



MedwayGo

ANNUAL REPORT

2024/25

Introduction

What is MedwayGo?

MedwayGo is Medway Council's Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) program which provides children who receive benefit-related Free School Meals with enrichment and physical activities as well as a hot, nutritious meal, 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 16 days during the Summer, totalling a minimum of 24 days each year.

Each daily session is a minimum of 4 hours long with at least 1 hour of physical activity, a nutritious meal and an enrichment activity included. There is a wide range of activities including soft play, multi-sports, outdoor activities, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) activities, arts and SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities). These can be booked via the website: go.medway.gov.uk/book and spaces are available based on preference, needs and interests.

Why MedwayGo?

The primary objective of MedwayGo is to ensure that children who receive benefit-related Free School Meals during term time can similarly access a hot meal which meets school meal standards and access to enriching activities during holidays. It also aims to provide enriching activities during these periods, helping to reduce inequalities faced by families. HAF provides respite and reduces pressures parents feel during longer holidays, while ensuring that eligible children are physically active and engaged thus mitigating social isolation and its attendant impacts.

Children who attend MedwayGo can access premium provisions, activities and events at no cost to their families' giving children and their families opportunities to access activities they might usually not be able to. Free bus passes are also available to some families with additional needs or who may require transport support.

All Providers that are commissioned by the MedwayGo team undergo DBS-checks to ensure the safety of children during sessions and are checked for the appropriate levels of training for their respective provisions.

Additional Eligibility

The Department of Education allows local authorities 15% funding flexibility to offer HAF places for free to children who are not Free School Meal eligible. In Medway, this flexibility has been extended to:

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

Attendance

In 2024/25, there were 11,788 children aged 5 – 16 in Medway who were eligible for FSM. Of these, 11,788 children, 1,882 children attended at Easter, 3,103 attended during the summer and 1,134 attended during the winter programme. Altogether, these children attended a total of 23,758 MedwayGo sessions.

In 2024/25, 18% of the total attendance was recorded at Easter, 73% was recorded over Summer and 9% was recorded over the Winter holidays.

As expected, the highest attendance was recorded during the 4-week summer delivery period, where a total of 3,103 unique children attended 17,476 sessions.

This year, there has been a notable rise in the proportion of booked activities that were ‘actually attended’ with the average attendance rate increasing from 67% last year to 88%.

Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Provision

A total of 1,594 attendees were identified as having an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan and/or SEND. To increase access and promote inclusive experiences for children with lower-level needs, we are working with mainstream active providers to incorporate SEND provision into their universal offers. To support this, SEND training has been delivered to all providers, helping them make their sessions fully inclusive.

MedwayGo has 4 SEND 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.

MedwayGo Programme Components

Nutritional Meal Provision

All MedwayGo activities are required to provide each child with a hot, nutritious meal which meets the school meal standards across all sessions. 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 approved Caterers 2024/25

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

Routine Quality Assurance checks are performed during each holiday programme 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 improvements are also reviewed during provision to ensure that they have been applied and sustained. If activity providers continue to not meet school food standards, MedwayGo holds the right to decline providers for future holiday programmes.

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.

This year, the Food and Nutrition team within Medway Public Health 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. Providers have been more confident to deliver this education, which has helped providers embed nutrition throughout the whole provision, rather than a one-off activity run by an external party.



Physical Activity

MedwayGo provides a range of physical activities with each provider typically offering 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.

Some examples of the variety of physical activities are listed below.

- Football
- Basketball
- Racquet Sports
- Swimming
- Karate and Kickboxing
- Boxing
- Dance
- Indoor Assault Courses
- Rock Climbin
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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. These activities also enhance leadership, teamwork, future opportunities and problem-solving skills in children, in a fun and enjoyable environment.

All providers deliver various types of 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, arts, 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.

Feedback from previous years and recent insights from local parents revealed that they were interested in activities that families could enjoy together. Based on this feedback, we have continued to offer a series of family-focused activities during the Winter and Easter provision which included: grotto visits, pantomimes and zoo visits (including Relaxed versions for children with SEND). These activities were well received, seeing 100% of those tickets booked. Family tickets were offered again during the Easter programme, activities such as Diggerland, zoo visits and local theatre showings. Again, these activities were fully booked and had 100% attendance.

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, child safety and food offering. They ensure sustained compliance with HAF standards and Safeguarding procedures.

Feedback from each Quality Assurance check is documented and shared with providers during their 1:1 post-programme assessments, as well as the large provider evaluation meeting. 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. If an issue continues to arise and the issue does not resolve, the provider may be removed as an approved provider.

Programme Evaluation Assessment Sessions

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

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 collaborates with various partners to receive guidance including the MedwayGo steering group. The Group is made up of internal stakeholders including members of the Public Health team, Family Solutions, Sport and Youth teams who work to enhance the programme for the diverse target audiences. Collaboration is also facilitated with external stakeholders, such as the Medway Parents and Carers Forum, who provide SEND advisory from a lived experience perspective to continuously help improve the SEND provision. The steering group was brought together this year during some insights research the MedwayGo team funded. This gave members of the steering group opportunity to share their views on the programme and how to improve it.

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. There is a central list of signposting that is circulated to each provider before every programme. Information is also shared on the local offer through various events, family support days and visits to our local military families through Military Barrack events for their workforce. MedwayGo is also linked on the Medway Council webpage.

MedwayGo Fun Days

To promote MedwayGo directly to families, two Fun Days were held during the year - a Summer Fun Day on Tuesday, 23rd July and a Winter Fun Day on Saturday, 21st December. Each Fun Day started with a quiet hour where families of children with SEND were able to enjoy a low-noise version of the event before the main activities commenced.

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 hot healthy meal during the summer funday. For the Christmas funday, MedwayGo worked with a local producer to provide fruit and vegetable goody bags for families. This supported families in having fresh items to put towards their festive meals and improve the consumption of fruit during the holidays. These were well received by all.

Both fun days had a range of Medway internal and external support services providing engaging activities and information. These included support and information around oral health, food and nutrition as well as local information about local support services.

The summer event had an attendance of 377 children, whilst the Christmas event was a smaller event, with 50 children attending.

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 Medway 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.

Provider Network Meeting

The first MedwayGo provider meeting was held on 16th November where several providers met physically in a social setting with the opportunity to share peer-based learnings and experiences. The providers had the opportunity to network and connect with each other during the morning. The event hosted 2 guest speakers that provided additional learning opportunities for the providers around the areas of social media and enhancing fundraising opportunities. The meeting was well received by providers who found the information useful and time to connect valuable. The event had a total number of 29 attendees.

Collaborative Academic Research

HAF Impact Study on Children & Families

MedwayGo has 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. This has been a 3-year research programme (2022 – 2024) which was made up for the first 2 years of a quantitative study and this year there was a qualitative study. The qualitative study this year involved focus groups of families, teachers and providers and sought to identify the impacts of HAF attendance on children. The final report has now been published and this shows evidence of the positive impact the programme has on children, parents and the whole family and can be found on our website.

Social Impacts

From our Impact study, some of the identified social benefits of children attending MedwayGo include reduced loneliness and social isolation, making new friends, and increased confidence during and after provisions. The social impacts also included increase in fostering social interactions, learning from other children and children being happier surrounded by other peers. It also supported with their return to school after the summer break.

Food and Nutritional Impacts

The study highlighted that 17.44% of children reported experiencing hunger at home but felt adequately fed at HAF sessions.

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. The study showed 35% of parents reported that their child tried new foods because of HAF, increasing the variety in their diet and reducing food aversion.

The findings of this multi-year study indicate that children experience positive social, nutritional impacts from attending HAF during and after the provisions. As well as a positive impact on child and parent mental health, supporting family's financial stability and even increasing employment rates.

The official research report is available view on go.medway.gov.uk

Insights Study

The recent study allowed us to gain valuable insights from a variety people in Medway, including parents and headteachers.

The key themes highlighted in this research are:

- MedwayGo is positively received as a programme and parents appreciate the offer is available during the holiday. Those who have used it have found it enjoyable and really useful for their families.
- The importance of raising awareness of MedwayGo among eligible families and ensuring communications can be as clear as possible.
- Ensure that 'opportunity' barriers, so the external factors i.e., location, booking system and the capability i.e., knowledge and availability are the focus to encourage uptake of MedwayGo among eligible families.
- Continue to collaborate with schools to both raise awareness and host MedwayGo, since they are well placed and can be helpful to address the practical barriers.
- Parents would appreciate advanced notice of the activities to support their planning.

From this work, we have been able to evaluate the programme and establish key aims to increase awareness and improve understanding of what the MedwayGo programme is.

2024/ 2025 Key challenges

Booking System

The MedwayGo team changed to a new booking system called Eequ for 2025/26 due to some challenges with our last system. We anticipated the need for this change which was supported by parent feedback in our Insights study in early 2025. We trialled this booking system during the winter programme in 2024 and fully moved over to the system before the Easter programme. Changing booking systems can cause confusion with users but this booking system has proven to be a high-quality system, that is user friendly. The MedwayGo team supported families with this transition by offering Q&A sessions for parents. The Eequ team also provide detailed 'User Guides' on how to use the system. Eequ allows parents to easily book activities, with an automatic eligibility checker and this

creates an easier booking process. Eequ also allows us to track bookings and attendances in real time and has proven popular with providers. Although this was a transition for everyone, the new system has been a success.

Changes in Delivery Team

There were additional changes to the MedwayGo delivery team in 2024. With lack of clarity regarding the future of the HAF programme past 2024/25, recruitment was frozen and we were unable to recruit a project manager. Despite this the project was well supported by the larger Public Health team to effectively deliver the Winter provision.

Food Provision

Despite quality assurance measures there are still some providers who require additional time and attention to ensure school food standards are met. Due to this experience the MedwayGo team has introduced a menu plan that providers must follow to ensure food provided meets school food standards. Each programme a new menu will be introduced to support variety and seasonality. It is important that food provided during each programme is high quality and nutritious. The menu plan helps take pressure off providers when planning their activities. Providers can alter this menu with prior authorisation from the MedwayGo team as we understand some provision requires variation and most providers follow the framework, filling us with confidence as the commissioner.

The Year Ahead

The current funding cycle of the Department of Education's Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme runs until Winter 2025. We will use our insights and impact study to make small changes to refresh our brand to reach more families across Medway who aren't currently accessing the provision. Due to the uncertainty of the HAF funding past 25/26 will make minimal changes to the programme but will continue to plan for strategic process improvements for future funding cycles.

Process Improvements

A key focus area for 2024/ 25 has been adopting processes for enhanced resource and booking management. These 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 continue to be paid for booked spaces only while being supported to convert bookings to actual 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 Youth teams continue to 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 is partnering with the Youth team to reach new audiences of young people by exploring new activities and promotions.

Collaborating with Caterers

MedwayGo will continue to explore the opportunity to collaborate with caterers to centrally produce and distribute a unified menu to all providers. This collaboration will 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 social media, SEND Awareness, Improving Fundraising Opportunities, first aid and nutritional education. A second 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 be onboarded in 2025 ahead of the Spring provision.

2025/ 2026 Provision dates

2025/ 2026 Provisions are scheduled to hold on the following dates:

Spring: book from Monday 4th March 2025

Summer: book from Monday 30th June 2025



Appendix I - Feedback* (*Feedback may be edited for brevity)

Parents' feedback

'As a parent that suffers from anxiety and depression, MedwayGo gave me a purpose and something to look forward to during the most challenging time of the year. I'm forever grateful.'

'It allowed me to watch my son take part in activities that he wouldn't be able to access anywhere else. The camp gave him amazing opportunities to take part in amazing activities and he tried them all.'

'The children learnt new skills, they became resilient'

'It broke the days up so the kids didn't get so bored, also where the Medway go activities were free and the kids had a decent meal I saved a little money so I could take them out as a family which I wouldn't have been able to if it wasn't for Medway Go.'

'I always feel guilty in the holidays that I cannot provide the fun activities many of their friends do. This gives me the opportunity to do more things and spend more time with my children. We always have an amazing time.'

'It helped with childcare as I'm a single parent and worked from home on half term.'

'My kids were still in normal school routine which made going back to school easier, also helped ease financial difficulties of having to buy more food/snacks. Also location! It's 5 min walk which was brilliant!'

'My child always came home happy which gave me piece of mind, saved us money and the hassle of hosting playdates'

'He was able to keep busy and active with other children and take part in things that I would not be able to provide him.'

'Enjoyed some family time for free as we would not have been able to afford the activities together'

'As a foster parent this respite has made a difference for our family to have a break to reset'.

Childs Feedback

'I come every holiday and I love it. I keep telling my friends to come.'

'I love it here!'

'I enjoyed the food'

'I've been coming here for two years and I really love it.'

'I could do these clubs forever - I love playing dodgeball and football.'

**Feedback may be edited for brevity*

MedwayGo Provider Register

All Saints Community Project	Pasta Rasta Ltd
Anchorians Football Club	Peekaplayers Ltd
Bakesnbites	PIXIE MAGIC PLAY ZONES LTD
Body Buddies Ltd	Progressive Sports
Busy bodies with jess	Purely Nutrition Ltd
Challenger Troop CIC	Raising Youth CIO (Mr Callum Thomas)
City way nursery limited (Mrs Sara Daly)	Rivermead Outreach Community Challenge
Code Edge Technologies Limited T/A Jam Coding Medway	Rochester Dance Junction
Elite Pathways Sport & Training	sendtivate cic
Essel innovation and development services limited	Sport on your doorstep CIC
Forks & Corks	St Augustine's Gillingham
Fuzion Active	St Francis Of Assisi
Great Leaps Adventure CiC	Street Games Medway
Group 23 Services Ltd	Street Soccer Foundation
H2O Swim Fitness Ltd	Strive PE & Sport
Hoo Sport	The Future of Sport CIC
Icon Theatre	The Paramount Foundation CIC
Jimmys Tennis - Frindsbury LTC	The Right Step Dance Company
KCL Medway Ltd	The Rowans AP Academy
Little Voices West Kent	Venner Nutrition
Little Yoga Warriors	WHAM Theatre Schools
London Gospel Music Company	Jolloffe
Loveland Limited	Sports Cool Maidstone
MidKent College	MKA Karate & Kickboxing
Multi Active holiday courses ltd	The Wonderlab Project
Mythologic Escape Rooms	UK Sapphire Foundation
Ninja Warrior	TeamTheme
Olympia Boxing CIC	Football Fun Factory