 As the programme has continued to develop over the four years it has been running, several improvements have been implemented:

- An online booking system – this helps to identify numbers of 'unique children' which enables a better understanding of the reach of the programme
- Enabling providers to apply for funding for the whole year rather than individual holiday periods
- Dedicated food and nutrition support, advice and guidance provided from Public Health
- Transport for children who need to travel to their nearest activity
- Mandatory and on-going training for all clubs to ensure standards of quality are maintained
- Improved links with schools to help ensure all eligible families and carers receive the information and to assess new referrals
- Improved provision for SEND children and families
- Additional funded places provided for children under the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

3.5 Provision for Easter 2024 has continued to build on these improvements. We are pleased with the level of provision delivered for the Easter 2024 holidays. Compared to last year, we saw increases with:

- the number of activities on offer (71 to 74)
- the number of spaces offered (9,801 to 12,463)
- the percentage of spaces that were booked (90% to 95%)
- the number of booked spaces that were attended (78% to 86%).

3.6 This means that more vulnerable children and young people have the chance to attend varied and high-quality activities in their local community. We have been particularly pleased with these improvements in relation to ongoing challenges HAFs nationally are facing with non-attendance.

3.7 We have continued to focus on developing our activity offer and optimising opportunities available from being a unitary council. We have welcomed two new specialist schools; five libraries; two outward bound centres and leisure centres and arts and cultural venues.

3.8 One challenge is the increased demand on FEAST spaces within the budget available. In Summer 2023, a more robust eligibility checking and activity booking system was

introduced which has enabled us to better understand our eligibility numbers. In 2024/25 we have seen an increase in eligible cohort of over 20%, with 16,800 eligible children in Easter 2024 compared with 13774 in Easter 2023. Although DfE funding has increased each year – circa 2% per annum – this is not at the same level as our increases in eligible children and we are finding that for some clubs and activities demand is outstripping supply.

- 3.9 2024/25 is the final year of the existing funding agreement from DfE. It is unknown at the present time whether funding will continue beyond Christmas 2024 school holidays.

4. Contribution to Council Priorities

- 4.1 This programme was established to support children in families on low incomes by providing free holiday activities and a meal over the main school holiday periods who would receive free school meals during term time.
- 4.2 This contributes to the following Council Health & Wellbeing priorities:
- People are supported to have a good quality of life and enjoy active and healthy lifestyles
 - Reduced variations in health through tackling the root causes of inequality
 - In times of hardship, support is provided to those that need it most.

5. Alternative Options

- 5.1 Local Authorities have flexibility regarding how the provision is delivered including direct delivery from Council services; partnership arrangements and commissioning an external contractor.
- 5.2 In North Yorkshire the programme is delivered as a partnership between the Council and a consortium of local voluntary and community-based providers. Co-ordination of the North Yorkshire programme – FEAST – is managed in partnership with North Yorkshire Together (North Yorkshire Sport, North Yorkshire Youth and Rural Arts) with North Yorkshire Sport being the lead provider.
- 5.3 Recognising the large rural geography of North Yorkshire, we made the decision from the start that a single provider approach to the delivery of the activities themselves would not be appropriate and that a more suitable approach would be to build a network of existing and new locally based activity providers and clubs built from both the commercial and voluntary sector.
- 5.4 This approach has a number of advantages: it ensures the funding provided from the DfE is invested in North Yorkshire organisations; it builds capacity in local groups who may choose to deliver activities outside the principle holidays using other grants; it helps to ensure that some of the smaller, rural communities have provision reducing the need for travel and it also gives us the opportunity to link the activities to a range of other local support such as local food providers and information and advice services.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The grant is awarded to the Council for the following purpose only:

“...for local authorities to make free places at holiday clubs available in the Easter, summer and Christmas school holidays in 2024. This will be made available to children in the local authority area who are eligible for and receive benefits-related free school meals.”

- 6.2 The grant to North Yorkshire for 2024/25 is £1,410,570. The HAF programme is currently fully funded by DfE. Additional funding is provided for children from Ukrainian families from the Homes for Ukraine grant.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 A Programme Board governs the delivery of the programme with representation from a range of internal departments: Finance, Early Help, Youth Voice, Libraries, Leisure, Culture & Heritage, Public Health and Localities. The Board is chaired by the Head of Localities. In line with DfE requirements, external partners are also on the Board including North Yorkshire Together, North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service and North Yorkshire Police.

8. Equalities Implications

- 8.1 No negative implications identified. The programme purpose is to contribute to the reduction of financial inequalities.
- 8.2 Programme delivery design is inclusive and open to all with enhanced funding for:
- clubs that provide activities for children with SEND
 - free transport for children living in rural areas
 - free places for refugee children funded from refugee and asylum seeker funding
 - signposting to a range of wraparound support to parents and carers.

9. Climate Change Implications

- 9.1 No negative climate change implications identified. The following mitigation measures are in place:
- local delivery providers across North Yorkshire in order to reduce travel distance for children attending
 - clubs are asked to provide food from local sources wherever possible
 - children are offered environmental activities as part of the programme to enhance their knowledge in relation to environmental issues.

10. Risk Management Implications

- 10.1 The main risk to the programme is continued funding. As mentioned in 3.9 above, 2024/25 is the last year of the existing agreement with DfE. To date, no indication has been made regarding the continuation of the programme from 2025 and beyond.
- 10.2 In the event that the national DfE grant funding is not available in future years we will seek to attract funding from other key funding partners. Depending on any funding secure may necessitate the programme to be re-designed. We will also work with the existing activity provider network to ensure they can continue to thrive and provide vital support for those most disadvantaged within North Yorkshire.

11. Recommendation

11.1 It is recommended that Members note the contents of the report.

Rachel Joyce, Assistant Chief Executive – Local Engagement, Central Services

Date of Report

6 June 2024

Appendices

A - Feast Impact Report

Background Documents

Guidance Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2024 – DfE – Updated 11 March 2024

[Holiday activities and food programme 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/holiday-activities-and-food-programme-2024)

Report Authors:

Marie-Ann Jackson, Head of Localities, Local Engagement

Alice Skaith, Holiday Activities and Food Coordinator, Children & Young People's Services