

# Expression of interest

# Title: Evaluation of the Holiday Activities and Food 2021 Scheme

**Project reference: DFERPPU 20-21/030**

**Deadline for expressions of interest:** 11:59pm on Monday 15th February 2021

## Summary

Expressions of interest are sought to undertake the design and delivery of research to evaluate the implementation and impact of the 2021 Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF), which will be rolled out in all local authority areas over the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays. The evaluation will predominantly consider the summer holiday scheme, however there may also be scope to consider the Christmas holiday scheme as well.

The Department will use this research to understand if this approach to delivering HAF nationally meets programme aims as well as informing decisions on future delivery.

## Background

To date the HAF programme has been running for 3 years, with the 2020 scheme involving a £9 million grants programme operating in 17 Local Authority areas. The HAF programme has now been expanded to reach all local authority areas in England over the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021. The investment of up to £220 million will be delivered through grants to local authorities. Grant funding will cover the provision of the free holiday places for 6 weeks a year (4 weeks in the summer, 1 week at Easter and 1 week at Christmas) and the coordination of the programme locally. The Department will be using a support contractor to help Local Authorities to roll out the HAF scheme in 2021.

Local authorities will be asked to ensure that the offer of free holiday club provision is available to children eligible for benefits-related free school meals in their area. We would not expect all eligible children to participate. We also encourage local authorities to make the holiday clubs available to any children not eligible for free school meals, who can pay to attend.

Local authorities and their providers will have flexibility about how they deliver this level of provision to best serve the needs of children and families in their area and are also being encouraged to signpost to wider childcare offers available to families. This flexibility includes when families may access provision, for example, in the Christmas and Easter holidays, local areas could spread a week’s worth of provision across a two-week period. In the summer, they may wish to spread the equivalent number of hours over a longer period. Local authorities will also have flexibility over how the programme can be delivered to older children.

As a result of the HAF programme, we want to:

* Improve the nutrition of children who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals, in the holidays.
* Increase healthy behaviours (e.g. participation in physical and enriching activities) amongst children who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals, in the holidays.
* Improve school readiness (including behaviour, confidence, and socialisation) amongst children who are eligible for FSM
* Improve parent confidence and behaviour around purchasing and preparing healthy meals on a sustainable basis

## Evaluation aims

The aim of the research is to evaluate the impact of HAF 2021 on programme aims (impact evaluation) and to understand whether it is being implemented as intended (process evaluation). We have previously conducted an [evaluation of](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/945255/Evaluation_of_the_2019_holiday_activities_and_food_programme_-_December_2020.pdf#:~:text=In%20March%202019,%20Ecorys%20UK%20was%20commissioned%20by,2019.%201.%20Due%20to%20COVID-19,%20publication%20of%20this) HAF 2019, but as noted above, the HAF scheme has significantly expanded since then. The evaluation of HAF 2021 covers several objectives:

1. To evaluate the impact of the HAF 2021 programme on nutrition, healthy behaviours and school readiness of FSM eligible children. Research questions include:
* Does the programme, or increased access to the programme, improve nutrition for FSM eligible children during the summer holidays?
* Does the programme, or increased access to the programme, increase healthy behaviours amongst FSM eligible children during the summer holidays?
* Does the programme, or increased access to the programme, improve school readiness amongst FSM eligible children?
1. To evaluate the impact of the HAF 2021 programme on parent behaviour and confidence around purchasing and preparing healthy meals. Research questions include:
* Does the programme, or increased access to the programme, improve parent behaviour and confidence around purchasing and preparing healthy meals?
1. To understand how the HAF programme is being implemented, whether it is being implemented as intended and what factors enable effective implementation. Research questions include:
* What are the characteristics of the local programmes being delivered in terms of their content and duration, and how does this vary by local delivery structure, provider type, area and region etc.?
* Are programmes being implemented as intended and in accordance with the department’s specified criteria?
* What support and guidance do LAs and providers need from the support contractor?
* What is the level of demand for HAF provision (e.g. attendance) and what factors affect take-up by eligible families?
* What are the perceived barriers and enablers to effective provision at a) local authority level and b) programme level?
* How effectively have LAs attracted support from stakeholders and developed effective partnerships to increase local provision?
* What plans have local coordinators and programmes put in place to ensure the provision is sustainable beyond the initial funding period?
* What are the views of providers, participants and parents/carers about the provision and its impact on nutrition, family eating habits, healthy behaviours, and school readiness?
* To what extent has family engagement and local comms campaigns increased awareness of wider Government childcare offers?

## Methodology

At full tender stage, the Department will ask bidders to detail a proposed methodology, alongside a rationale for the recommended approach. We anticipate that there will be several ways to answer the key research questions. Below, we outline possible approaches to the process and impact strands of this evaluation which we consider will appropriately answer our research questions. Whilst we have set out broad parameters for a methodology, bidders that are invited to submit a full tender will be free to suggest amendments if, based on their proven expertise, they can provide a clear rationale as to how this will successfully meet the key aims of the research. Similarly, if bidders feel additional, innovative elements could be added to this research to better meet the requirements, they are welcome to suggest them at the full tender stage.

**Monitoring data:**

* Local authorities would be asked to collect data on the number and characteristics of attendees (FSM, SEND, ethnicity etc.), sessions attended, type/structure of provision, and activities and food provided. This data can be used to inform the process evaluation.

**Process evaluation:**

* Case studies in approx. 10-15 Local Authorities: to include interviews, focus groups and observations (dependent on Covid-19 restrictions) with LAs, providers, parents and young people attending HAF clubs over the summer holidays.
* Approx. 60-70 semi-structured qualitative telephone interviews with LAs, providers and parents, to gather information from a wider range of clubs/local authority areas. Optional 15-20 follow-up interviews with LAs and providers over Christmas holidays.
* LA/coordinator and provider surveys to supplement MI collection.

**Impact evaluation:**

We propose a quasi-experimental approach using surveys to evaluate the impact on programme outcomes.

Prior to the full impact evaluation being carried out, we would expect a feasibility study to be conducted in order to ensure that the proposed approach will be able to provide accurate insights into the impacts of the HAF programme. We would only wish to progress to a full impact evaluation if the feasibility study showed that the programme impacts could be accurately measured.

Selection of the empirical approach will be informed by feasibility and cost effectiveness of data collection. Three options, which can be combined are:

1. **Instrumental variables analysis.** Variables such as ‘distance from provision’ or ‘being just above or below the FSM eligibility threshold’ can instrument for treatment. A mid-point or end of provision survey would be administered to capture data on holiday clubs attendance and outcomes.
2. **Differences in differences.** For any counterfactual group, we suggest administering a pre- and post-survey to a sample of parents and pupils to capture data on nutrition, healthy behaviours, school readiness and eating habits in families of FSM eligible children.
3. **Regression Discontinuity Design:** We propose using data sources, such as Universal Credit income data, to compare the average outcomes of pupils either side of the FSM eligibility threshold to see if participation in clubs or increased access to HAF provision improves outcomes.

At this stage, the Department does *not* expect EOIs to contain a specification or methodology for research. This EOI is looking to establish if interested parties are able to meet the following basic criteria, in order to then make appropriate invitations to tender.

## Assessment criteria

## Understanding of the requirement (10%)

Interested parties should present evidence of an understanding of the Department’s requirements, and demonstration of knowledge of the aims of the Holiday Activities and Food scheme.

#### Experience in process and impact evaluation research design (30%)

Interested parties must have a proven track record of conducting similar evaluation research, as well as evidenced experience of quantitative research techniques, particularly including survey design and analysis. Experience of quasi-experimental impact evaluation analysis would be particularly welcomed.

#### Deliverability from Spring/Summer 2021 (30%)

Interested parties should display evidence of organisational capacity and project management skills to deliver this research within the specified timescales. They should be able to commence work on this project as soon as possible following the ITT deadline. We expect this research to continue until mid-Autumn 2021, with the potential to conduct follow-up research on the Christmas HAF scheme in early 2022. We anticipate the majority of the research will be conducted and analysed during the summer and early autumn.

#### Experience working & engaging with a range of research participants (30%)

Interested parties should have experience recruiting, working with and engaging with research participants. As Local Authorities, HAF service providers and parents will be the main research participants, experience working with these groups is particularly sought. Prior experience in engaging with low-income families, particularly around improving response rates, would also be advantageous. Understanding of the best methods to recruit and retain these types of research participants should be evidenced.

**Expressions of interest should succinctly confirm the ability of an interested party to meet the above set of criteria, rather than present a methodology for research.**

The following scoring system will apply for each assessment criteria within EOIs:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Mark** | **Description** |
| 0 | Fails to meet the criteria |
| 1 | Meets some of the criteria |
| 2 | Meets most of the criteria |
| 3 | Fully meets the criteria |
| 4 | Exceeds the criteria |

## Timings

Deadline for EOIs – 11.59pm on Monday 15th February 2021

Review EOIs – w/c 15th February 2021

Invitations to Tender (ITT) – Monday 22nd February 2021

Deadline for ITT – Monday 8th March 2021

CVs and references are not required at this stage.

Expressions of interests submitted must be no more than 1000 words overall. Please do not include website links or references. Anything longer than 1000 words will be disregarded.

Collaborative/ consortia expressions of interest are welcome and may be advisable to score highly across the criteria.

We will produce a short Q&A during the EOI, with responses to any questions asked. Questions will be anonymised and any commercially sensitive information removed. Should you wish to ask a question and/or receive a copy of this note, please email grace.ablett@education.gov.uk or christopher.gray@education.gov.uk

| **Closing date for EOIs: 11:59pm on Monday 15th February 2021****Send your EOI form to:** **grace.ablett@education.gov.uk** **and** **christopher.gray@education.gov.uk** |
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## How to submit an expressions of interest

You must submit an expression of interest (EOI) in order to be considered to be invited to tender. To do so, please complete the ‘NEW EOI form’ form which can be found under attachments in the ContractsFinder listing. A submission of an EOI does not guarantee an invitation to tender and the Department does not routinely advise organisations that they have not been successful in being invited to tender. Feedback is however available on request.

All contracts are let on the basis of the Department’s Terms & Conditions, a copy is available attached to the ContractsFinder listing. You are encouraged to check these before submitting your expression of interest, as these form part of your contractual obligations.

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