



South Shropshire Youth Forum

Annual Report 2024-25



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 12 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.

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 2024-25

Young Rangers

During 2024/25 SSYF continued to deliver Young Rangers in the Clee Hill area. This was despite the end of the 3 year Lottery funded Young Rangers grant. In addition we were able to team up once again, with the Shropshire Hills National Landscape (SHNL) to deliver a range of activities funded through a national programme called Generation Green. This project gave us the opportunity to reach young people who ordinarily wouldn't have the opportunity to do

residential, and farm visits. **85** young people accessed the Young Rangers/Generation Green project which included a residential at Long Mynd Adventure camp, 3 farm visits, night walks, and a wild camp experience. In total **16** activity experiences were offered.

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 other activities. In total **32** sessions were delivered from April 2023 to end March 2024.

511 contacts were made with young people (last year this was 425 on 34 sessions) 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.

Ludlow Youth provision

Friday night detached sessions have continued to be delivered in Ludlow. We also delivered sessions in partnership with Wesley's cafe, providing 6 weeks as a drop-in.

We don't record individual's details but estimate between 100-120 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 continued to be 80% of contacts made. There was also a significant number of females visible socialising in and around the town. (nearly 40%)

439 contacts made with young people in total over **23** sessions.

Garden Help Scheme

Full day sessions started to be delivered in the Summer School Holidays. In total, **6** full days were delivered weekly across the summer.

We recruited young people through word of mouth, via Social media and advertised on detached youth sessions prior to the summer holidays. One young person was referred via Social Prescribing.

8 young people, aged 12-16 volunteered their time on the project. 5 of the group identified themselves as female.

'This service is an amazing service to all residents in Ludlow that require help. It not only keeps their gardens good for them but the community to be proud of them too'.

Local resident

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. From May 2024 the sessions were run with the help of volunteers and the part time youth worker only.

After School club

After School Club at Bishop's Castle Primary School runs weekly in term time. From April 24 up until the end of the Summer term **91** children took part in the Creative Writing activity that SSYF ran. From October 24 through to March 25, creative writing session were delivered with **131** young people attending these sessions.

To add to this – from May 2025 a 6 week course was delivered to all year 6 pupils to prepare this group for the transition to Secondary School. 26 pupils took part weekly in these sessions

Youth Drop in

From April 24 through to March 25, Young people registered for activities at the drop-in totalled **29**. Total contacts throughout the period were **381**

The activities at the Drop in are the same weekly – the team normally have a cooking session every two weeks, but this was dropped to an occasional session from January 2025.

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 an overnight camp, with two days of activities including the longest zip wire in England!. The group also put together a survey regarding the town's recreation park. What improvements are needed. The results of the completed surveys were handed over to Friends of the Park.

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 2024 to end March 2025 we engaged with **55** young people aged 10-13 with **35** sessions being delivered. (this included 24 pupils from the Primary school)

Totals of young people attending over sessions was **525**.

The percentage of females attending was 26%



Shropshire Hill stories project

A two-year project delivered in partnership with Piece of String media designed to work with (up to 40) rurally-isolated young people aged 11-18, across three areas in South Shropshire, to enable them to create a series of (up to 16) short films — about their experiences and perspectives of local places and stories with the aim to share with their local communities and online. To date **21** young people have participated on **8** project days. **16** films have been produced. The project is due to finish in June 2026.

Ongoing consultation with young people

We continue to listen to young people and try to respond to their changing needs. This is continuing to be done as we deliver services direct with young people, while encouraging them to help shape the service we offer.





Chair's report 2024/25

This year we welcome 2 new trustees to the Youth Forum, bringing new skills and experience to support the development of our services for young people across South Shropshire. Our regular trustee meetings have been held online this year to ensure all can attend across the county, with regular Officers Meetings held in person where possible. This year we have focused again on reviewing and updating policies and procedures, and bringing job descriptions up to date as well as supporting our Chief Officer and the work of the Forum, attending events, conferences and fundraising opportunities. We are always looking for new trustees, with new skills and ideas, 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.

Funding continues to be a challenge in the current climate. At present we have only 1 permanent staff member, the Chief Officer, along with part time and sessional youth workers. Despite this, we are still meeting local need and delivering services in Church Stretton, Craven Arms, Bishops Castle, Cleobury, and Ludlow. There are a wide range of activities for young people to be involved in, including film projects, drop ins, after school clubs, garden help scheme, detached sessions, Young Rangers, residential, networks and consultations, all outlined in this report. The success of these services is testament to the dedication, and hard work of everyone involved, who have created diverse opportunities for learning and celebrating young people, and their voices. The strength of the voluntary sector is that we can respond to need, and be creative, diversifying in times of change and financial challenges, as the Youth Forum has done successfully for nearly 3 decades.

After 4 years as Chair, I will be stepping down at our AGM and hope the Youth Forum will continue to make a difference to young people's lives, for the next 30 years! I would like to thank our Chief Officer for all his work this year, along with all part time staff, 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 moving forwards.

Mandy Furniss

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

	<i>Income</i>	<i>Expenditure</i>
2020/21:	£53,065	£42,112
2021/22:	£67,236	£66,669
2022/23:	£81,706	£76,313
2023/24:	£87,621	£68,313
2024/25:	£50,689	£57,815

Partners

Arthog Outreach
Bishop's Castle Town Council
Church Stretton School
Cleobury Mortimer Primary School
Cleobury Mortimer Social Club
Cleobury Mortimer Town Council
Craven Arms Mosque
Craven Arms Town Council
Craven Arms Youth Partnership
Hands Together, Ludlow
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)
Teme Leisure – Cleobury
Wesley's - Ludlow
Wild About Westhope

YOUNG PEOPLE!

Funders & contributors

Anonymous
Bishop's Castle Town Council
Cleobury Mortimer Town Council
Craven Arms Town Council
Craven Arms Youth Area Partnership
Euro Quality Foundation
Herefordshire Community Foundation
(*Teme Valley Youth Fund*)

Heritage Lottery Fund
Ludlow Town Council
National Lottery – Awards For All
Old Downton Lodge
Shropshire Hills National Landscape
Partnership
Shropshire County Council
Tesco's Stronger Starts Fund

South Shropshire Youth Forum

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