



We were very grateful to be awarded a grant of £3,648 from the Youth Services Fund, to enable us to launch SPARK, a parenting support initiative in Witney, as a means to improving the home-life and general well-being of young people in the town.

We initially proposed running six courses, each lasting six weeks - three aimed at parents of primary children and three for parents of teenagers.

In reality, due to practicalities and time constraints on staff/volunteers, we have ended up running one primary years course in Tower Hill Primary School and we are about to start our second one, this time in the community. In Tower Hill Primary we started well with two parents, but sadly they both stopped coming to the weekly sessions. We are not sure why that happened but conversation with the school staff confirmed that this is not unusual based on previous attempts to offer support. We are hopeful that running the course in the community will remove some of the stigma and reluctance to attend. In fact, we have seven people signed up already for the new course, four of whom are parents/grandparents of children at Tower Hill Primary. After this six week 'Parenting - the primary years' course is complete, we will move on to running a 'Parenting - the teenage years' course in the same venue, and will target parents from the secondary schools in the town.

We have also run three successful stand-alone parenting sessions on the topic of supporting children's emotional well-being. Since anxiety and mental health issues are a major concern amongst young people at the moment, we felt this material would be helpful and it was definitely well received. We reached 18 parents and carers of children of a range of ages, as well as three teachers and church youth and children's workers with these sessions. We are planning two more of these sessions this term. Feedback in person was very positive, plus all those who completed feedback forms (90%) said they would be interested in further support, either by way of a full course or further stand-alone sessions.

The funding covered the cost of training for the course facilitator and approximately 80 salary hours for admin, marketing and delivery, as well as venue hire and course materials, as follows:

Training - £240
Salary - £1,156
Venue hire - £750
Resources - £200
Total spent: £2,346
Balance: £1,302

We intend to use the balance of the grant to cover salary and refreshments, venue hire and printing for the courses and stand-alone sessions we are running this term. As such, the grant will be fully spent by December 2026.