

BRINGING HOPE AND FOCUS
TO YOUTH & FAMILIES
OF SOUTH WIGHT



SWAY Charity Number: 1160139



ANNUAL REVIEW - 2023/2024
A Summary of Activities
and Achievements

INTRODUCTION

What a year it has been: some significant highs and some challenges. This Annual Review will aim to tell the story of our 10th year of operation as SWAY. We hope to celebrate this milestone in the Autumn of 2024, but more of that later. It is still at the heart of our vision to bring hope and focus to the youth and families of South Wight. We begin with our Chair's Report for the year, moving on to a summary of the year.

CHAIR'S REPORT **Jo Richards**

10 years ago in August 2014 saw SWAY registered as a charity. Founding trustees only thought in those days was to run the youth work that IWC were no longer providing. 10 years on, SWAY is so much more and that is due to our great supporters, volunteers and staff. Thank you so much for that support.

Our vision is still burning, still relevant and still needed.

As our profile grows so does our work. Straddling the area from Ventnor to Brook and the wide range of activities evidenced in this review means there are challenges with resources of all sorts, but most urgently, funding.

The rural beauty often disguises pockets of need that are not as highlighted as their counterparts in the urban environment and so the pressure is deemed less. This is often overlooked by funders and services and makes our work so important. Our impact is vital and so although we must access major grants, the ethos of the trustees is based around our faith that is our greatest guide, provider and inspiration.

This Annual Review gives a flavour of the tremendous imagination taken to programme all sorts of activities to keep young people and families connected and engaged. It is also a record of the achievements of all involved. This has been a thorough team effort from many people. A shuffle of staff saw Marie Willis leave us, but Olivia Stemmet, who was volunteering on her 1st year Moorlands training course, step up to a part time Youth Worker post. Lynne, our Youth and Families' Worker has continued her sterling work with families, but also taken the lead with the



River Project. Catherine, our Administrator, has been very busy too. Volunteers and Trustees alike have similarly stepped up to cover a lot of ground in the charity.

Together all have run a smooth operation over a challenging year. This is obvious from tremendous feedback we have received from schools and families. An update on another project, the 'Hub' is referred to later in this review.

Another year in which we are enormously grateful to the inspirational and energetic way our trustees, team and volunteers lead the work of SWAY. We thank all our supporters who encourage us all at SWAY. We look forward to the year ahead to see our young people grow in their potential, families become more resilient, and skills increase through the work. Everyone is valuable and essential, and we express our thanks to them for all their enthusiasm and endeavours.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Our aims and objectives remain unchanged from previous years: to serve the young people and families of South Wight through activities that engage and grow them as individuals, as well as bringing them together to enjoy healthy relationships in a positive environment. Although we remain at the beginning of our partnership with the churches in Ventnor, we include the area of Ventnor and Upper Ventnor as part of our area of work.

We aim to offer practical support and advice where requested. Our Christian values and mindset remain core to our approach in all things, though usually implicit and understated. We seek to meet young people and their families where they are, helping them to explore their potential and become more independent and responsible. This is done through conversation, activities and mentoring.

Always, we aim 'to provide hope and focus to the youth and families of South Wight' and help them towards stronger community engagement and individual resilience.



SUMMARY OF THE YEAR

Let's now retrace our steps to last summer as we tell the tale of 2023-2024. As usual, what follows is an overview of the year, which allows you to see how busy we have been. Firstly, here is a list of our main groups throughout the year.

Time	Location/Area	Activity/Event	Numbers
Monday during term time 6:30pm-8pm	Niton	Rock Solid	12
Thursday during term time 7pm-8.30pm	Niton	Roots	18
Wednesday term time 6.30pm-8.00pm	Upper Ventnor	Ventnor Youth Group	15
Monday lunchtime during term time	St Francis, Ventnor	River Project	4
Tuesday lunchtime during term time	St Francis, Ventnor	River Project	4
Wednesday lunchtime during term time	Brighstone Primary	River Project	4
Thursday lunchtime during term time	Niton Primary	River Project	4
Saturday evenings	On line - zoom	Cook along on zoom	14 average
Friday evenings	Various venues	Young Leaders' Group	Between 19 and 14

Secondly, here is a list of our main groups throughout the year.

Time	Location/Area	Activity/Event	Numbers
22nd September	Pizza Hut evening	Young Leaders Meal	14
13th October	Pizza Hut evening	River Project Meal	13
20th October	Westbrook Centre evening	Young Leaders' Training	9
24th October	Laser Quest	All groups eligible	13
19th November	Harbour Church Christmas themed service	Young Leaders	11
3rd December	Ice skating Portsmouth	River Project	11
9th and 10th December	Brighstone Christmas Tree Festival	Car Parking and Stars of Wonder	10
16th December	Zoom Cooking	Spanish Omelette	6
6th January	Zoom Cooking	Chicken Korma	10
20th January	Zoom Cooking	Chicken and Chorizo Paella	13
3rd February	Zoom Cooking	Sausage, Leek and Apple Pie	15
3rd February	Bethany Church, Newport	YFC Catalyst Years 8+	9
5th February	Portsmouth	Harbour Church Years 8+	10
9th February	Snacks and Ladders	River Project	13
12th February	Swimming at West Wight	All eligible	10
13th February	Pickleball at West Wight and Pancakes in Brighstone	All eligible	9

17th February	Zoom Cooking	Sweet and Sour Stir Fry and Noodles	14
2nd March	Zoom Cooking	Veggie Risotto	12
16th March	Zoom Cooking	Macaroni Cheese	16
17th March	Harbour Church visit on leadership	Young Leaders	7
11th April	Corf - Kayaking	All eligible	15
31st May to 2nd June	Corf Camp	All eligible	34 young people plus 14 adults
15th June	Shorwell Summer Fair	All eligible	8 young people and 5 adults
28th June	Summer Night Walk from Freshwater to Carisbrooke	All eligible	18
7th July	Disc Golf	River Project	3
11th July	Cricket	Roots and Rock Solid	16
15th July	Disc Golf	Roots and Rock Solid	11
22nd July	Headhunters	All eligible	18 young people and 6 adults
30th July	Young Leaders' Celebration on Compton Beach	Young Leaders	15 and 5 adults
30th July	Naval Ship Trip	All eligible	7 young people and 5 adults
1st August	Crabbing	All eligible	6 young people and 2 adults
6th August	Bell ringing	All eligible	10 young people and 3 adults
3rd August	Chale Show	Helping out: car parking & refreshments tent	9 young people and 4 adults
8th to 13th August	Lakes Residential	Year 6 upwards	25 young people and 7 adults

Given that we have been depleted in personnel this year for a variety of reasons beyond our control, this table shows that SWAY have been very active and busy across all age groups. Of course, what this does not show is the work that has gone on in 1-1's with young people, meetings with families and support given to families, largely by Lynne.

ROCK SOLID - Olivia

Rock Solid is for young people aged 10 to 12 years with attendance ranging from 5 and 13 each week. It has been great to be able to help lead Rock Solid with adult volunteers and young leaders. We run sessions mostly with ball games and very active games such as dodgeball and Ian's game because these are what the young people prefer. We then have a themed discussion towards the end. In some of the sessions we have enjoyed board game nights, youth nights and gone to the rec and windy corner in Niton to play wide-games such as manhunt. These are generally, fun and energetic evenings, for the young people to let off steam and get together.

ROOTS

Roots is a term time youth group for young people aged from 12 to 18 years. There are high energy games, team building challenges, special events such as 'code breaking' and cricket coaching, besides mocktails, hot chocolates and chilled pool and table tennis evenings. Generally, we have 15 young people attending, but some evenings can see 24 young people enjoying this sociable youth group.

THE RIVER PROJECT

We have been running the River Project for 2 years now. This year we had 2 groups at St Francis, 1 at Niton and 1 at Brighstone, with four Year 6 children in each group, so that meant 16 children involved in this inspiring project. Each week a team of SWAY leaders meet with the children over lunchtime to share their lunch, talk about various issues to do with self-confidence, self-esteem and social relationships. Over the year, as can be seen in the above table, we bring these groups together for some fun and social occasions.

The feedback we have received from the schools and parents has been very positive: the children have shown greater confidence and engagement as the year has worn on. The fact that 7 of our River Project children joined us in the Lake District tells its own story. We are looking for funding to continue this important aspect of our work.

THE LAKES TRIP

Once more back to St John's in the Vale for our Summer Residential between 8th to the 13th August. With 25 eager young people, 3 young leaders (Olivia, Holly and Jacob) and 4 more senior (to put it politely) leaders (Peter J, Peter Taylor, Archie McGhie and Dave Stewart), we arrived in drizzly rain and made ourselves at home at the Centre.

As always, we were fed well by our ever-reliable cook, Pete. Cooked

breakfasts every morning, except for an ample supply of pancakes on Day 4, was much appreciated by all.

We focused on Abraham and his journey to faith and trust in God in our morning and evening thoughts for the day. We were privileged to hear one story told in a thick Scottish accent by Archie, with a Rabbinic grace for the meal afterwards.

The weather, after that first night, was very good. We enjoyed a bracing climb up Castle Crag on Day 1 and an exciting and exhausting activity day on Day 2, which consisted of giant paddle boarding in the morning and ghyll scrambling in the afternoon. Needless to say, there was chaos on the water as leaders were thrown unceremoniously into the waters of Derwentwater from our paddle boards.

On Day 3 the group took on Haystacks, the resting place of Alfred Wainwright's ashes, in glorious sunshine. There were wonderful views from the top and lunch was well earned here. By Day 4 many of the young people were flagging and so a gentle amble around Ambleside was followed by a short 4km walk into Grasmere along the Coffin Trail. Some of the group queued patiently to buy the world renowned Grasmere Gingerbread to take home as presents (or eat on the minibuses).

A tasty BBQ above the Centre and then fire with marshmallows was a great end to the trip and well deserved. Awards were presented. The tidiest room competition was won by Toby, Nico and Fraser for their immaculate room. The best person of the trip was jointly won by Pete the cook and Alfie, his reliable assistant for cooking breakfasts in the mornings.



The evening light during that last evening over Blencathra was stunning in its clarity. However, that was overshadowed by events that occurred far later in the evening. Whilst the drivers went to bed at a sensible hour, Olivia, Holly and Jacob stayed up with the young people to view the Perseid meteor shower after midnight. As it turned out, they got far more than they were expecting, as a glorious instance of the Northern Lights greeted them just before midnight. What a climax for a great Summer Residential! I feel sure the young people came back to the Isle of Wight sensing that they had a very rewarding experience.

We very much appreciated our new members of the team, Archie and Dave. They were of enormous benefit to the trip. It was quite an eye-opener to both of them, in what we do. They felt the young people thrived on the responsibility we gave them: in helping in the kitchen, serving meals, being responsible for their rooms and equipment, collecting wood for the BBQ and being responsible for themselves in an unfamiliar town. It was good to be reminded of these things from two leaders who had not been with us before.

NEWS FROM THE TEAM

FIRST YEAR AT MOORLANDS COLLEGE - Olivia

I have completed my first year at Moorlands studying Theology and Youth Work. It has been a great year and I have learnt so much through studying and through working with SWAY. I have looked at different ways to apply theology to youth work and have learnt lots about the bible that I didn't know before, especially about the history, which I have found very interesting. Through working with SWAY, I have really enjoyed taking on more responsibility with youth groups and helping with the residential. I am really grateful for this opportunity.



OUR TRUSTY ADMINISTRATOR - Catherine's View

Communication is my main role in SWAY. That means keeping contact with over 120 families so that all parents and young people currently registered, know the activities we have to offer. SWAY's activities programme has a wide variety of events to appeal to all ages from termly youth groups, a young leaders programme, winter Zoom cooking, a mainland residential trip, volunteering in the community to outward bound and sporting activities, socials and crafts. We are regularly having new families join SWAY in the South Wight, which is usually through young people's friends and through our links with schools. The regular Updates enable us to let our further 130 supporters and sponsors know how donations and grants are used to provide for our young people and families.

Currently, I am looking at how we can encourage feedback from our mentoring River Project, Youth Groups and events such as Corf Camp and the mainland residential trip. This feedback is crucial in improving our provision of activities, so we continue to engage the young people and highlight where we need to establish new ventures to connect with and support the community, such as building the Community Hub for a central safe meeting place and developing youth provision in Ventnor.

I'm enjoying my role as an Administrator and volunteer, especially when I meet the young people at the events and see how each person has flourished over the years; gaining in confidence and learning skills for life.



LYNNE'S PARTING COMMENTS

I have mixed feelings about leaving SWAY. Sadness at leaving all those I've worked with, but also encouraged and excited for SWAY with the new team they have and the prospect of the hub now moving forwards.

It has been a time of growth and development for me and I'm excited, but a little apprehensive, for my next step; working with children who aren't in school, doing some PA work and hopefully more counselling.

TREASURER'S OUTLOOK - Andrew Gardner

The past year has been more challenging than usual because there have been fewer resources available to make applications for external funding, through the usual grants. As a consequence, the funding gap forecast at the beginning of the year has been largely unfilled. This will leave the year with a deficit overall, which means that reserves from previous years have been used. New funding is now being sought for next year, so that the expected total operational cost of over £110,000 can be fully funded without the need to rely on past reserves. In the meantime, we continue to rely on our faithful and generous regular supporters, for whom we are most grateful.

It appears that SWAY is now very close to making the Community Hub project a reality, with all the necessary funding pledged, committed or made available. It is expected that the construction and, once the building is open, the operation of the Community Hub will be financially independent of the youthwork budget and funds.

THE COMMUNITY HUB - Richard Webb

We reported on the Community Hub Project in last year's Annual Review. During this year we have made significant progress, the key points of which are: that we have purchased the land on which to build the Hub; we have received planning permission for the revised design; we have completed the fund-raising of £650k; we have appointed a contractor; and finally, we have started building the week beginning the 9th September 2024.

The main features of the Hub are a multi use hall, a café, a top-up shop, a meeting room and an office. It will provide a much-needed range of facilities, not just for Chale but for the wider area of South Wight. One exciting possibility is that the Café will provide supported employment opportunities for young people who would find it difficult to go directly into mainstream employment.

We aim to make the Hub a location where people who find it difficult to travel into Newport for support services to access the support they need, by holding sessions at the Hub.

Now that we have set the construction in motion, we will focus on recruiting staff who will help bring the building to life, starting with a Development Manager.

CHANGES IN STAFFING

Over the year we have seen quite a lot of change in our team. Marie left us in December after 15 months working with us. She gave a great deal of impetus to our River Project, for which we remain grateful. She stepped into the work of SWAY at a critical time and served us well. Olivia subsequently increased her hours after Marie left, along with continuing her College course. With Andy having to take some time out during the year, Olivia and others have stepped up to fill in the gaps. It is not without note that Trustees have stepped in to cover areas where there was work to be done. After managing the families' work with enthusiasm for the last 2 years, Lynne left us at the end of August for pastures new. We have appreciated her diligent commitment to the family work and also the River Project, which she has managed since Marie's departure.

As we begin September and a new year of work for SWAY, we begin with two new workers in Holly Garrett (part-time Youth Worker) and Kathryn Alvis (part-time Youth and Families' Worker). We will feature them in



the next Update in November, but for now we are delighted that they will have begun work with us by the time you read this Review. We are excited about this growth of the Team.

So, it has been a year of change, but the Team and Trustees have pulled together and we have seen some excellent events, activities and conversations.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

We commented last year in the Annual Review that it had been an eventful year and with some considerable challenges. Well, that could be said for this year, writ large! But as you can see, we have achieved a lot and continued to bring hope and focus to many young people and their families in the South Wight. Last year, we also looked forward to the realization of the Hub; it is with great thanks that we shall see the commencement of that vision as you have just read from Richard Webb in his section on the Hub. We look forward to that Hub becoming a centre of life and useful activity.

The financial challenges we face are considerable as we look for funding to sustain our operation in the next year or two. SWAY is 10 years old this Autumn and we plan to hold a celebration party at Northcourt, Shorwell in November, to start our year of fundraising for SWAY. We aim to raise the cost of a full-time youth worker for 2 years in this coming year; which amounts to £50 000. We have all sorts of exciting ideas about how we might do that; in fact, 10 ideas to match each of the years the charity has been operating. This is ambitious, we recognize that, but we need to be, if we are to find the funding required to keep going.

As ever, we remain grateful to you and to God for all your support and interest in our work over this last year. Please continue to pray and support us for the coming year and thank you for taking the time to read this Review.



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