

Leisure Credits in South West Wiltshire

An Overview Leisure Credits

The Leisure Credit Scheme was first devised in Mere and Tisbury a number of years ago and whilst it has been developed and improved over the years, the basic ethos has remained the same – namely that young people undertake work which benefits their community and earn leisure credits. A rolling programme of reward activities is on offer and young people choose which activities they would like to take part in – obviously the more credits they gain, the more reward activities they can take part in.

The award of Credits is made with the involvement of the young people on completion of the task and they are encouraged to reflect on their performance during the session in relation to level of initiative, team work, time keeping, behaviour and how hard/consistently they have worked.

The Work

Most of the work undertaken has an environmental flavour and takes place outdoors in towns, villages and in open countryside. There is almost always an element of physical activity and young people are always involved in deciding how the task is best executed.

The main criteria for identifying what work could be done is confirming that it is safe and appropriate for the young people to undertake the work and that someone with the appropriate level of experience is in charge of the work. There is an experienced group of youth workers who are qualified in aspects of conservation work but where particular specialist knowledge is needed then it is sought out.

Young people involved have the opportunity to take part in accredited training in skills such as brush cutting, tree felling and first aid.

Some examples of work undertaken by young people has included painting seats and benches, clearing out rivers and gardens, clearing footpaths, decoration and maintenance at the youth centres as well as a major environmental and conservation project on Long Hill in conjunction with B.T.C.V. This work has been identified by the young people and youth workers themselves, as well as individual members of the community and the parish councils.

The Rewards

The young people are involved in drawing together the programme of reward trips (to ensure that the programme takes account of the tastes of all members of the group). In the past young people have chosen to go to Thorpe Park, bowling, cinema, go karting, outward bounds activities, ice skating, snowdome, zorbing and more.

It is important to note that the reward trips for the young people are not the only benefits for them and others. The accredited training they are offered can be used on their CV and increases their employability. Skills in problem solving, negotiation and responsibility, reliability and relationship building come with the work and approach taken by the youth workers.

The community as a whole also benefits, both in terms of an improvement to their environment but also by challenging some of the stereotypes which exist around young people and showing that young people are willing to make contributions to society as a whole.

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