



**BURY2GETHER Members Survey On Bury Council's Summer 2024 HAF
and Boomerang Multi-Sensory Play Centre Offers for
Children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**

During the summer of 2024 Bury Council offered HAF (Holidays and Activities Fund) activities for all children eligible for free school meals plus children regarded as 'vulnerable'. Vulnerable children included children with SEND. BURY2GETHER surveyed its members in September 2024 on their experience of HAF. Also this summer, Bury Council offered free places for eligible children with SEND at Boomerang Multi-Sensory Play Centre in Bury, funded from the Short Breaks budget under the Children's Social Care department. BURY2GETHER surveyed its members on their experience of this offer. This report presents the findings.

In total 32 members of BURY2GETHER responded to the survey. Participants were able to leave answers blank if they were not applicable. Some respondents only wanted to reply about Boomerang as they were not eligible for HAF.

1. Boomerang Multi-Sensory Play Centre

This was a new offer from Bury Council, unconnected to HAF, for children with SEND from Early Years to age 16 to attend free sessions at Boomerang over the summer holidays. Children did not need to be eligible for free school meals to participate.

Awareness of the Offer

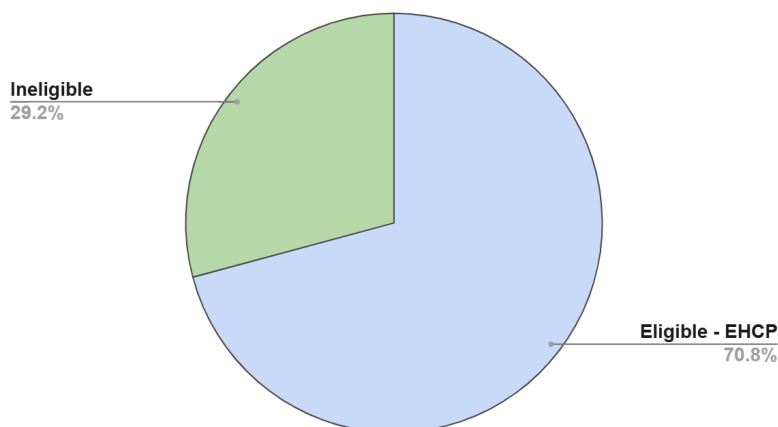
Of the 32 respondents 28 were aware of the offer and 4 were not. This may be biased by the fact that BURY2GETHER had previously notified members by email and on Facebook about this offer. We do not know how many families with children with SEND in Bury were actually aware of the offer.

Eligibility

The offer was for all Bury Early Years children with SEND (we assume aged 0 to currently in Reception) and these children did not need a diagnosis or an EHCP (Education and Health Care Plan). Places were offered to Bury Primary and Secondary school children (Year 1 to age 16) but only if they had an EHCP.

Of the 32 respondents 8 said their child was eligible to attend as an Early Years child with SEND. Of the Year 1 to 16 year olds, 17 respondents said their child was eligible as they had an EHCP and 7 were not as had no EHCP.

Eligibility of Children In Year 1 to Age 16 to Attend Boomerang



Of the 24 Year 1 to age 16 children, 71% were eligible to take part as they had an EHCP.

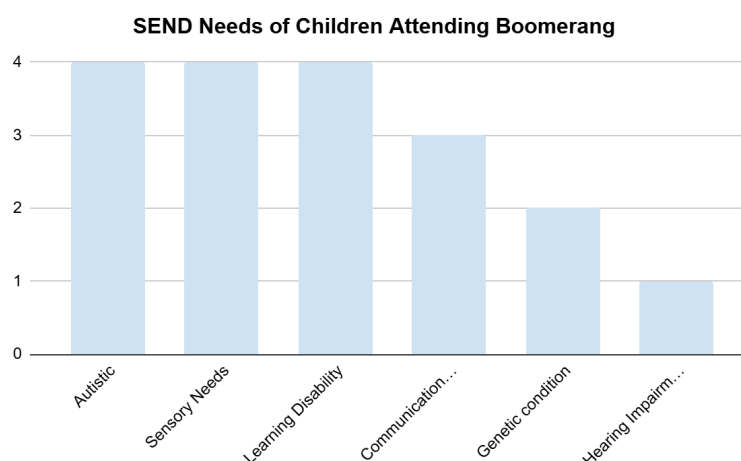
Attendance

Of the 25 children eligible to attend Boomerang only 5 (20%) attended. Of the 5 children attending, 2 were Early Years children and 3 were Year 1 to age 16.

The 5 children that did attend went to between 3 and 6 sessions each at Boomerang.

Members whose child attended Boomerang all rated their child's enjoyment of their session, on a scale from 0 (did not enjoy) to 5 (child loved their session), as level 5.

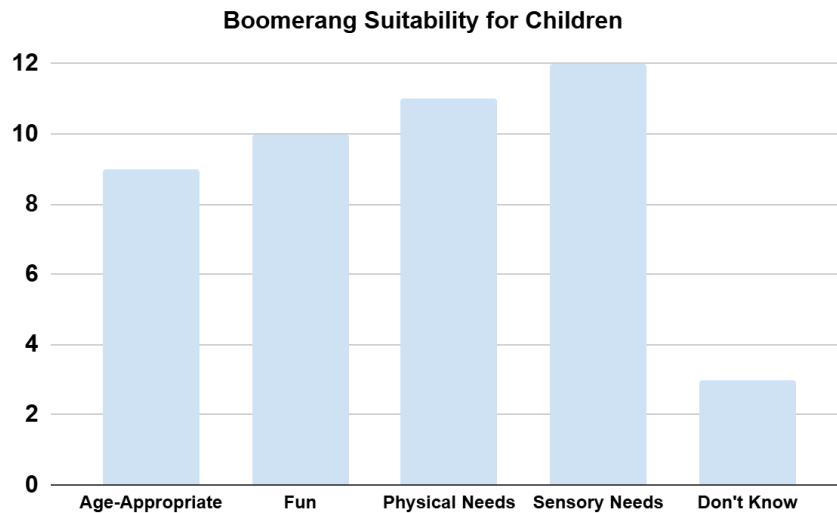
SEND Needs



The SEND needs of those children who attended Boomerang are shown in the above chart. Respondents could list more than one SEND need per child. None of the children attending listed a physical disability.

Suitability of Boomerang

Boomerang is a venue specifically aimed for children with SEND. Members were asked how suitable they thought Boomerang was for their child. Respondents could choose more than one option and 17 of the 32 respondents chose at least one suggested response. This means 15 respondents did not tick any suggested response for suitability.



Other comments on Boomerang

Members were asked for any other comments on the Boomerang offer, whether they attended or not. The following comments were received:

Respondents' General Comments on the Boomerang Offer

'Boomerang is too young now for my 10 year-old.'

'Boomerang is a fantastic facility for very young children and those who can cope in that setting. For the majority of children, and both of mine, it was terrible to only have this option. Having children with all different needs and ages using all the equipment is not appropriate. Last year with Bee Inclusive was far better - a range of activities that were suitable for different children's needs and interests. No disrespect to Boomerang, but what a pathetic and non-inclusive offer for the SEND children in Bury!'

"Boomerang, as great as it is, was not an appropriate choice. This is a specific type of event, rather small with nothing much to offer. The fact you discriminated against children who do not have an EHCP is absolutely disgusting. We have been to two things this summer and both were arranged by Bee Inclusive because, unfortunately, my child does not like to do things where there are lots of people and strangers. We are entitled to HAF vouchers but this year we're unable to use them and because you [Bury Council] limited funding to one organisation, there was no variety of events on offer. Every child with SEND has different likes, different needs and variety is needed so each individual family can choose what is appropriate to them. A SEND child with an EHCP is not always more in need than a child without it, but your discussion this summer has been discriminative and not at all inclusive!"

"It was a little frustrating that we paid for the SEN sessions at Boomerang before the free sessions were announced."

"My child is non-verbal with severe sensory processing difficulties and autistic. They are terrified of Boomerang because it is too dark inside. They cannot access this even though they were eligible."

"Only found out through BURY2GETHER. No online booking system - they [Boomerang] would suggest the best sessions based on having to phone or 'pop in' and explain my child's disabilities. Not a bad place but nothing like the range of activities offered last summer. My child is a bum-shuffler - I was concerned they would get hurt mixing with more mobile children so did not attend."

"The free offer went out after they had advertised the paid-for Boomerang sessions. I did not book as I had already booked a SEND session that I paid for. So, that was the main problem I had with their offer."

"Completely inappropriate for Early Years child with sensory issues. Far too overstimulating and therefore could not access any of the sessions over summer. Very disappointed."

"My children were eligible, but my eldest is too old to go to Boomerang now - they wouldn't benefit or get anything from this. My youngest gets totally overstimulated, so the offer was inaccessible to us this year. Really disappointing compared to previous years' offers with other providers. Very shortsighted of the LA to assume all children with SEND can access Boomerang."

"Whilst we used to love going to Boomerang when my child was younger, it is no longer age-appropriate for my 8 year-old child, so we did not attend any sessions."

"Massive parking issue at this venue. Also, was reluctant to try because when we have been in the past, was very, very busy and child struggled to cope."

"Boomerang is a wonderful place where our children have spent some great times over the years. However, we feel it is aimed at more younger children and as such not really appropriate or beneficial for the Bury HAF offer for children above 8, and definitely not for 16 year-olds. This meant a very limited offer overall."

"Boomerang is not suitable for a teenager/someone with the same additional needs as my child."

"The last time we attended it was not accessible: the doors were not assisted; it did not have a suitable changing area; we were blocked in by people entering and leaving; there were no hoisting systems in place in rooms suitable for my child; and the cafe area was overcrowded with seating making it almost impossible to navigate a wheelchair around."

"We love Boomerang but this was far too limited in terms of an offering for children with SEND. There was no variety offered beyond this and as such we did not access (nor did we use a single HAF voucher) - it's a pointless offering for a family like ours. Why offer to only children with an EHCP?"

"My child is 15. They are too old for a play centre. They need small group activities that are appropriate to their age. 15 year-olds would not be allowed in ordinary play centres. It shows a complete lack of understanding by Bury Council to think every child with SEND wants to do the same thing and that Boomerang is suitable for teenagers. It's also unfair that you have to have an EHCP to access the offer - well-supported in school and you can't come even though your summer is as lonely as another child who has an EHCP. Boomerang is excellent for some children but the offer was badly thought out."

"It was great for my child as they are young and there was practically nobody at the sessions. However had they been a few years older this would have been no use to us. It was so poorly attended that it was an absolute waste of Council money: if you were to calculate how much that would have cost per head! Last year's sessions for Bee Inclusive were always full and well-attended."

"Boomerang was great for my child. The sensory sessions that were run in the centre [Boomerang] were great, and the fact that they could then go back to the soft play whenever they wanted was great for their sensory needs and attention span."

"Boomerang is a FANTASTIC setting! The staff are brilliant and non-judgemental! They are very helpful and knowledgeable!!! Never had a bad experience! The most inclusive session we have ever been to! You can tell the staff really care and want to make a difference!

"My child needs quiet calming activities. It did not tailor to her needs at all. Last year she accessed the animal petting and the paint-a-pot and make-your-own pizza [Bee Inclusive activities]. She would have come away more distressed attending the sessions due to sensory issues than if she had gone. Not that she was eligible due to no EHCP. School won't apply for one because she is academic but has lots in place with an IEP at school to manage her SEMH and sensory needs."

"Too busy, too loud. Not bespoke, not suitable for interests."

"Too overstimulating at Boomerang."

BURY2GETHER originally advertised the Boomerang sessions on both its public Facebook page (where commenting is not available) and its private members' Facebook page (where commenting is available). There were many comments made about Bury Council's Boomerang offer. These comments have been included with this survey in Appendix 1.

2.0 HAF

Note - not everyone who responded to the questions on Boomerang also answered questions on HAF. 28 respondents completed the HAF questions.

Who Was Eligible for HAF?

Of the 28 respondents only 4 said they were eligible for HAF due to receiving free school meals. One of these respondents did not receive a HAF code because their child is on EOTAS and another claimed not to have received a HAF code either so only 2 of the 4 respondents eligible for Free School Meals received a HAF code.

Of the 24 respondents who were not eligible for free school meals 1 did not state if they had received a HAF code and 2 just said they did not get a HAF code. 11 asked their child's school for a code and got one (although one school thought children with EHCPs were automatically given codes) whilst 2 asked their school for a code but the school could not provide one. 6 respondents, who did not believe they were eligible through free school meals, were automatically sent a code by their school. 1 respondent who did not think they received free school meals said they were sent a code from Bury Council and 1 respondent who did not think they received free school meals said they were sent a code directly from the HAF team.

This means that of the 24 respondents who said they were not eligible for free school meals 19 (79%) received HAF codes.

In our survey in 2023 of the summer HAF experience, 30 respondents were not eligible as they did not receive free school meals but 24 (80%) of them received a HAF code.

In both 2023 and 2024 at least 79% of respondents who did not believe themselves to be eligible for free school meals obtained HAF codes. This indicates that schools, or a professional working with the family, believed the child to be eligible for HAF due to SEND needs and fitted into the category of vulnerable children who could access HAF.

Age of Children Wanting to Take Part in HAF Activities

Of all respondents 9% had a child in secondary school and 91% had a child in primary school. In our 2023 HAF survey 28% of respondents had a child in secondary school and 72% in primary school.

The drop in the number of secondary school SEND children represented in the survey is concerning and may indicate a lack of engagement due to lack of suitable HAF activities for secondary-age children with SEND.

SEND Needs of Those Wanting to Take Part in HAF Activities

Respondents were asked to list all of their child's SEND needs as children can have more than one SEND need. The table below shows all the SEND needs indicated by parents from both our 2024 and 2023 surveys.

SEND Need	No of children 2024	%	No of Children 2023	%
Autistic (diagnosed or on the assessment pathway)	27	84	34	74
Sensory Processing Disorder/Sensory Difficulties	21	66	27	59
Learning Disability/Difficulty	13	41	20	43
ADHD	13	41	15	33
Communication Disability/Difficulty	10	31	11	24
Physical Disability	5	16	10	22
Mental Health	2	6	6	13
Epilepsy	0	0	5	11
Genetic Condition	7	22	5	11
Cerebral Palsy	0	0	3	7
Dyspraxia	0	0	2	4
Down's Syndrome	1	3	2	4
Visual Impairment	2	6	2	4

Anxiety	1	3	1	2
Hearing Impairment	1	3	1	2

The highest proportion (84%) of respondent's children in 2024 were autistic with 66% of children having sensory needs. It is not a surprise to see the increase in autistic children from 2024 as this follows a national increase in autism diagnosis. The range of other SEND needs in 2024 broadly follows the results of our 2023 survey. However, the drop in respondents who have a child with a physical disability is concerning in case that correlates with a lack of access to the HAF scheme due to lack of suitable activities.

Suitability of HAF Activities for Children with SEND

Of the 21 respondents in total who received a HAF code 11 (45%) said there was a suitable HAF activity for their child. In 2023 70% of respondents said there was a suitable HAF activity for their child, although there were concerns with that survey that some respondents were including Bee Inclusive activities as HAF activities. Regardless, there has been a significant drop in the number of parents who felt that there are HAF activities available that are suitable for their child with SEND.

The 2 respondents who said they were eligible for HAF due to receiving free school meals and received a HAF code both said there were no suitable HAF activities for their child. This means that no respondents who received a HAF code because they were eligible for free school meals took part in HAF: only non-free school meals children did. **This means that the very core group for HAF - free school meals receivers - responding to this survey did not benefit from HAF due to no suitable activities for their SEND child.**

Reasons given by parents/carers for some of the HAF activities being unsuitable

"There were no age-appropriate activities available."

"My child requires 1:1 supervision and this isn't available at the HAF-funded events. I cannot attend them with my child due to being disabled myself."

"There were only two options available - Boomerang [which was not HAF] and Secret Garden. Secret Garden was run-down and not wheelchair accessible; the flooring is difficult to get around on; there are places completely inaccessible for a wheelchair; the instruments were worn and had no stick to play with so resorted to using my car keys; nothing structured just 'walk around with some difficulty' - would've been better to go for a walk round the park."

"No activities were suitable. All for children with lower care needs."

"My child will not attend a holiday club. Years ago we could have used HAF for Bee Inclusive."

"My child requires constant adult support."

"Overall this summer's HAF programme was completely unsuitable for my child, very disappointing and a complete waste of time."

"Too busy, too loud, not bespoke, not suitable for interests."

“Not accessible, would need 1:1 support, generally too busy of an environment, not age-appropriate activities.”

“Activity not suitable for needs.”

HAF Activities Attended

Parents/carers reported that their children took part in activities run by Communitree, Funtime, Secret Garden, Ed Start, Radcliffe Borough Football plus mentioned dance activities and sports clubs. This appears to be a smaller list of activities listed than in our 2023 HAF survey.

Comments given by parents/carers on HAF activities their child attended

“Secret Garden only - was the only accessible activity for my children which was safe, and they actually enjoyed and benefited from.”

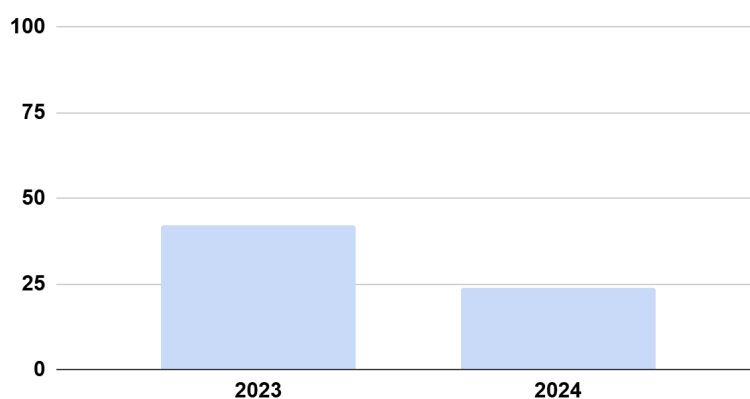
“My child attended one [session] at Secret Garden but had a meltdown so I went to collect them.”

“Ed Start & Funtime but struggled with anxiety so wouldn't return.”

Variety of HAF Activities for Children with SEND

When asked if parents/carers felt there was a wide variety of HAF activities for their child to take part in, of the 25 respondents who answered the questions 6 (24%) felt there was a wide variety of activities their child could attend. In comparison to our 2023 HAF survey, there has been a significant drop in the number of parents feeling there are a wide range of activities to take part in. The 2023 survey may have been skewed by parents thinking Bee Inclusive, as in previous years, was part of the HAF offer when it was not in the summer of 2023 (funding came from Bury Council's Social Opportunities budget). This is very concerning as is the fact that only 6 respondents in 2024 thought there was a wide variety of activities for their child to attend.

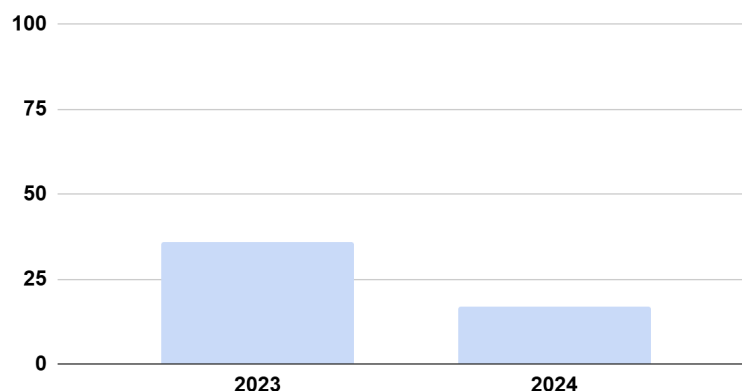
Percentage of Respondents Who Felt There Was a Wide Variety of HAF Activities Suitable For Their Child



Ability to Use All Allocated HAF Vouchers

Of the 24 respondents who replied, only 4 (17%) felt enough suitable activities were available for them to use their 16 four-hour vouchers over the summer. This indicates that many children with SEND did not get the number of hours of activities that they were entitled to. This is a decrease to the responses in our 2023 survey, which is concerning.

Percentage of Respondents Who Felt There Were Enough Suitable HAF Activities To Use All Their Vouchers



Inclusion

Asked if they felt that the activity/activities their child attended with HAF were inclusive, of the 15 people who responded to the question 12 said yes and 3 said no.

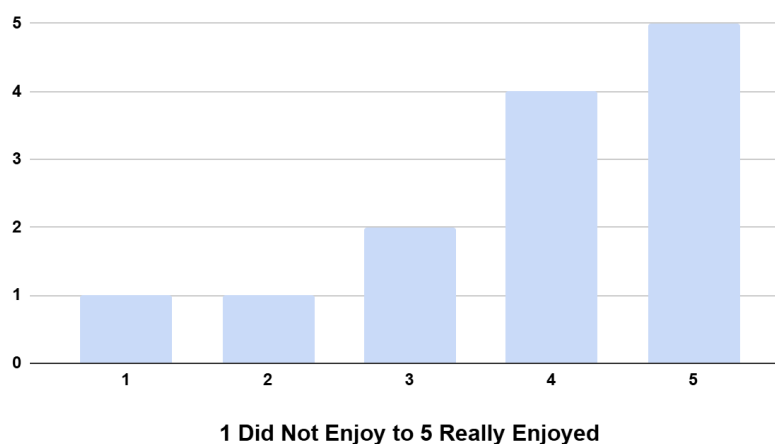
Reasonable Adjustment

Of the 16 respondents to this question, 3 had not received reasonable adjustment at a HAF activity so their child could take part, 8 had received reasonable adjustment and 5 responded that their child did not need any reasonable adjustments making.

Children's Enjoyment of HAF Activity/Activities They Took Part In

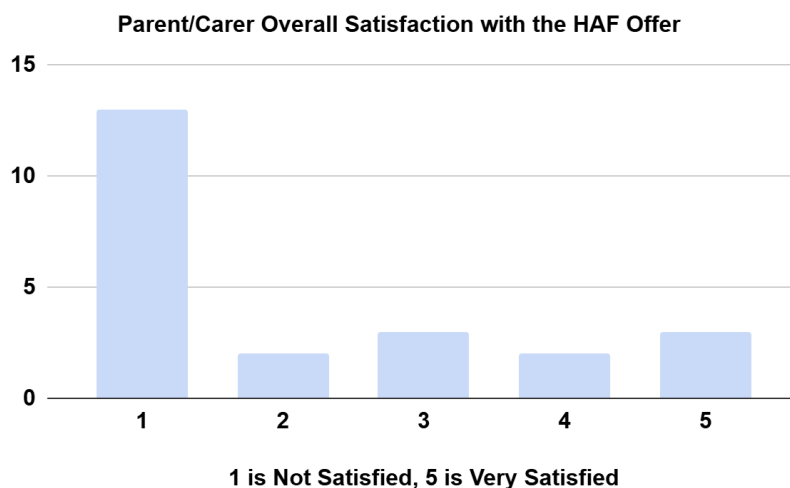
Respondents were asked to rate how much their child had enjoyed the HAF activity/activities they had taken part in on a scale of 1-5 (1 did not enjoy, 5 really enjoyed). The majority of those children who had taken part in a HAF activity had enjoyed their session.

How Much Children Attending HAF Enjoyed Their Activities



Parents/Carers' Satisfaction with HAF

Parents/carers were asked to rate overall how satisfied they were with the HAF programme for their child with SEND on a scale of 1-5 (1 unsatisfied, 5 very satisfied). There was a split with some parents very satisfied with the HAF programme but many who were not. This follows the pattern of the 2023 survey.



Other Holiday Activities for Children With SEND

Of those responding to the question, 12 respondents (44%) were able to find activities outside of HAF suitable for their child with SEND to take part in but 15 (56%) could not. These statistics are very similar to those of the 2023 HAF survey. Of those that did find other activities these included activities provided by Action for Children (2 respondents), Bee Inclusive (6), SEND swimming lessons (1), activity at the child's school (1) and private yoga, football and forest school sessions (1).

Other Comments in General on the Summer Activity Offers

Respondents Were Asked For Any Final Comments on Bury Council's Summer Holiday Activity Provision in General (HAF Or Otherwise):

"The offer needs to be better. Funding one provider [Boomerang] that isn't appropriate for children with SEND isn't good enough. The general HAF offer needs more providers that are willing to cater to children with SEND and can provide safe and stimulating activities that children actually look forward to."

"There is no variety for my child. Boomerang or Funtime were the only options for them. This made the summer long and meant we spent a lot of time at home. This means their behaviour was challenging as they need to keep active."

"Very few activities available for children with SEND."

"How can HAF legally get away with offering so little for our kids? Any other area this would be seen as discrimination but because it's about disabled children, HAF just get away with it. Absolutely seething that there was ONE HAF activity suitable for my child."

"The Local Authority needs to consult with parents to find out what is actually beneficial for their child. This needs to be organised in good time. Even if there was an option where parents could subsidise some of the activities for a small fee, that would have been much better doing that through Bee Inclusive rather than a play centre designed for babies and severely impaired children."

"Early Years SEND session was good [Bee Inclusive]. My child would have benefited from some activities outside in a calm space. This was not inclusive at all [other offerings]."

"HAF was no good for my child this year."

"Bee Inclusive are amazing. They deserve funding and respect for all they do all year, not just in holidays."

"I don't feel able to leave my child in one of the clubs as they are only 5 and have autism and ADHD. They would struggle so much with a new environment, new people, new tasks and would hate me leaving them. My child has an EHCP and this would need to be read, understood and acted upon for my child to join a club. They have 1:1 at school and I doubt any clubs would provide this."

"Never reply to emails! Never received HAF vouchers for over 2 years now! It's disgusting!"

'Bee Inclusive, in my opinion, are a much better representation for summer holiday activities, they are wide-ranging to cater for individual needs and have in the past had multiple activities to suit all ages. Whilst a summer holiday club that could support children without their parents present would be great for families, I understand the challenges that staffing this type of activity would include. Boomerang is suitable for children up to 8 years old maximum.'

"HAF is brilliant for most families but due to my disability my child misses out. They have an EHCP at school and love routine. My child struggles in the school holidays and I would love for them to be included, but can't due to not having 1:1 supervision."

"This year's HAF program rendered us stuck at home with nothing to do in our community, further reminding us of the difficulties we face every single day and how services simply do not seem to care - out of sight out of mind!"

"Provision through HAF is woeful for children with SEND."

"Whilst there were a couple of HAF SEND activities suitable for my younger child, nothing was suitable for my eldest. That meant I needed to arrange childcare with a grandparent for the eldest to take the youngest to experience HAF activities. Eldest does have an EHCP but Boomerang is not age-appropriate activity for them anymore. Last summer, the universal short breaks offer for SEN families (offering a wide range of activities administered by Bee Inclusive), was much more suitable and accessible for our family. Both children had more fun at Bee Inclusive activities being able to go together."

"More SEND-inclusive activities"

"I cannot leave my child in an unfamiliar environment with unfamiliar people as would cause anxiety and lots of meltdowns."

"Communitree at both Summerseat [School] and Bury Grammar [School] was excellent!"

"I really wanted to see the horse riding one. My child loves animals and I would have taken them to a horse as it's very therapeutic. I would have liked to see more therapeutic activities,

animal-centred. My kids are just too anxious to separate from me. I really missed the Bee Inclusive events as well. These were really good - although I had to attend with them [my children] they used to be great, eg pizza making, etc.”

3.0 Conclusion

HAF

Up until 2022 children with SEND had a wider choice of activities specifically aimed at their needs provided via the summer HAF programme. The majority of these activities, as stated in many of this survey's responses, were provided by Bee Inclusive. The HAF offering has drastically reduced the number of activities specifically aimed at children with SEND. BURY2GETHER believes that children with SEND and in receipt of free school meals should have just as varied a programme of activities on offer as children without SEND.

Where children did attend HAF, few HAF providers offered exclusive SEND sessions making it hard for parents to use all their HAF vouchers. The SEND exclusive activities provided were either physical or outdoors. It is not fair, and it is not much fun to be expected to go to the same activity again and again, however good it may be, when children without SEND have a wide choice of activities to attend. Children with SEND deserve to have the variety of experiences with HAF as their peers without SEND enjoy. To not provide more variety for children with SEND needs and on free school meals is discriminatory.

Where children were able to access a HAF session, on the whole the child enjoyed the activity, although parental satisfaction of HAF as a whole was low.

BURY2GETHER would suggest that all children with SEND come under the category of 'vulnerable children' who are eligible for HAF even if they are not eligible for free school meals. This will include children who are not just 'category 4' disability but an overwhelming number of neurodiverse children who will need extra support to attend activities or activities specifically aimed at children with SEND needs.

Boomerang

BURY2GETHER is very supportive of Boomerang and recognises it as a unique provider for children with SEND and know that many families enjoy visiting. We are lucky to have this provider in Bury. Many of the respondent's comments support Boomerang as a venue for children with SEND.

However, the majority of our membership who completed the survey or commented on our Facebook page believe it was the wrong decision by Bury Council to only offer Boomerang as a non-HAF SEND activity. Comments from parents/carers clearly show that Boomerang is not a suitable activity for all SEND children aged 0 to 16. Offering Boomerang places only to primary or secondary children with an EHCP was discriminatory meaning a child who was supported in school, but had lack of social opportunities in the summer, could not take part in the activity. It sent a message to parents/carers that in order to access a summer SEND activity you needed to apply for an EHCP - when BURY2GETHER are constantly reminded by the Local Authority that EHCP numbers for Bury are currently above the national average. More importantly, it showed a complete lack of understanding that all children with SEND are individuals, with not only individual needs but their own interests and the need often for age-appropriate activities, just like their non-SEND peers.

BURY2GETHER is pleased that Bury Council provided a non-HAF activity for SEND children and would wish it to do so again as the opportunities for children with SEND are very limited. **However, next time more coproduction with parents/carers/children needs to be undertaken to make sure the right activities and a variety of activities are offered so that the offer is appropriate for more children with SEND.**

4.0 Recommendations

In the analysis of last year's survey, BURY2GETHER drew to Bury Council's attention the Disabled Children's Partnership report, *The Loneliest Summer*, which highlights the distinct lack of holiday clubs for children with disabilities: there are none in Bury. This leaves parents of children with SEND at a disadvantage to parents of children without SEND during the school holidays. With Bury Council reducing the number of HAF activities for children with SEND this increases the vulnerability of families with children with SEND. In its report - based on a national survey of 1794 parents of disabled children - the Disabled Children's Partnership calls on the government and local councils to ensure that at least 15% of activities funded by HAF are specifically for disabled children. It highlights the risks to disabled children who cannot access social opportunities in the school holidays in terms of regression of skills, isolation and difficulties transitioning back to school; the risks to parents in terms of increased stress, isolation and exhaustion; and the often forgotten risk to siblings, who do not get time with their parents or a break from being young carers.

The following are BURY2GETHER's recommendation for improving the summer holiday activity offer to children with SEND:

Recommendations

1. **BURY2GETHER would recommend that the HAF programme includes at least 15% of activities specifically for children with SEND and that children with SEND that are not eligible for free school meals have access to the HAF programme.**
2. **BURY2GETHER would also recommend that a parent/carer rep from BURY2GETHER be on the Steering Group for HAF. This would mean that there is always a voice from parents/carers of children with SEND on the Steering Group. We have raised this many times now and have been told this should happen and yet we are never invited to the Steering Group.**
3. **BURY2GETHER would also recommend that a Task & Finish Group, lead by an independent chair, is set up to explore how other LA's run the SEND offering for HAF to see if anything can be learnt from their experiences. Manchester Parent Carer Forum have suggested to BURY2GETHER that Manchester Parent Carer Forum meet with Bury commissioners to discuss how coproduction has worked to improve social opportunities and the short break offer for SEND in Manchester and reduced overall costs.**

Please note recommendations 1 to 3 are almost the same as made in the analysis of our 2023 HAF survey and all have been ignored. The lack of response and feedback to BURY2GETHER and parents might account for why in 2023 there were 46 responses to our survey and only 32 in 2024: ***parents and carers need to feel that if they put the time and effort into providing feedback to Bury Council that the Council will respond.***

Recommendation

4. In future, when Bury Council provides activities under the Short Breaks budget, contracts with providers should be coproduced and there should be strategic oversight from BURY2GETHER to avoid discrimination against some SEND children as happened in 2024.
5. Bury Council provides BURY2GETHER and the general public with statistics of the HAF programme. This will allow all families in Bury to see how public money is spent and the uptake of HAF activities - including the uptake by children with SEND.

In April 2024, BURY2GETHER wrote to Bury Council asking for various statistics around Bury's HAF programme to understand who was attending, how many places were used and how many children with SEND attended. **No statistics have been received by BURY2GETHER.** Other Councils often provide annual reports on their HAF programme for the public. BURY2GETHER would ask that such statistics are provided to us to avoid the need for a Freedom of Information Request to obtain them. In this way there will be transparency regarding HAF and who is attending.

BURY2GETHER
November 2024

Appendix 1

Comments Made By BURY2GETHER Members on the Private Members' BURY2GETHER Facebook Group After BURY2GETHER Announced in July 2024 Bury Council's Boomerang SEND Offer

NB: These comments are reproduced with permission from members. When referring to Bee Inclusive this refers to previous HAF funding Bee Inclusive received in the past or the 2023 funding Bee Inclusive received from Bury Council's Social Opportunity funds to put on activities for children with SEND. To protect anonymity, the terms 'daughter, son, he, him, she, her' have been replaced with 'child, they, them'.

Comments on Bury Council's SEND Boomerang Offer By BURY2GETHER Members on BURY2GETHER's Private Members' Facebook Page

"Well that's a little disappointing to just be one place. We meet all the criteria but it's too young for some older children. The range of activities Bee Inclusive used to find meant you could always find something to book on, again some things where suitable and some not depending on child's needs. We've been to Boomerang last year and at 11 it was too young for my child and they sat on some foam roof house."

"Very limited provision given the variety Bee Inclusive offered. Wouldn't interest any of my children at all. Having said that now that they need an EHCP they wouldn't qualify anyway."

"Whilst Boomerang is a lovely centre, it's not appropriate for all children. It's also really disappointing not to have the range of activities. Last year was so much better. You can't just put all SEND children's needs and preferences under one umbrella. In our case last year my child accessed the pottery and pizza making and the animal petting at the SEND Hub [Bee Inclusive]. They couldn't cope with soft play, trampolines and the activities at Heaton Park [Bee Inclusive]. The range of activities meant that we could choose what was suitable for our children. The EHCP thing really has annoyed me too. My child is autistic, has sensory processing disorder and SEMH needs. They are academically thriving so there is no need for an EHCP. They do have regular movement breaks, sensory room visits twice a day and a lot of emotional support in school. It doesn't seem fair to gatekeep additional support. Also, considering the fact that the LA agreement to assess for an EHCP is a struggle for a lot of families, it seems like they have gone with the cheapest option without a thought for the diverse needs of our children. I would say I'm shocked by it, but it's another example of their pathetic attempts to tick boxes. None of this is child-centred at all. SEND is SEND, regardless of EHCPs and diagnoses."

"All funding catering to one activity isn't great or inclusive. Again, while Boomerang is a great setup, the variety of what has been offered in previous years has been brilliant [Bee Inclusive]. Every child is different and will take part in very different things. There were activities for all age ranges. My child doesn't have an EHCP either but does have additional things put in place to support their needs. It's very disappointing."

"I have two children with SEND. One has an EHCP and the other doesn't as is well-supported in school. So where does that leave families like ours? Can I only take one child? SEND is SEND - 100%."

"It's so hard to get an EHCP. I've previously been turned down for my child and now having to get a professional to help me to through the process. It's just more stress that we don't need. I was disappointed to read over 5s need an EHCP. This seems rather unfair. Surely it should go off the child's needs."

"Really disappointing..We don't meet the criteria, and even if we did it's not something my child would want to do! Such a shame after the great opportunities over the last couple of years!"

"It's way too closed in for my child - and me, to be fair."

"My 11-year-old (current Y6) child has an EHCP, but this activity does not cater for them. Last year they loved the Forest School climbing wall and Tree Tops [Bee Inclusive]. Yes my child has SEND needs, but they are still a typical 11-year-old in many ways. Very disappointing."

"My 12-year-old with an EHCP needs 'typical' activities for their age but delivered in an accessible way: the reduced capacity numbers, sensory adaptations like no music- that can be made by exclusive booking of venue for SEND group - plus the inclusivity of being with other families who 'get it'. This Boomerang offer is so disappointing. I understand the Boomerang sessions will be SEND-specific, and that's brilliant for the group of SEND children/young people who would enjoy a session there. It's the complete oversight of the diversity within the SEND population and funnelling all the funding into only one activity which will not suit many of them, for so many different reasons, that is disappointing."

"My child is a wheelchair user and whilst we have been to Boomerang on occasions, I find it difficult to access as no doors are push button operating and it's quite difficult to enter from reception, very tight access. With the amount that will be accessing these sessions, my child would be overwhelmed."

"I feel like every year they move the goalposts and make it more and more difficult for children with SEND to access, primarily for cost, but then surely if the majority don't access the activities then a proportion of the money is effectively wasted?"

"Not appropriate for my grandchild. Finds it far too over=stimulating. We won't be able to access this either unfortunately. Very disappointed."

"This is really disappointing. I don't wish to take anything away from Boomerang (as my child really loves it there and we try to go to their Sunday morning SEND session as often as possible), but funnelling all the funding into one activity is shortsighted and doesn't meet the needs of many children - especially given only those (5+) with an EHCP can access it! Whoever made that decision obviously doesn't realise EHCPs and SEND are not inextricably linked. We loved the range of activities Bee Inclusive offered last year. We were able to access a range of activities which were thoroughly enjoyable and more interactive than soft play. We hope Bee Inclusive get the funding next year."

"We love Boomerang but my child's getting bigger now and needs more space to run around - very limited. My child's favourite was Tree Tops at Heaton Park [Bee Inclusive]. Can't believe Bee Inclusive haven't gotten funding yet again. They do a variety of activities for the kids and cater for all needs. The LA just don't have a clue about diversity. The HAF activities are no good for my child. There isn't one thing on there that is appropriate for them and this is the second year. It

makes me sad. Where's the inclusivity for our kids? Something needs to be done and we need to be heard. Do the people who make these decisions have SEND kids? If they don't then somebody else needs to fill this role."

"Such a shame, my child loved the fun experiences Bee Inclusive provided last year, particularly the kayaking and the pottery/pizza. Do the LA not think it would be better to actually consult with the families who actually access these activities to see what they would like on?"

"Delighted for Boomerang but not varied enough at all for all our children. My child, aged 15, wouldn't benefit from this, unfortunately."

"The play session is utterly pointless for our PMLD wheelchair user child. My child may tick all their boxes but they do not tick my child's!!"

"We are another family who have benefitted from activities previously and cannot now benefit under the new rules and restrictions. As others have said, it is hard enough to get a diagnosis (we are over 3 years now waiting for this for one of our children), let alone obtain an EHCP, especially, if like our children, they are flying way beyond academic expectations. The whole system is set up to fail families like ours."

"So disappointed. My child has a diagnosis and in receipt of DLA, is on the SEN register and goes to a school in Bury. It's been an absolute mission to get the school to apply for an EHCP but they have to fund the first £6K themselves. My child is going into Year 3 (juniors) with no EHCP and can't take part in summer activities that they'd like because of this!! System is terrible."

"We went to one of these sessions at Boomerang over the Christmas holiday. The room we were in was fine, but the cafe and surrounding area was very busy and noisy with other families. It was extremely difficult to navigate the wheelchair around all the pushchairs and baby chairs and after using the change place, when we tried to open the door, someone in the cafe had moved their chair right in front of the door. We had to shout out for them to move their chair! The parking at Boomerang is hugely inadequate for a large wheelchair accessible vehicle. The venue is totally unsuitable for the needs of my child, a full-time wheelchair user."