

MAY is the charity that manages and is responsible for activities in the Youth Centre at Green Hill, and particularly for the Yard Youth Club.

The aim of the Yard Youth Club is to provide a safe place for young people to socialise and develop relationship and work-related skills, through contact with each other and with youth workers.

Our core values are respect for people, equality, participation, valuing difference, empowerment, education, listening to others, and respect for property.

We always try to deliver a service for and with young people which will engage with young people and actively involve them in decision making processes.

Activities will be provided which will give young people the opportunity to test ideas in order to enable them to develop the knowledge, skills and values to enjoy the rights and responsibilities of adult citizenship.

Our Objectives for Youth Work

- To provide accurate information to young people in a non-judgemental manner, and signpost young people to further information sources where necessary.
- To encourage a sense of responsibility among our young people.
- To involve young people in community projects and ideas in Moretonhampstead, and encourage them to develop projects and ideas of their own.
- To enhance the healthy growth and development of young people.
- To promote literary, sports, cultural, recreational and social activities.
- To provide opportunities to young people to make good use of leisure time.
- To help young people develop their hidden potential and talents.
- To ensure that our staff and volunteers receive ongoing training and support to enable them to achieve the above.

The present Yard Youth Centre at Green Hill is purpose-built. This followed a long campaign and many years of it running in unsatisfactory premises belonging to some one else, e.g swimming pool, parish hall. Since the move to Green Hill the quality of the youth club experience and the attendances have improved considerably. The centre has been the envy of other towns. That we are able to offer plenty of space, allows young people to express themselves and choose activities and companions.

The centre comprises:

Downstairs: A common / games room, with pool table, football table, computer games, dance area
Snack bar / kitchen
Toilets, including one accessible for people with disabilities
Upstairs: Computer / activity room, a flexible space – also available for daytime users

Since Devon Youth Services withdrew from rural youth clubs, and we have been running the club entirely ourselves, it seems to us that the quality has improved still further. We have built up the club and membership (now 62) and the relationships with members and parents. We have three dedicated members of staff, and 4 regular volunteers. Volunteers and staff are trained, and continue to be trained

to increase their expertise. We are open three evenings per week, one for Juniors aged (8 to 12 yrs), one for Seniors aged(13 to 16) and one new session for year 6-13yrs. A team of senior members help with the juniors, and undertake training for this which develops their skills of leadership and responsibility.

We are supported by a range of grants, as well as regular entry subs and tuck sales, and are constantly engaged in fund-raising. We are currently about breaking even. From January 2016 we will be paying a full rent on the downstairs room and half of the upstairs room. This will require a fund-raising target of £10K per year from now on, which we are committed to.

We do not want to jeopardise this success. The proposals for sharing rooms with the Library would mean that the type of activity that could take place in the shared space would be restricted:

With the library downstairs (sharing it as a computer / activity room) and the Club Room upstairs

There would not be room for the present number of computers in the library, unless they were replaced by laptops

There would not be room in the library for the sofas that we use at present upstairs

We would lose the ability to have physical activities in the library space – they would all have to take place upstairs

Doing physical activities upstairs – dancing, games, gym activities using mats – causes excessive vibration and noise to be felt downstairs; we would need confirmation that the floor upstairs is sufficient for these loads (A layer of special insulation may help, but it is not possible to test this.)

We would not be able to consume drinks etc or any crafts downstairs, for fear of making books sticky or dirty

We would lose about half of our wall display space for the club room, because of the angles of the roof upstairs

If the kitchen was a library reading room, it would limit our ability to use this space for messy, supervised, small-group craft activities e.g painting, clay modelling; we would have to move tables around / away every time;

Large-group messy crafts would have to take place upstairs – requiring many journeys up and down with water, for washing etc.

The carpet upstairs would have to be replaced by a washable surface.

The kitchen area is unsuitable for buggies because of access and health and safety reasons.

With the library upstairs

It would be easier – some of these issues would not arise. But we would still have a loss of flexible space, computer stations, and comfortable seating (sofas).

Overall

There is a perception of losing ownership and control of the space. We have a strongly motivated membership, and do not want to lose this positive relationship – which is good for them and good for Moreton.