A GUIDE TO STARTING A YOUTH CLUB
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**Supporting Information**

A series of information sheets outlining some of the key tasks which you will need to Start your Youth Club are available on the Malvern Hills District Council web page: [www.malvernhills.gov.uk/youthclubinfo](http://www.malvernhills.gov.uk/youthclubinfo)

| INFORMATION SHEET 1 | Drawing up a Constitution |
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Malvern Hills District Council would like to thank Dag Smith, Malvern Hills Community Safety Partnership, Worcestershire Council for Voluntary Youth Services and Worcestershire County Council for their help and support in producing this guide.
Why Start a Youth Club?

Where do the young people go in your area after school?

Do they hang around outside shops, sit around in the park or play in the street? It could be that your community isn’t providing enough stimulation and activities for your children.

And if you think that, imagine being a 14-year-old who has nowhere to hang out with their friends after school.

Most youth clubs start with the ambition of trying to keep young people off the streets, but youth clubs can be so much more than that. It’s a place where people can be themselves, learn new skills, meet new people and have fun!

In many ways, getting your youth club off the ground is the easy bit; keeping it going is where the hard work comes in. This guide has been designed to give you some ideas and inspiration and to keep you on track.

Good luck!
What is a youth club?

A youth club is a safe, secure and alcohol free place where young people can relax and socialise.

Different people will come for different reasons:

- To enjoy other people’s company
- To hang out somewhere warm
- To meet their mates
- To participate in activities
- To use computers and other facilities
- To get out of the house and spend time with other young people.

Youth clubs come in all shapes and sizes and there is no set formula. The most important thing about a youth club is that it is set up by young people for young people with adult support. Young people should be involved in the planning, researching, decision making, fundraising and running of a club; empowering young people and giving them responsibility creates a sense of ownership and commitment.
STEP 1

Does anyone want a youth club?

The first step in setting up a youth club is the most important one; namely finding out if anybody wants one. You need to talk to as many young people in your area as you can to see if they would use a club:

- What would they want to do there?
- Where should it be?
- When should it be open?
- How big should it be?
- What kind of activities would they take part in?

Young people are the heart and soul of youth clubs and are key to the development and so should be involved from the beginning: their views and opinions are essential to the development process. By asking young people what they want, you can be confident that your proposal has strong roots and that you are getting people on board to support you in the future. You also need to talk to other interested groups and organisations in your area. These might include other youth groups, local agencies that work with young people, the council, local schools and so on. You should find out what they think of your ideas, if there are things that you could do together or if they know any people that might be able to help you.

By doing thorough research at the very beginning of your project, you will build a youth club that will be successful and popular.
THINGS TO DO...

- Ask local young people and adults for their opinions on setting up a youth club.

- Involve young people in the research process by getting them to talk to their peers to find out who wants what.

- Learn from experience – speak to people who have done it before. There are other youth clubs out there, so why not ask them how they did it?

- Talk to the competition - who else in the area works with young people? Go to scout and guide groups, youth clubs or after school groups to find out what they think of your ideas.

- Let everyone know what you are planning to do. Get your plans into the local press; build a positive picture from the very beginning of the project.

- Keep potential supporters in the loop. Establish a good flow of information with them from the beginning. Speak to schools, community groups, local councils, councillors and so on (see Section 3. Useful contacts and partner organisations).
Involving and empowering young people is the key to the success of a youth club. Ask them what they want. Get them to help you to do it.

By giving young people responsibility for decisions and by directly involving them in the planning and running of the club, you’ll create an environment in which they feel confident, secure and valued; there’ll be an atmosphere of ownership and trust.

There are various ways that young people can be directly involved, these include:

- **Research** e.g. talking to peers and other club users about the youth club and its aims and objectives.
- **Day-to-day running of the club.**
- **Design** – of the club itself or of promotional material.
- **Promotion and marketing** e.g. talking to peers and encouraging them to get involved.

Another crucial group that you will need to attract are volunteers. You will need proper adult supervision in order to open a youth club and then you will need plenty of volunteers to ensure that it stays open and that it can offer all the activities and programmes that you are planning. Think about how many and what type of volunteers you need and where you might find them. You also need to think about how you are going to look after them - volunteers must always be given very clear roles and responsibilities so that that they know what is expected of them. It is also important never to take their help for granted – remember to say thank you.
THINGS TO DO...

- Get together a small group of people (a steering group) at the very beginning of your planning process. This group will help you to involve other people and will be essential in providing the enthusiasm, ideas and support necessary to push the project forward.

- Don’t be afraid of lists. Write a simple action plan that details all the things you need to do.

- Do a SWOT (Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats) analysis to focus your thoughts – a chart that helps you to separate out all of the different things, good or bad, that could affect your club.
How are you going to manage the club?

This is one of the less exciting aspects of setting up a youth club, but it’s also one of the most important. Setting off on this big adventure without a management structure would be like building a house with bricks but no cement; everything might look good but the slightest upset will send it all tumbling down.

From the very early stages of planning, you need an organised group of people who will make decisions about setting up and running the club. As you move further into the adventure this group becomes more and more important when approaching funders, for example, or when building up partnerships with local agencies. You can choose the structure of your management committee.

Some youth clubs have a mixture of adults and young people on their committee, others have two management committees running side by side; one made up of adults, one made up of young people. The number of people involved also differs from small groups of about ten, right up to a large single group of twenty. You can choose the structure that fits best with your community and your plans.

Use the expertise and advice around you. Get local organisations and parents involved and, if you need them, local professionals such as surveyors, designers or lawyers. Remember that a certain level of adult support and involvement is essential and that the sooner everyone is engaged by the project the sooner you can all work together.
THINGS TO DO...

➢ Agree the shape of your management committee: how big do you want the group to be? How many adults should be invited? How often will you meet and, if you decide to have two separate groups, how will you exchange ideas and reach decisions?

➢ Give yourselves a name and make it official by agreeing and adopting the rules of the organisation – what are you going to do and how are you going to do it? This is called your constitution.

➢ Write another list! Give small groups from the management committee the responsibility for jobs detailed on your original action plan, for example fundraising or making contact with the local media.
Agreeing policies

Everyone involved in the youth club needs to know the boundaries within which it functions. Discussing and agreeing policies on issues that are important to the youth club users right at the beginning of the project, will contribute greatly to the smooth running of the club.

The management committee should take the lead on this job but it is very important to involve as many young people as possible in the process, as the policies will have a direct impact on their use and enjoyment of the club.

It is important to remember that there are no right or wrong answers and that your policies should not discourage potential users from attending. It is equally important to make sure that all of your policies are clearly communicated to and understood by all of the club’s users and supporters; this makes them easy for everyone to follow and enforce when necessary.

Examples of policy areas include:

- **Eligibility** – who is the youth club for? Remember to be as flexible as possible and to encourage access for those who wish to attend.

- **Opening hours** – members need to know when they can come and how long they can stay.

- **Use of facilities** – you may want to put time limits on the use of certain facilities such as computers or behaviour codes for certain areas such as the kitchen or quiet area.
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- **Alcohol** – youth clubs provide an alcohol-free environment in which young people can socialise; the consequences of breaching this code need to be agreed and clearly communicated.

- **Code of Conduct** – many clubs have agreed behaviour standards that members sign up to on joining or entering the premises, and that young people themselves monitor. Again, the consequences of breaking these standards need to be clear.

- **Legal policies** – these include Child Protection, Health & Safety and Equal Opportunities. Having clear written policies for each of these areas is a great help in ensuring that you meet all the legal requirements and is likely to be a prerequisite of many funding applications. It is important that you understand and follow current guidelines regarding Safeguarding (refer to Information Sheet 6).

**Example Policies**

“We want this to be a place that all people can come to and feel safe. We therefore aim to treat all visitors and members equally. Anybody found to be acting disrespectfully will be asked to leave the youth club.”

“The club will be open from 6pm-9pm every Wednesday for the enjoyment of all.”

“For the comfort of all, there will be no alcohol consumed at the youth club. Anyone found breaking these rules, will be asked to leave.”
THINGS TO DO...

- Discuss and agree the policy areas for your club. You might want to start with just two or three really important ones and then develop others over time.

- Communicate the policies clearly to everyone involved in the project. Some policies are worth displaying around the club so everyone remembers them!
Any club has to work hard to attract and keep its visitors: a youth club is no exception.

You need to make sure that people know where you are and what you are doing. The sooner you start doing this the better. Make use of the local media – they are always grateful for a good story and their coverage will reach a lot of interested people, including potential members, supporters and volunteers.

As we said at the beginning, people will have different motivations and reasons for visiting the club. Somebody may start coming for one reason and as they become more familiar with and involved in the club, they’ll keep coming for different ones. It is essential to keep up-to-date with members’ reasons for turning up: as their needs evolve so you too can develop the activities that the club offers.

First impressions count and promotion starts at the door. Ensure that new users feel welcome by making sure that they are greeted and shown around. Encourage some established members to do this as others will then take their lead.
THINGS TO DO...

- Contact the local media early on in your project plans. They are always very keen for a good story.
- Keep up-to-date with your members’ needs and, if appropriate and possible, develop the club to suit them.
- First impressions count – make the club a friendly place to walk into.
- Look at possible places to promote your club – notice boards, shop windows or lamp posts.
Training and skills

When you set up a youth club you’ll need to provide some people with specific training. You will also provide others with the opportunity to learn new and very useful lifelong skills.

Some of your volunteers may already have relevant training; for others you will need to provide training in youth worker skills and certification, drugs and alcohol awareness, child protection and health and safety: you may be able to secure funding for this. It’s also worth talking to other local youth groups to find out if they provide training themselves or if they would be interested in sharing costs.

The opportunities for young people to learn new skills in the context of the club are many and various.

These include getting involved in organising activities and events, day-to-day running of the club, assisting with fundraising and contributing to interior design and decoration. The benefits that they gain from this kind of involvement are both practical and personal; they include increased self confidence and improved communication skills.
THINGS TO DO...

- Prepare a list of training requirements for both staff and volunteers – include training that would be good to have but that is not absolutely essential.

- Talk to youth groups and agencies about training they can provide and about sharing training costs.

- Research possible funders.

- Think about the opportunities that you provide for young people to develop new skills as this is also an area that may attract funds.
Evaluation

Evaluation is an essential part of the life of your club for two reasons:

- It helps you to find out what you are doing well and what you could do better.
- It also provides you with interesting and sometimes essential information for funders and supporters.

Successful evaluation requires you to review the clear aims and objectives that you agreed early on in the project and assess your performance against them. You need to remind yourself of what you are trying to do before you can find out if you are doing it well.

You also need to be very clear about why you are carrying out any specific piece of evaluation. Who’s the information being gathered for and exactly what are you trying to find out? It’s essential that you are very specific about what you need to know – the answers that you get during evaluation are very dependent on the questions that you ask.
Measurements can be either:

- **Qualitative** (assessing the quality and value of achievements) e.g. users’ opinions of the club; how much fun the club is; whether the club is providing activities that they enjoy; what kind of opportunities they have had to learn new skills.

- **Quantitative** (counting the number and type of achievements) e.g. number of young people using the club, takings at the shop, events and activities provided and numbers attending.

Information can be collected by a variety of means e.g. using the regular records you keep as part of your business administration; via informal discussion and feedback; through workshop meetings that focus on a particular topic; through questionnaires or feedback forms about your facilities and service.

**It doesn’t have to be complicated**

– you can hold occasional informal meetings with young users and parents to evaluate some aspects of the club – in particular, practical issues like opening times and transport to the club. Evaluation is an essential part of keeping your youth club on track. It will help you to keep a sharp eye on where you’ve been so that you know where you’re going!
THINGS TO DO...

- Be clear about why you are carrying out the evaluation.
- Identify the best way of getting the information that you need. Don’t reinvent the wheel. Use regular records or feedback forms when appropriate.
- Keep records of any evaluation that you carry out as it is bound to come in useful in future funding discussion and applications.
### Useful contacts and partner organisations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation Name</th>
<th>Telephone number</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Why contact?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worcestershire Council for Voluntary Youth Services (WCVYS)</td>
<td>01905 795098</td>
<td><a href="http://www.wcvys.co.uk">www.wcvys.co.uk</a></td>
<td>Advice and support about setting up any voluntary provision for young people and networking (eg. CRB, insurance, training).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plug and Play</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.plugandplay.org.uk">www.plugandplay.org.uk</a></td>
<td>A what’s on website which is a free way of promoting events and activities to young people in Worcestershire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worcestershire County Council Children's Services Directorate</td>
<td>01905 763763</td>
<td><a href="http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk">www.worcestershire.gov.uk</a></td>
<td>Information on council services, funding, training, partner contacts and other support for children and young people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malvern Hills District Council Community Services Team</td>
<td>01684 862151</td>
<td><a href="http://www.malvernhills.gov.uk">www.malvernhills.gov.uk</a></td>
<td>Information on council services, funding, training, partner contacts and other support for children and young people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish or Town Council</td>
<td>Refer to contacts on website.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.malvernhills.gov.uk/parishcouncils">www.malvernhills.gov.uk/parishcouncils</a></td>
<td>Information on local facilities, organisations and local people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local schools</td>
<td>01905 763763</td>
<td><a href="http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/school-information/school-search.aspx">www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/school-information/school-search.aspx</a></td>
<td>Schools may be interested in working with you and promoting your group to their students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other local groups for young people eg. Young Farmers, guides, scouts and sports and arts clubs</td>
<td>Contact WCVYS for up to date details of local clubs: 01905 795098</td>
<td><a href="http://www.wcvys.co.uk">www.wcvys.co.uk</a></td>
<td>Contact your local uniformed, non-uniformed groups and other youth clubs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Mercia Police (Local Policing Team)</td>
<td>0300 3333000</td>
<td><a href="http://www.westmercia.police.uk">www.westmercia.police.uk</a></td>
<td>Local support and knowledge on policing your area.</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham Federation of Clubs for Young People</td>
<td>0121 4533531</td>
<td><a href="http://www.birminghamfed.co.uk">www.birminghamfed.co.uk</a></td>
<td>Opportunities for additional support and special offers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worcestershire Safeguarding Board</td>
<td>01905 752803</td>
<td><a href="http://www.worcestershiresafeguarding.org.uk">www.worcestershiresafeguarding.org.uk</a></td>
<td>Safeguarding queries, issues, support and training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Safety Partnership (Safe and Sound)</td>
<td>01905 722065</td>
<td><a href="http://www.southworcestershirecsp.co.uk">www.southworcestershirecsp.co.uk</a></td>
<td>Advice, information and mediation with issues that affect young people, specialising in youth disorder which is causing alarm and distress to the community. Support in planning, setting up and running a youth club and working with young people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worcestershire Rural Outreach Project (includes all areas of Malvern Hills district)</td>
<td>01905 779115</td>
<td><a href="http://www.droitwichcvs.org.uk">www.droitwichcvs.org.uk</a></td>
<td>Advice and support for small, rural voluntary and community groups on a range of issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community First</td>
<td>01684 312730</td>
<td><a href="http://www.comfirst.org.uk">www.comfirst.org.uk</a></td>
<td>Advice and information on best practice and support for local voluntary organisations. Practical advice on funding and other issues to support local initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malvern Hills Volunteering</td>
<td>07872 419646</td>
<td><a href="http://www.malvernhills.gov.uk/volunteering">www.malvernhills.gov.uk/volunteering</a></td>
<td>Advice and support for organisations who want to recruit volunteers and people who are looking for opportunities to volunteer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do It</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.do-it.org.uk">www.do-it.org.uk</a></td>
<td>A free website which enables organisations to publicise their volunteering opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK Youth</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.UKyouth.org.uk">www.UKyouth.org.uk</a></td>
<td>An online resource of resources and advice on youth work.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Funding Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation Name</th>
<th>Telephone number</th>
<th>Website</th>
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</table>
| Worcestershire County Council            | 01905 763763     | www.worcestershire.gov.uk                    | • Funds allocated by Councillors
• Commissioned funds
• Other funding sources                  |
| Malvern Hills District Council Councillors | 01684 862151     | www.malvernhills.gov.uk                      | • Funds allocated by Councillors
• Other funding sources                  |
| Parish or Town Council                   | Refer to Parish Council details on District Council website. | www.malvernhills.gov.uk/parishcouncils | • Locally allocated resources |
| Worcestershire Partnership Funding Desk  | 01905 728738     | www.worcestershirepartnership.org.uk         | • Funding support and advice
• Free online funding search facility
• Funding support toolkits               |
| Awards for All                          | 08454 102030     | www.awardsforall.org.uk                     | Awards for All is a lottery grants scheme funding small, local community-based projects in the UK. |
| The Elmley Foundation                    | 01363 877433     | www.elmley.org.uk                            | The Elmley Foundation is a local trust which funds projects which demonstrate the appreciation, knowledge and study of the arts and of artistic achievement in all their forms in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. |