

HOLIDAYS ARE FUN



Holidays Are Fun – Annual Report

2023 – 2024

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“I love that the kids keep active and are doing something physical, they come home tired out, de stressed and well fed. They always seem to have fun stories about how the day went and it’s lovely to see them doing something healthy and productive.”

“L was really anxious about attending and didn’t want to go but she loved every second. She also gained independence by getting the bus there and back on the last day independently.”

Stockton-on-Tees: introduction to the Borough

Teesside, located in the North East of England, is a vibrant and historically rich region that offers a blend of industrial heritage, stunning landscapes, and cultural attractions. Teesside was once renowned for its manufacturing industries, with large steelworks dominating the landscape. Later, these steelworks were joined by chemical industries, many of which remain. In contrast to the heavy industry in Teesside the coastline offers stunning sandy beaches, rugged cliffs, and picturesque seaside towns, whilst inland there are beautiful hills, moors, forests and a regenerated riverside area for residents and visitors to explore.

Within Teesside sits the borough of Stockton-on-Tees. Once a historic market town, the Stockton-on-Tees borough has expanded over the years and is now a large area encompassing Billingham, Ingleby Barwick, Norton, Stockton, Thornaby, Yarm, and several rural villages.

The population of Stockton-on-Tees is approximately 200,000, made up of people from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds. Within Stockton-on-Tees there are approximately 30,000 children between reception and year 11 on roll in our schools. Of these children we know around 8,800 are eligible to claim free school meals and are therefore entitled to access the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme.

Sadly, there are children in Stockton-on-Tees who have never experienced the culture or beauty the region has to offer, and this is why the HAF programme has been vital to our residents and the development of our children. HAF has offered enriching, exciting and life changing opportunities to some of our deprived families in Stockton-on-Tees, many of whom would never have otherwise visited a beach, a museum, a cinema or been horse riding for example.

“This is the best thing I’ve ever done in holidays and I love coming here.”
Olivia, 8, HAF attendee.



Challenges in Stockton-on-Tees

Deprivation

According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019, the Borough is the 73rd most deprived Local Authority in England (out of 317). There are 27 wards in Stockton-on-Tees, nine of which are in the 10% most deprived wards in the country.

Inequality

There are highly affluent areas alongside areas of deprivation within Stockton-on-Tees. Some parts of the Northern, Western and Southern areas of the Borough are amongst the least deprived in England. For example, there is a gap of 21 years in average life expectancy amongst men between the most and least deprived wards in Stockton-on-Tees.

Cost of living crisis

At present, the rising costs of food, fuel and other essentials are combining with the existing disadvantages and vulnerability in the Borough to put households under significant pressure. This leaves them at risk of hardship and poor wellbeing in the short-term and reduced opportunity in the long-term.

Social Care involvement

Within Stockton-on-Tees we have high numbers of families and children who require additional support from Children's Services.

Children in our care

There are 560 children in our care as an authority. This is a rate of 1.32% per 10,000 children, against a national rate of 0.67% per 10,000 children.

School challenges

Schools are facing several challenges post-Covid. This is evident in attendance data, closely followed by social and emotional wellbeing, which can result in challenging behaviour within both primary and secondary schools and the community.

Domestic violence

Statistics show that domestic abuse affects a quarter of all women at some time in their lives, regardless of age, social class, race, disability, sexual orientation, or lifestyle. The visible consequences of this are obvious to see but the hidden consequences are often underestimated, such as isolation, loss of confidence, fear, and despair.

Diversity

Towns in Stockton-on-Tees and the wider North East have high levels of migrants and asylum seekers. Whilst the area welcomes families and migrants and the diversity of cultures it brings, the demands on local services is high and language/cultural barriers can at times be difficult.

"It is such a relief being able to leave our children in a place that could meet their needs and the opportunity to spend time with siblings."

"The holiday club has really helped my child become more confident after coming here from Ukraine. His English is improving every time he is here and is being introduced to new activities too."

Holidays Are Fun!

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme is funded by the Department for Education and delivered by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council in partnership with Catalyst. The Stockton-on-Tees HAF team held a competition to rename the programme and selected “Holidays Are Fun” to remove some of the stigma some parents associated with holiday hunger.

HAF is offered to school aged children from reception to year 11 who are in receipt of benefit related free school meals. Recognising that families are struggling in the current cost of living crisis, we have expanded the HAF offer in Stockton-on-Tees to also include families in receipt of universal credit or in financial difficulty. In addition, we have offered vulnerable families open to Children’s Services HAF places if referred by their support worker. This allows vulnerable children the opportunity to experience enriching activities in holiday periods, whilst also ensuring they are not hungry when they are not able to access a school meal.

The aims of the HAF programme are to encourage children and young people to:

- Eat healthily over the school holidays
- Be more active during the school holidays
- Be safe and not be socially isolated
- Take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience, character, and wellbeing along with their wider educational attainment
- Have a greater knowledge of health and nutrition
- Be more engaged with school and services.

HAF is delivered through the main school holidays and offers six weeks of provision with the equivalent of at least four hours a day, four days a week:

- Easter – one week, face to face, minimum of four days
- Summer - at least four weeks, face to face, minimum of 16 days
- Christmas – one week, face to face, minimum of four days



HAF delivery and organisation

In Stockton-on-Tees we have a well-established HAF Steering Group with representation from the Council's Children's Services, Finance, Public Health, Community Engagement, Communications and Marketing, Information Governance, and Catalyst, a charity that supports the VCSE sector in Stockton-on-Tees.

The group meet monthly to discuss a range of topics with standing items including:

- What's working well
- Even Better If
- Booking system
- Financial reporting
- Marketing

The HAF steering group is made up of the following members:

Mandie Rowlands	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council	Service Lead - Early Support and Projects
Jane Williams	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council	Team Manager - School Support
Katie Newton	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council	HAF Co-ordinator
Jane Johnson	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council	Finance Manager
Gemma Jackson	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council	Governance Manager
John Paul Stabler	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council	Communications Officer (Adults & Child)
Paula Davison	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council	Contract Management Officer (Children & YP)
Jessica Young	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council	Public Health Practitioner
Margie Stewart-Piercy	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council	Community Engagement and Consultation Manager
Jon Carling	Catalyst	Chief Executive Officer
Clare Gamble	Catalyst	Community Projects Manager
Rebekah Jennings	Catalyst	Holiday Activities Project Officer

Communications and marketing

Communications material in 2023 to 2024 included a school communications toolkit, news releases, social media posts, adverts in a local “positive news” newspaper, targeted emails to parents who have previously booked HAF, direct emails to staff working with children and families, printed leaflets, posters and pull up banners displayed in community venues, and adverts on digital screens in Stockton high street and Tees Active leisure venues.

The programme has also been promoted on the Council’s website, in our Keeping You in Touch weekly staff newsletter, and in our regular stakeholder communications to town and parish councils. The HAF programme is also highlighted on our cost-of-living advice webpage.

In 2023 the Council commissioned a HAF promotional video, and this has been used extensively to promote the programme since Summer 2023. The video features a range of activities and can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/842802441>. Providers, including Roseberry Community Consortium and the Globe make their own videos and use these to promote their activities.

In Summer 2023 we also ran a competition asking children and young people to send us reviews of the HAF provisions they had attended.

Fun, food and friends this Easter!

Booking is now open for thousands of free and exciting activities on the Holidays Are Fun (HAF) programme over the Easter school holidays.

There's a wide range of sessions to choose from for eligible school age children from Reception to Year 11. Activities include horse riding, boxing, gymnastics and trampolining, martial arts, climbing wall, football, yoga, arts and crafts, ice-skating, theatre workshops, bushcrafts, watersports, swimming and dancing.

A free nutritious meal is provided each day for every child taking part.

To be eligible, families must be in receipt of benefits-related free school meals, in receipt of Universal Credit, or experiencing financial difficulties.

To book a place or to find out more visit [Holidays Are Fun](#)
Sessions are running from Tuesday 2 to Friday 12 April
The programme is funded by the Department for Education

"Fantastic" free holiday activities for eligible children

"I've never seen my two come home so excited to tell me about their day."

Those are the words of mum Kayleigh Wilkinson, whose children had a blast during the Holidays are Fun (HAF) programme over Christmas.

Amelie, 12, and Jacob, eight, attended Roseberry Community Consortium's HAF Christmas activities. They learned about filmmaking, video editing and acting, and even showcased the film they created at Stockton's ARC cinema.

Kayleigh said: "Being a single parent, it was fantastic to know that it was accessible. They got fed, made new friends and there were brilliant choices for them all. It was like a community coming together."

"They came home really happy and could just be themselves. It also meant I could work a little longer over the holidays which was helpful."

All HAF activities come with a free, healthy meal each day.

Kayleigh added: "I wasn't sure if I'd qualify and I think that there are a lot of people who are the same. There are lots of ways you can be eligible."

The programme, which is available for eligible children from reception class up to Year 11, is led by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council in partnership with the Department for Education and Catalyst.

HOLIDAYS ARE FUN

Free, fun activities for school age children from Reception to Year 11.

To be eligible, families must be in receipt of benefits-related free school meals, in receipt of Universal Credit or experiencing financial difficulties.

Scan to register:

- www.stockton.gov.uk/haf
- 01642 527752
- HAF@stockton.gov.uk

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council | Department for Education | catalyst

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

13 November 2023

Hurry – booking is now open for thousands of FREE and exciting activities on our Holidays Are Fun (HAF) programme this Christmas!

- There's a wide range of sessions to choose from for eligible school age children from Reception to Year 11, including gymnastics, boxing, martial arts, arts & crafts, sports and games, football, bushcraft, film making, swimming, ice skating and more!
- Each day includes a free nutritious meal for every child taking part.
- HAF is delivered by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council in partnership with Catalyst and the Department for Education.
- The activity sessions are running from Wednesday, December 20 until [redacted] and are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

For more information and to book your child's place, visit www.stockton.gov.uk/haf

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council in partnership with Catalyst and the Department for Education.

HOLIDAYS ARE FUN

Free, fun activities for school age children from Reception to Year 11.

Activities run from Tuesday 2 April

Scan me! for more information and to book

Families in receipt of benefit-related school meals or Universal Credit, or experiencing financial difficulties, are eligible to book.

HOLIDAYS ARE FUN

Fun, free activities for school age children from Reception to Year 11

Find out more and book now!

Think Smart, Think Big | STARS Recognising Our People | Smarter Working | Powering Our Future

Case study – Harbour

Harbour works with families and individuals who are affected by abuse from a partner, former partner, or other family member. Families sometimes arrive at our refuges with only the clothes they are wearing; frightened and uncertain they have done the right thing. They can stay with us whilst they take time to think and make changes to the way they want to live.

At Harbour, the funding from HAF is so valuable as it has allowed us to provide lots of positive and new opportunities for our families and ultimately bring fun and enjoyment back into people's lives at a time when it is needed most. As an organisation we are so grateful to have the opportunity to receive this additional funding as it has made such a difference to so many families we have supported.

School holidays can often be a difficult time for our families. Some families may feel quite isolated as they may have had to move out of area away from family and friends, and having to adapt to a new environment can be difficult. For many of our families they may have experienced financial control and may be struggling financially so the funding from HAF has really alleviated stress and worries for them. Due to domestic abuse some of our families have not had the chance to try new things or do things together as a family and it has been wonderful watching our families having fun together. Hearing the children's laughter has been priceless and lots of new, happy memories have been made. Every day during HAF children were excited to learn what they would be doing next, and it was wonderful seeing these families smile and have fun.

Family A

Family A came into refuge having experienced abuse throughout all their lives. Mum had experienced abuse as a child from family members and was married at a very young age herself. This marriage was abusive in every way. The children also suffered at the hands of their abusive parent, and they had limited experiences throughout their childhood.

The HAF programme over the summer really allowed this family to take part in things they have never had the opportunity to do before. Mum and children had never played or engaged in activities together and it was just so wonderful to see them taking part in activities together and laughing and having fun. Due to their experiences the family had never been on days out together, and the family absolutely loved the trip to the farm. Mum said that this was the best day they have ever had and the excitement in the children's faces when they arrived was just priceless.

We hosted a trip to the beach and this family had also never stepped foot on a beach before. As the children played in the sand making sandcastles, mum stood on the shoreline and cried. She said they were happy tears and that she was so grateful for all the opportunities the family had been provided with.

The little things that we take for granted really mean so much to our families and being able to create new and lasting memories is absolutely amazing. This particular family engaged throughout the summer and mum loved the activities just as much as the children. At the end of the summer mum got really emotional and she said that she was crying happy tears for everything everyone has done for her and she said she would have never imagined being as happy as she is now.

From Harbour's perspective, HAF provides opportunities that some families have never experienced before but really benefit from. The HAF programme supports our families with recovery and a life free from abuse moving forwards.

"I have noticed a visible improvement in my teenager's mental health, keeping active and being around other kids, their own age is so important. They had so much fun and would love to come back!"

Providers

During 2023-2024 there were 34 providers involved in the delivery of HAF within Stockton-on-Tees. These providers included schools, family hubs, charities, childcare providers, and private companies.

The HAF providers worked hard providing engaging, enriching activities in safe, welcoming environments where children had fun and could make new friends.

There was a wide range of activities on offer for children and young people in Stockton-on-Tees, including:

- Horse riding
- Martial arts and boxing
- Swimming
- Arts and crafts
- Dance
- Football
- Ice skating
- Go Climb
- Bushcraft
- Paddleboarding
- Film making and podcasts
- Music
- Cinema club
- Sports

Activities and food

All providers involved in the HAF programme were asked to offer enriching activities, a minimum of 60 minutes physical activity per session and a hot (where possible) nutritious meal that met the school food standards. In addition, providers were asked to deliver education around healthy lifestyle and food choices. Providers met these requirements, and some went over and above, delivering cookery sessions or food workshops or sending home simple recipe cards or meal ideas for children and young people to follow with parents. During the summer HAF provision, children also received a PotGang home growing kit to take home and grow their own vegetables.

Stockton-on-Tees were lucky to be supported generously by Warburtons during 2023-2024 which allowed providers to offer an extra meal or snack and carry out a food education activity with children such as making pizzas and sandwiches. Providers also accessed donations and support from other organisations including major supermarket chains and local food providers.

All providers who helped deliver HAF during 2023-2024 ensured signposting and referrals were made for families and their children and young people where applicable. Providers displayed information, had leaflets or flyers for distribution and some made folders of information about local services.

To ensure all providers met the requirements of the programme they were visited by both Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and Catalyst during each holiday period, with quality assurance checks carried out to ensure all guidelines were being adhered to. If there were areas for improvement these were noted and fed back to providers.

With thanks to our providers for 2023-2024:

ARC Stockton	Outdoor Ambition
BCT Aspire	ReGenerate - Hope for Autism CIC
Billingham Boxing Academy	Roseberry Community Consortium
Budo For Change	Purple Door Studio
Cornerhouse	School's Out Sport's In
Daisy Chain	School's Out Sport's In Shine
Eastern Ravens Trust	Simon Carson Sports School
Family Action	Sporting Chance
Family Hubs	Stainsby Gymnastics
Five Lamps	Stainsby Stud Riding School
Football Fun Factory	Tees Active
Groundwork NE and Cumbria	Rosedene Nurseries
Harbour Support Services	Mill Lane Primary
Hardwick In Partnership	Tilery Primary School
Iron Guidance	High Clarence Primary School
Lisa McGee Education Ltd	Bowesfield Primary School
Live It and Get Active	Layfield Primary School



Key data

The HAF programme in Stockton-on-Tees successfully achieved the following:

	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
	<i>EASTER 2023</i>		<i>SUMMER 2023</i>		<i>CHRISTMAS 2023</i>	
FSM-eligible / Non-SEND	771	136	1248	276	523	133
FSM-eligible / SEND	148	32	239	43	129	20
Non-FSM-eligible / Non-SEND	69	29	191	91	99	14
Non-FSM-eligible / SEND	20	0	54	22	25	12
TOTAL HAF funded attendees	1008	197	1732	432	776	179
TOTAL HAF funded as a %	84%	16%	80%	20%	81%	19%
TOTAL SEND attendees as a %	16%	16%	17%	15%	20%	18%

“My children really enjoy riding. It has given them a chance to do something they would not usually do and to learn. My son is autistic, and he benefits from spending time round the animals as he finds it therapeutic. Thank you.”

“The girls have a chance to do something we would find hard to maintain. They absolutely love it, and they are up and ready without having to be asked.”

Case study – Child O working with a School Support Worker from Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Background: O struggles with his emotions – anger in particular. O displays disruptive behaviour in school which impacts on his learning. O has disclosed historic allegations relating to neglect, emotional abuse and witnessing domestic violence.

O has been engaging with a school support worker around some of the issues impacting his attendance and learning. After building a relationship with O, the school support worker encouraged O to attend HAF, giving him information on a range of available provisions. O decided he would like to try martial arts and attended a provision during school holidays with support from his worker for the first session.

Voice of the child

“It wasn’t what I expected. I was really nervous when I walked in, but the staff made me feel really comfortable, they were really nice. I enjoyed learning new stances. It was very laid back which I liked but there were also expectations around our behaviour, for example we weren’t allowed to be disrespectful or swear. I have decided to continue the sessions outside of HAF. At the moment I am doing two sessions per week but plan to increase it to five days when the rugby season is over. The other day I had a bad day at school and was feeling really angry, by the time my session ended I had forgotten all about it, when I go there I just feel calm. If I hadn’t gone there, I would have just stayed in bed all holidays, I’m really glad I went.”

Feedback from school

School have said that O has been speaking positively about the HAF provider and their other classes and has been trying to encourage his peers to attend. School have seen a positive change to O’s emotional wellbeing and resilience and the school support worker confirms he is much happier and confident in himself.

“It is lovely how we can all get together and help cook and prepare the dinners, I love bringing the children to the lounge every day as both of my oldest enjoy joining in doing the activities which they usually struggle with but here they are flourishing.”

“The trips are really good. I would never have the confidence to go on my own. I had never been to that farm before and it was really good, the kids were really entertained.”

Expenditure

Stockton-on-Tees were granted £916,790 to deliver HAF in 2023-2024. The table below details the breakdown of the actual spend of the funding.

Administrative Expenditure	£88,374
Capital Expenditure	Nil
Programme Expenditure	£788,904
Other Expenditure	£32,408
TOTAL EXPENDITURE (For 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024)	£909,686

“The girls have always loved your club. They love the staff, the sports, and activities on offer. It’s a great opportunity for them to always be active, eat healthy and be in a positive environment in the holidays. Both have absolutely loved being sports leaders and are desperate to return in the Summer.”

“Child A loves this. Normally shies away from getting dirty and hands on but the mucking out and grooming. Being outdoors and around the animals makes a huge difference in our boys’ life. Child A is a fussy eater, and the lady always customises his food to his liking.”

Case study - primary school

We have been providing HAF activities within our primary school since 2019. These activities allow children to have fun, eat nutritious meals and enjoy enriching activities all within a safe environment during holiday periods. We feel the HAF programme also encourages children to gain confidence, interact with other children and create lifelong friendships.

Our HAF activities consist of sports, crafts, preparing and cooking food, and much more. Parents are also invited into the school to participate with cooking and to receive additional free food from our community market. The uptake and feedback we have had from attendees and parents alike has been amazing.

The families within our school (almost nine out of 10) are in the lowest 20% deprivation in the country. Rising inflation and fuel bills are causing huge difficulties for many families and the increase in the cost of living has been having a detrimental effect on the families within our school. FSM children are our priority group; however, we also identify vulnerable children as well as SEN pupils who can benefit from HAF.

We have a high level of immigrant and refugee families within our school who speak a vast array of languages. HAF gives our children time to learn about each other outside of the classroom and develop their communication skills.

We acknowledge that physical activities and social interactions all assist with the mental health and well-being of our children. Our PSA is available to oversee the health and wellbeing aspect of the HAF programme and signposts families to relevant places where they can access help and support if needed.

The children see our school as their 'hub' and 'safe' place. The parents see us as a gateway to help in a non-judgemental way. The HAF funding allows us to provide this during the holidays. The provision is needed within this area, and we feel any reduction in this provision would severely impact our families.

"Child B loves riding, and this activity has really improved her confidence. She socialises more with the other children - we have seen a huge difference. Thank you for providing this facility."

"Child C thoroughly enjoys being outdoors and loves to learn. She constantly tells us what she has done and how she has spent every minute of the day. Time spent at HAF is beneficial to us both as I know she is having a good time and safe - learning new skills and making friends."

Plans for the HAF programme

Moving forwards we would like to:

- Continue to develop and promote the HAF programme to the residents of the borough
- Implement a new booking system
- Develop the SEND offer where possible
- Increase attendance and work with providers to decrease no shows
- Continue to support providers with offers of training
- Build on current teenage engagement and encourage providers to engage young leaders
- Plan for sustainability



Feedback from families

“Holidays can be a struggle financially and mentally. It’s hard to keep them entertained because everything costs money, especially when you have more than one child. It was so nice to know the kids were having fun with their friends, keeping fit and learning new skills, having a good meal and just enjoying their holidays. It was a huge weight off my shoulder. The provider made the whole family feel very welcome.”

Parents of anxious child who has brother with severe SEND: “He has really enjoyed having a calm space to come to and have fun. Home life is so hectic and over stimulating for him due to his brother’s needs, it’s really important that he has a break away from that in a calm environment.” This family were signposted to continue with “relax kids” and other relaxation courses at the Family Hubs.

“She has been having a very challenging time at home, she’s not able to see Dad at the moment, and that’s for the best but her behaviour is chaotic. This week has really helped, she’s been showing me lots of the things she’s learnt at home. I’d love for her to keep coming.”

“Firstly, I wanted to email you to thank you directly for all your hard work and effort to make this week happen. We really appreciate it and have just loved seeing how much my daughter has come alive doing the course and how excited she has been by it all. Opportunities to experience and learn more about the backstage of theatre are not easy to come by so this has been an incredible experience for her, especially with her dreams to go into costume and make up. Thank you so much.”

“My daughter loved it. Being the youngest and not knowing anyone she was very nervous, but she commented on how well they were welcomed by Josh, how wanted she was made to feel (not like they were doing her a favour to be there) and how time was given to help them bond as a group. She really enjoyed everyone who interacted with them. She was encouraged when the makeup tutor encouraged her to look at the college course and when the casting agent mentioned linking her in with someone in costume! I have rarely heard her tell us so much about her day. She loved seeing backstage at the Globe. She understands so much more now about what happens backstage. She has learnt theatre terms. She has grown in confidence, passion and is more determined to pursue her dreams. Thank you!”

“Thank you for trip to farm, enjoyed the day with kids. Thanks for transport, lunch, entry, and animal feed. Most importantly for creating happy memories with my family. Always feel safe and relaxed when attending families are fun days at Family Action, big smiles from Mum and boys.”

“As a foster carer, I appreciate all the hard work that goes into it. I love the management; it has a friendly atmosphere. The children want to come again, and they feel safe here.”