

County Councillor Report

for November

Winter Holiday Activity booking now open

Together with its partners, the county council is providing a wide range of activities across Gloucestershire for four action-packed days of the school holidays from 19th – 22nd December.

The winter Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) is funded by the Department of Education for families eligible for benefits-related free school meals.

Using grant funding, the council is giving all families in Gloucestershire the opportunity to join in the fun by offering enriching holiday activities to all children and young people, through its Holiday Activities Programme (HAP). More information is available at www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/haf.

Now in its second year, the HAF continues to go from strength to strength, thanks to strong and successful partnerships with local partners who help make it all possible.

- Gloucester – The Venture White City Ltd
- Cheltenham – Cheltenham Borough Council
- Tewkesbury – Young Gloucestershire
- **Stroud – Stroud District Council**
- Cotswolds – Cotswold District Council
- Forest of Dean – Forest Voluntary Action Forum

This winter there are 49 activity providers across the county. Activities available include Christmas parties, drama and science workshops, various sports and games, art and crafts, ticketed attractions and more.

Families eligible for benefits-related free school meals can also apply for Holiday Free School Meal vouchers, which the council is providing for two weeks. Parents will receive £30 per child (£15 per week, per child) from reception to year 11. Applications close at midday on Tuesday 6 December. Find out more at www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/holiday-school-meal-vouchers/.

Parents who have registered previously are automatically included and do not need to reapply. Families whose circumstances may have changed, can find out about [eligibility for free school meals on our website](#).

Gloucestershire Stand against Domestic Abuse

At its meeting in November, Gloucestershire County Council agreed to work toward becoming a 'White Ribbon' accredited organisation, in a commitment to do more to end male violence against women and girls (VAWG). Around 80 per cent of domestic abuse victims in Gloucestershire are female according to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) so the 'gendered nature' of domestic abuse and associated crimes should be recognised.

Council also agreed the important role Gloucestershire's schools play in preventing VAWG by educating pupils about misogyny, equality, and healthy relationships. Schools are encouraged to sign up to the White Ribbon initiatives to enhance lessons and help bring boys and men into the conversation about preventing harm.

The 16 Days of Action started on 25th November; the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls. Over the next few weeks, the county council and partners such as GDASS (Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service), the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and Gloucestershire Constabulary will be working to raise awareness of domestic abuse and VAWG and the support available to victims and their families.

Partners will share information on the signs and types of domestic abuse, how to get support, and how bystanders can play a role in preventing harm.

Domestic abuse can impact anyone and can have harmful effects on a person's health, wellbeing and their future. The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) found that for the year ending March 2020, approximately 7 in 100 women and 4 in 100 men aged 16-74 years had experienced domestic abuse in the last year. During 2020/21, domestic abuse accounted for 14 per cent of all crime recorded by Gloucestershire Police, a slight increase from the year before, according to the CSEW.

The campaign is supported by GDASS (Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service) who receive on average 492 referrals a month from individuals seeking support ranging from advice over the phone and one to one support to assisting people who are fleeing violence with emergency accommodation. Everyone, regardless of their gender or sexuality, can approach GDASS for support, whether they themselves are experiencing violent and abusive behaviour at home or have concerns about someone else.

Gloucestershire has a Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board which is working to understand and prevent both adults and children experiencing the trauma from domestic abuse, however many things go unseen and unreported as domestic abuse can take many forms, including physical, economic, sexual, emotional abuse and coercive control.

Last year, the Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board launched a new countywide Domestic Abuse Strategy outlining how organisations will work together to prevent domestic abuse and improve services and support for victims. You can read more online at www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/public-health/domestic-abuse-strategy/

White Ribbon is the UK's leading charity engaging men and boys to end violence against women and girls, working to prevent harm by addressing its root causes. The organisation encourages everyone, especially men and boys, to make the White Ribbon Promise to never use, excuse or remain silent about men's violence against women. Find out more at www.whiteribbon.org.uk

What is domestic abuse?

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines Domestic Abuse as the behaviour of a person (A) towards another person (B) is domestic abuse if -

1. a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and
2. b) The behaviour is abusive.

Behaviour is 'abusive' if it consists of any of the following: physical or sexual abuse; violent or threatening behaviour; controlling or coercive behaviour; economic abuse; psychological, emotional or other abuse.

This behaviour can consist of a single incident or a course of conduct. Further detail is provided to detail how 'personally connected' would be defined and children are now recognised as victims of domestic abuse:

[Domestic Abuse Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

It is important to note that domestic abuse is complex and there is overlap in the different types of abuse; it could consist of one or more forms of abuse. **Domestic abuse can happen to anyone.**

Support available in Gloucestershire

- Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS) | www.gdass.org.uk 01452 726570 (Mon - Fri 9am-5pm)
- Gloucestershire Rape and Sexual Abuse Support (GRSAS) | www.glosrasac.org 01452 526 779
- Stroud Women's Refuge | 01453 764 385 | www.stroudwomensrefuge.org
- The Men's Advice Line | 0808 801 0327 | mensadviceline.org.uk
- Support for young people (under 16) | www.gdass.org.uk/support-for-young-people
- This landscape-led highways scheme will deliver a safe and resilient free-flowing road while conserving and enhancing the special character of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

A417 Missing Link Gets go-ahead

Transport Minister Huw Merriman MP has approved the A417 Missing Link scheme between Gloucester and Swindon, which will boost the regional economy and transform journeys for millions of people along this stretch of road, making it safer, reduce traffic congestion and mitigate the knock-on effect of rat running through the local villages. However, I do envisage there will be increased usage of the so-called *Rat Runs* through the local villages whilst the road is under construction as drivers seek alternative routes particularly Miserden, Edgeworth, Brimpsfield Cranham, Upton through Portway towards Gloucester. I understand that Preparatory work on the project will begin in early 2023 and construction will start later next year.

Do please contact me if you have any concerns or wish to discuss any parish issues .

Mobile 07766318854 or land line 01452770928

County Councillor Sue Williams