



Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme

Everyone Counts!

Valuing and respecting our children and families is at the heart of the HAF Programme. This Key principle is fundamental to the concepts of equality of opportunity and access. This means that discrimination does not exclude them and that steps are taken to identify and remove stigmas and barriers that may affect eligible children, young people, and their families right from the start of the programme.

Programme partners must consider equality and diversity in everything that they do. Tackling and reducing stigma and discrimination around food insecurity and those accessing free school meals plays an important part in working towards the improved life chances and opportunities for children and young people and their families.

In line with The Equality Act 2010¹ all programme partners should consider how they take positive steps to ensure that they provide a safe, caring environment that promotes equality of opportunity and values diversity.

To realise the objectives of creating a positive environment that welcomes everyone and is free from discrimination and stigma, programme partners should consider the following points.

- Ensure that all children and young people, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), will be included and supported, with reasonable adjustments made for them. Working with families, schools and outside agencies already working with these children and young people will enable them to be supported throughout the whole programme.
- Ensure that the programme is open and available to all eligible families, children, and young people in the local community.
- Ensure that issues of socio-economic, ethnicity, culture, nationality, religion, gender, language, sexual orientation, and disability do not inhibit a child, young person, or family from fully accessing the programme.
- Treat all children, young people and their families with equal concern and value.
- Have regard for the promotion of understanding, respect and awareness of diversity and equality of opportunity in planning and implementing programme activities.

¹[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/570382/Equality Act 2010-disability definition.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/570382/Equality_Act_2010-disability_definition.pdf)



- Ensure that **all** members of staff are aware of and understand the equal opportunities policy as it relates to all aspects of work, as well as have a positive attitude to and understanding of inclusion.
- Encourage programme staff to act as positive role models to children by displaying and promoting tolerant, respectful behaviour, language and attitudes and challenging any discriminatory behaviours or incidents. Programme partners may wish to access further training for their staff to ensure that this is embedded in practice.
- Support children and young people's belief in themselves, promoting self-worth, a sense of belonging and high aspirations.

What is Stigma?

Oxford dictionary definition:

Negative feelings that people have about particular circumstances or characteristics that somebody may have.

If negative feelings that people have towards families experiencing food insecurity or families accessing benefits or free school are not challenged, stigma can lead to stereotyping and discrimination. Research from the Child Poverty Action Group demonstrates that children and young people feel that they are judged, bullied, and excluded because of stigma.

Every aspect of the HAF Programme needs to be carefully planned and organised to ensure that partners are very clear about how they are going to reduce stigma and ensure that equality of opportunity and inclusion is a thread that runs throughout. The following are some points to consider and implement.

- Working with the school the children and young people attend. This is an important part of reaching eligible children. The school Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), Family Liaison Officer (FLO) or office managers will not only be able to help to signpost eligible children and families to you, but they may also be able to give programme partners information and guidance relating to what support or agencies are involved with children, young people, and families. Please remember that you will need to ask permission from families for this information to be shared. This should be requested and carried out through a respectful, inclusive process.
- Building respectful positive relationships with families will foster trust and engagement. From the start programme partners must work with families to gain information that is key to supporting children and young people in the programme. Please be mindful that completing forms and reading induction information in written format or online may not be the most inclusive way to gain information. Think of alternatives that will not make the families feel different and make this clear in all your marketing and information given to families prior to the programme starting, for example, inviting families in to verbally discuss the information required or offer a named staff member to help complete the documentation required. This will ensure that all children



and young people are kept safe, that staff understand how to support them and that all their needs are met.

- Anti-discriminatory practice applies to environments, resources, practice, policies and procedures. To ensure that barriers to inclusion are identified and addressed, consideration must be given to these key aspects.
- Reasonable adjustments must be made to environments and resources to enhance participation and practice must reflect positive attitudes to individual children and young people, their circumstances and needs.
- Getting to know them is vital to delivering a programme that excites, engages, and enriches their experiences so that they feel they belong and are valued.
- Resources and equipment provided must be appropriate to individuals, and careful consideration must be given to ensure that they are not stereotyping or discriminatory in any way. For example, consider whether your art materials and drama resources reflect the culture and familial background of participants.
- Have cultural and religious requirements been considered in your physical activities, as well as their physical abilities.
- Does the programme and the staff team foster an ethos that everyone can develop their talents, skills and knowledge and that no one receives less favourable treatment than another, ensuring that everyone is treated as an individual.
- It is important that staff skills, attitudes, knowledge and understanding of inclusive, anti-discriminatory practice, challenging discrimination and bias, and reducing stigma is up to date and in line with policy and practice.
- Having knowledgeable, welcoming staff can act as a bridge between the families, children and young people and the wider community. Staff induction to the ethos, policies and procedures of the programme is a must and further training may be required to enhance knowledge and understanding. The Education People's Early Years & Childcare Service offers a broad range of training opportunities.²

Families know and understand the characteristics and needs of their children and young people the best. It is down to the programme partners to ensure that they are respected, included and that they feel welcomed and valued in all aspects of the HAF Programme.

*Inclusion is not a matter of political correctness. It is the key to growth. Jesse Jackson
Let's stop believing that our differences make us superior or inferior to one another.*

Con Miguel Ruiz

² <https://www.theeducationpeople.org/our-expertise/early-years-childcare/threads-of-success/the-threads/thread-7-equality-and-inclusion/>