



2022-0045524CCPO

Claire Coutinho MP

Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing

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Harry Catherall
Chief Executive, Oldham Council
By email: harry.catherall@oldham.gov.uk

19 December 2022

Dear Mr Catherall,

Thank you for your letter of 4 November, addressed to the Prime Minister, about Oldham Council's holiday activities and food (HAF) programme. I am replying as the minister responsible for this policy area.

May I begin by thanking you for writing to share your views on HAF provision and for all the work you do to support vulnerable young children.

We are investing over £200 million a year in our HAF programme to support families during the school holidays. This programme provides healthy meals, enriching activities, and free childcare places to children from low-income families, benefiting their health, wellbeing and learning and contributing to recovery from COVID-19.

While HAF provision is targeted at school aged children from reception to year 11 who receive benefits-related free school meals (FSM), local authorities (LAs) also have discretion to use up to 15% of their funding to provide holiday club places for other children who are not in receipt of benefits-related FSM but who the LA believe could benefit from the provision. In addition, LAs can also provide free or subsidised holiday club places for children who are not in receipt of FSM but who the LA believe could benefit from HAF provision.

Thank you for writing on this important matter. I hope you will find this reply useful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Claire Coutinho', written in a cursive style.

Claire Coutinho MP
Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing

