



End of Summer Term 2022 Report

This report summarises Godalming Youth Service's progress to date, including the successes, threats and challenges the service has faced throughout this first academic term (April 2022–July 2022). It offers an overview of the Youth Service provision and identifies potential threats and solutions to these. The report seeks to be thorough, impartial, and transparent. There is more that can be written, particularly regarding future aspirations, but these will be addressed in future proposals. For the sake of space, Summer Programmes are also omitted. These will be addressed in a future separate report.

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Godalming Youth Service Introduced

Godalming Town Council's delivery of youth services is primarily focused upon a term-time only, universal, free to access youth drop-in centre, at Broadwater Park, for young people of secondary school age to use after school.

The objectives during the first term were:

1. Begin with a 'soft launch' where a small group of young people would be engaged to build towards higher attendance levels in September hopefully.
2. To build a team of youth workers to support young people to develop the confidence and skills they need to thrive.
3. Provide youth work programmes that impart new skills, develop self-esteem, and provide young people with somewhere they can belong.
4. To convert Broadwater Park Community Centre into a Youth Centre.

This report details how these objectives were met and exceeded in all instances.

Successes of the Youth Service To-Date

There is much to be celebrated following this first term. It is important to remember this has happened since April, demonstrating the rapidness at which the service has established itself, and the need of young people for this type of provision.

An Exceptionally Effective Project Launch

The so-called quiet, soft launch proved to be anything but quiet. The number of young people we attracted during our first term proved to be exceptional:

- We had a footfall of 1000 session attendances during our first month.
- Approximately 300 different young people have attended the centre.
- To provide some context, 95% of our attendees come from Broadwater School, a school with approximately 600 students on roll. This means we have reached almost half the school roll in our first two months of opening.
- Our retention rate has been notable, with young people returning week-on-week, particularly those young people who are especially vulnerable.

As term has progressed, these numbers have remained high, with drop-in numbers continuing to average between 20-40 young people each day. Ordinarily, youth projects lose substantial numbers at the end of the summer term due to improved weather, school commitments such as exams and work experience, and plain old end-of-term fatigue. Whilst these have led to a slight drop in numbers, the centre remained busy until the end of term, with only the final two weeks seeing considerable drop-off due to exams, work experience and Broadwater School's challenge week. How each programme functions, their successes and challenges are addressed in subsequent parts of this report.

Complex and Vulnerable Young People Successfully Supported

One of the notable successes of the project is the high volume of young people with complex needs that we have been able to support.

Partner agencies have been incredibly impressed with the types of young people we are managing to engage, with Broadwater School noting the high number of school refusers in attendance.¹ The benefits of young people accessing these programmes has been widely attested:

'We have a number of school refusers and friends of these students have been able to arrange to meet these particular students at the youth centre as a first step to get them out of the house and start building their social skills for a return to school.' – Broadwater Pastoral Staff

Similarly, the service's effectiveness and appropriateness when supporting young people with special educational needs and difficulties (SEND), young carers, LGBT+, those with complex family lives and other attributes is well attested.

'Tom actively encourages those students with challenging family lives to engage at the centre and seems to have a sixth sense for these vulnerable families. This approach can only help in supporting positive outcomes for these young people' – Broadwater Pastoral Staff

'This is amazing, I've never felt so included' – Non-Binary Young Person

Parents too have remarked that the Youth Service has responded exceptionally well to young people with complex needs. Many parents have contacted us and been unsure if a youth club would be suitable for their child; we have consistently proven that it is an appropriate environment for these young people and been able to support them to integrate into the group.

Case Study – 'Annabel' (name anonymised)

Annabel had not been attending mainstream education for several years. She had limited friendships with peers, preferring to talk to adults in a one-to-one setting. The barriers to school attendance that had been identified were emotional barriers and linked to her special educational needs.

Annabel was invited for a one-off building tour and one-to-one with youth workers. This put her at ease, helping her to enter the building despite a high level of anxiety. She agreed to give an evening group a try, initially committing to join for just 30 minutes.

The first time she came, she didn't feel able to enter the main room where young people met due to emotional barriers. The youth workers were able to encourage her to enter the room for a short time, which they praised her for doing afterwards as it was a significant step forward. She then left after 30 minutes as agreed.

The following week, she came for an hour and, whilst she didn't talk to peers, she found she could stay in the room. This pattern progressed for several weeks until eventually she would remain for whole sessions.

The young person was very interested in animals, and we offered that she could bring her hamster to the group. She did so, and that week, another highly vulnerable young person joined who liked hamsters. The two young people interacted and even played badminton together, representing the first time they had made friends with peers in several years.

The two young people have become friends, and both sets of parents sent texts to Tom independently to describe how thankful they were and what a big deal this was.

This has now created one safe space for these young people to attend each week, and somewhere that they can progress with improving their emotional wellbeing and, crucially, be around other young people. One of the girls is hoping to re-enter school in September, and this friendship and place to grow their confidence are invaluable in getting them ready to re-enter education.

¹ The youth service often like to use the term emotionally based school avoidance and signpost parents to the appropriate guidance in relation to this. Our groups provide somewhere where young people can overcome some initial emotional barriers to mixing socially.

Case Study – ‘Bob’ (supplied by Broadwater School)

We would particularly like to highlight a year 8 boy (we will refer to him as Bob) who has had a very troubled upbringing and had a social worker involved for most of his childhood.

Bob struggles with his behaviour and emotions at school; we are aware through Tom that there were also some issues at the youth centre. However, through the great work of Tom and his colleagues, they have enabled Bob to recognise his poor choices, and we were delighted to hear of a recent incident when someone hurt Bob, but he walked away without retaliating.

Bob has said that the youth centre “*has kept me off the streets and there a good role model there. I like the multiple consoles, board games and the outdoor activities. The staff are really nice and if something happens, they are on it*”.

We believe that through joint working with the centre and school staff we can ensure some positive outcomes for Bob.

Marketing and engagement approach

Our marketing and engagement approach has been instrumental to this happening. The youth service has been promoted through three methods:

Social media – We have grown a following on social media. The procedure we use is to take photos of the main activity in every session, with the intention that we post something daily. Doing so keeps people aware of the youth centre and celebrates young people’s achievements, demonstrating a centre that is interesting and worth attending as there is life and enthusiasm there.

Outreach and detached – Outreach work is where Youth Workers seek to meet young people outside the centre, meeting them where they are and engaging them on their terms about the things that matter to them. Prior to the centre opening, the team engaged in a few sessions of outreach where they went into the local area and met local young people. Many of these same young people have attended the session.

School engagement – By far the most successful piece of engagement work came in the form of a school assembly at Broadwater School that Tom completed online. Using Zoom, Tom could give the young people a complete overview of Broadwater Youth Centre’s facilities and explain how the centre would operate to the entire school. Following this first assembly, a vast number of young people began arriving each day en-masse as they were very impressed by the facilities, sometimes as many as 60 in one afternoon.

Tom has since maintained a presence at Broadwater School and we have an excellent relationship with their Pastoral Team:

From the outset Tom Manning has been instrumental in linking with the school and engaging with our students. He has run an assembly to introduce the project, come and talked to students at lunchtime, joined a young carers lunchtime group and last week supported transition day with our new year 7s. This has ensured that students know about the centre but can also see that the centre staff and school are working together. If there have been any incidents involving our students, Tom is excellent at communicating with us if he feels the school needs to be aware. Tom is always willing to talk through suggestions, the young people being at the heart of all they do. We have also been impressed by the inclusive nature of the centre and the understanding of the needs (including SEN) of the students that attend.

Tom has actively engaged with other local services and has a clear understanding of local need.

We would always welcome Tom or anyone for his school into the team and will continue to look at how we can forge links.

In addition to this, the Youth Service also linked with Loseley Fields to promote the Juniors Group and they emailed all parents with details of the programme. Doing so has led to this group being oversubscribed, so much so that the team had to split the session into two. Details of this are available later in the report.

Tom also visited the Star Project, a project that provides alternative education provision to young people not suited to mainstream schooling.

As mentioned earlier, this term was intended to be a 'soft launch'. For this reason, our engagement with Rodborough School has been more limited than is desirable, with the youth service not yet having done assemblies there or been in to visit groups. This is regrettable, but with such high numbers of young people there would not have been space also to accommodate a large volume of Rodborough students. This is now the priority for September.

Staff Team Overview

The staff team have shown an exceptional level of performance and adaptability. Tom and Rita were impressed during interviews, feeling that candidates exceeded expectation. These initial impressions have proven true in practice.

There has also been an outstanding level of teamwork, with each member of staff having identified skills and talents that they are utilising within the youth centre. This has led to a situation whereby the activity content of sessions is delegated to members of staff who then arrive to work with specific activities in mind. These differ in basis dependent upon the session but can be anything from fun activities to more elaborate ones that explore themes like conflict. The nature of these activities will be explained more thoroughly when providing an overview of each group.

Perhaps most significantly, three members of staff have decided that they want to become Youth Workers as a full-time occupation. All of them have fantastic potential and if appropriately supported through professional development and training, they could take on responsibilities like the YSO.

The priority for the coming year will be to ensure we offer these staff the best possible opportunities to ensure we retain them.

School Feedback Regarding the Youth Service

Broadwater School offered to provide some written feedback to support this report and provided the following:

The drop-ins have enabled students to engage in positive activities with their friends after school "rather than going home and playing on my x box" (quote from a student). Students in school have been able to arrange to meet their friends there and engage in a variety of activities.

We have a number of school refusers and friends of these students have been able to arrange to meet these particular students at the youth centre as a first step to get them out of the house and start building their social skills for a return to school.

Tom actively encourages those students with challenging family lives to engage at the centre and seems to have a sixth sense for these vulnerable families. This approach can only help in supporting positive outcomes for these young people

We would particularly like to highlight a year 8 boy (we will refer to him as student A) who has had a very troubled upbringing and had a social worker involved for most of his childhood. Student A

struggles with his behaviour and emotions at school and we are aware through Tom that there have also been some issues at the youth centre. However through the great work of Tom and his colleagues they have enabled Student A to recognise his poor choices and we were delighted to hear of a recent incident when Student A was hurt by someone but he walked away without retaliating. Student A has said that the youth centre "has kept me off the streets and there a good role models there. I like the multiple consoles, board games and the outdoor activities. The staff are really nice and if something happens they are on it". We believe that through the joint working with the centre and school staff we can ensure some positive outcomes for Student A.

From the outset Tom Manning has been instrumental in linking with the school and engaging with our students. He has run an assembly to introduce the project, come and talked to students at lunchtime, joined a young carers lunchtime group and last week supported transition day with our new year 7s. This has ensured that students know about the centre but can also see that the centre staff and school are working together. If there have been any incidents involving our students, Tom is excellent at communicating with us if he feels the school need to be aware. Tom is always willing to talk through suggestions, the young people being at the heart of all they do. We have also been impressed by the inclusive nature of the centre and the understanding of the needs (including SEN) of the students that attend.

Tom has actively engaged with other local services and has a clear understanding of local need. We would always welcome Tom or anyone for his school into the team and will continue to look at how we can forge links. One suggestion is that we use the centre for some lunchtime clubs. We would also like to look at how we can support our school refusers and link in with the centre and staff more. I am aware that Tom is already working with our Eikon Youth Worker to do more work with Young Carers.

In summary, Tom and his team are doing a fantastic job and the young people of Godalming and Farncombe are very lucky to have such a great facility. Thank you to all the organisations that have supported it.

Threats and Challenges to the Youth Service

Whilst there is much to celebrate at the end of this first term, there are several threats to the Youth Service's sustainability.

Staffing Structure does not Achieve Appropriate Delegation.

By far the most significant challenge at present is that, aside from the YSO, all other youth worker contracts are for pure delivery, with workers expected to operate as follows:

- 2:30 – Arrive, set up the activities and equipment, have a staff briefing
- 3:00 – 5:00 – Deliver youth work
- 5:00 – 5:30 – Pack away equipment, debrief as a staff team

This schedule of work provides no time for staff preparation, training, or admin. It also creates an untenable situation where the YSO is needing to carry all other aspects of the day-to-day running of the service. Doing so includes:

- Dealing with all phone calls, social media messages and emails from parents /professionals.
- Handling all communications, including maintaining the social media posts and direct messages.
- Writing and adapting policies, including in relation to safeguarding, data management.
- Completing any reports required, including this one.
- Creating all posters/flyers related to marketing and physically printing them.
- Maintaining the noticeboards and décor in the building.
- Providing advice and guidance regarding complex young people.
- Site management.

- Processing all requests for service, including tasks like managing waiting lists.
- Equipment procurement, often through complex or informal means such as receiving donations.
- Stock checks and replenishment.
- Computers and electronics maintenance, including maintaining youth service equipment such as gaming computers, televisions, smart speakers and other electrical devices.
- Writing funding bids to attract additional finances.
- Making sure that youth support workers' training and supervision needs are met.
- Managing all data, including attendances, evaluation forms, case studies.
- Directly managing six staff, and soon volunteers as well.
- Managing external contracts.
- Delivering key days in partnership with schools and other stakeholders.
- Managing partnership agreements.
- Managing serious incidents such as if a young person is being bullied or there is anti-social behaviour.
- Responding to any additional requests.
- Being 'on-call' if incidents happen such as the alarm being tripped.

This workload is not realistic for one person to carry on a long-term basis. If the Youth Support Workers were given additional preparation hours, as exemplified by other Youth Services in the appendix, then many of these tasks could be delegated to other staff members. This would also eliminate the YSO being the single point of failure for maintaining such tasks.

It is neither desirable nor realistic to expect the YSO to continue at the current level without the ability to delegate to other staff. The overall cost to the Town Council would be substantially higher if the current situation proved untenable for the incumbent and a replacement had to be recruited. Such a change would necessitate significant commitment of the RFO and Town Clerk's time when neither has the capacity to do so.

Furthermore, the drop-in attendance was anticipated to be approximately 15-20 young people, but the response has been far more than that. This has meant that the ratio has at times been borderline, requiring the YSO to act as an additional member of staff for sessions to operate safely.

Many of the staff we recruited, whilst excellent workers, did not have previous youth work experience and understandably time has been needed to train these staff up. Even when the YSO is not delivering directly, he has been drawn in to answer questions and offer support.

This means that often the YSO has had very little time to fulfil other necessary functions as nearly half his time has been taken up by direct work with young people, including responding to issues that emerge from more vulnerable young people. Trying to fit this level of direct engagement, staff training and supervision, administration and service development work into the available work hours is unsustainable, thus making the availability of preparation hours for other staff a necessity.

Whilst it was accepted that the initial setting up of the service would entail a significant investment in time and energy, it was expected to be time-bound. However, the actuality is that this level of time and energy has remained necessary continually, which is unsustainable physically, mentally and emotionally.

Given that the service is pretty much at capacity now without having done any serious advertising at Rodborough School, this places limits on how the youth service might expand. The YSO has delayed engaging with Rodborough as the service came to numerical capacity quickly. Whilst it is excellent that it grew in this way and maintained attendances throughout the term, it is a cause for concern in September, particularly as we will be looking to advertise at Rodborough.

Furthermore, additional summer activities aren't currently viable due to the demands of the service during term-time. The Youth Service has done well to plan in three weeks' worth of activities this Summer but doing so brings the service right to the cusp of its capacity.

All of this points to the realisation that when the YSO role was developed, it was intended that they would be part of the direct youth work delivery. However, experience of the service delivery has shown that they should not be part of direct delivery unless for a specific reason, such as providing input to contribute towards staff development or dealing with complex situations. In short, there are simply too many other functions needing to be done in maintaining a youth service of this scale and calibre for the YSO to be a full-time part of the face-to-face delivery. Moving forward the priority needs to be developing other staff to provide high-quality in-person work.

Withdrawing the YSO from being on rota to provide direct work leaves a gap of 27 hours of delivery.

Comparisons with Other Youth Services

Hailsham Youth Service (Hailsham)

Hailsham has two Youth Service Officers, both of whom are full-time, in addition to 6 youth support workers and bank staff.

Hailsham was an especially significant model that we drew inspiration from when forming Godalming Youth Service.

Sylvia Beaufoy (Petworth)

Sylvia Beaufoy Youth Centre in Petworth employs two full-time youth workers, and a youth centre manager. They also have three Youth Support Workers.

Options for Godalming Youth Service

Option 1 – Increase the preparation and training hours of our youth service staff

We have excellent staff who want this to be their primary occupation. Our original assumption was that we would attract staff with other full-time work who would complete a few sessions a week to complement their employment.

This does not reflect the position of the staff we have. Therefore, this option embraces a new model where we increase the hours of existing staff with the goal of creating the conditions where their role becomes their primary occupation. In doing so we could explore training options for them, allowing them to transition into professionally qualified youth workers who provide the nucleus of our youth service as it expands.

The following keyed table contains a plan to better support the retention and development of our excellent staff team. The proposed planning hours are a necessity for the reasons mentioned, and the additional delivery hours would make the job roles remain financially viable for the respective candidates:

Godalming Youth Service proposed staffing hours	Youth Support Worker One	Youth Support Worker Two	Youth Support Worker Three	Youth Support Worker Four	Youth Support Worker Five	Youth Support Worker Six
Monday afternoon						
Monday Evening						
Tuesday Afternoon						
Tuesday Evening						
Wednesday Afternoon						
Wednesday Evening						
Thursday Afternoon						
Thursday Evening						

Friday Afternoon						
Friday Evening						
Preparation Hours (three)						

Key

	= Proposed additional delivery hours
	= Proposed additional planning hours
	= Fits within existing budget

In total, 21 extra hours per week are required which would mean a salary uplift of approximately £29,000 including on costs. It is felt that this is the best option to maintain the existing service and to ready ourselves for future expansion.

What value does Option 1 bring to Godalming Town Council?

Providing the additional staffing hours in the proposal above would allow the following:

Firstly, we could ensure the youth centre is open at the times when young people need it most, including Friday evenings. The need for a Friday evening project has been a recurrent theme from young people, parents, and the community. This proposal would allow us to establish this.

Secondly, this option would allow us to maintain an adequate child-adult ratio. There have been times where the exceptional popularity has led to a ratio that is bordering on the unacceptable. The revised staffing would prevent this being a frequent occurrence.

Thirdly, we will be prepared for growth and able to take on future challenges. At present, we cannot expand the service beyond its current size as we are already overstretched. The planning hours in this revised budget would make all the difference, allowing the YSO to delegate key areas of responsibility.

Fourthly, there is a significant single point of failure caused by an overdependence on the YSO to sustain so many aspects of the service. The introduction of planning and preparation hours for other staff will combat this, allowing others to step in and cover important duties if they are absent.

Finally, this revised staffing plan will assist our staff retention, enabling us to retain the excellent youth work team that have made the youth service an exceptional success to date. Without leaping ahead to future proposals, if external funding is attracted then the ambition would be to open a second centre serving the southern and southwestern area of the community. If this intention is realised then it will be a natural progression for existing staff to take on new responsibilities as their skills, confidence and experience develop further.

How can we fund Option 1 in the current year?

£9,000 Welcome Back Funding from Waverley Borough Council has now been confirmed. The council delivered the items contained in the proposal in the 2021/22 financial year but did not account for the funding as it had not been confirmed. This therefore represents an unbudgeted windfall.

£4,000 Newsletters – the Council previously did four printed newsletters that were distributed to all Godalming residents via a local magazine. In a move to be more environmentally friendly, and building on the success of our social media, the Council now uses both its website and social media platforms to keep its residents informed throughout the year (not just quarterly). Consequently, the budget for printed media is no longer required.

£7,000 Over budget Wilfrid Noyce Centre income. The current year’s budget kept the Wilfrid Noyce Centre income from hirers at a low level given the uncertainty of lockdowns. Fortunately, we have not had any further lockdowns, so whilst income is not at pre-pandemic levels, it

is well above budget. The first three months of the current year show additional income against budget of £7,000. This is likely to continue so long as no further lockdowns occur, so there could well be further unbudgeted income, but prudence dictates we only consider that which we currently have in hand.

£9,000 New Initiatives Reserve. Whilst it is entirely possible that the balance could be contained within the existing year's total council budget, it is too early in the financial year to be certain of that. For example, the grants budget could be underspent (as in most previous years) or Members could choose to allocate grants funding to the Youth Service. However, should no other funds be identified, the balance required should come out of the New Initiatives Fund.

Option 2 - Reduce the number of sessions

We could reduce the number of groups provided to reallocate these hours as planning time. This would leave us in the unfortunate position of, for example, ending our Juniors or LGBT+ provision, or cancelling our plans for Music Groups or Young Carers.

Option 3 - Do nothing

If we attempt to maintain the current model, then we will likely not retain the excellent staff we have attracted, and the Youth Service will fail.

Programmes & Projects

The Youth Services' core regular projects are the weekly Drop-In and evening group provision. These are complemented by one-off events.

Drop-In

Godalming Youth Service provides an after-school drop-in at Broadwater Youth Centre every day after school between 3:00 – 5:00pm. Each day has a different theme but taking part in the activities is always voluntary on the part of the young person.

Drop-in Programme for Term-One



What is the purpose of Drop-In?

The purpose of the after-school drop-in is to provide a safe, guided space. Every young person should feel valued and have access to positive activities, being nurtured and encouraged in ways that enhance their social and emotional development.

Before drop-in began, it was extrapolated from previous consultation work that there would be several young people who might struggle in various ways:

- Young people might leave school and return to difficult home life situations where they are emotionally neglected.
- Due to boredom or not feeling heard within their community, they might use their time immediately after school in ways that are anti-social.
- They may be struggling with mainstream education and feel like they lack somewhere to belong. This significantly affected their outcomes.
- There would be several young people with SEND that are not being included in other contexts, raising their vulnerability to exploitation²

How is Drop-In planned and evaluated?

Within youth work nationally, drop-in programmes run in various ways. Godalming Youth Service's principles regarding our drop-in provision are as follows:

- Every session should contain an opportunity for young people to participate in some form of activity that enhances their social and emotional learning. It should never be 'just somewhere to chill out, there should always be new opportunities for young people to try on a voluntary basis.
- Young people should be involved in shaping decisions. This principal is central to our youth work pedagogy as we recognise the invaluable learning young people undertake by actively shaping their youth provision.
- We want to structure our drop-in in a way that keeps with young people's needs. This means recognising that young people need a relaxed, informal approach after the school day.
- Far from being a project that only supports those with universal or mainstream needs, we recognise the huge benefit that this environment offers to those who have been excluded elsewhere. Examples are multifaceted and include those undergoing emotionally based school avoidance, school exclusion or who might be marginalised due to social or communication difficulty.
- Drop-in is used as a feeder for our issue-based evening provision.

We always write out a plan for the session, and use the following formula each day:

Time	Activity name	Overview
3:00 – 3:20	Arrival	Young people arrive during this timeframe
3:30 (approx.)	Group Chat	We gather all young people into a circle and discuss the ground rules for the youth centre, which are: respect each other, respect staff, respect the building and equipment.
3:45	Toast/Tuck Shop	We provide toast to young people. This is sourced from the community store where possible, and some members of the public have begun donating loaves each Friday. We also have a tuck shop which is facilitated by the young people.
4:15	Group Activity	We have some form of group activity. This is optional to participate in, but we make it engaging enough that normally 60%-80% of young people participate. There is a different theme each day
4:50	Pack Down/ Evaluate	Encouraging responsibility on the part of the young people, we encourage them to help us tidy up and we actively seek their feedback.
5:00	End	All young people leave at 5:00pm. We are firm on closing on time as we need to prepare for the next session, and if given the opportunity many young people would stay longer!

² See the relevant research regarding child sexual exploitation and county lines

At the end of each session, staff pack-down and complete a debrief sheet that identifies: *what worked well, what concerns are there, what changes do we need to implement?*³. These changes are then actioned and the service improved week-to-week.

This formula above one was developed based on young people’s feedback throughout our first couple of weeks. We trialled a few variations, such as having a formal young person evaluation at the end but found that this structure best meets young people’s needs. Too much formality would not be conducive to meeting the needs of this cohort of young people, but likewise having no structure would leave young people unsure of what was happening and absent of needed activities.

Activity Themes within drop-in

Each day at the drop-in there is a different activity theme:

Day	Theme name	Overview
Monday	Creative Drop-In	Each Monday there is a different craft activity. This encourages young people’s creativity and has led to our walls being covered in artwork.
Tuesday	Sports and Team Games	This session combines sports with team-building games that improve communication. Classic team-building activities such as ‘cross the ground using matts’ are used here.
Wednesday	Gaming	Recognising that digital gaming and digital communications are significant parts of young people’s lives ⁴ , this session seeks to harness this and address their needs.
Thursday	Board Games	Board games impart a number of skills to young people, and so we seek to use these as a modality within this session. We have a number of youth work themed board games that also get used
Friday	Chill Zone	We keep this session as an ‘open’ one where young people can pick up activities that they have done during the week. They often want to pick up something from earlier in the week. We often facilitate some form of team game also.

We anticipate changing Thursday afternoon into a music themed session in September.

When planning each of these themes, we met at the beginning of term and developed strategy documents for each drop-in. These specified the activities we would provide, the reason for doing so and we also mapped out the anticipated needs of young people.

Successes

Drop-in Numeric Data

From a numerical standpoint, the after-school drop-in has been an overwhelmingly success. We have averaged between 20-40 young people per day throughout our first term, figures that remained until the end of summer term.

These numbers demonstrate the success of our marketing, our school’s engagement work and the effectiveness of the outreach work we completed prior to the centre opening.

³ This method is adapted from Signs of Safety

⁴ 88% of 16-24 year olds engage in digital gaming <https://www.statista.com/statistics/300513/gaming-by-demographic-group-uk/>

These numbers were completely unanticipated, and the team were slightly blindsided by it. A soft launch with approximately 8-10 young people per session was anticipated, followed by a true centre opening in September. Instead, the centre grew in popularity immediately following a school assembly, with numbers sometimes as high as 60 per session.

However, quantitative metrics only provide a partial picture. High numbers do not indicate high-quality youth work if, for example, young people were only coming to be entertained and enjoy the facilities. The proof is in the difference that participation in youth work makes to their lives.

Drop-In Case Studies

As mentioned, if young people attend the project but don't receive the advice, guidance and support that youth work seeks to offer, then the numbers are all for nothing. The qualitative case studies below provide a snapshot of how the drop-in is making a significant difference in the lives of young people.

Issue encountered.	How was this addressed?
Young people shared that they were having lots of issues at school, their dad is in prison, and the school also reported that he is at risk.	The school stated that ' <i>... the work you are doing is so valuable, you are literally saving him at the moment.</i> We have supported the young person with managing their anger during our youth clubs and are exploring making them a young leader to boost confidence and self-esteem further.
Young person identifies as non-binary. They have low confidence, are unsure where they fit in and are a frequent target for bullying as they 'different'.	This young person loves the youth centre because we work hard to include and understand them. A particularly touching quote was when they said that ' <i>... this is amazing, I've never felt so included</i>
Young person who is a long-term school refuser. The school have significant difficulty supporting them to attend school.	This young person has begun attending the drop-in regularly, alleviating their anxiety and aiding them in starting a phased return to school.
Young person with autism attends the group. He is on a behaviour warning at school, and outside school was riding around on his bike and often found getting into trouble.	He is hugely appreciative of the youth centre, coming every day. He said of us, ' <i>You are amazing, how do you know exactly what kids want?</i> '
At first, this young person presented as just being bored, in no ways a 'bad kid' but not engaged in many hobbies or interests outside school. It largely emerged they had problems with their emotional wellbeing that cause them significant angst.	This young person said, ' <i>The best thing going on in my life at the moment is the youth centre</i> '. They now regularly help with the tuck shop, learning numeracy skills and building confidence. They will soon be joining our new young leader's programme.
Young person previously excluded from school for fighting. He is quiet and withdrawn but attends drop-in nearly every day.	The young person was able to share their previous journey, including talking through their difficult home life and how this impacted on their wellbeing. They now attend drop-in every day, providing them with a safe space to be.
Young person 'between schools', waiting to receive a place and being home educated	This young person has a complex family background. They have said that being able to remain connected to peers and having something to do outside the home is invaluable and attend most days.

School statement regarding Drop-In

Broadwater School said the following regarding Drop-In:

The drop ins have enabled students to engage in positive activities with their friends after school *“rather than going home and playing on my x box”* (quote from a student). Students in school have been able to arrange to meet their friends there and engage in a variety of activities.

We have a number of school refusers and friends of these students have been able to arrange to meet these particular students at the youth centre as a first step to get them out of the house and start building their social skills for a return to school.

Drop-in Challenges

The most significant challenges within drop-in are because of the overwhelming numerical success. The amount of young people attending makes it challenging to maintain an appropriate staff-young person ratio, and on the busier days, it can be more like crowd control with little opportunity for in-depth discussions or to give time to more vulnerable young people. The team has adapted to this with procedures such as having two members of staff on 'walk about' whilst another delivers an activity or has a small group discussion, but it is far from ideal. The YSO is often needing to join drop-in during afternoons which shifts their focus away from managerial and leadership tasks, with face-to-face taking a disproportionate amount of their time.

Anti-social behaviour and Police Youth Engagement Team

There was a group of four boys who caused problems at drop-in. It stemmed from one young person within this friendship group refusing to listen to instructions; after this they were asked to leave and not come back until next week. They then snuck into the youth centre the following day, and on subsequent days would frequent the car park causing disruption. Three other boys who were otherwise respectful in the youth centre were then drawn into this anti-social behaviour.

The YSO stated that if they went home that day, then they could come back tomorrow. Instead of leaving, they continued causing problems. Eventually this escalated to one of them throwing a stone over the wall which then hit a young person.

An issue then emerged that some of these young people had given fake contact details, and in the case of one young person a phoney name. Through working with the school, we were able to find the correct contact details. We arranged for the young people to meet Officers from the Police Youth Engagement Team, who explained that these actions were anti-social behaviour. Tom then followed up by booking in times to visit the young people at home to complete Behaviour Contracts, after which they would be readmitted to the youth club.

However, one young person has yet to show any remorse or indicate that they will change their behaviour. Tom is determined to work with the family to eventually reintegrate this young person so that we can support them in understanding the implications of these actions.

Bullying incident

There has been one incident where bullying happened in the youth club. A young woman who was vulnerable due to SEND⁵ was relaxing in the youth centre. Two young people, both from traumatic and complex backgrounds, began making sexualised comments towards them.

The issue was treated as highly serious. Of the two young people, one had not completed a consent form. Upon contacting the school, it emerged that their parent refuses to complete consent forms.

⁵ Special Educational Needs and Difficulties

The young person has been told that they need a consent form before re-joining⁶, and that we will need to investigate the issue thoroughly. The other young person is well-known to us, and we are supporting them through a range of issues, and they have since been allowed back without subsequent incidents. We will be seeking to address healthy relationships through our boy's work programme.

The young person who was victim has drawn closer to our provision due to being impressed with how quickly we actioned the issue; the parent especially was impressed that we took action within a day. We use short-term exclusion very sparingly and seek to use a restorative justice approach to allow the young person to reintegrate into the youth centre. We use a three-strike warning system, and if a young person has a warning, then we will make it clear that these can be erased through engaging well.

Young person not attending because of perceived threat of bullying

The YSO received a Facebook message from a parent saying that their child did not want to attend due to the intimidating environment some other children were creating.

The YSO responded by saying that he was 'devastated' to read this message. He arranged for the young person to come and speak to him.

It then emerged that the bullying was not happening at the youth club at all, but rather at school and on the way home. It had been reported to the school already. They were scared to come to the youth club in case it gave the bullies another avenue to find and bully them.

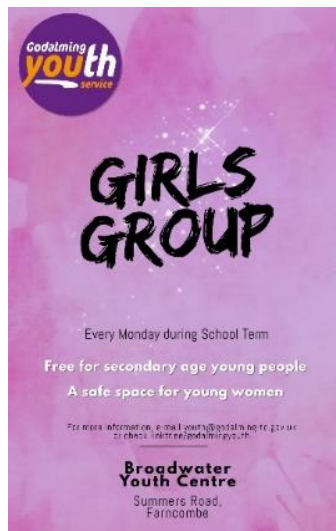
They were reassured that we would not tolerate any slight indication of bullying, and it was shared that someone had recently done this and been told to leave for the rest of term. They were very reassured and said they really trusted the team. They have since been coming back to the youth centre each day and have said that *'they love it here; they have never felt so included'*. They have formed a WhatsApp group including others from the youth centre, some from other schools, called 'banter' where they can have a laugh and support each other. She has a positive friendship group through the youth centre that will help them, and others navigate adolescence.

⁶ On the subject of consent forms, we require that all young people complete these. However, in the event that a parent refuses and a young person wants to access our service, we can allow them to join based on the Gillick guidelines. The Gillick guidelines refer to a significant case where a young person was provided contraception without parental consent as they did not want their parents to know. In this instance, the nurses were found to have acted in a legally justified way in the best interests of the child. We can apply this same approach in the youth centre but only if a young person is not impacting on others' wellbeing.

Evening Groups

Our evening groups aim to provide smaller groups where we can support young people in addressing difficulties they are encountering. A summary of each follows:

Girls' Group

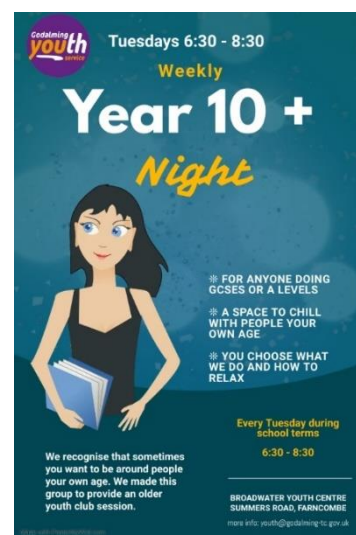


The Girls' Group exists to provide a safe environment for young women. It is a challenging time to be a young woman, particularly with the impact that the pandemic had on self-esteem and confidence, and with the proliferation of social media platforms that are rife with bullying, sexualised comments, body image and unhealthy advice. Our Girls' Group exists to support these young women, raising their resilience, self-esteem and helping them to identify dangerous behaviour.

Crucially we are beginning to support several young people with high levels of vulnerability.

Year 10+

The Year 10+ evening session represents our only real misfire. We tried this for the first 4 weeks, but attendance was limited; it soon became apparent that it wasn't compatible with exam timetables. We also came to realise that Year 10s and Year 11s were frequenting the After-School Drop-in and engaging well with staff. The need for a Year 10+ group during the first summer term had been mis-anticipated but might be appropriate in subsequent terms.



My Unique Individuality



After the Year 10+ group proved a misfire, we launched My Unique Individuality (MUI). The goal of this project is to support young people who are LGBT+. The reason for this project is that young people attending drop-in had been requesting it.

Surrey County Council has a county-wide LGBT+ service, so we reached out to them and booked a time for their workers to visit our youth centre to share best practice. Tom also reached out to some of his former colleagues in Ireland to gain different insights from this context.

MUI has been an exciting project to get off the ground. Many young people that want to attend find it challenging to do so due to barriers such as anxiety, meaning that it is taking a while to build a substantial group. However, the young people that have been attending have particularly acute needs.

A managerial decision that has been taken is to have two members of staff on this session rather than three whilst the numbers are low. The third member of the team uses this as additional planning time, beginning to help Tom with some of the duties in maintaining the service.

Juniors

The Juniors group aims to cater to younger youth and provide a transition group for year 6 students moving to secondary school.

We did not anticipate this group being so popular, which led to us needing to close the group to new joiners and implement a waiting list. To support as many of the cohort as possible we eventually split the group into two cohorts of approximately 20 young people each. Had we gone ahead with assemblies in junior schools, the demand would likely have been even more acute.

The group itself has played an essential role in engaging incoming students, and crucially we have attracted young people impacted by multifaceted and complex issues. Supporting these young people now means that we will establish a great working relationship with them, positioning us to help them through their journey through adolescence to adulthood.



Boys' Group



The Boys' Group seeks to support young men. Many of those attending have been in trouble at school or in the community, and the group has sought to address themes such as behaviour, emotion and choices. The group use a giant Jenga set each week on which young people write issues that they face as young men, and the group discusses these together at the beginning of each session. This provides a soft, gamified way of unpicking the issues facing these young men.

Conclusion & Recommendation

The first term for Godalming Youth Service has vastly exceeded expectations, with a very high level of response from young people. The staff team too have proven excellent and their skills and enthusiasm far exceed expectations. With such an unanticipated response to the service, it has been a strain to meet the demands. Far from being a soft launch, the Youth Service has come to a position of prominence very swiftly. However, this growth brings both opportunities and threats. Without increasing staff hours, most crucially in regard to planning and training opportunities, we may not retain the talented staff that made this happen and the service will be under threat.

Recommendation: To safeguard the Town Council's and Community's investment in the Godalming Youth Service, it is recommended that the salary budget be increased by £29,000 to allow a sufficient increase in available staff hours to continue to deliver the youth service in a sustainable manner.