



WELCOME TO DOWNEND SCHOOL

PARENT NEWSLETTER: Support for children and families over the summer holiday

17th July 2026

Whilst for most young people, the summer holiday brings weeks of fun and enjoyment, we are aware that some young people will struggle without the support from adults in school and will miss the routines and security the school provides.

To support our students and their families, we are providing a range of places that your child can access support over the holidays should they need it, plus information about local clubs, events and support for families over the summer holiday. We hope this is of use to many of you

Great British Summer Savings from the Government

Last month the Chancellor announced the Great British Summer Savings scheme.

From 25 June to 1 September 2026, the Government is temporarily cutting VAT from 20% to 5% on children's meals in restaurants, children and family tickets to cinemas, theatres, concerts and exhibitions, and admission to a wide range of attractions. Combined with free bus travel during August for children aged 5 to 15 in England, families and young people will be able to enjoy experiences that make summer special, including visits to the kinds of cultural and educational attractions that enrich children's lives outside the classroom.

As part of this campaign, the Government has launched an attraction finder website which allows families to type in their postcode and find participating venues near them to make the most of summer savings. To use the attraction finder, please visit <https://summersavings.gov.uk>.

Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF)

If your child receives targeted free school meals (previously known as benefits- related free school meals), they may be eligible for a free place on South Gloucestershire Council's Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme.

During the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays, children aged 5-16 can enjoy a range of activities including sports, arts and crafts, cooking, theatre and much more, while also receiving a healthy, nutritious meal. Please note that free HAF places are not available for children receiving expanded free school meals or universal infant free school meals. However, many providers also offer paid places. To find out more or book a place, visit www.southglos.gov.uk/HAF or email HAF@southglos.gov.uk

Support and Advice from South Gloucestershire

South Gloucestershire Children's services have put together a few suggestions and practical steps you can take to help bridge the gap over the summer period.

- [Holiday activities for children and families | BETA - South Gloucestershire Council](#) lets residents know what's on in the local libraries and community spaces.
- Information holiday clubs or local events happening over the summer can be found at this link [School holiday activities and food programme | South Gloucestershire \(southglos.gov.uk\)](#)

We have included below information about services and support, which families can access throughout the summer.

Financial support/offers

- Information on different ways of getting support with the cost of living rising [Cost of living help | BETA - South Gloucestershire Council \(southglos.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Crisis and Resilience Fund | BETA - South Gloucestershire Council](#) (Previously the Household Support Fund)
- [Kids Eat Free UK | Summer Holidays 2026 | All 40+ National Restaurant Deals | FamilySave UK](#) is a website that tells families restaurants where kids eat free throughout the holidays.
- [Financial support and wellbeing | BETA - South Gloucestershire Council \(southglos.gov.uk\)](#)

Young people's mental health

- Off The Record: Free, self-referral counselling service for young people age 11-15, who are experiencing low mood, depression, anxiety, phobias, self-harm, eating problems and/or

anger. OTR is a [mental health social movement by and for young people aged 11-25](#) living in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. Getting free support couldn't be easier. [Come along to one of our regular Hubs](#) or explore this website and sign-up directly to the [project or service](#) you want to try.

- Website: [Home - OTR \(otrbristol.org.uk\)](#) Email: hello@otrbristol.org.uk
- Creative Youth Network: Creative Youth Network (CYN) enables young people, no matter what their background or circumstances, to reach their own potential. CYN offer group work and 1:1 Low Intensity Wellbeing Sessions to young people in Bristol and South Glos - [Creative Youth Network](#)
- Kooth: Free, safe and anonymous online support for young people 10-18 [Home - Kooth](#)
 - On Kooth you can:
 - Chat to our friendly counsellors over live chat or text ([Find out more about 1:1 support - Kooth](#))
 - Read articles written by young people;
 - Get support from the Kooth community
 - Write in a daily journal and other wellbeing activity ideas
- Childline: Free counselling via online webchat, and free support/advice available 24/7 via confidential helpline, and emails via the website. Tel: 0800 11 11. Website: www.childline.org.uk [Childline | Childline](#)
- Young Minds national charity offers confidential online and telephone information and support for anyone worried about the emotional, behaviour, or mental health of a child/young person up to 25 years of age, including ADHD, Autism and Aspergers. Parents Helpline: 0808 802 5544 Website: [YoungMinds | Mental Health Charity For Children And Young People | YoungMinds](#)
- Young Minds Crisis Messenger Service for free 24/7 support across the UK if you are experiencing a mental health crisis. Text YM to 85258.

Adult mental health

- South Gloucestershire Talking Therapies - Vitamins: Therapeutic interventions including counselling and group courses, in line with people's differing needs, age 16+. Self-referral via

the website: wellaware.org.uk Tel - 0333 200 1893 [NHS Talking Therapies - North Somerset & South Gloucestershire \(vitahealthgroup.co.uk\)](http://NHS Talking Therapies - North Somerset & South Gloucestershire (vitahealthgroup.co.uk))

- Samaritans: Free, confidential emotional support for those experiencing despair, distress, self-harm or suicidal feelings.
 - Tel: 116 123 (free, from any phone, 24/7).
 - Website: www.samaritans.org [Samaritans | Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy | Here to listen](#)
 - Email: jo@samaritans.org

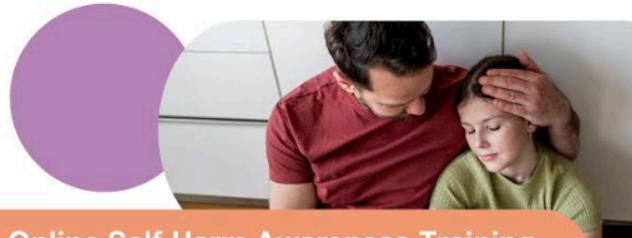
Family/parenting support

- Compass Face to Face drop-in sessions.
 - Face-to-face advice and signposting available from Compass (South Glos Early Help), currently running from the One Stop Shops in Kingswood (Tues), Patchway (weds) and Yate (Thurs) between 9am - 12.30pm. This support is available now to all families who may need information, advice, or signposting for their children and young people. These sessions are also available during the summer holidays when school is closed. Please see the attached poster and scan the QR code for details of drop-in sessions—no appointment needed.
- Togetherness South Gloucestershire families: Build everyday emotional resilience! (Previously Online Solihull Parenting Resources): Your free online learning. Big feelings, how the brain works, and relationship ideas for happier lives.
 - South Gloucestershire Council gives families free access to Togetherness resources to support wellbeing. For parents, carers, grandparents, and young people. Learn from NHS clinical psychologists, practitioners, and other parents. The pathways will help you and your family understand and manage emotions in everyday life. For the full details and information on how to access the online learning, please visit: [South Gloucestershire | Togetherness - Togetherness](#) and enter our exclusive South Gloucestershire ACCESS Code: CONCORDE.
- NHS website: Advice for parents on a range of parenting issues, including talking to teenagers, fussy eating and teenage aggression. Website: [Live Well - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://Live Well - NHS (www.nhs.uk))
- CCP – Caring for Communities and People – Offer outreach support and parenting courses for families at an early help level. [Supporting Families With Everyday Life South Gloucestershire > CCP](#)

Support for families who have children with additional needs

- SEND and You - SAY: Local SEN and disability information service (SENDIAS) - Information and support around Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, for children, young people and families. (previously Supportive Parents)
 - Tel: 0117 9897725 Mon-Fri 9.30 - 4.30 (answerphone at other times), Email: support@sendandyou.org.uk Website: [Home - SEND and You](#)
- South Glos Parents and Carers: Information and groups for parents who have children with a disability and/or additional needs. Offers a weekly drop in for parents and carers, support groups, workshops, counselling and events.
 - Website: [South Glos Parent Carers \(sgpc.org.uk\)](#) Email: team@sglospc.org.uk
- JIGSAW Thornbury Support families who have children who are 0-25 years and have any additional needs or disability. This can be anything from learning needs such as dyslexia to complex disabilities or medical problems. Many children who come have no diagnosis. Weekly support group for parents, carers and children + training courses on a range of topics.
 - Telephone: 01454 416381
 - Website: [JIGSAW Thornbury | For Children with Additional Needs and Disabilities - SEN Lending Library, Events, Meetings, Bristol Area and the South West.](#)

The South Glos LIFE homepage has more information about services in South Glos [South Glos LIFE](#)



**Online Self-Harm Awareness Training
for Parents & Carers - Wednesday 23
September 6.00-8.30pm**

Training to build knowledge, confidence, and practical communication skills to help you support a young person who may be self-harming or experiencing emotional distress. Session open to all parents and carers.

Topics covered include:

- Signs and indicators of self-harm
- What can lead to self-harm
- Broaching suspected self-harm
- Phrases/language to be aware of



To find out more and register, scan the
QR code or visit bit.ly/4w68hF1.

For more information email
hello@bristolhealthpartners.org.uk

SUMMER
HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AT

OTR

STAY ACTIVE!

Join us at OTR for relaxed, welcoming holiday sessions designed for young people. You'll have space to hang out in our lounge, courtyard garden, and kitchen, with activities that let you get creative, move your body, and try something new.

DELICIOUS FOOD INCLUDED
Make connections, learn a new skill and join us for a different activity each day!

SOME OF THE ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:

- Art and crafts
- Hapazome flower printing
- Wooden amulet creation
- Stamp making
- Planting and pot decorating
- Zine creativity
- Treasure hunt

DATES

- Monday 27th July
- Tuesday 28th July
- Monday 3rd August
- Tuesday 4th August
- Wednesday 5th August
- Thursday 6th August
- Monday 10th August
- Tuesday 11th August
- Wednesday 12th August
- Monday 17th August
- Tuesday 18th August
- Wednesday 19th August

LOCATION
8-10 Old Market
Bristol BS2 0BH

AGE RANGE
11-16

TIME
10am-13:00 pm

SIGN UP AT www.otrbristol.org.uk/what-we-do/holiday-activities