

Annual Village Meeting: Mears Ashby Youth Club Report, March 2019

In a nutshell

We currently have 32 youth club members, of whom 25 live in Mears Ashby. Typical attendance on a Friday is around 21, with 32 being our maximum to date.

Origins

The club opened on Friday 2nd March 2018.

The club now meets weekly, during school term time on Friday from 7-9pm.

The club has relied heavily on donations and would not have opened were it not for the support of the community. Particular thanks should go to the Town Estates Charity and the Parish Council whose donations allowed us to pay our 1st year of Public Liability insurance and first 6 months of Village Hall hire charges.

The Club only exists due to the support of the volunteers who run it. All the volunteers are unpaid and are typically either parents of children who attend or are members of the community who have kindly donated their time. Without these 15 people there would be no Youth Club.

The club has affiliated to the Northamptonshire Association of Youth Clubs (NAYC). For an annual fee of £48 we are provided with a range of support from applying for Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) checks (to ensure we comply with safeguarding legislation), to free activity evenings hosted by a youth worker at NAYC.

Developments

Our first year has seen numerous developments, all designed to enhance the provision available:

- Thanks to a donation from Pacesetter Sports we were able to buy a new table tennis table.
- The Mears Ashby Society have been generous in their support allowing us to use their sound system.
- On 6 evenings we have had Youth workers from NAYC attend to lead a range of activities from indoor archery to badge making.
- We have also organised 'one-off' events ourselves, a summer BBQ and a Halloween Disco.
- The Mears Ashby Sports Club have kindly agreed to allow us to hold Youth Club on the sports field during the warmer summer months.
- Since September 2018 we have started a process of trying to organise an evening out each half term for the Youth Club - so far we have taken the youngsters Roller Skating, Ice Skating and Bowling.
- We have been fortunate to have the support of Village Life - enabling us to advertise the Youth Club and its activities to encourage both parents & youngsters to join the Club and get involved.
- 3 of our 'older' members have been away for a residential training weekend to learn how to become 'Young Leaders.'

Challenges

Our biggest challenge has been financial. Our aim has never been to make the Youth Club a profit making organisation - we want to cover our costs and, where possible, not pass on charges to our members.

Our weekly charge of £2 does not cover all our costs.

Initially the generous donations of equipment and money supported our start-up and first 6 months, however we have had to look to other funding to secure the future of the Youth Club.

We made an application to the National Lottery and were successful in securing £4,620. We also made a bid to the Wellingborough Council Community Small Grant fund and, again, were successful, securing the maximum of £500.

These two bids have allowed us to invest in some new equipment - a new sound system for example and to have a spending plan going forward to cover our costs, replace equipment as and when and subsidise some of the additional events we will offer.

This will ensure that we are able to operate through 2019.

Clearly funding is our number one issue and we will need to continue to bid for additional funding opportunities.

Our other major challenges going forward will be:

- a) Ensuring a varied programme of events for the members to maintain interest in the Youth Club.
- b) Training some of our older members so that they can become activity leaders, thus ensuring longevity of the Youth Club.
- c) Managing the disparate needs of a wide-range of ages who come to the Youth Club (from 8-16)
- d) Recruiting more adult volunteers - we currently have a healthy number of volunteers, however we need to recruit new volunteers every year to ensure the the club can still function effectively.