

Comber Youth for Christ

Annual Report & Statement of Accounts

For the year to 31 December 2024

Comber Youth for Christ, 49 Bridge Street, Comber, Newtownards, Co. Down,
BT23 5AT Registered charity no. 103460 www.thenetyouthproject.org

Annual Report for the year ended December 2024

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Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2024.

The Directors of Comber Youth for Christ are pleased to submit their report and accounts for the period 01 January 2024 to 31 December 2024.

Comber Youth for Christ exists to engage young people, support them in their whole-person development and help them reach their full potential. The outworking of this focuses mainly within the town of Comber - however our stakeholders hail from surrounding towns and villages. Our 'whole-person' approach; seeks to identify areas of a young person's life that is impacted by their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs; leading to our provision being bespoke in nature, and journeying with young people through a range of conversations, discussion, learning and experiences that better their knowledge and helps each individual to make more positive and informed choices around challenges facing them in today's society. It is through these endeavours, we begin to see the growth and development of them as a person, and lead them to reaching their full potential.

Many young people disengage from youth provision because it can carry an unspoken expectation of immediate conformity — to rules, behaviours, or cultural norms that are imposed rather than learned over time. In response, our initial approach is to meet young people where they are, acknowledging their behaviour, language, and personal experiences, and offering them genuine acceptance. For some young people, this level of acceptance is unfamiliar, and for the trusted adults involved it can require significant time, patience, and emotional investment. It has long been our experience that a young person's need for belonging is fundamental; if they do not find acceptance within a healthy and positive community, it is likely they will seek it elsewhere, often in environments that are far less supportive or constructive.

During this time, the organisation has taken intentional steps to broaden its range of programmes, ensuring they respond not only to the needs of young people but also to the wider community — including families and individuals. We recognise that effectively supporting a young person often requires supporting those around them: parents, siblings, and carers.

Looking back over this past year, we have been encouraged by the growth and development across many areas of our work and have seen the positive impact of this project as it seeks to care for and show compassion to those within our community who are most in need.

Here is a summary of our work over the past twelve months:

PROGRAMMES

Comber Youth for Christ exists to help young people reach their full potential. We have a number of programmes which are designed specifically to offer a safe space where young people can engage in conversation, ask questions and develop a sense of community with their peers.

AFTERSCHOOL//JUNIORS//SENIORS: These drop in sessions offer a wide range of outputs - they are social in nature, creating a safe and welcoming space for peers to meet and enjoy all that the centre has to offer. It is also diversionary in its nature, offering a space for all young people as an alternative to gathering in areas synonymous with anti-social risk taking behaviour.

PRIMARY//SEVENS: Provides a space for all young people attending P7 in local primary schools, to explore themes that are important as they prepare for their transition year into post-primary school education. These themes include hopes and fears, identity, anxiety, mental health, confidence and resilience, friendships, opportunities to name a few. Primary Sevens group also creates space for future stakeholders to engage to help them find community and belonging with the organisation - offering positive adult role models and consistent pastoral support.

GROUPWORK: We work with a small group of young people who have a desire to engage and explore areas of personal and social development and understanding in order to make more informed choices in the outworking of everyday life. Such topics include, Identity, relationships, friendships, leadership, community, personal responsibility and navigating difficult aspects of societal life - dealing with conflict, reconciliation, taking responsibility; but are not limited to this, and can be identified by the young people in advance of sessions.

COUNSELLING SERVICE: This service seeks to provide free counselling to those in the community who can neither afford the private cost of counselling, nor can they afford to wait for a lengthy period of time for a GP counselling referral or service provider opening. This service is predominantly used by those aged 10-25 years of age, but not limited to this age range.

COMMUNITY ADVICE: We have partnered with Community Advice Bureau Ards and North Down, in our centre to ensure that members of our community can receive the best advice and support for a range of topics i.e. debt, benefits advice, employment rights. This session is offered at the same time as The Living Room, so that those attending either session can receive a variety of support.

RYAN CORKEN MEMORIAL FUND: Ryan was a former attendee of our provision, who sadly passed away as a result of a car accident. His parents had done a collection in lieu of flowers, and we used the collection to set up a fund to help individuals who have fallen on difficult times. This is utilised at throughout the year, but mostly at Christmas and helping families who are stakeholders.

ENGAGING LOCAL CHURCHES: Staff continue to keep in touch with local churches, sharing news, prayer requests and events. Members of local churches are also encouraged to volunteer at the Net.

ENGAGING LOCAL SCHOOLS: Staff continue to work closely with local primary and post primary schools offering a range of programmes and activities, and pastoral system to ensure that young people are supported when the opportunities arise. Some activities include assemblies, Scripture Union, Afterschool Clubs, Mentoring, Counselling and P7 Transition Programmes.

DETACHED WORK: This programme was started with the aim of making Comber a safer community for all its residents. A small team, made up of staff and volunteers, engage with young people in the community who gather in 5 areas known for attracting anti-social behaviour. The intention with the detached work is to engage young people in conversation, develop relationships and direct them to our centre provision. As Covid restrictions eased, detached work was a good way to re-connect with young people and engaging in them in conversation.

PRAYER NIGHTS: We offer a Monthly prayer space for people in our local community to come and gather and pray over the work of our organisation, or the needs in the wider community.

VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT

In every area of our provision, we seek to provide the best service to the young people we engage with; whether facilities, resources or programmes. In upholding this value, we also aim to offer the best that we can in terms of volunteer capacity.

We undertake the appropriate application process, provide training relevant to our context, and support volunteers through an induction process; to ensure our team of volunteers are comfortable and confident in their role.

We have been fortunate to maintain a good number of our volunteers, most of whom engage in between 1 or 2 sessions per week.

Financial Performance

Reference and Administrative Details

Charity Name

Comber Youth for Christ, also known as The Net.

Charity Number

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland, no. 103460

Principal Address

49 Bridge Street, Comber, Newtownards, County Down, BT23 5AT

Charity Trustees as of 31 December 2024

Mr Robert Dalzell

Mrs Judith Hoey

Mr Gordy Crozier

Mrs Alison Balzer

Miss Victoria Lloyd

Mrs. Anne Johnston

Mr Kevin Finlay

Mrs Roberta Watson

Mr Michael Gibson

Structure, Governance and Management

Governing Document and Constitution

Comber Youth for Christ is governed by its memorandum and articles last amended September 2019. Comber Youth for Christ is run by the board and its staff and, as of December 2024, we had 2 members of staff, and 9 board members.

Charities Trustee Selection and Management

Comber Youth for Christ is managed by the board of directors (charity trustees). Trustees are appointed by the board through nomination. In the year to December 2024 a total of 5 meetings took place. The meetings were held on 29th January, 8th April, 27th May, 3rd September and 27th October.

At each meeting a youth report was given by one of the members of staff, and any issues arising were raised by the chairman for discussion and input from the Board

The Annual Report and Statement of Accounts are approved by the trustees.

Objectives & Activities

To develop and deliver programmes to parents and carers in church and other community settings, addressing in particular teenage risk-taking behaviours through the application of parenting skills and strategies. To train and resource those working with young people, including teachers and youth workers, around the physical, emotional, physiological and spiritual development of young people and their relational and sexual well-being. To engage with political representatives, government departments and statutory bodies in the development and implementation of holistic policy with regards to Relationships and Sexuality Education and Sexual Health Promotion. To support the Church and wider faith 10 community in actively addressing issues pertaining to relationships and sexuality. To engage with media in relation to project activity and the promotion of our vision. To network and partner with individuals, agencies and churches, locally and internationally, in the pursuit of our vision.

Public Benefit Statement

The board of Comber Youth For Christ confirm that they have complied with their duty under section 17 (5) of the Charities Act 2011 to have regard to the charities Commission's guidance on public benefit and that the public benefit requirement has informed the activities of The Net in the year to December 2024.

Summary of Main Activities

Comber Youth for Christ offers the following as their core activities:

- Junior and Senior Drop in
- After School programme
- Primary//Sevens
- Group Work
- Detached work
- Mentoring
- Counselling
- Prayer meetings

Comber Youth for Christ offers these programmes to the community regardless of personal circumstances, race, gender and ability. We work in Comber, but people attend from the wider area. Our focus is centred upon the 'whole-person' approach; simply put, we are about the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual development of young people. This is achieved and is encapsulated by relationship; a respect of young people who are valued for who they are and accepted where they are at.

Approved and adopted November 2024 and signed on the board's behalf:

Kevin Finlay
Chairman