

Cabinet (Resources) Panel

24 May 2023

Report title	Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Grant Framework	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Children and Young People	
Key decision	Yes	
In forward plan	Yes	
Wards affected	All Wards	
Accountable Director	Emma Bennett, Executive Director for Families	
Originating service	Partnerships and Strategy	
Accountable employee	Alice Vickers	Children's Innovation Lead
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Report to be/has been considered by	Children's Social Care Leadership Team	11 May 2023
	Education Leadership	27 April 2023

Recommendation for decision:

The Cabinet (Resources) Panel is recommended to:

1. Approve the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme Service Specification & Application Guidance as detailed at Appendix 1.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This paper seeks approval of the Grant Framework for providers of Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) providers and support for its implementation.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Council has been administering the Department for Education (DfE) funded Holiday and Activities Programme since 2021.
- 2.2 To date, commissioning of providers to deliver local HAF schemes has been through a series of funding rounds for each main school holiday period (Easter, Summer, and Christmas). Each funding round has culminated in an Individual Executive Decision Notice (IEDN) for the respective holiday period. In the case of Easter 2023 this was for £412,600 (excluding one-off top funding up from the Council).
- 2.3 Instead of awarding a separate, stand-alone grant agreement to each provider for each holiday period, it is proposed to offer HAF providers the option of bidding for a block of successive holiday periods up to two years in advance. A syndicated approach would achieve a Best Value Outcome through more-competitive bids as well as a significant reduction in the evaluation, assessment and administration of grant applications and grants to providers.

3.0 Overview and Consultation

- 3.1 The local HAF Providers Forum has confirmed an appetite from providers to bid for block grants as opposed to the time-consuming process of bidding for multiple small grants throughout the year.
- 3.2 The current cohort of HAF providers serving the City of Wolverhampton also expressed a desire to achieve stability of funding through block grants, These organisations are predominantly local community and voluntary groups and social enterprises engaging local volunteers and/or paid employees.
- 3.3 A number of other local authorities delivering HAF grants have moved towards a syndicated block grant model augmented by Easter/Summer/Christmas 'top up' rounds to accommodate new providers and smaller organisations lacking capacity to bid for block grants. Bristol City Council has been highlighted as a model of commissioning best practice across HAF authority networks.
- 3.4 Top up rounds also enable the administering authority to tactically target neighbourhoods in need of greater coverage and/or provision for older teenagers which typically receives fewer expressions of interest.

4.0 Evaluation of alternative options

- 4.1 Most HAF authorities have examined a Procured (tendered) Service model instead of a Grant Framework with relatively few opting for the former in what is an under-developed market.

4.2 From the inception of HAF in Wolverhampton up and including Christmas 2022, the level of funding bids for respective holiday periods has been lower than the grant allocation with general acceptance of all compliant bids submitted. The local HAF market in Wolverhampton has seen a relatively small cohort of providers facing little or no competition and compounded by a high degree of grant-dependency,

4.3 Easter 2023 saw a record 42 grant applications to deliver HAF schemes in Wolverhampton. To contain costs and buffer the main Summer holiday provision, 7 of the 42 bids were deemed unsuccessful following a Best Value exercise which took into consideration:

- Cost of provision per child per day (including a healthy meal) with a ceiling cost for general, non-specialised, non-Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) - specific activities such a neighbourhood community programme or football camp.
- The number of competing bids within the same council ward.
- Latent demand and evidence of need for the HAF programme based on the number of registered Free School Meals recipients in each ward of the city.
- Activities complying with DfE HAF guidelines e.g. minimum of 4 hours activity per day.

4.4 All the above criteria are retained in the proposed Grant Framework going forward.

5.0 Reasons for decision

5.1 A more-competitive local market for high quality HAF provision from secure and well-established providers should lead to a greater number of eligible children being able to participate.

5.2 The economy of scale achieved with predominantly block grant applications will enable the Council's HAF Team to concentrate more on HAF provider support and market development.

6.0 Financial implications

6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from implementation of the HAF Grant Framework as the programme is underwritten by DfE. However, the Council has a duty to deliver Best Value in the commissioning of local provision.

6.2 In addition to DfE funding for HAF-eligible children, it is proposed to top up provider grants by up to 10% from the Council's #YES Holiday Activities budget to enable providers to accept additional children onto sessions whom they believe to be 'in need' but unable to supply a valid HAF code number.

[JG/26042023/D]

7.0 Legal implications

- 7.1 The Council has no specific statutory duty to deliver holiday-based food and activity for families.
- 7.2 By section 31(3) and 31(4) of the Local Government Act 2003 (Power to pay grant) the Department for Education has made grant provision available to enable local authorities to provide to school age children who are eligible for free school meals, healthy meals and enrichment activities during the Easter, Summer and Christmas holiday periods free of charge. The Grant Determination sets out the conditions upon which the grant has been made available and to which the local authority must comply.
- 7.3 The recommended actions comply with the general law and the Council's Contract Rules as set out in the Constitution.
[HNR/11052023/L]

8.0 Equalities implications

- 8.1 The DfE HAF programme is inherently highly inclusive and targets a wide range of disadvantaged and economically challenged families.

9.0 All other implications

- 9.1 There are no other implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

10.0 Schedule of background papers

- 10.1 There are no background papers.

11.0 Appendices

- 11.1 Appendix 1: HAF Specification 2023-2025