

Paddle boarding and roller disco among free summer activities

Acrobatics, roller disco, paddle boarding and pony care and grooming are among the free activities taking place in West Suffolk during the school summer holidays.

They are part of the national Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme which is primarily aimed to support children who receive benefits related free school meals. It was set up to help support them during the school holidays when they may not otherwise get a hot meal.

But discretionary places are also available to other families who could do with a little bit of extra support at this time.

The Summer holiday programme of activities is Government funded and has been coordinated by West Suffolk Council on behalf of Suffolk County Council.

In total, the West Suffolk programme will offer more than 5,035 places held across 444 sessions. West Suffolk is working with 30 providers this Summer, six of which are new, to provide a strong mix of activities that will appeal to children and to teenagers up to and including the age of 16.

As well as acrobatics, roller disco, paddle boarding in Brandon and Newmarket pony care and grooming, sessions also include fitness, mindfulness, swimming, football, crafts, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and more.

Families with children on benefits related free school meals should have already received information through their school or college about HAF. Booking is through an online platform called Eequ at [Search learning experiences · Eequ](#) which details all the HAF activities across Suffolk. Schools have also been given information to help any parents who cannot access online to book. If transport is an issue, Suffolk County Council may be able to help - families are asked to contact HAFenquiries@suffolk.gov.uk

Other families should contact the activity providers to ask about discretionary places. Contact details can be seen on the same Eequ link or through the council's [#westsuffolksummerhaf26](#) posts on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). Discretionary places are limited and will be decided by Suffolk County Council on a first come first served basis.

Cllr Donna Higgins, West Suffolk Council's Cabinet Member for Families and Communities said: "We have a packed programme with new providers, new activities and plenty of free activities for children and teenagers to enjoy. While HAF is primarily aimed at children and teenagers who receive benefits related free school meals, I would urge families who could do with that little bit of extra support at this time to ask the activity providers about discretionary places.

"The Holiday Activities and Food programme is just one of the ways that we are working to help households across West Suffolk.

"We are committed to helping residents, including working households. Our Financial Inclusion Service is working alongside the charity and voluntary sector to help households save money and maximise their income.

"We are continuing to provide tax relief to low-income households in West Suffolk.

"Through our grant agreement with Citizen's Advice West Suffolk we are supporting work to help people who are struggling with money, heating costs, and more.

"And we are about to reopen our Thriving Communities Fund from mid-July, with grants awarded from the last round already supporting lots of great community led projects, including helping residents improve their finances, manage debts and save money on bills."