

# Your Bus Your Call

We wanted to write an article this month in response to the rural priority in last month's newsletter about a future for rural young people. We work on the Your Bus Your Call mobile project in Storrington, and at Steyning Grammar and Downlands secondary schools. We love our work and the young people we work with; by and large they are a pretty happy bunch. There are, however, considerable limitations for them to face because they live rurally.



One of their common cries is "I'm bored!" Yes, a common cry of many teenagers, but sadly true for many living in villages. There is less for them to do in a village, but also their options of heading into town for sport, recreation and to access services are drastically reduced because they can't get there, or more accurately, they can get there, but they can't get home! The last bus back is at six o'clock. This actually has quite far-reaching repercussions.

When considering college placements, apprenticeships and work options, the question of transport is always a key one. Can they get there? Can they get back? How much will it cost? The towns are where there are more opportunities. The young people we work with have found it really hard getting a part-time job in their village. A part-time job is not only valuable in terms of giving someone good work experience, but also in increasing their confidence and helping them become accustomed to the wider world.

Ambition can also be lower sometimes in rural areas. One young man we work with, quite bright and very personable, helps

his dad milk the cows. He said he wasn't bothered about his exams or staying on at school or college, as he will continue to work on the farm. We spoke to him about considering other options, sitting his exams and then maybe thinking about agricultural college so that his work and life opportunities might be wider. I think it's up to people like us to present a broader picture and help people think well about their choices.

The same goes for health choices. A project like ours helps young people make more informed choices about their health in terms of alcohol and substance use and of sexual activity. The information and resources they need to look after themselves are right here on the Bus in the Village Hall Car Park!

It has been through recognising how, and in what life areas, rural young people are disadvantaged that we have been able to support them to make wise choices about their health and their lives.

The knock-on effect of this has been an increase in their confidence and sense of purpose and a much less disaffected group of young people. This can be done; even if the last bus home is at six o'clock!

**Ali Cardosi, Community Health Development Worker on Your Bus Your Call**



## Local democracy

**Action in rural Sussex (AirS) has been working with the Sussex Associations of Local Councils to create a resource pack for parish councils about involving children and young people in local democracy.**

The project has been funded by the South East Rural Empowerment Programme. Four parish councils have been working with Liz Allsobrook of AirS to identify and share good practice models that engage and involve children and young people in local level governance and community actions.

Westham, Willingdon and Jevington Parish Councils in Wealden and Crowhurst and Camber Parish Council in Rother, have all met with young people to discuss what life is like for a young person in their parish and what it is that the parish council does. Each parish has taken a slightly different approach.

Through the support of Willingdon Community School, Willingdon and Jevington Parish Council have been meeting regularly with the Youth Forum to discuss issues that are affecting young members of the community and Forum representatives have subsequently attended a parish council meeting, *see above*.

Crowhurst Parish Council are working closely with the Youth Club as a whole to find out more about what services and facilities young people are using and to share with them what is involved in being part of the Parish Council.

Camber Church Youth Club has met with the parish clerk to hear what a parish council does and are now being consulted about how access to services and facilities can be improved for young people.

The clerk of Westham Parish Council has now delivered a presentation to local primary schools in Stone Cross, Pevensey and Westham and Hankham. The presentations have included what is a parish council and what do they do? The Clerk has also met with each of their school councils about issues they would like the Parish Council to discuss.

Further details of the project, along with the guidance for parish councils providing details of the different approaches taken to engage and involve young people, will shortly be available.

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