

Downton Youth Centre
c/o Trafalgar School
Breamore Road
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SP5 3HN

6th January 2012

To Whom it may concern

Use of Old Sarum Community Room for Weekly Youth Group

I am the Youth Development Co-ordinator for the Southern Wiltshire Community Area and we deliver youth groups across the Community Area.

When we first started delivering our weekly group in Old Sarum, we used a converted Peugeot Boxer van (called the Urbie) and very quickly made contact with a number of young people from Partridge Way. Unfortunately the Urbie is a small vehicle which meant that we were only able to offer one activity at a time and also meant that if young people had fallen out with each other (which can be known to happen from time to time) they would choose not to come to youth group that week as they would be in close proximity with each other. All of which limited the number of young people who attended a session.

Since moving into the Old Sarum Community Room, we have been able to increase the number and variety of activities we offer to young people.

Our provision is open to young people in School Year 8 and above up to the age of 19 years old, that said, the majority of young people we work with are aged 13 -16.

As the new estate has developed we have worked with both our existing young people and those who have moved into the new estate to ensure that the youth group is open to all young people and to challenge the misunderstandings and fears which each group had about the other which means that of our current average attendance of 10 young people per session, we have young people from both parts of the community.

The main focus of our weekly provision is to provide a safe, fun environment where young people can come, spend time with their friends, have a range of activities to engage with if they wish to and know that youth workers are available to talk with if they want to. We also use the weekly session to promote other activities available to young people (either organised by ourselves or by others) and support and encourage young people to become engaged in decision making, community organisation and the democratic process.

In terms of outcomes from our weekly provision, there are the obvious examples of new skills and understanding developed – for example a fruit smoothie making session where young people engaged in conversations about healthy eating and had a go at making fruit smoothies, as well as the less easy to measure intangible development of young people such as learning to be with other people and conflict resolution. There are also numerous examples of young people individually and in small groups talking with a youth worker about an issue which is concerning them including school, friendships, peer pressure and family issues. I believe this has come about because the Community Room enables us to create a fun environment that young people want to come into and a safe environment where young people know they can speak with a youth worker about something and there is the space for them to do it without being overheard. We would not be able to provide this if we had to return to the Urbie.

As well as the outcomes from our weekly sessions, the fact that the Community Room gives us the space to chat with young people altogether but also in small groups and individually means we have been able to encourage and support young people to take part in a variety of things including Leisure Credits (a scheme where young people undertake work in their local community and receive credits which they use to go on reward trips), take part in decision making about their own group and also plans for activities for young people across the community area, be involved in the recruitment of youth work staff, attend Area Board meetings to represent the views of young people and we have supported one young person to become part of the management committee for the Community Room. Again, I believe that all of this is as a direct result of what we are able to do by having access to a facility like the Community Room and I do not believe we would achieve this if we returned to using the Urbie.

Summing up, using the Old Sarum Community Room for our weekly youth group means that we are able to offer young people a weekly youth group which is fun and engaging whilst also being developmental and challenging. We are also able to support and encourage young people in the issues they face in their day to day lives and to engage in a variety of activities and decision making opportunities which I do not believe would have been possible whilst the Urbie was our venue for delivery.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss the contents of this letter.

With best wishes,

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