



Forest Row Parish Council Youth Service Policy & Delivery Plan

MISSION STATEMENT: -

Forest Row Council Youth Services (FRPCYS) aims to provide a 'safe space' for the youth of the community, where they can be themselves, hear themselves, interact and grow. The space allows them to relax and enjoy each other's company and socialise in a safe environment as well as participate in organised developmental activities as appropriate. ¹

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES: -

- 1. Aims** - FRPCYS is to provide a 'safe space'. Although it is not the aim to be a 'Youth Club', in the traditional sense, it has a formal membership list, and a session fee, whether attending for 5 mins or the whole period. Young people already have significant daily schedules/ structures. The idea is to have a safe space, which the young people are free to attend as and when they wish, where activities are of their choice and appropriate to the needs of who is there and what is going on at any given time,
- 2. A therapeutic aspect:** providing an environment in which all youth, within specified age ranges, are welcome. Where confidentiality is paramount, no expectations excepting those of acting within the law, showing respect to each other, the staff and the physical facilities. No one is judged. The facility allows space in which 'live issues/ discussions' can take place freely, and for the adolescents to socialise.
- 3. Recreational aspect:** provided by the availability of various amenities; table-top/ board games, arts, crafts, drawing, table tennis, table football, pool/snooker, electronic games, TV and computer use. They are also able to use the outdoor facilities around the building, including the skatepark and games area. There are regular themed activities and occasional age-appropriate outings.

¹ See National Youth Agency 'Statement of Youth Work': "Youth work offers young people safe spaces to explore their identity, experience decision-making, increase their confidence, develop inter-personal skills and think through the consequences of their actions. This leads to better informed choices, changes in activity and improved outcomes for young people." <https://nya.org.uk/careers-youth-work/what-is-youth-work/>

- 4. Educational aspect:** this takes place by the sharing of knowledge from peers, assistance with homework, writing up CVs, having discussions on budgeting, living alone, washing/cooking and other basics, providing a launch pad into adult life and responsibility.²

TARGET MEMBERSHIP: -

1. The Centre is principally for the youth of the village of Forest Row, however, youth from further afield are welcome, particularly now the new building is up and running. In particular, there is no objection to including young people from Hartfield, Sharpthorne, Chailey, Danehill where youth provision is, at this moment in time, minimal if any at all. A lot of the youngsters from outside the village are already using the skate-park. Priority is always given to our local youth so overcrowding is avoided.
2. The original intention was to have allotted times for 12- 15 years, 16 – 19 years, and once a month, a session for those aged 20 – 24 years (the latter group being considered in current theory as being a specific group within the youth cohort). The intention was therefore to cater for all the differing needs and interests of the groups. Also, to provide the relevant facilities/space and time for those groups and ensuring growth and appropriate behaviours.
3. To date, the provision has been primarily for the youngest group (year 7 upwards). There is, at this time, little social provision for 12 – 15 years outside of the school environment. FRPCYS offers a ‘safe space’ for this group between the times of 3.30 – 6.30 pm on weekdays, and 1-4 pm on alternate Saturdays This gives them the opportunity to mix with their peers free from any pressure from older age groups.
4. We are not currently providing for 16 -19-year olds who used to be the main service users and are, classically, the ones who loiter in

² See National Youth Agency ‘The basics’: “Youth work focuses on personal and social development – the skills and attributes of young people – rather than to ‘fix a problem’. It is an educational process that engages with young people in a curriculum that deepens a young person’s understanding of themselves, their community and the world in which they live and supports them to proactively bring about positive changes. Therefore youth work needs to be (and be seen to be) transformational, harnessing skills of young people not fulfilled by formal education.” (Ibid).

public places/spaces. The intention was to have a follow-on session from 6.30 – 9.30pm free from harassment, physical conflict, alcohol, smoking and the use of any substances – the ‘space’ being for unstructured interaction, music, socialising, and other appropriate activities, but pilot sessions were not sufficiently well attended. This remains our plan for the future as the current cohort gets older.

5. As for the third age group, there remains the possibility, if the need is identified, of promoting a smoother transition from youth to early adulthood by providing a welcoming environment.

HOURS OF OPERATION:

As noted above, the current hours of operation are 3.30-6.30 on weekdays (with an earlier finish on Thursdays to allow for Brownies), plus 1 – 4 pm on alternate Saturdays. These hours can be varied if required by specific activities.

FACILITIES: -

The space itself is a single hall adjacent to the village centre, plus an informal games area and skatepark. The hall space incorporates storage and fixed seating. It also has toilet facilities, a kitchen area for the provision of light refreshments and non-alcoholic drinks, and there is an office/quiet room, a space where ‘one to one’ private conversations can be facilitated.

In addition to the hall itself there is moveable furniture, seating and tables – plus electronic equipment and sound apparatus. There is physical game equipment: snooker, table tennis, board games and such like. The moveable equipment is packed away when the space is required for other users.

MANAGEMENT, STAFFING AND ORGANISATION: -

1. Youth services are provided by the Parish Council under the general oversight of the Community Services Committee. They receive current reports on the activities and status of the service. As with other services, staffing and financial issues are the responsibility of the Finance and Policy Committee and the Clerk may exercise agreed delegated authority to deal with minor items relating to organization and or expenditure. Major strategic changes will need to be referred to Full Council for ratification.

2. Currently, the staff consist of a Youth Service Supervisor, who works a basic 12 hours per week, with a group, currently 5 in number, of youth work assistants. They have a rota system, working between 3-9 hours per week, each. There are always two members of staff on at any one time, the more experienced member being the leader at that session.
3. All staff have contracts and job descriptions and DBS accreditation, and are entitled to paid holidays and sick leave, and participation in the staff pension scheme. The staff 's role is to open and supervise the youth sessions, to engage with the youth as appropriate, to safeguard them in all respects; to ensure the basic rules, within and out of the facility are adhered to and the standard of behaviour is appropriate and respectful. They resolve any disputes, problems that may occur, provide refreshments, and account for cash takings, The staff will also meet regularly to discuss progress, any matters of concern, check-in with each other and plan future events/activities.
4. All staff abide by the following nationally agreed principles³:
 - a. Treat young people with respect.
 - b. Respect and promote young people's rights to make their own decisions and choices.
 - c. Promote and ensure the welfare & safety of young people.
 - d. Contribute towards the promotion of social justice.
 - e. Recognised the boundaries between personal & professional life.
 - f. Recognise the need to be accountable to young people.
 - g. Develop and maintain the required skills and competence.
 - h. Work for conditions in employing agencies where these principles are discussed, evaluated and upheld.
5. Additionally, there are many Council Policies, safeguarding, health and safety and equality of treatment procedures for dealing with adverse incidents or complaints. Risk assessments are provided for specific activities or external events. All staff are expected to be aware and knowledgeable with the policies and procedures and able to implement them efficiently where and when necessary.
6. A formal qualification in youth work is not an absolute requirement, but the current youth supervisor is working towards such a

³ National Youth Agency "Ethical Conduct in Youth Work": http://www.nya.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Ethical_conduct_in_Youth-Work.pdf

recognised qualification, and all the youth staff are expected and encouraged to participate in appropriate and regular training to increase their skills and awareness of their role.

The most important things are that staff have experience, consistency, patience, respect, self-confidence, compassion without judgement, and are good listeners and approachable.

7. The youth work group also have regard to the 'Toolkit' published by Surrey Youth Focus as an organisational & procedural resource.⁴

FINANCING: -

1. As with any other Council service, the staff costs are met from the general budget and financed by the Parish precept. There is also an annual budget allocated for 'youth development' to fund items of equipment and sundry expenses, and to subsidise the occasional outside trips.
2. The youth currently pay for refreshments/tuck provided onsite, and are expected to make a realistic contribution to the cost of external trips – it is recognised that some of the youth are not able to pay. Since the move to the new facility, a flat rate session fee of £1 is payable by all participants, as a contribution toward the running costs of the facility.
3. The youth and staff will engage in active fund raising, through grants, one off donations, sponsorships to improve facilities, equipment and to fund activities (such funds to be ring-fenced in the Council's accounting system).

PUBLICITY: -

Originally the availability of the service was spread by word of mouth and each age group was replaced naturally by the next group as time elapsed. However, the staff now actively promote the facility in the local schools, over Facebook, through posters, the Council website and external media, in conjunction with Council staff and the Community Services Committee. By going into the schools, it gives the 12 to 15-year olds an opportunity to get familiar with what is available and dispel any preconceived ideas, also offering them the chance to ask questions.

⁴ Surrey Youth Focus 'The Toolkit'

http://www.surreyyouthfocus.org.uk/sites/default/files/Toolkit%202014_FINAL_National.pdf

LONG TERM PLANNING: -

1. FRPCYS will continue to be a major service provided by the Parish Council, as an investment in the youth of the community.
2. It is envisaged that membership will gradually expand and that there will need to be a periodic review of the facilities and staffing levels.
3. It is also likely that when the need arises that formal training will need to take place for affiliation with appropriate national networks.
4. It may well be advantageous for the youth supervisor, the Chair or other member of the Community Services Committee, the Chair of Finance and the Community Development Officer to meet on a regular basis to evaluate the service and consider ways of improving and/or expanding it - thus keeping to the Council's overall commitment to the community.

[Service plan revised by the YOSS working group
(Cllrs Davies, T Lewin & Withers, the Clerk,
Sara Smart (Community Development Officer),
& Mel Rey-Mesher (Youth Service Supervisor))
January 2020]

Due for next review May 2022