

The Arch Road Youth Club is run by the community-led registered charity Hersham Youth Trust. Established since 2002 in their new home at Arch Road, the Hersham Youth Trust mission statement is, "All equal, all different, all welcome". The doors are open a minimum of five nights a week and Saturday afternoons, including all through school holidays. The building is used a minimum of 83 hours a week.

Committed local open access youth support workers, mostly paid by the Trust, work in teams along with dedicated volunteers to provide a safe, warm and creative environment all year around. It's an incredible reflection on the value of the free drop-in youth club that many of the younger youth workers were originally young people who came to the club when younger themselves, and many of the current members' parents were former members. There are plenty of 'hang' out spaces – the music room and computer area, the pool and table tennis rooms and an outdoor area for sports.

Through the challenges of this year, the Youth Trust has continued to provide a valuable service to the young people of Hersham and the surrounding area. Since the first week of lockdown they established a partnership with Morrisons in Weybridge aimed at supporting those food-insecure. Over 60% of the population in the UK lack reliable access to sufficient quantity of affordable and nutritious food. The initiative began with sending out 1,000 Easter eggs, then through the summer goody bags of food and necessities specifically targeted at young people were sent out. Further initiatives are ongoing, including wrapping Christmas presents to give to families in need.

As the lockdown eased, the youth club was repainted and redecorated inside and the Youth Trust supported those on community unpaid work, who are doing meaningful work experience with maintenance on the outside. There are 18 on probation service and all 18 have given positive feedback on their experience, which makes the Youth Trust a flagship example.

In September, in line with the schools, the doors were reopen for youth support services once again, providing a safe and relaxing place for young people. Current key issues among the young people, relating to Covid 19 are anxiety, isolation, mental health and domestic abuse. Young people have been greatly affected by the events of this year, impacting their homes, school and social lives, affecting those with jobs and trying to manage the uncertainty. But the Hersham Youth Trust has provided stability and a familiar, reassuring 'business as normal' as much as possible. The Youth Trust are also doing remote work, by cooking meals at the club, and if young people are unable to make the sessions, then providing the ingredients to them with the recipe. Currently in this second lockdown invitation-only youth support services is happening as per government guidance.

But Covid-19 is currently not the biggest challenge to the Youth Trust. As similar to other registered charities, it is the challenge of short-term sustainability. Just before lockdown the Youth Trust held its 10-year residential weekend with trustees, youth workers, volunteers

and senior members with the aim to discuss and plan to support long-term sustainability – doing more for less money. However, with the imminent loss of Surrey’s long established skilled youth workers and income from a service-level agreement that supported core running costs, there is a hard task ahead, especially with the Arch Road Youth Club being the only remaining open in Elmbridge. But the 18-year-young Hershams Youth Trust remains positive about making sure the young people of Hershams and the surrounding area never come to a closed door.

A testament to this is the commitment from the numerous communities, partners and supporters to the valued work of the Hershams Youth Trust. Without their support, this innovative youth-led enterprise would not be possible.