

Project Report for GirlzClub. February 2023.

Data –

We currently have seventeen Year 7 girls on our GirlzClub register. Out of those seventeen girls, fourteen - sixteen of them attend regularly every week. Twelve of them live on the Sandy Hill estate or roads that are just adjacent to the estate. The remaining six are from Aldershot, Farnham & at the very bottom of the Upper Hale Road. Alongside our Year 7 girls, we now also have four Young Leaders (Year 8, 10 and 11), three of which are from the Sandy Hill estate and regulars to the youth centre.

Report –

We ended 2022 with a really lovely Christmas party that all of our girls attended and enjoyed. They had all made, homemade secret Santa gifts (staff and volunteers included) which we gave out at the party. This was a lovely way to end our topic of 'kindness' and 'thinking of others'. We also held a wreath making workshop that was facilitated by a local lady. This was a great success, and all the girls went home with lovely Christmas wreaths. The girls all completed evaluation forms at the end of the year and I am very happy to say that 100% of them said that they had enjoyed GirlzClub that term, particularly the cooking and art activities. Lots of positive messages were added to the forms, some of which included, "It's so nice to have somewhere that I can hang out with my friends", "Now that I go to a different school from all my old friends, I really love having the chance to still meet up with them every Monday" and, "I feel listened to at GC and it is helping my confidence"

It has been a really positive start to 2023 with all the girls returning from the Christmas break excited about the new term. Our main focus this term is mental health and well-being. This topic has come about because of my own concerns and observations regarding the mental health and well-being of some of the girls that attend our group. I started to see a decline in their well-being towards the end of the year so started the first session back with a baseline assessment questionnaire on confidence and self-esteem. Reading through the questionnaires I was concerned to see that 85% said that they did not feel good about themselves or feel confident. 90% said they had trouble sleeping and 75% said they didn't feel positive about their future. All of the results really highlighted to me that there was a need for some work to be done on their mental health and well-being. We will be paying particular attention to how we can keep ourselves healthy, how we can look after our own mental health and that of others, how we can help our sleep routine, who we can turn to for support and how we can manage the challenges that we all face in life. We have started making our own wellness journals and will also be making some relaxation candles, sleep balm and mental health tool kits.

The girl's weekly feedback and evaluation journals continue to be a great source of help to me with regard to planning and reflection. They keep me informed about the things the girls enjoy and don't enjoy, what they would like to try/learn about and also about how they are feeling before and after the sessions. It is positive to see that all girls regularly enjoy the activities we offer, especially the art and the cooking and they always leave the sessions either feeling the same as when they arrived or happier.

Our four Young Leaders are really growing in confidence and proving to be a great success with the Year 7 girls. They help with the running of activities and have really started to get to know the younger year group and their individual needs. It is lovely watching their confidence and self-esteem grow and our two regular volunteer helpers, have also commented on how responsible they are becoming and how they have also seen a positive change in their behaviour and their confidence and self-esteem.

One of the Young Leaders is currently attending a specialist education provision in Guildford due to her behaviour at school. She is really struggling with this change so having GirlzClub on a Monday helps so much with her confidence and well-being. It gives her something positive and rewarding to focus on and she tells us every week about how much she enjoys coming to Youth Club. Our other Year 8 leader really used to struggle to interact with people, especially adults. However, since helping at GC she has become much more confident and actually sat and spoke to a visitor last week, telling her all about the things we do at GC. This is definitely something we would not have seen her do six months ago. As time goes on, I am hoping that our young leaders will start planning their own activities and taking ownership over their ideas.

Alongside our mental health and well-being work, we will continue with our weekly baking and art activities. One of our girls has a severe intolerance to gluten and will not attend any other after school club because of this. However, we have worked hard with her and her family and she now confidently attends GC and is the first to get in the kitchen and bake alongside her friends. She trusts us and knows we are taking every safety measure to ensure she does not come into any contact with anything that could make her ill.

We are also working on our contribution to the Farnham Literacy Festival, and we have two specialist nurses from the Surrey Park Clinic, coming in to give a talk on puberty, body changes and periods. The Men in Sheds project is booked in for May Half term and we are hoping to make a whole day of it, with the girls enjoying some time in the 'Space to Grow' garden after they have finished making their wooden planters. We are also looking forward to the warmer weather as a lot of our girls have shown a great interest in helping to do some work in our garden.

We are all very much looking forward to the term ahead.

J Goodhew
06/02/2023