



MedwayGo

ANNUAL REPORT

2023/ 24

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Introduction to MedwayGo

What is MedwayGo?

MedwayGo is Medway Council's Holiday and Food (HAF) program which provides children who receive benefits-related Free School Meals with a hot and nutritious meal, enrichment and physical activities during the School Holidays. This service is offered to eligible families at no cost, and is funded by the Department for Education (DfE).

MedwayGo is targeted at children aged 5 – 16, and is delivered during the Spring, Summer and Winter holidays. Provision is usually available for 4 days during both the Spring and Winter holidays, and for at least 16 days during the Summer, totalling a minimum of 24 days each year.

Each daily session is at least 4 hours long with 1 hour or more of physical activity, a hot, nutritious meal and an enrichment activity included. There is a wide range of activities including soft play, multi-sports, outdoor activities, STEM activities, arts and SEND provision that can be booked via go.medway.gov.uk/book based on preference, needs and interests.

Why MedwayGo?

The primary objective of MedwayGo is to ensure that children who receive Free School Meals during term time can similarly access a hot meal which meets school meal standards during holidays. HAF provides respite and reduces pressures parents may face during longer holidays, while ensuring that eligible children are physically active and engaged thus mitigating social isolation and its impacts.

Children who attend MedwayGo can access premium provisions, activities and events at no cost to their families. Free bus passes are also available to families with additional needs or who require transport support.

All Provider teams are DBS-checked to ensure the safety of children during sessions and have appropriate levels of training for their respective provisions.

Additional Eligibility

DfE grants local authorities 15% funding flexibility to extend HAF for free to children who are not FSM eligible. In Medway, this concession has been extended to

- Children with SEND and/or EHC plans
- Children from military families
- Children in care
- Vulnerable children

Attendance

In 2023/24, there were a total of 11,788 FSM-eligible children aged 5 – 16 in Medway. Of these, 4,988 unique children attended a total of 14,462 MedwayGo sessions. This indicates an overall adoption rate of 42%.

38% of the total attendance in 2023/ 24 was recorded during Spring, 51% was recorded over Summer and 11% was recorded at Winter.

The highest attendance was expectedly over the 4-week Summer delivery period where a total of 2,565 unique children attended 18,516 sessions.

Budget constraints caused by an unintended oversubscription over the Summer provision led to much smaller capacity over the Winter provision.

**51% of
MedwayGo
attendance
was recorded
over the
Summer**

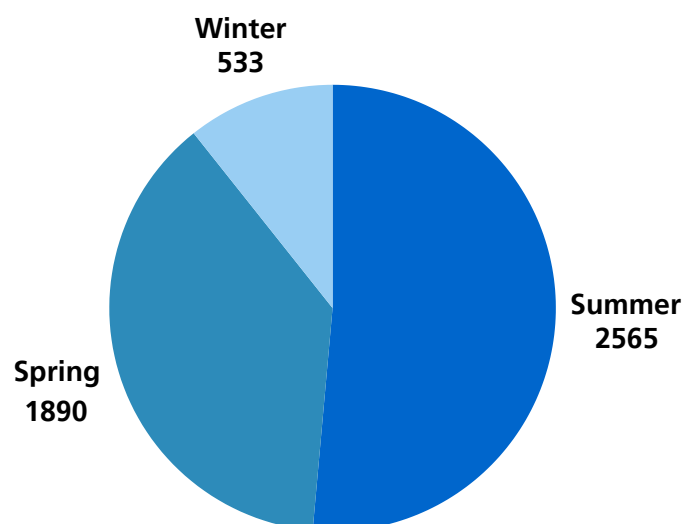


Chart 1: 2023 Number of Unique Children by Provision

More children of Primary age attended provisions than those of Secondary age.

A total of 4025 unique children of Primary age attended MedwayGo in 2023/24 compared to 963 Secondary school children.

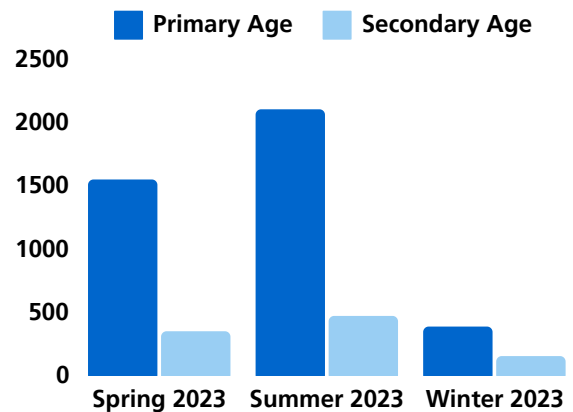


Chart 2: 2023 Unique Attendance by School Age

SEND Provision

946 attendees were listed as having an EHC Plan and/or SEND. To increase access and also promote inclusive experiences for children with lower-level needs, we are supporting mainstream activities to incorporate SEND provision into their universal offers.

MedwayGo now has 4 providers; ROCC, Strive, Sendtivate and The Rowans, that deliver bespoke 1:1 or 2:1 SEND-exclusive activities to children with higher level needs. These premium provisions are in high demand and regularly receive a lot of positive feedback from families.

Some of the SEND-exclusive activities include:

- Magic shows
- Bouncy Castles
- Trampolining
- Cooking
- Animal encounters
- Messy play
- Sports sessions
- Painting

**19% of
MedwayGo
attendees were
listed as SEND**



MedwayGo Programme Components

Nutritional Meal Provision

All MedwayGo activities are required to daily provide each child with a hot, nutritious meal which meets the school meal standards. This ensures that children who are on Free School Meals during term time can get similar nutrition at MedwayGo. Providers are also encouraged to provide healthy snacks, specifically fruit, during the day.

There are several MedwayGo registered caterers who provide meals to school meal standards. A register of these caterers is available to providers, and providers can also engage other caterers as long as MedwayGo is pre - informed and can confirm they meet all requirements.

MedwayGo Caterers 2023/34

- Bakes & Bites
- Forks & Corks
- Fuzion Active
- Medway Norse
- Contract Dining Company (sourced by provider)
- Cuxton Bakehouse (sourced by provider)
- Gillingham Street Angels (sourced by provider)

Quality Assurance checks are performed routinely to ensure clubs comply with nutritional standards and maintain high levels of service quality.

Where an issue is identified, it is logged and promptly addressed with the provider. Corrective measures are agreed, refresher training is offered and followed up with regular inspections to ensure and track improvement. These corrections are also reviewed during provision to ensure that they have been applied and sustained.



Nutritional Education

Nutritional education and the promotion of healthy lifestyles are key components of the programme as MedwayGo operates within the Food and Nutrition team of Medway Council's Public Health department.

All MedwayGo providers are required to provide hot and nutritious meals as well as nutritional education to each child. This nutritional education is based around the sensory exploration model, using fun activities to improve knowledge and awareness of healthy eating among children. The children participate in activities which include planting and growing fruit and vegetables, food preparation and cooking, discussions around nutrition, and tasting sessions for children to try new foods.

In previous years, third party providers delivered in-person nutritional education to children at various camps. This year, MedwayGo staff and other members of the Food and Nutrition team delivered regular Train-the-Trainer sessions to providers. These sessions gave providers the guidance and resources to confidently deliver nutritional education through fun and engaging activities.

The Food and Nutrition team also provided hands-on sessions at clubs that required additional support. These sessions focused on food preparation, learning about different fruits and vegetables, discussions about the children's food and drink choices, and their health implications.

Collaborating with Medway Adult Education's Family Learning team, this nutritional education was also extended to families through Brunch Clubs, where parents and children prepared their own brunches whilst learning about nutrition together. Similar sessions were delivered by the Medway Family Solutions (Early Help Service) at the Children's Hubs, emphasising the preparation of affordable, quick and easy recipes while engaging in discussions on healthy food choices.

Physical Activity

MedwayGo provides a range of physical activities with each provider usually having several options to keep the children active and engaged. Each day, providers deliver at least 60 minutes of physical activity during their sessions with providers giving a detailed account of what activities would be on offer during the tendering process.

Providers who have primary activities that are not physical activity focused, such as computer-based sessions, include other activities to meet this requirement. They often work with local sports coaches to deliver engaging multi-sport activities which ensures the children are active during their time at the clubs.

Enrichment Activities

Enrichment activities offer a wide range of extra-curricular benefits, and contribute to children's overall development and well-being. These activities promote personal development, creativity, critical thinking, social skills, improved emotional wellbeing, life skills, and cultural awareness. Enrichment activities also enhance leadership, teamwork, future opportunities and problem-solving skills in children, in a fun and enjoyable environment.

All providers deliver various enrichment activities ranging from nutritional education through playing or working with food, physical activities, engaging with animals to promote empathy and care, music, dance and drama, camping, wall climbing, coding and escape rooms. The variety ensures the children get new and exciting experiences, that they may otherwise not have been able to attend, which give opportunities for improved skills and knowledge.

For instance, based on feedback from previous years, an immersive family pantomime show for children aged 4 – 6 years was introduced to promote family-based activities during the Christmas holidays. This included a low-noise session to accommodate SEND families.



Quality Assurance Checks

The MedwayGo delivery team conducts unannounced, on-site inspections of all providers during each provision to perform Quality Assurance checks. These are a combination of visual, physical and verbal assessments of the provision, venue, processes, children and food offering. They ensure sustained compliance with HAF standards and Safeguarding procedures.

Feedback from each Quality Assurance check is logged and shared with providers during their 1:1 post-programme assessments. Where an issue is identified either during delivery or a Quality Assurance check, a Programme Improvement Plan is developed to address and mitigate future occurrence. This is shared with the provider, next steps are agreed and tracked closely to ensure resolution over an agreed period. The issue(s) are also checked in subsequent provisions to avoid reoccurrence.

Programme Evaluation Assessment Sessions

Pre and post-programme evaluation sessions are essential components of MedwayGo's service enhancement and feedback loop.

Providers are required to attend group and individual pre and post-programme sessions. During pre-programme sessions, providers are reminded on MedwayGo requirements and expectations, receive updates from the central HAF team and have an opportunity for peer-to-peer knowledge sharing. Any provider(s) with a Programme Improvement Plan must also have a 1:1 pre-programme meeting to ensure that all issue(s) have been resolved and solutions are in place to avoid reoccurrence.

After each provision, a general post- programme evaluation session is held with all providers to review the provision, celebrate successes, address challenges and discuss lessons learned. This is another opportunity for peer-to-peer engagement and learning among providers. In addition, each provider also has a 1:1 post-evaluation meeting where they receive an analysis their numbers (availability, bookings and attendance), engage in discussions and receive recommendations, as well as updates on key dates towards planning for the next provision.

MedwayGo Steering Group

The programme receives guidance from the MedwayGo steering group which is made up of internal stakeholders including members of the Public Health, Family Solutions, Sport and Youth teams, who help to improve the offering to varied target audiences. There are also external stakeholders, including the Medway Parents and Carers Forum, who provide SEND advisory from a lived experience perspective to continuously help improve the SEND provision.

Signposting and Support

All providers are briefed on the services available to families in Medway and can signpost families to a dedicated page on the MedwayGo website (go.medway.gov.uk/support/). This page provides details and links to various services available across Medway to access support on healthy lifestyle services, fussy eating, weight management, housing advice, Citizen's advice, support, domestic violence, special needs management, food and Household Support Fund.

Information is also provided on Medway Council's and A Better Medway's websites, on our social media accounts, and via email. The signposting and support information has been particularly useful to the community of military families living in Medway. Information is also shared on the local offer through various events, family support days and visits to the barracks. Extending MedwayGo access to military families supports their community integration and reduces social isolation.

MedwayGo Fun Days

To promote MedwayGo directly to families, two Fun Days were held during the year - a Summer Fun Day on Tuesday, 25th July and a Winter Fun Day on Friday, 22nd December.

Providers showcased their services to families and children enjoyed taster sessions of some services available in the upcoming holiday. Booking assistance was provided to families who may have had barriers to access.

All children received a hot Christmas dinner at the Christmas Fun Day, and a recommendation from the Medway Parents and Carers Forum to introduce a SEND hour will be implemented in the next Summer Fun Day.

Marketing and Promotion

The MedwayGo website (go.medway.gov.uk) is the repository of information about the programme. It includes an eligibility checker, a booking platform, booking instructions and details on available camps. It also hosts a blog with resources for children, like recipes and activities, that families can use throughout the year.

MedwayGo's Facebook page, and other Medway Council pages, highlight the benefits of HAF, promote upcoming HAF programmes and providers' offers. They also share information on launch dates and booking details while redirecting traffic to the MedwayGo website.

Articles in Medway Council publications, such as the Food Partnership, Physical Activity Alliance, Housing, Climate Change and Medway Matters newsletters, all frequently feature information on MedwayGo. These publications reach diverse audiences to inform those working with our target group about the programme. Information is also distributed through HeadWay to school headteachers, and further distributed among school and education staff across Medway.

The MedwayGo team delivers regular in-person and virtual presentations to target groups of stakeholders including families, administrative staff, teachers, the police and nurses to promote the programme, and to provide on-site booking support to families.

MedwayGo Providers

MedwayGo's success is due to the unwavering support of our partner providers. Almost all MedwayGo providers are small businesses located within Medway. MedwayGo adds to the social value of the community by enabling these businesses to become registered providers through the Council's Dynamic Purchasing System. These businesses, in turn, work with MedwayGo's delivery team to provide impactful programmes, facilitate job creation and multiply those positive social impacts across Medway.

Collaborative Academic Research

HAF Impact Assessment on Children & Families

We have partnered with the Brighton and Sussex Medical School to evaluate the impact of the HAF programme on participating children, and its extended effects on eligible children and families in Medway.

The research, which runs from 2022 - 2024, aims to identify areas for HAF delivery improvement, as well as highlight the social, health and wellbeing impact of all participants.

Early findings from the research identified that most of the respondents were aged 5 - 10. This creates an opportunity for more providers and more promotion targetted at older children as HAF is for 5 - 15 year olds.

There were also some incidences of younger children (4 years or less) who accompanied older siblings to activities.

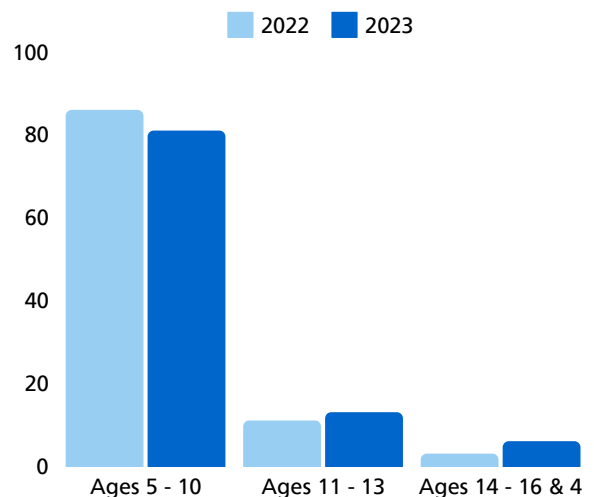
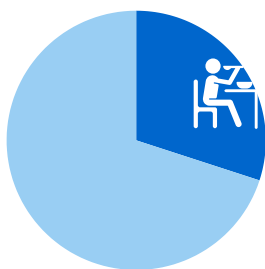


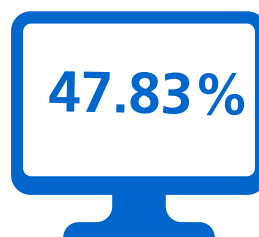
Chart 3: Percentage Attendance by Age

Social Impacts

From the 2023 study, some identified social benefits of children attending MedwayGo include reduced loneliness and social isolation, making new friends, and increased confidence during and after provisions.



30% said they would likely have **eaten lunch alone** if they were at home and not at HAF



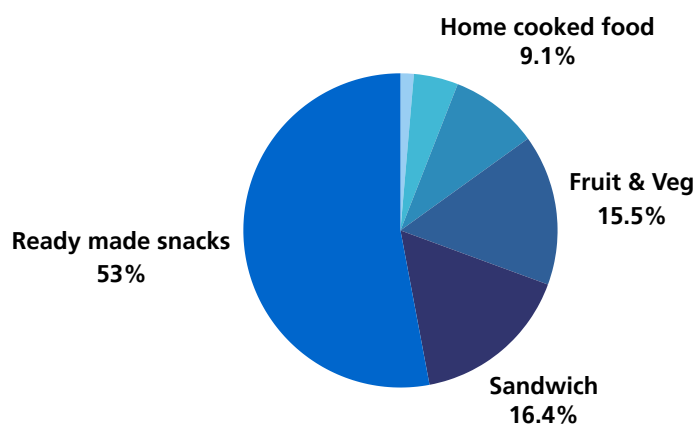
47.83% would have been **in front of a screen** (phone, tablet, computer or TV) if not at HAF



71% of parents acknowledged HAF's contribution to **social skills and confidence**

Food and Nutritional Impacts

The study highlighted that while a hot, nutritious meal is required at HAF, only 9.13% of respondents said they would have eaten a cooked meal if they were at home.



Of the respondents, 52.97% said they would have eaten ready-made (ultra-processed) snacks, and 16.44% said they would have had a sandwich.

Chart 4: What would you have had for lunch at home?

As part of nutritional and enrichment activities, children are often introduced to new foods, spices and flavours which they may be averse to trying, or unable to try, at home.



30% of children attending HAF tried new foods and flavours for the first time



70% of children ate fruit at HAF compared to 20% who said they eat fruit at home

The initial findings of this multi-year study indicate that children experience positive social and nutritional impacts from attending HAF during and after the provisions.

This research is still ongoing and more findings would be shared on go.medway.gov.uk once published by the University.

2023/ 2024 Key challenges

Oversubscription

The delivery team was unable to confirm participant eligibility prior to Summer 2023 when the new booking platform with eligibility checker was introduced. Following the adoption of this platform, providers booked more spaces than planned for the Summer provision which caused an overspend. With less funding, a smaller Winter provision than initially forecast was delivered. Providers supported MedwayGo by adopting cost-cutting measures like exploring cheaper or free venues to ensure delivery of a memorable Winter provision despite the challenge.

Change of Provider Payment Terms

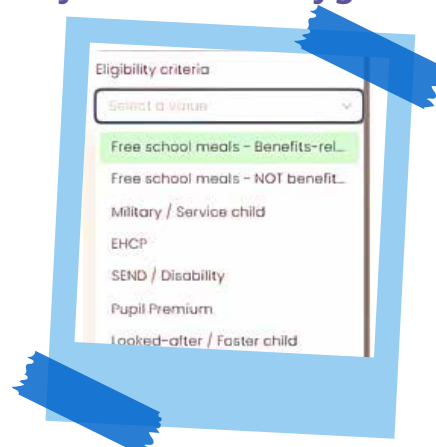
Provider payment terms were changed from 100% for available spaces to paying for booked spaces only. While this removed the burden of paying for empty spaces from MedwayGo, it was not well received by some providers. To increase reach to families in their communities, providers were supported with centralised publicity and social media support.

New Booking System

The newly commissioned Plinth booking system includes an eligibility checker to ensure that the provision is delivered to eligible families. However, this adoption created a steep learning curve for the delivery team, providers and families. Previously registered families had to re-confirm eligibility, re-register, and learn to use the new platform.

Families now confirm eligibility for MedwayGo via bit.ly/bookmedwaygo.

MedwayGo now uses the Plinth booking platform with eligibility checker



Exclusion of Ineligible Participants

The introduction of the eligibility checker led to several participants being excluded as they did not satisfy the eligibility requirements. To reduce cases of exclusion, paid provisions will be introduced by some providers.

Uneven Interest in Provisions

It was also identified that some activities were more popular than others which created an uneven demand for some provisions over others. For example, family-based activities were more popular at Christmas than other activities. This was a learning opportunity and allowed us to reflect on available offers ahead of Winter provision in 2024.

Low Interest among Teens and Youths

Uptake was low among teens and there is a need to work closely with Medway Council's Youth team to access this audience. This may require different promotional material, language and channels.

Changes in Delivery Team

There were staff changes within the MedwayGo delivery team which caused minor disruptions that were well managed with the support of the larger Public Health team.

Working with Community Charities & Providers

Further opportunities to work closely with smaller charities and local providers have been identified. We will continue to identify long-term opportunities to collaborate with more grassroots providers, nurseries, religious and cultural organisations, to encourage their participation in MedwayGo and to increase available provision across Medway.

The Year Ahead

The current funding cycle of the Department of Education's Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme runs from 2022/ 23 - 2024/25. As the last year in this cycle, MedwayGo will make minimal changes to the programme in 2024/25, while identifying strategic process improvements for future funding cycles.

Process Improvements

A key focus area for 2024/ 25 would be adopting processes for enhanced resource and booking management. These would include the adoption of a streamlined procurement process with a combined proposal review period for Summer and Winter to enable more effective planning during the year. Providers will continue to be paid for booked spaces only while being supported to convert bookings to attendance through a planned MedwayGo promotional campaign and social media training to equip providers to increase awareness of their programmes.

Identified opportunities to work closely with the Wraparound Care and Youth teams would also be explored.

Increasing Youth Participation

While overall attendance among young people (aged 13–16) has been historically low, some children who previously participated at primary school level have now grown into secondary school age. This creates an opportunity as these participants are already familiar with the programme. MedwayGo will partner with the Youth team to reach new audiences of young people by exploring new activities and promotions.

Collaborating with School Caterers

MedwayGo will explore the opportunity to collaborate with school caterers to centrally produce and distribute a unified menu to all providers. If achieved, this collaboration would ensure all meals adhere to school food standards, with a fixed, seasonal menu so families are aware of meals being offered in advance. This is expected to also achieve cost savings to the programme.

Promoting Provider Sustainability

To equip providers for sustainability outside of and beyond the programme, several trainings would be made available throughout the year on programme-related topics such as PREVENT, LADO, safeguarding, managing difficult behaviour and nutritional education. An in-person MedwayGo Provider Network meeting would also be held to gather, share learnings and provide recommendations on the future of MedwayGo.

New providers would not be onboarded in 2024 after the Spring provision.

2024/ 2025 Provision dates

2024/ 2025 Provisions are scheduled to hold on the following dates:

Spring: book from 4 March for activities between 4 - 9 April, 2024

Summer: book from 1 July for activities between 29 July – 23 August, 2024

Winter: book from 2 December for activities between 23 December - 3 January, 2025.

With Winter dates falling between 2024 and 2025, providers choose their delivery dates based on their target audience and available resources.

Appendix I - Feedback

Parents' feedback

- As a parent of an autistic child, we definitely got a few hours of respite. Thank you so much for the support.
- Just good to see my daughter smiling and telling us about the activities after being there
- I felt very proud that my daughter tried a new experience and was happy to see she had enjoyed it and learnt new skills. We all enjoyed the new dance moves she showed us when she came home.
- The holiday activities gave my child time to be in a different ,structured environment where he can have fun, make friendships and learn from different activities. As a parent, I have also benefited from my child's experience, knowing that he is able to adapt easily to new environments.
- The activities kept my child from being lonely and bored and misbehaving which meant we had a calm environment at home.
- It kept my kids happy and made me feel less guilty that I'm unable to spend money on these activities.
- We can't praise SEND camp enough. We were made to feel welcome and comfortable from the second we walked in, the staff were very attentive to the children's needs and engaged with each and every child. We aim to slowly get my son used to us leaving him at camp for short periods of time and then increase how long we leave for so that he can eventually be left for a whole session which would enable us to have a few hours to ourselves. That would be extremely beneficial for us.
- It was nice my daughter was able to do something as I could not have afforded to pay for her to go out or have the meal.

Parents' feedback (cont'd)

- I was happy she had meaningful activities to engage in and also built some social skills. It was nice to know that she was not just going to use the tablet or watch TV all day.
- MedwayGo have opportunities to do things together as a family, such as swimming, which we all thoroughly enjoyed.
- Took the pressure off us to have to find the money for activities out of our own pocket with costs rising everywhere.
- Gave my daughter fun filled days rather than being stuck at home and I had no guilt of her being bored as she has an autistic brother who doesn't like to go out much.
- My 14 year old has SEND and it's the first time he had accessed holiday activities it was a massive boost for his confidence.
- My son who suffers from ADHD, ODD & autism joined this club over summer. The team was amazing and supportive of his needs. He learnt a lot and had so much fun that he wanted to go every day though he usually struggles with new environments or activities. I could not recommend this club enough for giving him an amazing summer of fun!
- My daughter was totally transformed in 3 weeks from shy and timid to an outgoing would-be actress. I will be forever grateful to all at Icon for bringing this side of her to the front.
- My girls love trying new activities being autistic, the camps really helped them with meeting new people and developing confidence.
- When my children are at MedwayGo, I know they are getting exercise and being well looked after.

Children's feedback

- When at MedwayGo, we talk about things that make us happy and joyful.
- I like how all the coaches are really nice and have a sense of humour.
- It is really fun here.
- I enjoy the food!
- They are friendly and approachable and made activities enjoyable.
- I love all of the staff here!
- Everything here is perfect!

**Feedback may be edited for brevity.*



Appendix II - Statement of Expenditure

Name of Organization: Medway Council

Name of Approved Project: Medway Go - Holiday Activities and Food programme

Financial Year: 2023/ 24

EXPENDITURE	
Expenditure Type	(£)
Administrative Expenditure (include all costs incurred in carrying out the administrative functions of the HAF coordination in your LA)	102,248
Capital Expenditure (include cost of any equipment purchased to support the programme that meets the definition for capital expenditure, as set out in the HAF guidance on gov.uk)	0
Programme Expenditure (this should include all of the costs of providing free HAF places, including payments to providers and third parties for services provided)	1,057,012
Other Expenditure (any expenditure that does not fall into the above categories - provide a brief description of what this expenditure is)	1,539
TOTAL EXPENDITURE (1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024)	1,160,800

Statement of Expenditure (cont'd)

PAYMENTS FROM DfE	
Total of the payments from DfE for the HAF 2023-24 programme received by the LA between 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024	(£)
TOTAL	1,160,800
UNDERSPEND	
Declare any underspend in overall funding here. An underspend is any remaining, unspent funding from the maximum allocation. For example, if the maximum allocation for the 2023 programme was £800,000 and the total cost of delivering the 2023 programme between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 was £775,000, then declare underspend of £25,000.	(£)
Underspend on Grant (if applicable)	0

Appendix III - Provider Register

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anchorians Football Club• Bakes n Bites• Body Buddies• Challenger Troop• Chatham Central Theatre• City Way Nursery• Code Edge Technologies• Elite Pathways• Forks and Corks• Fuzion Active• Great Leaps Adventure CIC• Group 23 Services Ltd (MFSE)• Hoo Sport• Icon Theatre Club• Jam Coding Medway• Jimmy's Tennis CIC• Little Yoga Warriors• London Gospel Music Company• Loveland• Lower Bush Alpacas• Medway Adult Education• Medway Family Hubs• Medway Greenspaces• Medway Norse | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Medway Sport• Medway Theatres• Medway Youth Service• MidKent College• Monkey Bizz• Ninja Warriors• Olympia Boxing• Peekaplayers Ltd• Raising Youth• Rivermead Outreach Community Challenge (ROCC) *• Rochester Dance Junction• SENDtivate*• St Francis of Assisi• Street Soccer Foundation• Street Games UK• Sport on your Doorstep• Strive PE and Sport *• The Future of Sport• The Right Step Dance Academy• The Rowans AP Academy*• The Street Soccer Foundation• WHAM Theatre Schools |
|--|--|

***SEND-exclusive provisions**

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