

Youth engagement/outreach audit

Aims of this report

- Haydon Wick parish council is very integrated into the community, especially with its youth outreach. The council **regularly puts on events for young people** to boost youth engagement, from photography competitions and 'SK8JM' to the Wildwick summer extravaganza '25. These **are crucial in boosting youth engagement**, providing services for residents, and overall providing fun and support for families.
- The council goes far in this, through multiple events and activities. However, one issue in youth engagement that the council looks to tackle is more programs for the **14-18 bracket**, which is a bracket that the council struggles to reach and put on events for due to a severe lack of demand.
- This report aims to figure out why this is, and recommendations for further outreach for the 14-18 age bracket to boost youth engagement and general community connectivity.

What the council currently does

- Currently, the parish council does a great deal in terms of community engagement and outreach, which is particularly effective in bringing families and children together, as well as serving to **boost resident interaction with the parish** while allowing for greater community connectivity.
- Events such as the summer extravaganza are perfect in achieving this through family fun days, and engaging the 3-13 age bracket. Furthermore, events such as the SK8JM are also excellent in tapping into **the 'tween' 9-13 age bracket**, ensuring engagement with the parish council is maintained as children grow up.
- However, beyond this, the council does not put on much in teenager activity, which negatively impacts teenager engagement with the parish, though just one of many reasons for a lack of engagement, and this is for various reasons.

Reasons for a lack of engagement in the 14-18 age bracket

- The 14-18 age bracket seems **unreachable in terms of engagement** due to a lack of demand and interest for the council. In conversations with Laura, we discussed this in depth, and concluded that many young people are likely not even aware of the parish council, let alone what it does and what events it puts on. As such, any attempts to reach this age bracket in the past has usually resulted in cancellations due to a lack of demand.
- It's also difficult to put on activities or events for the 14-18 bracket due to the **wide range of interests** this age group enjoys. For instance, a poetry competition a teacher set up as a parish activity had to be cancelled due to a lack of demand, highlighting difficulties in youth outreach in this regard. 'Popular' activities, such as football tournaments, are also not very inclusive for the entire community and are not likely to appeal to a majority of the 14-18 bracket. In contrast, when it comes to younger and primary school aged children, it is far easier to put on activities, such as arts and crafts, that appeal to both families and children alike, allowing for the parish to meet greater demand.
- This is also **not an issue unique to the parish**. Other parish councils, such as West Swindon parish council, do not put on very much for the 14-18 age bracket. More broadly, it will always be a challenge to reach this age bracket due to low disengagement in politics generally. Most young people are probably **not even aware of the existence of a parish council**, let alone what it provides for and what activities it puts on, and,

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even if they did, they probably would not care too much for the activities that are put on, either.

- When it comes to young people, there are already a variety of youth outreach programs in place regardless, from secondary schools to football clubs, which makes it even harder for the parish to aid young people, as there is already an extensive support network potentially in place for young people anyway.
- Furthermore, **the parish will always focus on its older residents**, with 25% of residents being 65+, and being far more likely to engage more regularly with the parish and its activities than many younger residents. As such, the logistics of what Haydon Wick can provide for the community goes substantially into providing for its older residents, which is great, but may take away the focus from the 14-18 bracket further, as well as providing a logistical challenge in putting on more events for the 14-18 age range that is pointless given the lack of demand among this age range regardless.

Other parish councils

- Some parish councils, such as the aforementioned West Swindon, also have a similar issue in youth engagement with Haydon Wick, looking at their website alone. However, when looking at recommendations for the parish to boost 14-18 youth engagement, Haydon Wick could learn a great deal from **Stratton St Margaret parish council**.
- Stratton St Margaret has a dedicated youth provision, with a youth committee that meets to suggest changes to what the parish provides for the youth, which may be critical in tapping into what young people in the 14-18 bracket really want the parish to provide.
- The parish provides a wide range of activities, from a homework club to a youth café, as well as having **dedicated youth and community workers** doing street-based youth workers boosting outreach to the 14-18 bracket who are unlikely or unwilling to seek help on their own, which is critical in building a healthier community, in preventing early drug and alcohol abuse, and importantly building trust in the community among young people, while **raising awareness** of what the parish does.
- While most of the activities Stratton youth club puts on target the 7-14 age bracket, there is still much Haydon Wick could learn from what Stratton does. Not only is the youth café, aimed at the 14-17 bracket, an excellent idea in bringing young people together in the community, these activities helps **integrate young people with the parish**, boosting awareness of the impact of the parish among young people substantially, as well as being crucial in providing for youth engagement and healthy living, in addition to improved mental health through this **connectivity in the community**.

Surveying ideas to aid in research

- In order to gain more information about what the parish council could do in order to improve its youth outreach and engagement, the council could conduct **surveying and questionnaires** targeted at the teenager bracket, in order to ascertain youth knowledge of the parish council, what it does, and what events it could put on to tap into the 14-18 bracket. What must be noted, however, is that any young person responding to such a survey will already have some interest in the parish council, and many will not even bother to respond, which will impact the results of such a survey.
- Any such survey could include the following questions.
- “Do you know what a parish council is?” (Yes/No/Other)
- “Do you know what a parish council does?” (Yes/No/Other)

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- “Do you know about the youth events and activities the parish council puts on?” (Yes/No/Other)
- “Currently, would you be interested in attending any youth event or activity the parish council puts on?” (Absolutely interested/Interested/Neutral/Not interested/Absolutely not interested)
- “Would you agree or disagree that the current provision of youth and teenager services that the parish puts on is inadequate and not enough?” (Strongly agree/Agree/Neutral/Disagree/Strongly disagree)
- “Would you support the parish expanding its youth underground and creating a youth committee to improve activities and events for young people?” (Strongly agree/Agree/Neutral/Disagree/Strongly disagree)
- “What events and activities do you want the parish to put on for young people?” (Write-in answer)
- “How can the parish improve youth outreach and engagement?” (Write-in answer)
- “Do you have any other suggestions/thoughts for the parish council to consider?” (Write-in answer)

Recommendations for the parish council

- In order to boost community engagement with the currently disconnected 14-18 youth age bracket, the parish council could do many things.
- **Focus and increase the activities it puts on for the 9-13 age bracket**, which will help engagement with the children as they grow up into the 14-18 bracket, which will go a long way in maintaining youth engagement and outreach, alongside other benefits.
- Activities could include film nights, gaming sessions, and so on. For the 9-13 bracket, what could also be very helpful in helping improve mental health outcomes are helping young people worried about the **transition to secondary school** with groups such as homework clubs, which will help young people in the transition to secondary school while keeping them engaged and connected with the community and parish as they grow up and move into the 14-18 bracket.
- Make the parish council a **hub for youth clubs and groups**. Through additional activities and groups for the 14-18 bracket, as well as strengthening provision for the 9-13 ‘tween’ bracket, the parish could make its premises a hub for youth community engagement, as well as increasing awareness of what the parish does and the services it provides.
- To boost youth engagement further, especially with young people who are unlikely to reach out for support in the first place (and who will be in more need of support), enlist volunteer ‘Youth and community workers’ to get out into Haydon Wick, speak to young people, **build up trust**, as well as raising awareness of how to reach help if they need it, the services the parish provides, and so on.
- Expand any current youth committee initiatives, perhaps by creating two for different age brackets, in order to gather information from young people about what they want from the parish and what activities they want on, in order to truly boost youth outreach and engagement by the parish for the benefit of all residents.

Summary

- Trying to tackle low disengagement among the 14-18 age range is a **difficult task**, one with no easy answer, but it can be done.
- Using examples from other parish councils, by increasing what Haydon Wick provides in the 9-13 age bracket could increase awareness of what the parish does and its

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responsibilities among young people and teenagers, **increasing interaction** with the 14-18 bracket, which should boost youth engagement and outreach if there are increased youth clubs and activities provided for ages 9+ which will bring **numerous benefits for residents and the parish.**