

Review of 2019

From the Chairman

North Avenue Youth Centre (NAYC) continued to thrive throughout 2019, its first full year under a full-time Centre Manager. Our dedicated team of staff, volunteers and trustees is totally committed to offering ever greater opportunities to young people in the local area, many of whom are otherwise disadvantaged.

Under the enthusiastic leadership and guidance of our Centre Manager, Charlie Newton, more and more activities have been led by the young people themselves. Being able to determine what activities are offered and how, has encouraged commitment and teamwork from the young people, and provided opportunities for learning both from when things do not go as well as planned, as well as when they do.

NAYC's valuable role within the community has been recognised at a number of levels and we are grateful for the ongoing support of the Lord Lieutenant, Mrs Jennifer Tolhurst, past and present High Sheriffs and Mayors of Chelmsford, our local councillors, and the Chelmsford Centre Supporting Voluntary Action.

We are particularly proud to have been awarded the Essex Police Cup at the High Sheriff's Awards held at Hylands House in March 2020; this award recognises the value of our work in the community.

None of this would have been possible without the generous funding support we have received and for which we are so thankful.



Rev Ken Thom
Chairman NAYC

Objectives and activities at NAYC

The aim of the North Avenue Youth Centre (NAYC) is to help boys and girls (age 8-25) through their leisure time activities so to develop their physical, mental and spiritual capacities that they may grow to full maturity as individuals and as members of society, and that their conditions of life may be improved.

It does this by running a varied programme of out-of-school activities for young people from the local area, which is one of great social deprivation. NAYC has the use of purpose-built facilities



which include a sports hall, and an outside



all weather play space funded by a grant from Chelmsford County Council's Community Infrastructure Levy.

During 2019, NAYC further developed its programme of activities during the school holidays, often working in partnership with other agencies, as well as maintaining the four weekly sessions in term time.

During 2019 sessions were run by the Centre Manager, assisted by one paid youth support worker, a total of 7 volunteers over the year, 3 partnership workers from EBGC and EYS and a team of young leaders¹. NAYC remains indebted to Essex Boys and Girls Clubs (EBGC) and the Essex Youth Service for their help and support at so many levels – from help with running sessions, training and ongoing advice and ideas.

External training for the Youth Centre Manager, youth support worker and volunteers covered the areas of the sexual health of young people and their mental health. Our Youth Centre Manager carried out in-house training sessions with staff and volunteers refreshing on youth work approaches, reflective practice, managing challenging behaviour and child criminal exploitation. Our Centre Manger promotes reflective practice and continuing development, which is a key focus of sessional evaluations, ensuring our youth work is both responsive and developmental.

¹ Young leaders are those more experienced seniors who develop during their time at NAYC to the point where are ready to take on more responsibility within the sessions, particularly the junior session. We have one young person being developed to become an adult volunteer when they reach 18.

How NAYC is run

NAYC is a registered charity and is overseen by a Management Committee. The members of this Committee are the charity's trustees and are responsible for seeing that NAYC is run according to its constitution and in line with the requirements on charities. The Committee is chaired by the Rev Ken Thom; it is made up of representatives appointed by the United Reformed Church (URC) and the Essex Youth Trust, together with others appointed at the Annual General Meeting. The Committee is advised by the Safeguarding Officer of the URC's Eastern Synod and a representative from the Essex Youth Service.

The Management Committee continued to keep its risk management processes under review over the course of the year and looked in depth at the key risks it faces and ways in which they can be mitigated. These are principally related to the ongoing availability of suitable staff and volunteers, together with finding sources for sustainable funding.

As well as the Centre Manager and a part-time youth worker, NAYC employs someone to fill the combined role of part-time administrator and fundraiser. In late 2018 the responsibility for running and maintaining the premises was taken over by the North Avenue Christian Centre, with NAYC paying an agreed contribution for items such as energy costs, cleaning etc.

2019 Activities

Activities continued to be held on three evenings a week during term time:

Monday (5.30-6.30pm for those at senior school) – numbers attending this session grew substantially over the course of the year.

Wednesday (4-5.30pm for juniors aged 9-11 and 6-8pm for those at senior school) – this is usually the most popular night.

Friday (from 6-7.30pm for those at senior school)

Sessions are planned ahead of time, with different activities and informal learning objectives which are flexible through the week. They are also planned in response to previous sessions and the interests or identified needs of the young people; they are often structured around topical issues, sometimes relating to nationally recognised themes and other times focusing on the experiences of our young people.



The wide range of activities regularly on offer include various sports, craft and cooking, as well as music, games and discussion groups. These regular activities have been supplemented by several specifically themed activities and programmes over the year, such as:



- Gangs and Child Criminal Exploitation – ongoing preventative work, focused on awareness and education.
- Collaboration with Streetgames on Rail v You – looking at the risks of trespassing on railway lines.
- Try Life films – Try Life creates interactive films where young people can make decisions and learn about the impacts of these. So this was an opportunity to work with creators to develop characters, which are relevant and relatable to young people. We linked in with this to promote awareness around knife crime and child criminal exploitation.
- Focus on mental health – promoting positive discussion to minimise stigma, identify unhelpful coping strategies and form self-care strategies to maintain positive mental health. This included making self-care boxes like the one pictured here.



We have continued to include telephone calls, home visits and 1:1 support with young people and families, signposting and making referrals to other organisations as appropriate. Much of our work has focused on the conflict that young people experience in their communities, at school and online. We are faced regularly at the centre by behaviour which challenges and we actively promote strategies for positive conflict resolution. We do this through promoting clear and agreed boundaries in the centre as well as respect and trust. We also work with individuals, groups and parents to implement a variety of strategies to support young people to move beyond conflict. We have had great successes in this area, with young people and parents now approaching us asking for support. We regularly use sports to develop de-escalation skills and to provide opportunity for those in conflict to interact in agreed and safe ways, and use team building and project work to foster good will and trust.

Holiday Programme

During 2019 NAYC further developed its offering of activities during school holidays, first started in a limited way the previous year. This continued to be developed and refined over the course of the year in the light of what the young people most preferred. For instance, it became clear that activities on the regular days of Monday, Wednesday and Friday were better supported; the young people were reluctant to commit ahead; and even minimal cost tended to be prohibitive.

In the February half-term holiday the young people planned and implemented a fund-raising cake and craft sale. As well as raising over £80 towards NAYC funds, the young people learnt about how issues such as planning, commitment and following through are key to a project's success or failure.



Pizza making and film nights proved popular, as did many of the offsite trips (camping at Skreens Park, an adventure day at Layer Marney, ice-skating and a trip to the Police Museum).

Extended centre-based activities gave a greater opportunity for young people to talk to youth workers about issues they were facing with their peers or parents and enabled us to complete our graffiti wall planned by one of our Jack Petchey winners (see next page).



Other Trips and activities

Nineteen young people and their leaders enjoyed the Essex Adventure Weekend at



Stubbers outdoor activity centre in June. This was funded by a generous grant from Essex Youth Trust.



Two young people received Jack Petchey awards with one using theirs to fund a group trip to Adventure Island in Southend, and the other using theirs to bring in a professional graffiti artist so that a wall in the outside play space could be transformed.



A group of eight young people went to Maes Y Lade in Wales in November, to take part in EBGC's 80th birthday celebrations, planting 400 trees, hedgerows and a willow grove.

Five young people also attended the EBGC night exercise at Layer Marney. The year ended with a very successful inflatable assault course evening.



Presentation Evening

In June 2019 we again combined our Annual General Meeting with the NAYC presentation evening, when we were joined by representatives from several of our generous funders.



The Lord Lieutenant of Essex who was to have joined us, was unfortunately held up in traffic, but the Mayor of Chelmsford presented certificates to the young people to mark their achievements.

Funding NAYC

NAYC relies mainly on grant funding to operate. 2019 was a particularly successful year for us in terms of grants received. The income towards running the Centre came to over £62,000 (this was about £18,000 more than our income in 2018). Expenditure on running the Centre was nearly £52,000.

Once more we were grateful to Essex Youth Trust for funding of £16,000 towards our core costs. For additional funding our thanks go to Essex Community Foundation (ECF), URC Eastern Synod, Chelmsford City Council, Hilden Charitable Fund, Streetgames, Woodward Trust and the Col JD Sherwood Trust and Christ Church URC Chelmsford.

Grants totalling just over £3,000 in recognition of specific young people were received from the Jack Petchey Foundation, the ECF Chrysalis Fund and the Essex and Southend Sports Charitable Fund. We were also very fortunate that Chelmsford City Council awarded us a further grant from the Community Infrastructure Levy to be spent on capital projects – see below.

Community Infrastructure Levy grant 2019

The further grant from Chelmsford City Council totalling £14,500 has allowed us to have low energy replacement lighting installed in our sports hall and outside the Youth Centre to provide greater security. The remainder of the grant will provide: outside seating and equipment such as a shed, BBQ and vegetable troughs for the new garden/play area at the rear; comfy seating for the TV area; and additional games equipment.

Future plans

NAYC began 2020 with plans to build on all that had been established, particularly in terms of developing the holiday programme in the light of lessons learnt from the various activities in 2019. An additional session had been started. Called 'Have Your Say', this was to provide the young people with an opportunity to be part of the decision making and planning processes, as well as giving them the chance to voice their views and opinions. Plans were also underway to increase the opportunities for the young people to engage in 1-2-1 sessions with youth workers.

NAYC had successfully bid for funding for activities in British Science Week in March. These were designed to provide the opportunity for young people to learn about coding and programming using micro-bits and neo-pixels to create an outside sign for the centre.

Then, like all other activities considered 'non-essential', NAYC had to close its premises in mid-March to help prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus. However, NAYC continued in virtual form, mainly using the online platform Zoom to engage with young people at the usual three sessions a week. These focused on giving young people a space to talk and receive support, and allowed staff to ensure that the young people had accurate information about the virus and that they are able to understand what was happening, and why the restrictions had been put in place. There

were many conversations around young people's fears, disappointment at not sitting the exams they have worked hard to prepare for and the uncertainty and confusion around their future. We continued to develop what we were doing, learning with young people and being responsive to their needs and interests, in the same as we would have done through centre-based work.

Meanwhile plans continue to bid for funding to expand the opportunities which NAYC hopes to be able to offer in the summer holidays and beyond. On the governance front, the trustees have decided to seek the agreement of the members at a general meeting to apply to the Charity Commission to register NAYC as a Charitable Incorporated Institution with an updated constitution.