



Nemo sibi nascitur:

*Our values of **community**, **aspiration** and **opportunity** enable every individual to grow and flourish*



Supporting Student Wellbeing

June 2025

It is not long now until school closes for the summer break. For many families, this school holiday offers a welcome opportunity to relax, spend time with friends and enjoy a range of fun activities. However, for some children, the long stretch of unstructured time can feel uneventful or even isolating. Not all families have the time or resources to provide the experiences their children might hope for and some students may feel anxious about the change in routine when school ends for the term. With this in mind, it may be beneficial to plan some simple, low-cost activities with your child to help provide structure, stimulation and enjoyment over the holidays. The first item in this newsletter suggests a range of low-cost or free activities that can help your child stay busy, connected and stimulated during the summer break.

If you've ever found yourself wondering 'Why did they do that?!' after your teenager makes a baffling decision, rest assured - you're not alone. The teenage brain is a work in progress and, between the ages of 11 and 18, it's going through one of the biggest renovations it'll ever face (yes, even bigger than that bedroom redecoration phase). In this edition, we provide you with a snapshot of what is really happening inside that brain.

Supporting Your Child Over the Summer Holidays

- Enjoy Local Green Spaces

Encourage your child to explore local parks, gardens or nature reserves. These spaces often offer a peaceful environment for independent play, exercise or time with friends.

- Discover Community Resources

Leisure centres, youth clubs and local recreation grounds may host free or low-cost events during the holidays. Look out for 'free swim' sessions or community fun days organised by the local council.

- Visit the Library

Local libraries can be a great resource. Check opening times and available services, such as free computer access, reading clubs or summer programmes for young people.

- Volunteer Locally

Getting involved in community or youth groups as a volunteer can be an excellent way for young people to build confidence, meet new friends and develop new skills.

- Get Creative: Write a Book or Magazine

Encourage your child to write and illustrate their own story or magazine. This can be a fun and imaginative way to use simple materials like paper, pens and pencils while developing literacy and creativity.

- Take on a Personal Challenge

Summer can be a great time to learn a new skill. Some ideas include:

- Learning to ride a bike or swim
- Trying out roller skating or skateboarding
- Exploring a new language using library books or free apps.

- Stay Connected

Help your child find ways to stay in touch with friends and classmates. Consider suggesting regular meet-ups at local parks or shopping centres to maintain social connections.

- Watch a Film

Check if local cinemas offer discounted or free screenings for young people during the holidays.

- Learn Through Local Museums and Galleries

Many museums and galleries offer free entry and can provide both educational and enjoyable experiences. Look online to find ones nearby and explore their summer events.

- Become a Photographer

Encourage your child to take photos of their surroundings using a phone or camera.

What's Going On in Their Heads?

1. The Brain Gets a Makeover

Imagine your teen's brain is a big, overstuffed wardrobe. Around age 11, it starts sorting through all the stuff it's collected - keeping the things it uses a lot and tossing out the rest. This process, called *synaptic pruning*, helps the brain work faster and smarter. But while it's decluttering, things can get a little... chaotic.

2. The Decision-Maker Is Still Loading...

The prefrontal cortex - the part in charge of making decisions, thinking ahead and stopping to ask, 'Is this a good idea?' - is under construction until their mid-20s. So yes, that slightly risky stunt involving a skateboard and a hill might seem like a great idea to them at the time.

3. Feelings Take the Wheel

The emotional part of the brain (the limbic system) is growing like crazy and it's very chatty. That's why everything feels so intense - whether it's excitement, stress or the world's greatest injustice (like being asked to unload the dishwasher).

4. The Sleep Switch Flips

Ever wonder why your teen turns into a night owl and then acts like a zombie at breakfast? Their internal body clock has shifted. They genuinely don't get sleepy until later at night and they still need about 8-10 hours of sleep to function well. It's biology - not laziness.

5. The 'Who Am I?' Phase

As their brain grows, teens start thinking more deeply about who they are and what they believe. Cue identity experiments, changing opinions and a desire to try new things (some of which may leave you scratching your head). It's all part of figuring themselves out.

So next time your teen makes a strange choice or reacts like the world is ending, take a breath. Their brain is doing a lot behind the scenes - and believe it or not, they're slowly becoming the awesome adult you're raising. There is an interesting TED talk by cognitive neuroscientist, Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, available [here](#) if you would like to learn more.

How You Can Help (Without Losing Your Mind)

- Stay cool: Even if they're having big emotions, your calm helps them settle.
- Keep talking: They may roll their eyes, but your words still matter (more than you know).
- Set clear limits: Teens still need boundaries, even if they won't admit it.
- Prioritise sleep: Try to protect their rest (and yours!).
- Laugh when you can: Humor goes a long way when emotions run high.

Sources of Support

Who to talk to at school:

Your child's form tutor would normally be the first point of contact, however, we recognise that students develop strong working relationships with various trusted adults across the staff body. Our school matron and pastoral support base team are available too. Aside from offering 1:1 support, Mrs Craigie (School Matron) is available for those students who have been bereaved. Bespoke Group Work is sensitively undertaken as the need arises and numbers allow. Please contact Mrs Craigie directly if you would like more information about this.

Additionally, there are many external sources of support that you and your child can access:

Safe Space Information Pack - secondary age young people

[Resources from Safe Space](#) to help secondary age young people with their emotional and mental wellbeing. Covering a wide range of subjects, including anger, anxiety, self esteem and mindfulness, with links to many agencies.

Signpost Counselling

[Signpost](#) is a counselling provision that supports children and young people aged 10 - 25 years across Hertfordshire.

Lumi Nova digital therapy

[Lumi Nova](#) is a fun digital therapy for children aged 7 - 12 years, to help them manage fears and anxieties.

Just Talk

[Just Talk](#) signposts young people to free, self-referral services.

Nessie

[Nessie](#) is a voluntary sector therapy organisation that focuses on helping children and young people (0 – 25 years) thrive. They offer free webinars and workshops for parents/carers.

SPOT THE SIGNS, SUICIDE PREVENTION WEBINAR

Contact us to discuss your training needs, or head to our website by scanning the QR code below:

15TH SEPTEMBER 2025

FREE FOR ALL HERTS PARENTS

7 PM - 9 PM ONLINE

Please contact cyp@hertsmindnetwork.org to book your space!

Logos: Hertfordshire Mind, Hertfordshire, Hertfordshire Learning Trust, Hertfordshire Children's Trust

CARERS WEEK - YOUNG CARERS

Caring about Equality

- Could someone in your family be a young carer?
- A young carer cares for a **family member** who, due to illness, disability, a mental health condition or an addiction, **cannot cope without their support**.
- We are proud of our young carers and the care they provide. However, a young carer **may miss out** on extra support offered and opportunities in their education, careers and personal lives due to their caring role.
- You can get them further support by contacting the Young Carers Service at Carers in Hertfordshire.

THINK → REFER → SUPPORT

email: young.carers@carersinherts.org.uk

Visit: www.carersinherts.org.uk/young-carers

Logos: Carers in Hertfordshire, Hertfordshire