

FREE FUN AND FOOD

Holiday Activity Fund (HAF)

Application Guidance and Criteria



The Holiday Activity Fund programme has provided healthy food and enriching activities to disadvantaged children and young people across Nottingham since 2018, benefiting their health wellbeing and learning. Funded by the Department of Education, the programme is aimed at children and young people in reception to year 11 receipt of benefit related free school meals. Free Fun and Food is the name for the Holiday Activity Fund in Nottingham.

Since 2021, Nottingham City Council has funded 'Free Fun and Food' programmes across Spring, Summer, October half-term and Winter school holidays. For 2025-26 the programme has been revamped to ensure it provides children and young people with a varied new programme of exciting activities and healthy, nutritious food so please read this guidance carefully to be aware of the changes.

School holidays can be particular pressure points for some families because of increased costs (such as food and childcare) and reduced incomes. For some children that can lead to a holiday experience gap, with children from disadvantaged families:

- less likely to access organised out-of-school activities
- more likely to experience 'unhealthy holidays' in terms of nutrition and physical health
- more likely to experience social isolation.

You can apply by completing the [online application form](#) and submit it no later than 9:00am on Monday 26th May 2025.

1. AIMS OF THE FUNDING

'Free Fun and Food' is a response to these issues, evidence suggests that activities have a positive impact on children and young people and work best when they:

- provide consistent and easily accessible enrichment activities
- cover more than just breakfast or lunch
- involve children (and their parents) in food preparation

As a result of this, we want children and young people who attend these activities to:

- eat more healthily over the school holidays
- be more active during the school holidays.
- take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience, character and wellbeing along with their wider educational attainment
- be safe and not be socially isolated
- have a greater knowledge of health and nutrition
- be more engaged with school and other local services

2. WHO IS IT FOR?

This funding is for primary and secondary age children and young people (reception to year 11) who are eligible for benefits related Free School Meals (FSM), which means they are from families in receipt of income support, jobseekers allowance, employment and support allowance or universal credit.

You are also able to offer paid for places to non Free Fun and Food eligible children, you should discuss this within your application if you intend to offer paid for places including how much you will charge.

We are particularly looking to support exciting opportunities for secondary aged FSM young people who may not have accessed Free Fun and Food provision in the past. Applications with a secondary aged focus will be looked upon favourably?

3. WHO CAN APPLY?

A wide variety of organisations can be funded to deliver the Free Fun and Food programme:

- voluntary and community organisations and charities
- schools and alternative provisions
- colleges
- nurseries
- SEND providers
- social / not for profit enterprises
- uniformed services
- youth services

All organisations delivering under the Free Fun and Food programme must have the following relevant and appropriate documents in place:

All applicants

- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policy (or similar)
- Safeguarding policy including the recruitment of staff and volunteers
- Health and safety policy / risk assessments appropriate for any activity being undertaken
- Food safety policy
- A bank or building society account in the groups name with at least two unrelated signatories
- All staff supporting or delivering the activity to be DBS checked.

VCS Organisations

- A constitution or set of written rules which set out your aims and objectives. This must also contain a dissolution clause: For example this should state any assets purchased with grant funding will be kept for community use or assets remaining will be redistributed to a charity/community organisation with similar aims should your group come to an end or close.
- Annual accounts or income and expenditure records for groups over 12 months old
- A 6 month cash flow for groups under 12 months old showing predicted income and expenditure

Schools, colleges, nurseries, alternative provisions

- OFSTED registration or Company number

If you are a locally managed branch of a national organisation, you can apply as long as you have your own local management committee and accounts.

4. WHAT TYPES OF ACTIVITIES CAN BE FUNDED?

All Free Fun and Food funded provision must provide both enriching and physical activities as well as a healthy meal.

Enrichment activities should be fun and allow children and young people to:

- Develop new skills or knowledge
- Consolidate existing skills and knowledge
- Try out new experiences, have fun and socialise

Physical activities does not have to be in the form of a structured activity session, but might include active travel, free play and sports and should:

- Be moderate-to-vigorous physical activity for an average of at least 60 minutes per day
- Be of a variety of types and intensities of physical activity to develop movement skills, muscular fitness, and bone strength
- minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary, and when physically possible should break up long periods of not moving with at least light physical activity

Funding can be used to support new or existing schemes, applicants must consider whether they are able to launch and manage a programme of activity within the funded holiday periods, or whether activity of the same or similar nature already exists to support children and families in their community, which they could support.

We are looking to widen the variety of activities available for Free Fund and Food participants when compared with previous years. Applicants should consider the long-term benefit that participating in the activities they provide could bring, particularly for secondary aged young people.

We welcome applications that offer:

- STEM activities (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) particularly for secondary age young people
- Digital arts such as virtual reality, music production, gaming and film making
- Activity days (such as trips to the countryside or theatre trips) to provide new experiences that city children and young people have been unable to access
- Vocational opportunities such as 'trade days' offering experiences in construction, hairdressing, beauty, car mechanics and others
- Outdoor experiences such as Forest Schools to enable children and young people to engage in their environment
- Cooking sessions with family members to promote healthy eating on a budget
- Drama and dance and associated skill offers such as set design, directing, etc
- Activity sessions with resources such as Lego or board games both individually and with families to encourage play and conversation
- Sports and fitness provision for all ages and abilities that includes learning around healthy bodies and exercise.

Applications which include a selection of these type of activities will be looked upon favourably?

5. WHAT ARE THE FOOD DELIVERY REQUIREMENTS?

There is flexibility in the design of the food provision, which should always be tailored to ensure that all food meets the dietary and cultural needs of the children who attend. The food served should also be appropriate for the nature of the session, for example, offering cold packed lunches for parks or outdoor venues or for day trips may be more appropriate. Food and activity providers must also ensure care of individuals with food allergies.

All applicants must provide at least one healthy meal per session that must meet [School Food Standards](#) with snacks also available on arrival for all participants. Drinking water must be available and accessible throughout every sessions, fizzy drinks or those with added sugar must not be served (no added sugar dilute is acceptable).

Providing food on site can provide an opportunity to engage children in food preparation and nutrition. When children are involved in designing menus and the preparation of food, they are more engaged and more willing to try new and healthier food. Applicants that provide hot meals (where possible) or involve children and young people or their families in the preparation and cooking of food will be looked upon more favourably.

Applicants can buy in food if they do not have the resources available to create options on site. Where this occurs food providers should (where applicable) be registered as a food business to give reassurance they are fully compliant with food hygiene laws and that food safety standards are being met. A food business is defined as anyone preparing, cooking, storing, handling, distributing, supplying or selling food. Further information is available on [Food Business Registration](#).

There are also environmental factors to consider when planning the food provision and consideration should be given to minimising food and packaging waste.

Natasha's Law: From 1 October 2021, changes to the Food Information Regulations 2014 came into effect, adding new labelling requirements for food that is pre-packed for direct sale (PPDS). Providers should take the time to read the guidance on the [Food Standards Agency](#) website and ensure that all food provision for the Free Fun and Food programme meets these requirements.

6. WHAT COSTS WILL BE SUPPORTED?

The fund will support costs like the examples overleaf. In all cases the costs must relate directly to the activity you are providing:

Rent	The cost of using premises to deliver your project or to hire a venue for an event
Equipment	Purchase of resources and materials and / or hire of equipment to deliver your project / event
Publicity	Production of a leaflet or newsletter to advertise the activities you are undertaking
Expenses	Travel / parking for staff and volunteers delivering activities (specified pence per mile)
Tickets	Entry into venues for trips etc
Training	Necessary Courses that you intend to offer volunteers and / or staff
Transport	For travel to activity days or special trips

Admin costs Insurance and membership costs, general stationery for running the activity
Salaries Staffing costs for additional hours / new posts to deliver the activity (inc. recruitment)
Support Additional specific support that may be needed (e.g. translation costs/SEND staff)

The fund cannot be used to support:

- Individuals
- Activities where making profit is a primary aim
- Activities where the primary purpose is to promote religious beliefs. **We can fund** religious organisations to work with others and to provide activities open to all
- Political groups or groups promoting political activities
- Charitable or fund-raising activities
- Groups / organisations where the majority of the membership/beneficiaries live outside the City Council boundary
- Costs you owed or promised to pay before your application was approved (retrospective costs)
- Grant making bodies applying for funding to redistribute to individuals or groups
- Costs associated with foreign travel
- General running costs that your organisation is already committed to supporting

7. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND)

We want Free Fun and Food provision to be inclusive and accessible to all benefits-related free school meals eligible children and young people in Nottingham. We understand that there may be additional or higher costs to support the inclusion of children and young people who may need extra support to engage with the programme, most typically, children and young people with Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities who require extra adult help and/or specialist equipment.

There is flexibility in how activity can be delivered to eligible children and young people with SEND or additional needs e.g. offering extended or condensed sessions to meet needs.

We also want to ensure SEND children and young people are able to access non-SEND specific settings in order to experience new opportunities and may be able to support applicants with additional staff when needed which would be funded by the Free Fun and Food programme.

Within the Free Fun and Food booking system parents/carers/guardians must disclose all SEND requirements to enable the child or young person to safely access an activity, providers are then able to contact the responsible adult to discuss specific needs and whether their activity would be able to accommodate them. In all cases we would encourage applicants to consider the engagement of SEND children and young people and demonstrate within their application how they would welcome them into their activity or provision.

8. WHICH SCHOOL HOLIDAYS ARE THE DELIVERY PERIODS?

Overall, we are wanting providers to offer the equivalent of 5 weeks' (20 days) Free, Fun and Food provision to eligible children during the summer, October half-term and winter school holidays.

Over summer holidays:

Participating children should be offered face-to-face provision, which should be for a minimum of 12 days (3 weeks).

Over October half-term:

Participating children should be offered face-to-face provision, which should be for a minimum of 4 days (1 week).

Over winter holidays:

Participating children should be offered face-to-face provision, which should be for a minimum of 4 days (1 week).

Each session should be the equivalent to at least 4 hours a day (shorter hours may be funded if in line with the activity/provision that you provide, please contact us before applying to discuss).

In the past, Free Fun and Food applicants had to commit to delivering 4 days per week across all the above-mentioned holiday periods. However, this has changed for 2025-26, and we are now accepting applications for separate holiday periods. For example, you may only be able to deliver your provision over the summer holiday period, or you may wish to deliver 3 days per week instead of 4 days. Please make it clear in your application when you intend to deliver your provision.

Each delivery period will need to identify its own budget, where and when it will be delivered, and what activities will take place. We will manage this with other provisions to create the 4 days per week required by the Department for Education. Applicants may need to consider adjusting their timetables to enable this to occur on different days, but we will ensure this is a joint discussion between the provider and Nottingham City Council as the funder.

Flexibility in the winter school holidays:

The Free, Fun and Food programme offers a wide range of support for families that goes well beyond the delivery of food and activities: it's a point of contact for children and families during holiday periods that can be vital for them in accessing support and services. We also know that children benefit from being together, being sociable, engaging in activities with friends and having fun and that families may need support with childcare during the winter holiday period.

We however understand that there are many factors that can impact upon the capacity of Free, Fun and Food providers over the winter school holidays. There are also many children and families across the country from cultures that do not celebrate Christmas and it is Nottingham City Council's responsibility to endeavour to ensure that the needs of all eligible children and families from across their community are fully met.

While our expectation remains that participating children should benefit from at least 4 days of face-to-face provision, we recognise that over the winter school holidays, this may not always be possible. Where this is the case, we recommend that participating children are offered at least 2 days of face-to-face provision complimented by at least 2 days of Free, Fun and Food support which can be provided in the form of high-quality food hampers and activity packs.

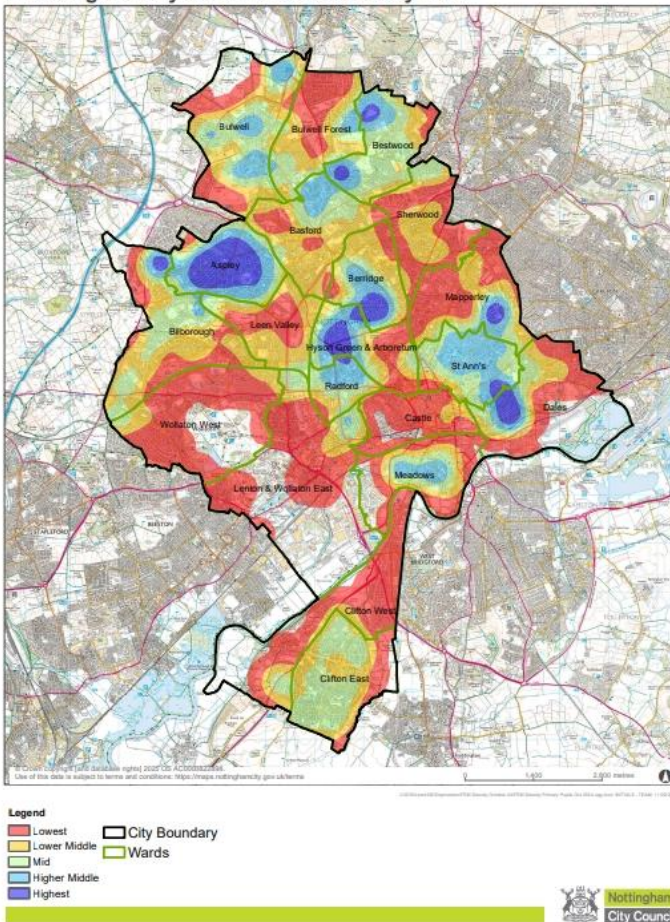
It could also be, for example, a Christmas festival or fayre where children and their families are invited along to take part in activities together, prepare a festive meal together and socialise. At these events, we expect that those attending should eat high quality, healthy food and take part in some fun activities.

It could also involve day trips or other experiences, providing that this includes a healthy meal as well as an element of physical activity, for example, a walk.

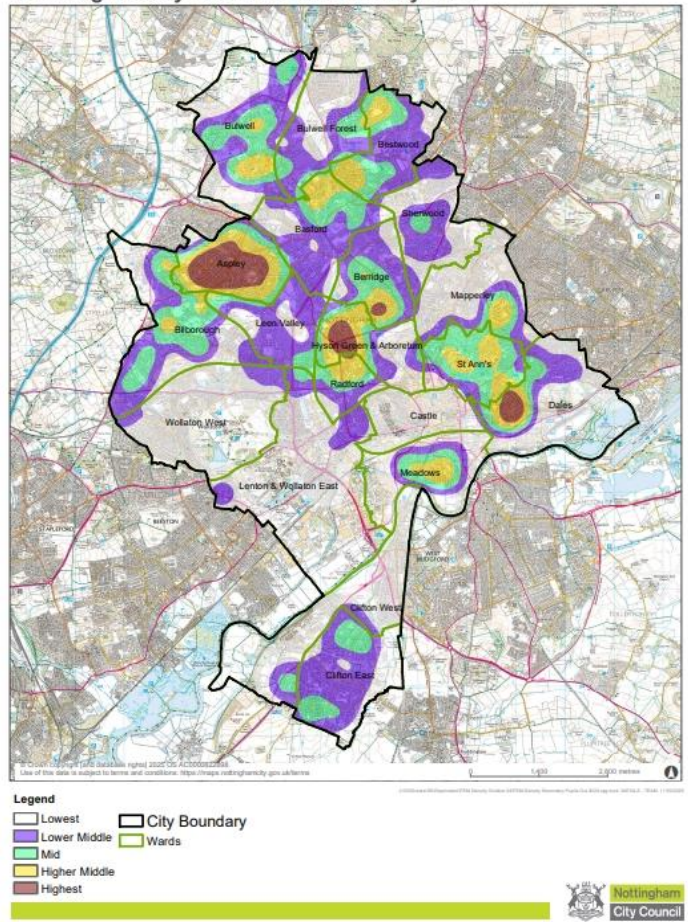
9. WHERE SHOULD DELIVERY BE FOCUSED?

Free Fun and Food provision must cover all areas of the city but there are a number of areas that have a higher number of eligible children and young people. A higher proportion of funding will be awarded in these areas. The heat maps below identify both primary and secondary hot spots for consideration.

Proportion of Primary Aged Pupils Eligible for Free School Meals in Nottingham City Schools October 2024 by Ward



Proportion of Secondary Aged Pupils Eligible for Free School Meals in Nottingham City Schools October 2024 by Ward



10. HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES PORTAL

The Department for Education require all Free Fun and Food funding to utilise an online portal for parental booking and registration of children and young people attending activities. Eligible parents are emailed a voucher code by their school, for use on the portal to book their sessions.

Successful applicants will be required to upload their activities onto the portal to enable parents/carers/guardians to book their child or young person onto a provision. Providers will then complete this registration process to enable data to be processed and sent to the DfE.

Use of this portal is non-negotiable for all providers, failure to complete the data requirements will result in funding being



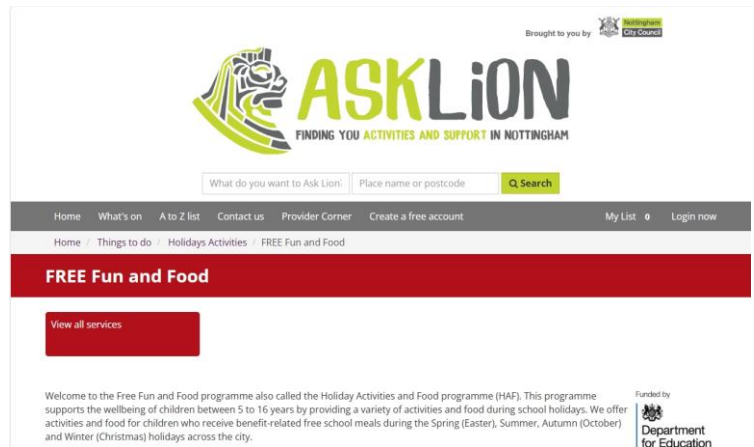
withheld or withdrawn.

Nottingham utilises the Holiday Activities portal which supports many councils across the country. Support is readily available should issues occur either from providers or parents. Training will be provided by the Holiday Activities team prior to delivery and attendance is a requirement of funding. Applicants should consider the administration requirement as part of their funding request.

11. MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION

In order for children and young people to select their preferred activity, all provision must be logged onto the Ask Lion information website which has a specific [Ask Lion - Free Fun and Food](#) page. It is a funding requirement that each successful applicant must log their activities onto the dedicated web pages, support is available for this. This must be uploaded to specific holiday period deadlines.

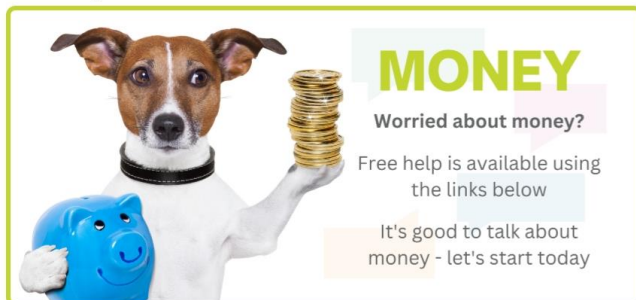
Failure to upload session information could result in funding being withheld or withdrawn.



If providers struggle to fill their available spaces, they must undertake local marketing to prevent wasted funding. This may be through schools, local social media groups, local notice boards etc. If numbers of children and young people attending continue to be significantly lower than places available, we may need to consider future funding amounts.

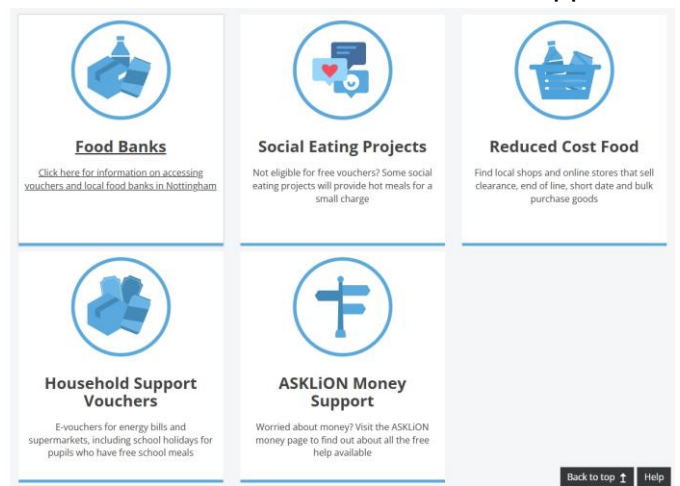
Nottingham City Council will undertake central marketing to publicise the Free Fun and Food programme throughout the year and will also contact families direct via schools.

12. REFERRALS AND SIGNPOSTING TO SUPPORT



available on the Money Pup pages on the Councils information website Ask Lion [Ask Lion - Money Pup](#)

Free Fun and Food providers should be able to offer information, signposting or referrals to other services and support, that would benefit the children who attend their activities and their families. Information about financial support is



Information about food offers is also available on Ask Lion [Ask Lion - Support with food and bills](#) which can be shared with parents. The Council's website has details of the Household Support Fund which supports with the costs of utility bills and food shopping when they become available [Household Support Fund vouchers](#)

Other services and support could include:

- [Advice Nottingham](#) a partnership of citizens advice and local advice centres across Nottingham
- School nurses, dentists, or other healthcare practitioners
- [Support for Children and Families](#) from the council
- Housing support officers
- Jobcentre Plus
- Organisations providing financial education
- Early years and childcare, including help to pay for childcare (for example, [Tax free childcare](#))

There are many ways that providers can meet this element of the programme, for example, through trained and knowledgeable staff engaging with families during drop-off and pick-up times, weekly training and advice sessions for parents, carers or other family members. We encourage providers to offer those sessions.

Sessions could provide advice on how to source, prepare and cook nutritious and low-cost food. This could be combined with the increasing awareness and understanding of healthy eating aspect of the programme, for example, by inviting children and their families to prepare and eat a meal together at a Free Fun and Food session. There are alternative ways of delivering this, for example, by providing participating children with ingredients and recipes to take away and try at home with their families.

13. SAFEGUARDING TRAINING

All successful applicants must send a representative from their organisation to attend safeguarding training provided by Nottingham City Council.

Failure to attend could result in funding being withheld or withdrawn.

This should be a person who:

- is able to share information from the training to other staff members.
- is a Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- has a strong knowledge of the Free Fun and Food programme being offered by their organisation.
- will be present during some of the delivery of their organisation's Free Fun and Food programme.

The training session will be delivered via MS Teams. We will send further details about this training to successful applicants once the bidding process has closed.

14. MONITORING REQUIREMENTS

In order to demonstrate the difference this fund makes we require you to evaluate your project, assessing the difference it makes to those involved, all successful applicants will be required to report after each delivery period. We will send you a monitoring form which you can support with further evidence such as questionnaires, photo or video diaries or any other method you feel is appropriate to showcase your project.

- Outputs (eg. number of places booked and attended) will be monitored through completion of your registration/attendance data in the Holiday Activities portal.
- Outcomes (what went well, issues and solutions, food successes etc) will be captured on the simple form we send you.

We will also undertake a quality assurance visit during each holiday period, these will support us to improve the quality of future provision. We will tell you the date that we will be visiting you and will speak to staff and the children and young people within your provision.

15. HOW TO APPLY?

Deadline for applications – 9:00am Monday 26th May

Applicants should complete the [online application form](#) and submit it no later than 9:00am on Monday 26th May 2025. Applications received after this date will not be considered. A checklist of required information can be found as part of the application form.

Using the information from your application and in some cases a follow up email, we will assess your project to see;

- How well it fits with our themes and priorities
- How much local benefit the project will have
- What difference your project will make to the lives of local children and young people
- Your ability to deliver the project
- Whether it offers good value for money

**A panel will consider your application and you will be notified
of the outcome by the 16th June 2025.**

The information contained in your application form may also be shared with appropriate partners or agencies.

A list of the questions asked in the application form can be found in Appendix 1 at the end of this document.

16. SOURCES OF HELP

Nottingham City Council are working with [Funding Support](#) to help you in completing your application. Funding Support are running two grant application seminars where you will be able to talk about what makes an application successful, what you should include and why you don't need

to use buzz words! Both sessions are the same so you only need to attend one session. It is recommended that applicants attend.

1. **Session 1: Thursday 24th April, 10:00-12:30 (Castle Cavendish, Cavendish Suite)**
2. **Session 2: Tuesday 29th April, 10:00-12:30 (Castle Cavendish, Castle Suite)**

The address for Castle Cavendish is: Castle Cavendish Works, Dorking Road, Nottingham NG7 5PN

If you wish to attend one of these seminars please book yourself a place by completing the [booking form here](#).

After attending one of the grant application sessions, potential applicants will be able to access one to one support to discuss their project and application for the funding. You can book an appointment with Funding Support at one of the above sessions.

You can also contact us at FreeFunandFood@nottinghamcitycouncil.gov.uk with any questions as well as technical concerns you may have about the Holiday Activities portal or Ask Lion.

17. THINGS TO CONSIDER!

Please ensure you have read this information before you complete an application form. Ensure you have thought your activity through and read through all the guidance notes and application form thoroughly, making a note of any questions or concerns you may have.

Bear in mind the level of funding you have requested and make sure you complete the application form appropriately; for example, we would expect more information for a project costing over £10,000 than one costing £1,000.

Please only send us complete applications with all their supporting information. It is not helpful for us to receive partial information and instead of speeding applications as you might think, it only delays them as we have to match the information you may send later with the original submission of documents.

- There are no trick questions, no buzz words such as social value, community capacity building or any others which must be included in a successful application, just a simple straightforward explanation of what you want to do, where, when and why.
- When completing the application form all sections must be completed and responses contained within the space provided on the form.
- Please answer each question on the form. We are unable to consider applications with '**see attached documents**' as answers to questions and will return such applications.

Common reasons for saying 'No' and causes of delays:

- Dissolution clause or asset lock is not acceptable from VCS organisations
- Governing documents are not included
- Quotes are not included
- The budget is not clear
- We can't understand what you want to do!

APPENDIX 1: APPLICATION FORM QUESTIONS

Section 1: ORGANISATION DETAILS

1. Name of organisation
2. Organisation address
3. Address for correspondence (if different from question 2)
4. Name of primary contact
5. Position in organisation of primary contact
6. Mobile phone number of primary contact
7. Email address of primary contact
8. Name of contact 2 in your organisation
9. Position of contact 2 in your organisation
10. Mobile phone number of contact 2
11. Email address of contact 2
12. What type of organisation are you? (Charity, CIC, company limited by guarantee, etc.)
13. Name of your organisation's safeguarding lead
14. Is your organisation registered with Ofsted? If no, would you be willing to complete the voluntary registration?
15. Do you have public liability insurance? How much financial protection does this provide?
16. How many staff within your organisation that are involved with Free Fun and Food delivery have completed food hygiene training?
17. Are ALL of your staff who have any contact with children and young people DBS checked?
18. Please state how you keep a record of the DBS checks you have completed on your staff.
19. Tell us about your organisation. What sort of activities do you normally provide? Who do you normally work with? What programmes do you currently deliver (outside of Free Fun and Food) that engage Free School Meal children?

Section 2: AREAS OF DELIVERY

20. Does your organisation currently operate within Nottingham City?
21. If yes, which areas of Nottingham do you work in?
22. If you are delivering across multiple sites, please detail how many sites are in each of the areas above.

Section 3: FREE FUN AND FOOD DELIVERY

23. Please clearly list the individual dates you are planning to deliver over the summer holiday period.
24. Please clearly list the individual dates you are planning to deliver over October half-term.

25. Please clearly list the individual dates you are planning to deliver over the winter holiday period.
26. What times will your provision take place in the summer holidays?
27. What times will your provision take place in the October half-term?
28. What time will your provision take place in the winter holidays?
29. At what venue(s) will your project take place in the summer holidays? Have these been secured? Please include postcodes of all sites.
30. At what venue(s) will your project take place during October half-term? Have these been secured? Please include postcodes of all sites.
31. At what venue(s) will your project take place in the winter holidays? Have these been secured? Please include postcodes of all sites.
32. Will you be offering paid places for children who are not eligible for free school meals?
33. If you have answered yes to Q. 32, approximately what will be the percentage split between free places and paid places?
34. How many free school meal (FSM) children do you anticipate will attend each day over the summer holiday period?
35. How many free school meal (FSM) children do you anticipate will attend each day over the October half-term?
36. How many free school meal (FSM) children do you anticipate will attend each day over the winter holiday period?
37. How many free school meal (FSM) children do you anticipate will attend in total over the summer holiday period?
38. How many free school meal (FSM) children do you anticipate will attend in total over the October half-term?
39. How many free school meal (FSM) children do you anticipate will attend in total over the winter holiday period?
40. Please provide an overview of your proposal stating how it will meet the aims of the Free Fun and Food set out in the guidance document. (500 word limit)
41. Please detail all the activities you intend to provide. For example, football, table tennis, arts & crafts, music, dance, board games, life skills, nature walks, trips to museums, etc.
42. How will you know your project has made a difference? For example, what will you do to find out what your children and young people thought?
43. What do you see as the wider community benefits of your project? (200 word limit) What difference will your Free Fun and Food provision make to your community?
44. How will you make sure provision is available for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and how will you engage these families? You should state the level of need you can accommodate.
45. What ages ranges will you cater for?
 - 5-16
 - 5-11
 - 12-16
 - Other

- 46. Tell us about the food you will be serving during your activities. Hot food, cold food, snacks, etc. How will you source it and who will provide it?
- 47. What signposting will you put in place to ensure families have access to the support they need?
- 48. How will you promote and market your activities across the local area?
- 49. How will you ensure your provision is well attended and how will you tackle non-attendance?

Section 4: BUDGET and FUNDING

- 50. What is the total cost of your project?
- 51. How much money are you applying to Nottingham City Council for? Please ensure the breakdown in questions 53-55 matches this figure.
- 52. Is there any confirmed match/in-kind funding you will contribute? If so, how much and what is the source of funding?
- 53. How much money are you applying for in your summer delivery?
- 54. How much money are you applying for in your October delivery?
- 55. How much money are you applying for in your winter delivery?
- 56. Please give a detailed breakdown of how ALL funding will be spent, including what you intend to buy with other funders grants. If you are requesting funding for a number of items, please list them in order of priority. Show how costs have been calculated. For example, for staff costs indicate cost per session or hour. Please ensure the breakdown matches the figure in Question 51.
- 57. Have you talked to any City Council officers about this application?
- 58. Have you talked to anyone else about this application?
- 59. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your organisation or your proposal?

