

Summer Youth Diversion Fund to run for second year to keep young people safe

Community groups which can provide safe and engaging activities for young people during the school summer holidays are being invited to bid for a share of £110,000 from Merseyside's Police Commissioner's Youth Diversion Fund.

This is the second time Emily Spurrell has run the Fund during the summer holidays, with the focus on giving young people from struggling families more opportunities and helping to ease holiday hardship.

The money will be used to provide safe, engaging, positive activities, with the aim of helping to reduce crime and ASB which often spikes when the schools close, while also providing meals to ensure young people are not going without during the six-week break.

A total of £110,000 is available from the fund, which uses money raised through from the sale of unclaimed stolen goods or property recovered by the police which cannot be returned to its owners diverted into worthwhile causes.

Organisations, charities and community groups which are best placed to provide support for young people across the region can apply for a vital one-off cash boost of up to £5,000.

Merseyside's Police Commissioner Emily Spurrell said: "I'm delighted to be able to, once again, open up my Youth Diversion Fund for bids of up to £5,000 to organisations which are working to make their communities safer and better places to live by engaging with young people over the summer holidays.

"Sadly, there can often be a spike in crime and ASB during the six week's break when young people are not in school and there are long light nights with little for them to do. Coupled with that we have seen the cost-of-living crisis putting extra financial pressure on families and for those who are struggling to make ends meet, expensive holiday clubs and classes are simply not an option.

"The vast majority of young people want to do something positive with their time and my Youth Diversion Fund is entirely focused on provided those opportunities during the school holidays."

Thanks to the Youth Diversion Fund, last year nearly 9,000 young people were able to enjoy fun, engaging activities delivered by 49 grassroots organisations during the six-week school break and the autumn half term in every area of Merseyside.

Emily added: “We saw and heard first-hand last year how projects delivered through my Youth Diversion Fund helped to ease that pressure and provide a lifeline to these young people - from boxing and football sessions to cooking, dance and martial arts classes. I want to give young people the same chance this year to gain new skills and experience, increase their confidence and broaden their horizons.

“These projects are focused in areas where we know, sadly, there can often be a spike in crime and ASB during the long summer break and the more we can offer exciting opportunities for young people which keep them occupied and engaged, the less chance there is they will get involved in any activity which could become anti-social or criminal, meaning fewer victims and safer communities.

“This gives young people a brighter future, while helping to create nicer, better places to live, and reducing the burden on the police during a particularly busy time of the year.

“Local people know their communities best. They know what works when engaging with their young people and I am looking forward to reviewing their ideas and initiatives for ensuring everyone can have a safe and fun summer.”

Taylor* was one of the young people who was able to take advantage of the activities offered by Park Farm ACYP Centre during the last round of Youth Diversion Fund in autumn 2022.

After being consulted about what the project should offer, the 14-year-old, who is autistic and non-binary, got involved in helping to coordinate a ‘scare night’ event.

He said: “Life was rough for me, and in some ways still is as a teenager, but since coming to the youth club I’ve found the support to help me through those challenges. I never thought I would be planning an event and to see it work so well and to help put so many smiles on faces is fantastic. I feel more a part of my community now. I’ll also put this on my CV.”

The Youth Diversion Fund is administered by the Community Foundation for Merseyside, (CFM) on behalf of the Commissioner. CFM holds funds from individuals and organisations as donors who wish to support deserving causes in Merseyside.

CFM's Programmes Director James Proctor said: "The Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner's Youth Diversion Fund is a fantastic funding opportunity to support our local grassroots community organisations and their engagement work with young people. It is so important to recognise the valuable community projects on offer over the summer school holidays which allow young people to get involved in sporting, cultural, educational and crucially, fun activities which keeps them safe and helps to reduce instances of anti-social behaviour"

All applications must be submitted online via the Community Foundation for Merseyside by **4pm on 2nd June 2023**.

Please visit their website <https://cfmerseyside.org.uk/funds/youth-diversion-fund> to apply.

A video promoting the launch of the Youth Diversion Fund is available to download here: <https://we.tl/t-MFX3s7I7w9>

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