

Report on Year 1 of the Hothfield Youth Project

Following a trial period in the summer of 2010, the Hothfield Youth Project received funding from the Big Lottery Fund in September 2010, with additional grants from Hothfield Education Foundation and Hothfield Parish Council. The Project is to run for three years, with the BIG Lottery setting targets to be met each year. It is anticipated that by the end of that time that the Project should be self funding.

A lead youth worker from KCC was identified, and two part time youth workers appointed to help her to run the Friday night sessions in the village hall. Between 15-18 young people between the ages of 12 - 17 attended, and the programme consisting amongst other things, of sporting activities, art sessions, keep fit and trips out to meet up with other young people in similar groups began. The young people themselves set the rules of their group, and members were challenged if they did not adhere to them. Throughout the sessions, the staff worked on other issues as they arose, for example criminal damage caused by catapults and graffiti around the village, giving alternative points of view, and explaining to the young people the consequence of their actions.

In October, a 6 week course on Motor Mechanics was offered at Goldwyn School on another night of the week, in addition to the Friday night Youth Club. This proved to be popular, and 5 young people obtained a Youth Achievement Award in Mechanics. Other awards gained over the year included Emergency 1st Aid Certificates and awards for Outdoor Activities.

The Hothfield Project offered to host a talent contest for the Ashford, Dover and Shepway Try Angles Event. The staff were delighted to find that the young people were able to demonstrate their organisational skills and put together a programme of a high standard for over 70 young people in the area.

At the beginning of the Project I think it would be fair to say that young people in Hothfield did not have good relationships with the older generation in the village. This I am told has changed considerably, and the Community Warden has noted that young people's behaviour has improved generally over the past year.

The number of people attending the Project dropped at the end of the summer, with many of the older age group moving on naturally to other activities. One of the part-time staff left in early July, and the remaining staff are now assisted by an experienced volunteer.

Penny Selby
30/9/11.