

Newcastle's Holiday Activities & Food Programme

ANNUAL REPORT
2024

livin' for
the hols



Newcastle
City Council



Department
for Education



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INTRODUCTION

Newcastle's Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme, locally known as 'Newcastle's Best Holiday Ever' has continued to evolve since being commissioned by Newcastle City Council in spring 2023.

The programme delivery team continue to leverage their relationships across the city by connecting with organisations who already support young people aged 5-16 who are eligible or in receipt of benefits-related free school meals, while also utilising the capacity to explore gaps in provision – both geographical and based on social need. This included welcoming several new providers and enhancing the cultural offer for young people and children across the city. The contract is overseen by Newcastle City Council, bolstered by our steering group, consisting of professionals and partners with diverse backgrounds and expertise who help shape our offer.

Our vastly enhanced HAF Plus offer continued to reach young people aged 12 plus across the city with much consultation directly with young people in relation to their access to youth and sports provision that has supported in identifying challenges and young people's needs and aspirations. This included implementing access to a range of sports and activity retailers including leisure centres, gym, swimming and much more!

This year saw us pilot our HAF Uni programme in partnership with Newcastle University, thanks to Liam Issac and Maddy Wood on the University Sports Services team. Over Easter and Summer, over thirty young people participated in a wide range of sports activities, complemented by workshops from university staff, finance workshop with citizens advice and Young Responders Street First Aid programme with St John's Ambulance.

Newcastle University further supported us with our Annual HAF Celebration at their site at Cochrane Park where over 300 families and children had the opportunity to try out a variety of activities including zorbing, climbing wall, silent disco, boxing, football, golf, STEM to name a few! The weather was glorious with families basking in the sunshine enjoying their picnics, also provided by Newcastle University.



"I just wanted to say a huge thank you to you and the team at Newcastle Uni Sports Centre for the fantastic workshop. I've heard nothing but praise from all of the children they have absolutely loved every session, both the workshops and sports games; even the more shy young people from our group. Please pass on my thanks to Waz, Annie and Maddy for putting this together and of course yourselves at StreetGames".

Holiday Club Leader



Key strategies and themes:

- Development of our SEND offer – training for organisations on how to improve mainstream provision to ensure inclusivity of SEND young people and children.
- Enhancement of our HAF Plus offer – build on 'Teenage Ticket' scheme to allow young people's independence in accessing cultural and social activities.
- Implementation of strategic plans to enhance girls' participation in sport.
- Capacity and skills building for organisations in relation to funding and sustainability of holiday provision.

IMPACT

263

Holiday Clubs

89

Holiday Club Providers

257

Locations

12,286

Young People Engaged

55,018

Attendances & Meals Provided

85%

Free School Meal Attendance

£1,369,341

Value of Grants Awarded

FINANCE

Newcastle City Council has **15,472** children and young people who are eligible for the Newcastle's Best Holiday Ever programme. The DfE made a grant to Newcastle City Council of **£1,681,401.98** for the 2024 programme delivery period.

Newcastle's Best Holiday Ever continues to be committed to supporting as many children and families in need as possible, through a vision of upskilling communities, developing competence and confidence and extending provision most sustainably. Of the delivery grant, **81.4%** was invested directly into provision for children and young people in 2024.

To achieve the levels of engagement required by the programme, a cost model was developed to support grant making and ensure value for money. The cost model implemented for 2024 was based on an average of £25 per child per day to reflect the rise in costs of utilities, food provision and staff capacity. We also allowed flexibility in relation to the delivery of SEND provision where we appreciate that staff costs may be higher due to the specialist needs and ratios that may be required.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2024	
Administrative Expenditure	£168,140.20
Capital Expenditure	£32,965.37
Programme Expenditure	£1,369,341.88
Other Expenditure	£110,675.26
Total Expenditure	£1,681,122.71
Total Payment from DfE	£1,681,401.98
Underspend	£279.27

ADDED VALUE AND ENRICHMENT

The Newcastle's Best Holiday Ever programme continues to leverage alternative provisions and support within the existing network that complements the delivery of the programme. Throughout 2024, this equated to **£408,514.21** with just over **£190,000.00** additional match funding secured by Holiday Club providers and **£215,000.00** of in-kind support. Match funders included local Ward Committees, Garfield Weston, National Lottery, The Community Foundation and the Youth Investment Fund to name a few.

Newcastle's Best Holiday Ever is aligned with the Evry initiative and is a key part of the Newcastle City Council's Children and Young People's Strategy 2023- 27. This has resulted in aligned priorities (both social need and geographical) to ensure that every young person across the city has opportunities to thrive.

Furthermore, Newcastle's Best Holiday Ever also aligns with public health and community safety work with all groups working to support the key target audience of young people and children in underserved communities. Newcastle's Best Holiday Ever is only one part of the Newcastle City Wide family holiday offer and is complemented with wider partnerships through Evry and NE1 and all provision, including Newcastle's Best Holiday Ever is advertised city-wide, including festivals, street events and cultural provision which supplies an array of choices for families to spend valuable time together.

The Newcastle's Best Holiday Ever programme is a key part of StreetGames ambition to create a year-round programme for children and young people in Newcastle with the creation of a doorstep sport city and youth leadership, ensuring fair access to sport and physical activity, tackling challenges and barriers that stop young people in underserved communities accessing sport.

GOVERNANCE

The core governance structure in Newcastle is the Steering Group. Established in October 2023, the group has defined terms of reference and membership.

The group is made up of Newcastle City Council departments including Public Health, Children and Families Directorate teams including, School Effectiveness, Youth Voice, SEND Voice, Play and Youth Strategy lead, Family Hubs locality leads – Action for Children, Barnados, StreetGames, Newcastle United Foundation, and Urban Green.

Within the governance structure, we also operate a Safety Advisory Group, made up of Newcastle City Council and StreetGames staff to manage any safeguarding issues which meet termly.

Due to specialist areas for targeted work, the SEND steering group was established, with a teen steering group shortly to follow. The SEND steering group includes specialist advisors and providers, including the implementation of the SEND boxes for all providers and delivering training for mainstream providers to support the inclusion of SEND young people and children within their provision.

The programme continues to be embedded well across the city, with representation and commitment across numerous strategic plans. This includes Evry- a city-wide young people's plan for Newcastle.

HAF is also a part of the Newcastle City Council's Children and Young People's Strategy 23 -27 helping deliver their plan to make young people, happier, healthier, safer and ready for their futures, as well as the Newcastle City Council's Public Health team new physical activity strategy and city-wide food systems plans.

STAKEHOLDERS

We have continued to nurture strong working relationships with key stakeholders across the city to support delivery of the programme, to evaluate its impact on children, young people and families and to enable future sustainability.

Our key strategic stakeholders include:

- Newcastle City Council; Public Health, Children and Families Directorate
- StreetGames
- Newcastle University
- Northumbria Police Crime Commissioner
- Family Hubs – Action for Children and Barnados
- The Tyne and Wear Community Foundation
- Sport England
- Newcastle United Foundation
- Connected Voice
- Northumbria University
- National Governing Bodies of Sport; Access Sport British Olympic Association
- Newcastle and Gateshead Cultural Venues Initiative
- Newcastle College
- Newcastle Youth Offending
- North East Child Poverty Commission
- North East Combined Authority

OUR NETWORK

In 2024, we supported 263 holiday club providers operating across 257 venues. Some providers work across multiple venues and some venues are used by different providers during the same holiday periods i.e. delivering programmes during different weeks of the holidays.

VENUE TYPE

20%	School/ College/ University	10%	Youth/ Children's Centre
33%	Community Venue/ Asset	8%	Faith Venue
14%	Fitness Centre/ Leisure Centre/ Gym	5%	Cultural
10%	Open Space/ Outdoor Venue		

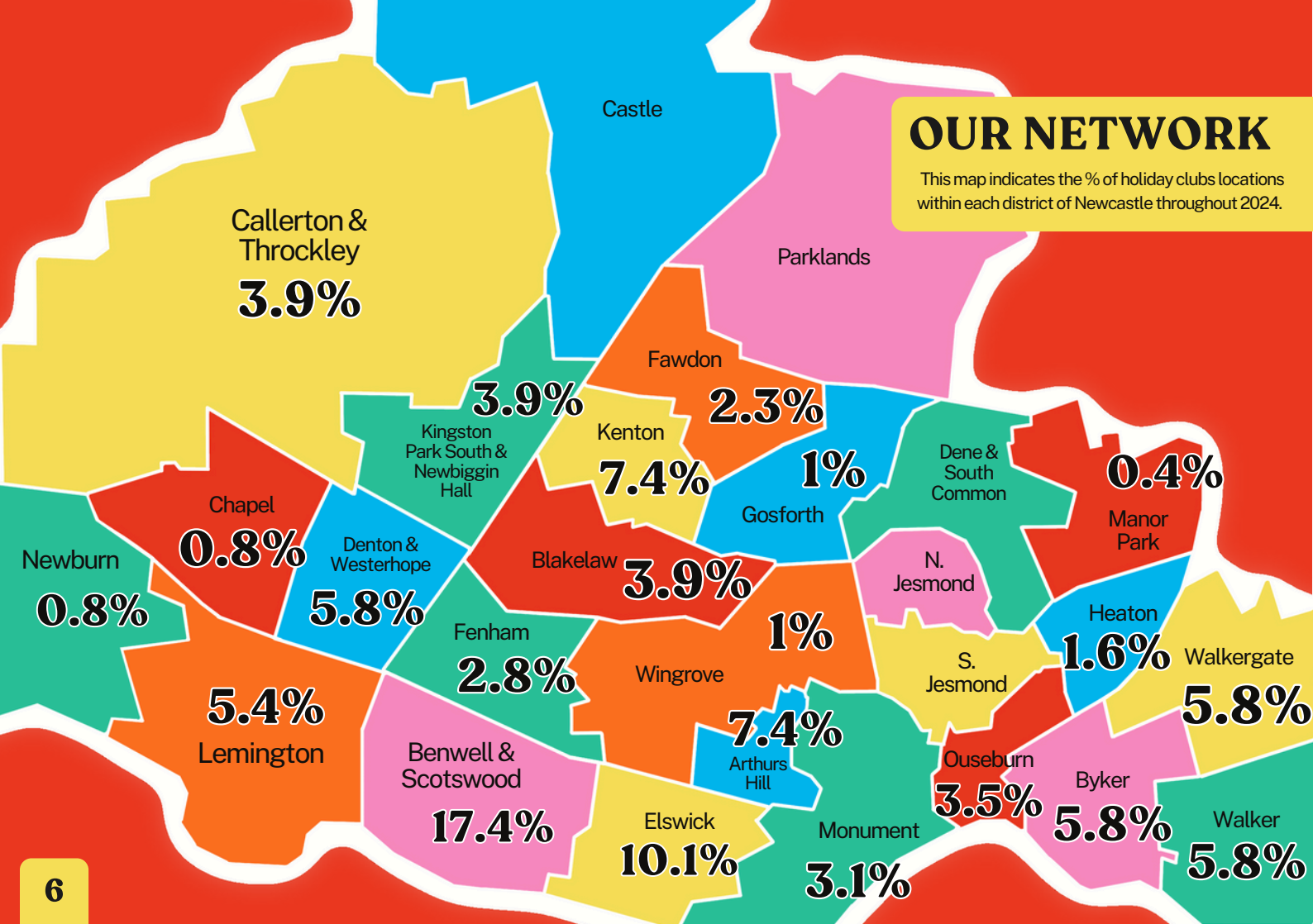
PROVIDER TYPE

56%	Charitable Trust	6%	Local Authority Services
13%	Community Interest Company	3%	Constituted Community Organisation
10%	Company Ltd by Guarantee	2%	Constituted Sports Club
9%	School/ College/ University		



OUR NETWORK

This map indicates the % of holiday clubs locations within each district of Newcastle throughout 2024.



OUTCOMES

We encourage all Newcastle's Best Holiday Ever holiday club providers to deliver all the Holiday Activity and Food Programme framework standards. In 2024, these standards were:

- Food provision
- Enrichment activities
- Physical activities
- Nutritional education
- Food education for families and carers
- Signposting and referrals
- Robust policies and procedures
- Effective Safeguarding

We acknowledge that not all providers have to deliver all aspects of the programme, but our clear expectation is that all eligible children and their families should benefit from all aspects of the programme.

Partnerships were developed to support our delivery. One example includes Hat-trick, who delivered the physical aspect of HAF for some providers, as well as Nourish Food, who, as well as Healthworks, offered nutrition education for holiday clubs.



QUALITY ASSURANCE

We assess an organisation's ability to deliver against the framework standards through:

Grant application forms – all organisations were required to complete a grant application to apply for funding to run free holiday clubs. This form asks for information on their overall programme, where it is needed and why and asks in turn how the holiday programme will meet the requirements of each framework standard. Safeguarding questions highlight their knowledge and processes where safeguarding plays a fundamental part of their Continuous Professional Development and is embedded within the organisation's culture.

Quality Assurance (Support Visits) – In 2024, 91 quality assurance visits were completed. During these visits to the holiday clubs, we observe the activities taking place, ask questions about the daily programme, and check the food offer to ensure the framework standards are being met. These are communicated positively so HAF providers view this as positive and supportive experience where additional support or training is offered where necessary. This process also allows us to reflect as a team and inform future applications.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE FEEDBACK

479 Responses

97%

highly satisfied/
satisfied with
their **holiday club**
and the activities
provided

100%

were highly
satisfied/
satisfied with the
location of their
holiday club

92%

were highly
satisfied/
satisfied with the
food provided

98%

were highly
satisfied/
satisfied with
their **coaches and**
leaders

100%

were highly
satisfied/
satisfied with the
time their holiday
club takes place

We asked children and
young people

"WHAT DID YOU LIKE THE MOST ABOUT YOUR HOLIDAY CLUB?"

"This is the only activity I am involved outside of school activities and it makes me happy to have physical activities and outreach activities with friends where we are fed in every session for free."

"It is so fun and supportive to have activities and food."

"It is most wonderful place to be on holidays as I have fun activities with friends and enjoy free meals."

"I am having best moment of my life playing games, visiting lovely places, going to cinema, beach and having free meals."

"The whole holiday's programme that make feel happy because i have something to do and spend time with my friends and siblings."

"Because of these activities that enable me to learn how to ride a bike, so best holiday activities give me great opportunity to learn many things."

"The bubble making was fantastic, as were the circus skills, fire engine, police van, police horses and marshmallow toasting."

"Enriching activities, as I do not go to those places with my family, only when NBHE organises them."

PARENT & GUARDIAN FEEDBACK 107 Responses

"Definitely needed in this area especially during the holidays. Lovely time for kids and parents as well - great idea to bring the community together."

"As a parent I'm glad I can find something for the kids over the holidays. I love that the kids have the opportunity to be outside in nature. My kids always come back happy after the sessions."

"A gorgeously accessible group that welcomes young people regardless of experience or ability, a really wonderful provision during the holidays."

"This programme is so good for parent who can't afford holidays. We're so thankful."

"This programme is excellent. It's a brilliant group where you can bond with your child and also learn skills that can then be taken home and used again. Would highly recommend."

"Amazing! Perfect for our young people with a huge variety of fun and interesting activities that are well thought out."

"This programme was brilliant. Really enjoyed cooking with my daughter and the food we made was delicious. Gave us new ideas for lunches and dinners. The staff were fabulous."

98%

highly satisfied/
satisfied with
their **holiday club**
and the activities
provided

93%

were highly
satisfied/
satisfied with the
food provided

PROVIDER FEEDBACK 17 Responses

100%

highly satisfied/
satisfied with
their **holiday club**
and the activities
provided

94%

were highly
satisfied/
satisfied with the
food provided

FOOD & NUTRITION

HAF delivery partners strive to ensure that their food offer meets School Food Standards, often this means thinking innovatively and creatively so their young people and children enjoy the meals offered and get the opportunity to explore new foods.

For organisations new to following the School Food Standards, there is a link they can access on the application form which can help create their menu and food options.

Working in partnership with Healthworks allows us to provide training to organisations, ensuring staff have the minimum expected training and qualifications when providing their own food and that food quality is up to standard.

There are also a number of expert food organisations that offer support to delivery partners to ensure that not only is food provision to a quality standard, but also that nutritional education is embedded, whether through cookery sessions or games.

It was positive to see multiple providers doing cookery outdoors using a small fire, outdoor pizza ovens and barbecues. This allowed for educational conversations around food safety, hygiene and nutrition.

During the winter delivery period, Newcastle's Best Holiday Ever delivered food hampers to families in the most underserved communities in the city. Working in partnership with the Family Hubs in each of our four locality areas, we were able to reach approximately **500** families with food parcels and recipes which families could cook and eat together.

This was supported by Healthworks, who created videos which enabled families to follow along with the recipes and produce their own meals, making adaptations to suit their taste. This meant that not only was nutrition education implemented for young people and children attending HAF, but also directly to parents and families.

Feedback from this work was positive and reinforced the value and necessity of this initiative. Nutrition Education is something that we specifically ask delivery partners to explain in their application – we want to ensure that healthy lifestyle promotion goes beyond just a healthy lunch. We want to ensure quality nutritional education is embedded within their day-to-day delivery of HAF.

We continue to develop our training and link to city-wide resources to offer support to organisations and build confidence in embedding healthy food within their provision.



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Our HAF delivery partners bring a wealth of expertise and experience when it comes to delivering physical activity. During summer, there were a wide range of sports offers including rugby, football, horse riding, cycling, dance, golf, cricket and many more! This included our teen offer where young people had access to a local gym, swimming and trampoline park,

Many organisations work in partnership with other delivery partners to meet the physical activity needs of their holiday club. For example, Hat-trick delivered physical activities and sports education to a HAF provider who works specifically with Refugee children. Another example is Cricketqube delivered a range of physical activity with another provider, Cup of Parenting.

Applications and visits show the varied, safe and engaging provision on offer. We ensure the offer is diverse and find that at primary age, the offer tends to be broadly multi-skilled, whereas at secondary, it tends to be a more focussed sports activity.

To ensure quality and varied delivery, we provide training (informal and accredited) across our network, including Level 2 Multi-Sports Activator and various sport-specific Activator workshops. The multi-sports activator aims to develop an organisation's knowledge in implementing sports activity, how to diversify content and how to ensure inclusivity.

This training not only benefits the quality of delivery in HAF but also enhances knowledge and expertise within the sector where sports provision can be implemented into wider, year-round projects.

We also encourage providers to connect through collaboration, where sports-expert organisations can support those who do not usually deliver this type of activity, whether that's delivering the sports element on their behalf, loaning equipment or providing activity ideas and sharing good practice.

The diversity of physical activity in HAF is further demonstrated by leveraging the good weather to get young people and children using the many city-based green spaces and parks, whether for walks, playing sports or creating arts using natural items.

We hope the longer-term impact is that families continue to access these green spaces in their own time. In summary, our Newcastle's Best Holiday Ever clubs all deliver activities that meet physical activity guidelines during each session.

All children and young people are engaged in moderate to vigorous physical activity for at least 60 minutes per day. Our holiday club providers deliver this outcome in many formats; structured sport, physical activity, or exercise sessions are the most common, with many also delivering free play sessions.

We encourage providers to engage young people in a variety of physical activities to develop movement skills, muscular fitness and bone strength.

For providers who deliver a varied programme of sport, they often consult with their young people and children to find what they'd love to try and experience each day so young people remain engaged and excited. As providers in Newcastle grow in confidence, we have seen an increase in both the variety and quality of the types of physical activities offered.



ENRICHMENT

One of the most heartwarming aspects of Newcastle's Best Holiday Ever is centred around the enrichment part of the programme, where children and young people are exposed to new experiences.

An example of this is the trips out and family experiences, where, due to the costs, many children and young people would not otherwise be able to access.

These trips give children something to talk about when they go back to school and create lasting memories with family members.

This is especially magical during the winter programme where organisations worked with cultural partners to attend shows, workshops and see a pantomime.

Enrichment activities are often embedded as part of an organisation's physical activity offer, such as swimming, trampoline park or climbing wall. Other examples of enrichment include a petting zoo visit, arts and crafts, day-camping and trying musical instruments.



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Through consultation at one of our cluster meetings early in 2024, we were able to ascertain organisational training needs and where they felt they needed further support. Inclusion of SEND young people and children in mainstream provision came out strongly, therefore we identified the training would support this and more.

Training included:

- Smile Through Sport (SEND inclusion)
- Level 2 in Food Hygiene
- Level 2 in Allergy Awareness
- Introduction to British Sign Language
- Makaton
- Think for yourself (Youth Mental Health)
- Managing Challenging Behaviour
- Safeguarding
- Engaging Women and Girls in Sport
- Youth Mental Health First Aid
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

The food-related programmes are fundamental not only on a legislative level, but also in relation to good practice that improves organisations' year-round offer. StreetGames' ethos is based on bringing physical activity and sport to young people and children in underserved communities and HAF allow us to leverage the great partnerships we have, and we look forward to bringing partners on this journey with us to see how we can build capacity within the city to make this a year-round offer.

SEND

Our SEND HAF offer includes a combination of mainstream providers with inclusion of SEND and also SEND exclusive providers. For providers who wanted to build their expertise and knowledge in the inclusion of SEND young people and children, they had access to various training programmes that would support and enhance these – see the Workforce section.

During 2024, we reached over **1300** primary and secondary SEND children and young people both in SEND exclusive and mainstream provision and we hope this number to increase in 2025.

Providers have great systems to support assessing children's needs to ensure they have the capacity and resources to fully accommodate and ensure that children's needs are met throughout their HAF programme.

For some families, finding suitable provision for their children, particularly those with SEND, can be very difficult. The Support Directory, managed by Newcastle City Council, allows families to choose a provision that is right for them. The listings highlight how/ if a provider can accommodate different needs and allows for a conversation directly with the provider to ensure the best care and a positive experience.

As a parent of a child with complex needs, the holidays can be incredibly tough. But thanks to HAF at Hadrian School, for the first time, I saw my child excited to go somewhere without fear or anxiety. He came home smiling, full of stories telling his dad how much he had enjoyed himself. I felt I had a chance to breathe, knowing he felt safe and understood. It's hard to explain what that means as a parent, it's everything. I also felt I was reassured, supported, and able to relax, even just for a few hours. HAF helped both of us more than I can say.

Parent



NAPI SEND Exclusive HAF Activities has been truly transformative for the families we support at North East Action for Children Parents and Inclusion at Hadrian School and Sir Charles Parsons School. For our SEND families, it's so much more than holiday activities, it's about inclusion, understanding, and the chance to take part without barriers. For many parents, HAF has offered more than just a safe space, it's been a lifeline. We've seen children light up with joy, confidence, and a sense of belonging during the holidays times that can often feel isolating for families with additional needs. The programme has given children a safe, engaging space to thrive, while providing families with much-needed respite and a sense of connection. The impact on wellbeing for both children and parents has been profound. With increased capacity at both Hadrian School and Sir Charles Parsons School, we've been able to reach more SEND families than ever, 714 SEND children in the last year and families who often feel left out of typical mainstream holiday provision.

Leah Evans -Dodsworth, Chief Executive Officer, North East Action for Children, Parents and Inclusion (NAPI)



MARKETING

Through our communications strategy, we utilised a variety of methods to increase bookings and specifically target families who have yet to access HAF provision. As part of the agreement between StreetGames and HAF providers and with support from Newcastle City Council, all HAF delivery partners register on the Newcastle City Council Support Directory website, which is where families are referred to, to book their children and young people onto provision. The support directory also allows providers to explain exactly what their provision is and how they can cater for young people and children with SEND, whether this be expert SEND staff, a quiet space or SEND resources.

Newcastle City Council further support targeted marketing through dissemination of information through their various relevant departments to ensure that information is shared, this includes the education service (direct contact with schools), children's services and SEND specific departments. We have good relationships with schools across the city who support the process of getting information to relevant families.

Whilst the programme had already established strong relationships with HAF providers, in 2024, we continued to build engagement amongst providers. Each provider was given access to a marketing toolkit which included branded posters, social media graphics and a suggested social media schedule.

We also provided a letter to schools to be distributed to parents, which explained the details of the programme and the booking process.

Sportfin, our data management system, allows us to map provision across the city so we can identify both social and geographical gaps in the city and therefore ensure there is targeted provision where it's needed most. We continue to explore and identify new avenues for how to reach every eligible family across the city with the support of the Council and our HAF partners.



CONCLUSION

Key Challenges

Evidence continues to show the need for HAF provision and access to holiday activities for those who need it most. In Newcastle, there are multiple wards with high proportions of young people that are eligible for FSM, and this hasn't changed since our last report with Byker being **67.2%**, Walker at **63%** and Elswick at **54.4%**. This is further evidenced through Sportfin mapping, overlaying HAF delivery with areas of high deprivation and Newcastle City Council Public Health data which helps us ensure there is ample coverage, not only geographically across the city, but also in these highly concentrated, underserved communities where social issues are more prominent.

Our strategy for HAF continues to evolve to meet the increasing demand for this support and during 2025, we aim to increase not only the number of providers but also the diversity in the provision. We are also identifying how HAF fits into a number of StreetGames initiatives, including Poverty Proofing (in partnership with Children North East), Doorstep Sports City and aligning with Newcastle City Council's Marmot City and Children and Young People's plans.

Summer 2024 saw some challenging times for our delivery partners with the threat of riots and fears within communities of retaliatory or violent attacks. Our delivery providers stood up and firmly showed their commitment, tenacity and dedication to families in their localities by continuing with their provision, ensuring safety and security for children and young people.

Looking ahead to 2025

We look forward to continuing and building on the momentum of 2024 and increasing workforce development around the sustainability of delivering programmes throughout summer for the families who need it most. With ongoing uncertainty surrounding the future of HAF, we must continue to nurture the strong partnerships we have and create new ones to ensure that the legacy of HAF continues.

As well as HAF reaching thousands of children since the pilot, it has allowed hundreds of organisations to improve their practices, build capacity, improve knowledge, skills and expertise to become embedded as part of their year-round delivery.

HAF 2025 will be the opportunity to solidify our network of providers we have and create a sustainable network of provision through our Doorstep Sport City work, Poverty Proofing of Sport and our Youth Leadership work.

