

BARKING & DAGENHAM

Holiday
Activities & Food
Programme

ANNUAL REPORT

2026



INTRODUCTION

The Holiday Activities and Food Programme

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme, funded by the Department for Education, continues to play a vital role in supporting children and families during the school holidays.

The programme provides access to nutritious meals and high-quality, enriching activities for children eligible for benefit-related free school meals, within safe and inclusive environments.

Delivered across the Easter, Summer, and Winter holiday periods, the HAF programme targets areas of greatest need, reaching children and families across some of the borough's most disadvantaged communities.

Through a well-established network of local providers, including schools, voluntary and community organisations, and local partners.

The 2025 - 26 HAF programme in Barking and Dagenham has evolved into a more targeted, data-led model, prioritising children with the greatest need while strengthening inclusion, engagement and delivery quality.

This report highlights the significant contribution of our delivery partners, whose commitment, innovation, and strong community presence have been central to the programme's success.

Through their work, they have created inclusive and high-quality opportunities for children and families, strengthening community engagement across Barking and Dagenham.

We extend our sincere thanks to all partners for their continued dedication to delivering the HAF programme.

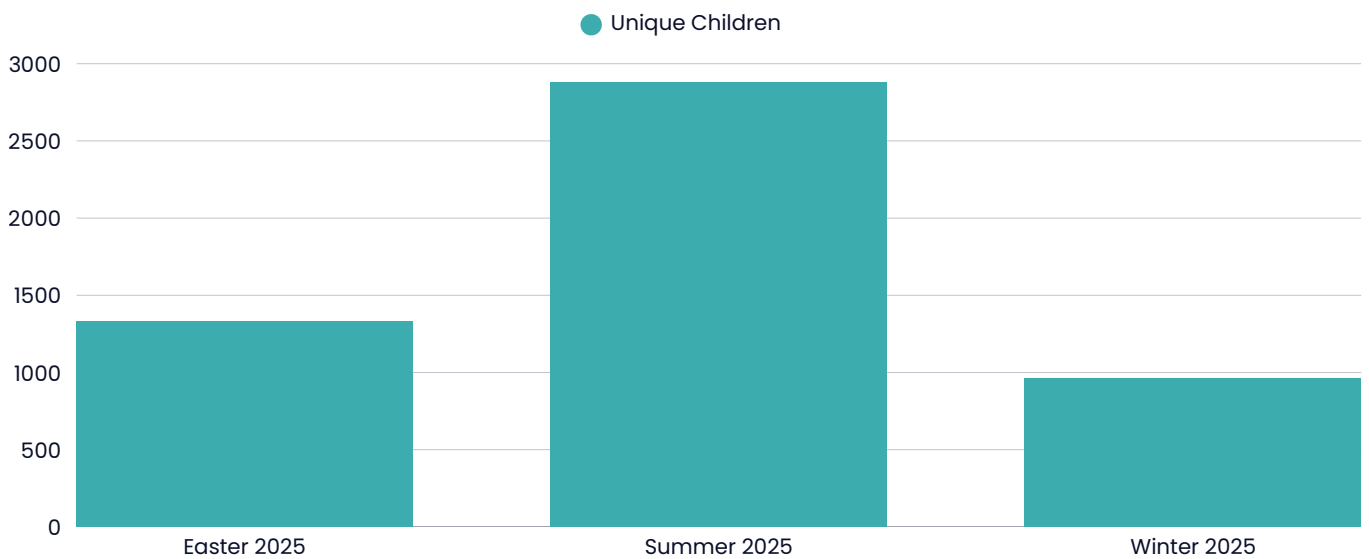
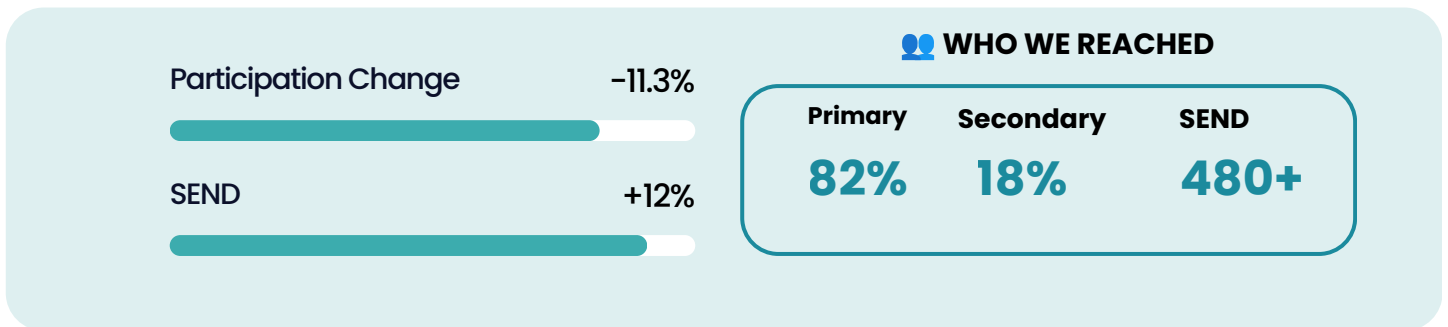


HIGHLIGHTS

The 2025 HAF Programme supported **5,175** children across Barking and Dagenham. While overall participation decreased slightly compared to the previous year (-11.3%), this reflects a more targeted delivery model, with resources focused towards those with the greatest need.

The programme saw improved engagement, stronger inclusion of children with SEND (+12%), and significant enhancements in data monitoring following the introduction of a centralised booking system. Delivery remained consistent across all holiday periods, ensuring continued access to high-quality provision for eligible families.

Overall, the 2025 programme demonstrates a more focused, data-informed, and inclusive approach, strengthening our ability to reach and support those who will benefit most.



Inclusion & Community Impact

Supporting children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), alongside wider vulnerable groups including children in care and those with additional needs. Provision was targeted to areas of greatest need, helping ensure equitable access to safe, structured holiday activities across the borough.

Key Development

Increased engagement reflects improved programme quality, stronger provider delivery, and enhanced targeting of participants. This approach has supported more equitable access to provision, particularly for children facing the greatest levels of disadvantage.

20+

Providers Engaged Across
the Borough

104

HAF-funded clubs
delivered

5,175

Children & Young People
Supported

FOOD PROVISION & NUTRITION

Delivery

Food provision remained a core element of the 2025 HAF programme, with all providers delivering at least one nutritious meal per day in line with School Food Standards. Compliance remained consistently high across all delivery periods, with Winter provision achieving 100% compliance and strong standards maintained throughout Easter and Summer.

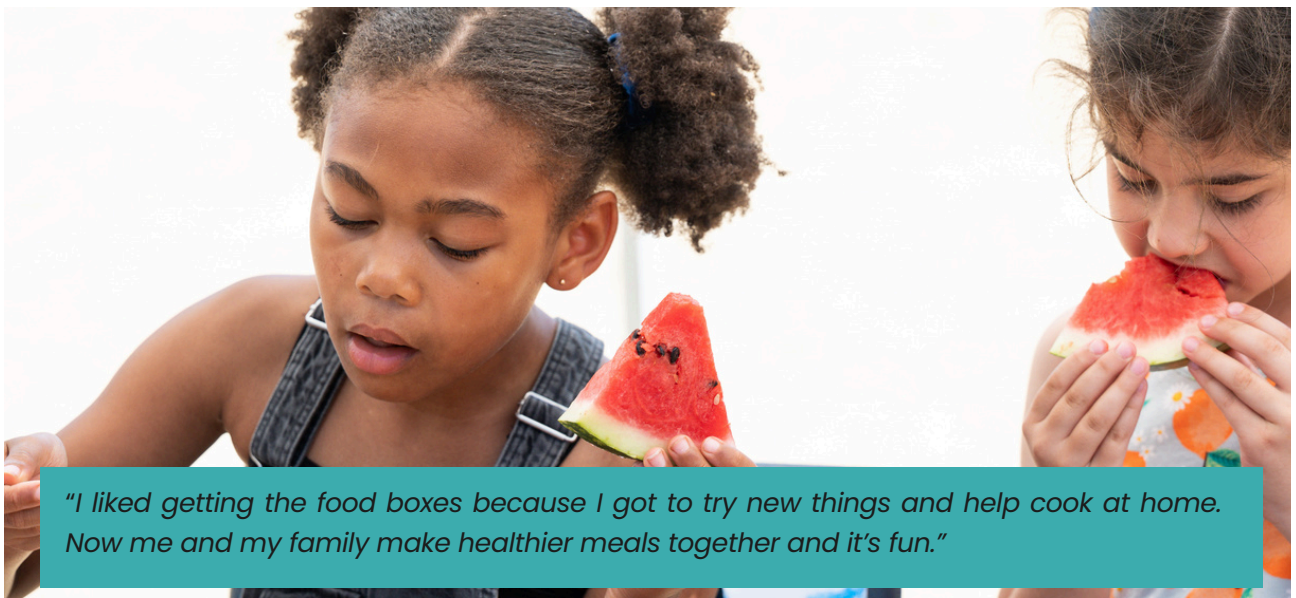
Beyond meeting nutritional requirements, food was used as a key engagement tool to support wider wellbeing outcomes. Children responded positively to the offer, with many trying new foods and developing greater confidence around healthy eating. Food provision was increasingly integrated into the wider programme experience, encouraging participation, curiosity and social interaction.

The introduction of 'Take and Make' food boxes during Easter extended this impact beyond the holiday setting, enabling families to prepare meals together at home and supporting households experiencing food insecurity. This approach strengthened the programme's role not only in addressing immediate need, but in promoting longer-term healthy habits and family engagement.

Impact on Children

- Daily nutritious meals delivered in line with School Food Standards
- High compliance maintained across all providers (100% in Winter)
- Cooking sessions developing practical food preparation skills
- Food-based activities promoting healthy choices and balanced diets
- Shared meal experiences supporting social development

Impact on Families



"I liked getting the food boxes because I got to try new things and help cook at home. Now me and my family make healthier meals together and it's fun."

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

The programme introduced a vibrant and high-quality selection of enrichment activities that significantly enhanced children's personal growth, creativity, and well-being. Each activity was carefully designed to offer both enjoyment and meaningful developmental progress.

Key Areas of Enrichment

1

Creative arts including dance, music, drama and visual arts

2

Cooking and essential life skills development

3

Wellbeing, confidence and resilience sessions

4

Safe spaces for creativity, self-expression and exploration

5

Improving confidence, reducing social isolation, and supporting emotional expression

Impact of Enrichment Activities

"Coming to the camp made me feel happy and confident. It gave me something to look forward to during the Christmas holidays and helped me stay active instead of being at home all day. I felt proud of myself because I got better at basketball and the coaches always believed in me."



PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

A vibrant and diverse programme of physical activities was delivered, providing children with a wide range of opportunities to stay active, explore new interests, and develop skills within an enjoyable and supportive environment. Activities included football tournaments, boxing sessions, swimming, dance workshops, structured fitness classes, cycling proficiency training, and BMX skills development, alongside informal games and team-based challenges.

The programme was carefully designed to be both engaging and developmental, enabling children to build confidence, enhance physical competence, and experience new activities in a fun and inclusive setting. The breadth of provision ensured accessibility for a range of interests and abilities, supporting sustained engagement and positive participation throughout the programme.

- **Diverse Sporting Offer** A wide range of activities including football, boxing, swimming, dance, cycling and BMX ensured broad appeal and sustained interest.
- **Active Participation** Children engaged consistently in physical activity, increasing movement levels and developing healthier routines.
- **Skill Development** Sessions supported the growth of physical coordination, technique and overall fitness in a structured and enjoyable way.
- **Confidence & Resilience** Activities encouraged children to challenge themselves, build confidence and develop a positive approach to trying new experiences.
- **Social Interaction & Teamwork** Group-based activities strengthened communication, teamwork and peer relationships.
- **Inclusive Access** Adaptive and specialist-led provision, including inclusive sports, ensured all children could participate regardless of ability.

Embedding Physical Activities

Impact On Children & Families

The physical activity offer across the HAF programme delivered far more than opportunities to be active, it created an environment where children could build confidence, develop lifelong skills, and experience a sense of achievement. Through inclusive, engaging and high-quality delivery, the physical element of the HAF programme has laid strong foundations for healthier lifestyles, sustained participation, and improved wellbeing outcomes beyond the life of the provision.



SEND INCLUSION

Supporting children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) has been a central priority in the HAF programme. By emphasising inclusive practices, targeted provisions, and personalised support, the programme ensured that children with additional needs could access, participate in, and truly benefit from a wide array of activities. This approach led to remarkable progress for children with SEND, including boosted confidence, enhanced social interactions, and increased involvement in structured activities.

- **Inclusive Universal Delivery** SEND children were supported to participate within mainstream provision wherever appropriate
- **Specialist SEND Provision** Dedicated sessions tailored to meet a range of additional needs
- **Individualised Support** Including 1:1 support where required to enable full participation
- **Wide Reach** Over 480+ children with SEND engaged across the programme
- **Flexible Delivery Models** Provision adapted to meet varying needs, abilities, and engagement levels

Area	Approach	Outcome
Inclusive Delivery	Integration within universal and targeted provision	Increased participation and engagement in activities
Individual Support	Personalised and 1:1 support where required	Improved confidence and ability to access sessions
Specialist Provision	Tailored SEND-specific activities and environments	Enhanced social interaction and comfort in structured settings
Engagement Outcome	Consistent attendance and tailored support strategies	Greater confidence, independence and willingness to participate





CASE STUDY

EVERYONE ACTIVE **LONG-TERM IMPACT AND PROGRESSION**

Marion, a foster carer, has supported her foster children to attend the HAF programme for several years. The children have consistently benefited from the activities, developing confidence, resilience, and practical life skills.

Swimming and first aid sessions have been particular highlights. One of Marion's foster children, Amy, progressed from attending HAF sessions to completing the NPLQ lifeguarding qualification and has since secured employment at Becontree Leisure Centre⁵. The confidence and skills gained through long-term involvement in the programme played a key role in her achievement.

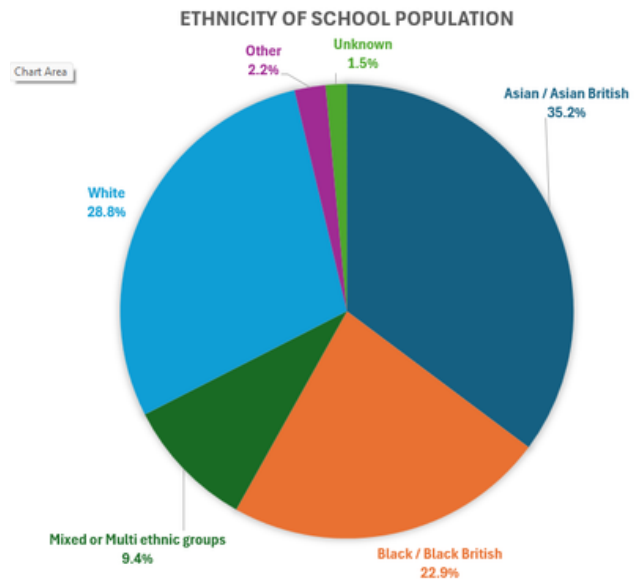
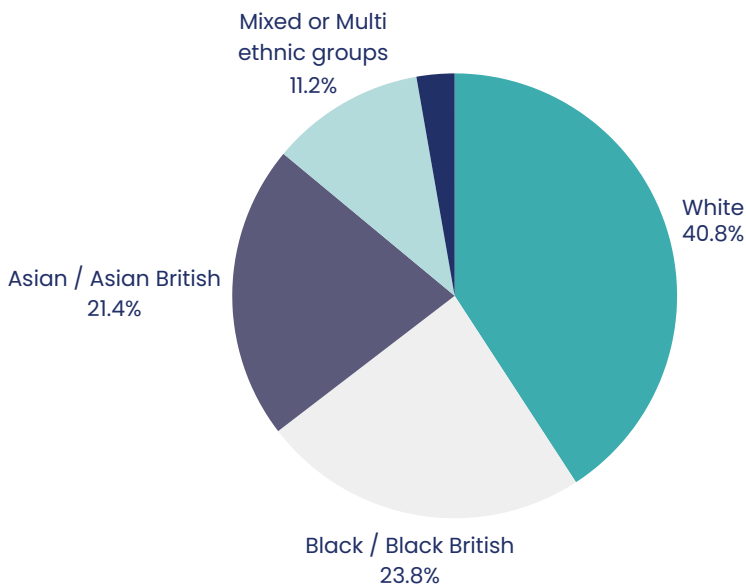
Inspired by Amy's success, Marion's other foster children now hope to pursue their own lifeguarding qualifications. Marion credits the HAF programme with providing a positive, supportive environment that has helped her foster children grow and plan for their futures.

ETHNICITY PROFILE

We looked at ethnicity data for children who attended the Easter 2026 HAF programme, focusing on those who shared their ethnicity, to get a clear and accurate picture of who we are reaching.

The data shows that the programme is engaging a broad mix of children from across Barking and Dagenham's diverse communities, with most participants identifying as White, Black, Asian or Mixed ethnicity.

This reflects the make-up of the borough and gives confidence that the programme is reaching the communities it is intended to support. We will continue to use this insight to strengthen the HAF offer ensuring activities remain inclusive, accessible and relevant to all children and families in the borough.





PARTNERSHIPS

Partnership Working

The programme was delivered in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, including:

- Schools across the borough
- Community and voluntary sector organisations
- Sports, enrichment, and arts providers
- Foster care and wider Children's Social Care services
- Public Health

This collaborative approach supported a more holistic offer, enabling the programme to meet both delivery requirements and wider outcomes linked to health, wellbeing, and inclusion. Strong local partnerships have been central to extending reach into priority groups and ensuring provision is responsive to community needs.

Governance and Oversight

The programme is managed through established internal governance arrangements, with oversight from:

- Education (programme lead)
- Public Health
- Children's Services
- Finance and commissioning teams
- Key delivery partners

These structures ensure clear strategic alignment across services, robust quality assurance, and ongoing monitoring of delivery, performance, and outcomes.

Funding

The programme is primarily funded through the Department for Education HAF grant. In addition, Public Health contributed **£50,000** during the Winter delivery period to enhance provision and support targeted outcomes.

Face to Face Provision: £984,063.00

SEND Provision: £73,095.00

Administration: £117,462.00

Total: £1,174,620

Use of Resources

Resources have been deployed to maximise both impact and value for money:

- School sites have been utilised to improve accessibility and local reach
- Flexible commissioning has enabled provision to be adjusted in response to demand
- Places have been prioritised and reallocated where needed to target vulnerable children and families

This approach has supported a more efficient use of funding while maintaining delivery quality.

Partnership Challenges

Partnership working has been strong overall; however, there have been ongoing challenges in developing and sustaining corporate partnerships, particularly within the private sector. This has limited opportunities to diversify funding and secure longer-term investment to complement core grant funding.



CASE STUDY

RADIANT AMBITIONS

CONFIDENCE, SKILLS, AND YOUTH-LED ADAPTATION

Two brothers attended every session of Radiant Ambitions' Christmas camp, engaging well with both the physical activity and wellbeing elements. Football became their preferred activity, helping them develop teamwork, confidence, and a willingness to collaborate with peers.

They also enjoyed the nutrition and wellbeing workshops, particularly exploring foods from different cultures and creating a balanced 'power plate'. These sessions supported a practical understanding of healthy choices.

During group reflections, the brothers and other participants shared ideas on improving the program, which led to table tennis being added to later sessions. Responding to young people's feedback strengthened engagement and gave participants a sense of ownership over the activities.

KEY REFLECTIONS

Introduction

The 2025–26 HAF programme has delivered positive outcomes across Barking and Dagenham, with strong levels of engagement, a diverse provider network, and continued reach into priority cohorts. Alongside this, the programme has provided important insight into areas where delivery can be strengthened. The reflections below draw on operational experience, provider feedback, and programme data to inform future planning and continuous improvement.

Key Challenges

Attendance, non-attendance and overbooking

As in previous years, levels of overbooking and non-attendance remained a key challenge, impacting the efficient use of places. While demand for provision is high, a proportion of booked places were not utilised, limiting opportunities for other eligible children to attend.

Alignment of SEND provision

Although a range of SEND provision was commissioned, uptake did not always align with anticipated demand. This suggests a need to better understand family preferences, levels of need, and confidence in provision, as well as ensuring the right balance of inclusive and specialist offers.

Barriers for more vulnerable families

Some families continue to face barriers to access, including transport, awareness, and digital exclusion. These factors particularly affect those who would benefit most from the programme, reinforcing the need for targeted and accessible approaches.

Provider cost pressures and sustainability

Providers continue to face increased delivery costs, including staffing, food, and venue hire. This has created pressure on delivery models and, in some cases, limited the ability to expand or sustain provision.



KEY INSIGHTS

Data Visibility is Essential for Effective Delivery

The implementation of EEQU has enhanced oversight of bookings, attendance, and outreach. Nevertheless, there remains an opportunity to further leverage data proactively to manage performance and guide real-time decision-making.

Enhanced Demand Forecasting is Necessary

An analysis of booking and attendance trends underscores the need for better forecasting. This will ensure that services align with actual demand, minimize unused spots, and guarantee equitable access throughout the borough.

Flexible Commissioning Boosts Responsiveness

The ability to modify services during delivery periods has proven vital in addressing emerging needs and filling gaps. A more adaptable approach leads to improved outcomes and a more efficient allocation of funding.

Targeted Engagement Enhances Participation

Stronger connections with schools, community organisations, and local networks have facilitated engagement with harder-to-reach groups. This strategy will continue to be essential for improving access for those who need it most.

FORWARD PLANS

Analysis for Participant Data for Commissioning Model

- Conduct deeper ongoing analysis of the demographics of participant data to ensure it accurately reflects the borough population and take action to address areas of underrepresentation
- Develop a data-driven and adaptable commissioning strategy that allows for continuous improvement based on performance metrics, demand, and local priorities.
- Strengthen booking and attendance processes by implementing stricter controls on reservations, setting clearer expectations for attendance, and enhancing communication with families.
- Utilise EEQU data for more proactive monitoring and intervention as needed.

Enhance SEND provision and accessibility

Work with providers, families, and partners to review and refine the SEND offer, ensuring it is accessible, trusted, and better aligned to need. This will include a focus on workforce skills and inclusive delivery models.

Increase targeted outreach and access routes

Build on partnership working to develop more tailored approaches for vulnerable families, including non-digital access options and community-based engagement.

Support provider sustainability

Continue to review funding allocations and explore opportunities for additional investment, while supporting providers to deliver high-quality provision in a financially sustainable way.

Strengthen and Diversify Universal SEND Provision

Alongside our strong specialised SEND offer, we will expand and diversify provision for children with lower-level or emerging SEND needs within universal settings by reducing reliance on a single provider and growing a wider network of inclusive delivery partners. This will involve engaging new organisations with experience in adaptive practice, increasing choice for families, and embedding inclusive approaches across the wider HAF programme, ensuring more children can access suitable, high-quality activities locally without always requiring specialist provision.

The 2025–26 programme demonstrates the continued value of HAF as a critical intervention supporting children and families across the borough. A strengthened focus on data, inclusion, and targeted delivery will ensure the programme remains responsive, impactful, and sustainable in future years.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to say a big thank you to our HAF providers, who have continued to deliver a fantastic provision across the borough.

Artbash
Ballerz Ltd
bMoneywize CIC
Box Up Crime
Carter Productions & Co
Centrestage Perform CIC
Community Music Service
Company Drinks
Dance Network Association
Everyone Active
Future Youth Zone
Inspire Minds Through Sports
JH Sports Ltd T/A Active Future
Kick
Learning Hive
Let's Get Active (LGA)
Malearn
Motion 4 Kids
Omega Sportz
Premier Education
Pullums Dance Academy
Radiant Ambitions CIC
Sport Leisure Management – Everyone Active
The Disablement Association of Barking & Dagenham (DABD)
The Football Fun Factory
TKO Boxing
True Cadence CIC
Ultimate Vision Sports Limited
Urban Promise UK
Your Sport by The PE Specialists

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