



# Suffolk Holiday Activity and Food Programme

Annual Report  
1st April 2023 - 31st March 2024



# Who are we?

## Introduction and Background.

Suffolk, in the East of England, is a beautiful but rural community, covering an area of 3,801 Square kilometres and comprises busy towns dotted between arable and farming countryside. It is bordered by Norfolk to the North, The North Sea to the East, Essex to the South, and Cambridgeshire to the West.



Due to being mainly coastal and farming areas, employment is made up of a vast amount of seasonal work, which in turn impacts the level of poverty for the inhabitants, with over three-quarters of parents worrying that they do not have enough money to provide for their families.

Between January and December of 2023, the number of families needing to claim Free School Meals in Suffolk has risen by over 1500 from the previous year. This number has continued to increase month-on-month since, proving the need to support these families now and in the future.

**“ In 2023, the number of families needing to claim Free School Meals in Suffolk has risen by over 1500 ”**

Suffolk HAF was one of the first organisations to deliver in 2019, starting with around 15 key providers who delivered in the main towns. In the early days, one of the main issues was reaching the small rural villages, so we started looking for ways we could work with other professionals to produce ways to ensure that any children who wanted to join an activity had that opportunity. To achieve this, we worked with roughly 45 organisations, purchasing places within activities that were already running to meet the needs of the children requiring support. We worked with 84 providers last year, with 2024 shaping up to be even bigger and better than ever.

2020 brought new challenges with Covid, and the ability to be flexible and find ways around the issues we were facing was again needed. We thought of ways around the challenges, whilst still providing a quality service for our Free School Meal children. We introduced activity boxes, a provision that could be used in the children's homes.



One of the main concerns we had was how to reach the older children. To do this we went out into the community and offered support to the secondary children by seeing them face-to-face in parks and other areas. This way we could offer support and ensure that they have access to local services.

# The Steering Group

Suffolk County Council is just one small cog in the partnership that makes up the Suffolk HAF. Over the years we have worked closely with our local district and borough councils, East Suffolk, Ipswich, West Suffolk, Babergh, and Mid Suffolk.

We are accompanied in the steering group by representatives from Suffolk Libraries, and Activities Unlimited who deliver a large portion of SEND provision for Suffolk. We get together Bi-weekly to share good practices, updates on the project, and other news and ideas. Together we have brought a project in Suffolk from strength to strength and are a long way from that small start back in 2019.

We work closely with other colleagues and organisations to gather the information that is used to plan and provide the best outcomes for the families and young people in our community.

## The Steering Group members

### Suffolk County Council

Head of Community Infrastructure, Public Health and Communities

HAF Project Manager

### West Suffolk Council

Families & Communities Officer

### East Suffolk Council

Families & Communities Officer

Families & Communities Support Officer

### Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils

Manager of Health, Wellbeing, Sport and Leisure

Communities Officer

Graduate Project Officer

### Ipswich Borough Council

Health & Wellbeing Engagement Officer

### Suffolk Libraries

Youth Activities Producer

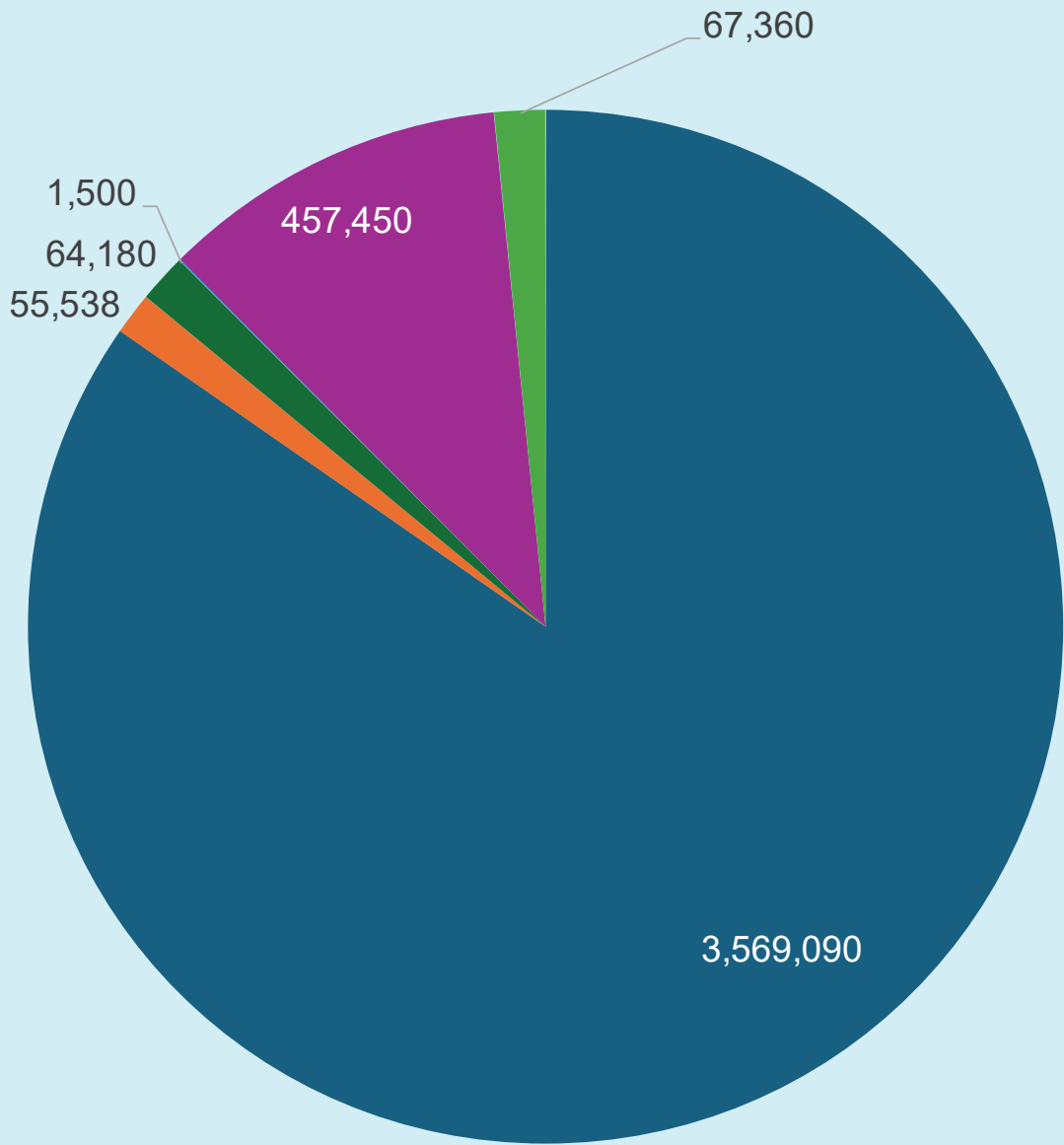
### Activities Unlimited

Provider Account Manager, Inclusion Services



# Finance

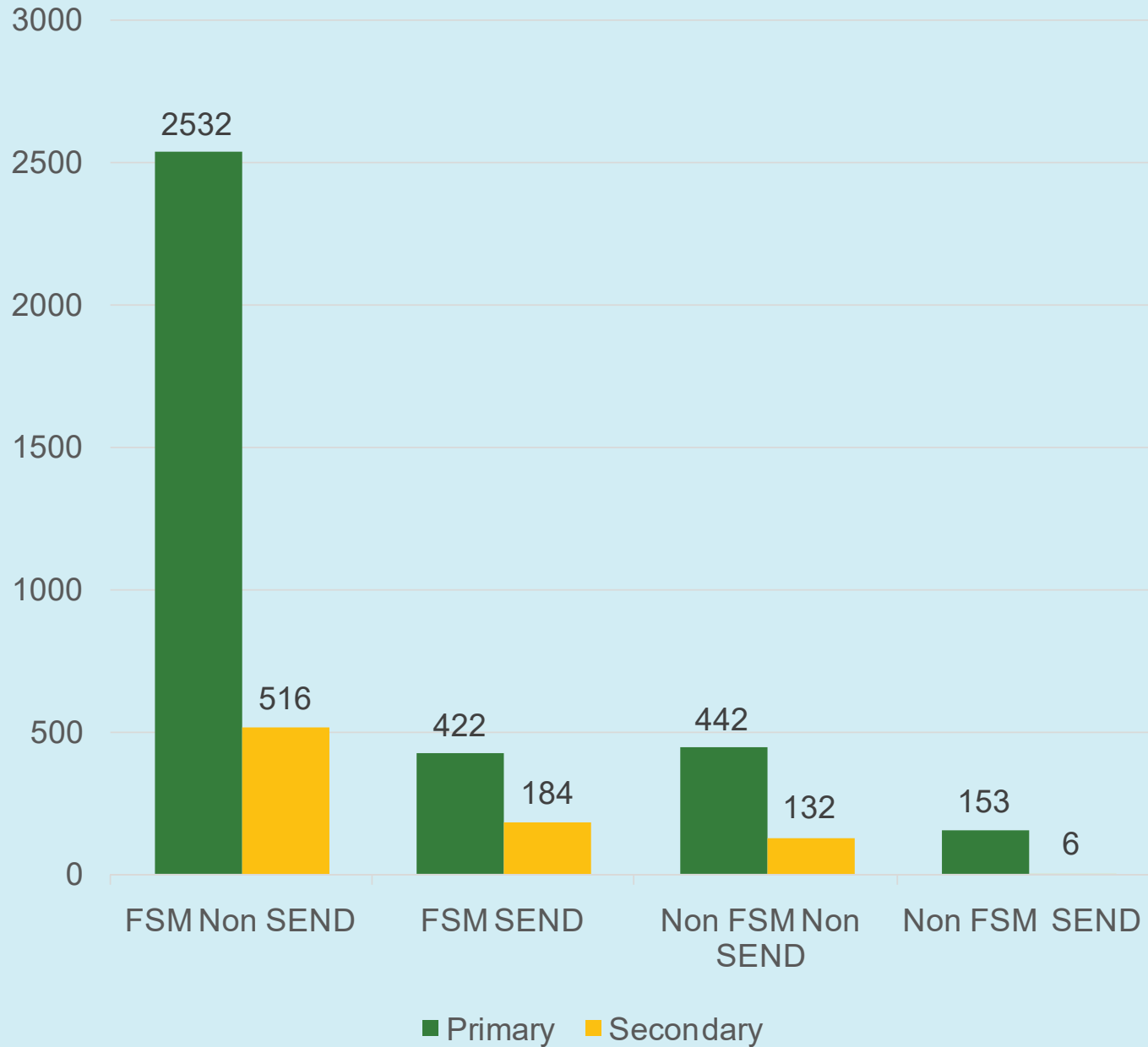
## Expenditure



- Face to Face Provision
- Remote Holiday Club
- Promoting the Scheme
- Capital Expenditure
- Management and Admin
- Other Costs

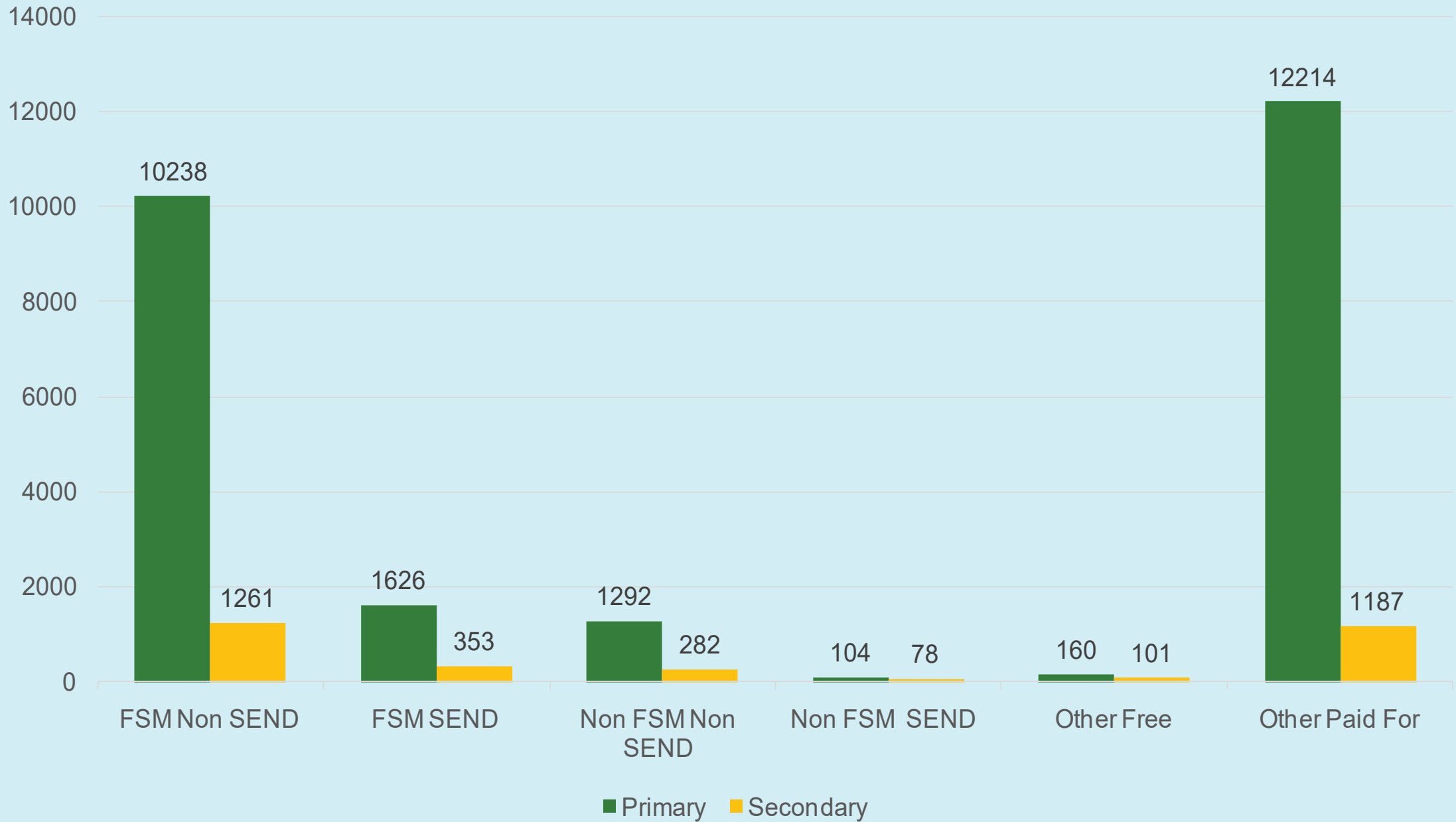
# Numbers

## Easter by Primary and Secondary



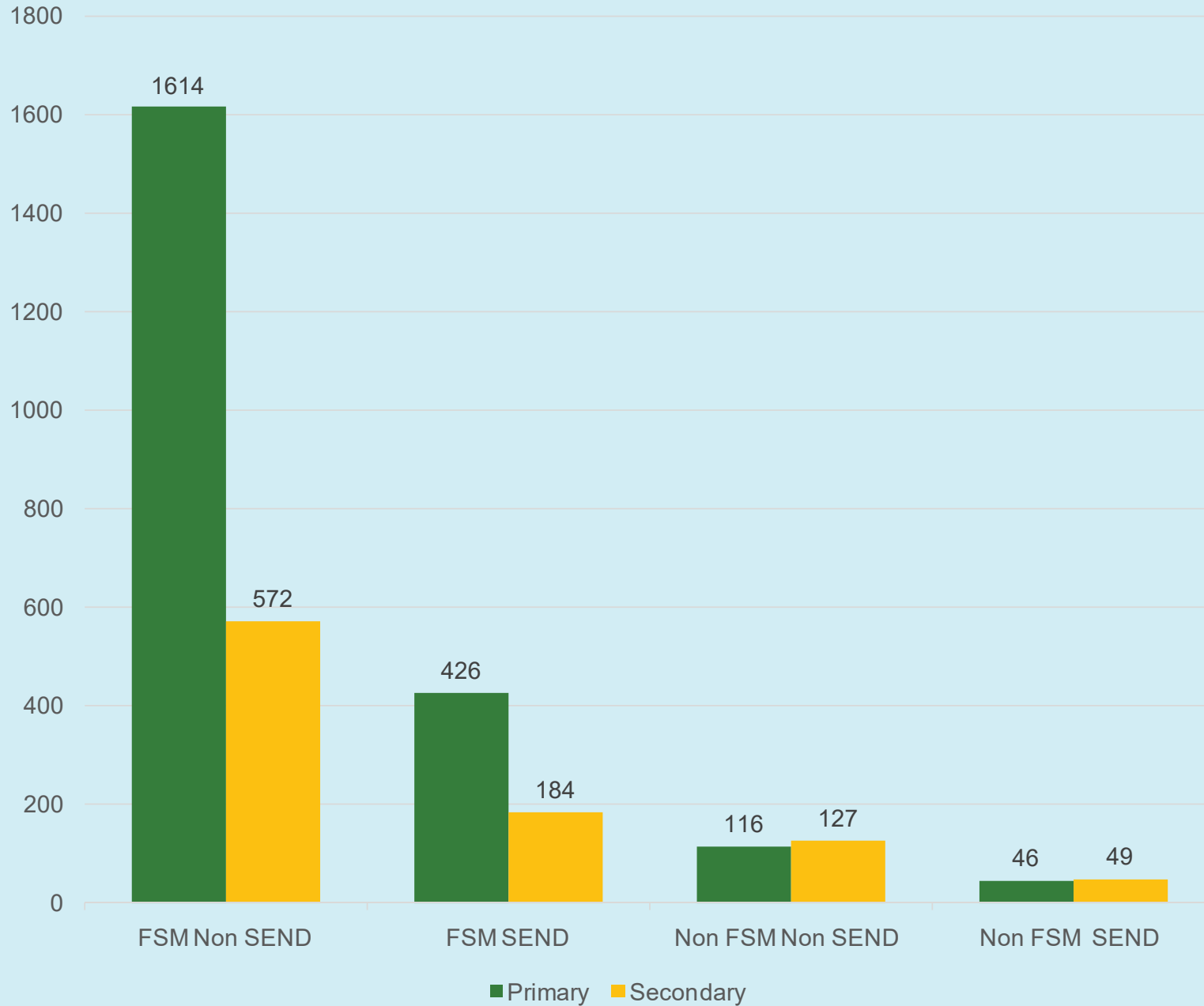
# Numbers

## Summer By Primary and Secondary



# Numbers

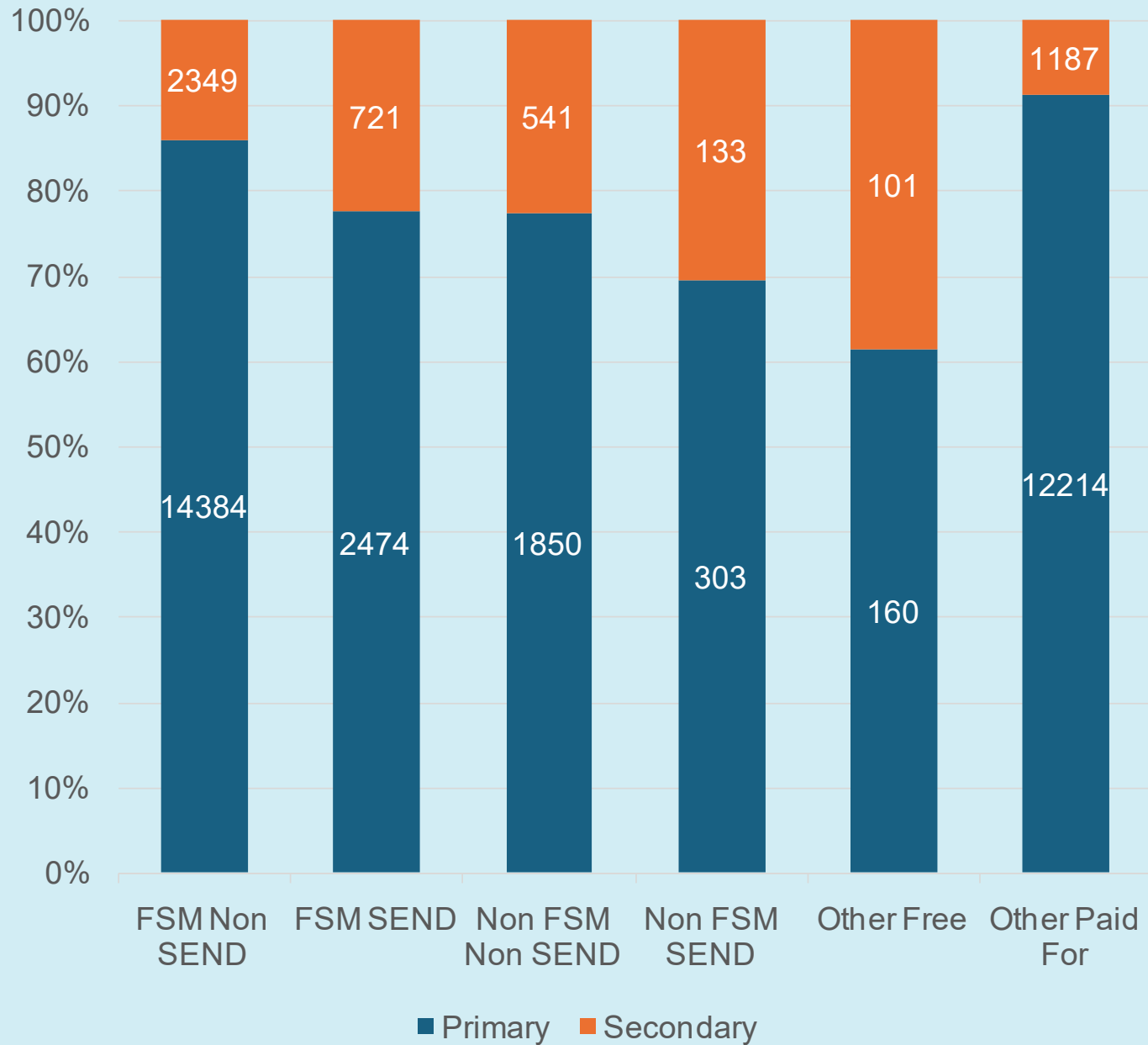
## Christmas by Primary and Secondary





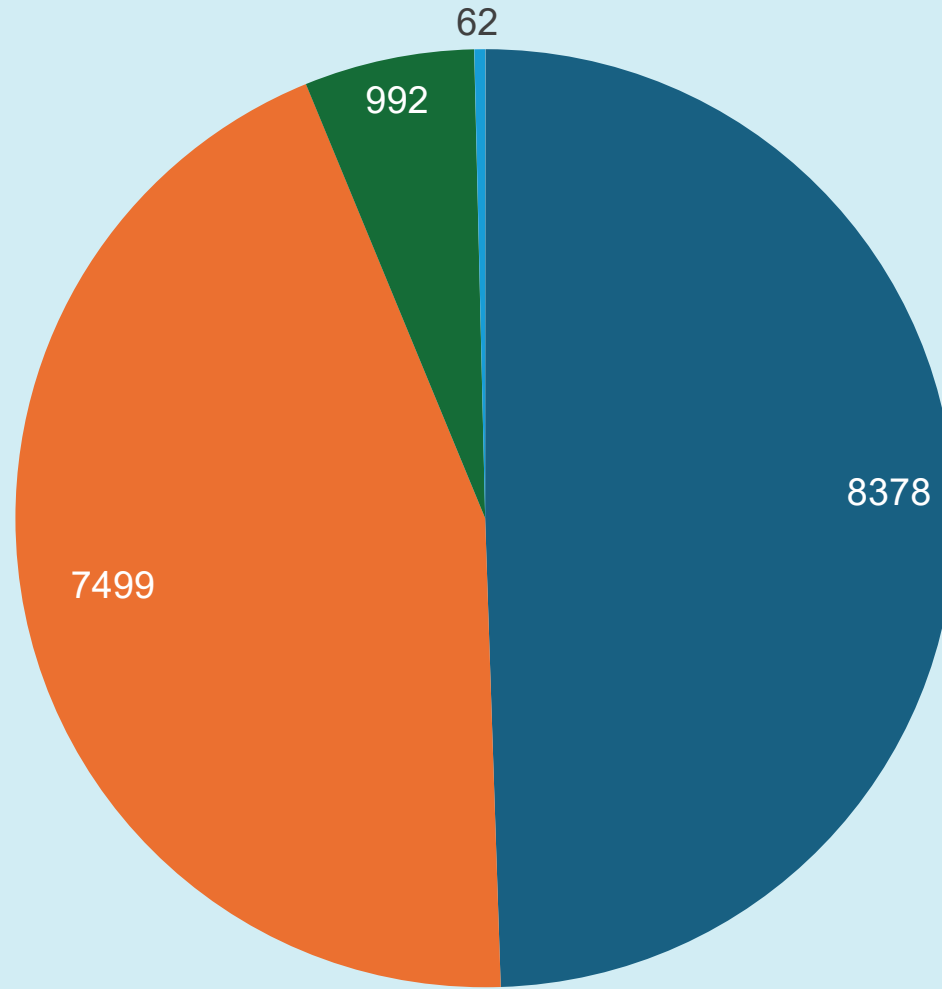
# Numbers

## Total YEAR by Primary and Secondary



# Numbers

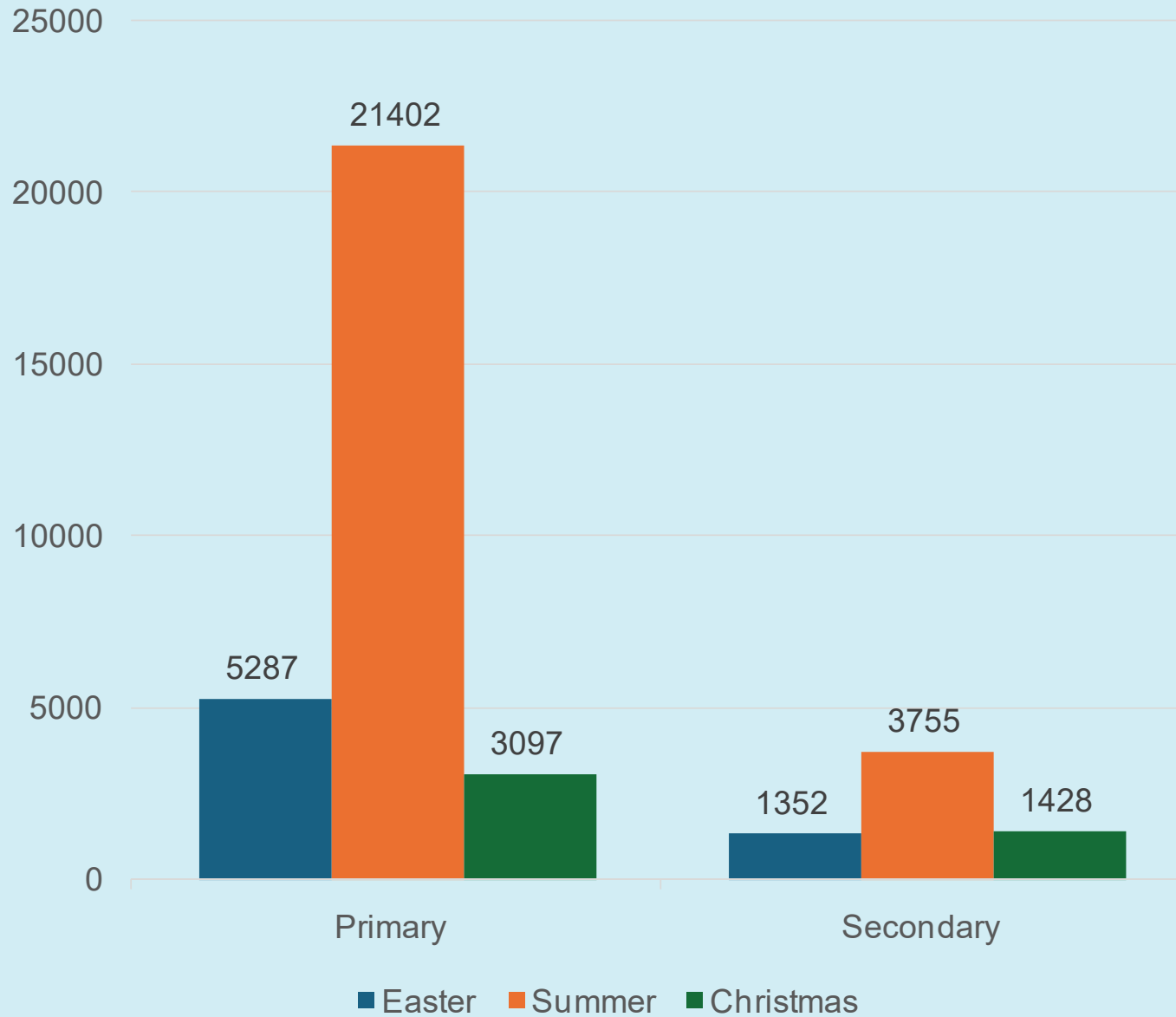
## Total Number of Places Offered/Filled



- Total number of places offered
- Total number of places filled
- Total number of cancelled places
- total number of Haf clubs

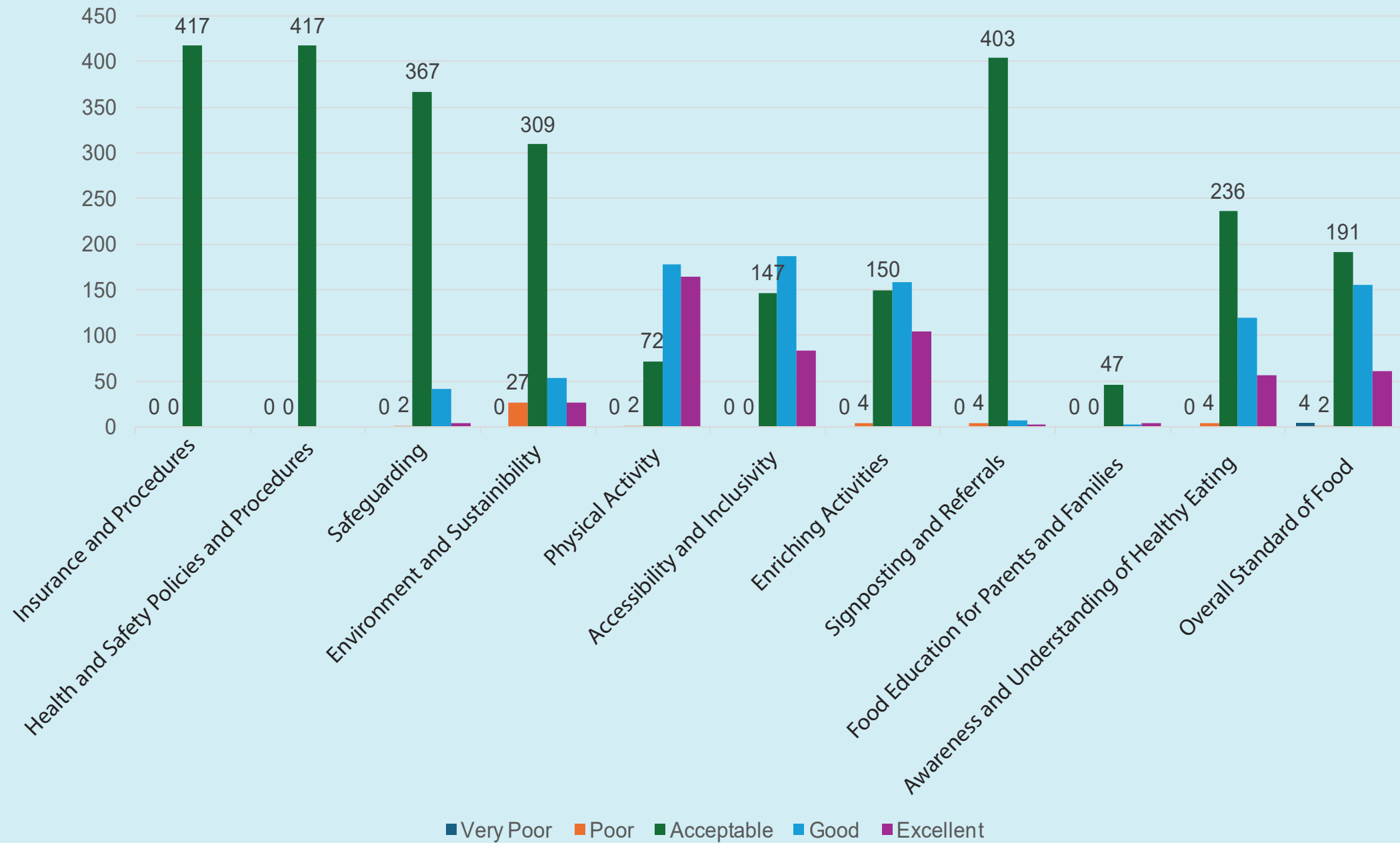
# Numbers

Total Number of Children Who Attended by Holiday Period



# Numbers

## Quality



# What We Offer

We provide a variety of activities aimed at children of different ages and abilities. These include cooking in the park, dance, football, crafts, horse-riding, den building, nature lessons, food activities and education, gymnastics, netball, and science.

Whether indoor or outdoor, aged 5 or 16, we have a provision that will interest everyone who we support. With a range of staff with excellent experience, knowledge, and skills, we can provide safe, fun, and supportive care and guidance for all our participants.

We offer mixed groups for ages, groups who provide SEND support and full SEND provision.

We aim to make sure that all HAF children who want to participate feel that they will get the care and support they need and they will return season after season, year after year.

## Some of the Providers we work with.

Suffolk Libraries

Home for Good

Schools Out

Premier Education

Suffolk Wildlife Trust

Abbeycroft, Explore Outdoor

Abbeycroft, Cooking in the park

Local leisure and sports centres

And many, many more....

Activities Unlimited

YMCA

Asset Education

Kicks and Tricks

Rock, Paper Scissors



# Marketing and Promotion

Suffolk is known for its open spaces and has a vast rural community. We use our relationships with local schools and other providers to promote HAF, and this year we created a flyer with links to our InfoLink page where the project is promoted. Each of our Local District and Borough Councils used various ways to promote the project, including pages on the Council websites, their own InfoLink pages, and social media posts and campaigns.

We actively encourage our providers to promote the project and the activities they offer, including visiting schools and other events to promote the project. Each council and provider work hard to create and maintain links and relationships, with a variety of organisations to promote and spread the word about the support we can offer local families. We also advertise on two family magazines Rearing2Go and Suffolk Families Magazine.



## Nutrition, Meals and Good Food Education

Some of our providers provide the ingredients and methods to cook nutritious and healthy meals outside with the families (weather permitting). This is one of the many enjoyable activities that our families come back for again and again.

All our providers are encouraged to provide healthy meals and snacks for our families and HAF children and provide a variety of options from which to choose, catering to food preferences and intolerances. Food education is included in many of the activities, with children getting the chance to try foods that they may not have experienced before. They share this experience with their friends, comparing notes on what they liked and enjoyed.



# Who benefits?

## The Children

We have a variety of children coming to join us in our activities, each given the chance to make new friends and learn new skills.

Different nationalities can join the local children, share a community with them, make new friends, improve language skills, and extend local knowledge.

Children with ADHD, Autism, and other challenges can join in and experience the same fun experiences, building new relationships and engaging in positive and fun activities.

Parents and carers have commented on how many of them have grown in confidence, learning new skills, and having positive and enjoyable experiences. Support from knowledgeable and understanding staff with a variety of skills and experience helps each child to have a childhood experience they will never forget.



# Reflections on what we learned this year

We are still using HAF codes and vouchers for families to book the activities - We feel this is something that could be improved on and have been sourcing other options. We are reliant on schools providing the codes to the families and are eager to find a way that the families can take some control over this. We are looking for a suitable booking platform to use to streamline the booking, approvals, and promotion of the Suffolk HAF.

We also feel that we could be promoting the project earlier and more robustly so will be looking at improving communications in 2024. There is a need to give the schools and others involved in promotion the time to get the word out to the families. There has been a high turnaround of staff in a lot of the key roles towards the end of the year. This has had an effect on the project and the collective knowledge held. That being said, the new staff members are bringing in new exciting ideas and a determination to make 2024 the best year that Suffolk HAF has had to date. As always we are looking at ways to promote and encourage secondary school ages to the project. Due to the rurality of some of our areas, this is always challenging, but with the new ideas and the new team, we are confident that we can see an improvement in this area.



## Challenges

There is a 'hangover' from the Covid years which means that many young people and children have found engaging in schools, activities, etc difficult. Many have ongoing mental health struggles from the pandemic and are reluctant to sign up at first. Once engaged, however, they find it rewarding and therapeutic, helping to ease stresses and worries.

The ongoing financial crisis which we find our country in at present causes many families to have an extra financial strain that previously we they might not have experienced causing extra stress in the family and on the children and young people. The HAF projects have proven to ease the financial burden and social exclusion for many families. Children who engage in the project are given fun and educational things to do, meals, and relief from the worries of the family unit. Much of our provision is aimed at families being able to do things together thus providing bonding opportunities for families over the holidays.





# A glimpse into the future

## The future - What does 2024/25 hold for us?

The first thing we plan to change is how we book and promote activities. We will be moving away from E-Vouchers, and utilising a modern and reliable booking system. We will be using Eequ as a booking platform, enabling us to maintain a closer eye on numbers, helping us react to providers who may be struggling to get bookings, and providing a thorough support system for them. This will ensure better control of bookings for parents and carers, making reporting clearer and more reliable in the future.

This will make marketing our opportunities and activities easier, with links to the booking systems being easily shared on documents, social media campaigns, emails, and marketing materials. We also plan to work harder to promote our project - we are passionate about what we do, and helping local families is important to every one of us. We want to promote this through as many channels as we can so that families who deserve this support can know about it, and access it easily.

We know what we do is beneficial to families and groups - we will be taking the lessons we have learned and the good practices that have been honed, and applying these to continue to improve our model and successes.

We are already looking for other local organisations who can deliver diverse sessions and more variety in our provision which, in turn, will engage more children to join in and support our local families. We plan to work more closely with colleagues working with groups such as Homes for Ukraine who help these new residents to settle in Suffolk, make friends, and receive help with mental health and English education.

Finally, we will be looking to grow the number of places on offer so that we can reach and support more children, giving them fun, active, and educational school holidays.

# Out of the mouths of babes (and parents!)

It was our first time at something like that and I was worried it was going to be "clicky". It wasn't, Everyone was very friendly. People understood our daughter's behaviour and it was lovely to be with people who understood us.

"When money gets low it's really helpful to know this is available."

These sessions truly are a lifeline for local families and I would like to thank you for giving up your time, resources and expertise to run them."

"enjoyed playing the robot game."

"It's so nice as the kids love following the recipe cards and creating the dinners because all the ingredients are there and they enjoy getting involved - My fussy eaters love the pasta and chickpea soup"

"My child was engaged all day listening and taking part which he struggles to do at school."

"Once again a fantastic event where we can get support from others in a similar situation and our children can be themselves. As always so well organised and we were well looked after."

"I enjoyed making new friends, VR and toontastic."

I honestly cannot rate these sessions highly enough. Myself and my three children now attended two and have absolutely loved both. It has been a great way for myself and my children to spend valuable time together doing things."

"Roller Skating again please."

A photograph of two hands, one from a child and one from an adult, holding a heart shape made of twigs against a wooden background. The child's hand is on the left, and the adult's hand is on the right. The twigs are dark brown and have been arranged to form a heart shape. The background is a wooden wall with vertical planks and a metal hinge on the left side.

# Thank you!

Thank you for reading all about us in Suffolk and learning about our wonderful families, young people, and the people who work on the Suffolk HAF Project. We look forward to telling you about our 24/25 successes.

**Funded by the Department For Education**



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