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Trustees Annual Report Financial Year End 31st March 2024

Purpose of Organisation

Ballysillan Youth For Christ has been established to work alongside local churches and community organisations to see children, young people and young adults in Ballysillan experience, share and be transformed by the love of God, supporting them in meeting their needs, improving their conditions of life and helping them reach their full potential; socially, spiritually, educationally, physically and emotionally.

Charitable Purposes

- The advancement of education
- The advancement of religion
- The advancement of citizenship or community development

Benefits to flow from purpose

The direct benefits which flow from this purpose include the availability of on going support, improved educational outcomes, improved emotional well being, increased confidence and self esteem, a greater desire to participate, increase in social skills, greater understanding and appreciation of difference and diversity, development of citizenship and leadership skills, promotion of healthier lifestyle including reducing damaging behaviour, learning new practical skills and increased spiritual development in the lives of local young people.

Beneficiaries & Overall figures

- We delivered 20 youth programmes for those aged 7-25, most engaging twice weekly
- We also ran a summer scheme, which included 2 summer camps, a week long kids club and football camp, plus a social action week
- We delivered 11 community programmes which included our counselling service, mums and tots, womens fitness, womens drop in, friendship group, general community liaison work and detached
- Finally, as a “drop in centre” our doors are ‘open’ and additional to our programmes and services we constantly have people, young and old, calling in to say hello, grab a chat, have a cuppa or get some advice.

This year the Bluehouses engaged with:

- 562 young people
- 399 young people through centre activities
- 206 males, 193 females
- 328 young people through regular weekly activities
- remaining 71 were young people engaged in summer activities or detached
- additional 163 were engaged through schools work (89 male, 74 female)
- 311 attended drop in, 66 participated in group work and 18 mentoring
- 11 young people took part in young leadership activities
- 255 young people participated in summer activities, 74 of these at football camp
- Delivered 93 sessions of engagement over July & August
- Our counsellor delivered 99 counselling sessions to 12 clients
- Our womens work engaged 78 women in total, 21 at fitness programmes and 47 at Mums and Tots and 32 at Drop In with an overlap of 22 women (42 babies and toddlers engaged)
- Our community liaison work supported 71 families
- Our Friendship Group engaged 6 senior women fortnightly
- Our 5 full time staff and part time “counsellor and family support worker” were supported by 4 part time staff, 1 full time volunteer and 39 volunteers and 11 young leaders

Through all our programmes we have 6 key differences that we are trying to achieve for young people:

- Enhanced personal capabilities
- Improved health and wellbeing
- Greater level of engagement in peer group and community
- Increased appreciation of difference and diversity
- Development of life and leadership skills
- Faith development

Equally, we recognise that these are not the only differences made in the lives of young people, their families and the local community, and we continue to be open to all aspects of how our work can help young people reach their potential through faith, hope and love.

Main Activities to further Purposes

Our programmes now have 3 delivery streams:

“BlueHouses Youth Development”

Relational youth work to enable people to journey with young people and enable them to reach their full potential
2023-24 (18): Football coaching, RE, 3 x drop in, Year 8-10 lads, Year 11/12 lads, Year 8 girls, Year 9/10 girls, Year 10 girls, Life skills group, Young leaders, mentoring, faith group, Youth Committee, Cross Community Girls, Homeless awareness group, Summer scheme

“Bluehouses Academy”

Skill based programmes // Term time 8-10 week courses
Work with small group of young people or 1-2-1 // Relational and practical
2023-24 (3): Music academy, Educational support, Joinery academy

“BlueHouses Community Development”

Relational work with the whole community, women, men, parents, families, journeying with them to enable each one of them to reach their full potential
2023-24 (11): Counselling, mums and tots, womens fitness, women's drop in, womens DIY, alpha, community liaison, friendship group, detached, one off community events (Fun Day, Carol Service), volunteer development

Breakdown of Programme Delivery

Programme Type	No. of sessions
Youth Work	484
Community Work	196
Total	680

Youth Work Session Breakdown	No. of sessions
Drop In	118
Group Work	124
Football Coaching	12
Schools	46
Detached	7
Educational Support	52

Mentoring	57
Additional Summer	68
Community Work Breakdown	
Womens Work	97
Counselling	99

Statistics

No. of young people involved in programmes	328
No. of males	148
No. of females	180
Age 4-8	31
Age 9-13	181
Age 14-18	113
Age 19-21	3

Programme	Male	Female	Total	Average
Junior Drop In	37	80	117	37
Intermediate Drop In	55	78	133	30
Senior Drop In	57	40	97	23

Note: there is some cross over of young people between programmes

Overview of the Year

Absolute roller coaster of a year, which really isn't any different to any other year in the life of the BlueHouses with what goes on in community life, but this one in particular was different. 2023 could be best described as tough and strange, but despite so many difficult situations we knew God was in control and in many ways was bringing order to chaos. Here are some areas to highlight:

"Our Grace"

The passing of our beautiful friend and full time volunteer Grace. As tough as the month (June 2023) was we need to remember it as one of celebration for a life that was lived so beautifully, loving and serving people and embracing a life in all of its fullness. Grace had developed incredible relationships with so many of our young people and parents over a period of 9 years. Hence the impact she had on people's life was huge, as was the impact of her passing on the community and the people who live within it. This became a period of celebration of her life, but also a key one of support, for leaders and volunteers to walk with young people, but also for young people to support each other. This also opened up many opportunities with regards to mental health and wellbeing.

Staff

The loss of 2 key male staff, Bean in October and Jamie in November. Both moving on to jobs really suited and right for them at this moment but obviously left a huge hole in our work. We adjusted the sails, and made a few tweaks. The small changes have been positive, ensuring quality over quantity, availability and connection, with space to be creative and explore.

Stephen joined the team in January (though had major surgery in March!). He has brought his youth, enthusiasm and heart for young people as well as his graphic design and media skills! A fantastic combo.

Sarahanne also had major surgery and 2 periods of being off work.

Numbers and Momentum shift

Despite the reduced staffing, our numbers have grown, particularly though our Junior and Intermediate Drop Ins. Intermediate drop in has brought a great bridge between junior and senior drop in with a much larger portion of young people now continuing on their relationship with the BlueHouses post P7.

Again, despite the staff disruptions we felt our programmes had a great momentum, particularly at the latter end of 2023 and beginning of 2024. We have felt there has been a shift in our youth work programmes, especially with our two older drop in nights. There is a greater sense of home, safety, control and calm, as small things that have been introduced have made a big difference. Align this with newer young people beginning to get a feel for the centre and the leaders, with relationships developing, we are beginning to see movements towards something that's even more special, built on the foundation of what has been.

In December Parties, Christmas dinners, celebrations, movie nights and an ice skating trip all provided that wraparound family feel which made this month so very special, seen no less in the Christmas dinner evening at Senior Drop In

Growth Areas

Girls Groups

2 very different groups in their make up but both flourishing in involvement in life skills and health and wellbeing projects. Team building work here has been key as the overall make up of the groups does not come from one natural friendship circle. Examples of group content includes first aid, music production, cookery classes, creative art as well as healthy body and minds projects.

Young Leaders

10 new young leaders began training at the beginning of the year and 3 continued on from the previous year, who have completed an OCN level one in youth work. Of the 10 who started the training 6 are now volunteering on a Monday night at our juniors session. 4 young people are currently working towards Level 2 youth leadership.

Young leader volunteer hours April to March = 288.5

An additional 8 young lads volunteered at our 5 day summer football camp

Life skills group

This was a group of young people who when they were to migrate from Juniors to Seniors that jump would have been too big, so for a period of years they had their own separate group. Here we have seen huge growth amongst young people with high levels of neurodiversity into a safe group who now integrate into senior drop in

Senior Boys

Growing a group of 15 year olds to meet regularly each week who are normally involved in Anti Social Behaviour. Not only have these lads attended drop in but got involved in some single identity work, music production, cookery classes as well as healthy body and minds projects, looking at areas of emotional and physical health, importantly drug and alcohol misuse and the importance of healthy decisions

Educational support

Releasing Louise to 1-2-1 and small group work. The level of educational poverty is massive

Ladies work

Includes a DIY club where the women are opening up about all aspects of life, drop in and Alpha group

Volunteers

Really stepped up when staffing was difficult as well as having an incredible residential in March

Challenges

Drugs

It is totally rife in this community. Crazy scales. Minimum of one dealer on each street. People you thought would never have gone down that path caught up in it all. We had a visit from the Dad of one of our former young people.

Youth Work

So much more harder now than ever before, as well as throwing the impact of Covid into the mix. The levels of trauma, the increased additional needs (neurodiversity), the numbers of different groups, social anxiety, generational dysfunction, social media etc. It is not an easy job at all.

Neurodiversity

So much more prevalent and how to adjust youth work to work individually with people as well as in a group setting.

Infrastructure

As the BlueHouses has grown exponentially over the past number of years, both in the physical size of the building as well as the front facing work, the strain on the back end of organisation is becoming greater. Adjusting systems, structures and roles is therefore vital for the health of the organisation and its staff.

Staffing

Links to both "Our Grace" - mentioned in celebrations as well as our two male youth workers moving on in October and December. Leaving a bigger strain on existing staff

Key examples of activities linked to charitable purposes

The advancement of religion

We are able to demonstrate our impact in this area by using the following key difference which we track each year:

Difference 6: Faith Development

Indicators

- Young people engaging in prayer
- Young people engaging in conversations about faith and exploring God's Word
- Young people choosing to follow Jesus

What difference has been made?

For many young people who attend the Bluehouses they have little to no contact with a local church, many come from families who don't express any faith, and the only real understanding they have of the Christian faith is through what they might learn in RE within school. That said, what we have observed over the years is that our young people are incredibly open and extremely curious. Faith and prayer underpin everything within the Bluehouses and our ethos permeates every programme, even though we may not always use our words to communicate this. An example of this faith in action can be seen no more in this quote, referencing a near tragic event at a bonfire in July 2021 - *"I totally believe there is a God, especially from what I witnessed on the 11th night. The fact that Marcus is still alive is a miracle and the fact that the BlueHouses is here, was open that night and had lots of people working shows me that God exists"* Jake, 15

That said, there are many opportunities each week for us to use both our words and our actions to share the message of the Gospel, and to engage young people in prayer, conversations about faith and exploring God's word, and even helping them to follow Jesus. Relationships with people who love Jesus and opportunities to experience the Kingdom are the two things that have had the most significant impact on our young people's faith development. Our team of incredibly committed staff and volunteers build long term meaningful relationships with young people, and as part of that have the opportunity to share their own stories. The message that speaks loudest however is that young people in our centre are loved and accepted, no matter where they come from or what they come with. Young people consistently describe the Bluehouses as *"their second home"*, *"the family I got to choose"*, *"people I*

can trust” and it is from that place that they are often most open to questions of faith. Through providing opportunities to experience worship, prayer, teaching and serving (to name but a few) young people receive an invitation to go on a journey of discovering who Jesus is and what a life with Him in it might look like.

Of the 562 young people we have engaged with, approximately 349 have experienced significant progress in terms of faith development. This figure includes 224 young people who are engaging in RE lessons on a weekly basis, and a significant number of our very committed regulars who attend drop in, a group work programme and are mentored. We have also observed some progress among another 44 young people involved in these programmes. The 169 young people who have yet to experience progress include 150 sporadic attenders and the additional 19 young people we connected with through summer activities, detached and football coaching.

At the Bluehouses we have learned from experience that it is wise not to underestimate the “small beginnings” and so it could be that young people find themselves arriving early for a programme and ending up in the prayer time with the leaders, or they find themselves having a chat with a volunteer about their faith, asking for prayer or praying for others in our prayer room.

At the other end of the scale we had 24 young people involved in Faith Exploration Group, 22 attending Summer Madness and 12 attending Summer Camp, asking deep life questions.

Sandwiched in between those 2 ends of the spectrum there might be 1000 tiny steps, formed out of conversations, or prayers, or experiencing the Holy Spirit, or doing something kind for their neighbour (who might just happen to live on the other side of the world) or asking a question, or listening to a volunteer on the ‘Hot Seat’, or listening to a worship song. Wherever young people are on the journey, we are committed to them, no matter what decision they reach in regard to faith.

Finally, another significant observation we have made this year is how young people might begin to grasp and live out elements of the Kingdom, even before they have made a commitment to following Jesus. The commitment of our young leaders reflect this on a weekly basis, and other acts of service has involved 60 young people involved in social action projects (Summer and Christmas), including the collection of 25 bags of rubbish and the delivery of 150 flower pots and 100 christmas cards and chocolates. Our “Helping Hands” Homeless outreach project, also involved 6 young people aged 16-18.

Examples and evidence of the difference being made

Young people engaging in prayer

"Coming to Bluehouses has helped me have more experience of prayer"

82.5% Yes

Prayer Room (Drop In)

Young people are engaging in prayer and conversations about faith, an average of 30 per week make use of our prayer room. Encouragingly we have young people who aren't just open to being prayed for, but are courageous enough to do the praying, whether that be for their friends or family, especially when they are sick or simply saying thank you to God for something.

Junior Drop In

- 10 girls in the prayer room engaging in the prayer activity - passing the ball and naming people/things they wanted to bring before God
- What can we pray about for Ballysillan? Friends & family, Neighbours, Older people, Thank God for Bluehouses, That everyone has a good time, Those that feel lonely

Intermediate Drop In

- KM in the prayer room, he hasn't prayed since primary school, "I'm just here to find out a bit more about prayer." went through graces book with him
- CW (first night) "how do I become a christian?" "how can I pray?"
- Grace....I asked if there was anything that the girls wanted to pray about and Marcy & Melrose both said Grace which was so lovely. Lynne lead us in prayer, causing Marcy to get upset. I sat with her and encouraged her to keep praying for Grace, to talk to God about how she is feeling as well as us, and that Grace is safe, she will be going to Jesus and that's the best place for anyone. Same with Charlotte - just

encouraging prayer and reminding them that Grace is safe with God - they nodded along and seemed to understand it. It will definitely lead to more conversations

RE Lessons

- Lovely to hear young people share their prayer requests for family, those who are sick, their new schools and pets.
- Young people had the opportunity to pray as we passed round the pencil. Amazing to hear lots of children pray out loud and the staff taking part too.

Alpha

- Residential: At the Alpha overnight Louise had a conversation with MT, CK, LB & JH. Talked about prayer and if they ever prayed. MT said he prays all the time about family and for Danko. Asked the lads what they wanted me to pray for them. JH straight away "pray for Ethan, he basically killing himself with drugs." Other lads shared about how upsetting it was watching their friend make poor choices and how they want to care for him but also he has hurt them. They sat in absolute silence as I prayed over their lives. They each thanked me after - really powerful time.
- Group sessions: As the weeks progressed the girls asked if Lydia would pray for them, and we closed our time in small group together in prayer over what the girls wanted.

Helping Hands

Opportunities and exposure for young people in praying for those sleeping on the streets.

- "Met a lady called Lauren who was very open and keen for us to pray for her. She said God has answered her prayers and she has been accepted for a house. She welcomed prayer and spoke openly about Jesus answering her prayers. We prayed for protection over her and that God would continue to provide for her life."

Young people engaging in conversations about faith and exploring God's Word

"Coming to Bluehouses has helped me be more open to conversations about God/Jesus/the Bible."

90% Yes

"Coming to Bluehouses has helped me understand more what it means to follow Jesus"

87.5% Yes

Prayer Room (Drop In)

To provide a flavour of our conversations this year, we have discussed: family, Health, forgiveness, thankfulness, exams, future, Jesus' death and resurrection, the christmas story, fears, sexuality, church, what is love?, who is your neighbour?, helping others, worship, legacy, the good shephard, the armour of God, hopes and dreams, and all the while wrestling with the doubts and questions that inevitably come up.

Senior Drop In

- How would you describe God? - 5 new boys (Carter's mates) experiencing the prayer room - I asked the same question of who God is. Some shared he SAVES PEOPLE, he's Dead on, he's Santa Clause. Carson shared his mum was a Christian and he has a fair understanding of what that means. Aaron shared openly very openly about who God is.

Hot Seat (Drop In)

- Hot seat questions, hearing stories from leaders and having small group time at the end to pray with young people - very special moments and encounters. There has been increased exposure and experience of prayer but also growing vulnerability and openness.
- Peter shared about his faith and journey. Encouraging our young people to consider Jesus. He also shared the importance of the true meaning of John 10:10 and what living to the full in Jesus looks like.
- Luke S getting to share with Reece about his journey with God. RF said that he did believe but he wasn't sure. The more Luke shared the more Reece was interested.
- Talking with Ethan about how God speaks to us. Luke shared so much about his journey and accepting Jesus. Was a powerful time and going deeper.

Grace

As Grace, our full time volunteer, lost her battle to cancer in June this opened up countless conversations in every aspect of our work, from mentoring, to group work to drop in, about life, death, God and faith.

Alpha

- 24 attended
- Themes explored: What's Life all About? Who is Jesus? Why did Jesus die? How can I have Faith? Prayer / Holy Spirit How Can I Resist Evil? How do I read the Bible? How does God Guide?

Summer Madness

- 22 young people attended
- Young people experience corporate worship for the first time
- They heard faith stories and testimonies that bring real, personal relevance to their lives
- Exposure creates curiosity and brings questions. Small groups allowed a safe and protected space to ask questions and be more open and vulnerable
- An opportunity to call out and encourage the God given gift and talents we see in each young person. Building young people up and connecting them to their creator.
- The boys might not have slept the first night but the early morning chat with MM & CK were gold. Big questions about how we got here, why do we exist etc.

Summer Camp

- 12 attended
- Similar to summer madness, incredible exposure and awesome opportunities in small groups
- Josh said, "my fear is that after i die I'm just floating about in nothingness" chance to explain the Christian hope with him - Mason said "that's what hell is like, that's what happens if we don't become Christians"

RE

- Lessons in 2 Primary Schools - 224 pupils involved
- creatively explored topics such as Old Testament characters, parables, Easter, Christmas, the Lords prayer, Jesus and the disciples. The questions from these children are amazing , and often mature and astute.

Summer Kids Club

- Week long attended by 60 kids
- Memory verses, worship, drama, quizzes, small groups, craft, big games

Boys Group

Hang out session essentially with Jamie, where at the end he took some time to share a little bit of his story and how he believes God has a plan for each of their lives. As I reflect and observe its very clear that this group know how much they are loved and cared for, especially through the time and effort by Jamie to make them feel important and valued. Simple really. But its this time, attention, availability and connection that provides the space to share about the deeper things in life, and to share our faith, which then carries so much more weight and significance for young people, when they see that love of God in action through simple acts of service and taking time to ensure people know they are important.

Young people choosing to follow Jesus

With regards to young people choosing to follow Jesus, we believe many young people believe in Jesus, but with regards to following him, no one this year made that clear decision to give their life to him.

Quotes

SDI

"Through the prayer room and leaders I have explored what it means to follow Jesus"

"Although I don't believe in jesus blue houses has made me understand from another perspective what it means to be a Christian"

NT - "Jesus died for our sins"

SW - "God, he knows the future"

Youth Committee

Quote from MT - "Bluehouses is a Christian centre, 'Gods got the whole world in his hands' - commenting on one of the bins with a world and hands on it.

JDI

BM "God makes me strong!"

IDI

KM in the prayer room, he hasn't prayed since primary school, "I'm just here to find out a bit more about prayer." went through graces book with him

CW (first night) "how do I become a christian?" "how can I pray?"

Abbie to Natalie "I just came back to ask you could you pray for me that I have a better week"

Maddison "josh what is your Jesus time?"

"It has helped me understand Jesus better"

"I'm an atheist"

"Grace helped me with all of these."

"Spending time with leaders in prayer room"

"Recently in blue houses i have been more curious about god and ive been asking questions and becoming more of god believer"

"Blue houses is all about fun and to follow Jesus's way"

"It has made me know a lot more about God and the Bible so can talk to leaders about it"

"I now go to church"

"I pray more"

"grace helped"

Year 11/12 Boys

"I believe there is something there, just not sure what it is" Carter

"I am a big bang theory guy" Cole

The advancement of citizenship or community development

We are able to demonstrate our impact in this area by using the following key difference which we track each year:

Difference 5: Development of Life and Leadership Skills

Indicators

- Quality of young people's participation in volunteering opportunities
- How young people describe their leadership ability
- Number of young people achieving new practical skills

What difference has been made?

As an area Ballysillan continues to be characterised by low aspirations, poor educational achievement and unemployment, and frequently young people can lack the confidence to lead or think they have little to contribute. For example, the North Belfast Constituency Report records that Belfast North had the lowest proportion of school leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs, and the lowest proportion of over 16s enrolled in higher education. Around 50% of people living in the area surrounding the Bluehouses have no or low level qualifications and Ballysillan is one of the most deprived areas in NI for education, skills and training, ranked 47/890 on the NI Multiple Deprivation Measure.

The development of young leaders has been something we have focused on increasingly over the past number of years to help young people learn, develop in confidence and skill, to make achievements they can be proud of, and

to give them an opportunity to invest in their own community. In terms of the 'distance travelled' we feel that the quality of experience for not only young leaders but young people in general has continued to improve this year.

As in previous years, we have focused on a 3 dimensional approach; to provide opportunities for young people to volunteer, to offer relevant training, and to give young people a voice in identifying their needs and how we as a centre can respond to those needs. This strategy has been underpinned by young people's ongoing involvement in other core programmes which has increased their self-esteem and subsequently their willingness to lead. We have also observed a knock on effect as these young people set an example to their peers, or those younger than them, who then grow in confidence, ask 'When can I be a young leader?' or simply want to be around them.

Over the past year we've observed 40 young people experience significant progress in terms of improved leadership skills (11 involved in young leaders programme, 6 at youth committee, 19 through summer football camp, 4 through helping hands). Many of these young leaders were committed to ensuring that our programmes were delivered to an exceptional standard.

Approximately 40 young people have started to experience progress, this includes those who are beginning to be developed through age appropriate opportunities within the programmes they attend. Young people demonstrating leadership by choosing to use their initiative and influence well has been a significant part of both group work and drop in.

It is difficult to place a number on those who are yet to experience progress in this area, as it is dependent on age, ability and willingness. For that reason, as in previous reports, we would distinguish between leadership and responsibility or ownership. Of those young people that we currently engage with there are probably a further 20 who could develop improved leadership skills in the future as they increase in maturity and experience, yet every young person we work with has the potential to develop new life skills and take on greater ownership or responsibility.

Examples and evidence of the difference being made

Quality of young people's participation in volunteering opportunities

"Coming to Bluehouses has helped me take part in volunteering opportunities."

82.5% Yes

Youth Committee

Giving young people a voice to identify their needs, as well as help us continually evaluate and reflect on how we can improve what we offer as a youth centre has continued to be a crucial part of how we operate, and this continued our newly formed Youth Committee in the BlueHouses.

- 6 young people were part of this group, aged 11-16 made of young people from our different programmes.
- Discussions included planning trips, programme activities, tuck shop and fundraising events.

Young Leaders

Our young people are incredibly willing to volunteer their time, which in turn develops their self-esteem and leadership skills, but also has a wider impact on the community as they inspire others. 3 important observations we have made about the quality of our young leaders' participation this year are:

- As young people have taken opportunities to lead it has challenged and changed their perceptions of themselves, showing them they are more capable, creative, or resilient than they realised.
- It has had a direct impact on the quality of other young people's participation, engaging marginalised young people or inspiring our juniors to step up.
- It challenges the 'status quo' of our area around education and achievement. Young people achieve more and so they dream more, which in turn impacts others.
- Other:
 - Growth in organising and leading activities, whether games in the hall, cookery or small challenges
 - Simple things like learning young peoples names and building relationships with them
 - BH in particular has taken more initiative, supporting individuals and encouraging young people
- 11 young people involved
- 4 working towards level 2 in youth leadership

- Number of young leader volunteer hours (Apr - Mar) = 288.5 Hours

Helping Hands Homeless

Helping Hands Homeless Project was run by Laura, one of our incredible part time staff members. The project involves 6 older young people and covered Homeless Awareness Outreach, including practical hands on support to those in Belfast. These guys served hot drinks, distributed food and health packs as well as sleeping bags and roll mats.

Football Camp

Football Camp also gave space for young people to get involved who maybe normally would not step up to serve or lead.

- 21 young people involved
- Set up and take down of equipment, registration & admin, taking scores, leading drills and competitions, building relationships with young people

Social Action Week

- 23 young people serving alongside 15 adults

Drop In (random)

During drop in sometimes the opportunity to lead and serve comes about.

Key example

- CR, one of our more troubled young people, helped serve in the kitchen at our Christmas Night and was phenomenal

Mums & Tots

We must also note that this project saw 5 local women from the community come on board and volunteer each week. These women also drew together a team of people to help at our community fun day in July which saw over 400 people attend. These women noted - "It is just brilliant helping out, knowing you can make a difference, and being part of bringing people together and growing community."

How young people describe their leadership ability

"Coming to Bluehouses has helped me build teamwork skills"

92.5 Yes

"Coming to Bluehouses has helped me build leadership skills"

77.5% Yes

Young Leaders

- Why do you want to be a young leader?
 - To get more experience
 - To make kids happy
 - To show young people a good role model
 - To work with children and get to know them
 - Because it is important to have a good relationship with your community
 - To give young people the experience I have had at bluehouses
 - To gain new skills and be able to work with kids and other people
- One thing you have learnt?
 - That I work well with kids
 - I've learnt new skills
 - I've learn lots of new names
 - That I want to continue working with children in the future as my career.

Junior Drop In

- Ally is helping as part of her tech placement. She is normally shy, reserved when it comes to new groups etc. So encouraging and refreshing to hear her speak positively about herself and give herself credit about what she had done

Helping Hands Homeless Project

- “it was a great night and that helping others on outreach makes you feel real good within yourself!”

Girls Group

- Coming to Bluehouses has helped me build teamwork skills - 80%
- Coming to Bluehouses has helped me build leadership skills - 60%

Number of young people achieving new practical skills

The development of new skills is something that we try to help every young person achieve as we help them to reach their potential.

"Coming to Bluehouses has helped me learn a new skill e.g. cookery, new sport, music, craft etc"

95% Yes

Note: full list of practical skills achieved in the centre is found in the appendix

A few examples of practical skills, which has grown to even greater scales this year, include:

Drop In

Drop in continues to be a place to learn baking, pool, table tennis, darts, craft and jewellery making. More so this year there have been specific projects over a longer period of time, such as cookery and joinery.

Recycle Project

- For many this was the first time they had held a tool let alone make a planter for their parent
- AD & DS stepping up and having a go using the electric sander. They were really anxious about using it but gave it a go which was significant
- NT, JP & LS got stuck in. LS was amazing with using the drill. JP made an effort with the sanding. NT tried using the drill and it didn't go in right. He was fab at the sanding. Good to see him stick at something even though it was tricky - shows development and learning

Music Project (Girls)

5 girls boys have participated in a course to write and record their own song with Danny Ball who is a professional music producer. Over 5 sessions the girls learnt

- How to write songs form scratch
- Improved their confidence singing, rapping
- Showed creativity writing their own lyrics
- Sense of pride when they received the final produced version of their track
- How to produce beats from Scratch on Ableton Live
- what it looks like to work in the music industry

Social Action

- Develop new practical skills 43%
- Develop my communication skills 43%
- Develop my teamwork/leadership skills 71%

Quotes:

"Group has helped me learn more and do things rather than buy them"

"I'm a chef now"

"It's made me more confident in working with others to achieve a goal. If its a game or real life issues"

"I've been doing young leaders which I taught me lots and I now have better skills to lead games and talk to kids"

"To be a better person to the world and community"

"I want to try new stuff and have more opportunities"

"I'm better at working in groups"

"Being part of this programme has helped me try new things & share new experiences"

"I learned how to make new foods and learned new kinds of skills"

"I've become more creative"

"Not scared to speak in group"

“I learned how to cook and learned how to play ping pong”
“It has given me opportunity's to help the elderly make plant pots”
“I have completed 2 OCN whilst attending bluehouses”

Other further examples of this charitable purpose:

Friendship Group

This group of ladies meet fortnightly in the centre for community, fellowship and lots of food and laughter, facilitated by the amazing Louise. Alongside the traditional quiz or game of bingo the ladies enjoyed a christmas creativity session, pumpkin carving, knitting, crafts, pancake making, a few movies such as the great escape, Christmas lunch and a trip out to Lisburn for the day.

The traditional highlight of the year is our Christmas Lunch and this was no different this year. And what an afternoon it was. Lovely to spend time celebrating these incredible ladies and giving thanks for the past year of fun and memories.

Conversation is a massive part of what happens in this group and this year the biggest topics were Family, Health, Bereavement, Faith, Thankfulness and Community

Regarding faith there has been development and growth within the group over the past few months especially around vulnerability and the nitty gritty of life and also the openness to God's word and sharing verses each session and getting to talk about what they mean to me and hearing the ladies' views and stories.

There are always lovely words of encouragement from the ladies its amazing to hear how special the bluehouses is to them.....

After the Easter session, Emily sent a message with a picture saying “Friendship is a treasured gift that gives our hearts a lift, a blessing that we can't do without. Because friendship is what makes life more beautiful and worth living for.”

Betty shared that getting out makes a difference to how you feel and that's why getting to Bluehouses and the caravan is so important to her. It's a wee escape.

“I'm so glad it's Tuesday tomorrow because I know she's coming here!”

Community Liaison

Over the years our engagement with the community beyond youth work has increased. In more recent years this includes programmes such as Friendship Group and detached and also simply building relationships with local families and running events such as our Community Fun Day or Family Day away. For a long time this has been a very organic aspect of our work through the Bluehouses but as our staff team has grown we have been able to invest more time, effort and energy. David takes on a significant role within community liaison which includes developing relationships with local families, other agencies and charities, and working alongside the police, Probation Board and Youth Justice. These tasks are also performed more adhoc by other staff members. Note: David left his post in October 2023.

Over the year we significantly supported 71 families. The support he offered dealt with issues surrounding mental health, drugs and alcohol, debt and gambling, benefits assistance, helping to provide families with food and basic necessities, and job or employment advice. This is not an exhaustive list, but provides a snapshot of the type of needs being addressed and support being offered. The summer brings a significant time of ASB and through our relationship with different parties we were able to be the negotiator between young people, residents and local authorities as issues arose regarding the local bonfire, especially after the tragedy of 2 years previous.

In an effort to capture the difference being made by having a supportive presence within the community, and through the programmes that are currently run by staff and volunteers there are a few stories worth sharing.

Christmas Gifts Appeal

Supporting families in need during the festive season

- 10 Families received Food Hampers
- 10 Families received Vouchers

We also managed to deliver over 220 Christmas Cards and chocolate coins to local households, organised by our youth committee

Social Action

Over the year we would run a few social action projects, significantly in the summer and at Christmas time. The summer involved another clean up. Involvement included:

- 23 young people and 15 mums involved over 4 days
- Clean the Green/Litter pick streets - 25 rubbish bags
- Leaflet Drop - 350 Homes
- Weed & rebarked the Garden
- Hug in a Mug - 100 delivered
- Plant Pots - 150 delivered
- Afternoon Tea - 32 people
- Drumming Circle - 28 people
- Out the back and side of Bluehouses - weeded, powerhosed, planters, brushing
- Number of social action volunteer hours - 166 hours

What a week! An incredible week of all generations and families coming together to serve Ballysillan. The week brought a mix of team time, devotional, practical work around the centre and on the green and blessing our neighbours with flower pots and hugs in a mug and afternoon tea. It was a very special week!

Feedback from all those involved included:

100% enjoyed it

Helped me:

“It gave me something to get out of bed and look forward to.”

“Remind people they are important because they are”

“Move around more instead of sitting at home”

Learnt:

“We can make a difference to our community”

“How to accept help”

“I have learned how important it is to do my part in the community and help others out”

Summer Fun Day

Brilliant day! Looked like it could be a wash out and even during set up the heavens opened but then for 3 hours the sun split the sky which made the event a brilliant success. I would say in total close to 400 people turned up, children, young people, parents and grandparents. Such an amazing mix of people. For entertainment there were multiple inflatables, the playbus, penalty shoot out, tattoos (fake ones lol), face painting, and Krystal from Table Food did the burgers and hot dogs - these flew out!

We learnt lots of little things from last year and so our team of volunteers (mainly women from the community) was a lot bigger, which meant that staff could literally mingle with the community and take pictures of the event. Also we had a team of YWAM volunteers from the states, who literally came in and helped us for those few hours, from set up, to tattooing, to set down. Made such a difference! Also, after the ongoing negotiations with the “local bonfire builders”, the residents and the housing executive, it was great that we had clear space (and enough of it), to host the event.

Highlight for me was actually in the set up, when Martine, one of the mums who lives opposite the green space, came out and helped put the gazebos up in the lashing rain, with not a care in the world that she was getting soaked! She is a mum that really connected through Mums and tots and you feel there is a lot of deeper stuff happening with her, and it really was lovely to see her heart to serve. It felt like she understood that there is something special about the Bluehouses and she just wants to be part of that.

Overall the vibe for those few hours on that sunday afternoon was incredible. Everyone shared during and after how much they loved it and how it was so significant to do something really positive on the green space after what had happened previous years at the bonfire.

Christmas Family event

This was a fabulous night, place was packed, worship, readings and sharing a message. Approximately 100 attended

Helping Hands Homeless Project

Helping young people to see that even such a small act of kindness can make a huge difference to someone.

Run by our amazing part time staff member Laura this project engaged 6 young people, age 16-18. Helping Hands is an opportunity to raise awareness of Homelessness and identify the reasons why people become Homeless. It provided practical hands-on experiences with the Homeless in Belfast City and created learning opportunities, experiences and developed new skills.

One highlight was working with The People's Kitchen, an impressive indoor soup kitchen that provides and serves hot meals, clothing, food parcels, toiletries etc. It's an absolutely brilliant Homeless outreach providing vital help and support to the Homeless of Belfast. This was an incredible first-time experience in serving the Homeless in an indoor environment. As a team we found this in many ways to be an even more challenging and moving experience than the outdoor street outreach.

On other occasions the team got to both practically help people with, as well as pray for them

One example

“Met a lady called Lauren who was very open and keen for us to pray for her. She said God has answered her prayers and she has been accepted for a house. She welcomed prayer and spoke openly about Jesus answering her prayers. We prayed for protection over her and that God would continue to provide for her life.”

Quote from young person

“It was a great night and that helping others on outreach makes you feel real good within yourself!”

Counselling and Family Support

In August 2021 we strengthened our team, our community liaison opportunities and areas of expertise by employing Sarahanne as our counsellor and family support worker.

Despite some illness this year she has been able to engage the following:
engaged 78 women in total, 21 at fitness programmes and 47 at Mums and Tots and 32 at Drop In with an overlap of 22 women (42 babies and toddlers engaged)

The key areas of her work have involved:

Counselling

Our counsellor delivered 99 counselling sessions to 12 clients.

Bar quoting the stats it is not possible to share any depth or insight into these situations and scenarios. Quite simply though the support given by Sarahanne is proving to be a lifeline to many and helping people find a voice and a new found freedom and hope.

Ladies Fitness

The women love getting some space away from the stresses of parenting, work etc. Fitness provides some healthy outlet coupled with some snacks and chat really works.

This year 21 women attended fitness programmes which across the year included HIIT and the running group as training began for the Belfast marathon.

HIIT

Ric took the class with sensitivity to each individual womens fitness ability and created a safe, warm, fun environment for them to workout.

A lovely blend of old and new faces. What was so encouraging was seeing how the original attendees had brought along new people. 9 women agreed to complete an evaluation form (pre) and 44% of them said that they had heard about our class from a friend. Many of the women in the community struggle to trust and struggle with self esteem, so a friend's reassurance that our fitness class is unique in that the focus is about enjoyment, feeling connected and being made to feel safe, rather than getting fit/ losing weight massively helps these ladies take the step to come

along! Having smaller class numbers works far better with the structure of HIIT and helps to create a more intimate and therefore safe environment for the ladies attending.

Marathon

On the 30th April, 7 of the Ladies who attended the running group took part in the Relay. This group of ladies have been on such a journey since January. Many of the girls struggled running in public and would wear hats and hide behind the group to avoid being seen and here they were on the day of the Marathon, making videos for our social media page and running along the roads of Belfast waving back at crowds that cheered them on. Heads were lifted, smiles on their faces - these ladies were relishing every single second of the experience! All that hard work had finally paid off and what a sense of achievement they all expressed when they had the medals hung around their necks at the finish line!

I had the privilege of being able to run a few legs of the race which meant I could run alongside some of the girls to help encourage them to keep going! Witnessing first hand how they not only embraced the atmosphere around them, but took time to spur one another on was so moving! Friendships have most definitely been cemented as a result of this venture amongst these ladies and they are all buzzing to take part next year as well!

The video footage on our facebook page really tells the story, as you watch these incredible women step out of their comfort zones, embrace the new, and reap the rewards as a result. Friendship, belonging, a sense of purpose and the realisation that each one of them has been made for more!!

Some examples of differences:

Empathy and self esteem

K has attended every session and has shared how she struggles to deal with her Autistic son each week and has found coming along to the HIIT class a nice break from the day to day stresses and also an opportunity to chat with other women and have a laugh. She has really opened up to the group during our table time and the support and care they have all shown to her has been lovely to witness.

J is an older lady and completely new to anything related to The Bluehouses. She has attended every session and gives it 100 % each time she has shared how she has struggled in many fitness classes that are run in the local leisure centre as she has always felt very intimidated but finds our wee group so welcoming and non judgemental.

Some significant quotes from these sessions:

“So, running with you guys today was an absolute privilege. I’m in awe of each and every one of you amazing people. You are the best bunch and we had the best laugh. Thank you all, you bunch of absolute weapons.” - K , one of the ladies from our running group.

“I’m so proud of you Elaine.. We didn’t think we would make it past the 1st set of traffic lights and to be honest, we had only got past them and I felt like giving up but we did it girl!! T- one of the ladies encouraging the other.

“I felt so proud today to be running for the Bluehouses... the work you guys do is amazing and the love and concern you have for others was so evident today, as you encouraged each other on. Thank you for making me part of the team today.” Heather Currie

“I had the best day, it was amazing! I couldn’t have done it without all the encouragement , especially from Ric the last few miles. Thank you everyone.” E - one of the ladies .

“Pete , Sarahanne and the rest of the Bluehouses team- massive well done for sorting today out.. It was great craic and really good to be part of it. It didn’t surprise me that you guys managed to get 30 runners for today because the work you all do in the community is awesome and needed. It was such a pleasure to be able to support you in that!!! Great to meet some new people too- Elaine and Ric, I’d have walked the whole of Ravenhill if I didn’t bump into you guys so you gave me that wee boost to the end!” Ian- member of Ballysillan Presbyterian

Mums and Tots

Over the year we ran 21 sessions, engaging 47 mums and 42 children. As well as the “normal” weeks (if you can call any week normal) we held many themed sessions and events including Easter, Tots graduation, Pumpkin party and Christmas.

Our Tots Graduation was such a great opportunity for us to celebrate the little ones and their mums that we have had the pleasure of building relationships with over the past year. Some of the mums were emotional saying goodbye to us and thanked us for making their Friday mornings so special too! One mum shared how she felt she would be lost without Tots and was going to try to come along to our fitness so she can stay connected.

Key themes and words that encompass this group are belonging, community, support, acceptance and connection. I have been completely taken back by the variety of women who have attended our Tots and how age, stage or personality hasn't held these women back from connecting with each other, in fact, I would say that the diversity has enhanced the connection.

One example of impact made was with T, who has been attending Tots since the beginning. She brings along her youngest daughter who has severe learning difficulties and struggles socially as a result. In the first year of them attending, T was very withdrawn and hard to talk to. She is now very much a part of our little group and engages and chats to many old and new faces that come each week. Our final session of Tots was the last one both her and her little one would be attending and she very kindly offered the services of her husband who is an ice cream van man! It was so lovely watching her usher Mums and little ones out to receive this very generous gift. When I offered to pay she responded to me by saying "You all have done so much for me and S and this is the least we can do to thank you for the past two years."

Community (and volunteers): We had really struggled to get people who were available to volunteer on a Friday morning and I can now see how God's hand has been on this as He has brought people from the community itself! Donna, Elaine, Tracy and Kirsty have all offered to step in as 'helpers' and the impact has been so positive. Not only do they know the women but myself and Victoria are able to invest in each one of them as we grow in friendship serving together. My desire is that groups like Tots 'belong' to the community as opposed to them coming along to what 'we' offer. It is from this stance that I believe we can see God at work, rebuilding, restoring and giving purpose and hope to individuals who, prior to this, may have felt redundant. This is what a community should look like.

Doris regarding mums and tots...."It has thrilled me to see how the group of volunteers support and care for one another as well as caring for the mums/carers and children. Clearly a strong bond between the group and this creates an atmosphere of care and friendship for all those attending Friday mornings."

Ladies DIY

Themes: Belonging, Community, Support, confidence, friendship and upskilling

This grew from a group of ladies asking could they do similar to the young people - our volunteers Victor and Trevor were happy to oblige!

Every week they gather and have made a variety of things including love seats and windmills. The women are loving the whole experience and, in the words of Victor "They are all very good at the woodwork!"

Each session ends with a lovely cuppa and a selection of buns to enjoy while conversations flow around the table. The women have shared how much they have enjoyed this aspect of the programme as they have been able to ask Trevor and Victor lots of questions running from DIY questions to life! Watching the women interact with Victor and Trevor, both while they work and over a cuppa and a bun is just lovely. Both these men have taken on a fatherly role with the four women and it is just precious listening and watching the interaction between them all. The women freely ask Trevor and Victor deep questions about life and their belief in God and then sit attentively listening to the wise advice as they share from their own experiences. These four women really value this time and are very precious about protecting it. It is a safe space for them.

One highlight was Trevor making personalised wooden gifts for the ladies. Tracy responded....

"That is genuinely the best present I have ever received" Tracy, in response to her wooden tractor

Key Quotes

"Please tell me this isn't the end ! I need to know that we will see you two again!" T talking about Victor and Trevor.

“I know God is real but I struggle to understand why He allows suffering . I want to understand Him so I am up for coming along to Alpha.” E

“I love DIY because it's a small group, I feel like I can be real, warts and all, and open up with you all.” T

“I did not realise what proper friendship was until I began coming here in the past few years. I compare what I have here to my experiences with other friendships. It is totally different. Here is wholesome and encouraging and leaves you feeling lighter. It is very special”. Tracy

“I love this small group. I feel like I can be real, warts and all, and open up with you all.” Tracy

Ladies Drop In (Sarahanne)

We made the decision to venture out of fitness and try out a new program for the ladies on Thursday evenings . The women love to gather, have a laugh and connect with each other and the idea of a ladies drop it lends itself to this.

Evenings included Pamper Night, Cinema Night, General drop in and a session with Menopause NI.

Cinema night was priceless...

Looking around the room at women propped up on a bean bag, in their pjs eating popcorn and chuckling away together at the movie - priceless! I am so excited to see what God will do through this group as we explore, learn and build friendships together.

The common thread of feedback from the women was that this was just what they needed in their lives. So many of them spend the majority of their week giving out to family, jobs etc, so the opportunity to come, receive, hang out and build friendships in the safety of the Bluehouses was like a breath of fresh air.

Key Quotes:

“This is just what I have needed !” T after the cinema night .

“Can we do this again? I just loved it and surprised myself as I never sit still long enough in the house to watch a movie.” N

The advancement of education

This area does not have one of our specific key differences directly assigned to it but we are able to demonstrate our impact in this area by using examples of our programme delivery.

Demonstration of Advancement of Education can also be found within the evidence for our 6 key differences.

Girls Good Relations Group

Sample: Jan - Mar 2024

Themes: Cross community, Good relations, relationships, diversity, cultural expression

Key aims: To engage a group of girls from different backgrounds (Bluehouses & Clonard Youth Club) in a programme that promotes difference and diversity and develops relationships, knowledge and understanding of how we can build community together.

Key session activities: 8 sessions this term

OCN Level 2

- Behaviours, issues, feelings and relationships in conflict

- What is my conflict style?

- Mediation & Principled Negotiation

- Conflict Resolution

Clonard girls visit to Bluehouses

Photography (my community, through my lens)

Evaluation & Photography Stories

Ice Skating & Bowling Trip

Key Outcomes/Differences achieved: stats from google forms using 6 key differences

Enhanced Personal Capabilities

'Confidence and self-esteem':

- ALM continues to stand out as a really good engager and makes excellent contributions to discussion and can articulate her thoughts really well.
- JQ was the spokesperson for her group and gave feedback on what they thought about conflict behaviours - significant for her.
- Leanna came to the group by herself one week. The other girls wouldn't have done that.
- The girls sharing their photographs and what they mean to them. Confident enough to share something personal with the group. Jodie was a bit embarrassed and hid behind her picture but she still spoke up and shared.

'Resilience':

- CC struggles to sit for any length of time to listen. She needed a 'walk about break' during the session.
- Despite most of the girls not being able to ice skate they got on and had a go. Shout out to Charlotte (who like me lol) was terrified and clung on to the sides for dear life. She still was determined to get on and give it her best!

'Empathy':

- Trying to get the girls to understand different perspectives in the room between them, us as youth workers and the OCN facilitators. The activities also helped us to think about how conflict doesn't just impact you and the other party but can ripple out and impact family, friends, teachers etc.
- Conversations with them about lack of commitment, poor communication, disrespect. The impact of that in terms of planning & prep but also how it makes leaders feel when they have put in so much effort and you don't bother showing up or communicating.

Greater Level of Engagement in Peer Group and Community

'Participation in programme activities' -

- LF is very good at motivating others and they tend to follow her lead on things.
 - KP & JQ are more reluctant to get up for games but once they get into it they actually enjoy it.
- Great session walking round Ballysillan taking photos of things that are important to them or mean something to the community.
- Leanna - A tree on Ballysillan Avenue where there used to be a swing she went on all the time
Katie - Ballysillan Primary School because she loved it and her teacher and has good memories
Charlotte - The top of the glen where she walks her dog.
Paige - The pyramid opposite the school - represents key things in Belfast
Jodie - The community garden and field where the bonfire is each year

Great evaluation session - girls all open to share their thoughts and opinions.

- Three top highlights of the group
 - Trips
 - OCN Qualification
 - Workshops (Small Worlds, African Drumming)
- Being part of this group has helped me have a better understanding of people from different backgrounds and communities? 90% agreed, 10% not sure.
- Being part of this programme has helped me...
 - Have fun (70%)
 - Try new things & share new experiences (60%)
 - Find out things the two groups have in common (50%)
 - Become more confident (40%)
 - Build relationships with new people (40%)
 - See how difference & diversity is a good thing (30%)
 - Have a sense of achievement (30%)

- If you had a choice, would you prefer to live in a neighbourhood with people of only your own religion, or in a mixed-religion neighbourhood? Mixed Religion 30% / Own religion 50% / Unsure 20%
- Do you think opportunities to take part in community relations programmes (with people from different backgrounds) is important? 90% Yes
- Overall, I enjoyed the Bluehouses/Clonard Project this year? 100% Yes
- Would you be willing to take part in future community relations programmes? 100% Yes
- Tell us 1 thing you might do differently in your youth centre or community because of what you've learned? Don't make assumptions about people based on their religion

'Positive peer relationships':

- KP volunteering to switch groups with the Clonard girls
- Kahoot quiz, darts and pictionary during visit to Bluehouses.
- Working together during games and activities.

Increased appreciation of difference and diversity

'How willing are young people to engage in programmes that test their values and beliefs' -

Conflict styles in our lives...

- Are we accommodating, competing, collaborating, compromising or avoiding when it comes to conflict.
- ALM shared that she likes to get her own way but has got better at listening to others and taking different opinions on board.
- CC said that she avoids conflict and tends to just agree with what others think.
- Great discussion around how this plays out in our friendships, relationships, at home with parents or in school with teachers.
- Conversations about how other people (family, friends, teachers) all handle conflict differently which is good to learn so we know how we can work best with people.

Calling the girls out about their attitudes to commitment and lack of effort at times.

Girls sharing out key places in their communities and how they are different between Clonard and Ballysillan

'How young people talk about people from different areas/cultures/backgrounds' -

'Respect for difference' -

Development of Life and Leadership Skills

'Quality of young people's participation in volunteering opportunities':

- LF taking the lead and encouraging others to take part. ALM being an encouragement during the name games
- JQ being the spokesperson for her group
- Bluehouses girls taking the Clonard girls on a tour of Bluehouses to show them around.

'Number of young people achieving new practical skills' -

Highlight/s for you as a leader:

- Better Attendance
- Seeing the girls step out of their comfort zone and pushing themselves a bit more.
- Positive end to the programme
- Giving the girls certificates and goody bags to celebrate the last session

RE Lessons: Ballysillan Primary & Carr Glen

Sample: Jan to Mar 2024

Carr's Glen

Topics & Themes

P7 classes at Carr's Glen continue to be a complete privilege and joy each week. Delivered 8 sessions this term looking at the themes of New Year, Old Testament Characters (Moses, Ruth, Daniel, Samuel, David & Nehemiah) and Easter.

Enhanced Personal Capabilities

'Confidence and self-esteem':

Confidence developing - asking questions, volunteering for the dramas, wanting to have a go at saying the memory on their own in front of the class.

The classes are getting to know Stephen and build that relationship.

Greater Level of Engagement in Peer Group and Community

'Participation in programme activities':

We acted out palm sunday - so much chaos and laughter but really meaningful as they waved their palm leaves and shouted out 'Hosanna in the highest'. Impactful way to bring the story to life and make it memorable. Loved getting to share the overarching theme of Love at Easter and how much God loves each of them.

Increased appreciation of difference and diversity

'How willing are young people to engage in programmes that test their values and beliefs':

How does God want us to live? What does our heart look like? Challenge to think of the things/words/actions in our lives that we might need to change or make more positive. How can we encourage others in that?

We had the opportunity to reflect on 2023 and look ahead to the new year as we thought about resolutions and how we spend our time - challenges us to invest time and energy into helping others.

Faith Development:

'Young people engaging in prayer and conversations about faith and exploring God's Word' - one week we did a chain prayer where we passed a pencil round the class as each person prayed. Three young people prayed out loud for their sick relatives, war in the world and giving thanks for school.

Moses - learnt that God can use anyone for his work even Moses, who messed up and made mistakes.

Ruth - challenged us to be good friends and to care for each other. Great lessons, super engagement and practical life challenges they can implement to remind them of the lessons.

Samuel - taught us that when we pray, God listens to us and God wants us to listen to him too.

David - being selected as King reminds us of 'People look at the outside, but God looks at the heart' – 1st Samuel ch16:v7.

Nehemiah - think about our dreams for the future and how we ask for God's help and guidance in the choices we make.

Daniel - 'Blessed are all who fear the Lord, all who walk in his ways' Psalm 128:1. When we fear God it isn't that we're scared of him, but we realise how powerful and mighty he is, that there is no one else like Him. It means we put God first, we realise that his plans for our lives are more important than anything else, and what God says matters more even than what other people think, or try to tell us to do. Daniel put God first, and walked in his ways and God blessed him.

Number of young people engaged with: 51

Number of boys: 20

Number of girls: 31

Age Range: 10-11

Number of sessions this term: 8

Number of sessions year to date: Apr - Mar = 23 sessions

Education Support: Homework Club (Louise)

Sample: Jan to Mar 24

Key themes/topics:

- Homework / Education
- Relationship Building
- Creativity
- Celebration of success

Key session activities:

- Literacy / Numeracy
- Spellings
- Sensory Room
- Doodle Tables / Purple Mash
- Easter Afternoon: Craft & treats

SMc...

- Turned up to the first session and opened her bag which was full of crumpled papers and rubbish. Louise sat with her and went through it all and worked out what to keep and what to bin. We finally found her homework in the middle of it all.
- Fully engaged with Dylan and remained focused the whole time...she even completed her spelling after her mum telling us she hated them and always refused to do them - she takes on board support and correction well.
- Has become committed and attended every week.
- SMc finished her work quickly and Lousie and Rosemary started playing word dominos with her. Match up the letters to make words. She got really into it and celebrated when she found a new word.

BK...

- Continues to be a superstar. He can't wait to get his homework finished with Rosemary.
- Using games to help us reinforce learning. Bradley was so focused on bananagrams and spelling out the best word he could.
- BK is set on sitting his transfer test - he came armed with a huge practice booklet for numeracy and had to complete about 10 pages. Took a bit of work to build him up and encourage him that we could get it done. He was adamant there were too many pages to get done in the time we had so the best solution was to not even try. Once we got started he was flying and had accomplished the area of a triangle by the end of it.
- Bradley took a short break from HW club as it clashes with school play rehearsals - he'll be back after Easter.

LR...

- Finally made a return but really struggles with basic literacy and numeracy.
- They have the same homework and spellings but their abilities are very different.
- Spend a lot of time encouraging and refocusing LR to remain on task.
- He doesn't seem to have a sense of achievement when he completes it - it's just something he 'has to do'.

We have been creative with our games and resources, like using jenga blocks and counters to help with numeracy and bananagrams letters to sound out words - this has been really effective.

The last session we had an easter fun session making rice krispie nest buns and decorating ceramic eggs. Lucas and Sophia shared their plans for Easter and how they were looking forward to getting off school.

Highlight/s for you as a leader:

Relationships within the team. BK and Rosemary and SMc and Dylan. They're like wee teams.

Key issues arising:

LR poor attendance

Number of young people engaged with: 4

Number of girls: 2

Number of boys: 2

Age Range: 8-10

Max attendance: 4

Minimum attendance: 2

Number of sessions this term: 6 Sessions

Number of sessions year to date: Apr - Mar = 23 sessions

Other key differences and key achievements (as a result of the activities)

We have observed many positive changes over the year, and often these soft outcomes are hard to quantify.

Here are 4 further differences that we have focussed on during the year which highlight the impact being made to the beneficiaries.

Difference 1: Enhanced Personal Capabilities

Indicators

- Confidence and self-esteem
- Empathy
- Resilience

Difference 2: Improved Health and Well-being

Indicators

- How young people describe their well-being (engage in conversation about their well being)
- Understanding of health and well-being
- Ability to make healthy choices

Difference 3: Greater level of engagement in peer group and community

Indicators

- Quality of young people's participation in centre programmes (e.g. sense of belonging, commitment, volunteering)
- Positive peer relationships - how young people describe their peer relationships, how they work together
- Positive relationships with others in the community (e.g. residents, parents, teachers)
- Young people making a positive contribution in their community

Difference 4: Increased appreciation of difference and diversity

Indicators

- How willing are young people to engage in programmes that test their values and beliefs
- How young people talk about people from different areas/cultures/backgrounds
- Respect for difference

For specific information on these 4 differences please contact peter@thebluehouses.org

Mitigating harm flowing from purpose

Throughout the year training takes place for staff and volunteers covering the areas of first aid, child protection, health and safety, risk assessment and fire safety. This ensured that they could ensure best practice and anticipate and prevent accidents, helping the benefits of participation in activities to be achieved by the charity's beneficiaries.

Private Benefit

No private benefit has occurred (incidental to public benefit).

Statement of compliance to have regard to the Charity Commission's public benefit requirement statutory guidance

In setting our objectives and planning our activities for the year the trustees have given careful consideration to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit to ensure that the activities have helped to achieve the charity's purposes and provide a benefit to the beneficiaries.

Financial Position at Year End 31st March 2024

Total income for the period under review was £302209 and revenue expenditure was £283297.

Reserves totalled £1,033,994 of which £865693 was held in the form of fixed assets.

There were £69436 of unrestricted funds available at the balance sheet date for general use.

Charity Trustees

The trustees of Ballysillan Youth For Christ are:

Mr Mark Smyth

Mr Chris Kinghan

Mrs Heather Dickey
Mr Simon Hetherington
Mrs Doris Dickison
Mr John Rodgers
Mr Jamie Macdonald

Appointing Charity Trustees

No person or any other body is permitted to appoint a new trustee

Governing Document

Ballysillan Youth For Christ a company limited by guarantee and hence is governed by its articles of association which set out its objects, powers, membership, responsibilities of management committee, and information on finance, trustees, indemnity, dissolution and alterations to the articles of association. It was adopted on 22nd June 2017.

Report approval

This report was approved by the board on 21 January 2024 and signed on its behalf by

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature appears to be 'D E Dickison' written in a cursive style.

Doris Dickison
Secretary