

A Rural Youth Work Success Story

It is sometimes said that it is hard to do youth work in a rural setting. The Reverb Project in Wharfedale is facing the problems of success! Have we got enough space to run the groups? How can we staff the programmes we want to run?

The Reverb Youth Project is ecumenical and funded jointly by Anglicans and Methodists. For two and a half years it was staffed by a single youth worker and met in various locations in Upper Wharfedale around the Grassington area. When the youth worker left, a year ago, it was decided to fund two part-time workers giving the opportunity for mutual support and a wider range of skills. At that time the Methodist Church agreed to allow a redundant Chapel to be used as a permanent base for young people to meet. Threshfield Chapel is perfectly placed being visible and accessible at a road junction near the local high school.

At the moment there are four youth groups meeting on three nights. On Mondays, "Respect" for year 6 (top year junior age) with 24 regular members followed by "Active8" for year 7 children with 14 regular members. On alternate Wednesdays there is a Youth Emmaus group with 10 attending and on Fridays there is "Hyperactive" for those from age 12 with numbers averaging around 25.

In addition there are special activities and trips, a weekend away, and many of the older youths act as young leaders at the summer holiday club.

There are volunteers supporting the two part-time workers, but high quality youth work takes preparation and hard work outside the club meeting times and the project is wondering how to support the growing numbers of young people wanting to come and expand the programme so that it bears witness to the Christian ethos. There are limits to the physical capacity of the building and the energy capacity of the youth workers.

The Reverb Management Committee is made up of representatives from the local Congregational and Roman Catholic Churches as well as Methodists and Anglicans.

Where does the success of the Project come from? There is real financial and prayer support from local churches. There was vital foundation work and relationship building done by the original full-time worker but a key to the growth has been the appointment of two part-time colleagues who can work together and the provision of a permanent meeting place.