

Senior GirlzClub Report – September 2023



BACKGROUND –

Senior GirlzClub runs every Monday (during term time) from 5pm till 7pm and is open to all young women from Year 8 to Year 11.

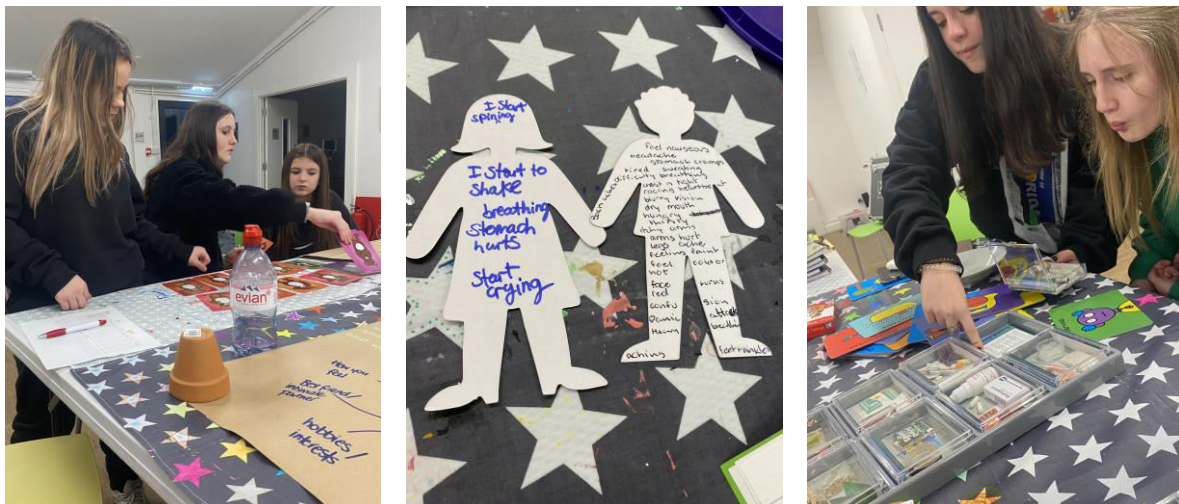
These sessions take place at Hale Youth Centre, which provides the girls with a safe, welcoming and non-judgemental space to come and meet their friends. Sessions are planned, organised and delivered by two youth workers (myself and my colleague, Jo). We have taken a lot of time to get to know the group and are very proud of the strong and trusting relationships we have built with them all.

STATS –

In total we engage regularly with thirteen girls. Out of those thirteen, ten live on the Sandy Hill estate, or roads adjacent to it. The remaining three girls live in Farnham and Aldershot. On average, a minimum of eight girls attend regularly each week, with the remaining girls attending approximately fortnightly. This is largely due to difficulty getting dropped off/picked up and homework constraints.

TOPICS WE HAVE COVERED –

Despite having access to and provided with, many different activities and resources, the girls usually prefer to sit with us and chat. They like the comfortable and informal setting, and it has provided us with many valuable opportunities to sit and have extensive, honest and open conversations with them. During our weekly chats and discussions, we have covered many topics, some of which include, how to look after our mental health and well-being, strategies we can use when we are struggling, careers and future plans, aspirations for the future, friendships and relationships, the dangers of drug, alcohol and vaping misuse, what a healthy relationship looks like, the dangers of social media and how we can keep ourselves safe. Most of our discussions are un-planned as we respond to the needs of the girls, what they want to discuss and what is affecting them at that moment of their life. The girls trust and respect us which shows in the way they feel safe and comfortable enough to open up and discuss these often very personal issues. These chats have been crucial to many of the girls as it has enabled us to support them through some difficult and personal challenges they have faced at school and home, provided us with opportunities to teach them self help techniques and encouraged them to reach out and ask for help, guidance and support.



Alongside our chats, the girls have also particularly enjoyed cooking their own food, playing football and other indoor and outdoor games and challenging us to pool tournaments.



Back in July this year, ten of the girls joined us for a really fun day out to Hayling Island. It poured with rain for most of the day, but this did not spoil their fun and enjoyment in any way at all. Behaviour was excellent, they were extremely polite and respectful to the public and very grateful to us adults who took them. For almost all of the girls, it was the first time they had ever had the opportunity to go out for the day with their friends and do something fun. They were an absolute pleasure to take out and it was so lovely to watch them having such a great time. It was such a success that we have actually booked another trip for them in October half term. This time we are taking them to Thorpe Park which they are extremely excited about.



CASE STUDY ONE –

Abi is sixteen years old, lives on the Sandy Hill estate and has been attending our youth centre since our early days. She attends regularly each week as well as coming to our other sessions on a Tuesday and Wednesday. In the beginning she presented as a withdrawn, and at times, confrontational young lady. She always chose not to engage with staff, instead preferring to sit away from the group. She would only chat to her friends, ignoring the other young people in the centre and was very hostile to anyone new that joined the group. If the

adults tried to engage her in any conversations she would always appear disinterested and disengaged. However, over the last six months in particular, we have seen a massive change in her behaviour and attitude. Through the hard work and perseverance of the staff we have built some really strong and trusting connections with her. She now happily chooses to engage with the adults (often seeking us out for a chat), asks us for our advice and opinions and turns to us for support and guidance. She shares her struggles with us and allows us to suggest strategies that she could try and also takes great pleasure in sharing her successes with us. She is far more welcoming and engaging with new people to the centre and will now chat to everyone, regardless of if they are in her friendship group or not. Abi is a great example of how offering a safe space and taking time to develop and nurture a healthy and trusting relationship can reap such beneficial and positive rewards.

CASE STUDY TWO –

Debbie is thirteen years old and another of our regulars to GirlzClub. She also lives on the Sandy Hill estate and attends all of the available sessions at the youth centre. She suffers with poor mental health, consistently struggles in school, has a high exclusion and truancy rate and has spent 3 months at a pupil referral unit in Guildford. Her behaviour in school has been described, at times, as extremely challenging and difficult to manage. However, when she comes to youth club, she is polite, well behaved and overall, a pleasure to work with. She is always very grateful and appreciative; she asks us for advice and support and listens when we try to offer guidance and encouragement. When I asked her (during our recent evaluation process) why she comes to youth club, she replied with the following comments, “you accept me for who I am. You listen to me and want to help. You don’t judge me or label me as the naughty one that is always going to get into trouble. I can tell that you like me, really like me”. For me personally, these comments completely sum up why youth workers and youth centre provisions are so valuable to young people. They give so many individuals a chance and the opportunity to thrive. Without the youth centre, Debbie wouldn’t have that safe environment. She wouldn’t have that caring and supportive group around here that believe in her and inspire her to never give up and to keep trying her hardest to be the best that she can be.

FINAL WORDS –

On a personal note, GirlzClub is one of my favourite sessions. It is a group where we can build trusting and meaningful relationships and really try to make a difference to the lives of the young women who attend. We have some amazing and incredible young women that attend each week and working with them is an absolute privilege.

Thank you for your continued support and enabling us to help the young women in this area to thrive and achieve.

Jo Goodhew
GirlzClub Lead Youth Worker
September 2023