



Holiday Activity and Food Programme 2025-2026 Annual Report



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Foreword

Welcome to Newham's Holiday Activities and Food Programme Annual Report for 2025–26.

This report tells the story of another year of delivery, learning and impact across Newham's Holiday Activities and Food Programme. It reflects the work of providers, schools, voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations, specialist SEND providers, Council services, families and, most importantly, the children and young people who took part.

Funded by the Department for Education, HAF provides free holiday provision during the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays for children and young people aged 4 to 16 who are eligible for benefit-related Free School Meals. In Newham, the programme also supports children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and others who may benefit from additional support during the holidays.

HAF also plays an important role in strengthening the borough's voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector. By working with a broad range of local organisations, the programme invests in trusted community providers, builds local delivery capacity and helps ensure children and families can access support in familiar places, led by people who understand their communities.

This year's report sets out both the scale and the quality of the programme. It highlights our impact in numbers, the growth of SEND participation, the breadth of physical activity, enrichment and food education, and the role of youth work, schools, providers and wider Council services in supporting delivery.

It also reflects how we have built on learning from previous years. This includes strengthening our use of attendance data and register checks, supporting providers to manage bookings and non-attendance, promoting the programme more widely, and raising awareness of the importance of applying for benefit-related Free School Meals.

We would like to thank every organisation, staff member, volunteer, parent, carer and Council colleague who helped make this year's programme possible. Most of all, we thank the children and young people who brought energy, creativity and joy to HAF across Newham.



At a glance

54,031
attendances

5,732
unique attendees

86%

said they were able to book a HAF Club close to their home address (15 minute walk or less).



94%

said HAF helped them feel more part of their community.



92%

said their child enjoyed going to HAF!



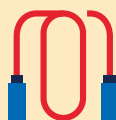
90%

agreed or strongly agreed that their child was safe at HAF.



90%

agreed or strongly agreed that HAF helped their child take part in more physical activity.



86%

agreed or strongly agreed HAF will help their child feel better about returning to school after the holiday period



89%

agreed or strongly agreed that HAF helped with their child's well-being.



81%

agreed or strongly agreed that food served at holiday club was nutritious.



88%

agreed or strongly agreed that HAF programme staff were good role models.



“My child really enjoyed his time there. I am glad he had somewhere to go and do lots of physical activities rather than sitting at home all day.”

“My daughter did not want to leave — that’s how much fun she had.”

“Honestly, it was absolutely amazing. Two of my children have special (educational) needs, and it was so wonderful to see them happy and fully engaged.”

The HAF Programme and why it matters

The Holiday Activities and Food Programme is a Department for Education funded programme that supports children and young people during the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays. In Newham, the programme provides free holiday places for children and young people aged 4 to 16 who are eligible for benefit-related Free School Meals. It also supports children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, and those who may benefit from **additional support during the holidays**.

Across Newham, the programme aims to ensure children and young people are:



Newham is one of the youngest, fastest-growing and most diverse boroughs in the country. It is a place of energy, creativity and opportunity, but also one where many families continue to experience deep-rooted inequalities and cost-of-living pressures. This context matters. For some families, school holidays can place additional pressure on household budgets, childcare arrangements and access to safe, enriching activities.

HAF responds to this by working through Newham's strengths: its schools, youth services, leisure providers, voluntary and community organisations, faith groups, specialist SEND providers and local community spaces. Across the borough, children and young people took part in sport, dance, arts and crafts, cooking, drama, music, coding, gardening, trips, outdoor learning, swimming, cycling and specialist SEND activities. In doing so, HAF helps ensure that the school holidays are not a period of reduced opportunity, but a time when children can eat well, stay active, feel included and experience more of what Newham has to offer.

Our Impact in Numbers

Attendance and Reach



Unique attendees

School	Easter	Summer	Christmas
Primary	1134	2441	1577
Secondary	478	1892	629
TOTAL	1612	4333	2206

The number of unique children and young people across the three holidays was 5,732. This is less than the Sum of the three holiday periods as a child could attend multiple holiday periods.


Bookings

School	Easter	Summer	Christmas
Primary	8760	30783	7206
Secondary	3884	14606	2968
TOTAL	12644	45,389	10174

Attendances

School	Easter	Summer	Christmas
Primary	6380	25516	6087
Secondary	1639	11834	2483
TOTAL	8019	37442	8570

31
Number of providers
(includes 8 Council teams)



45
Number of venues /
delivery sites



60,000+
Number of meals served



9.4 sessions
Average number of sessions
attended per child



79%
Attendance rate
(attended places as % of
booked places)





Schools



The table below shows the ten schools with the highest number of children and young people attending HAF this year. We would like to thank these schools for their support in promoting the programme to families and helping children access holiday provision.

It is also notable that the four schools with the highest number of pupils attending HAF all hosted HAF provision on site. This highlights the value of school-based delivery: when provision is located in familiar, trusted settings, pupils and families are more likely to engage.

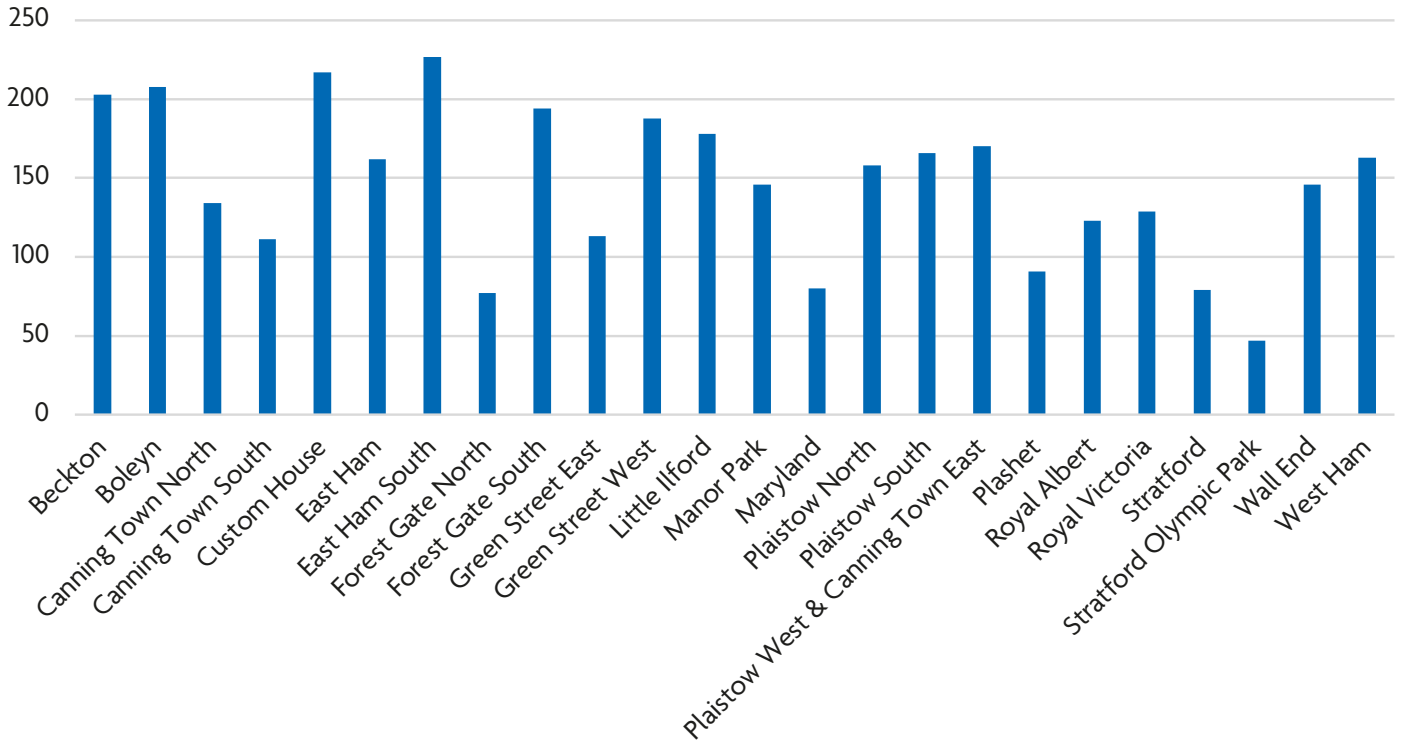
We recognise that schools vary significantly in size and in the number of pupils eligible for benefit-related Free School Meals, so this data should not be read as a direct comparison between schools. Instead, it helps us understand where engagement has been strongest and where further links can be developed.

Schools interested in supporting or hosting future HAF delivery are encouraged to get in touch, so that more children can benefit from accessible, local holiday provision.

School	Number of free-school meal eligible children attending HAF
Sandringham Primary School	59
Park Primary School	61
Kingsford Community School	66
Langdon Academy	67
Brampton Manor Academy	71
Vicarage Primary School	83
Avenue Primary School	89
Elmhurst Primary School	97
Maryland Primary School	168
Essex Primary School	207

Geographical Spread

Attendees by Ward



This analysis should be read as indicative rather than a complete picture of all HAF attendees. Valid postcode data was only available for c.3,500 children and young people. A small number of records related to children and young people living outside Newham, or postcodes that could not be matched to a Newham ward, and these have not been included in the ward-level breakdown. The data nevertheless provides valuable insight into the geographical reach of the programme and will help inform future outreach, school engagement and provider development.



Ethnicity

Ethnicity	% of HAF Participants	Children on FSM across Newham*	Difference to average
Asian/Asian British	48%	47%	1%
Black/Black British	27%	22%	6%
Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups	11%	9%	2%
Other ethnic group	4%	5%	-1%
White British/White Other	10%	17%	-7%

* The above figures are from Easter 2025 and they are % of available data, where ethnicity was provided.

This breakdown helps us monitor whether HAF is reaching children and young people from across Newham's diverse communities. The data will continue to be reviewed alongside wider FSM eligibility, school and ward-level information to identify any areas where further promotion or targeted engagement may be needed. There isn't significant disproportionality within the ethnicity of those attending of the HAF programme compared to those eligible for benefits-based free school meals however we are hoping that our new procurement system for 2026 will enable us to reach more children from 'White British/White Other' backgrounds.

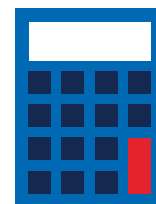
Young Carers

In 2025–26, we began recording young carer status as part of our HAF monitoring. This has strengthened our understanding of the children and young people accessing the programme and has helped create clearer links into wider support, with relevant information shared, where appropriate, with Newham's commissioned Young Carers service delivered by Renewal Programme on behalf of Newham Carers Community (NCC). We recognise that accurately capturing data on young carers is challenging because many young carers remain hidden, are not identified, or do not recognise themselves as young carers. This means it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about levels of disproportionality from the data currently available. Nevertheless, the introduction of young carer monitoring within HAF represents an important step forward in improving identification and understanding of this group.

During 2026–27, we will continue to strengthen our approach by improving data collection, increasing provider awareness of young carers, and enhancing referral pathways into the commissioned Young Carers service. This work aligns with the wider transformation of support for young carers across Newham, including the development of the borough's first Young Carers Strategy, which aims to improve identification, raise awareness, and ensure young carers receive timely and appropriate support across education, health, community and council services. Renewal Programme's role as both a HAF provider and the commissioned Young Carers service further strengthens the connection between holiday activities and ongoing specialist support for young carers and their families.

Does this young person look after or help anyone else in your house or family	%
Yes	9%
No	91%

Budget



Newham received a total grant of £2,049,110 to fund the HAF programme for 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026.

The funding is provided to achieve:

- Provision of places over three holiday periods
- Coordination of the programme locally

Expenditure	Description	Amount
Programme Expenditure	This includes all costs relating to delivering the HAF Programme, the majority of which pertains to funding provided to external providers	£1,809,767
Administrative Expenditure	This includes all costs incurred in carrying out the administrative and management functions of the HAF coordination	£173,118.44
Other Expenditure	This includes all costs which do not fall into the above categories and includes training for providers, promotion of the programme & transport amongst other costs.	£66,224.56
Total Expenditure	(for 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025)	£2,049,110

This Department for Education funding enabled the Council to work with a broad range of local providers while maintaining oversight of quality, safeguarding and attendance, helping to ensure public funding was targeted towards provision that children and families could access and benefit from. Providers are paid through a staged model, with an upfront payment to support mobilisation and a further payment linked to attendance. This approach supports providers to plan and staff provision effectively, while helping ensure value for money by aligning final payments with actual participation.



Spotlight on our SEND Offer



Supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities remained a major priority for Newham's HAF programme in 2025. Across the year, the SEND offer continued to grow, with more children and young people accessing both inclusive universal provision and specialist SEND provision.

To understand participation across the year, we have counted children and young people once within each holiday period. This means a child attending in both Easter and Summer would be counted once in Easter and once in Summer. The figures below therefore show holiday-period unique SEND participation, rather than the total number of individual children with SEND across the full year.

In 2025, there were 2,607 holiday-period unique SEND participation records across Easter, Summer and Christmas. This compares with 1,965 in 2024, representing growth of around 33%. Participation increased across all three holiday periods, with the largest number recorded during Summer.

Holiday period	Universal provision	Specialist SEND provision	Total
Easter	294	312	606
Summer	662	630	1,292
Christmas	402	307	709
Total	1,358	1,249	2,607

Note: figures are unique within each holiday period, but children and young people may be counted in more than one holiday period if they attended HAF more than once during the year.

This data shows the importance of a mixed model. Across the year, there were 1,358 holiday-period unique SEND participation records in universal provision and 1,249 in specialist SEND provision. This demonstrates that SEND participation was not limited to specialist settings. Universal providers played an important role in making reasonable adjustments and creating inclusive environments, while specialist provision supported children and young people who required smaller groups, higher staffing ratios, structured routines or more tailored support.

Primary-aged children made up the majority of SEND participation, but the programme also supported a significant number of secondary-aged young people.

Specialist providers used detailed referral information, risk assessments, parent and carer conversations and staff expertise to plan support around individual children. This included adapting activities, supporting transitions, providing sensory regulation opportunities, matching children with appropriately trained staff and ensuring children could participate at their own pace.

Case study – Ambition Aspire Achieve (AAA)

AAA's provision provides a strong example of this approach. At Arc in the Park, working in partnership with SEND Short Breaks, the programme was delivered by 1:1 staff trained in areas including Autism and Play, Communication and Understanding Autism. The setting offered adapted sports, sensory play, music, movement, cookery, outdoor play and structured routines to support regulation, engagement and enjoyment.

At Abbey Hub, children with SEND were supported in an inclusive setting, delivered with a staffing ratio of 1 staff member to 4 children. Staff adapted activities, offered individual support and encouraged children to try new experiences.

Feedback from families shows the difference this support can make. Parents and carers described children becoming more confident, more active, more socially connected and more willing to try new things. One parent described the SEND HAF Short Breaks programme as “absolutely phenomenal”, saying it helped their family “create beautiful memories during a challenging time”. Another parent highlighted the importance of respite, saying: “The care and attention of his 1:1... allows for us to have some respite.”



Case Study

E first joined Abbey Hub as a shy child who relied heavily on the support of his sister. He found it difficult to engage independently and often looked to her for reassurance in new situations. Over time, with patience, encouragement and positive relationships with staff, E began to build trust and confidence.

Staff encouraged his interests, including his passion for plaiting hair, which helped meet his sensory needs and gave him a calming way to express himself. E gradually became more willing to try new activities, taste different foods, build friendships and take small steps towards independence. His mum shared that he now asks whether he is going to Abbey Hub because he enjoys it so much.

E's journey shows the impact that safe, supportive and inclusive holiday provision can have. With the right environment and trusted adults, children with SEND can build confidence, develop relationships, explore new interests and enjoy positive experiences during the school holidays.

Looking ahead, we will continue to strengthen the SEND offer within HAF by supporting universal providers to become more inclusive, developing specialist provision where additional support is required, improving referral and information-sharing processes, and working closely with families and providers to ensure children with SEND can access safe, enjoyable and enriching holiday opportunities.

Programme Showcase 1: Physical Activity



In 2025, physical activity was built into HAF provision across Newham in many ways: from structured sports coaching to free play, outdoor adventure and movement-based sessions.

At **Newham Leisure Centre**, one of our new providers **GLL** delivered a highly active programme including basketball, football, rugby, rounders, badminton, cricket, swimming, table tennis, dodgeball, volleyball, space hopper races and a bouncy castle. Basketball, football and badminton were coached every day, with Essex Cricket Club also delivering sessions across three of the four weeks. One child said: **“I really enjoyed badminton and football. I would come again.”**

West Ham United Foundation used qualified coaches to deliver football and multi-sport sessions at St Edward’s Primary School and The Foundry, helping children build teamwork, discipline and confidence through daily activity. **Newham Sports Club** also placed sport at the centre of its programme, with football, basketball, canoeing, SEND-inclusive activities and free play. For some children, this meant trying something completely new: **“The best part was trying canoeing for the first time. I never thought I’d be able to do that.”**

Providers also recognised that physical activity does not have to look the same for every age group. **Ackee Tree** found that some secondary-aged young people preferred lower-impact sessions, including mindfulness walks, calming activities and park-based games, rather than high-energy sport. For younger children, free play was particularly popular, with one child saying: **“Sports day is good, but free play is even better!”**



Other providers created active programmes through a mix of sport, play and outdoor movement. **Bonny Downs Community Association** delivered football, basketball, gym sessions, street dance, archery, relay games, boxing, hula hooping, skateboarding, trampolining and scooters. **West Silvertown Foundation** offered outdoor sports, boxing workshops, Zumba, laser games, bouncy castles, indoor free play and sensory circuits for children attending its SEND provision.

Across the programme, children were supported and encouraged to move, play, compete, try new things and enjoy being active with others. For some, this meant developing sporting skills. For others, it meant building confidence, making friends, celebrating as a team or simply having the chance to run, play and be outside during the school holidays.

Programme Showcase 2: Enrichment Activities



Enrichment activities are central to the HAF programme because they give children and young people access to experiences they may not otherwise have during the school holidays. Across 2025, providers used HAF funding to offer creative, cultural, educational and confidence-building activities that went well beyond traditional holiday activities.

At **Eastside Young Leaders' Academy** who partnered with The **5Es Development**, enrichment was deliberately linked to leadership, confidence and aspiration. Their programme included drama, arts and crafts, gardening, cooking, showcase performances, wellbeing workshops, maths and English booster classes, back-to-school preparation, employability skills, volunteering opportunities, work experience and a residential summer school. One young person reflected on the impact of the drama work, saying: **"The drama was amazing. I learned so much about Black history and myself... I felt like I overcame my nerves and found my confidence."**

Wonder Years built enrichment around local outings and practical experiences, with visits to the library, museums, parks and playgrounds, as well as trips to the zoo and Fairplay House outdoor activity centre. Children were able to take part in outings twice daily alongside indoor activities such as arts and crafts and cooking. One child said: **"I love going to library as we always did something nice there and could read books."**

Social Organisation for Unity and Leisure (SOUL) used enrichment to build teamwork, friendships and a sense of community across its sites. Children took part in mini games that developed numeracy, literacy, teamwork and wellbeing. One child captured the value of the programme simply: **"I meet all my holiday friends in the club, they come from different schools but I always see them in the holiday."**

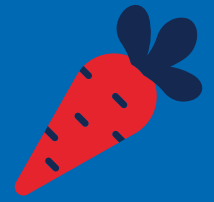
Premier Education included arts and crafts, team-based activities and science experiments, with children making volcanoes and learning about chemical reactions. The children enjoyed the experiments so much that they repeated them during the programme! Children described how they "loved the experiments" and enjoyed the chance to be outside and take part in water play.



Empower Youth offered a particularly broad programme of trips and specialist experiences for their secondary school programme, including ice skating and BMX at Lee Valley, paddleboarding with On The Water, animal encounters with ZooLab, workshops with The Children's Society on resilience, poetry and journaling, and a Sky Studios trip where children worked together to create a short film. Families described these opportunities as memorable and meaningful, with one parent saying their children were **"constantly coming home with stories of what they've learned and tried for the first time."**

Across the borough, enrichment activities helped children and young people create, perform, explore, travel, learn and connect. Whether through drama, local trips, creative arts, science experiments, volunteering, film-making or community events, HAF gave children access to new experiences and helped them build confidence, friendships and skills during the school holidays.

Programme Showcase 3: Food & Nutritional Education



Food and nutritional education remained a key part of the HAF programme in 2025, with providers using meals, workshops, visual resources, cooking activities and family conversations to support children and young people to make healthier choices.

At **Elite Pathways Sport & Training**, food education was embedded into the daily programme at Essex Primary School. Children took part in interactive sessions about balanced diets, hydration, portion sizes, fruit and vegetables, reducing sugar and making healthier swaps. Visual displays and posters were used throughout the setting to reinforce key messages, helping children return to the same learning during the programme.

Kulan Somali Organisation delivered a wide-ranging food education offer for children and families. Children took part in workshops about balanced meals, food groups, portion control and reading food labels, alongside cooking classes where they learned basic cooking skills, healthy recipes and meal preparation. Kulan also used storytelling, videos and multimedia presentations to make food education more engaging, and invited a chef to speak to children about healthier choices. Kulan's approach also connected food education to wider learning and family life. Children visited a local farm and grocery stores to learn where food comes from and how to make informed choices. Families were supported through recipe cards, meal planning templates and educational materials, encouraging them to cook and eat together and reinforce healthy habits at home.

REIN also linked food provision with wider family support. Hot meals were freshly prepared by Jackie's Love Kitchen, with menus adapted based on feedback from children and families. Young people were involved in interactive meal preparation, and recipe cards and books were distributed to families. Parents were also supported through REIN's food bank and referrals to financial advice services, recognising that food education sits alongside wider cost-of-living pressures for many families.



Sphere Support used food education to help children understand healthy choices in practical ways. Children took part in activities such as "Guess the Nutrient", "Build Your Plate", food label discussions, healthy snack preparation and a Healthy Lunchbox Challenge. Families were also offered practical support through recipe cards, take-home packs, healthy swaps, affordable meal ideas and conversations around fussy eating.

Across these examples, food and nutritional education was not treated as a one-off lesson. It was built into everyday conversations, meals, activities and family engagement. Children learned about hydration, sugar, food groups, balanced plates, cooking, portion sizes and where food comes from. Families were also given practical ideas that could be used at home, helping the impact of HAF continue beyond the holiday programme itself.

Supporting Providers to Deliver Quality Provision

1. Toolkit: clear expectations in one place

A key foundation for provider support was Newham's Holiday Activity and Food Programme Toolkit for Delivery, developed last year and used again in 2025 to support consistent, high-quality delivery. The toolkit brings together key information and checklists in one place, covering booking processes, data collection, policies and insurance, safeguarding, equality and inclusion, SEND, staff training, health and safety, sustainability, nutritional education, food provision, enriching activities, physical activity, signposting and referrals. This helped providers understand expectations clearly and prepare safe, inclusive and engaging provision.



2. Training days: bringing providers together

Alongside the toolkit, we delivered provider training and support events ahead of the Easter, Summer and Winter programmes. These sessions brought providers together to plan delivery, ask questions, share learning and focus on common priorities.

We covered marketing and promotion, catering and nutritional education, safeguarding, due diligence, quality assurance and SEND adaptations. Public Health colleagues supported providers with food provision and nutrition, including School Food Standards, allergy awareness, food safety and menu planning. We held workshops on high-quality HAF delivery, environmental sustainability, the 2026 tender process and the future outcomes of the programme.



3. Ongoing support: bespoke, adaptable support

Provider support continued throughout delivery, with the HAF team offering practical and responsive advice on booking processes, eligibility, register checks, attendance monitoring, marketing, waiting lists and non-attendance follow-up.

Providers were also supported with key delivery documents, including safeguarding policies, risk assessments, staffing information, insurance details, menus and caterer information.

Together, the toolkit, training days and ongoing support helped strengthen confidence, consistency and quality across HAF delivery, ensuring providers were better equipped to deliver safe, inclusive, active and enriching holiday provision.





Spotlight on Youth Empowerment Service



Newham's Youth Empowerment Service (YES) played an important role in the Summer HAF programme, delivering provision through youth zones and detached youth work across the borough. This enabled young people to access HAF in familiar, trusted spaces, supported by youth workers who understand their communities and can build relationships beyond the holiday period.

Across the summer, the Youth Empowerment Service offer included delivery through Forest Gate, Stratford, Beckton Globe, Little Ilford and Shipman Youth Zones, alongside detached provision in Stratford and Green Street. Together, these settings provided a broad youth work offer combining food, physical activity, creative opportunities, trips, informal education, health and wellbeing support, life skills and targeted engagement.

At **Forest Gate Youth Zone**, the programme welcomed 265 young people, building on the previous year's reach. The offer included fresh meals, "World Foods Week", cooking and shopping activities, sports, trips, creative workshops, digital arts, coding, first aid, financial literacy and peer leadership opportunities. Young people were involved in menu planning and food preparation, including researching recipes, budgeting for ingredients and cooking meals for their peers.

Stratford Youth Zone delivered a programme combining universal youth work with targeted activities, including music through its "Roots to Rhythm" project, arts and crafts, VR and tech activities, nutrition sessions, off-site educational visits, youth pantry support and Health Spot access. Young people took part in trips to places such as West Ham Park, TOCA Social, Southend Adventure Island, London Zoo, Paradox Museum and a PGL residential on the Isle of Wight. The programme also supported young people experiencing transition points, including those awaiting GCSE and A-Level results.

Beckton Globe Youth Zone delivered a varied programme focused on health education, creativity, sport and memorable experiences. This included cooking sessions and healthy eating discussions, workshops with CGL and SHINE, CAMHS drop-ins, VR storytelling, a DJ workshop with BBC Radio and the Asian Network, football with Royal Falcons, tennis with the National Tennis Association, sailing and kayaking, iFly, climbing the O2, Safari Pete animal sessions and trips to Thorpe Park.



Little Ilford Youth Zone offered open-access drop-in provision across five weeks, with no pre-booking required. The programme included sports hall access throughout each session, theatre and museum trips, arts and crafts, woodwork, gym sessions, volleyball, badminton, cricket, basketball, CAMHS wellbeing sessions, CV writing and job search support, a repair café and an end-of-summer community celebration. Fresh fruit was available throughout the programme, with meals provided for all attendees and surplus food distributed to young people and families.

Shipman Youth Zone delivered a programme for young people aged 10-18, including a basketball camp, music production workshops, universal youth sessions and the Xpand personal development programme. Young people accessed creative writing, music technology, board games, computer gaming, football, basketball, stop and search education, financial literacy, SHINE sexual health sessions, Progression support around CVs and careers, and Next Steps guidance on post-school options. Cooking sessions also helped young people develop practical skills in the kitchen.

The **Detached youth work** offer extended HAF beyond building-based youth zones and into community spaces. In Stratford, young people accessed activities at Carpenters Estate MUGA, CrossFit 1971 and Stratford Park Pavilion. The offer included multi-sports, calisthenics, football with West Ham Foundation, skating with Skate Kabal, first aid

awareness with Street Doctors, Fairplay House outdoor activities and informal “chill and chat” opportunities. This approach helped reach young people in spaces they already use, while combining physical activity, food, relationship-building and trusted youth work support.

A key strength of the Youth Empowerment Service delivery was the breadth of the offer. Young people were not only provided with a place to go during the holidays; they were supported to try new activities, eat well, build confidence, develop practical skills, explore creative interests, access health and wellbeing support, and connect with trusted adults. The mix of youth zones and detached provision meant that HAF could reach young people in different ways, reflecting the varied needs, interests and geographies of Newham’s communities.

This model also demonstrates the wider value of linking HAF with year-round youth work. For many young people, the summer programme was not a one-off intervention, but part of an ongoing relationship with youth workers, youth spaces and local support. This helped create continuity, belonging and opportunities for young people to remain engaged beyond the school holidays.

Family and Participant Voices

Following learning from last year, we placed a stronger emphasis on collecting and using feedback from children, young people, parents and carers. In total, 525 survey responses were received, giving us valuable insight into what families valued most about HAF and where we can continue to improve.

Feedback from families was overwhelmingly positive. Parents and carers told us that HAF helped their children enjoy the school holidays, stay active, feel safe, try new activities and build confidence. It also supported families by providing accessible local provision, trusted staff, healthy meals and structured activities during the holidays.

Accessibility

A key strength of the programme was accessibility. **86%** of respondents said they were able to book a HAF club close to their home address, while **94%** said HAF helped them feel more part of their community. Families particularly valued provision that was local, familiar and easy to attend.

“Please continue at this school as it’s so much easier to attend.”

Financial Pressures

Families also told us that HAF helped reduce pressure during the school holidays. For some parents and carers, the programme helped them balance work, childcare and household costs.

“It enabled me to continue work, generate income which otherwise I would have been without.”

Social Benefits

Children and young people also benefited socially. **81%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that HAF helped their child make new friends, while **86%** said it helped with their child’s confidence. Parents described children becoming more independent, more sociable and more willing to try new things.

“My child came out of his comfort zone to speak with other children and make friends which I was surprised and very happy about.”

Staff at the Programme

Relationships with staff were another important part of the programme. **88%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that HAF staff were good role models, and **88%** said their child was well looked after. Families valued staff who were welcoming, friendly and able to create a safe environment.

“Everyone was so welcoming and friendly and my boys loved turning up and look forward to next holiday.”

SEND Inclusivity

Feedback also highlighted the importance of inclusive provision. Parents and carers of children with SEND valued opportunities for their children to access suitable activities, particularly where settings were calm, well-managed and not overcrowded.

“Limited spaces so the venue wasn’t crowded, perfect for SEN child to explore a new space.”

Food & Nutritional Education

Food remained an important part of the programme. 81% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the food served was nutritious, while 72% said their child was able to try new foods they would not normally eat. Families also valued practical food support that extended beyond the session itself.

“The take-home food really made a difference for us. It showed that the programme cares about the whole family, not just the child attending.”

Areas to focus on

Feedback also helps us understand where we need to keep improving. Families told us that booking, communication, SEND availability and consistency of food provision remain important areas of focus.

“The main difficulty for us is the booking process rather than the activities themselves.”

We will continue to use feedback from families, children and young people to strengthen future delivery. This includes making provision easier to find and book, supporting providers to include children with SEND, strengthening food and nutritional education, and ensuring every child has access to a safe, active and enriching holiday experience.

Looking Ahead: Lessons Learnt and Priorities for 2026–27

The HAF programme continued to grow in 2025, reaching more children, young people and families across Newham. Alongside this growth, we have reflected on what worked well and where the programme can continue to improve. These lessons are already shaping the approach for 2026.

1. Strengthening commissioning and coverage

One of the most significant changes for 2026 is the move to a revised procurement process. This will enable us to plan earlier, give providers more time to prepare, and improve geographical coverage across the borough.

In particular, we have used data and local intelligence to address areas where HAF provision has previously been more limited, including Beckton and Canning Town. By commissioning earlier and with clearer expectations, we aim to ensure that more families can access high-quality provision close to home.

2. Improving food and nutritional education

Food remains central to HAF, but the strongest programmes did more than provide a meal. They involved children in cooking, explored healthy choices, supported families with practical ideas, and made nutrition education engaging rather than classroom-based.

In 2026, we will continue working with providers and Public Health colleagues to strengthen the food and nutritional education offer. This will include clearer expectations around School Food Standards, allergy awareness, menu planning, food education activities and support for children to try new foods.

3. Increasing attendance from booked places

A key priority for next year is improving attendance among children and young people who have booked a place. While demand for HAF remains high, non-attendance means that some funded places are not used as effectively as they could be.

We will continue to use real-time register checks, waiting lists, overbooking where appropriate, and provider follow-up with families to reduce unused places. We will also use attendance data to inform future place allocations, helping ensure funding is directed towards provision that children and young people are able to access and attend regularly.

4. Better integration with wider support

HAF is most effective when it connects families to wider support. In 2026, we want to strengthen links between HAF and other services, including Family Hubs, Public Health, SEND services, youth provision, food support, schools and community partners.

This will help ensure HAF is not seen as a standalone holiday programme, but as part of a wider local support system for children, young people and families. Better integration will also help providers signpost families to the right support at the right time.

5. Telling the story of HAF more clearly

This year's feedback, provider reports and case studies show the value of HAF: children trying new activities, making friends, eating well, building confidence, accessing trusted adults and feeling more ready to return to school.

In 2026, we will place a greater emphasis on storytelling and impact. This includes improving how we collect feedback, strengthening case studies, capturing children and families' experiences, and communicating the value of HAF to schools, partners, providers and decision-makers.

Looking ahead, our priority is to build on the strengths of the programme while continuing to improve quality, access and impact. We want every eligible child and young person in Newham to have the opportunity to access safe, inclusive, active and enriching holiday provision close to home.



Thank you

The HAF programme would not be possible without the commitment, creativity and hard work of providers across Newham. We would like to thank all organisations who delivered HAF provision in 2025–26 and helped children and young people access safe, active, inclusive and enriching holiday opportunities.

2025-26 HAF Providers

- Ackeee Tree
- Ambition Aspire Achieve
- Aston Mansfield
- Bonny Downs Community Association
- Elite Pathways Sport & Training
- Empower Youth
- Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL)
- Hope 2 Humanity
- Kulan Somali Organisation
- Newham Sports Club
- Omega Sportz
- Premier Education
- REIN
- Social Organisation in Unity and Leisure (SOUL)
- Sphere Support
- The 5es Development
- UK Islamic Mission
- West Ham United
- West Silvertown
- Wonder Years
- Wright Education
- East London Care & Support
- Magic Care Moments
- SEND Short Breaks (LBN)
- Beckton Globe Youth Zone (LBN)
- Forest Gate Youth Zone (LBN)
- Little Ilford Youth Zone (LBN)
- Shipman Youth Zone (LBN)
- Stratford Youth Zone (LBN)
- Detached Youth Teams (LBN)
- Youth Justice Service (LBN)