



Northumbria University HAF Plus delivery team with partners from Chartwells and Big River Bakery

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## Northumbria University supports delivery of Holiday Activities and Food programme

Northumbria University has launched a schedule of free activities for teenagers to enjoy this summer as part of the Department for Education's national Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Plus programme.☒☒

As part of its ongoing commitment to drive social mobility, widen participation in higher education and enable people from all backgrounds to succeed, Northumbria University will be actively involved in the delivery of

HAF Plus this summer through its partnerships with three local authorities in the North East of England.

The University will welcome HAF Plus participants onto its Newcastle city campus on selected dates throughout the school holidays to take part in a variety of free sports, entrepreneurship, skills development, and wellbeing activities. ☒☒

The announcement is welcome news after [a survey](#) from the [National Youth Agency](#) revealed that the nation's young people are "crying out" for youth work activities that provide fun, as well as allow them to feel a sense of belonging in their local community.

The [HAF programme](#), delivered by councils across England, provides children and young people in receipt of means-tested, free school meals – or otherwise in need during the school holiday period – with opportunities to get involved in physical and cultural activities and with access to healthy meals.☒ ☒☒

Researchers at Northumbria University evaluating the HAF programme identified that teenagers were not engaging with them as much as organisers expected.☒As a result, they have since worked with 13–16-year-olds to co-design a new format for HAF, known as HAF Plus, that better meets their needs and interests whilst still adhering to the Department for Education's HAF criteria. ☒ ☒

After successful pilots of the new programme last year, HAF Plus is now set to be rolled out more widely across Gateshead, Newcastle, Birmingham, Northumberland, and across all London boroughs through partnership work with the Mayor's Fund for London during summer 2024. ☒ ☒☒

Northumbria University, working with partners including Gateshead, Newcastle and Northumberland Councils, Chartwells and Big River Bakery, will deliver a schedule of activities including climbing, dodgeball, gym sessions and MMA training in its £30m Sport Central facility.

Participants will be given a healthy breakfast and get the chance to take part in cooking and baking sessions where they will prepare their own healthy meals and develop essential cooking skills, as well as learn more about

nutrition. ☒

The University is also offering a number of enterprise and career development activities to support participants. They will get the chance to improve their team building skills through fun and engaging activities and learn more about CV building and interview techniques using VR headsets.

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In addition to the on-campus activity Northumbria University academics will work alongside Gateshead Council and the Newcastle United Foundation at the Metro Centre's Community Hub, delivering hands-on, interactive sessions to HAF Plus attendees and members of the☒public on topics including vaping, alcohol awareness and wellbeing, as well as signposting to mental health and advisory services.

The sessions will be delivered using some of the University's state-of-the-art medical simulation and virtual reality equipment giving people the chance to see how the body physically responds to vaping and excessive alcohol consumption.☒☒ ☒☒

Speaking on the University's decision to work with regional councils and partners to provide HAF Plus programmes this summer, Professor Graham Wynn, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education at Northumbria University, said: "Northumbria University has been leading research into food insecurity, school breakfast clubs and holiday programmes for over a decade. Our researchers have been instrumental in campaigning for, and securing, funding from central government for these programmes. They have also played a crucial role in their design and delivery, and the evaluation of their success – proving their value for young people and their families. ☒☒ ☒☒

"Our decision to deliver HAF programme activity on campus this summer is the next natural step for us. It will give more young people access to more opportunities and will support them to achieve their potential. ☒☒

He added: "We've committed our facilities, our expertise, and our staff resources and we look forward to welcoming HAF Plus participants and our partners onto our campus throughout summer."☒☒ ☒☒☒☒☒

Professor Greta Defeyter, Director of the University's Healthy Living Lab

which leads on the research on childhood food insecurity, school breakfast clubs, and the HAF programme said: “The impact of HAF is outstanding in terms of positive outcomes for children’s nutritional and dietary intake, reducing child and parent social isolation, increasing children’s participation in physical activity, improving children’s school readiness to return to school at the end of the holiday, and in reducing antisocial behaviour and crime.”

Professor Defeyter’s team led on the development of the HAF Plus programme for teenagers. She explained: “We’re always looking for ways to continue to build upon our research knowledge to improve these programmes where we can. Our research highlighted a relatively low uptake from 13–16-year-olds so in 2022 we decided to research this more thoroughly. XXX XX

“We spoke to over 500 young people across England and ran a series of workshops across the country to co-design a variant of the HAF programme that better suited the needs and interests of teenagers. This resulted in a new service blueprint for a national teens programme that the young people named HAF Plus.” XX X

Brian Kielty, Partnership Officer and HAF Delivery Lead at Gateshead Council, praised the University for its work on developing the new HAF Plus programme, saying: “Without Northumbria University’s help I don’t think we’d ever have gotten to the point we’re at with the HAF Plus programme today. The academic input and support from the staff within the University has made the programme happen and the work they delivered was outstanding.” XXXX XX

Professor Defeyter added: “For me, higher education involvement in initiatives like HAF Plus is vital and I’m so pleased to see Northumbria University leading the way in delivering research and youth voice-informed, holiday programmes for young people. XX X

“The HAF Plus programme provides young people from less advantaged areas with access to opportunities and experiences during the school holidays that they otherwise might never be exposed to. It supports them with building those skills they need to succeed and to achieve their own aspirations. We’re really looking at HAF Plus as one of the ways that the university invests in young people, increases their social mobility and drives the regional economy.” XX X

In the UK millions of children who rely on free school meals are at dietary risk during the school holidays. This has been further exacerbated by COVID19 and the cost-of-living crisis with more families accessing food banks during the school holidays than ever before.☒☒☒ ☒

Research has also shown that children and young people experience learning loss following school holidays, and this is most pronounced in children living in poverty. Providing activities for children and young people has been shown to be effective in attenuating lost learning and learning new skills.☒

Professor Defeyter and the Health Living Lab research team were instrumental in the national roll out of school breakfast clubs and have since gone on to demonstrate the need for the government to ensure that children and their families were also provided for in the school holidays. Their findings directly impacted the Department for Education's decision to invest £220 million into its HAF programmes for the whole of England.☒☒ ☒

Northumbria University is dedicated to reducing health and social inequalities, contributing to the regional and national workforce and improving social, economic and health outcomes for the most marginalised in society. Through its new Centre for Health and Social Equity, researchers will be delivering world-leading health and social equity research and creating innovative, evidence-based policies and data-driven solutions to bring impactful change across the region, the UK and globally.☒☒

Contact your local council for more information about HAF Plus in your area.  
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### **Additional quotes from partners**

**Meg Longworth, Director of Nutrition and Sustainability, Chartwells:** “We have been long-standing supporters of the HAF programme, with our team of nutritionists delivering hundreds of fun workshops on health and nutrition across the country during school holidays. The programme not only ensures that vulnerable children continue to receive a meal during the holidays, but also provides them with a platform to have fun and fuel their learning and creativity. Our team at Northumbria University are very excited to be taking part in this programme and to pass on their passion for cooking and food to a new generation.”

**Andy Haddon, Founder of Big River Bakery:** “At Big River Bakery we have long recognised the importance of healthy food being available to all and are big supporters of north east food culture. So, we are beyond excited to be part of this HAF programme and about the opportunity it gives us to have some fun sharing the secrets of stottie making with a younger audience.”

**Emma Richardson, Senior Manager, Northumberland County Council:**

“Working alongside Greta and the team at Northumbria University has been transformational for our young people in Northumberland. The young people led our design sprint to provide insights and support to develop our teenage HAF offer. This allowed them to take real ownership of what HAF should look like beyond primary school. By increasing the number of teenagers and providers now involved we can ensure the holidays are fun but also offer valuable experiences and connections which is what our young people all asked for.”

**Tracy Machnicki, HAF Programme Manager for Newcastle at StreetGames:**

“HAF has allowed funding to go where it will make the most difference within Newcastle City, in really targeting areas of greatest need. For many families, HAF provision is a lifeline over the holidays: parents know their children are safe, being fed great food and having a brilliant, memorable time.

“For older young people, we have a varied approach where they can access safe provision and also spend time with their friendship group, accessing facilities at times and days that work for them. Through strong partnerships across the city, we have been able to implement a great offer for our young people, engaging them in constructive and positive activities that otherwise might be out of reach for them. HAF Plus allows young people to explore new opportunities, raises their aspirations and potentially opens their eyes to a positive future.”

**Extended quote from Brian Kielty, Partnership Officer and HAF Delivery Lead at Gateshead Council:** “Data showed that teenagers were not engaging with the HAF programme in the way we would have hoped and so we worked with them and colleagues at Northumbria University to design a programme that they wanted to do.

“Following the pilot last year, this summer’s programme is a massive step up for us with over 300 HAF Plus participants. Without Northumbria University’s help I don’t think we’d ever have gotten to the point we’re at with the HAF

Plus programme. The academic input and support from staff within the University has made the programme happen. Without them I think we'd still be designing it. The work they delivered was outstanding.”☒☒

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UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR 2022 (Times Higher Education Awards)

Northumbria is a research-intensive university that unlocks potential for all, changing lives regionally, nationally and internationally.

Two thirds of Northumbria's undergraduate students come from the North East region and go into employment in the region when they graduate, demonstrating Northumbria's significant contribution to social mobility and levelling up in the North East of England.

Find out more about us at [www.northumbria.ac.uk](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk)

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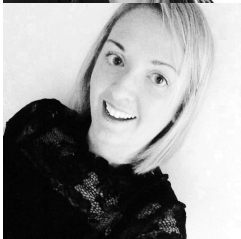


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