**Baildon Community Link Youth Club Report**

**September 2023 – March 2024**

**General Sessions and Activities**

We run a Senior Youth Club on Mondays and Junior Youth Club on Tuesdays. Both Youth Club sessions continue to be popular, with a waiting list for our juniors’ sessions. At both sessions, we encourage our young people to be active and have a balance with technology. We have lots of activities to promote mindfulness both in our sessions and at home, such as painting and drawing, crafts and more. We display any art or craft work our young people have created if they are happy for us to do so. We promote health and exercise by using the facilities at the Link, such as sports equipment in the sports hall. We vary the sports/games to ensure that it is enjoyable, engaging, and inclusive for all.

Many of our young people often have problems with confidence and low self-esteem, including negative self-images/beliefs. We carry out activities to make them feel good about themselves inside and out, and to help build their confidence. We work hard to ensure everyone feels welcome and part of the group and promote an understanding of ways to express ourselves and find things that help us practise self-care. We also provide several opportunities throughout the year for our young people to reflect on their lives and the positive things in them; celebrating difference and diversity amongst families and across cultures; showing appreciation for special or important people in their loves; and helping their local community. We have done this by talking about who are important people to them and what positive role models are, including making cards and small gifts. Our young people have planted sunflowers in the community garden, along with weeding and tidying and watering, painting wooden bird houses and litter picking in the park adjacent to the community link. We have invited local PCSOs in to give talks on personal safety, as well as advocating for road safety, e.g., wearing a helmet and having a light when riding bikes and scooters.

We have also run several trips for our youth club members, including bowling, scavenger hunts, walks to Shipley Glen and Roberts’ Park, visits to Bracken Hall Countryside Centre and DENSO. These trips ran effectively and gave youth workers and volunteers further opportunities to get to know young people outside of the Link setting, as well as allowing young people to mix with people in the group they may not normally have. It proved effective in raising positive interactions amongst our young people and establishing a more consistent, inclusive group.

**Seniors Youth Club**

Monday sessions are more relaxed, allowing time for more 1:1 well-being checks with our young people. We speak with them about personal issues, such as family, relationships, and friendships, as well as topical issues, such as gang crime, online violence, and vaping. We ensure a safe, non-judgemental space for them to talk openly about issues they face as young people, whilst also providing support, advice, and signposting to resources when appropriate, such as local organisations, leaflets on mental health, mindfulness apps and so on. We also liaise with them on a regular basis as to what their interests and hobbies are and use these to generate ideas for youth club. Often, we do cooking or baking with seniors as this is something they enjoy, whilst also providing us with an opportunity to promote life skills, such as cooking, hygiene and safety in the kitchen. We often do team games, such as dodgeball or relay races, to promote teamwork, respectful communication, and sportsmanship. This is also applied in regular, ongoing pool tournaments. In fact, it is their keen interest in pool that encouraged us to spend some of our donation money on a new, larger size pool table.

We try to ensure that our sessions are engaging and thought-provoking, as well as providing a safe, warm, dry space for them to hang out with friends and access healthy drinks and snacks.

**Juniors Youth Club**

Tuesday sessions are more structured, with an itinerary of activities planned and shared with parents/carers. We have found that having a more structured routine helped our young people to regulate their emotions and enjoy activities to the fullest. We begin each session with a group check in, which promotes active listening skills and encourages them to get to know each other and learn from each other. It also generates discussions that enable us to talk to them about difference in opinions and how to be respectful whilst having different thoughts, ideas, and opinions. We then do an activity, followed by a break in which our young people can enjoy a drink and a snack. We then have a final activity, ensuring there is time for tidying up before being collected. This has been important in promoting teamwork and a sense of responsibility amongst our young people. Here is a brief overview of the activities/workshops that we have run between September 2023 and March 2024, which demonstrate the range of activities and experiences that juniors have enjoyed. September saw us celebrating Harvest Festival and making full-sized scarecrows, as well as ‘recycling crafting’, making bread, learning some first aid and talking about National Garden Wildlife Week & National Bike Week.

In October we worked with Sharon from the Co-op Trust, who delivered the talk “lonely, not alone”, which was a Co-op Foundation initiative, as well as making scarecrow biscuits. We also had members of Baildon Rounders Club come down to teach the young people technique and set up a mini tournament! We went on a trip to Shipley Bowl and celebrated Halloween by dressing up, making masks and apple-bobbing!

In November we learned about cultural celebrations that take place in Mexico - Día de Muertos (Day of the Dead) – and enjoyed making some Mexican-inspired snacks (nachos), crafts (making sombreros and decorating skulls) and playing piñata. We enjoyed lots of crafting sessions, such as tile and glass painting and tin foil art, as well as playing board games, completing jigsaws and having sports / games in the hall.

December brought lots of festive cheer to the community centre, with our young people making colourful, decorative paper chains and posters, cards for families and members of the community, and pulling crackers to tell each other jokes.

After the Christmas break, juniors returned in high spirits and happy to be back together at Youth Club. Throughout January, juniors had a talk and workshop from Bradford Ornithological Group; they created and painted clay figures of themselves portraying their new year’s resolutions; and enjoyed a pamper night!

We kicked February off in style with World Pizza Day, in which we introduced our young people to Italian culture! We listened to Italian music, taught them some beginners’ phrases and they made their own pizzas. During the half-term, we took a group of young people for a walk to the tramway, where we met Richard from Bracken Hall Countryside Centre. We all walked to the centre together, learning lots of local history and nature facts along the way. We had a picnic and enjoyed pancakes (it was Pancake Day!) as well delighting in what the centre had to offer. Later in the month we focused on ‘someone special’ – creating cards and small gifts for Mothers’ Day (or someone special in their life, prompting sensitive but important conversations in a safe place). Our juniors love animals and their pets so we had a special ‘show and tell’ week whereby the juniors could bring photos of their pets (or dream pets) and tell the group about them.

In March, we completed a scavenger hunt, held a Lego Masters competition, did some tin foil crafting and celebrated National “Let’s Laugh Day” by doing comedy stand up routines and joke telling.

We have so much planned to look forward to in April and beyond, and our juniors were thrilled when they saw some of our upcoming activities and guest speakers/workshops!

**Outreach / Detached Work**

Our youth workers have spent time doing detached work at various locations around Baildon, offering free hot chocolate and biscuits. By doing this, they engaged with lots of local young people, as well as parents/carers and members of the community. During this work, they were able to promote youth club, and other activities which run at the Link. This had a positive impact on the uptake of members at both senior and junior youth clubs. This outreach work took place at Coach Road shops throughout January and February, and more recently at Baildon Co-op. The youth workers plan to continue their detached work in Charlestown and along Cliffe Avenue during May, and there are also plans to do more community outreach work in local housing estates during the summer months.

**Number Of Beneficiaries**

We have engaged with 65 households, including looked after children and children in temporary foster situations. We have young people who attend who have been diagnosed with, or have traits of, neurodiversity, such as Autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and several with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) issues.

We have a diverse and open-minded range of young people who attend our sessions, including different cultures, religions, and ethnicities, as well as different socio-economic backgrounds, genders and sexuality. We provide a trusting and safe environment for young people to be themselves, share their views and experiences, and promote tolerance and open-mindedness.

We regularly have full attendance at juniors, and currently have a waiting list. Enquiries are coming in regularly due to impactful use of outreach work and social media. Seniors’ youth group is growing and we have seen a more balanced mix of boys and girls, which has brought a new dynamic and given us a chance to do a wider range of activities and have more varied discussions.

We have also seen and spoken a large number of family members, including parents/carers, siblings and extended family at our ‘family community days’, such as the Christmas Party and Easter Fun Day. By hosting these events, we have been able to engage younger siblings who are keen to start youth club when they turn 10! It has also provided good opportunities for us to inform families of other services we offer, and other local places of support (such as food banks).

**Overall Summary**

Both the sessions are growing and evolving as we meet the new needs of new and dynamic group of young people. All youth club sessions are engaging, teaching and providing new experiences and opportunities for children to grow, develop and be valuable members of our society. The young people took part in several new experiences that expanded their horizons and understanding of the wider community. We are proud of what we achieve with the young people with lots of positive outcomes.

The following pages show just some of the positive experiences that our wonderful young people from both youth clubs have enjoyed. These include: creative, crafty sessions; baking; walks to Shipley Glen Tramway; visits to Bracken Hall Countryside Centre; playing pool and doing sports; playing at the park and more! These are just a snapshot of the fun we have had – more photos can be found on our Facebook page. Please enjoy looking through them 😊

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