

Children, Youth and Families Review 2024 for Circuit AGM

“The new normal is no longer normal”

This is a quote from a research briefing paper undertaken by York St John and Liverpool Hope University on the effect of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Young People’s mental health. The post-pandemic future is likely to be marked with increased frequency of crises which are both global and local and take on many forms. One of the findings of the report is that the ‘social contract’ between young people and school has been broken. Attendance is lower in schools than ever seen before; I have recently completed a survey on my views on attendance which has been sent by my daughter’s school. It used to be the case that ‘schools knew best’ and everyone did their best to make sure their children were in school. Now parents have seen that there is a ‘different way’ and they are challenging the strict adherence to attendance. This is the social contract mentioned above. Reduced attendance is due to many and varied reasons, some can be viewed negatively but some are entirely understandable.

This is symptomatic of many of the social contracts that have broken down. The mistrust of institutions is higher than ever, particularly among young people. They only have to turn on the news (or look at their social media feeds!) to see seemingly endless crisis after crisis. Parents’ worries about the cost of living crisis are understandably, albeit inadvertently, being felt by the children too, which makes learning harder. Like with most issues we face today: it’s complicated. We have to rebuild the social contract with our young people and their families. Communities and churches have a part to play in that. Building relationships and listening to young people. Making sure they are heard.

It’s against this backdrop that the Children, Youth and Families Team will go into their strategy meeting in June. Throughout the year, we network with other children and youth workers across York, across the District and wider, we find common observations, we share solutions and work together. The team will also look locally to our own churches and groups, to understand how we can best support the young people, and their families and leaders, to strengthen relationships and help them to have ‘life in all its fullness’. The work is rich and varied and we look forward to seeing what God has in store for the next year.

Please see below for a summary of the ministry undertaken with young people and families over the past year.

Lorraine Jones





This small, but beautiful group is lots of fun, aimed at primary aged children. We have food, craft or baking, a Bible story and chat and often a song (including 'I want a hippopotamus for Christmas' which is now a firm favourite, even though everyone is then singing it all weekend!).

There are a dozen young people who regularly come along to our fortnightly (ish) youth group which is held at the Hub. They have bonded well and support each other. It's a space to relax and chill over pizza (the argument is ongoing as to whether pineapple belongs on a pizza). There'll be games, discussions, quizzes, crafts, activities (including tyre painting!). This year we have also explored how they currently use digital media, with a view to thinking about how we can use it in our faith journey. We also ran membership classes, which everyone engaged with. It was a special moment when 4 of our group decided to become members of their Churches. Thanks to Louisa Taylor for walking alongside the young people and being an honorary member of the group for a while.



SOCIAL ACTION

We love to ensure that the young people can get their voices heard and to contribute to issues that are important to them. In November, they came to Viva la revolution at the hub. This was created for young people by young people, supported by the team. At the time of writing, Amy and Lorraine are ready for Pride - with rainbow activities planned, flags to wave and about 300 beautifully crocheted rainbows ready - each has a label on it saying 'You are loved', which the young people will hand out at Southlands Methodist as the parade goes past. Of course we can't forget the sleepout for the homeless, which Lidgett kindly hosted for us again. We raised over £3000 for homeless charities.



ONE XTRAS

There is chance, roughly once a quarter, for the families and young people to all get together. This year we went off to Epworth Rectory, iceskating, Hilda's heirs, and youth synod

CHURCH UPDATES

The team also go to individual churches to support them with ideas or activities. This year, the team has been involved with holiday clubs, playgroups, lego church, prayer spaces, Open the Book support, family support, intergenerational resources and more. If your church would like some inspiration or are thinking about working with young people or your communities, then do call us.

We organised and took part in First Aid Training and safeguarding training. The team knows the importance of staying up to date and get inspiration from other people. We attend Communities of Practice and children and youth networks. We also attended the 'Joined up' conference, 'Beyond Church' conference and went on the layworkers retreat.



RESIDENTIALS

We offer 2 opportunities for residentials – 3generate held at the NEC and coming up in July is the District Youth Residential at Carlton Lodge.

THANK YOU

The team would like to say a huge thank you to Victoria and Lois who have done so much of the 'behind the scenes' legwork and kept the team functioning! Lastly, we have to say a sad goodbye to Heather Lewis, as she returns to the challenges of a teaching role in the school she currently works. We will miss you Heather and wish you all the very best.

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