

Youth Advisory Board Question to Council

What can the council do to increase opportunities for young people to access free or affordable local activities

Answer (Councillor Coleen De Freitas):

The Council recognises the importance of ensuring that young people have access to a wide range of free and affordable activities that support their wellbeing, personal development, physical health and social connections.

We already work with a range of partners to provide opportunities throughout the year. For example, a free STEM-themed pantomime is planned for Christmas for disadvantaged families, and Stevenage Day continues to offer activities that young people can enjoy. More recently, external funding enabled us to deliver a successful Summertime Youth Day, and we continue to actively seek additional funding opportunities that would allow us to expand the range of activities available.

Alongside this, we are in ongoing discussions with the University of Hertfordshire and other partners to explore what further opportunities may be developed for young people in the future.

In addition, Everyone Active, through its Active Communities programme, provides a range of activities across its Stevenage sites for residents of all ages, including young people. These programmes vary according to local demand and participation levels, with some activities offered free of charge, some subsidised, and others available at a low cost. Young people and families can access information on these opportunities through the Herts Moving More Activity Finder, which brings together details of local physical activity sessions, including those delivered by Everyone Active.

However, feedback from young people suggests that awareness can be as significant a challenge as availability. While there are a number of free and low-cost activities already provided by community groups, sports clubs, voluntary organisations and public services across the town, many young people may not know what is currently available to them.

As a result, one practical area of focus is improving how we promote and signpost opportunities. Bringing together information on local activities in a single, accessible format could help young people and their families better understand what is already on offer and make it easier to participate.

We will also explore how the Youth Advisory Board can support this work. As a forum representing the voices of young people, the Board is well placed to advise on the most effective ways to communicate opportunities, identify gaps in provision and help shape future activities to ensure they reflect the interests and needs of young people in Stevenage.

By continuing to develop partnerships, secure external funding, support community providers and improve awareness of existing opportunities, we can help ensure that more young people are able to access affordable, inclusive and enriching activities across the borough.

