



Case Study: Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Project, Sonning Common, South Oxfordshire, July – August 2021

Summer 2021 saw Active Leaders triple its offer to children and families in and around Sonning Common in South Oxfordshire. Please contact matt@activeleaders.co.uk for the full story.

In response to the UK Government's call to action for the Holiday and Food Fund (HAF) to provide free holiday clubs to children who qualified for Free School Meals (FSMs), Active Leaders was appointed by Oxfordshire County Council as an approved HAF Provider. In less than 4 weeks the company created a diverse and rich programme of activities, accompanied by high quality food provision in the form of packed lunches.

The activities comprised:

- 8 days of outdoor "Summer Fun" for primary school children and parents
- 4 days of Active Leader training for older teenagers (running alongside Summer Fun to enable the teenagers to gain practical experience helping to lead younger children)
- 4 days of a new and innovative music and rhythm-based leadership programme ("Jammers") for 9-13 year olds.

Now more than ever, school holidays are a pressure point for many families because of increased costs (such as food and childcare), lack of affordable family activities, leading to a holiday experience gap for children compared with their more affluent peers, including:

- more likely to experience 'unhealthy holidays' in terms of nutrition and physical health
- more likely to experience social isolation
- more likely to miss out on easily accessible enrichment activities
- more likely to experience learning loss

Summer Fun was free to all attendees resulting in over 600 visits, by 127 children and families across 12 days of provision at a cost of less than £42 per visit (each visit lasting at least 4 hours). Oxfordshire County Council agreed to allow anyone to access the provision, to promote social integration and enable friends to come together.

Summer Fun for primary school children and their parents/carers.

Active Leaders provided action, games, crafts and team-building for local children and parents/carers, with healthy snack breaks for all.

Penny Snowden, founder and CEO of Active Leaders, said: "Encouraging participation, being active, building confidence, developing social skills and having fun is at the heart of everything we do. We wanted Summer Fun to be inclusive, memorable and welcoming. We used experienced, Active Leader trained, staff for our two week programme, including recent graduates from our leadership training course.

Summer Fun ran on four days each week, for four hours each day.

Each day began with a briefing to children and parents/carers, setting expectations for joining in and having fun using 'school style' boundaries. Activities included an amazing variety of games, wild art, sports and team challenges, many of which were drawn from the Active Leader Games Booklet. The





games use simple equipment and are easy for parents to replicate in any garden, park or playspace, to promote the outdoors.

The highlights included

- building a giant 'Kerplunk'
- creating a gigantic ball run from simple plastic guttering and used tennis balls
- seeing children of all abilities and needs playing together
- seeing parents enjoy social time, join in with their children and make new connections
- seeing children be energetic, trying hard and constantly smiling
- seeing children become more confident at joining in, understanding winning/losing, more creative, better at sharing and working together, making new friends.

Our take home lesson is the value of our fully trained, experienced and dynamic Active Leader staff team, able to connect and engage all children to achieve great outcomes.

We conducted a survey among the parents/carers who attended (completed by 36% of them). They said:

- Overall experience of Summer Fun 2021 (1 low to 5 high): 96% level 5; 4% level 4.
- Quality of the experience: 92% agreed that Summer Fun has given their child an active experience and had helped their child interact socially.
- 100% said Summer Fun was welcoming and friendly
- 96% said it was well organised, that their child felt safe and supported and that the Active Leaders were helpful and kind

Quotes received:

“Summer Fun has really helped us as a family. Being a non-driver and having 3 children I can't afford any places. To have this and see my children having, getting and seeing different people is great and I can't be more grateful for it so thank you.”

“I would like to thank all the Active Leaders for an amazing two weeks. The leaders are absolutely fantastic, the activities they have come up with have been great. Food and coffee a bonus! Thank you guys, so much and we hope to see you next year!”

“We had the best time at Summer Fun, it really was the highlight of our week. We struggled this summer financially and having this club really meant the world to me, giving my kids something fun to do and covered all their ages. Unfortunately, we can't come next week, I wish we could!! Thank you, Active Leaders, you really saved me from the monotony of home and gave me a break and some fun for a few days.”





Active Leader training for older teenagers (aged 15+)

The Active Leader training course ran over 4 days, 9.30 - 2.30, at Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge School. 12 teenagers (boys and girls) completed the course, developing their confidence and skills using fun, physical activity to provide hands-on leadership experience. The course was led by the school's Head of PE who had completed the Active Leader Accredited Trainer programme.

The course ran in parallel with Summer Fun, at the same school, and created the perfect opportunity to combine learning sessions with practical experience. Each morning the young people were trained in key activity and leadership skills which they put into practice in the afternoon by helping lead the Summer Fun activities.

The Active Leader programme includes CPR and first aid awareness, risk management, safeguarding, event planning, marketing and communication, inventing games, running an activity session and a mini event. Each Active Leader receives a course manual, games booklet, t-shirt, certificate and personal reference.

The trainees gained confidence and experience, gradually taking on more responsibility as the week progressed. The week culminated in them creating and running a mini-Olympics for over 50 children attending Summer Fun. The younger children loved the trainee Active Leaders being involved, all of whom proved to be strong role models.

The Active Leader course is fully inclusive and the participants came from range of backgrounds and abilities. The trainer commented on the significant progress made by many of them who had not previously been as committed to a training/personal development programme (he had taught some of them at school).

Six of the newly trained Active Leaders volunteered to join the Active Leader staff crew in week 2 of Summer Fun, proving to be excellent workforce and developing their leadership skills further. One of them has since continued his volunteering at a local football club.

Andy Hartley, Headteacher of Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge said:

“One of my objectives as a new head has been to forge links with the wider community as much as possible and this summer afforded me the chance to do so. Active Leaders had a dynamic team of young, trained staff, including one of our recent leavers, Emily Edwards who had completed the Active Leader training. I was also really pleased to see a number of our older students coming up to school for training as Active Leaders by Darren Hunter, our excellent Head of PE. The feedback I had regarding how our students organised the children and showed great responsibility and enthusiasm for their work was really pleasing to hear.”

Our take home lesson is the strong impact the Active Leaders course has on workforce development and employability, when run alongside an active holiday camp environment like Summer Fun. The mutual benefits for the older trainees and the younger children builds confidence and self esteem, creating a wonderful sense of healthy fun for all.





Jammers – age 9-13 boys and girls

“Jammers” (short for Junior Active Music Leaders) is a leadership training programme using music, rhythm and beat as the core theme. It ran over 4 days, 4 hours a day, at Sonning Common Primary School.

Jammers is based on the successful Junior Active Leader programme which uses fun games to promote leadership and personal development.

The idea of creating ‘Jammers’ – a similar leadership course but with a musical theme - came from the recognition that music promotes movement and could be used as a means of inspiring engagement in activity, just as the fun, sporty games have, which form the core of the JAL programme.

12 young people aged 9-13 took part. Many had never picked up an instrument before. Others had complex additional learning needs.

Instead of culminating in leading an activity session, which is the climax of the Junior Active Leader course, the objective of Jammers was to run a Samba workshop for children and parents at the end of the week. The training programme was built on fun rhythm games, using simple percussion instruments, developing new rhythms and moves, making shakers, teaching the rest of the group and working together to enable everyone to succeed. Even the shiest child felt able to lead a game by the end of the first day.

The group’s confidence built day-by-day, and all participants took part in the grand finale, running a Samba workshop for an audience of 30 parents and siblings. Each “Jammer” received a booklet of information and games, a t-shirt, whistle and certificate.

The trained staff were experienced musical performers and teachers, including a trained Active Leader who is a talented drummer, and whose Active Leader training had helped him overcome personal mental health challenges. He proved to be an excellent trainer deriving great confidence from working with the children and enabling them to build their own resilience and self-esteem.

Our highlights included:

- seeing the young people support each other, especially helping those with additional learning needs;
- witnessing the confidence build throughout the week, so that each person felt able to lead the group;
- seeing the joy and smiles of the young people as they successfully led different games;
- the energy and fun which this format provided for all.

Penny Snowden, who runs Active Leaders said “We’ve seen the potential for branching out from physical activity, to include performing arts as the theme to develop leadership skills and confidence. ‘Jammers’ provided something different for young people during the holidays and we would love to make this opportunity more widely available, with the support of talented musicians.”

Our take home lesson is that ‘Jammers’ achieves the outcomes of nurturing personal growth and leadership skills, through music and rhythm. Further Jammers adaptations with other musical themes (rock, jazz etc) could be created for older students.





Active Leaders (the company)

Active Leaders is based in Oxfordshire and provides UK-wide youth leadership awards for children and young people, accredited by CIMSPA (www.cimspa.co.uk), and designed for community and school settings.

Its mission is to create and deliver programmes which are highly regarded, accessible, cost effective, relevant, practical, contemporary and fun.

Active Leader training is known for its engaging, creative and hands on approach to confidence building and leadership, providing pathways to develop experience. It focuses on motivating young people to adopt a positive appreciation for being active and building the skills and resilience to take on new challenges.

