



South Shropshire Youth Forum

Annual Report 2023-24



Who are South Shropshire Youth Forum?

Set up as an independent registered Youth based charity in 1997, South Shropshire Youth Forum (SSYF) have been aiming to support young people in their transition to adulthood. It offers a variety of projects, themes and activities that are delivered to help address and support the needs of young people within this sparsely populated area.

YOUTH WORK

We offer weekly sessions Bishop's Castle, Cleobury Mortimer, Craven Arms and Ludlow. We work with Schools, more recently in Bishop's Castle Community College, Bishop's Castle Primary School, Stokesay Primary, Church Stretton Secondary and Cleobury Primary School.

HERITAGE PROJECTS BASED ACTIVITIES

Activities based in the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (now National Landscape) including Young Rangers and Young Rangers Outreach projects in Secondary Schools. We have delivered over 10 years of activity including woodland restoration, bushcraft, practical conservation, outdoor adventure, and rural skills training.

COMMUNITY WORK & DIVERSIONARY PROJECTS

We help represent the views of young people both at partnership meetings and on a local strategic planning level. We feel that the views of young people should be heard, especially as they often feel they are unrepresented and not part of their community. More recently we have delivered and hosted Youth Conferences in south Shropshire and this has been an effective way of communicating the needs of young people.

Diversionary projects are delivered to engage young people in their own free time (usually holiday periods). Young people have developed their own ideas and so projects such as the Ludlow Garden Help Scheme has become established.

INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT

SSYF provide a South Shropshire Youth Network for any organisations that work or aspire to work with young people. The network officially ran until May 2024.

GENERAL VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

The Youth Forum provides opportunities for supported placements within the community or within the youth projects so people can apply their skills.

Our ethos

South Shropshire Youth Forum (SSYF) are an established and trusted youth based charity with a strong track record of delivering quality, value for money programmes for socially and economically disadvantaged rural young people.

South Shropshire Youth Forum aims to meet young people's diverse needs through creating individual and group opportunities for participation, education and celebration. Its core services are based on delivering youth clubs & play schemes, diversionary projects and helping to give young people a voice.

SSYF have different strategies and offer bespoke services depending on each market town area we work in (currently Bishop's Castle, Cleobury Mortimer, Craven Arms and Ludlow). More importantly young people refer themselves and so in effect they volunteer to get involved.

We have also been developing work for rural areas within the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Activities are carried out through the normal channels of youth engagement but more significantly through less traditional approaches such as diversionary activities and youth participation schemes. These are shaped around new research carried out by the young people themselves through peer led consultations. We have established Youth Forums in the market towns, which have helped to improve local youth facilities, brought in specific activities and have given the young people a direct link to local decision making processes.



Our work 2023-24

Young Rangers

During 2023/24 SSYF continued to deliver Young Rangers in the Clee Hills and Church Stretton/Craven Arms areas, in partnership with Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Beauty Partnership (Now National Landscapes). The Lottery funded programme finished at the end of 2023, so there was no delivery beyond that.

In the two and a half years we helped to deliver a programme with **153** young people registering onto Young Rangers and activities were hosted at a range of countryside and heritage sites in the Shropshire Hills National Landscape. Most of these were publicly accessible sites and/or those owned by countryside service providers including National Trust, Shropshire Wildlife Trust and Shropshire Council. 38 young people also achieved a John Muir Award.

Between April 2023 and March 2024 SSYF delivered 18 full day sessions; and a summer holiday residential in the Peak District. A total of **27** individuals participated on the 18 sessions. Sessions included farm visits, bushcraft, foraging, boardwalk construction, discovery walks, path clearance and footpath repairs. The residential included 3 days of climbing, scrambling, kayaking and team building challenges.

SSYF also piloted a Young Rangers Outreach course at Church Stretton School. The project is designed to help pupils raise their self-esteem and confidence, develops individual negotiation and communication skills, and provides opportunities to work as part of a team. There is also a strong focus on getting pupils to be reflective and to develop coping mechanisms into their lives. Pupils will be referred because they are not achieving their potential because of feelings of social anxiety and low self-esteem, and bullying or other emotional issues. Many, if not all the pupils will have anxiety issues. **10** females, aged 13-14 were referred onto the project

Craven Arms Youth provision

Weekly sessions were delivered in Craven Arms (Tuesday evenings). Access to the local Community centre is still not feasible due to ongoing issues so we delivered detached sessions throughout the year. Activities including regular football sessions, cricket sessions, night walks, and marshalling for community events, such as the Community Bonfire. In total 34 sessions were delivered from April 2023 to end March 2024. **425** contacts were made with young people with approximately 50 individual young people aged 9-17 participating on the various activities. The Tuesday night provision has the catalyst to start other project work and activities. Young people were recruited to join the Young Rangers programme, and also young people were recruited to volunteer at the community bonfire event and assisted the Santa Sleigh. Some of the Moldovan children living in Craven Arms have participated in our Ukrainian Refugee project in Ludlow.

Ludlow Youth provision

Friday night detached sessions have continued to be delivered in Ludlow. We also delivered 21 drop-in cafe sessions at Hands Together between March to April 2023 and also from October 2023 to April 2024.

We don't record individual's details but estimate approximately 100 individual young people accessing our service over the time but not all of these attend every week. The average age attending are mid-teens (13-16 year olds), which rose to make up 82% of contacts made (last year it was 75%). The majority of contacts made were new to us and the project. This is significantly up from previous years. There was also a significant increase in the numbers of females visible socialising in and around the town.

680 contacts made with young people in total over 41 sessions.

Other activities

At the request of a local partner we have delivered some pilot football sessions for Ukrainian young people. 4 sessions have been delivered at Ludlow Football club. We may offer more sessions as and when the facilities become available at Ludlow FC

Drop-in sessions/Garden Help Scheme

We were offered a cafe space at Hands Together who are located in the town. However, the times the space was available was quite limited 4.30-6pm. In total we delivered 21 sessions over the winter. Despite various approaches we had very little uptake but for a short time we did have a small core of about 5 young people attending regularly. As a result of this core group meeting we managed to relaunch our Garden Help scheme. **8** young volunteers helped deliver the project over the School summer Holiday. The Garden Help Scheme was awarded a High Sherriff Award in 2024.

Bishop's Castle Youth provision

Funding for the Youth programme at Bishop's Castle was extended due to money from the Town Council and Shropshire Council. A part time worker has been employed to deliver the project with sessional staff and volunteers.

After School club

After School Club at Bishop's Castle Primary School runs weekly in term time. From April 23 up until the end of the Summer term **123** children took part in the cooking activities that SSYF ran. From October 23, creative writing sessions were delivered with **76** young people attending these sessions.

Youth Drop in

From April 23 through to March 24, there has been a huge increase in young people attending. Young people registered for activities at the drop-in totalled **29**. Total contacts throughout the period were **327**

The activities at the Drop in are the same weekly – the team normally have a cooking session every two weeks, games, indoor hockey and pool/table tennis are available. Hot drinks and toasties are also on offer. Craft sessions happen weekly. Outside of term time sessions included climbing, and day trips. A two day camp in the Shropshire Hills was also delivered.

Cleobury Mortimer Youth provision

SSYF was commissioned to do a youth consultation in 2021 and as a direct result of this outreach sessions started in January 2022.

The project now aims to engage directly with young people initially through sport-based sessions, providing them with a place to spend at least an evening a week with trusted adults they can speak to and work with. The programme also includes the delivery of sports based sessions at Cleobury Mortimer Primary School.

The project will be specifically signposted to pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium funding in Upper Key Stage 2 at Cleobury Mortimer Primary School and Lacon Childe School. We aim to encourage pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds to recognise the importance of keeping healthy and leading an active lifestyle.

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From April 2023 to end March 2024 we engaged with **26** young people aged 10-13 with 28 sessions being delivered. Totals of young people attending over those sessions was **413**. In addition we delivered sessions at Cleobury Primary school, increasing the numbers worked with to **56**.

Ongoing consultation with young people

We continue to listen to young people and try to respond to their changing needs. As part of our Infrastructure Support we have been able to bring together organisations and together we have pooled resources to continue structured consultation with young people.

Following on from last year's residential, where we trained 9 young people in campaigning techniques we worked on a series of workshops that would help enable young people to design their own 'realistic' services. In Spring 2023 we organised another residential and young people designed a game called 'Youth Chance' that others could use to design their own ideas. A prototype is currently being designed and has been tested, and was played at the Youth Conference in July 2023.



South Shropshire Youth Network

South Shropshire Youth Network is a peer network of individuals (paid/unpaid), community and voluntary organisations working with young people aged 8-25 in that area. The aim of the network is to exchange good practice, collaborate, put in joint funding bids, and for organisations to become stronger and more sustainable. The network is essentially a Youth Partnership for the south of Shropshire. The SLA with Shropshire was extended until March 2024. Rural Media agreed to help manage the service and meetings and newsletters were sent out to network members. Attempts to keep the network going beyond May have proved to be problematic. We still aim to continue in some capacity but, may need specific funding to enable us to do this.

By the end of March 2024 we **38** network members.



Chair's report 2023/24

This year we have consolidated our trustee group to 6 and have continued to hold regular Officers Meetings with the Chief Officer, Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer, complementing our full trustee meetings. This year we have focused on reviewing and updating policies and procedures. We are always looking for new trustees however, with new skills and ideas, to cover the whole of South Shropshire, so please do get in touch if you are interested in supporting the youth forum and making a difference to young people across the region.

As a small charity with only 1 permanent staff member, The Chief Officer, now working 4 days a week and several part time and sessional youth workers, the range of activities, film projects, events, residentials, networks and consultations outlined in this report, is remarkable, with youth provision offered across South Shropshire in Cleobury, Bishops Castle, Craven Arms and Ludlow. The success of our established projects, such as the garden help scheme, film projects, young rangers, football and cricket sessions, as well as residentials and conferences, is testament to the dedication, hard work and flexibility of everyone involved. We are proud to have been awarded the High Sheriff's Outstanding young citizen award this year, for the garden help scheme, an intergenerational project involving young people helping to support older people to tidy their gardens. The new film produced with Shropshire Hills National Landscape and the young people involved with SSYF is a fabulous collaboration, creating diverse opportunities for young people to learn new skills, be creative, have fun, meet new people and improve their confidence. It is a strength of the voluntary sector that we can adapt, respond to need and demand and be creative, succeeding even in times of financial pressure and funding challenges.

I will close by thanking our Chief officer for all his hard work, along with all part time staff, all our trustees, partners and funders and of course the young people, who have enabled all these projects and activities to develop and who keep the youth forum flourishing, moving forwards and making a difference to young people's lives across South Shropshire.

Mandy Furniss

Youth Forum **income** **expenditure** over the last 5 financial years (April – March)

	<i>Income</i>	<i>Expenditure</i>
2019/20:	£51,461	£48,225
2020/21:	£53,065	£42,112
2021/22:	£67,236	£66,669
2022/23	£81,706	£76,313
2023/24	£87,621	£68,313

Partners

Arthog Outreach
 Bishop's Castle Town Council
 Caring for God's Acre
 Church Stretton School
 Clebury Mortimer Primary School
 Clebury Mortimer Social Club
 Craven Arms Mosque
 Craven Arms Town Council
 Craven Arms Youth Partnership
 Hands Together
 Hereford Diocese
 Ludlow Town Council
 National Trust - Cardingmill Valley
 Rural Media
 Shropshire Hills National Landscape
 Partnership
 Shropshire Council
 Shropshire Hills Discovery centre (Grow,
 Cook, Learn)
 Shropshire Wildlife Trust
 Teme Leisure - Clebury
 Wild About Westhope

YOUNG PEOPLE!

Funders & contributors

Anonymous
 Bishop's Castle Town Council
 Clebury Mortimer Town Council
 Craven Arms Town Council
 Craven Arms Youth Area Partnership
 Euro Quality Trust
 Hereford Community Foundation (*Teme
 Valley Youth Fund*)
 Heritage Lottery Fund
 Ludlow Town Council
 Old Downton Lodge
 Shropshire Hills National Landscape
 Partnership
 Shropshire County Council
 Tesco's Stronger Starts Fund

South Shropshire Youth Forum

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Registered Charity number: 1068321
Company number: 3476766

