Adults' Health and Care and Children's Services

Holiday Activities & Food (HAF) Programme
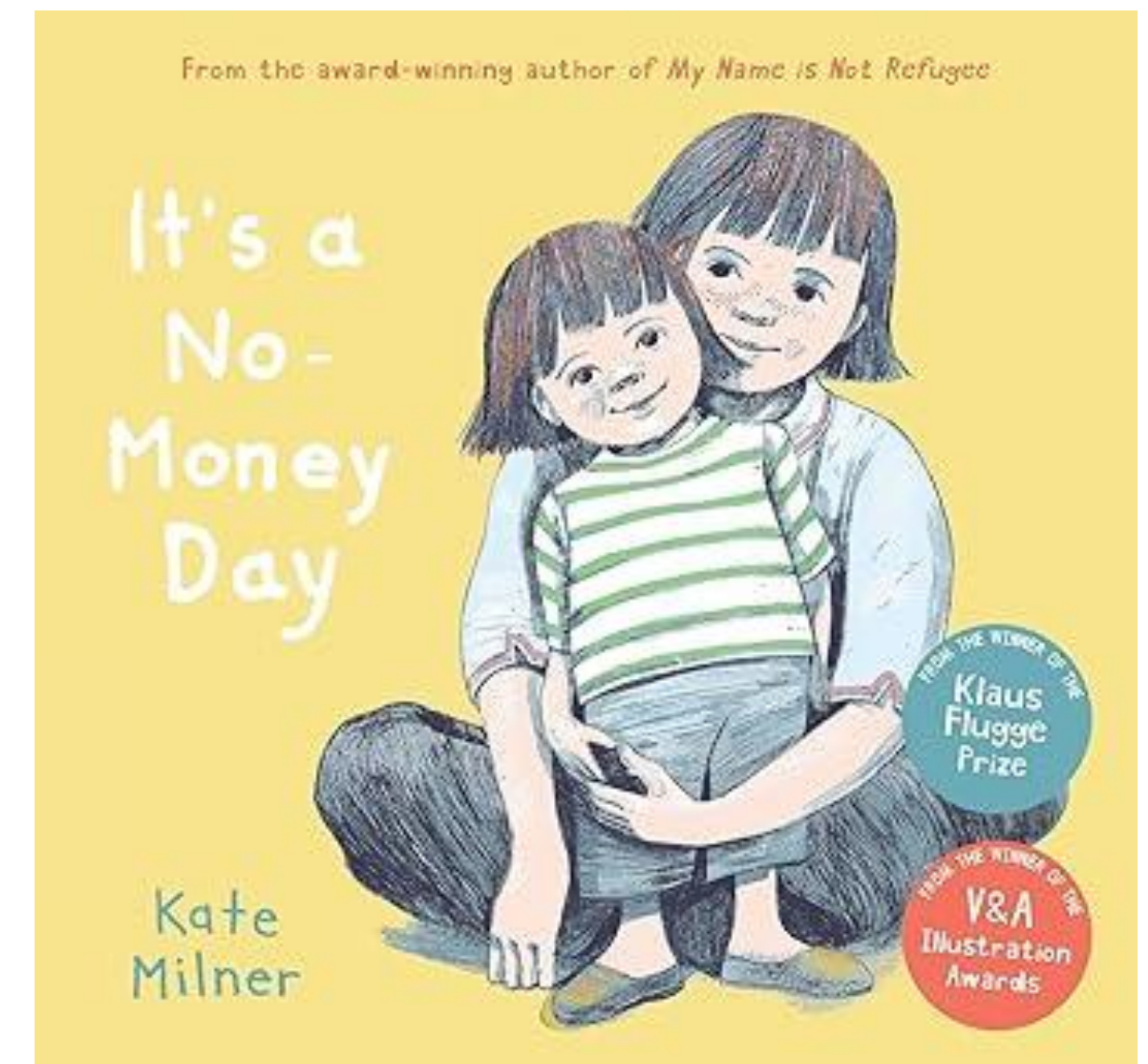
January 2026 - update

Hampshire County Council

What is HAF?

The Holiday Activities and Food (**HAF**) Programme is funded by the DfE to provide **free engaging activities** and **nutritious meals** to children from **reception to year 11** (inclusive) who would normally receive **benefit-related free school meals** (FSM). The programme runs through the main **school holidays** and is delivered across Hampshire by the **connect4communities programme.**

Participation in the HAF programme supports our most vulnerable children with:

- receiving **healthy**, **hot** 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

- feeling **safe** and **secure**

- getting **access** to the right **support services**

- returning to **school** feeling **engaged** and **ready to learn**

Changes to HAF 2026

HAF will form part of School Aged Childcare strategy – along with wraparound and free breakfast clubs.

Local authorities will have the discretion to run HAF over a half term (only 5% of the funding will be available). (February 2026 HAF schemes will be running at limited venues).

HAF standards remain the same – Hampshire will be focussing on SEND, the food offer and youth schemes.

Department for Education have confirmed that children receiving FSMs from September 2026 due to family in receipt of Universal credit will not be eligible for HAF.

Crisis and Resilience Fund (replacing the Household support fund) from April 2026 can be used by individuals to support them accessing childcare, transport, food etc.   More details to be released March 2026.

Hampshire are keen to work with schools and organisations already providing support to families during holiday periods. HAF framework applications will re-open later this term but we would also be interested in direct proposals.
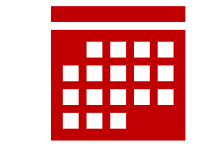
Summer 2025 HAF Parental Survey Headline Findings

Respondents told us that they liked:

The variety of activities available.

The friendly and supportive staff.

Opportunities for social interaction.

Routine and a structured, screen-free environment.

That the children enjoyed the food.

Positive impact on children with special needs.

Location and accessibility.

Barriers to attending included:

Not made aware of HAF by school or local groups.

Not enough available days/sessions.

No local schemes for children to attend.

Positive Impact of HAF on Children, Families and Schools
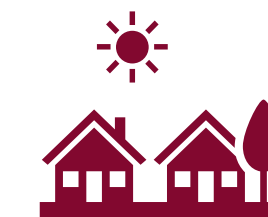
Reduced food insecurity

Increased opportunities for parent / carer's employment

Reduced stress for parent / carer

School readiness

Community cohesion and employment

Improved children's mental health

Improved physical health

Improved social skills and experiences

Research published by Rosie Haste, Postgrad MSc Student from Brighton and Sussex Medical School (September 2024)

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What can schools do to support HAF?

Encourage your eligible FSM children to apply for a HAF code to use at local provision – schools can apply on the behalf of families.

Support families with other vulnerabilities to apply direct to providers for discretionary HAF places. Full list of eligibility criteria is available on the connect4communities website: What is HAF? | Hampshire County Council

Consider running a HAF scheme at your school – you can apply to join as a HAF provider in 2026 or work with a local provider within your school.

Ensure the programme is promoted to the eligible children and families within your school. In the run up to the holidays, we share a school comms with flyers listing schemes running in each Hampshire district. In addition, HAF news is posted to our Facebook page which also shares information about our cost-of-living support projects.

For further information, email the HAF team via *connect4communities@hants.gov.uk* with the subject line **FAO HAF** or visit the connect4communities website: Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme | Hampshire County Council