



Hartlepool
Borough Council



Funded by
UK Government

Section 1 - LA details

Which local authority is this report about?

Hartlepool

Section 2 – Overview

In 2025, Hartlepool Borough Council delivered the Hartlepool Holiday Fun programme with £573,640 of Department for Education funding, achieving significant reach and impact for children and families across the borough. The programme concluded the year with a minimal underspend of £2,182.53, demonstrating strong financial management and efficient use of resources.

The investment enabled the delivery of a high-volume, inclusive programme that engaged thousands of children, with a particular emphasis on supporting those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Across the year:

- **3,582 unique children** participated in the programme
- **608 of these children had SEND**, reflecting targeted inclusion efforts
- **13,451 total attendances** were recorded, evidencing sustained engagement beyond one-off access
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Provision was delivered across three key holiday periods:

- **Easter:** 902 children reached (2,749 attendances)
- **Summer:** 2,077 children reached (9,184 attendances)
- **Christmas:** 603 children reached (1,518 attendances)
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The scale of delivery was achieved through strong partnership working, with **32 organisations** collaborating to deliver **104 holiday clubs** and **22,231 available places**. This diverse provider network ensured a broad offer of enriching activities, improving accessibility and choice for families across Hartlepool.

Funding was strategically allocated to maximise direct delivery:

- **87% of funding** was spent on frontline activities
- **10% on programme administration and staffing**
- **3% on essential infrastructure and support costs**

This distribution highlights an emphasis on ensuring that the majority of funding directly benefits children and young people.

The programme's governance structure, led by a multi-agency Steering Group, ensured strong oversight, accountability, and alignment with local needs. Representation from education, public health, SEND services, emergency services, and the voluntary sector strengthened both strategic direction and community engagement.

In response to seasonal challenges, particularly during the Christmas period, the programme adapted delivery to maximise reach. Activity packs and food vouchers supplemented in-person provision, ensuring continued support for vulnerable families. These packs, co-designed and distributed with delivery partners and volunteers, were particularly well received and extended the programme's impact beyond physical attendance.

The programme also demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement. While the Holiday Activities booking system supported delivery in 2025, a transition to the Eequ platform from 2026 will enhance functionality, improve data integration, and create opportunities to further expand access.

Overall, Hartlepool Holiday Fun 2025 delivered a high-impact, inclusive programme that successfully engaged a large number of children and families, strengthened local partnerships, and ensured that the majority of funding was directed to frontline provision. The programme continues to play a vital role in supporting children's wellbeing, access to food, and enrichment opportunities during school holidays.

Organisations providing activities as part of Hartlepool Holiday Fun in 2026:

- AJ Stage Schools
- Belle Vue Community Sports and Youth Centre
- Central Hartlepool Group Mission Project
- C&S Fitness
- Eden Academy Trust
- Empowerment Education
- Gamers@Hart Ltd
- Harbour
- Hartlepool United Community Sports Foundation
- HBC Active Hartlepool
- HBC Community Hubs and Libraries
- HBC Participation Team
- Innterplay Ltd
- Kilmarlock Road Children and Young People Family Resource Centre
- Lets Pretend and Play CIC
- Lisa McGee Education
- Live it & Get Active CIC
- NE Sports Coaching
- North Star Learning Hub CIC
- Pets4People
- Rossmere Forest School
- R&G Coaching
- School's Out, Sport's In Ltd
- SENFIT
- Simon Carson Sports School
- Something Positive Solutions CIC
- Springwell School
- St Francis 2000 FC

- St Hild's C of E School
- The Sensory Spot CIC
- The Thrive Hive CIC
- The Wharton Trust

The 2025 Steering Group for Hartlepool Holiday Fun was comprised of the following organisations:

- The Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services as Chair (HBC)
- The HAF Programme Manager (HBC)
- The HAF Programme Coordinator (HBC)
- Two Head Teachers of Hartlepool schools (Golden Flatts Primary School and English Martyrs School and Sixth Form College)
- Representative from the HBC Communications Team (HBC)
- Representative from Public Health (HBC)
- Representative from the SEND community (Community Led Inclusion Partnership)
- Representative from the Hartlepool Food Council (HartlePower)
- Representatives from the Cleveland Police and Cleveland Fire Authority
- There will also be elected provider representatives from the Local Authority (HBC), private sector (Eden Academy Trust and the voluntary and community sector (The Wharton Trust)

Section 3 – Children and families' feedback

Below is a cross section of feedback from children and families who attended provision in 2025:

"Thank you it has been amazing."

My little boy didn't want to stay as he is shy but now he doesn't want to go, he has amazed me today, he has made some friends which is brilliant as he can just keep himself to himself.

He has tried all new foods I can never get him to try new things at home, so this has been brilliant for him today.

Mum told staff "thank you for all your care for everyone today"

"They have really enjoyed it today and H has tried new things he would never try at home and this has given me more ideas of what I can give him to eat, I worry so much that he only eats certain things. I am so glad he has tried something new. "

"Been nice to see all the kids play together."

Child – "I learnt to ride a bike for the first time today. I kept trying."

"What a lovely group of people."

Child – “I made friends and we going to go to farm together and sit next to each other on bus.”

Child – “I made a salad for the first time and helped cut it and everyone said it looked amazing.”

“I thought I made a mistake moving here especially when kids off for 6 weeks but it has been great.”

Child – “I have liked being able to cook.” “I have learnt new things.”

Section 4 - Food

All children attending the programme were provided with at least one healthy and nutritious meal per session. In addition to these meals, providers offered a range of supplementary snacks, including fresh fruit, and incorporated food and nutrition education into daily activities to promote healthier lifestyles.

Providers recognised that supporting children to adopt healthier eating habits can be challenging and requires a sustained, supportive approach. As such, many providers introduced children to new and alternative food options, including meat-free meals, using these opportunities to engage children in conversations about nutrition, ingredients, and balanced diets. This approach helped to increase children’s awareness and understanding of healthier food choices.

A strong emphasis was placed on promoting fruit and a balanced diet throughout the programme, with several providers delivering interactive food workshops aimed at improving children’s knowledge and confidence around healthy eating.

While changing eating behaviours is a gradual process, there was consistent evidence across provision of positive outcomes. Providers reported that many children were willing to try new foods, with a growing number expressing enjoyment of healthier options over time. This demonstrates the programme’s contribution to supporting longer-term improvements in children’s dietary habits and attitudes towards nutrition

Section 5 – Enriching Activities

The 2025 programme delivered a broad and varied enrichment offer, designed to ensure accessibility and appeal for children with a wide range of interests and needs. Activities included forest school sessions, sports and physical activity programmes, mindfulness and wellbeing sessions, play schemes, STEM activities, imaginative play, cycling, arts and crafts, youth clubs, themed activities (including Pokémon and role-playing games), swimming, boxing, music, sensory play, football, trampolining, and seasonal experiences such as festive events and theatre trips. In addition, take-home activity packs were provided during the Christmas period to further extend engagement beyond session attendance.

This diverse offer supported children to explore new interests and build confidence through positive experiences. Providers reported that many children engaged in activities for the first time during the programme and, importantly, a number of these children went

on to access similar opportunities beyond the holiday period by joining local clubs and community groups. This demonstrates the programme's role in encouraging sustained participation and supporting longer-term engagement in enrichment activities.

The programme benefited from a strong, provider-led approach to activity design and delivery. Providers demonstrated a clear understanding of local needs and delivered a complementary range of activities, resulting in a well-balanced offer across the borough. This approach minimised duplication, ensured effective use of provision, and maximised choice for participants without the need for significant intervention or rationalisation by the local authority.

Overall, the enrichment element of the programme contributed positively to children's confidence, skill development, and ongoing participation in community activities beyond the HAF programme.

Section 6 – Physical Activities

All provision met the minimum requirement of 60 minutes of physical activity per session, with the majority of clubs significantly exceeding this standard. The programme offered a diverse range of physical activities to cater to different interests, abilities, and needs, including structured sessions such as boxing, football, dance, and other sports, alongside activities supporting wellbeing such as mindfulness and movement-based sessions.

In addition to structured physical activity, children also benefited from regular opportunities for active free play. This ensured that even outside of planned sessions, participants remained physically engaged throughout the day, contributing to overall activity levels and supporting both physical health and wellbeing.

The breadth of the physical activity offer enabled children to experience a variety of ways to be active, supporting increased confidence, enjoyment of movement, and the development of positive, sustained attitudes towards physical activity.

Section 7 – Nutritional Education and the promotion of healthy living/lifestyles

Nutritional education was a core requirement across all provision, with delivery tailored to reflect provider capacity, facilities, and expertise. A range of approaches were adopted to ensure engagement and accessibility for children of different ages and needs.

Many providers delivered structured food education sessions, enabling children to take an active role in preparing their own meals and developing practical cooking skills. Others incorporated interactive and creative activities, such as preparing fruit kebabs or using smoothie bikes to make fresh fruit drinks, helping to build positive associations with healthy foods. In some settings, nutritional learning was further reinforced through arts and crafts activities, including exercises focused on designing balanced meals and understanding the components of a healthy diet.

Alongside activities for children, the programme also supported families by improving awareness of local food support services. Families were signposted to low- and no-cost

food provision within the community and provided with information about the Hartlepool Food Network and Hartlepool Food Partnership. This helped to extend the impact of the programme beyond individual sessions, supporting wider household food security and access to nutritional support.

Overall, this combined approach contributed to improving both children's understanding of healthy eating and families' ability to access ongoing support within the local community.

Section 8 – Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND)

All provision was designed to be accessible to children with SEND needs, with varying levels of support in place depending on the nature of the activity and provider capacity. Strengthening inclusive practice remained a priority throughout 2025, with a continued focus on improving access and participation for children with additional needs.

Following feedback on previous systems, changes were implemented to ensure a more inclusive approach to access. In particular, the booking system does not allow providers to exclude children with additional needs, reinforcing the expectation that all provision should be open and inclusive wherever possible.

The programme Steering Group identified further enhancing SEND inclusion as a key area for development in 2025. In response, increased flexibility was introduced to support providers in adapting their delivery models. This included enabling providers, where possible, to deploy additional staffing in order to reduce ratios and provide more tailored support for children with SEND.

These measures have contributed to improving accessibility and supporting greater participation by children with additional needs, ensuring that the programme continues to move towards a more inclusive and equitable offer for all participants.

Section 9 – Key challenges

As in previous years, maintaining consistent attendance remained a key challenge during 2025. Due to the universal and free-to-access nature of the HAF programme, "no shows" continue to be a recognised issue nationally, impacting the efficiency and overall reach of provision.

To mitigate this, a proactive and structured approach was implemented across the programme. Providers were supported to carefully overbook sessions, based on expected attendance patterns. For example, where funding was allocated for 20 places, providers were permitted to offer bookings to a higher number of children, while ensuring that staffing levels and safeguarding requirements were planned to accommodate full attendance if required.

This approach ensured that capacity was utilised more effectively, reducing the impact of non-attendance and minimising the risk of unfilled places. It also supported better value for money by maximising the number of children benefiting from the programme.

Where attendance exceeded the originally funded places, additional support was provided to cover food costs on a per-child basis. This ensured that no child attending provision was disadvantaged, while maintaining flexibility and fairness for providers.

Overall, this model contributed to improved efficiency, reduced wasted resource, and helped to maximise engagement within available funding.

Section 10 – Marketing and Communication?

Throughout 2025, Hartlepool Holiday Fun worked in partnership with the HBC Communications Team to deliver a coordinated and multi-channel approach to engaging families. Promotion of the programme was delivered through a combination of targeted flyers, school communication apps, advertisements in local print media, and social media platforms, particularly Facebook.

This approach was further strengthened by providers, who actively promoted their own sessions while sharing central Hartlepool Holiday Fun communications. This collaborative effort helped to maximise awareness of the programme, ensuring that families were well informed about available provision and opportunities to participate.