

it's about me-

**It's About Me
Derbyshire's Holiday Activities and Food
Programme
2026 Delivery Guidance**

Version 1 – Updated 18/01/2026

**All organisations must read this guidance prior to applying for funding.
There have been changes from previous versions so please read in full.**



Department
for Education



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Overview

This document provides information for organisations wishing to deliver the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme in Derbyshire. This guidance has been developed by combining the Department for Education guidance for Local Authorities with local detail specific to the Derbyshire programme.

Derbyshire County Council have commissioned StreetGames to be the programme managers for the Holiday Activities and Food programme. Where local authorities are referred to in this document, StreetGames act on behalf of Derbyshire County Council.

In Derbyshire, the Holiday Activities and Food programme is known as 'It's About Me'.

For more information on our previous programmes visit the impact page of the It's About Me website: <https://itsaboutmederbyshire.co.uk/impact/>.

Introduction to Holiday Activities and Food Programmes (HAF)

The holiday activities and food (HAF) programme provides support to children from low-income families during school holiday periods. Research has shown that the school holidays can be pressure points for some families. For some children that can lead to a holiday experience gap. Children from low-income households are more likely to experience food insecurity and social isolation, miss out on physical activity and enriching experiences, and fall behind in development and wellbeing.

The HAF programme is a direct response to this, providing free nutritious meals, enriching activities, and safe environments for eligible children, benefiting their health, wellbeing and learning.

The programme is aimed at children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds (for detailed eligibility criteria see 'Eligibility' section), although we have discretion to use some funding to provide free or subsidised holiday club places for any school-age children regardless of their background, but who we believe could benefit from HAF.

On 28th August 2025, the government announced a 3-year funding settlement of over £200 million each year for the holiday activities and food (HAF) programme. The final year of this funding settlement is the fiscal year 2028 to 2029. This funding forms part of the Children, Youth and Families Grant being delivered through the local government finance settlement.

Aims of the programme

The programme aims to help eligible children eat more healthily, be more active, and develop resilience, character, and well-being through enriching activities and to ensure that children are safe, not socially isolated during the holidays, and return to school feeling more engaged and ready to learn.



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There are many benefits for children who attend the HAF programme. HAF providers should ensure a high-quality experience that 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 and wellbeing
- feeling safe and secure
- getting access to the right support services
- returning to school feeling engaged and ready to learn.

HAF also improves accessibility and affordability of childcare during school holidays, opening up work opportunities for parents on low incomes to support their families.

Families can also benefit, when HAF providers include their needs in planning and delivering their programme. This could be through:

- providing opportunities to get involved in sessions, for example cookery classes
- ensuring they are signposted towards other sources of information and support, such as health services or employment and education opportunities.

Eligibility - who is the programme for?

It's About Me is for school aged children who are in school years Reception to Year 11 who receive benefits-related free school meals.

Benefits-related free school meals (FSM) are available to pupils if their parents are in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits and have a claim verified by their school or local authority. For further information on eligibility, visit [Apply for free school meals - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk).

For 2026, the HAF programme will remain in line with the existing Free School Meal (FSM) threshold, for the whole delivery year (spring, summer and winter 2026). This means that from September 2026, when the new FSM expansion takes place, HAF will NOT be expanded to children from households in receipt of Universal Credit (UC).

Further clarification:

- children who become newly eligible for FSM in September 2026 due to the expansion to households on universal credit, but are above the existing FSM threshold, DO NOT become eligible for HAF
- children who become newly eligible for FSM under the existing threshold become eligible for HAF in the usual way.

Details on FSM expansion

The government has announced that it is introducing a new eligibility threshold for free school meals, ensuring all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit will be eligible from



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September 2026. For further information on FSM eligibility, including changes from September 2026, visit [Free school meals: guidance for schools and local authorities](#).

Universal infant free school meals

All children in reception, year 1 and year 2 in England's state-funded schools receive a free meal under the universal infant free school meals (UIFSM) policy. Infant pupils who receive a free meal under UIFSM must also meet the benefits-related eligibility set out above to be able to access the HAF programme.

Supporting additional children

The core purpose of the programme is to support disadvantaged children and young people from low-income families who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals. We have discretion to use some of our funding (up to 15%) to provide free or subsidised places for school-age children who do not meet the eligibility criteria but who the local authority believe could benefit from HAF.

This may include, for example:

- children with special educational needs and/or disabilities who are not eligible for free school meals
- children with an EHC plan (education, health and care)
- children assessed by the local authority as being in need, at risk or vulnerable
- young carers
- looked-after children, previously looked after children and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
- children and families living in temporary accommodation
- children who have low attendance rates at school or who are at risk of exclusion.

This list is not exhaustive; we will commission providers to run holiday clubs exclusively for these targeted groups. There will be specific questions on the grant application form for organisations working with these groups.

Checking eligibility

We are expected to have robust systems in place to ensure our programme is supporting the children and families that it is intended for.

All young people eligible for benefits-related free school meals and therefore eligible for HAF will be sent communication via their school which includes an It's About Me /IAM / HAF / FSM code. Collecting the code for each young person is compulsory. Pre-registration is recommended so that only eligible children are offered places.

Working with children with SEND or additional needs

It is vital that create sufficient, high-quality HAF provision for children with special education needs and/or disabilities or additional needs who are eligible for FSM. Accessibility and inclusiveness are core parts of the HAF framework of standards.



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To ensure our HAF programme is compliant with the Equality Act 2010, we will ask providers how they will accommodate children with SEND or additional needs and make sure that those with more complex needs are able to access suitable provision designed exclusively for them. There are questions in the grant application form that require providers to describe how they will make reasonable adjustments to their provision to ensure that young people with additional needs are able to access provision and ensure they are not subject to discrimination.

There is flexibility in how the programme can be delivered to children with SEND or additional needs. Key considerations include:

- identifying the most vulnerable children, young people and families
- making decisions and, where appropriate, delegating responsibility for decision making to different parts of the system to enable responsive support
- engaging regularly with families to understand changing needs
- being flexible in supporting families
- ensuring staff are trained, supported and equipped to provide flexible and responsive care in line with government guidance
- maintaining trust and confidence in staff from a parent perspective
- whether the food offer takes account of specific dietary and sensory needs.

Risk assessments are an important part of this provision and should be used as an enabler to provide support rather than a barrier. A good risk assessment should encourage creative solutions and prevent withdrawal of support for children, young people and families who are particularly vulnerable or at high risk.

Some different models might include:

- stay and play sessions, which allow children with SEND to benefit from enriching activities accompanied by a parent or carer
- family day trips
- providing sessions/activities that are shorter than 4 hours

The DfE has published a toolkit for creating inclusive provision for providers of wraparound childcare, free breakfast clubs and holiday activities and food programmes, developed in partnership with Mott MacDonald and Nasen. The [Creating Inclusive Provision toolkit](#) is an interactive digital toolkit developed to support schools, providers, and local authorities in creating inclusive provision that is accessible to families of primary aged children with SEND.

Working with the secondary school age range

We know that providing holiday clubs that are appealing and have high engagement levels with secondary school age range can be challenging. Provision for this age range will often look different to that aimed at the primary age range and we will make specific plans for the secondary age range.

There will be flexibility in the programme offered to older children with careful consideration being given to a different model of food and activity provision for example offering afternoon or evening sessions with an evening meal being the focus for the food aspect. Holiday programmes



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have a huge role to play in assuring parents and families that their children and young people safe and secure when taking part.

The choice of venue is often critical in building an attractive offer for older young people. School venues can be less popular but pop-up provision in parks and town centres can be highly effective in ensuring provision is where it is needed. Travel costs can be a barrier to attendance and therefore must be considered.

We need to consider the role that older children can have in supporting, designing and leading sessions for their peers or for younger children; to help them to socialise and develop leadership skills which can be crucial for those aged 13+ years.

Those who can pay to attend

We encourage providers to make paid spaces available to any children not receiving benefits-related free school meals, who can pay to attend. This would be through operating a blended approach where eligible children are given free spaces and non-eligible children are required to pay.

Help with childcare costs

If you are an approved or registered childcare provider some paying families who are eligible for Universal Credit may be able to claim back up to 85% of childcare costs. If you are charging for additional hours; families may be able to claim some of this back.

As a child care provider you can find out more, create a childcare provider account and sign up for Tax-Free Childcare here: [Tax-Free Child Care](#).



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The HAF Core Offer

Delivery periods

Spring (Easter), summer and winter (Christmas) will remain the core delivery periods for the HAF programme.

Across the whole programme, we are required to deliver at least the equivalent of 6 weeks' HAF provision with each week containing a minimum of 4 days (minimum of 24 days per year). Our programme exceeds this requirement because we have delivery across both weeks at spring (Easter) and winter (Christmas) and delivery across all 6 weeks of the summer school holidays.

There is additional flexibility with winter holidays where providers can offer themed events i.e. Christmas fair or school fete and where we can provide food boxes and activity packs to complement face-to-face provision.

Half terms

Whilst the Department for Education have afforded us the flexibility to fund HAF programmes during the May, October and February half terms we are unlikely to offer this at present in Derbyshire. There is no additional funding for these holiday periods and therefore to offer half term provision we would need to reduce the size of our spring, summer and winter programmes. If this changes, we will communicate this.

Session length

Our aim is to offer all eligible children provision for at least 4 hours per day. There is flexibility for provision for children with special education need and disabilities and family sessions for example our family cooking events.

You can deliver for more than 4 hours, but you must consider the Ofsted requirements for younger age groups. Our funding model is based on a 4-hour session so additional costs for more hours will need to be funded from other sources.

Programme flexibility

We have noticed that many summer programmes that deliver for 4 days per week for 4 weeks struggle with lower booking and increased non-attendance towards the end of their programme. We would like organisations to consider running shorter or more varied programmes during the summer holidays. For example, 2 weeks of Monday to Friday (10 days) or 4 weeks of 4 days split into two blocks.

It is not compulsory for all organisations to deliver for 16 days during the summer.

Understanding retention and churn during summer programmes is important. We know that on average, young people attend 8 times during the summer. This means for every space on a 16-day programme, organisations need to recruit two young people. Therefore, a programme with 50 spaces needs to engage 100 unique young people.



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Paid for places and mixed model clubs / blended provision

Whilst the HAF programme is primarily focussed on providing support to disadvantaged families, there are many benefits to providers and communities in expanding holiday clubs to include paid-for provision alongside HAF funded places.

We strongly encourage providers, to consider opportunities to offer paid for places alongside HAF funded places to ensure the HAF programme, supports the provision of childcare during the holidays for all young people.

Adopting a mixed model approach, where HAF-funded places sit alongside paid-for childcare can help create a more sustainable and inclusive holiday offer. This approach not only maximises the use of existing resources but also supports providers in maintaining viable business models, which in turn strengthens the overall childcare market. Mixed models can also increase flexibility for families, offering choice and convenience while ensuring that disadvantaged children continue to receive targeted support.



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Standards for holiday provision

Framework of standards

To ensure consistent, high-quality provision across the HAF programme, we have developed a national framework of standards. It is our responsibility to:

- support continuous improvement of HAF programme provision
- ensure that providers deliver the HAF programme in line with the framework of standards set out in this guidance
- support local providers who do not meet standards, through training, support, and partnerships.

Not all holiday club providers have to deliver all aspects of the programme, but the clear expectation is that all eligible children and their families should benefit from all aspects of the programme. This might mean that we require a blended approach to ensuring children and families can access different aspects of the programme through different providers.

Food provision

All providers must serve at least one meal during each session (breakfast, lunch or an evening meal) and all food provided at the holiday club (including snacks) must meet the [school food standards](#) which set out foods and drinks that must be provided, and foods that are restricted or prohibited.

The [allergy guidance for schools](#) contains resources and guidance. Although the Department for Education announced its intent to revise the School Food Standards in June 2025, the current Standards remain in place until further notice.

For some children, the opportunity to enjoy a hot meal at a holiday club is important and our aspiration is that providers should, where possible, try to offer hot meals to children attending. However, we acknowledge that this is not always possible and that alternatives to hot meals can sometimes be more suitable. All cold packed lunches must still meet school food standards.

If a provider offers both HAF-funded and non-HAF-funded places, it is vital that all children attending receive the same food offer to ensure all children receive a high-quality, stigma-free experience. Alternatively, for providers who provide meals on-site, they could consider making the same healthy food available to all children, but with an additional charge for the non-funded places.

All food provided as part of the programme must:

- comply with regulations on food preparation
- consider allergies and dietary requirements and comply with food information regulations ([allergy guidance for schools](#))
- consider any religious or cultural requirements for food
- comply with the School Food Standards.



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There is flexibility in the design of the food provision which should always be tailored to ensure that all food meets the dietary needs of the children who attend. The food served should also be appropriate for the nature of the session, for example, offering cold packed lunches for outdoor venues or day trips.

Preparing food on site can also create opportunities to engage children and families in food preparation and learning about nutrition. Providers have reported that when children are involved in designing menus and preparing food, they are more engaged and willing to try new and healthier foods. We encourage providers to prioritise approaches that involve children in the planning and preparation of food, as this can drive long-term improvements in nutrition and food engagement.

All HAF programme providers must be registered as a food business. This provides reassurance to those involved that food safety standards are being met. A food business is defined as anyone preparing, cooking, storing, handling, distributing, supplying or selling food.

For further information, visit [Food business registration - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk).

If requested HAF programme providers will need evidence the following:

- the menu you will serve demonstrating how meals meet school food standards
- evidence of staff training for Level 2 Food Hygiene
- evidence of staff training for Allergy Awareness.

We expect all organisations to ensure:

- drinking water is available and easily accessible throughout every session
- no serving of fizzy drinks or those with added sugar (no added sugar dilute is acceptable)
- no serving of fried foods
- meals and snacks must meet at least 2 portions of a child's 5 a-day
- excessive amounts of fat, salt & sugar should be limited
- attention to correct portion size should be exercised
- food and meals provided are ethnically sensitive and evidence cultural awareness
- children with allergies are safe when eating food provided
- all food is to be stored appropriately and at the correct temperature.

In the grant application form, providers will need to select how food will be provided at each venue. The options are:

1. Preparing and serving food onsite
2. Food partner prepares food offsite and delivers to holiday club.

In all cases, whether food is prepared on site or delivered to the venue, all providers must have public liability insurance that covers the provision of food. Providers will be asked to confirm that their public liability insurance includes the provision of food in the grant application form.

Food information regulations - Natasha's Law

The [Food Information Regulations 2014](https://www.gov.uk) require all food businesses to show allergen ingredients information for the food they serve.



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From 1 October 2021, changes to the Food Information Regulations 2014 came into effect, adding new labelling requirements for food that is pre-packed for direct sale (PPDS).

All providers should read the [guidance on the Food Standards Agency website](#) and ensure that all food provision for the HAF programme meets these requirements.

Increasing awareness of healthy eating, healthy lifestyles, and positive behaviours

Holiday club providers are expected to incorporate activities that help children and young people to understand the benefits of healthy eating and nutrition into their programme. These do not need to be formal learning activities. This could include:

- getting children involved in food preparation and cooking
- growing fruit and vegetables
- taste tests
- discussing food and healthy eating during mealtimes
- including food and nutrition in other activities

Offering positive learning and development through holiday activities creates stigma-free opportunities to support children and young people in learning about healthy lifestyles and exercise. This could cover, for example with older young people, the use of vapes, cigarettes, drugs, and how this can lead to issues including: economic challenges, social issues, personal safety concerns, exploitation and criminal activity.

To further support the development of this outcome there are free training courses and resources available to all providers that cover food and nutrition, including how to deliver food-based activities in holiday clubs.

For more information visit the provider support hub:

<https://itsaboutmederbyshire.co.uk/support-hub/food-and-nutrition-guidance/>

Password for the providers portal: itsaboutme (all lower case, all one word)

Physical activities

Holiday clubs must provide activities that meet the [physical activity guidelines](#) on a daily basis. In line with those guidelines, we expect:

- all children and young people participating in the programme should engage in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity for an average of at least 60 minutes per day.
- children and young people participating in the programme should engage in a variety of types and intensities of physical activity to develop movement skills, muscular fitness, and bone strength
- children and young people should aim to minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary, and when physically possible should break up long periods of not moving with at least light physical activity.

Meeting the physical activity requirement does not have to be in the form of a structured and focussed physical activity session, but might include active travel, free play and sports.



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Enrichment activities

Holiday clubs must provide fun and enriching activities that provide children and young people with opportunities to:

- develop new skills or knowledge
- consolidate existing skills and knowledge
- try out new experiences
- have fun and socialise.

This could include but is not limited to:

- physical activities, for example, football, swimming, table tennis, yoga or cricket
- artistic and cultural activities, for example, putting on a play, junk modelling or drumming workshops
- activities to engage children with wider community, for example volunteering, or working together on community improvement projects
- activities to support engagement with nature, the outdoors, and adventure, for example, nature walks, gardening, or adventure courses
- activities to support development of wider life skills, for example, cooking, coding, or group debates
- free play, for example, fun and freedom to relax and enjoy themselves.

We expect all HAF providers to provide a balanced programme. For providers whose primary focus is set around a specific activity or sport, we expect them to ensure that children attending their provision benefit from a holistic and varied experience.

All costs for enrichment activities must be included in delivery budgets and will count towards the cost per space per day.

Signposting and referrals and family support

All providers should be able to offer information, signposting or referrals to other services and support that would benefit the children who attend their provision and their families. This could include sessions or information provided by:

- family hubs
- Citizen's Advice
- school nurses, dentists, or other healthcare practitioners
- family support services or children's services
- housing support officers
- Jobcentre Plus
- organisations providing financial education
- early years and childcare, including help to pay for childcare (e.g. Tax Free Childcare)
- free breakfast clubs

There are many ways that providers can meet this element of the programme, for example, through trained and knowledgeable staff engaging with families during drop-off and pick-up times.



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Holiday clubs should consider inviting members of their local Early Help team or Live Life Better Derbyshire to their sessions to speak with parents and provide local signposting support. More information on Early Help and Live Life Better Derbyshire including contact details for the local teams can be found here.

[Derbyshire Early Help](#)

[Life Live Better Derbyshire](#)

Tools and resources to support organisations to achieve the HAF programme outcomes can be found on the providers support hub on the It's About Me website.

<https://itsaboutmederbyshire.co.uk/support-hub/>

Password: itsaboutme (all one word, all lower case)

The family support page of the It's About Me website also has information which can be shared directly with parents, carers and families: <https://itsaboutmederbyshire.co.uk/family-support/>.

Robust policies and procedures

All organisations must be able to demonstrate that they have in place relevant and appropriate policies and procedures for:

- safeguarding, including the recruitment of staff and volunteers
- food safety
- health and safety
- relevant insurance policies
- accessibility and inclusiveness
- record keeping.

When submitting a funding application, providers will be asked to confirm that they have public liability insurance covering holiday activities including the provision of food and employer liability insurance and/or professional indemnity insurance.

If providers are unsure whether their policies cover activities being delivered through the holiday activity and food programme, they should check with their insurer before applying. Organisations will also be required to share the date that their public liability insurance expires.

Quality assurance - ensuring providers meet the programme standards

We are required by the Department for Education to have an assurance process in place to confirm that all HAF-funded providers are meeting the expected standards for the programme and are providing a high-quality, accessible and inclusive experience for children.

We are expected carry out due diligence checks on each HAF funded provider prior to the provider commencing work and visit each holiday club provider once per year to verify compliance with the programme's framework of standards. In Derbyshire, we call these Support Visits, and we use a wider team of StreetGames colleagues and partner to help us complete them.



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Effective safeguarding

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. We want every holiday club to be a safe and happy place for children to be and for parents, carers and families to feel confident that their child is well looked after and that robust safeguarding arrangements are in place.

As set out in [working together to safeguard children](#), safeguarding is defined for the purposes of this guidance as:

- providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge
- protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online
- preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- promoting the upbringing of children with their birth parents, or otherwise their family network through a kinship care arrangement, whenever possible and where this is in the best interests of the children
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes in line with the outcomes set out in the Children's Social Care National Framework.

We expect all providers to take the safeguarding and welfare of all children seriously and that during the holidays issues or disclosures may arise that need dealing with. In the first instance providers should follow their organisations policies, procedures and codes of practice. Any serious safeguarding concerns should be reported to the relevant authorities.

Staffing ratios

Organisations need to work to ratios that have been set out in their own operating plans and risk assessments. We recommend having at least two adults present when working with or supervising children and young people. Consider the age, gender and wider demographics of your group when considering the number of staff and adults that you need.

The NSPCC recommend the following adult to child ratios as the minimum numbers to help keep children safe:

- 4 - 8 years - one adult to six children
- 9 - 12 years - one adult to eight children
- 13 - 18 years - one adult to ten children

Depending on the needs and abilities of the children, and the nature of the activity, you may need to have more adults than the minimum.

It is good practice to have more adults or staff than you need. Organisations should consider how adult volunteers can support the delivery of their holiday clubs, therefore improving adult to child ratios without increasing costs.

Review the guidance on the NSPCC website: [Recommended adult to child ratios for working with children](#).



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Holiday clubs in school settings

We know that schools are safe places and have robust safeguarding arrangements in place. Where activities are provided by the governing body or proprietor of a school, under the direct supervision or management of their school staff the school's child protection policy will apply.

Where the activities are provided separately in the school but by another body, the governing body or proprietor should seek assurance that the body concerned has appropriate safeguarding and child protection policies and procedure in place. We recommend that anyone involved in the delivery of a holiday club in school settings is familiar with [keeping children safe in education](#).

Holiday clubs in out of school settings

By out-of-school settings we mean organisations or individuals that provide tuition, training, instruction or activities to children without their parents' or carers' supervision, but are not:

- schools, colleges, education settings providing alternative provision, 16 to 19 academies, providers caring for children that are registered with Ofsted or a childminder agency.

These settings generally provide tuition, training, instruction or activities outside normal school hours (for example, evenings, weekends, school holidays), although some settings are run part-time during school hours to help meet the needs of those in home education.

The guidance for providers running out-of-school settings on [keeping children safe during community activities, after-school clubs and tuition](#) covers advice on what policies and procedures providers should have in place for health and safety, safeguarding and child protection, staff suitability, and governance.

Safeguarding in Derbyshire

We are working with Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership to provide organisations with the right information and support in relation to safeguarding children and young people. Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership website: [Derby Safeguarding Children Partnership \(ddscp.org.uk\)](#).

Are you worried about a child?

If you are worried about the welfare of a child or young person, Starting Point Consultation and Advice Service provides a single point of contact for members of the public and for professionals who want to raise concerns about a child.

They will listen, assess your concerns, and can act if a child is at risk. If you are not sure whether a child is at risk or not, you can discuss the circumstances with them or with them. You can report your concerns by phone or via an online consultation.

Starting Point Telephone Number: 01629 533190

Online referral: <https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/social-health/children-and-families/support-for-families/starting-point-referral-form/starting-point-contact-and-referral-service.aspx>



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Do you have concerns about an organisation that is running a holiday programme and/or staff and volunteers working at a holiday club?

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is the person who should be notified when there are concerns about the behaviour or conduct of a professional or volunteer who works with children.

The LADO will provide advice and guidance on whether the allegation sits within the scope of the procedures. If the allegation does fall within the scope of the procedures, the LADO will oversee the management of the allegation, co-ordinate information sharing with the right people and monitor and track any investigations, with the aim to resolve it as quickly as possible.

The LADO liaises with organisations such as the police, other departments within the council such as social care, regulatory bodies such as Ofsted and professional bodies to ensure a thorough and fair process for all those involved.

You can contact the LADO by completing a referral form and emailing to them:

Email: professional.allegations@derbyshire.gov.uk

LADO Referral and Advice Form: <https://www.ddscp.org.uk/staff-and-volunteers/info-and-resources/allegations/>

Inform us if you make a referral

If you make a referral to either CASS about a child or LADO about an organisation or adult who is working with children, you need to inform us (StreetGames) within 24 hours of the referral being made. You can contact your Area Lead or email us at derbyshireholidayactivities@streetgames.org.

StreetGames has its own safeguarding children and young people's policy that it must comply with should any safeguarding incident or harm to a child or young person take place in activity funded by StreetGames.

Supporting HAF providers with the most common challenges

Organisations delivering HAF programmes are telling us that the most common challenging scenarios are around young people's mental health, bullying and behaviour. The following resources may help in these areas:

Mental health

StreetGames training: [Youth Mental Health First Aid Awareness](#)

NSPCC learning: [Child mental health: recognising and responding to issues](#)

Mind: [Get active, feel good](#)

Young Minds: [Resources For Professionals Working With Young People](#)

Kooth: [Kooth Digital Health](#)

Bullying

Anti-bullying Alliance: [Anti-bullying CPD online training](#)

NSPCC learning: [Protecting children from bullying and cyberbullying](#)

NSPCC learning: [Think B4 You Type: anti-bullying toolkit](#)



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Kidscape: [Help With Bullying | Bullying Advice](#)

Behaviour

StreetGames training: [Understanding Behaviour That May Challenge](#)

Volunteers and DBS checks

We know that in some settings, volunteers can play an important role in the delivery of holiday clubs. Under no circumstances should a volunteer in respect of whom no checks have been obtained be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

For some of the voluntary staff involved in the delivery of the holiday, activities and food programme in holiday clubs, this work will be done regularly and considered to be regulated activity. This means they will be subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check with barred list information.

There may be a very small number of volunteers who do not regularly carry out this role, and so it may not be considered as regulated activity. This means they may not be required to have an enhanced DBS check.

The guidance on [regulated activity in relation to children](#) contains definitions of what we mean by regular and regulated activity. Example: a guest speaker or presenter visits a holiday, activities and food programme club to deliver a talk on nature. The guest is escorted by staff at the club (who are DBS checked) while on the premises and is not left unsupervised with children at any time. In these circumstances, we would not expect a DBS check to be carried out.

To provide reassurance to parents, families and carers, we strongly recommend that all volunteers who are involved in the delivery of the holiday, activities and food programme in holiday clubs should have an [enhanced DBS check](#) (which, where applicable, should include children's barred list information). We do not recommend holiday clubs using volunteers that are not DBS checked, but if this occurs, it is the responsibility of the provider to ensure that volunteers are not at any point left alone and unsupervised with children in holiday clubs.

Other workers

All staff who are employed by holiday club providers funded through the holiday, activities and food programme should be subject to an enhanced DBS check with barred list information. Part 3 of [keeping children safe in education](#) sets out a clear process for safe recruitment. We recommend holiday clubs providers follow this best practice when recruiting volunteers.

Ofsted registration

Holiday clubs may need to legally register with Ofsted depending on the provision they offer and the age range of children that they care for. Some may also choose to register with Ofsted on the voluntary register, while others may be exempt from registration. Both providers that require registration with Ofsted, and those that are exempt, can participate in the HAF programme.



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It is the responsibility of individual HAF providers to understand whether they are legally required to be Ofsted registered and for reviewing their status whenever the provision they are offering changes.

To support the raising of quality and to strengthen safeguarding, certain providers can opt to register with Ofsted even if not required. Registration offers benefits to families, such as eligibility for Tax-Free Childcare or the childcare costs element of Universal Credit. This can allow families to claim back up to 85% of childcare costs when using Ofsted registered settings.

Community cohesion in HAF

We want to ensure that all places are supported to build cohesion and resilience – the HAF programme is uniquely placed to drive that work forward. We can use HAF to encourage specific provisions focused on demographics 'at greater risk' of participation in social unrest, such as secondary school age children.

Activity that focuses on building cohesion and resilience could hold various benefits, including:

- connecting people of different backgrounds and groups through activities that work towards a common goal
- improving tolerance and cultural understanding
- introducing children to different cultural heritage, and breaking down stereotypes
- improving resilience to mis- and disinformation, and hate crime
- building respect and empathy
- helping to integrate new arrivals to communities
- facilitating dialogue, supporting conversations across group divides, and handling challenging topics sensitively
- providing diversions that reduce the likelihood of involvement in anti-social behaviour

Local communities are best placed to know how to build cohesion and resilience, and HAF providers can consider how to maximise the benefits to participants through their respective activities.

Environment and sustainability

We want to improve the delivery of sustainable development practices and believe it is important for HAF programme providers to consider these and their impact on the environment.

Some practices that HAF providers may wish to consider are:

- minimising the use of single-use plastics
- where possible using locally sourced food and ingredients
- making use of food surplus organisations
- ensuring there is a wide range of recycling and compost facilities for waste
- growing fruit and vegetables and showing how they can be used and cooked
- encouraging uniform banks and exchange schemes
- consider free, locally accessible activities in open environments.

This list is not exhaustive, HAF providers are encouraged to reflect on their settings and consider ways that their programmes can be more environmentally friendly and sustainable.



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Grant funding and application criteria

We need a range of providers across the county to help deliver an enriching and exciting programme during spring (Easter), summer and winter (Christmas) school holidays.

The following types of organisations are eligible to apply for grant funding:

- constituted community, voluntary, faith and not for profit social enterprises
- community Interest Companies (CIC)
- charitable organisations
- schools, colleges and educational establishments
- out of school providers/childcare
- commercial organisations that are delivering against a social objective and are not applying for funding that will generate profit.

What funding can cover

Funding is available for children who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals. Funding for vulnerable and SEND groups is available through solicited applications only; contact your Area Lead for more information.

All eligible young people should be able to access a minimum of 24 face-to-face sessions across the year: 4 sessions during spring, 16 sessions during summer and 4 sessions during winter holidays.

Organisations cannot apply for funding to run sessions on weekends or bank / public holidays. Funding is only available for spring (Easter), summer and winter (Christmas) school holidays.

If you have 50 spaces per day and 40 spaces are for eligible children, funding can only pay for 40 spaces, the remaining 10 spaces must be funded elsewhere or be paid for spaces. If you can commit to 100% of places being for eligible children, then they can all be funded.

The grant can be used to fund the delivery of the holiday club including the following:

- venue hire
- staff costs
- food costs
- physical activity costs
- enrichment, healthy eating, healthy lifestyles positive behaviours and signposting costs
- training costs (where the course is not being offered through our free training programme).
- Other costs, such as any resources and materials to deliver the holiday activities and food programme outcomes.

Maximum grant value – cost per space

Funding requests must not exceed the following cost per space per day; this is based on a programme being delivered for 4 hours.



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Children and young people eligible for benefits-related free school meals

- For organisations providing their own food the maximum grant available is £26.00 per space per day.

Vulnerable groups and those with special education needs or disabilities (SEND) who are not eligible for benefits-related free school meals but are eligible for It's About Me (*solicited applications only*)

- For organisations providing their own food the maximum grant available is £31.00 per space per day.

Food provision has been calculated at £7.00 per meal.

If the maximum grants available to not cover all your operating costs you will need to find additional match funding to support your programme.

Match funding and in-kind support

We would like to see as many organisations as possible secure match funding and/or offer 'in kind' support to their application. Area Leads can help with this, and we regularly promote funding opportunities through our HAF communications. We want to capture any match funding, both cash values and in kind such as time and resources that are already paid for. We will ask for match funding values on the grant application form.

Delivering in more than one venue

Organisations can apply for funding for programmes that are being delivered in different venues. These programmes must be for different groups of young people. Where organisations would like to apply for funding at different venues, they must complete a different grant application form for each venue. Two or more venues must not be put on the same grant application form. If you are looking to deliver activity in 3 or more venues; please speak to your Area Lead to discuss our multi venue application form.

Maximum number of spaces per day

In many areas of the county, the demand for funding exceeds the funds available. For this reason, we reserve the right to moderate programmes sizes to make sure we are building the best holiday programme for local young people and families. We are proud to have a varied and vibrant HAF programme, and we will continue to strive for this.

In some instances, this will apply to funding applications that are requesting funding for more than 100 young people per day and/or looking to deliver multiple sessions in the same venue. To keep a balanced programme in each district we will consider making offers to applicants requesting funding for 100+ spaces per day in exceptional circumstances only.

Delivering more than one programme at the same venue

Organisations can apply for funding to run more than one programme at the same venue. For example, two sessions per day, AM and PM and/or programmes in week 1 and week 2 of the spring or winter holidays. These programmes **must** be for different groups of young people.



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Where organisations would like to apply for funding for more than one programme at the same venue, they can do so on one grant application form. There will be space on the form for you to describe the different programmes, who they are for and the numbers of young people attending. In many areas of the county demand exceeds funds available, we therefore reserve the right to not fund more than one programme in the same venue.

Annual framework

We want to support good quality HAF providers who have delivered the programme consistently and regularly to submit an annual application. We are hoping this process will make it easier for organisations so only one application is needed to cover spring, summer and winter delivery.

Funding for each consecutive holiday period will only be awarded based on successful delivery of the previous programme including satisfactory programme monitoring and financial reconciliation.

Organisations must meet the following criteria to be considered for an annual award. If providers are unsure if their organisation is eligible to apply for an annual award, they should contact their Area Lead.

Annual award criteria

- successful delivery of at least two holiday club programmes in the last 12 months
- achieve 80% or more of the number of unique participants targeted in each application or a significant upward trend reaching 80% in the most recent delivery.
- engage a minimum of 85% of participants who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals.
- be delivering all holiday activity and food programme outcomes to a satisfactory level with plans in place for improvement beyond satisfactory to good and very good delivery.
- full compliance with grant conditions, financial reconciliations and programme monitoring in a timely manner
 - swift return of partnership agreements
 - accurate financial reconciliation completed by the deadline
 - independent (following training) completion of programme monitoring via Coordinate Sport by the deadline.

Application process

Organisations will apply for grant funding through an online portal managed by StreetGames. The grant application form can be accessed via the website:

<https://itsaboutmederbyshire.co.uk/support-hub/applying-for-haf-funding/>

Application assessment

During stage 1 of the assessment, we will review the eligibility criteria of the organisation, the quality of the application and delivery of the programme framework of standards. We will also assess the value for money of the application based on cost per space per day. This is calculated by taking the total grant request / number of days being delivered / number of spaces available each day.



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During stage 2 of the assessment, we will review the geographical areas being proposed as well as the demographics of the young people being targeted. We will be mapping the proposed holiday provision in each local area to ensure that sufficient levels of provision exist for all young people; taking into consideration age and types of provision offered. This mapping is completed alongside data showing the location of free school meal eligible children. Stage 2 of the assessment process will ensure that local provision is targeted in the right areas and supports those of greatest need. We will also ensure that the delivery budget is distributed across the county accordingly.

We will use the matrix below to ensure a consistent approach is taken when scoring grant funding applications. Organisations are required to answer each question in the application form as fully as possible, as each question will be assessed against the criteria. Every question in the grant application form must achieve a score of 3 or more to progress.

The maximum score of five marks per question is achieved through providing a detailed response with up to five different points made. Using examples of previous delivery will enhance the quality of the response.

Score	Description
0	No response to the question, no evidence provided and/or a poor track record in this area, evidenced from previous holiday club delivery.
1	Very Poor. The response clearly fails to meet the criteria detailed in the question. The response exhibits clear and significant omissions regarding meeting the criteria detailed. Inadequate or no supporting evidence has been provided to support the response.
2	Poor. The response satisfies only some of the criteria detailed in the question. The response has some omissions regarding meeting the criteria detailed. Some evidence is provided to support the response; however this is lacking in sufficient detail in one or more areas.
3	Satisfactory. The response satisfies the criteria detailed in the question. Some evidence is provided to support the response; any missing evidence or detail is only minor.
4	Good. The response fully and successfully meets the criteria detailed. Full and relevant evidence is provided to support the response.
5	Excellent. Exceptional response that meets or exceeds all criteria detailed in the question. Full and relevant evidence is provided to support the response.

Using artificial intelligence tools in funding applications

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are becoming increasingly embedded in our lives. Tools like ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot and Claude are changing the way people work by saving them time and improving accessibility.

You can use AI tools to help write your funding application. We will not reject an application just because AI was used. AI tools can support you if English is not your first language or if you’re new to writing funding applications.





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Use AI with caution

AI can provide a useful starting point but often what it produces for you is not as strong as it might appear. AI supported applications do not tell the unique story of your organisation and the work you want to deliver. Being too generic in content may disadvantage your application.

Key tips for using AI

- start with your organisation and what you want to deliver
- AI tools often produce generic content or include buzzwords that don't capture your unique perspective or your audience's voice
- make it personal by editing AI-generated content to reflect your own experiences, skills, and what your community has told you they need
- show impact, include insights from your previous work, such as consultation feedback or data, to explain why your project matters and how it will make a difference
- be specific; we prioritise applications that provide clear, detailed information
- describe what you'll do, why, when, and where in your application
- we want to understand the uniqueness of your programme so use real examples from your previous work to stand out
- don't rely on AI-suggested budgets without reviewing them. Ensure they fit your plans and meet the programme's funding rules
- if you input your organisation's data into AI tools, ensure that you do so in compliance with relevant legislation
- where personal information is used, please refer to the [Information Commissioner's Office for guidance on AI and data protection](#).

Risks using AI

- look out for inaccuracies
- AI can sometimes generate incorrect or misleading information
- to ensure accuracy use trusted sources for data and research
- always verify AI-sourced content and adapt it with your expertise and experience
- AI tools, especially free ones, may store data you input. This could compromise confidentiality.

AI has an environmental impact

AI tools require large amounts of energy and fresh water to power their data centres. This creates significant environmental impact. Use AI mindfully, only use AI where it will clearly help you apply or significantly improve the quality of your application.

How we may use AI tools to support reviewing funding applications

We are considering how we can use AI tools to support us when reviewing funding applications. Across the HAF programmes that we manage, we review over 1,000 applications per year and by using AI to review some parts of the application form we can reduce the time it takes to make decisions on funding awards.



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When using AI, we will commit to not entering personal or organisational information into AI tools. Our aim is to use AI to review text-based response questions only. There will be human oversight throughout the process, we will never solely use AI to decide, all final funding decisions will be made by a human.



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Programme monitoring requirements

It is compulsory for all funded organisations to use the Coordinate Sport system for programme monitoring. The Coordinate Sport system has several functions:

- The system can be used to promote programmes and take bookings directly from parents/carers in advance of programmes starting. This is our preferred method as it means all relevant information for each young person is collected automatically. The system has a messaging function which can be personalised.
- The system can be used to promote activities with bookings still taken directly by the holiday club. Organisations will then be required to import participant details and record the days they attended.
- Organisations offering 'closed' provision to a specific group of young people that do not need support with promotion or taking bookings will use the system to import participant details and record the days they attend.
- It is compulsory for all organisations to have their programme set up and register their young people on the Coordinate Sport system in advance of the programme starting.
- Penalties will be introduced where organisations regularly submit incomplete data sets. This will impact receipt of future funding.

Every organisation will need to have staff and/or volunteers trained to use Coordinate Sport. Training will be provided. Programme monitoring requirements are the responsibility of the holiday club provider including setting up projects, taking bookings, adding participants where bookings are taken directly and recording on the register the days each young person attended.

As part of the grant conditions, all funded organisations are required to capture the following information for each unique participant that attends.

- First name
- Surname
- Free School Meal eligibility (Yes / No)
- School name (From a list of Derbyshire County Council schools)
- Does the young person have a disability? (Yes / No)
- Does the young person have a special educational need? (Yes / No)
- Home postcode
- Ethnicity (From standard UK ethnicity list)
- Gender
- Date of birth (DD/MM/YYYY format)
- It's About Me / IAM / HAF / FSM Eligibility Code (sent to parent/carer via school)

We would recommend that organisations also collect the following information to ensure the safety of all participants. This information is not required as part of the reporting for the programme.

- Emergency contact details for parent/guardian
- Known medical conditions that could impact participation
- Allergies and dietary requirements, essential when providing food



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- Photography and media consent from parent/guardian if you are wishing to take photos of videos
- Medical consent in case of emergency situations.

More information on data capture can be found on the providers support hub on the It's About Me website: <https://itsaboutmederbyshire.co.uk/support-hub/programme-monitoring/>.

It's About Me / HAF / FSM codes

Eligibility codes are created by Derbyshire County Council, sent to schools who then send to the codes to parents/carers of each child eligible for benefits-related free school meals.

It is compulsory for all organisations to collect the It's About Me / IAM / HAF / FMS codes from parents/carers when taking bookings. The booking system can be set up to collect the code. If a parent/carer cannot provide a code, they need to contact their child's school to confirm their eligibility and get their code.

Reducing non-attendance

We want to work closely with providers to minimise non-attendance at HAF-funded sessions. While we recognise that absences can sometimes be unavoidable, reducing missed bookings helps ensure that provision is used effectively and that as many children and young people as possible benefit from the programme.

Solutions may include:

- using waiting lists to fill places when cancellations occur
- sending reminders (e.g., texts or emails) to families before sessions
- implementing flexible booking policies, such as allowing last-minute sign-ups where capacity exists
- monitoring attendance patterns and addressing persistent non-attendance with families

These strategies support better use of public funds and help maximise reach and impact.

Partnership agreements and funding payments

On approval of a grant, organisations will need to download, sign and upload a partnership agreement. These agreements are sent via the online grant portal.

Our usual process is to pay 80% of the grant up front and the remaining 20% on completion of satisfactory programme monitoring and financial reconciliation. Annual grants will be paid in this same way for each holiday period.

Financial reconciliations

Financial reconciliations are completed via the online grant portal. Organisations will need to reconcile their spend against their budget forecast. Financial reconciliations will be checked prior to any final funding payments being released.

Where programmes have not met their target number of participants, we would expect to see some cost savings recorded on the financial reconciliation; for example, where less food was



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needed and staff numbers were reduced in line with the number of young people attending. If recorded expenditure is less than the initial 80% grant payment, we will request that the difference is paid back.

Financial audits

Each holiday period, a sample of organisations will be identified where more in-depth financial audits will be carried out. Criteria that will be used to identify organisations for financial audit include random sample, grants awarded above £30k, new delivery partners and organisations with high underspend/overspend.

Providers receiving the most investment, including those with large programmes (50+ spaces) and those with programmes in multiple venues will have extra checks in place to ensure they are reaching their targets and reconciling finances correctly. We are under significant pressure from the Department for Education to reduce funded unfilled spaces and the value of grants not used.



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Programme dates

Spring 2026

Application, approval and booking dates

- Monday 19th January, 9am: grant portal opens for annual (spring, summer and winter) and spring only funding application; open for three weeks.
- Sunday 8th February, midnight: grant portal closes for annual and spring only funding applications.
- Monday 9th February to Friday 20th February: grant review process, allocated 10 working days for applications to be reviewed and sufficiency to be built.
- Monday 23rd February to Friday 27th February: partnership agreements awarded to successful applicants, five weeks before the start of delivery and two weeks before bookings open (unsuccessful applicants will also be notified at this time).
- Monday 23rd February to Friday 6th March: organisations to upload spring programmes to Coordinate Sport for promotion and bookings.
- Monday 9th March: bookings go live on It's About Me website; 3 weeks before the holiday period starts.

Spring delivery dates

Week 1: Monday 30th March April to Thursday 2nd April 2026 (4 delivery dates available).

Week 2: Tuesday 7th April to Friday 10th April 2026 (4 delivery dates available).

Because Friday 3rd April (Good Friday) and Monday 6th April (Easter Monday); are UK Holidays we will not fund activities to take place on these days.

Spring programme monitoring and financial reconciliation deadline

Friday 1st May 2026

Summer 2026

Application, approval and booking dates

- Monday 11th May, 9am: grant portal opens for annual (summer and winter) and summer only funding applications; open for three weeks.
- Sunday 31st May, midnight: grant portal closes for annual and summer only funding applications.
- Monday 1st June to Friday 12th June: grant review process, allocated 10 working days for applications to be reviewed and sufficiency to be built.
- Monday 15th June to Friday 19th June: partnership agreements awarded to successful applicants, five weeks before the start of delivery and two weeks before bookings open (unsuccessful applicants will also be notified at this time).
- Monday 15th June to Friday 26th June: organisations to upload summer programmes to Coordinate Sport for promotion and bookings.



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- Monday 29th June: bookings go live on It's About Me website; three weeks before the holiday period starts.

Summer delivery dates

Week 1: Thursday 23rd July to Friday 24th July 2026 (2 delivery dates available)

Week 2: Monday 27th July to Friday 31st July 2026 (5 delivery dates available)

Week 3: Monday 3rd August to Friday 7th August 2026 (5 delivery dates available)

Week 4: Monday 10th August to Friday 14th August 2026 (5 delivery dates available)

Week 5: Monday 17th August to Friday 21st August 2026 (5 delivery dates available)

Week 6: Monday 24th August to Friday 28th August 2026 (5 delivery dates available)

Week 7: Tuesday 1st September to Friday 4th September 2026 (4 delivery dates available)

Because Monday 31st August 2026 is a UK holiday; we will not fund activities to take place on this day.

Summer programme monitoring and financial reconciliation deadline

Friday 25th September 2026 (3 weeks after the final delivery day).

Winter 2026

Application, approval and booking dates

- Monday 12th October, 9am: grant portal opens for winter only funding applications; open for three weeks.
- Sunday 1st November, midnight: grant portal closes for winter only funding applications.
- Monday 2nd November to Friday 13th November: grant review process; allocated 10 working days for applications to be reviewed and sufficiency to be built.
- Monday 16th November to Friday 20th November; partnership agreements awarded to successful applicants, five weeks before the start of delivery and two weeks before bookings open (unsuccessful applicants will also be notified at this time).
- Monday 16th November to Friday 27th November; organisations to upload winter programmes to Coordinate Sport for promotion and bookings.
- Monday 30th November; bookings go live on It's About Me website, three weeks before the holiday period starts.

Winter delivery dates

Week 1: Monday 21st December to Thursday 24th December (Christmas Eve) 2026 (4 delivery dates available).

Week 2: Tuesday 29th December to Thursday 31st December (New Year's Eve) 2026 (3 delivery dates available).

Because Friday 25th December (Christmas Day), Monday 28th December 2026 (Boxing Day Holiday) are UK Holidays, we will not fund activities to take place on these days.

Winter programme monitoring and financial reconciliation deadline

Friday 22nd January 2027. (3 weeks after the final delivery day).



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School term dates

The dates on this page may not apply to academies, foundation, free or voluntary aided schools. All schools are encouraged to accept the dates set by Derbyshire County Council, but they are not required to. Providers should contact local schools directly to confirm their term dates in case they differ.

Before selecting delivery dates, providers need to check with local schools for any difference in term dates. This may impact the number of young people that will be available for holiday programmes on certain days.

See the Derbyshire County Council website for school term dates:

<https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/term-dates-school-holidays/school-term-dates-and-holidays.aspx>.



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Useful weblinks

It's About Me website

Our front facing website aimed at engaging parents and carers.

<https://itsaboutmederbyshire.co.uk/>

It's About Me Providers Support Hub

A password protected area of the It's About Me website where organisations can access documents and resources. This should be the place to go for all information on the programme.

<https://itsaboutmederbyshire.co.uk/support-hub/>

Password: itsaboutme (all one word, all lower case)

It's About Me Provider Communications

Sign up for programme updates: <https://confirmsubscription.com/h/y/812942E9C0C691CE>.

Derbyshire County Council Holiday Activity and Food programme website

<https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/out-of-school/holiday-activities-with-food-programme/holiday-activities-with-food-programme.aspx>.

Derbyshire Children's Partnership

[Derby Safeguarding Children Partnership \(ddscp.org.uk\)](http://DerbySafeguardingChildrenPartnership(ddscp.org.uk))

Coordinate Sport Website

System used for programme reporting, promotion and taking bookings

<https://app.coordinate.cloud/login>



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It's About Me team contact details

If you need further support your Area Lead can help:

Districts/Boroughs: Amber Valley, Derbyshire Dales, Erewash, South Derbyshire
Amie Brown; Amie.Brown@StreetGames.org

Districts/Boroughs: Bolsover, Chesterfield, High Peak & North East Derbyshire
Kev Hatton; Kev.Hatton@StreetGames.org

Food Lead

Contact: Pam Noel; Pam.Noel@StreetGames.org

Programme Manager

Contact: Claire Wheeler; Claire.Wheeler@StreetGames.org

You can also email the Derbyshire Holiday Activities email address:
derbyshireholidayactivities@StreetGames.org.