# Parents stage buggy blockade to occupy Tottenham Hale pavilion and run free summer childcare



Parents, grandparents and youth workers have occupied a shuttered community pavilion in Tottenham Hale, putting up a buggy blockade at the door and running a summer programme of free meals and children’s activities as part of a wider protest over the shortage of affordable childcare and holiday provision. The group — averaging around 50–60 people a day over the weekend — says it will remain at the Down Lane Park building for as long as necessary to keep a community space open through the six‑week school break. Protesters say the centre was one of the last in the borough to run free holiday activities including multi‑sports, crafts and gardening.

Gemma Brown, described by reporters as a local mum and dance teacher, said support from neighbors had been “overwhelming,” and that a planned summer programme run by volunteers had continued to grow after the reclaiming of the premises. Another volunteer, who gave only her first name, Rebecca, told The Independent she felt the closure deprived local families of “another home” and vowed: “We won’t let them take our community centre.” The Metropolitan Police told reporters the situation was not a police matter.

The occupation has unfolded against a backdrop of a breakdown in talks between the long‑standing charity Living Under One Sun (LUOS) and Haringey Council. Local reporting indicates LUOS decided to vacate the pavilion after negotiations for a co‑designed permanent hub stalled and council funding for the park plan was reduced. The council’s own statement confirms that LUOS trustees informed officials they would not seek a lease extension, and says the authority regrets the decision and intends to meet community groups to agree next steps.

Haringey Council has characterised the takeover as an “unlawful occupation,” saying individuals “stormed the building” and that a member of staff was injured; the council says it will seek possession of the premises so planned short‑term activities can proceed “through the correct channels.” Councillors also said they remain committed to delivering a new community hub within Down Lane Park as part of a wider improvement programme, and that they have engaged residents and local groups on co‑design for long‑term provision. The occupiers dispute those accounts and say community control and transparency over local planning money must be central to any scheme.

Campaigners say the protest highlights a wider childcare crisis in London. Coram Family and Childcare’s 2025 Holiday Childcare Survey documents rising costs and patchy provision: it reports that the average holiday‑club place costs about £179 a child per week — roughly £1,075 for the six‑week summer break — while holiday childminder rates in inner London average about £306 per week. The charity warns of acute shortages for children with special educational needs and disabilities and says many local authorities cannot be certain they have sufficient holiday childcare.

Those gaps are reflected in national evaluations of the government’s Holiday Activities and Food programme. Independent analysis and an Ecorys evaluation summarised in recent open‑access research show HAF reaches only around 29 per cent of eligible children, leaving most eligible youngsters without funded places; local delivery and participation are highly variable and barriers to attendance remain. The Department for Education has pointed to its wider Plan for Change, saying it will expand 30 hours of government‑funded childcare from September — a policy the department says could save parents up to £7,500 a year when used in full — and that HAF continues to provide six weeks of activities and meals for low‑income children. Yet campaigners and charities say national schemes do not always translate into immediate, local capacity where need is concentrated.

“All the council cares about is ‘regeneration’ plans that are making private developers rich while local families are priced out,” said play worker Pamela Berrocal, who is involved in the occupation, adding that Tottenham has “a long history of community resistance” and insisting residents will fight to keep community space and services. Local groups fear that, amid rapid development in Tottenham Hale, essential grassroots services for families could be displaced unless replacements are genuinely community‑led and funded.

For now the occupiers have transformed the empty building into a makeshift hub, running food provision and play while calling for immediate action from the council and central government to close the holiday provision gap. The council says it has already discussed short‑term usage with community groups and purchased equipment from LUOS to support summer activities; campaigners say those measures fall short of protecting long‑term, locally run provision. Journalists have sought comment from Living Under One Sun.

A Reform UK spokesperson argued that this episode underscores the broader failure of Labour’s centralised approach to public services: local communities should have real power over how scarce funds are spent, and funds should be directed to families and community groups rather than inflated regeneration schemes that benefit developers. The party says devolved funding, simplified decision‑making, and direct support for community‑run childcare and holiday schemes would prevent situations where a shuttered pavilion becomes the backdrop for protests rather than a lasting local service. Reform UK adds that the welfare of ordinary families should trump glossy plans that push up costs and push out grassroots services. Journalists have requested further comment from LUOS.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/parents-protest-tottenham-community-centre-childcare-school-holidays-b2804488.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/parents-protest-tottenham-community-centre-childcare-school-holidays-b2804488.html> - This Independent report describes parents, grandparents and youth workers occupying a recently closed community centre in Tottenham Hale, run by the charity Living Under One Sun (LUOS), in protest at a shortage of affordable childcare and school-holiday support. The occupiers set up a buggy blockade and started a programme of free meals and children’s activities, averaging 50–60 people a day, and said the action would continue to provide a community space through the summer. The piece cites Coram figures on holiday childcare costs, references Haringey’s child poverty levels and quotes a Department for Education spokesperson on planned government childcare measures.
3. <https://haringeycommunitypress.co.uk/2025/04/16/charity-set-to-leave-tottenham-park-pavilion-over-dispute-with-council/> - Haringey Community Press reports that Living Under One Sun (LUOS), a long‑standing Tottenham community charity, confirmed it would vacate its Down Lane Park pavilion amid a breakdown in talks with Haringey Council. The article explains LUOS had been involved in co‑design work for a proposed permanent hub but says communication stalled and council funding for the park plan was reduced, prompting LUOS’s decision to leave. The piece outlines local concern that the park’s community provision could be lost amid regeneration plans and describes residents’ fear that essential services for families and children could be jeopardised by the dispute.
4. <https://www.haringey.gov.uk/news/20250319/down-lane-park-statement> - This official Haringey Council statement addresses the situation at Down Lane Park, noting the trustees of Living Under One Sun informed the council the lease would not be extended. The cabinet member expresses regret and thanks LUOS for its work, and says the council will meet community groups to agree next steps. The statement confirms the council remains committed to delivering a new community hub within the park as part of a wider improvement programme and outlines planned engagement with local residents and the Friends of the Park to co‑design future facilities and to protect continued community use while plans progress.
5. <https://www.coramfamilyandchildcare.org.uk/research/holiday-childcare-survey-2025/> - Coram Family and Childcare’s Holiday Childcare Survey 2025 documents rising costs and gaps in holiday provision. The report finds the average cost of a holiday club place is £179 per child per week, totalling roughly £1,075 for a six‑week summer break, and reports holiday childminder rates are higher — with inner London averaging £306 per week. Coram highlights acute shortages for children with special educational needs and disabilities, and warns that many local authorities cannot be certain they have enough holiday childcare. The charity calls for sustained government action to ensure accessible, affordable holiday provision for working families.
6. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11813932/> - This open‑access article summarises evaluations and local learning about the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme; it cites the independent Ecorys evaluation which found HAF reached about 29% of eligible children, meaning most eligible youngsters did not attend. The paper discusses how attending HAF clubs can improve children’s physical activity, diet and social outcomes, and notes variable local delivery and barriers to participation. It highlights that reach remains limited relative to eligibility and stresses the importance of consistent, well‑publicised local provision to close gaps in holiday support for children from low‑income families.
7. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/applications-open-for-30-hours-funded-childcare-expansion> - A Department for Education news release announces that eligible parents can apply for the expanded 30 hours of government‑funded childcare from September, extending support to families with children from nine months old. The release explains the scheme’s rollout, estimates the savings for working parents (up to £7,500 a year per child when used in full) and gives application details. It places the expansion within the government’s wider Plan for Change measures to reduce costs for families, increase childcare capacity through school‑based nurseries and other routes, and help parents return to work by improving access to funded early years provision.