

Holiday Activities and Food Newsletter

Winter 2025/2026

Welcome to our Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme Newsletter!

On 28 August 2025, the government announced a 3-year funding settlement of over £200 million each year for the HAF programme. This announcement gives us stability and certainty, and we are thrilled to be able to continue to support HAF families, with so many families reporting that HAF is a lifeline for them.

HAF gives children who are eligible for benefit related free school meals the opportunity to take part in fun, enriching holiday activities and to receive a nutritious meal. There are also a small number of places that can be offered to vulnerable children not eligible for free school meals.

The funding covers Easter, Summer, and Christmas holidays, and providers are required to go through the council's procurement platform to be considered to deliver holiday provision for children and young people in Warrington.

Winter 2025/2026

This Winter 1031 eligible children booked a HAF session, and 921 of these attended at least one session. Most children attended an average of two sessions, and there was a choice of 21 clubs in 39 venues across the town.



New providers



We welcomed one new provider on the winter programme: Learn Active NW, who already work with several other Local Authorities and are experienced with delivering HAF. They deliver sports and wellbeing sessions with a focusing particularly on the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities. Bookings were low at first, but the club worked hard with local schools and their tenacity paid off as they were almost at capacity by day one, which is fantastic for a new club to the area. Craig Holcroft said *"We've had a fantastic start, and it's been great engaging with such a diverse group of young people. At Learn Active NW we pride ourselves on being fully inclusive, offering a wide range of activities from creative art projects and sensory sessions to sports, enrichment activities like Nerf wars, and inflatable days – ensuring there's something for everyone to enjoy and thrive in. Thanks very much, and we look forward to building on this."*

Family events



We hosted our annual pantomime on Saturday 3rd January, where families enjoyed a fantastic performance of Beauty and the Beast. Each family also received a £5 voucher to spend in the Market Food Hall, adding an extra treat to their day.

In addition, we distributed tickets to the Land of Lights show at Gulliver's World, which was a truly spectacular family experience. The feedback we received was overwhelmingly positive. One parent shared:

"Land of Lights is normally an event that is far out of our price range as a family of six. HAF allowed us to attend. It was truly beautiful, and the fire pits offering budget-friendly toasted marshmallows were a lovely touch."

Events like these help create magical memories for families, and we're delighted to have been able to make them accessible to so many.

Food boxes



This winter, we distributed 400 food boxes, each filled with everything a family needed to prepare a simple, nutritious meal together. Every primary aged child was also given a STEM kit provided by Next Education, giving children the chance to explore hands-on science through building, experimenting, and problem-solving. We're incredibly grateful to the Living Well Hub and Tinsley Street Family Hub for their support in making this event possible, and to Warrington Foodbank for creating the recipes and sourcing the ingredients.

Mayor visit



Moazzam Hussain paid a special visit to three of Striker Academy's venues last summer. Mr Mayor took the time to engage directly with the children, each lunch with them and ask thoughtful questions. The campers were particularly fascinated by the history of the mayor's chain, which is an important piece of Warrington's heritage that many had never seen up close before. Mr Mayor commended the club for the quality of food and activities on offer. He also made

comments about the incredibly important nature of the HAF programme, citing how essential it is to provide services for children who are at risk, or in need. A sincere thank you to Mr Mayor for his time and for the staff for facilitating such a positive experience, and to the campers themselves, who represented their community with pride.

Christmas Meal

Warrington Youth Zone were delighted to invite families to a magical Christmas experience this winter. Families were treated to a delicious three-course meal, including a traditional Christmas dinner, followed by a variety of festive activities for children and young people. Every child also visited Santa in his grotto and families were given food hampers to take home. Warrington Borough Council funded 200 places for this event.





Easter 2025

We are now planning our Easter provision, and bookings will go live on 13th March 2026. Each eligible child will be able to book and attend up to 4 sessions. Visit www.warrington.gov.uk/haf to browse and book, or email haf@warrington.gov.uk for more information.

Feedback from parents, carers, and professionals

“My twin grandchildren don't usually go to school holiday clubs as I look after them when needed. However, my daughter was stuck over Christmas as I have been ill. I found this Striker Academy through the Council website. I always worry about safety at these places but can honestly say that the staff were lovely and really put my mind at rest. The twins went for 2 days and absolutely loved the experience. I wouldn't hesitate to book them in there again. Sessions are well organised and fun for the children.”

“Thank you for all the Christmas activities. The food boxes were much appreciated, and science kits kept the kids off their devices for a bit. The highlight was the pantomime. What a treat!”

“Without HAF our school holidays would look very different. With two SEN children under 12 days out can be expensive and difficult to plan to suit their individual needs. Not only does HAF give us some great new experiences to do as a family it also offers much needed time to reset knowing both of my children are happy and safe with staff that are trained. For parents like myself with no family or support, I can not express how much of a difference it really makes.”

Interested in being part of the HAF programme?

The programme is coordinated by Hannah Green, who can be contacted at haf@warrington.gov.uk. Management and coordination of the programme sits within the Early Help team, and is governed by a Steering Group Chaired by Joanne Haslam, Head of Service for Early Help.

New providers can express their interest for our HAF programmes on the North-West Local Authority Procurement Portal <https://www.the-chest.org.uk/>