**Monday 12th April**

**Essex to provide more extra-curricular activities for our young people:**

Active Essex are delighted to announce that they have been successful in their application for Opening Schools Facilities funding from Sport England.

This funding, provided by the Department for Education, will be available to help secondary schools across the county to deliver more opportunities for activity during and after school hours. The money will be instrumental in supporting extra-curricular activities and providing financial support for the summer term and beyond, to keep school facilities open in the evenings, at weekends and during school holidays. (Large scale capital/building works will not be eligible for funding).

There are a number of ways that this financial support can be used to ensure clubs and activities can go ahead. From purchasing safety and sporting equipment to extra storage, accessibility improvements to short-term staffing challenges and more. This investment will be available to all secondary schools who can meet the required objectives. If you are interested in applying for funding to allow your school to open for activities, the application forms will be live from Monday 12th April.

Times have been difficult over the past year and the COVID-19 pandemic has not only affected crucial contact time for children in schools, but it has also incurred extra costs to ensure that all activities are safe and COVID secure. With this in mind, after school clubs and activities could suffer as a result. This funding will be available to ensure these costs are met, and that young people can still take part in the activities they love in a safe and sustainable way.

The objectives of Opening Schools Facilities funding are to ensure that all children and young people across the UK have access to sport and physical activity opportunities. Support and funding will be targeted towards schools that have a high percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals; schools with fewer opportunities for activity or schools who may need financial help to support SEND pupils in accessing sporting opportunities.

Active Essex will utilise local intelligence to identify schools that may have limited or no access to sporting facilities outside of school hours, to support them in creating these opportunities.

The benefits of applying for the Opening Schools Facilities are both short and long term. Not only will young people benefit from extra physical activity, the financial support will help to reduce the burden on school staff in opening the facilities when it is safe to do so, whilst also helping schools - where appropriate - to build reasonable, sustainable income from leasing their premises to external groups and organisations at affordable rates.

Application forms will be reviewed by an internal panel against project criteria and local insight to gage eligibility. Once successful, this phase of funding will be allocated as soon as possible. For more information about the funding criteria and application process - please visit:

https://www.activeessex.org/opening-schools-facilities/

www.sportengland.org/news/new-funding-help-schools-open-their-sports-facilities