

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF)

Annual Report 2025–2026

Prepared by: Nottingham City Council HAF team

Date: June 2026

1. Highlights

The 2025–2026 Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme has continued to build on its strong foundations, delivering high-quality, accessible holiday provision across Nottingham. Participation remained consistently strong, with children and young people benefiting from a diverse offer designed to support wellbeing, reduce holiday hunger, and provide meaningful and enriching experiences. With £1.8 million in funding from the Department for Education, Nottingham City Council successfully coordinated a city-wide programme that reached children and young people—primarily those eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)—during the spring, summer, October half-term, and winter holiday periods of 2025.

Over the course of the spring, summer October half-term, and winter holidays, we provided over 59,000 places across the city, ensuring equitable access to enriching, nutritious, and active experiences. The overall number of unique children who participated in the programme was

Spring 2025: 2086

Summer 2025: 2894

October 2025: 2180

Winter 2025: 1337

Key developments this year included the further strengthening of provider partnerships, leading to improved consistency and quality across delivery. Targeted outreach efforts enhanced engagement with underrepresented communities, helping to ensure provision reached those most in need. In addition, the move to a new centralised booking system which has improved accessibility for families and enabled more effective programme management and data insight. Furthermore, we have written and designed a new safeguarding audit which all providers must complete. This audit provides greater assurance of safeguarding practices and allows delivery partners to self-reflect on current safeguarding procedures and allows them to create an action plan on what they need to do to strengthen these further.



2. Feedback from children and families

Feedback from children, young people, and families has remained overwhelmingly positive. Families consistently highlighted the welcoming and inclusive environments created by providers, alongside the breadth and quality of activities available.

Children reported increased confidence, improved social and communication skills, and a strong sense of enjoyment and belonging. Many families noted the value of the programme in supporting routine, reducing isolation during school holidays, and providing trusted, safe spaces for their children.

Strong Overall Engagement:

Feedback from families was overwhelmingly positive, with many describing the programme as “fantastic,” “brilliant,” and “well-organised.” Participants frequently commented on the friendly atmosphere and how easy it was to get involved.

Inclusive and Varied Provision:

The range of activities ensured that children of different ages, interests, and abilities could all find something enjoyable. Families valued the flexibility and variety, noting that it kept children engaged across the full session.

Food Experience:

Meals continued to be a highlight, with several children trying new dishes for the first time. The pumpkin pasta remained a firm favourite and was praised for being both nutritious and appealing to younger attendees.



3. Feedback from Holiday Activity Providers

Consistent Participation:

Many children returned across multiple holiday periods, showing sustained interest in the programme. Activities such as sports sessions, particularly basketball, were repeatedly highlighted as favourites.

Welcoming Environment:

Staff were regularly recognised for creating a supportive and inclusive space. Their approachable manner helped children settle quickly, build confidence, and actively participate in sessions.

Success Stories

One family, including a child with SEND, initially felt hesitant about attending due to previous negative experiences elsewhere. With reassurance and clear communication from staff, both children attended and fully engaged in activities.

The experience exceeded expectations, with the younger child trying new foods and both children leaving with positive memories. The parent expressed strong interest in returning for future programmes.

Confidence and Social Development:

A child experiencing anxiety was supported through personalised approaches, including a pre-visit introduction, gentle encouragement, and small comfort measures.

Over the course of the sessions, she built trust with staff and peers, eventually forming a friendship with another child. Both have since expressed enthusiasm about attending future sessions together.

Case Studies

Child (Age 10):

Actively participated in a variety of creative and social activities, including dance and group games.

Demonstrated noticeable progress in confidence, communication, and willingness to engage with others.

Parent Perspective:

The parent reported a clear improvement in their child's confidence and social interaction. They particularly valued the opportunity for their child to remain active, develop friendships, and experience a positive, structured holiday environment.

Quotes

“The sessions have really helped my child come out of their shell—they're more confident, more active, and keen to try new things.” – Parent

“I loved the dancing and meeting new friends. I want to come back again!” – Child, age 9



4. Food

The provision of nutritious meals remained a central pillar of the programme. Providers delivered a wide range of balanced, healthy, and culturally appropriate food options, ensuring inclusivity and meeting diverse dietary requirements.

There has been a continued emphasis on embedding food education within delivery. Children increasingly participated in food preparation and cooking activities, supporting the development of practical skills, nutritional awareness, and positive attitudes towards healthy eating.



5. Enriching Activities

A broad and varied programme of enriching activities was delivered across the city. These included arts and crafts, cycling, swimming, outdoor learning, cultural experiences, creative workshops, and life skills development.

Providers demonstrated innovation and adaptability, tailoring activities to meet the interests and needs of participants. This contributed to high levels of engagement and provided opportunities for children to try new experiences, build confidence, and develop new skills.



6. Physical Activities

A wide range of sports and physical activities formed a key part of delivery, supporting children's physical health and overall wellbeing. Activities were designed to be inclusive and accessible, catering to a wide range of abilities and interests.

The programme successfully encouraged participation among children who may not typically engage in structured physical activity, helping to promote positive attitudes towards active lifestyles.

7. Nutrition and Healthy Lifestyles

The programme continued to integrate nutrition and healthy lifestyle education throughout its offer. Workshops, cooking sessions, and interactive learning opportunities supported children and families to develop knowledge and skills around healthy eating and wellbeing.

This holistic approach has contributed to increasing awareness of healthy habits and supporting longer-term behavioural change.

8. SEND

Inclusive provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) remained a key priority. The programme saw a continued use of SEND-accessible places and strengthened collaboration with specialist providers.

Efforts were made to improve accessibility, adapt activities, and provide appropriate staffing and support, helping to ensure that children with additional needs could participate fully and benefit equally from the programme.

9. Key Challenges

Despite continued success, several challenges were identified. Short planning timelines continued to impact providers' ability to prepare and scale delivery effectively. Engagement among secondary-aged young people remained lower compared to primary cohorts, highlighting an ongoing area for development.

Attendance variability across sessions persisted, and further work is required to refine data collection and improve consistency in monitoring and reporting.

10. Marketing and Communication

Promotion of the programme was delivered through a combination of schools, community partners, and targeted communication campaigns. This multi-channel approach ensured strong awareness across the city and supported accessibility for families.

Ongoing improvements to communication methods have helped to better reach priority groups and provide clearer information on available provision.

11. Additional Resources

Additional resources were deployed to strengthen programme delivery, including increased staffing capacity and enhanced partnership working. These resources were particularly impactful in supporting SEND inclusion, improving provider support, and maintaining quality assurance across the programme.

12. Looking Forward

Looking ahead to 2026–2027, key priorities include improving engagement among older children and young people, particularly those of secondary school age, and continuing to expand and enhance SEND provision.

Further focus will be placed on increasing attendance consistency, strengthening data quality and insight, and broadening the range of activities available. The programme will also continue to build on its strong partnerships to ensure sustainable, high-quality delivery that meets the evolving needs of Nottingham's children and families.