

EFYC Epping Forest Youth Council

In March 2010 Epping Forest Youth Council consulted with 340 young people from across the district, one of the main concerns raised was the lack of activities for young people to participate in. The young people said they were not aware of what was available to them and they wanted youth projects to clearly publicise what they provided.

In response to this, Epping Forest Youth Councillors mapped and researched the youth clubs and venues in the district and visited 12 youth projects over a three month period from July to September 2010.

The purpose of the visits was to anonymously review the clubs to assess the facilities and activities on offer to 11 – 18 years olds.

Mystery shopping findings:

1. The Box 4 ★★★★★ Star Award **134 High Street, Epping, Essex**

Overall The Box was found to be a great youth space for young people, as it offered a variety of services and expertise.
The atmosphere was friendly and welcoming.
The staff were friendly and helpful.
There was a variety of activities to do and a great place to hang out with friends.
Great location as it's on the High Street.
Colourful décor.

Suggested Improvements...

Display publicity about the centre and highlight the opening times.
(Especially during the summer holiday as one date when we turned up it was closed)
Website was not up to date; the address had not been updated.
Website at first can be confusing as there is a lot of information.
A suggestion box for the users could enable them to have a say in The Box.
Opening times could be later during the week (8pm).

2. The Deck 3 ★★★★★ Star Award **The Bridge, 29 Princes Road, Buckhurst Hill, Essex**

Overall The Deck was found to be a great place for young people, as it offered a variety of activities.
The atmosphere was friendly and welcoming.
The staff were friendly and helpful.
The venue was a nice place to meet friends and the décor was fun.

Suggested Improvements...

Need to promote the centre to get more young people there.
Promote the opening times, especially during the summer holiday.
Website was not well advertised and hard to find on the search engine.
A suggestion box for the users could enable them to have a say in The Deck.
To have a gender balance of staff on duty as there were no women working when we visited.

3. ignite 4 ★★★★★ Star Award

The ignite Centre, 201 High Road, Loughton, Essex

Overall ignite was found to be a great youth space for young people, as it offered a variety of activities and organised special events.
The atmosphere was friendly and welcoming.
The staff were friendly and helpful.
Great place to hang out with friends.
It is an energetic place with so much going on.
Well attended and lots of staff around to chat with.
Lots of space indoors and out.
Great location.
Good website.

Suggested Improvements...

To open all year round as there isn't much to do during school holidays.
Have a suggestion box for ideas.
More publicity in schools.

4. Limes Farm Youth Club 4 ★★★★★ Star Award

The Community Cabin, Limes Avenue, Chigwell, Essex

Overall Limes Farm Youth Club was found to be a great youth space for young people, as it offered a variety of activities and organised special events.
The atmosphere was friendly and welcoming.
The staff were friendly and helpful.
It was a great place to hang out with friends.
It was a cosy place.
Liked the wish list as everyone can contribute to what activities are organised.

Suggested Improvements...

Send publicity about the centre to the local schools, as we live locally and didn't know about the Limes Farm Youth Club.
Display the opening times.
Stay open during the school holidays as there isn't much to do.
No website.

5. Loughton Youth Centre 4 ★★★★★ Star Award

Loughton Centre for Young People, 106 Borders Lane, Loughton, Essex

Overall Loughton Youth Centre offered a variety of activities and organised special events during the summer programme.

The location is good as it is near a main road.
The summer programme was good as there is not much to do in the school holidays.
The staff were friendly and helpful.

Suggested Improvements...

Have leaflets to promote the youth centre.
Send publicity about the centre to the local schools, as we live locally and didn't know about the Loughton Youth Centre.
Display the opening times.
Open all year round as there isn't much to do.
Have a website and phone number.
Young people were smoking by the entrance; this can be intimidating for visitors.

6. New Images 4 ☆☆☆☆Star Award

Waltham Abbey Youth 2000, 154 Brooker Road, Waltham Abbey, Essex

Overall New Images was found to be a great place for young people to visit and take part in a wide range of activities and organised events.
The building has lots of space.
The staff were very friendly and helpful.
The atmosphere was friendly and welcoming.
There was information in the centre about local activities and events.
The two opening times are good as they suit the different age groups.
Unfortunately the location was remote and difficult to find as it had a small sign but it did not say it was a Youth Centre, as it is an industrial area the current sign could be a printing company.
It is an isolated area, the short cut across the fields is not recommended.
Good disabled access.

Suggested Improvements...

Bigger sign saying 'New Images Youth Centre.'
Leaflets to promote the youth centre, we live locally and did not know about it.
Send publicity about the centre to the local schools.
Open all year round as there is very little to do in this area.
Have a suggestion box for ideas.
Tidy up and paint the walls.
Get the website up and running as the opening page is very good.

7. Ongar Youth Centre 3 ☆☆☆Star Award

The Gables, Fyfield Road, Ongar, Essex

Overall Ongar Youth Centre offered a variety of activities and organised special events during the summer programme.
The location is good as it is near other facilities.
The summer programme was good as there is not much to do in the school holidays.
The staff were friendly and helpful.
Staff challenged the bad language being used.

Suggested Improvements...

Have leaflets to promote the Youth Centre.
Send publicity about the centre to the local schools.
Display the opening times.
Open all year round as there isn't much to do.
Have a website and phone number.
A suggestion box for the users could enable them to have a say in O.Y.C.

8. The Space 4 ★★★★★ Star Award

Loughton Youth Project, Loughton Library, Traps Hill, Loughton, Essex

Overall The Space was found to be a great place for young people, as it offered a variety of services, expertise, training and a radio station. The atmosphere was friendly and welcoming. The staff was friendly and helpful. The venue was colourful with lots of photographs of local young people. There was a variety of activities to do and a great place to hang out with friends. There was a suggestion box for young people. Opening times were great.

Suggested Improvements...

Display publicity about the centre and highlight the opening times.
Website was slow to download.
Website at first can be confusing as there is a lot of information.
Some publicity was out of date.
Need more staff to ensure this project continues to provide this unique and excellent service.

9. Theydon Youth 3 ★★☆☆ Star Award

Theydon Bois Community & Youth Centre, Loughton Lane, Theydon Bois, Essex

Overall Theydon Youth provided a great atmosphere for local young people and organised special events for local residents. The location was difficult to find but the new premises will be bigger and known to local residents. The staff were friendly and helpful. The opening times were good.

Suggested Improvements...

Display the opening times.
Open all year round as there isn't much to do locally.
Have a website and phone number.
Have a suggestion box for ideas.
.Need more activities for variety.

10. We Don't Do Bored (W.D.D.B.) 3 ☆☆☆ Star Award **Ninefields Community Hall, Ninefields Estate, Waltham Abbey, Essex**

Overall W.D.D.B. was found to be a nice safe place for local young people to hang out and take part in a wide range of activities and organised events.
The location was easy to find and well sign posted.
The Youth Club had great flyers and a link on the council's Website.
The staff were very friendly and helpful.
The atmosphere was friendly and welcoming.
There was a lack of information in the hall about local activities and events.
It was a shared building so they were not able to make it their own.
Open all year.

Suggested Improvements...

Information rack to promote activities and events in the local area.
Open earlier, after school when there is nothing to do.
Have a suggestion box for ideas.
Disabled toilet to accommodate young people with disabilities.

11. Youth Bus 3 ☆☆☆ Star Award **Sheering and Roydon locations**

Overall the Youth Bus is an excellent project as it can visit the villages where there are little or no facilities or activities for young people.
In Sheering the staff did not have the bus; they said they can spend more time with the young people if they use their cars.
They had organised sports activities that evening so the bus was not required.
The staff arrived late and the young people were waiting for them to arrive.
In Roydon the bus was parked in a car park and had lots of young people using it.
There was a good atmosphere.
The locations were difficult to find as we were not familiar with the villages.
There was no publicity on the web, or in the village to promote where the bus parks.
The staff were friendly and helpful.
The opening times were good.

Suggested Improvements...

Promote the route and times as young people would like to know when the bus is in their area.
A bus time table would be a good idea.
Open all year round as there isn't much to do locally.
Have a website with a Google map to highlight where the bus will be parked.
Have a suggestion box for ideas.
Need more activities for variety.
Be on time.

12. Youth Plus 5 ☆☆☆☆☆ Star Award

Ongar Youth Centre, The Gables, Fyfield Road, Ongar, Essex

Overall Youth Plus was found to be an excellent centre for young people with learning disabilities or no disabilities, to develop circles of friends and to access social activities in the community.

The group aims to support its members in creating and accessing social activities, in making friends and in forming peer groups.

It offers a variety of activities and weekend events.

The atmosphere was friendly and welcoming.

The project is run by volunteers, they were friendly and helpful.

There was a suggestion box for young people.

Opening times were great.

Had a good website.

Great location as close to other facilities and good parking.

Suggested Improvements...

Need a larger space for meetings.

**Epping Forest Youth Council
October 2010**