

Report to CABINET

Holiday Activities and Food Programme

Portfolio Holder:

Councillor Moores, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Officer Contact: Gerard Jones, Managing Director of Children's services

Report Author: Neil Consterdine, Assistant Director Youth, Leisure and Communities
Ext.

21st March 2022

Reason for Decision

To approve acceptance of the HAF funding and implementation, including payment terms for providers and creation of dedicated delivery team via fixed term posts, covering the 3 years confirmed programme 2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25.

Executive Summary

The purpose of the report is to request approval of the acceptance of the HAF Programme funding and approval for the payment terms for providers as well as approval for recruitment of fixed term posts to provide staffing resource for management and delivery of the programme in Oldham.

The Department for Education (DfE) made funds available to every local authority in England to coordinate free holiday club/activity provision, including healthy food and enriching activities, for children receiving benefits-related free school meals for the Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays in 2021.

Following the success of the HAF programme in 2021, the Chancellor confirmed in October that the programme will continue in all local authorities in England for the next three years, with funding of over £200m each year. This new funding covers the length of this spending review period – 2022-23 to 2024-25.

Oldham Council has been allocated £1,458,050 from the DfE to deliver the Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF) in 2022/2023 and will receive additional allocations for the programme in 23/24 and 24/25.

With the funding confirmed 3 years, we are keen to develop a 3-year delivery programme building on the processes established in the pilot year 21/22. With appropriate staffing resources to ensure we can meet our ambition to ensure eligible children and young people across Oldham have access to a diverse range of exciting holiday clubs and activities, offering a blend of borough-wide and more locally based activities.

To establish the programme delivery there are a number of decisions for consideration.

Payment terms for providers

Payment terms of the grants to delivery partners. We are recommending that based on the processes previously agreed in the pilot year we continue to have a tiered payment process based on the value of the grant being awarded to the provider.

- Awards under £20k will be paid in advance
- Awards over £20k will be paid 75% in advance and 25% on completion.

Recruitment of dedicated HAF programme staffing

There is a requirement within the DfE programme guidance that each local authority appoints a HAF coordinator/manager alongside having sufficient staff who are dedicated to work on the HAF programme all year round. Local Authorities are able to use 10% of the allocated funding for administration costs, this includes staffing costs.

We are proposing that to ensure the HAF programme to be sufficiently staffed, we create 2 fixed term post for the 3-year delivery programme. One full time programme manager (NJC - grade 8) and one programme coordinator 22 hours (NJC grade 6)

Recommendations

- 1 To approve acceptance of the DfE funding for the Holiday Activities and Food Programme
- 2 To approve a tiered payment process based on the value of the grant being awarded to the provider.
 - Awards under £20k will be paid in advance
 - Awards over £20k will be paid 75% in advance and 25% on completion.
- 3 To approve the recruitment of a manager and coordinator for the programme delivery – fixed term for 3 years

Holiday Activities and Food Programme

1 Background

- 1.1 Since 2018, the Department of Education’s holiday activities and food programme has provided support to children in receipt of free school meals through holiday periods. Following successful pilots between 2018 and 2020, the programme was rolled out to all upper tier local authorities in 2021. Oldham received just over £1.5 million for delivery of the programme in 2021/22.
- 1.2 Research has shown that the school holidays can be pressure points for some families. For some children this can lead to a holiday experience gap, with children from low-income households being less likely to access organised out-of-school activities, more likely to experience ‘unhealthy holidays’ in terms of nutrition and physical health, more likely to experience social isolation. The HAF programme is a response to this issue with evidence showing that free holiday clubs can have a positive impact on children and young people and that they work best when they: provide consistent and easily accessible enrichment activities, cover more than just breakfast or lunch, involve children (and parents) in food preparation and use local partnerships and connections, particularly with the VCISO sector.
- 1.3 In 2021 we were able to deliver the programme in Oldham via a grant-based process, enabling delivery partners to secure funding to provide activities as part of the programme. These delivery partners included a range of organisations working with children and young people.

2 Current Position

- 2.1 The pilot year delivery concluded early January 2022. The programme pilot enabled us to devise implementation processes including a steering group of key partners to help shape the programme, the grants-based payment process for delivery partners, and a communications strategy including a bespoke web-based module to promote the scheme and enable families to book places.

With the Government commitment to 3-year funding for the HAF programme we are keen to build on the learning and success of the pilot year and ensure we have a robust HAF programme in Oldham for the next 3 years.

Confirmation of the funding is outlined in Appendix 1 – the Grant Determination letter and in appendix 3 letter to Local Authority Chief Executives

Full guidance from the Department for Education on the programme can be found in Appendix 2 - Holiday activities and food programme 2022 - guidance for local authorities

3 Options/Alternatives

- 3.1 Payment terms for delivery providers.

Option 1: To pay all providers in advance of delivering their holiday activities and food provision. This would allow adequate funding for activities to be delivered by small providers with limited reserves. This option presents a level of risk to the council and there is potential for needing to claw money back if they fail to deliver in full.

Option 2: To have a tiered payment process based on the value of the grant being awarded to the provider.

- Awards under £20k will be paid in advance
- Awards over £20k will be paid 75% in advance and 25% on completion.

This option allows us to balance the need of small providers with the risk presented to the council. It should also be noted that the majority of these providers are known to the council.

Option 3: To pay all providers on completion of delivering their Holiday Activities and Food provision. This option provides maximum security to the council but will exclude a large number of providers from taking up the HAF grant and will ultimately limit the provision we are able to make available for our children and young people.

Recruitment of HAF programme team

Option 1: To not recruit a dedicated team for the management and delivery of the HAF programme.

This option would mean we are not fulfilling the DfE guidance for the programme and would not have sufficient staffing resource for delivery the programme in Oldham.

Option 2: To recruit one HAF manager and 1 HAF coordinator to lead delivery of the programme for the 3 years commitment to the programme

This option allows us to ensure the effective management and delivery of the programme over the 3 years.

4 Preferred Option

4.1 **Option 2:** To have a tiered payment process based on the value of the grant being awarded to the provider.

- Awards under £20k will be paid in advance
- Awards over £20k will be paid 75% in advance and 25% on completion.

Option 2: – Creation of 2 fixed term posts for 3 years to enable a dedicated HAF team to be established to manage and deliver the programme in Oldham.

5 Consultation

5.1 During the pilot year 21/22 a range of stakeholders were consulted in shaping the programme delivery. This included delivery organisations including those from the voluntary, community and Faith sector organisations, as well as council services who work with children and young people.

6 Financial Implications

6.1 Following the pilot of the HAF programme in 2021/22, the Department for Education (DfE) have confirmed the HAF programme will continue in local authorities for the next three financial years. The funding allocated to Oldham for 2022/23 is £1.458m with allocations for 2023/24 and 2024/25 to be confirmed by the DfE.

6.2 The preferred option outlined at paragraph 4.1 is to have a tiered payment process to HAF programme providers as follows:

- Awards under £20k – paid in advance.
- Awards over £20k – 75% paid in advance and 25% on completion of the programme.

6.3 The payment process is aligned to the process used during the pilot scheme.

6.4 In addition, in line with the conditions set out in grant determination 31/5854, local authorities must appoint or have in place a nominated HAF co-ordinator who takes responsibility for the delivery of the HAF programme. A maximum of 10% of the grant allocation can be spent on administration and co-ordination costs (£0.146m).

6.5 The recommendation is to create two fixed term posts for three years which will enable the Council to have a dedicated resource to manage the HAF programme. The cost of a 1.0 FTE Programme Manager at grade 8 and a 0.6 FTE Programme Coordinator at grade 6 at the bottom of each grade including on costs is £0.069m per annum. The cost of these posts complies with the grant conditions for administering and coordinating the programme.

6.6 The Council will be paid up to 80% of its total grant allocation in April 2022. The remaining 20% will be paid to the Council in April 2023 subject to reporting requirements. Grant expenditure will be monitored and reported in accordance with the grant conditions.

(Nicola Harrop – Finance Manager)

7 **Legal Services Comments**

7.1 As indicated in the report the payment of grants in advance of delivery do present a risk of potential non-delivery and non-recovery to the Council should the provider be in financial distress.

7.2 Fixed term employees in excess of two years are potentially entitled to a redundancy payment upon termination of the fixed-term contract which should be considered in terms of budgeting. Fixed term employment contracts extended beyond four years would entitle the employee to permanent employment status. (Colin Britain)

8. **Co-operative Agenda**

8.1 The investment in and further development of skills and capacity to support children and young people facing disadvantage, including access to healthy food, aligns with the Council's Co-operative Agenda in relation to supporting better health and life chances in the borough

9 **Human Resources Comments**

9.1 Options 2 proposes employment of 2 fixed term posts for 3 years. It should be noted that entitlement to a redundancy payment will be relevant when an individual has over 2 years continuous service.

When appointing the addition fixed term contract posts it is important to be mindful of any previous continuous service they may have as this may be relevant in calculating a redundancy payment if the contract is not renewed at the end of the term.

As the posts will be for 3 years the service will need to ensure that funding for potential redundancy payment is available. In addition, the funding situation should be correct under review in particular in the last 6 months of the employment contracts to ensure appropriate consultation takes place and where possible postholders are redeployed.

Kate Jolley
HR Strategic Lead

10 Risk Assessments

10.1 The risk of paying in advance is that services are then not provided and recovery of the funds maybe a challenge. The benefit is that it can assist certain organisations with cash flow on expenditure. The proposals set out in the report do not seem unreasonable to balance the requirements of the Council (Mark Stenson).

11 IT Implications

11.1 [NONE]

12 Property Implications

12.1 [NONE]

13 Procurement Implications

13.1 There are no Procurement implications as this report concerns early payments of a grant funding to the providers, However, as always when paying out monies to external organisations, the Authority must ensure that all due diligence activities on the providers are carried out, fair process has been followed that will comply with any scrutiny and are in line with the specific grant funding conditions. Mohammad Sharif 01/02/2022.

14 Environmental and Health & Safety Implications

14.1 [NONE]

15 Equality, community cohesion and crime implications

15.1 [NONE]

16 Implications for Children and Young People

16.1 The Holiday and Food Activity Programme will directly benefit children and young people in Oldham, with a specific focus on those eligible for benefit related free school meals.

17 Equality Impact Assessment Completed?

17.1 No

18 Key Decision

18.1 Yes

19 **Key Decision Reference**

19.1 KDD reference for the report is CHS-01-22.

20 **Background Papers**

20.1 None

21 **Appendices**

21.1 1.HAF Grant Determination Letter - Attached as a supplementary paper.

2. Holiday activities and food programme 2022 - Guidance for Local Authorities - Attached as a supplementary paper.

3. Letter to Local authority Chief Executives from Will Quince MP - Attached as a supplementary paper.

DELETE THE SIGNATURE BOX IF THE REPORT IS A CABINET DECISION

Signed _____ Cabinet Member (specify whom)	Dated _____
Signed _____ Strategic Director/Deputy Chief Executive	Dated _____