



# Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme

Annual Report 2025/26



Department  
for Education

 Brent's  
**Holiday  
Activities  
and Food  
Programme**



# Contents

<b>Programme Overview</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>HAF at Brent</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>HAF Highlights</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Easter 2025</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Case Study</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Summer 2025</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Christmas 2025</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Ward Coverage</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Reflections</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Looking ahead to 2026</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Delivery Partners</b>	<b>17</b>

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme began in 2018 to address food insecurity and inequality during school holidays. Following successful pilots and heightened need during the pandemic, it expanded nationwide in 2021. It now operates across all English local authorities, offering nutritious meals, enriching activities, and family support, backed by over £200 million per year in government funding.

The HAF programme is a national initiative funded by the Department for Education (DfE) to support children and young people from low-income families during the Easter, Summer, and Christmas school holidays.

The aims of the programme are that attending the programme will result in children:

- receiving healthy and nutritious meals
- maintaining a healthy level of physical activity
- being happy, having fun and meeting new friends
- developing a greater understanding of food, nutrition and other health-related issues
- taking part in fun and engaging activities that support their development
- feeling safe and secure
- getting access to the right support services
- returning to school feeling engaged and ready to learn<sup>1</sup>

This report will look back at the 2025/26 HAF Programme at Brent Council in the following sections to provide details of funding utilisation, programme delivery of each holiday period with parent and child feedback, and subsequent programme learnings.

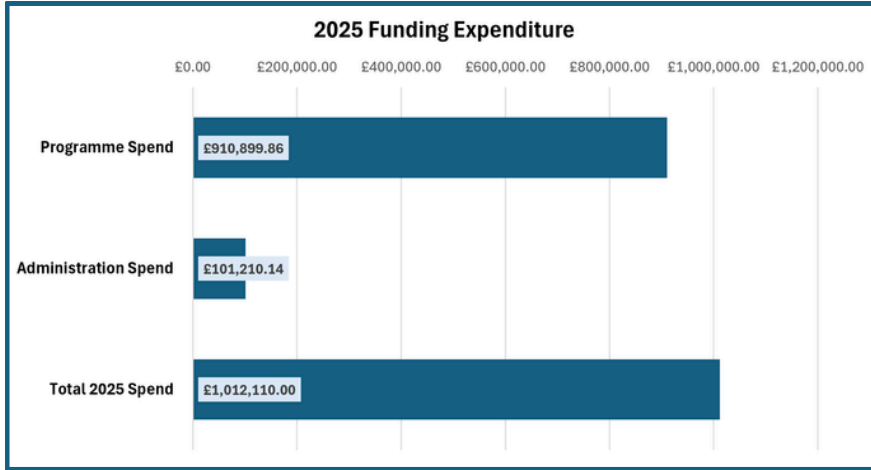


***As a mum, I can't express enough how much camp has positively impacted my son's life. The free trips and activities have opened up a world of adventure for him, allowing him to explore new places and trying things he never would have otherwise. It's been heartwarming to see him engage in various activities such as arts and crafts and engaging in other activities, and watching him grow more confidence in his abilities. Most importantly, the socializing with other kids has been invaluable. - Parent***



<sup>1</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/holiday-activities-and-food-programme](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/holiday-activities-and-food-programme)

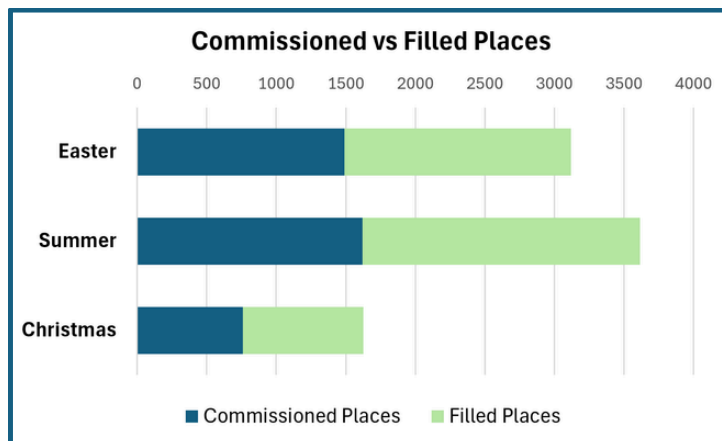
In 2025/26, the DfE allocated Brent Council £1,012,110 to deliver the Brent HAF programme for children on benefits-related Free School Meals.



Brent allocated 10% discretionary funds from the programme spend towards children and young people not eligible for the programme but deemed vulnerable; refugees, young carers, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and children with SEND. As per DfE guidelines, administration spend accounted for 10% of total funds.

Throughout the 2025 HAF programme, the number of filled places exceeded the number of commissioned places for all three holiday periods. This shows that our funding allocation method understood initial demand quite well and was able to deliver value for money through the government grant. It demonstrates the success and clear need of the Brent HAF programme within our neighbourhoods, and reflects on the benefit of returning providers that have built trust and a great reputation amongst families, who are pleased to register their children for the holiday clubs year on year.

Previous learning has highlighted that factors such as religious festivals or customs, school examination periods and familiarity with providers can impact attendance. Therefore, we continue to have these considerations in mind to support our planning.



### Note on Governance

The Brent HAF Team has been supported by the Brent HAF Steering Group with representatives from Children and Young People Commissioning, SEND Statutory Services, Early Help, Public Health, Communications within Brent Council and external partners including the Young Brent Foundation, and Headteachers from Brent Schools. The steering group is chaired by the Head of Forward Planning, Performance and Partnerships.

The Brent HAF Programme grows from strength to strength with each year of delivery. Here we reflect on key 2025-26 highlights that we can celebrate and acknowledge our progress from last year.

## 4,492

HAF places filled in 2025-26 across Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays

## Mapping tool pilot

Of an internal Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Dashboard

## 1,996

A record number of children attended a HAF provision in Summer 2025, since it was launched in Brent

## 52

Highest number of HAF providers delivered in 2025, since the start of the HAF programme in Brent

## Free Wembley Stadium Tours

Offered during Christmas break

## £27

Upper limit on the cost per child per day was maintained from 2024

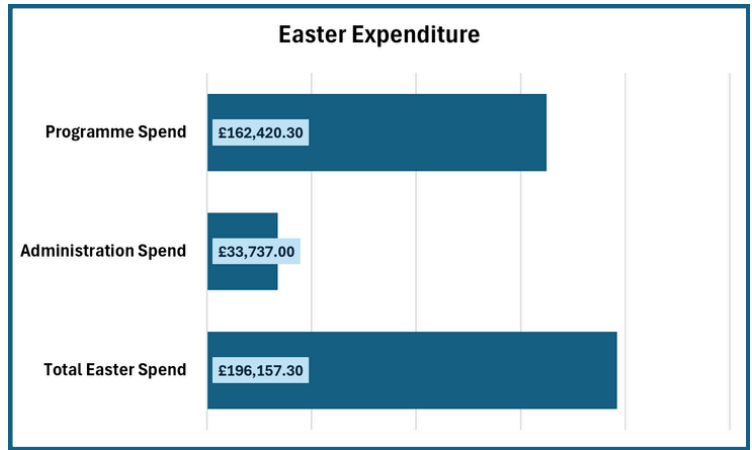
“

*My son loves coming to your camp and it makes me so happy to know he's getting out and playing with friends, we live in a one bedroom flat and I s very cramped, also he has a disabled sibling so I worry he doesn't get enough time doing things away from home. I also have the idea of him constantly staring at a screen. You guys give him freedom and joy. Thank you.- Parent*

”



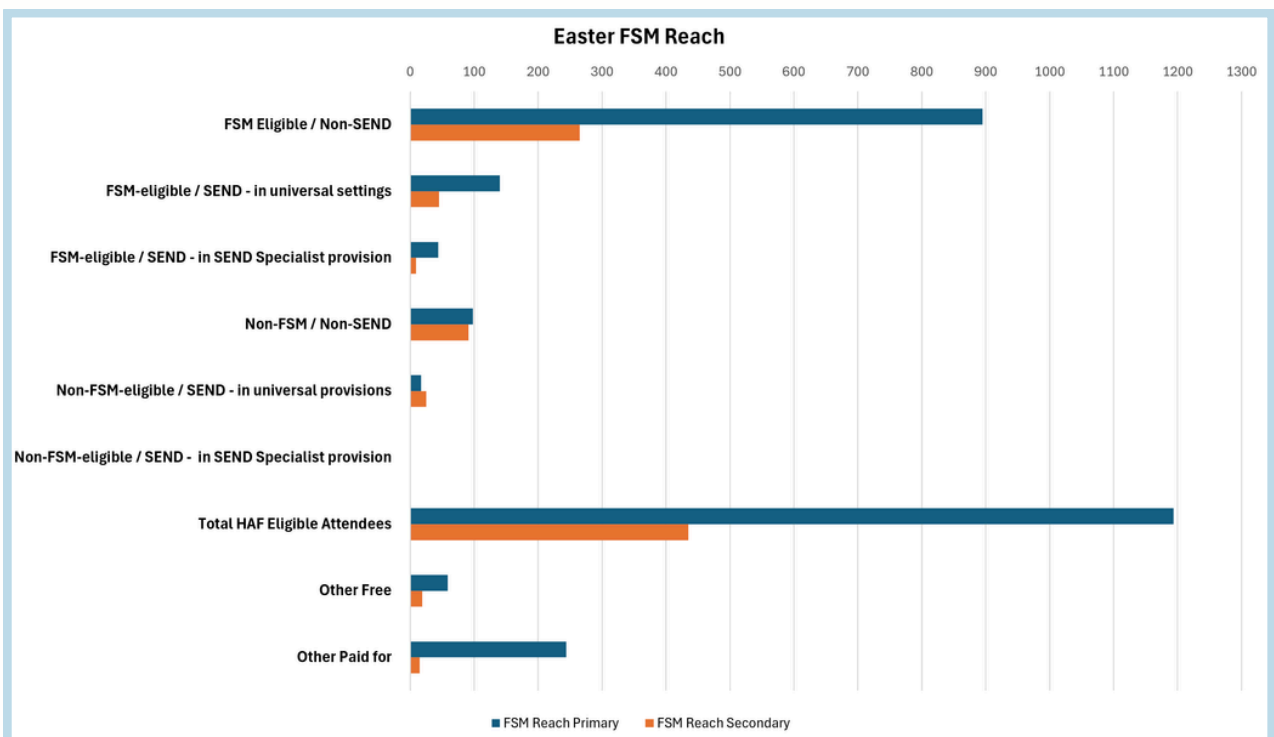
During Easter 2025, Brent commissioned 44 providers operating at 48 venues to deliver a HAF provision across 4 days. This meant 1,629 children and young people accessed a HAF place during this period, an increase of 14 places compared to 2024. The average attendance for Brent HAF during the Easter programme was 3.6 days.



Primary-aged children made up 73.3% of the total reach for Easter 2025. Secondary-aged children made up 26.7% of the total reach this period. This was a slight decrease of 5.8% from 2024 and was thought to be due to Easter falling later in the year meaning a priority focus on exams for older children. The proportion of SEND places accessed also increased to 17.2% in Easter 2025, compared to 15.8% in Easter 2024 and 12.1% in Easter 2023. This translates to 53 children with SEND accessing a place through a specialist provision across two returning providers.

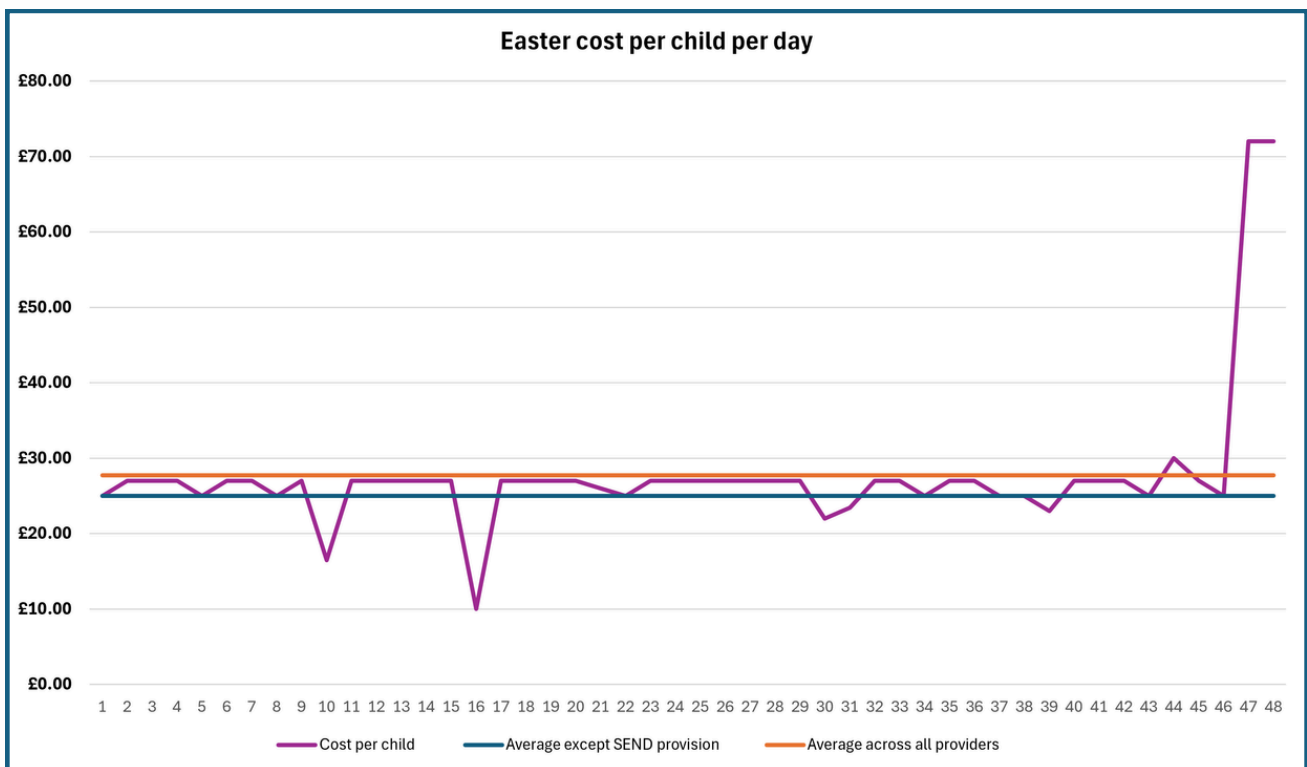
Across the providers, children participated in activities which included a variety of sports, arts and crafts, cooking classes, drama workshops and trips including to the Royal Air Force museum.

“ I had so much fun at Go Ape - I was scared, but I did it anyway and felt so proud! - HAF Programme Participant ”



The Brent HAF team carried out quality assurance visits to providers across the Easter period, assessing them against the key areas of the HAF programme in line with the Department for Education guidance. Additionally, the team sought feedback from children and young people attending the club. All clubs received a rating of ‘Acceptable’, ‘Good’ or ‘Excellent’ for both healthy eating awareness and healthy food provision, as well as physical activity. This is a real strength to see providers meeting and exceeding the standards for the core elements of the HAF programme to ensure children receive practical guidance of a healthy lifestyle.

There was one provider that scored ‘Poor’ in the signposting and referrals category, so they were provided with referral materials outlining information on key areas such as housing, money worries, domestic abuse, childcare and more. They were also given details of Family Wellbeing Centres and Brent Hubs within the community which families can access for support and guidance as required. One another provider scored ‘Poor’ in the environment and sustainability category. They were supported through recommendations based on what other HAF providers who scored ‘Excellent’ are doing. This included suggestions like junk modelling, methods for reducing food waste, and workshops on sustainability.



The Brent HAF Team fixes an upper limit on the cost per child per day to determine the number of places that can be proportionately funded for each holiday period. The cap is based upon the cost per child specified by individual providers as part of their funding application alongside local authority benchmarking. For 2025-26, a cap of £27 per child per day was put in place, exclusive of the two SEND specialist provisions that have higher staffing costs, yet the average cost was £25 for Easter. This amount was marginally higher than at Easter 2024 (£24.89), as the impact of inflation is also factored in, but can be considered stable.

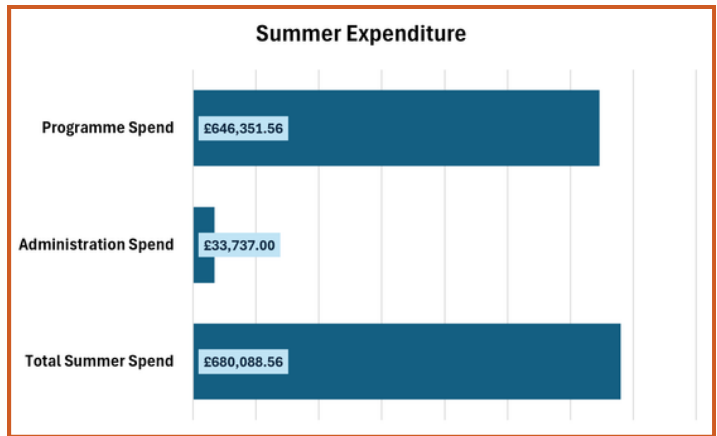
*As part of our commitment to offering enriching and inclusive opportunities for children from migrant and refugee backgrounds, [the provider] partnered with the Welsh Harp Sailing Club to deliver a Sailing Course through the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme. The course aimed to introduce children to new outdoor activities, build confidence, and promote teamwork and resilience. An 11-year-old boy with no prior experience in sailing or swimming, joined the programme with curiosity and a brave heart.*

*By working closely with the Welsh Harp Sailing Club, [the provider] ensured that all children, including non-swimmers like him, were fully supported with safety gear, patient instruction, and a welcoming environment. The team also coordinated with families, offering reassurance and encouragement to help children feel confident stepping into a completely new experience.*

*He embraced the challenge with determination. Over the course of the programme, he learned to manage the boat, understand the wind, and stay calm and focused on the water. His dedication and perseverance paid off—he successfully completed the course and received an official certificate from the Welsh Harp Sailing Club. This achievement not only marks his introduction to sailing but also symbolises his personal growth, courage, and the confidence he gained by overcoming a fear of the unknown. “At first I was a bit nervous, as I have never been in such water and can't swim. However, with the life jacket I felt safe. It was really a good challenge and an excellent experience. I have learnt to sail!”*

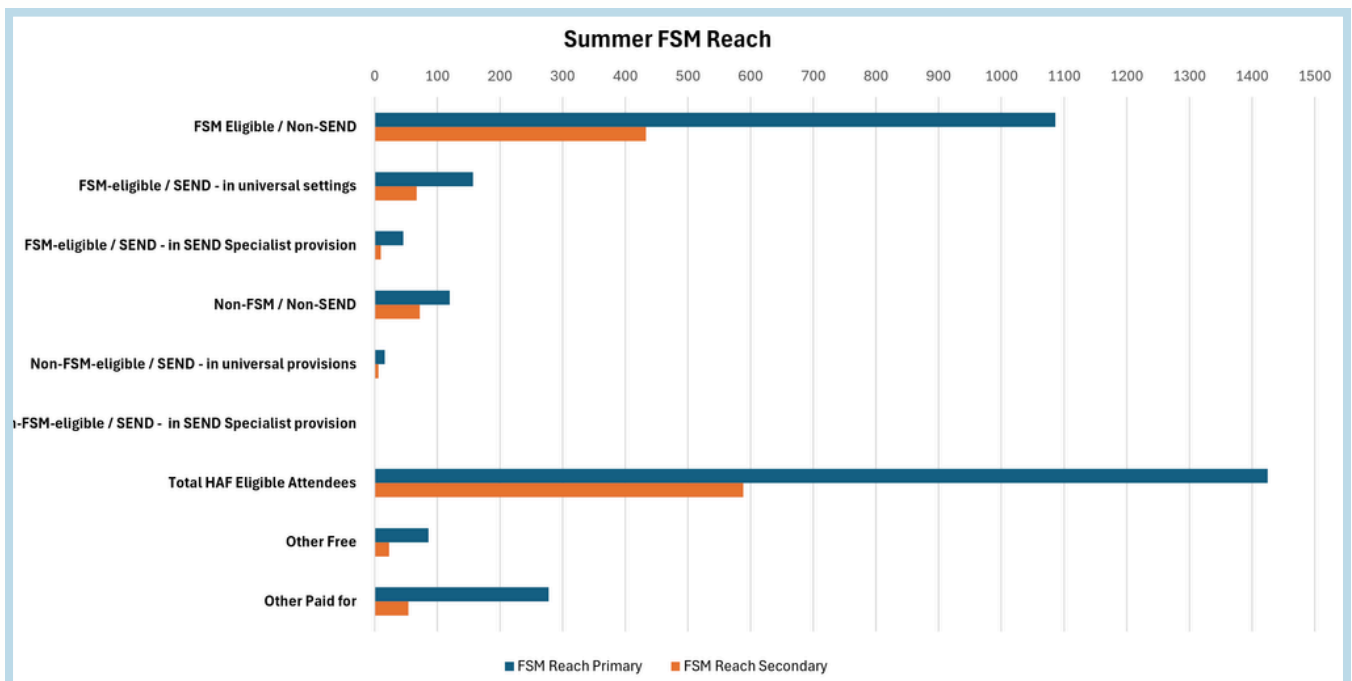


Brent Council commissioned 49 providers to deliver activities, including 2 SEND specialist provisions, enabling 1,996 children to access a holiday provision over the summer. This was a true highlight since it is the highest number of Brent children reached through our HAF programme since it was first launched. Between all providers, activities took place across 51 venues in 19 wards within the Borough.

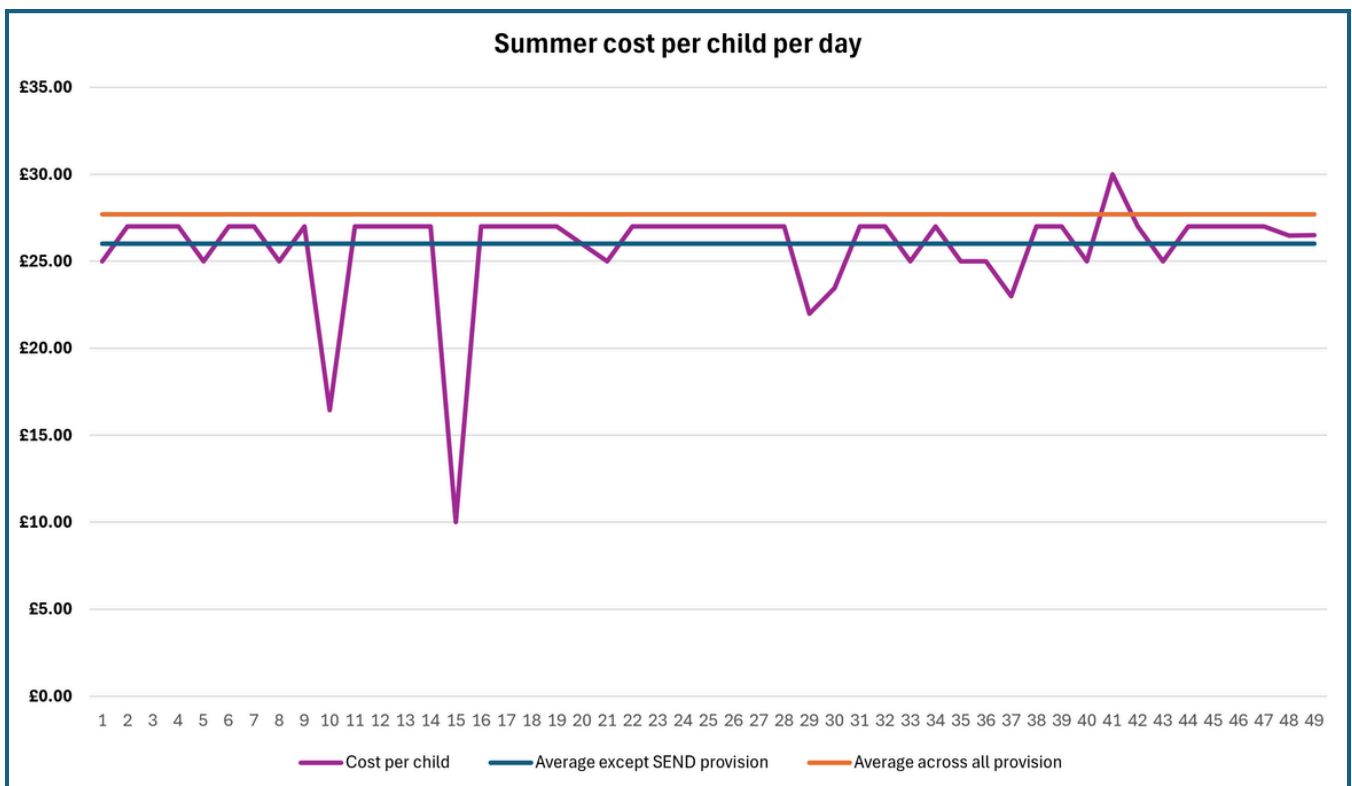


For this period, 29% of children were secondary-aged, which is a steady increase from Easter 2025 as well as from Summer 2024 (28%). It was also positive to see a more equitable split of male/female children amongst secondary-aged attendees of 53.7%/40.3%, with only 6% not disclosing. Whereas, previously in Summer 2024, this split was 72.5% male/27.5% female with the secondary age range. Feedback from holiday providers suggests that female children are more likely to attend holiday clubs when they are able to do so with their school friends whom they know.

The percentage of SEND places accessed remains steady from Summer 2024 (15%) at roughly 15.3% in Summer 2025. Four fewer SEND specialist places were taken up than the commissioned amount over the summer, mainly because the higher level of 1:1 and 2:1 support required meant there were not enough staff to run all 60 planned places. In previous holidays, many families booked places but attended only a few days. The Brent HAF team suggested providers introduce a three strikes policy which did help to reduce no-shows and allowed places to be reallocated. This supported attendance improvements, with primary attendance reaching 84% (80% in 2024) and secondary attendance rising to 86% (52% in 2024).



An additional 436 children accessed a universal place compared to what was predicted for the Summer period. The prediction is made on the basis that children will access their full 16-day entitlement available to them. The average number of days accessed over the summer period was 10.9 days. As not every child accessed the full 16 days, these remaining places were accessed by other children and young people making the overall number attendees higher than the predicted number. This builds on learning from previous years which was translated into a programme aim for 2025 to ensure spare places could go to children who were waiting for a place and not be lost.



The average cost per child per day across all providers for Summer 2025 was £27.69, which includes SEND specialist provision and one other faith-based provider that required higher catering costs. With the exclusion of the 2 SEND specialists, the cost reduced to £26.00, staying within the upper limit. The upper limit demonstrates good commissioning practice by the Brent HAF team and enables improved reach through a fair and consistent approach. It also promotes financial resilience amongst providers by asking them to show value for money whilst also seeking other sources of funding, if required, to cover costs.

“ Living in the hotel during the holidays is very hard because there is nothing to do and nowhere to go. These activities gave me a reason to leave the room and move my body. It helped me feel less bored and more normal, like other teenagers who have activities during school holidays - HAF Programme Participant ”



As with Easter, a range of activities were made available through the Summer 2025 programme, such as arts and crafts, sailing, multiple sports including tennis and cricket, trips to a safari park, farms and fire brigade visit. In addition, we partnered with Brent Public Health to offer healthy eating workshops via BeeZee Bodies whilst NHS teams delivered emotional wellbeing sessions.



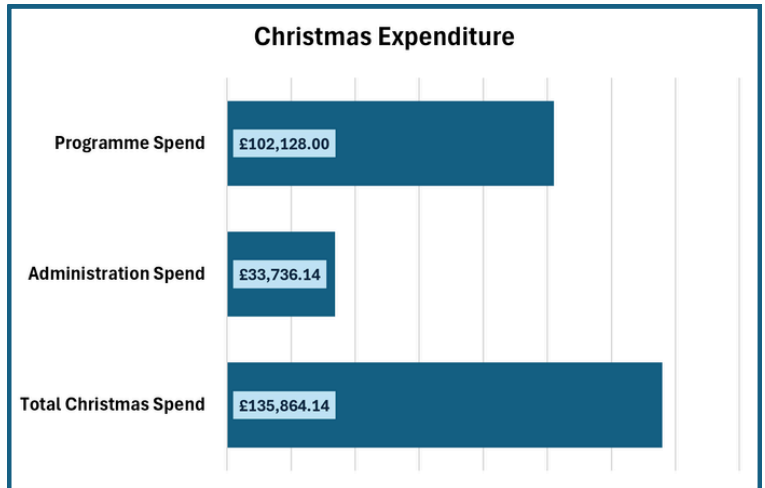
**I used to be nervous about trying new things, but here I felt like I could. Now I feel stronger and I even helped my team. I can't wait to keep playing sport after this. - HAF Programme Participant**



Quality assurance visits were conducted by our team at every club for this Summer period. It was brilliant to see that all providers were given a rating of 'Acceptable' or higher in the physical activities, enriching activities and accessibility & inclusiveness categories. Despite a greater number of clubs during this holiday period, we had only one club scoring 'Poor' on healthy food provision and 2 providers scoring 'Poor' for healthy eating awareness.

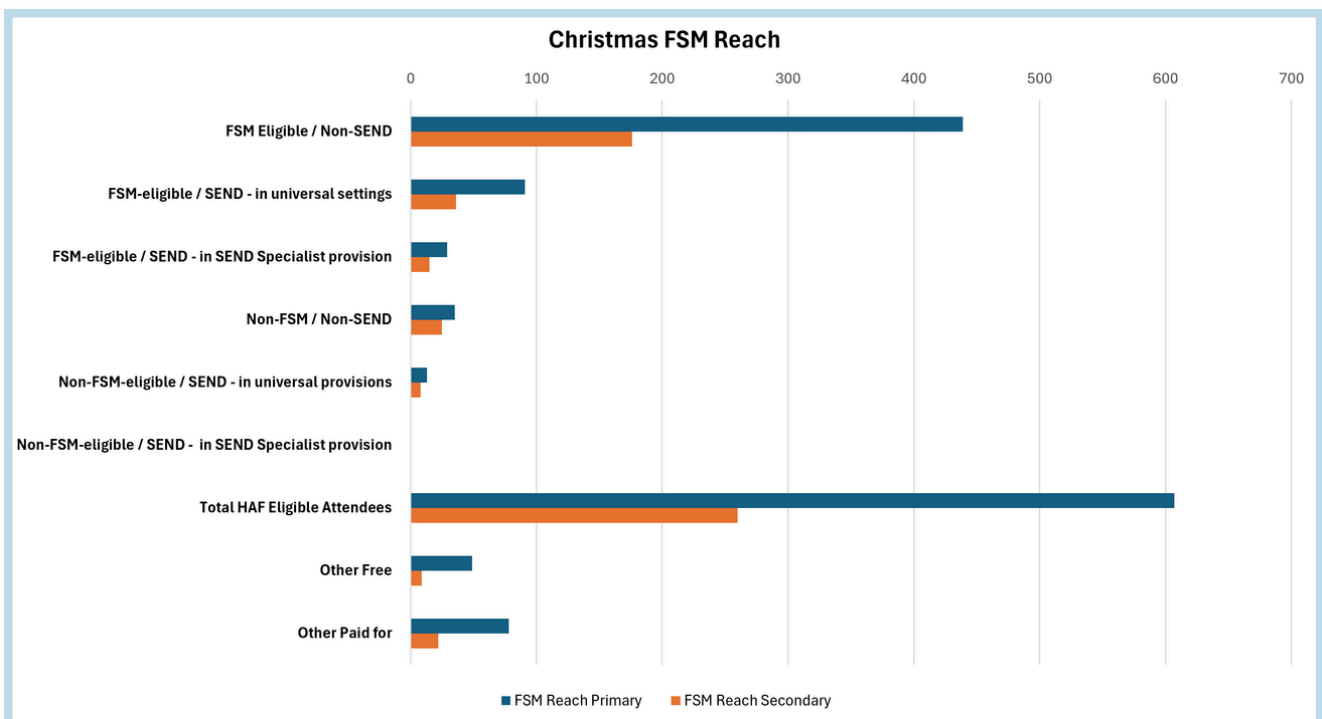
In these instances, the Brent HAF team reminds providers of the expectation to follow School Food Standards, as advised by the Department for Education, and also shares best practice from exemplary providers. Similarly, one provider was rated 'Very Poor' in the signposting and referrals category despite the same provider being rated 'Acceptable' in the same category for Easter. This provider is not Brent-based but is a returning provider therefore, they were advised to maintain or improve standards for all categories and ensure familiarity with the Information Pack sent to all providers pre-delivery, which contains useful resources for common issues that families experience.

During Christmas 2025, the Brent HAF programme funded 24 organisations for 4 days, and there were 27 clubs facilitating a HAF provision as some providers run at more than one venue. Due to the cold as well as festive season, Christmas delivery sees fewer providers operating at this time of year. This is due to less availability of staff and venues and participant attendance rates tend to be more affected by illness.



Despite this, 867 young people attended a Brent HAF provision, a small decrease of 2.3% from Christmas 2024. Of these, 30% were secondary-aged children which is an increase of 2.6% from 2024 and 22% of all children accessed a SEND place for Christmas 2025. The average number of days attended was 3.4 days.

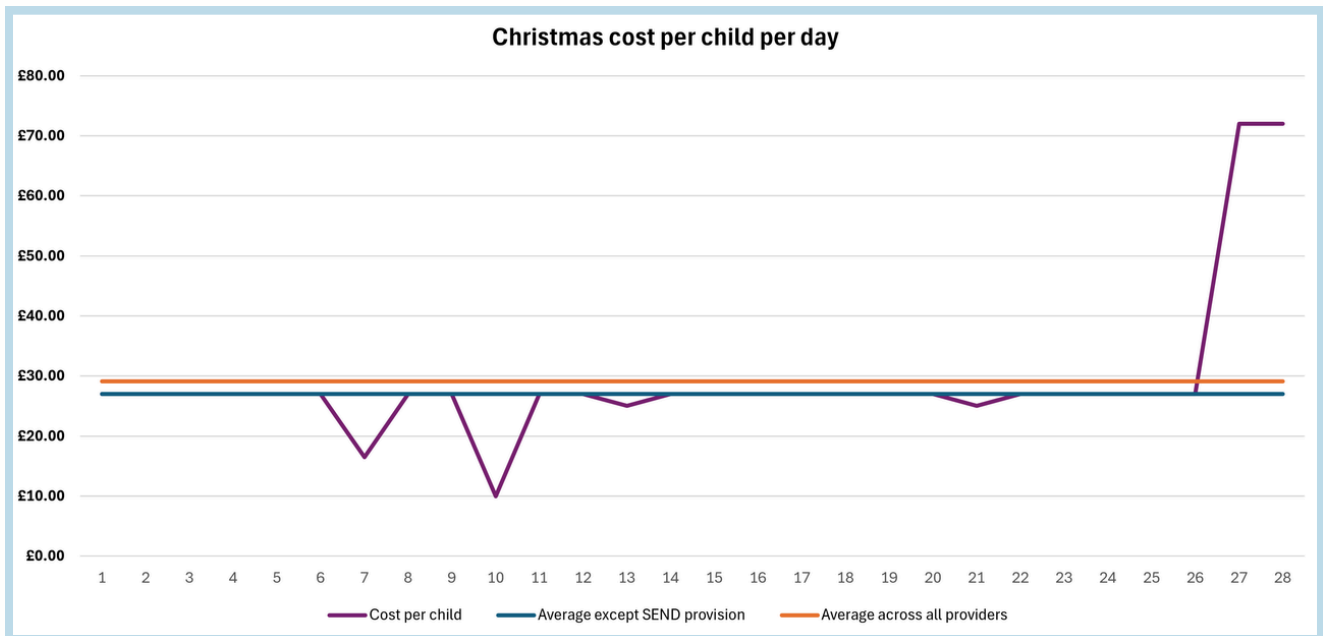
There were a range of activities available including football, basketball, science experiments, cooking sessions, arts and crafts and trips such as ice skating. Due to its proximity, Wembley Stadium offered up free tours to HAF providers, which was an exciting opportunity for children to visit a globally renowned venue. Staff from Brent Libraries also went along to a few sessions to encourage children and families to take up a membership at their local library. Similarly, partnerships with local dentists were arranged to motivate registration from families and boost dental check-ups.



The Brent HAF team visited all 27 clubs for quality assurance purposes for Christmas 2025. No provider scored ‘Very Poor’ on this occasion for any categories. Where it is deemed appropriate, providers are requested to consider upskilling staff or organise training to plug gaps in knowledge, which in turn can help with the quality of their service and improve their rating for future visits. One scored ‘Poor’ for healthy eating awareness; this was a SEND specialist provision where challenges around food and nutrition are more prominent than conventional settings due to the varying levels of understanding and ability. A booklet containing activities is shared again where they have the option to adapt resources to the needs of the group.

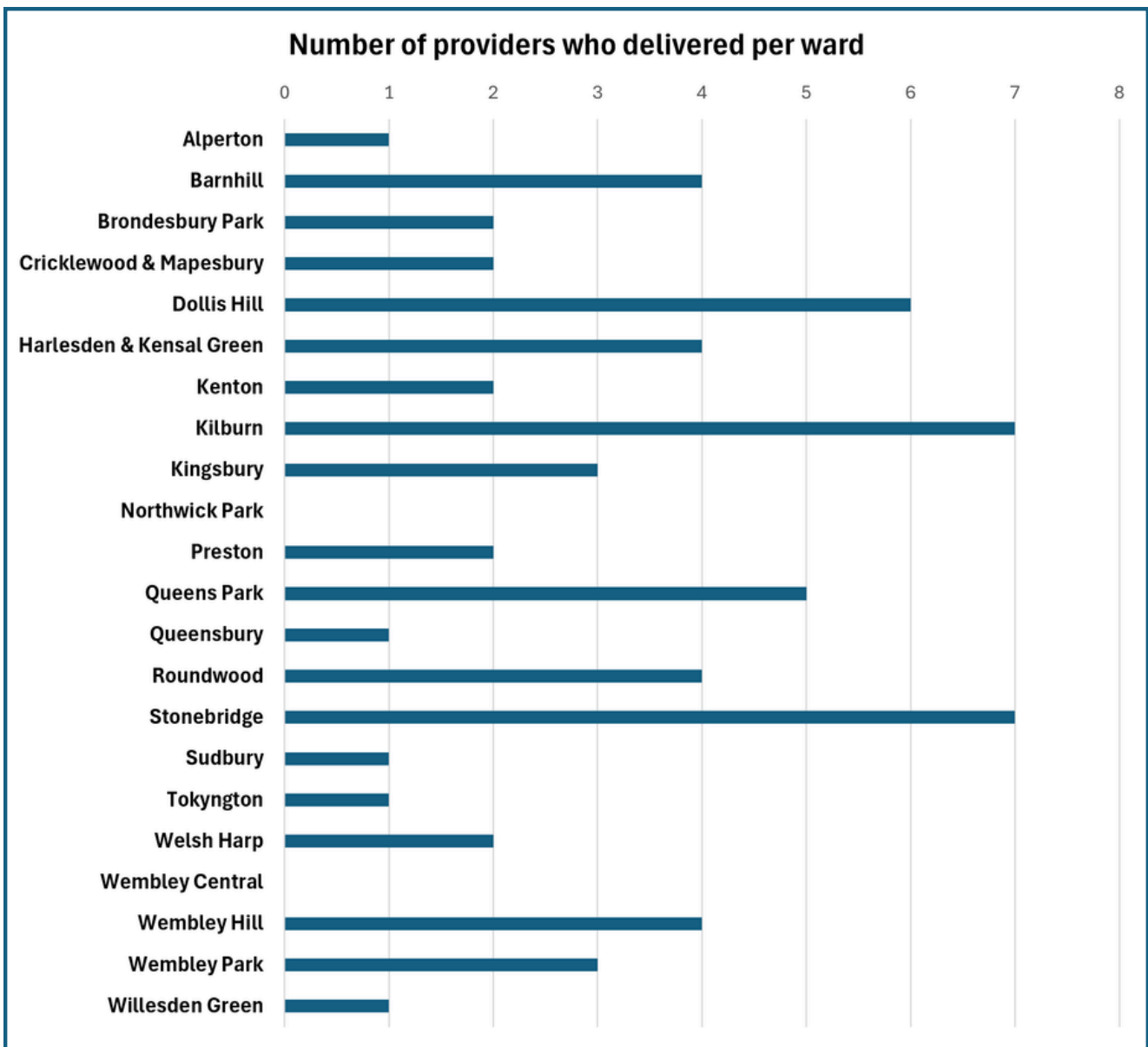


Families have the opportunity to speak with provision staff in person during pick-up and drop-off times, seek guidance or receive information for their independent circumstances. Many providers also share signposting information through their newsletters, emails and handout materials.



In Christmas 2025, the average cost per child per day was at par with the upper limit of £27.00, which is higher than at Easter and Summer as there are fewer providers running holiday clubs at this time of year. This was also higher than at Christmas 2024 (£25.10) as there were a greater number of providers stating higher average costs per child this year, whereas the averages were more broadly spread between providers during Christmas 2024. Due to the demanding time of year, venue availability becomes an increasing challenge and pricing negotiations are harder to carry out.

For 2025, provision availability was well spread across 20 out of 22 wards in Brent between all 3 holiday periods to ensure holiday activities are within reach for many residents in need. The two wards where there was no coverage – Northwick Park and Wembley Central – are often the wards with no HAF provision as they are areas of low demand or need, or lacking in adequate venue space which presents barriers for providers to host in these areas. Going forward, we will speak with providers to plan ahead and run their provision in these areas, where possible, so coverage in all wards can be achieved. If this is possible we will also re-evaluate our funding allocation process to be able to include at least 2 additional providers.



## Partnership Engagement and Promotion

Throughout the year, the Brent HAF Team along with commissioned providers aimed to enhance the holiday activities offered through community engagement and developing partnerships. For example, one team member attended various community-focused events at Brent Libraries to promote the HAF programme and engaged with the Brent Parent Carers' Forum to consult on ways to improve the accessibility and inclusiveness of the HAF programme. Providers also benefitted from food parcels via The Felix Project and visits from the London Fire Brigade, adding further value to the programme this year.

Additionally, the team leveraged other internal stakeholders to increase awareness of the programme. This has included the Homeless Prevention and Relief Team, the Inclusion Support Team and the Youth Justice Service, all for the first time. This helped to promote HAF for children and young people living in temporary accommodation, those at risk of exclusion and those who have offended or are at risk of offending. Ahead of Christmas delivery, two specialist training sessions were also delivered to providers in partnership with the SEND Support Team, with the intention to improve provider confidence and understanding when engaging children with SEND.

## Key Challenges

- **Growth in SEND participation appears to be plateauing recently, despite a small growth from 2024.**

The Brent HAF Steering Group agreed to offer training to providers, as provider confidence was identified as a reason for lower uptake and cancellations of SEND places. This was delivered for Christmas 2025 and was well received, so the team will build on the training offer.

- **Access to affordable venues**

This has been an ongoing challenge which can compel providers to pull out of delivering the programme when a suitable venue within budget cannot be found in time. Continued mapping exercises and usage of Brent's Family Wellbeing Centres can ease the pressure but do not fully resolve the long-standing issue.

- **Non-attendance and inefficiency (exclusive of instances beyond control e.g. weather or political conflicts)**

Due to the free provision of HAF, families are not incentivised to inform providers when their child can no longer attend thus preventing places to be easily refilled on for the day. This results in funding inefficiencies. Better usage and tracking of waiting lists and non-attendance policies have been advised to combat this.

The Brent HAF Team celebrates how far the programme has come for the Borough and are keen to build on the progress and take learning forward to achieve the aims outlined by the DfE for 2026/27. Here are a few areas of focus:

## **Provider Training and Engagement**

This is a valued element of our offer and one we intend to continue. The Brent HAF Team will be organising a HAF Network Meeting ahead of Easter 2026, which will focus on safeguarding refreshers and relevant training as well as discuss the benefits of Ofsted registration. It will also provide an informal space for providers to connect, collaborate, share insights and problem-solve together, with learning fed back into their individual programmes.

## **Targeted Provision (Female Cohorts)**

Whilst female participation in Key Stage 3/Key Stage 4 increased from 28% (2024) to 43% (2025), there is further scope to level out the programme's reach to female groups. By working with trusted providers that are more familiar with this cohort, we will encourage female-only sessions especially during the summer where there is greater flexibility. Providers will also be reminded to operate a blended funding model of HAF and non-HAF places for a more equitable delivery.

## **Data-driven Approach**

Work will continue to procure and implement a centralised booking system in 2026/27, with training and stakeholder communication factored in.

Although it will likely impact possible reach in the short-term as some funding will need to be ring-fenced for this, the consequent benefits of data accuracy and efficient monitoring will make programme planning more streamlined in the long-term.

## **Develop a coordinated approach to delivery**

Upcoming regulatory changes to Free Schools Meals guidance will have significant impact on HAF eligibility from September 2026, with many families likely to be no longer eligible. To mitigate this impact and ensure that the most vulnerable families continue receiving adequate support, the team will work more closely with School-aged Childcare Leads and other supplementary council services. Mapping of additional provision beyond HAF in the community will also help with signposting and alleviate pressure.

**We would like to thank all of our funded organisations for running a quality holiday provision throughout the year and creating local opportunities for some of the most vulnerable children and families to engage in healthier and more fulfilling lifestyles, which they may not have otherwise have access to.**

2 Da Stage

Active Sporting Communities

Alridha Foundation

All Child

Be One Hope

Braintcroft

Brent River College

CC Recruitment

Chalkhill Community Action

Connect Stars

Crest Academy

Crowning Greatness

DARE Manor

DFY Sports Limited

Destiny House International

Divine Purpose

ETT Sports Limited

Filmscope CIC

Fresh Arts

GOALS

Harris Lowe

Iraqi Youth Club

Joy Sports Academy

Jump Starters

Junior Adventure Group

Kidzplay Afterschool

Kilburn Park School

Kilburn State of Mind

Kore Development Charity

London Basketball Association

Mitchell Brook Primary School

Motion4Kids

Motivating Valuable Prospects CIC

National Tennis Association

Omega Sportz Ltd

Our Parks

Park Lane Primary

Platform Cricket

Rumi's Cave and Ulfa Aid Project

Salisbury World Refugee Centre

Skipz Production

Sport and Health Academy

Sport at the Heart

TETH Youth

The US Charitable Trust

Torah Temimah

We Restart

Westminster Warriors

Work Works Training

Yaseen Youth

Yovela

Zest of Mind