

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme 2024-2025 Annual Report



Contents page

Introduction

Welcome to the Newham HAF annual report for 2024-2025: a celebration of growth, inclusion and shared success.

The holiday activities and food (HAF) programme continues to be a cornerstone of support for Newham's children and families during the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays.

Funded by the Department for Education (DfE), the programme offers free holiday provision for children and young people aged 4 to 16 who are eligible for benefit-related Free School Meals (FSM). It also supports those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) as well as others facing additional vulnerabilities.

Since launching in 2021, the HAF programme has become an integral part of life in Newham — one of London's most vibrant and diverse boroughs. With over 355,000 residents, representing 150 nationalities and speaking over 100 languages, Newham is one of the fastest growing boroughs. Newham also happens to have one of the UK's youngest populations, with over 90,000 residents aged under 25. As of 2024 more than 24,000 local children and young people were eligible for benefit related free school meals (FSM) and the demand for HAF support continues to grow, with that number rising to 25,598 at time of this report, reflecting a growing demand for HAF services.

Throughout the year, the HAF programme has continued to evolve—reaching more families, strengthening community ties and adapting to the changing needs of our young people.

Our programme in 2024-25 was visited by the Council's Chief Executive, Director of Children's Services, Councillors, Public Health colleagues, and HAF colleagues from neighbouring boroughs undertaking a Peer Review, all ensuring our Children and Young People were receiving the best possible service.



What is the holiday activities and food (HAF) programme?

The holiday activities and food (HAF) programme is a government-funded scheme in the UK that supports families living with low incomes during the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays, often facing increasing challenges during this time. Children and young people who rely on free school meals during term time face challenges such as:

- Have reduced access to structured, out-of-school activities
- Are more likely to experience poor nutrition and reduced physical activity
- At an increased risk of social isolation

At the core of our programme in Newham is an intention to ensure that every child and young person attending our provision benefit from:

- Enriching activities that are creative, physical and fun
- Nutritious meals to support their health and wellbeing
- Safe and inclusive spaces to build friendships, confidence, and life skills.

Some of the activities on offer across HAF include:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inflatables• Personal training• Music production• Athletics• Skateboarding• Gladiator duel• Sketching• Archery• Bowling• Workshops (anti-bullying, life skills, wellbeing, cycle repair, etc.)• Orienteering• Cultural arts• Tennis and table tennis• Photography | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gardening• Volunteering• Taekwondo• Zorb ball• Den making• Film making• STEM• Crafts (including bath bomb making, jewellery making, ornament making, hair braiding, clay modelling, papier-mâché, bracelet making, slime making, face painting, henna, nail painting, and lip balm making)• Board games• Swimming• Cooking | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dance• Gymnastics• Cycling• Water sports• Food growing• Esports• Coding• Drama• Football• Basketball• Climbing• Trips & excursions• Rounders• Nutritional games• Cricket |
|--|--|--|

Delivery of the 2024-25 programme

HAF programme was delivered during 3 phases:

- Easter: 21st March to 12th April 2024
- Summer: 22nd July to 2nd September 2024
- Christmas: 20th December 2024 to 4th January 2025

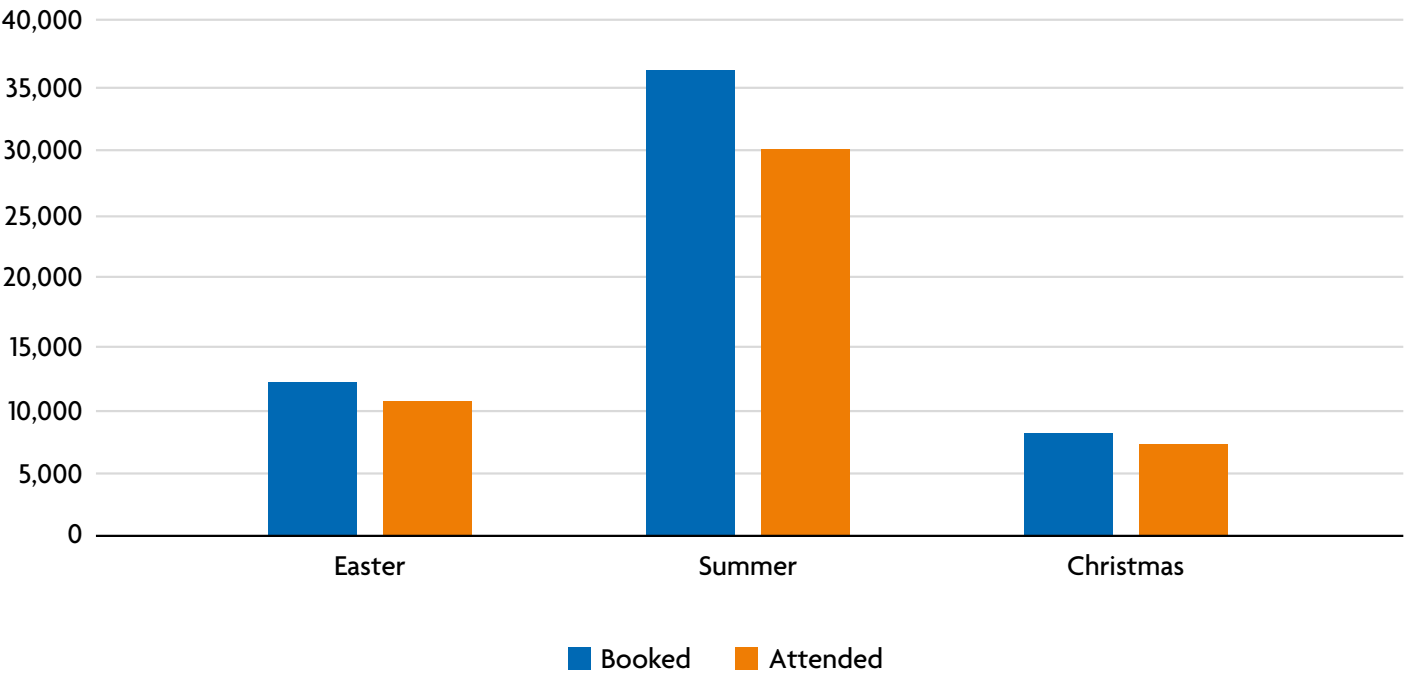


Attendance

Holiday Period	Number of unique Primary aged children attending HAF	Number of unique Secondary aged young people attending HAF	Total
Easter 24	1213	704	1917
Summer 24	2812	1724	4536
Christmas 24	1420	582	2002

We had 1,917 unique children attend our Easter provision; 4,536 at Summer and 2,002 in the Christmas period. Across the year we took 56,512 bookings for HAF programme places. Of those places booked, 47,830 places were actually attended; 10,490 at Easter, 30,112 during summer, and 7,228 at Christmas.

2024-25 Programme Attendance



During the Summer the national unrest and racially motivated rioting had a noticeable impact on attendance with many clubs reporting a temporary dip in numbers. In order to support families to continue attending a HAF club, the HAF programme team ensured clubs were given clear guidance on site security and safety and trips and visits were reviewed and moved to more localised sites where possible. Despite these challenges, we continued to expand and enhance our programme offer based on family feedback gathered at events. New clubs were introduced with a focus on dance, drama, cooking certification, music production, and SEND-specific activities and outings, including the establishment of two new SEND-focused clubs across the borough.

This targeted approach directly supported key priorities, such as increasing participation among those with SEND—and has already shown a positive impact on engagement compared to last year:

SEND unique primary and secondary (FSM eligible in both universal and SEND provisions):

There was a significant increase in the number of children and young people with SEND accessing both universal and specialist HAF provision in 2024-25 compared to the previous year, with participation more than doubling, reflecting inclusive practice, improved outreach and accessibility across the programme.

Holiday Period	Number of unique children with SEND needs attending Universal Provision	Number of unique children with SEND needs attending Specialist Provision	Total
Easter 24	167	95	262
Summer 24	458	594	1052
Christmas 24	301	350	651



Ethnicity

This year we started to monitor the ethnicity of our participants in order that we could ensure that our HAF Programme is reflective of the wider Newham community makeup. We only have the data for one holiday period as we only began to track this information for the Christmas HAF.

We track 18 different ethnicity groupings but for the purpose of this report, we have split these into five main ethnicity groupings as below. 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.

Ethnicity	HAF Participants	Children on FSM across Newham*	Difference to average
Asian/Asian British	47%	46%	1%
Black/Black British/Caribbean or African	26%	22%	4%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	12%	10%	2%
Other Ethnicity	4%	5%	-1%
White British/Other White	11%	17%	-6%

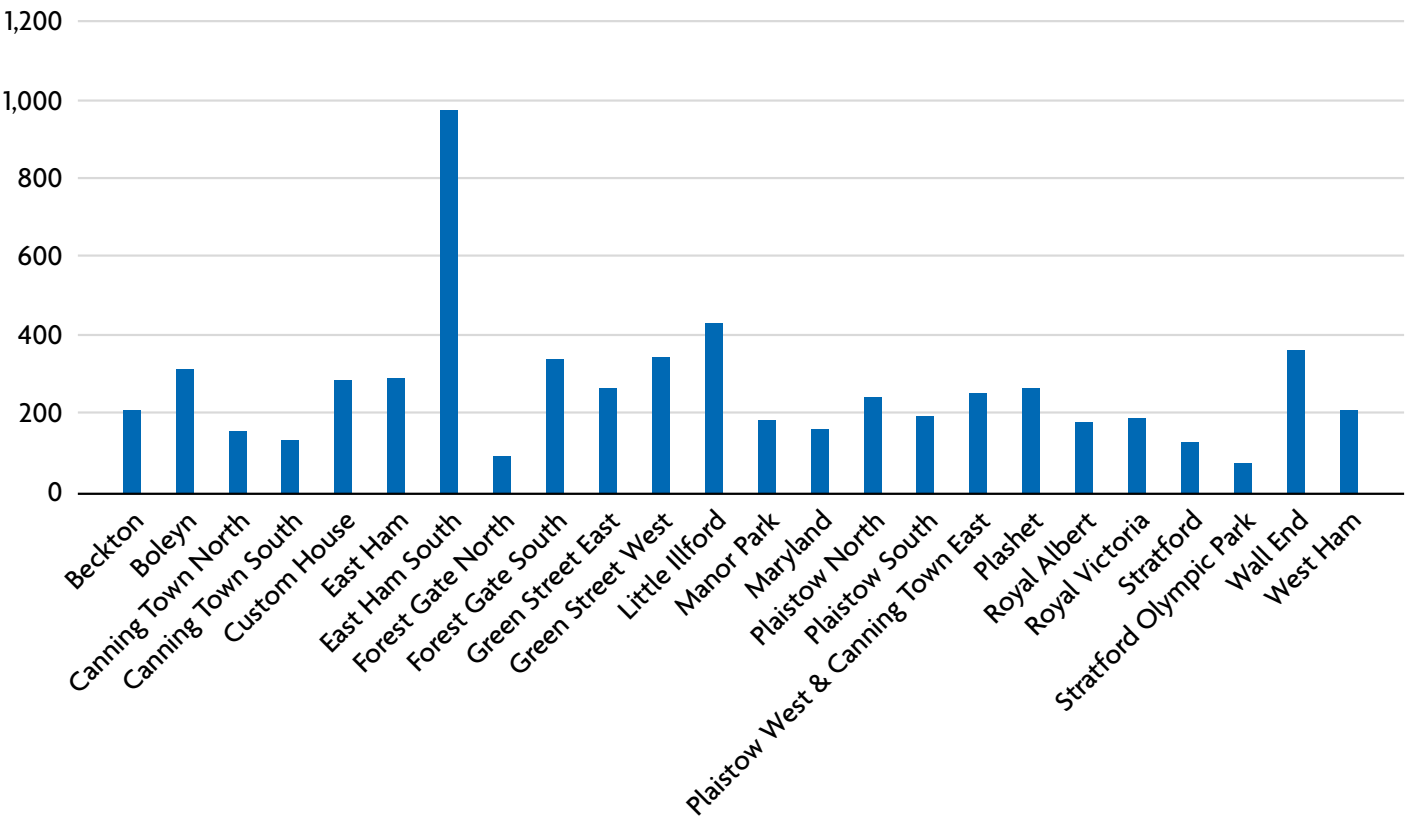
*This data represents those children for whom we hold the ethnicity data. We do not hold the ethnicity of 5% of the children and young people on free school meals.



Geographical spread:

For where we have data, the below graph represents the attendance by ward. This breakdown will allow us to target those wards where the take-up was lower next year.

Numbers of children and young people attending by ward



Finance

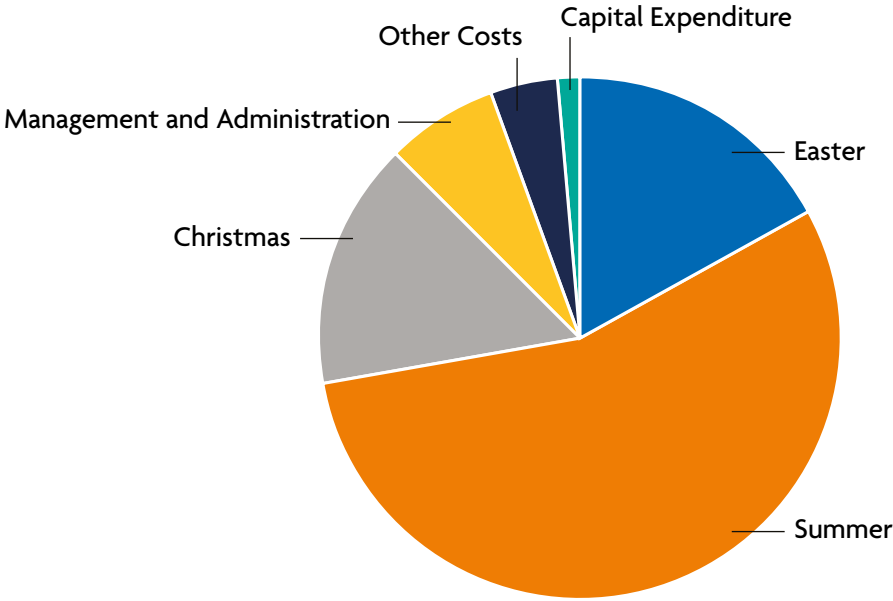
Newham received a total grant of £2,047,240.00 to fund the HAF programme for 2024-2025.

The funding is provided to achieve:

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

Programme Expenditure This includes all costs	£1,702,825.91
Administrative Expenditure This includes all costs incurred in carrying out the administrative and management functions of the HAF coordination	£166,265.11
Other Expenditure This includes any expenditure that does not fall into the above categories such as training and publicity	£76,282
TOTAL EXPENDITURE (for 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025)	£1,945,373.02

2024-2025 Budget



In 2024/25, we had an underspend of £101,866.98. As Delivery Partners are paid based on attendance, which encourages robust marketing and follow-up with non-attenders, we were able to save public funds from unfilled places. There was a dip in Summer attendance which particularly contributed to this underspend. The underspend was then returned to the DfE.

Providers

We are fortunate in Newham to benefit from a network of voluntary sector organisations, charities, private companies, schools, and faith-based organisations. Along with Council teams such as Youth Zones across the Youth Empowerment Service, SEND Short Breaks, Youth Justice Service and others.

We worked with and supported over 35 providers across the borough to deliver enriching holiday clubs that met the HAF core criteria through their delivery:

Ackeee Tree	Bonny Downs Community Association	Elite Pathways Sport & Fitness
Ambition Aspire Achieve		Empower Youth
Aston Mansfield	Drama Academy	Hope 2 Humanity
Kulan Somali Organisation	East London Dance	Wonder Years
Mini Athletics	Social Organisation for Unity & Leisure (SOUL)	Wright Education
Newham Community Project	Sphere Support	Beckton Globe Youth Zone (LBN)
Newham Sports Club CIC	Sports Works	Forest Gate Youth Zone (LBN)
Omega Sportz	The Renewal Programme	Little Ilford Youth Zone (LBN)
Premier Education	The 5es	Shipman Youth Zone (LBN)
Royal Docks Learning & Activity Centre	UK Islamic Mission	Stratford Youth Zone (LBN)
Rights & Equalities In Newham (REIN)	West Ham United Foundation	Detached Youth Work Team (LBN)
	West Silvertown Community Foundation	Children's 0-19 Health (LBN)
		Disabled Children and Young People's Service (LBN)
		Youth Justice Service (LBN)

LBN = London Borough of Newham internal HAF provision



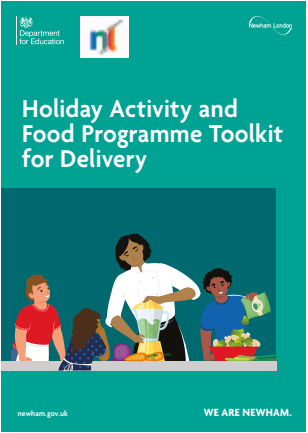
Below is a map of the locations where the HAF programme was delivered in 2024-25. Our aim was to ensure that there is broad geographical coverage across the borough for HAF.



Support for our providers

We actively strengthened provider capacity and consistency across delivery this year through:

- Developing a ‘**Toolkit for Delivery**’ handbook with all information providers needed.
- Empowering our providers through a set of training sessions including those on:
 - Bid writing and funding readiness
 - Nutritional activities and allergy awareness
 - Supporting children with SEND
 - Safeguarding and child protection
 - Mental health first aid
 - Paediatric first aid
 - Environmental sustainability in programme planning
 - Connecting to wraparound care services and referral pathways



- Quality assurance workshops helped set expectations, update providers on any changes to HAF guidance, and offered a space for networking, collaboration, and shared problem-solving.



Furthermore, providers received ongoing support such as help with menu feedback from the Public Health team, assistance with venue sourcing, support with making the most of our booking system, access to WhatsApp group and peer observations to encourage peer collaboration. The HAF team also carried out site visits, created informative newsletters, and ran online drop-in sessions to keep communication before, during, and after each holiday period.

We arranged site visits from the Chief Executive, Councillors, Public Health colleagues, and HAF colleagues from Brent to support the programme.

Safeguarding

We conducted thorough safeguarding and quality assurance checks with our registered HAF providers, complemented by a diverse selection of funded training courses, networks, and monitoring visits to uphold these standards. Many of our providers have also registered with Ofsted, reinforcing their commitment to maintaining safeguarding as a top priority.



Sustainability initiatives

Reinforcing Newham’s commitment to sustainability in the community, as part of the commissioning process we encouraged providers to think about their environmental impact and put practical measures in place. This focus led to a wide range of sustainable practices being adopted across HAF-funded programmes:

- Collaboration: Providers working with organisations such as City-Harvest, The Felix Project, Trussell Trust, Newham Food Alliance, and local supermarkets.
- Educational workshops: sessions were delivered on topics such as waste management, composting, where raw materials come from, fly tipping, farming, learning about where food comes from, when to plant seeds/and harvest, and global warming.
- Community gardens: Several clubs maintained vegetable gardens where fruit and vegetables were grown and used in the meals which were served for lunch.
- Minimising single-use plastics: Efforts were made to reduce the use of disposable packaging, particularly in food provision.
- Using locally sourced food: Ingredients for meals were sourced locally wherever possible to support sustainability, with some of our providers providing vegetarian only meals.
- Surplus food distribution: Surplus food was handed out to children and families to minimise waste.
- Encouraging public transport & cycling: Encouraging delivery staff and families to use public transport or cycle rather than relying on vehicles.
- Green space activation: Children and young people visited local parks; encouraging safe, community-friendly use of public spaces.
- Encouraging recycling & composting: There was an emphasis on promoting waste reduction and composting across many different programmes.

Publicity

Our marketing efforts were both comprehensive and strategic, aimed at reaching families and the wider community through multiple channels.

- Engaging with local schools and promoting at 23 school fetes
- Hosting at 4 community fun days—raising awareness and encouraging participation
- Organising dedicated 2 HAF events for families at Shipman Youth Zone
- Distributing flyers in the council tax mail out to all residents, local business, libraries, community hubs
- Involving key stakeholders, e.g. Head Teachers’ KIT meetings, GPs, Children’s Centres, Youth Zones

Lessons learnt and next year’s programme

We are committed to reflecting on what went well and where we can further enhance the HAF programme and we are keen to continue the development of the HAF Programme.

1. This year, we added in ‘real-time register checks’ which helped us keep track of attendance. This helped us to reduce no shows and enabled us to support providers with follow-ups on non-attendance. In 2025, we aim to continue this and also work with providers to base future place allocations on the attendance that providers have managed to get in the past.
2. This year, we put significant resource into a marketing and publicity strategy (see above). This continues to be our key focus and in 2025, we aim to improve the reach of this programme to ensure that over 5,000 unique children are attending HAF in the Summer and over 3,000 at Christmas and Easter. We will work with our providers to better utilise overbooking and waiting lists.
3. We know that there are significant numbers of children in Newham that have not applied for benefit-related Free School Meals due to the ‘Eat For Free’ Scheme offered by the Council. We are working with the Education Access team to try and boost awareness of the HAF Programme as a benefit of applying.
4. Our data tells us that those HAF programmes which were hosted in schools saw the highest levels of engagement across the programme; and attendances were from the children attending that school in term-time. We hope to build on this collaboration with all schools in the lead-up to holidays in 2025 to assist them in running a HAF programme.
5. Many of the providers we worked with in this year have significant programmes of support for children, young people and their families in term-time. A key focus of ours in 2025 is to further integrate the HAF Programme with Council initiatives and pre-existing work ensuring that there is a clear, well-signposted offer of support for families. We are strengthening links with teams working on Newham’s Family Hubs team, Food Security, SEND Services and Leisure.
6. In order to better understand the impact that the HAF Programme is having, we will be developing a clearer structure for monitoring and evaluating the benefits of the programme. In particular, we would like to better demonstrate its ability to improve children’s health and wellbeing.

Feedback from participants and families:

Participants - healthy eating education

- The meals are very healthy, and I have learnt to cook
- Can't wait to show mum how to make fried rice
- Didn't realise that I can make different types of food from veg
- I want to make this at home



Signposting and referrals

- Safe space to mingle with other women. The lady behind Sphere is a strong woman, who listens and always willing to help
- It's so embarrassing sometimes to ask for help, but I feel comfortable asking you guys for support and help

Enriching activities

- Next time I would like to make something like a Lego figure
- The buildings are very tall in London
- When is that man coming to do the exercise and boxing, he is funny
- But my favourite thing was the jewelry making. I made like 10 rings in one day
- I'm going to show my mum this magic trick
- I enjoyed the science activity my volcano was so amazing never knew I could do it
- Archery is harder than I thought, a lot of fun
- Going on the walk over the O2 was the best! I felt like I was on top of the world. It was my first time doing something like that, and I felt really proud of myself
- I love skateboarding, wish I could do it every time
- Yoga was so fun and relaxing
- I really enjoyed learning about plants in the garden
- I like playing food games, and doing the feely bag



Physical activity

- The activities keep me energetic and keeps me ready for more and the day ahead
- Had so much fun playing the balloon games, I laughed so much, think I need to practice this more
- Think I'm going to design the next obstacle course, so I can win
- Going on the walk over the O2 was the best! I felt like I was on top of the world. It was my first time doing something like that, and I felt really proud of myself
- It was good to play with other people as I am the only child

Food - participants

- It is good; it is hard to say no the healthy they meal provided
- Really enjoyed the patties, not something that I eat often
- Your spag bol tastes totally different to mine at school, I prefer yours
- I tried different vegetables I haven't had before



Food – families

- The meal is fantastic, my children look forward to the meal, they said the food they get is better than my cooking
- My daughter is normally very particular about her food, learning new meal ideas is great
- He said that he would like the Club's chef to come and prepare dinner for the family
- I can't get him to eat vegetables at home, so well done
- Helped with getting the kids to try new things
- She is very fussy with food so I'm pleased she ate what was given.
- How did you get them to eat the vegetables?
- My child said the food was different to their normal taste, but it was surprisingly tasty
- My daughter usually only eats Tuna sandwiches, but she tasted her friends vege pasta and loved it. Please send through the recipe
- My children look forward to the food



Thank you

We extend our thanks to all our HAF providers for their dedication, hard work and creativity in delivering exceptional and safe experiences to children and young people. Their passion is truly evident, and we take great pride in their efforts.

We would also like to recognise the invaluable contributions of our internal colleagues. Special thanks go to the Youth Empowerment Service, Fairplay House, Virtual School Team, Public Health, Children’s 0–19 Health, the Disabled Children and Young People’s Service, the Youth Justice Service, Education Access Team, and all the wider organisations that support the Newham HAF programme.

Case studies introduction

This year the HAF programme provided funding to support various initiatives aimed at enriching the lives of children and young people, particularly those who are vulnerable.

Fairplay House, an outdoor education centre, received funding to collaborate with 24 providers—including five Youth Zones, the Virtual School, and 0-19 Children’s Health Service to deliver activities such as climbing, caving, archery, and high ropes courses to children and young people, including those with SEND, those looked after and young carers.

At the same time, The HAF Programme allocated funding to the Newham Youth Justice Service, a multi-agency partnership including social care, probation, police, education, and health, working to prevent offending and support young people at risk.



Case Study - Fairplay House

Supporting looked after children through outdoor learning

In May 2024, a group of 24 looked after children aged between 9 and 18 participated at Fairplay House.

Firstly, young people climbed logs and wire ropes 10-30 ft high, using helmets and harnesses. They faced two challenges: climbing a large log and a wire course, both supervised by staff.

One young person anxious about heights was supported gently by staff and allowed to join at their own pace. A young person said: “In this activity, I managed to climb to the top of a large pole, and take a leap of faith off of it. It was quite difficult to get up the pole, but once I stood up on it, I felt like I had accomplished something. The leap of faith was also quite fun, jumping off and having myself lowered was a really unique and enjoyable experience.”

After a cooked lunch, the group moved on to archery and then caving. A beginner’s archery crash course with safety instructions included two rounds: practice and competition. Balloons added extra challenge and fun. One of the participants described it as an “Extremely fun activity, everyone had a go and they tallied up the points to see who did the best. They also decided to add balloons to the target, making it more demanding but much more rewarding. After 3 attempts, I ended up missing the balloon, 2 completely missing it, and one literally skimming it.”

A few more quotes from the day:

“Each staff member was incredibly nice and supportive! They pushed us to our limits but in a way that made us want to reach our limits, so everyone was having an extremely fun time.”

“Fairplay House is a very fun, challenging and inspiring place to be, and I only stayed for a day! ... I would absolutely love to go back... anyone who gets an invite would be lucky to try it out.”

“I really enjoyed Fairplay House! It opened up a lot of new activities to me that I’ve never tried, or even really considered. It was able to provide challenging and overwhelming tasks, yet increase my confidence at the same time”

“I enjoyed the archery because it was actually very easy for me and it felt satisfying to hit the target. I enjoyed the caving because it used teamwork and it made me think for a way out.”



Case Study - Newham Youth Justice System

Over Easter 2025, children aged 13-17 from diverse backgrounds engaged with an art practitioner to express their feelings through personalised graffiti artwork on canvases and T-shirts to keep, or through outdoor paintings on the walls and planters at the Newham YJS building. The Youth Justice Service works with children and young people who have offended or those that are at risk of doing so putting in place creative, artistic interventions such as this.

The first activity involved painting outdoor walls white as a base for a mural. Young people also spray-painted planters using provided designs or block colours. One young person said: "In this activity, I felt very focused on my spray-painting application and swiftly painted 2 separate planters. I am not as social as some of the children, so I felt good succeeding on my own and making it a more individual activity." Another said: "This was the best bit for me. I really liked using multiple colours per stencil to make my shirts. I got creative with it more than I expected, working outside the lines and using ideas provided by the practitioner and staff to really make it my own."

After being taught to safely use spray paint, the young people spent around two hours creating their own designs using stencils and a variety of spray paint colours on T-shirts and canvases. An art competition with a prize encouraged creativity.

The young people were then encouraged to contribute to the mural within the outlines created by the art practitioner. Another young person said: "I had a good time at the graffiti workshop I attended. Though I was initially scared of getting paint on myself, letting loose and working with my friends became a lot of fun. It was a challenge that I felt confident completing."

The young people also commented on the interaction with police that they were able to have through this activity:

"I was really impressed by the police officer participating so much. He painted a lot of the mural and did a great job. I felt like I got to talk to him more than I ever do otherwise. It felt nice not feeling like it was me versus him in this setting. The whole thing was laidback in a nice way for the holiday."

