In July, 18 young people went to Edale in the Peak District with two volunteers and three members of staff, after months of planning and training. Two groups were doing their practice expedition and two were undertaking an assessed expedition - the first time we have been able to offer this opportunity. They were faced with challenging weather and terrain throughout their 4-day expedition but they dealt admirably with countless physical and psychological ups and downs and came out stronger, better prepared and more confident individuals and teams.

Each expedition group successfully climbed to the summit plateau of Kinder Scout (the largest mountain in the Peak District) and, while some of them went round the top, others took the brave decision to take a bearing across it. Despite choosing to wade - and in some cases trying to swim - through muddy bogs, they returned from their day with smiles on their faces and in high spirits, eager to complete the rest of their expedition.

The young people saw amazing views over the mountains, waterfalls, reservoirs and small villages of the Peak District, appreciated the sunny spells and overcame challenges which they never thought possible. They were proud of their accomplishments and had fun and all achieved either their practice or assessed expedition respectively. To celebrate, they all tucked in to what tasted like the best meal ever on their final evening and enjoyed regaling each other with their stories of their expedition adventures.

None of this would be possible without the determination, motivation and enthusiasm of the young people and volunteers alike. Well done everyone.
FOCUS ON GILLINGHAM AND RAINHAM

WOODLANDS YOUTH CENTRE

Members took part in a consultation with staff from Medway Council’s Greenspace Services about the planning and design of Rookery Field, opposite the youth centre. Staff worked with members to put their ideas either in words or pictures. It was good to see that the voice of young people was being heard.

It became clear that the way young people are thinking about their open spaces has changed - gone are the days of just a swing and a roundabout. It seems that young people are now more interested in natural elements to a park such as trim trails and boulder climbing. The members are looking forward to seeing Rookery Field develop.

HEMPSTEAD YOUTH CENTRE

The centre is in an exciting stage of its development and the young people are continually making the centre their own, with support and encouragement from youth workers. They have started to add personal touches to the internal decor and are developing projects around issues they face.

Young people are applying for funding to buy a music system. This will enable them to develop a range of creative music projects.

The centre is also developing literacy programmes with Hempstead Library to encourage young people to read and to use their imaginations through books.

PARKWOOD YOUTH CENTRE

A group of young people from the Wednesday Squad, with a range of disabilities, worked together to complete the expedition section of the Duke Of Edinburgh’s Award at bronze level. The young people trained during the Wednesday youth session over four to eight weeks.

For the practice day the young people went to Shorne Country Park and took part in various activities including navigational exercises, camp craft and life skills.

The assessment took place over a weekend. On Saturday the young people were placed in two groups according to their needs and abilities in preparation for the first challenge - walking around a country park following a set route. The less able did a three and a half mile walk and the more able completed a five mile route. At the campsite the young people erected tents - with support from staff and one mainstream young person who is undertaking the same award. They then worked as a team to produce their evening meals.

On Sunday the young people were taken to Howletts Zoo to help with a future project. Overall they said they enjoyed the expedition - but the tents were too small.

SUMMER SCHEME

Youth development workers joined forces in the planning of daytime projects throughout the Gillingham and Rainham area. These took place over a five-week period, with the help of a small team of youth support workers. The programme was mainly based in parks but local youth projects also increased their opening times to offer an extended day programme that was varied and fun for eight to 16-year-olds. Themed weeks - 999, Sport, Healthy Living and Wet 'n' Wild fun days were delivered in partnership with KCA, Kent Police, Kent Fire & Rescue Service, The Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), the Medway Teenage Pregnancy Programme, Gillingham Youth for Christ, The Word on the Street, Friends of Hillyfields and Medway Youth Trust Connexions Service amongst others. The five weeks ended with an area trip to Thorpe Park, where only the brave or foolish tried SAW – The Ride. Congratulations to the team, who worked incredibly hard and demonstrated good team working and mutual support.
FOCUS ON CHATHAM AND ROCHESTER

LORDSWOOD YOUTH CENTRE

Concerns raised by the Lordswood Partners and Community Together (PACT) led to Kent Police, Medway Community Safety Partnership and Medway Council’s Youth Service arranging a day of clearing litter and removing graffiti in August. Local residents who were involved were pleased to see young people taking part, organised by youth worker Tyler Wilkins. The day was a success and was reported in the Medway Messenger.

The young people took charge at Lordswood Youth Centre in National Youth Work Week. They planned and delivered their own session, supported by youth workers Leona Smith and Donna James. Staff and young people all enjoyed the occasion and this positive experience will be repeated. The young people also asked to hold a sleepover. All funds raised went to a local young person who was raising money to work abroad with those in third world countries.

About 50 young people took part in the Summer Dayz programme at the centre, with activities from football to arts and crafts. Youth worker Melissa Furnell’s art project making a mascot for the summer was well received. On the final day more than 40 young people took part in a table football tournament with parents, youth workers and library staff. Thank you to Richard Pemberton from Medway Library Service for organising this.

WOODIES YOUTH CENTRE

Woodies received outstanding reports when they had a mystery shopper for C-card*. They gained 100% in delivery of service along with another youth centre - Woodlands in Gillingham.

Young people enjoyed two weeks of fun at Summer Dayz, run in partnership with The Thomas Aveling School and Warren Wood Primary School. Workshops included street dance, football coaching, clay model building, henna tattoos, pizza and cake making, eco bag and t-shirt designing, Wii and Xbox challenges and Zoo Lab, where they got close to creepy crawlies including giant land snails and snakes. The two weeks finished with the Woodies Got Talent show, featuring dance and majorette displays and comedy. Thank you to all involved in making this a successful program.

* C-card is a free and confidential service, providing free condoms, advice and information to young people in Medway who are 13-years-old and over. For more information please visit www.mixitonline.co.uk/healthandrelationships.

COMMUNITY COHESION PROJECT

The objective of this project is to integrate different communities in the Luton and All Saints areas and to date this is being successfully achieved. The project is well supported by Kent Police. The PCs and PCSOs attending the weekly sessions in All Saints Church have built up great relationships with the young people. When the project started there was little respect for the police but now they are welcomed into the project and the young people really enjoy engaging with them. 25 to 50 young people attend each week and most are working towards an Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) award.

In August, Stacey Gough - youth development worker for Luton and Wayfield - joined Kent Police for an very successful evening operation in the Luton area, to increase community spirit and awareness by walking around and engaging with residents of all ages to offer support and tell them about local services. This exercise also supported Kent Police in their community work and gave first hand experience of the struggles and problems they face within their work.

MULTI SPORTS ON SUNDAY

Natalie Dowling - youth development worker for Walderslade and Weedswood - has recently started working with Greenacre School in a sports programme held on Sundays to attract young people off the Street and into the school, where a variety of sports take place during the afternoon. Futsal sessions are also being planned, both at Greenacre School and at Hook Meadow Ball Court.

MEDWAY-WIDE WORK

In July a young person contacted BBC Newsround because she believed there was not much for young people to do in Medway. They contacted Medway Council and Andrew Willetts - acting area youth work manager for Chatham and Rochester - was interviewed on the programme by the young person. She was given the Summer Activities booklet - which lists a wide range of activities for young people in Medway during the summer break - and information from the MixItOnline website maintained by Medway Council’s Youth Service. The young person agreed there was a lot to do and that she just had to work out how to get to the various locations.
FOCUS ON STROOD AND HOO

SATURDAY CLUB

The club is run by youth worker Tony Randall on Saturday mornings for young people aged 10 to 15 years old. In September the young people discussed radio as Tony worked in radio before he became a youth worker and they decided they would like to record a radio show. The young people arranged a visit to Hospital Radio Medway at Medway Maritime Hospital. They had to choose all the records and programme them into the computer and then presented a two-hour show for the hospital. The show went out every Sunday for a month and they have been asked back to record more shows.

During discussions about what the young people would like to do in the future, many of them said they would like to work with animals. Tony arranged a visit to the RSPCA's Leybourne Animal Centre, where they were shown around and had a question and answer session with an inspector. The visit inspired the young people to raise money and to collect things the RSPCA desperately needs for the animals - food, towels etc.

CHATTENDEN

Following positive work started in the summer holidays, a new detached team has started a temporary project with young people in Chattenden on Monday evenings. During the summer ORBIT Training - a unique mobile motorcycle project that delivers youth diversion programmes and teaches young people motorbike safety and maintenance – delivered a motorbike project in partnership with London and Quadrant Housing Trust (L&Q) and Medway Council’s Extended Services team. The SOS bus also visited the area and young people were invited to join sessions at Strood Youth Centre. As a result of consultation with young people in the area, the team has hired Chattenden community centre’s IT suite to run a trial month of informal homework clubs on Monday evenings. The team is also consulting with girls in Chattenden to find out what activities they would be interested in.

STROOD COMMUNITY DAY

In September the Strood community events committee organised the fourth Strood Community Day. The event involved groups from the Strood Community Project, St Francis of Assisi Church, Strood Action Volunteers, Medway Council’s Youth Service, Kent Fire and Rescue, Kent Police, Medway Safer Communities Officers, Medway Council Trading Standards Team, staff from Medway Council’s recycling team, Sure Start, Boys Brigade, Kent Scouts. Displays included a fantastic performance by Jade’s Dance. Activities included face painting, circus skills, bucking bronco, arts and crafts, belly dancing, a gladiator challenge and much more. It is estimated that around 1,000 people attended the event, making it the most popular so far. Cllr John Avey said “It was a fantastic day for the kids, the community and Strood. We were blessed by the weather and everyone I spoke to said that it was the best event they had ever been to in the Strood area. We look forward to seeing people next year.”

CLIFFE

In August the Cliffe detached team ran an extremely successful music project, attended by 80 young people aged 13 to 19. They wrote lyrics, created music, performed for their peers and recorded a live CD, working with Harry Shotta and Fumin. The group is looking forward to future events.

SOS BUS

During the summer holidays Medway Council’s Youth Service worked with various partners to bring young people’s support services to villages on the Hoo peninsula using the SOS bus. The project was developed because young people told us that they find it difficult to make appointments and get support due to transport issues. On the bus were workers from the youth service, Medway teenage pregnancy and sexual health teams, Connexions careers advisors, KCA drugs and alcohol workers and Medway’s smoking cessation service. The bus was well received by young people and the community and has been booked to run similar sessions in early December.