# Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme 2026

The HAF programme provides eligible children and young people with healthy meals and enriching activities during school holidays benefiting their health, wellbeing, and learning.

This resource is to support **HAF providers (clubs) in conversations with families** about the Free School Meal (FSM) changes and HAF eligibility.

**What's new?**

For the 2026 to 2027 academic year (**after** 2026 summer holiday) this government will extend Free School Meals (FSM) to all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit. HAF will remain aligned to Targeted FSM, to ensure the programme continues to reach those it is designed to support.

## Free School Meals from academic year 2026-2027

**Targeted FSM**
Free school meals for children in households with household income below the existing threshold which is £7400. **This group remains eligible for HAF.**

**Expanded FSM**
From September 2026, FSM will also be available to all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit who have a household income of more than £7400. **This expansion does not include HAF eligibility.**

## Transitional protections

Transitional protections have been in place since 2018 to ensure no one who gained FSM eligibility would lose it while Universal Credit is rolled out. **These protections end at the end of 2025-2026 academic year.**

This means some children who currently access HAF because of FSM protections will no longer be eligible **after** the 2026 summer holiday. This is because their family circumstances mean they no longer meet the Targeted FSM threshold.

## What this means for HAF?

**HAF remains an important and positive programme with funding secured for the next three financial years.**

For the 2026 to 2027 academic year HAF will be aligned to Targeted FSM, this ensures the programme reaches the children and families it is designed to support.

This means some children who attended previously due to transitional protections will no longer be eligible as their family circumstances have changed.

## Tax-free Childcare

Offering paid for places alongside funded HAF places can help families on Universal credit, who fall into expanded FSM, access the provision.

Families on Universal credit can get support with childcare costs.

## Wider Support

Families who are no longer eligible for HAF due to the removal of transitional protections may be able to access other local holiday provision.

If you have a family that is no longer eligible but who you think would particularly benefit from HAF attendance, talk to your LA about whether there is any scope to include them in your provision through HAF discretionary funding

Where families continue to require support, providers can signpost them to LA services, such as Family Hubs, which may be able to offer additional advice.

## Support for providers

As these changes come into effect at the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year, we encourage providers to maintain regular dialogue with their local authority and HAF coordinator.

Local authorities will be able to provide guidance on local implementation and eligibility queries. Where questions cannot be resolved locally, local authorities can raise these with the Department for Education (DfE)

FSM eligibility can be verified quickly and easily through the new FSM Eligibility Checking Service (ECS) which has replaced the existing checking system.