

## Sheppey FM -Station of The Year Entry

Like most community radio stations, we are proud of being able to provide a wide mixture of music and shows and offer our listeners variety. We have live shows running from 7am until Midnight every day, trying to cater for all genres. We are live for 15 hours a day most days and have over 50 volunteers. We do like to have different people on set daytime shows through the week to have a change in voice daily, but we do have just a couple of people doing Breakfast and similar for Drive Time, most of our daytime shows are dedicated to local charity to give them publicity regularly. We run the tourist information centre for the Isle of Sheppey, hopefully soon, we may get a brown sign on the motorway, this is run by our volunteers.

Our specialist shows are Classic Rock, Cult Rock, Classic Country, Club Sheppey, 90s, 80's, Rock n Roll, Reggae and so on but we also have a show dedicated to unsigned or new/local artists in order to showcase these, they have their music played or can even come and play live they usually have interviews, and a full social media write up too.

Not all our shows sound as professional and as polished as many would expect, this is because we are different, we offer volunteering and training opportunities for



all, no matter their ability or disability. This extends to our presenters, we have 2 presenters that are blind one is completely blind and one almost completely blind, Abbie who was born without eyes reads the weather and community news on her braille computer and uses markers on the desk to control her microphone. We have one with severe Parkinson's Disease and now unfortunately leukaemia that now needs constant support, he may sometimes struggle with speech and needs longer to thank and respond. We have 4 presenters with autism, 2 with ADHD, one with Schizophrenia, 1 with slight brain damage, 2 more with learning difficulties and a few that really struggle with their mental health. We support each and every one to have their own shows or co-host, if necessary, any help they need is always available. The very ethos of our station is inclusion for all, and we make sure that stays with us.

We take great pride in our training at Sheppey FM, we recently received the Princess Royal Training award presented to us by Princess Anne and were one of only 6 organisations in the country to also get a Special Commendation from the Princess Royal. This is because of our great inclusion of adults with difficulties but also for our wide range of youth training projects. We have a youth show that hosts every Saturday that are not only budding radio presenters but are gaining skills in programming, production, speech, and journalism and. Each week the youth team research and record local



news, which is used by all presenters, they source guests for on air interviews and even go out on the field to interview at events, they also create their own PSAs, Jingles, and competitions. We



are also an arts award centre offering the chance of an accredited qualification for everyone under the age of 25 that wants it. The youth team are all studying arts awards with us many have already gained silver awards with us and are currently training for their Gold which is an A level equivalent. This last year we have passed 65 Arts Awards from Discover to Silver and overseen 8 DofE awards too.



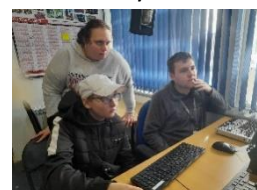
We also work with various groups of young people requested by the local school, some of our groups are young people that have been removed from main stream school and not allowed on school premises at all due to violent behaviour, some are struggling with confidence in learning and struggling to be part of mainstream school, we take these all, train them, teach them and show them a better path in life and the values of putting others first. On this project we team up with the community chef where he teaches them about food and hygiene and cooking as a vocation, we teach them how to be radio presenters, how to host, speak to people, how to recognise local issues and help others, we even introduce them to a local PCSO and get them to interview a local councillor. At the end of each rehabilitation into education project they host an event for a group of elderly and socially isolated people, they cook, they serve, they talk and liaise with them, they greet them and keep them company and they play them music too. This is a great way of integrating different generations and making a real difference to people's lives. We run a creative media arts award course which is taught both in the classroom and the studio, here they learn about all aspects of media rather than just radio and gain a qualification from it.



As well as training projects as big as those mentioned above, we also offer work experience in the radio station for several young people, we have had many through the door but in the last year we



have had some very special work experience. We've had many from the local college some have come for a great experience and a notch on their CVs, but some really needed help with their anxieties and confidence, they always leave us with miles more confidence than when they started.



In addition to supporting our mainstream provisions we also continue to work with our local special needs school, we have trained some with profound autism, down syndrome, cerebral palsy, and wheelchair bound. These young people melt our hearts and always want to come back to visit, we also take the roadshow to their school so more of the students can have a go, the school have asked us to help them build their own station in their school which we have been helping them with this.



All young people that come to us for training are gifted a brand-new set of headphones, receive participation certificates and a CD with some of their radio work.



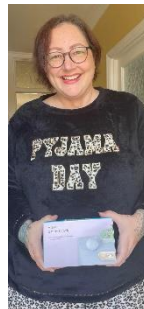
This past year we've supported lots of events for charities with our roadshows, these have included



cancer research, cat protection, Kent wildlife rescue, Harmony Therapy Trust, Mencap, Sateda help for firefighters and supporting local schools and community groups. We do not charge fundraisers a fee for providing a roadshow at their events. But we ask businesses for a donation to the station if we are booked for a non-charity event.



During covid like many stations we gave out FM/DAB radios but this last year we went one step further with the help and generosity of some of our presenters that funded them, we gave away



Amazon Echo Smart Speakers.

We continue to do provide listeners with a Sunday Church service each week in partnership with local churches, this has proven very popular, our presenters provided live shows on Christmas Day and New Years eve as well as normal as we have realised many in our community are still socially isolated post-covid and the radio interaction is a lifeline for many. We also continue to support the Ukraine project we built up last year. This year we gave our Ukrainian guests a Christmas party and a Coronation Party, complete with Ukrainian music. The children loved it. We done fund raising for Save the Children, Comic Relief and Cancer Research too.

At Sheppey FM we always try to help where it is needed most, last year was the Ukraine Project, this year it has been centred mostly around the cost-of-living crisis.

We are based in one of the most deprived towns in the south of England, 43 percent of our population is under 18 and over 65 percent of those are living in poverty, the new high energy costs and raise



of prices on all essentials caused great concern. We have already supported all of the islands food banks and continue to do so but wanted to do more, we had the means of communication, broadcasting, storage, and room to use so we decided to use all that to help. The first idea was to supply a warm space, the weather was getting cold and people were scared to put the heating on, this was the birth of toasty Mondays, where they got toast and a hot drink as well as a warm space with lots of company, it also birthed Winter Warmers where they can all get hot and freshly made soup by our community chef and a bread roll also use of a warm space and occasionally we had guest speakers.

Another thing we wanted to do was help make sure everyone had a winter coat, we used the power of the airwaves to get donations, we then had a team of volunteers that washed, ironed, repaired,



and made the coats as good as new, we advertised the event where members of the public came in and chose a coat and kept it for free. Some of our volunteers even knitted scarves and hats to



donate.

The next big focus was Christmas, we wanted to help in as many ways as we can in the same ways as before with coat drive, donations from and to the community, we decided to have a toy drive where



we collected used or new/nearly new toys, all in good enough condition to give as presents and invited families to come along and pick up for free a toy for every child they have.



The toy drive helped over 120 families we wanted to do a bit more though and thought every child deserved something new for Christmas so with some funding from local councillors we gave away



Giant Craft Boxes, any parent that got in touch with the studio saying they feel they need one for their child was allowed one, this went crazy but was very worthwhile.

One of our presenters went far and beyond put together from his own pocket Christmas hampers to



give away one for each week in December. These all went to very worthy households, we hear they even benefitted some of their neighbours.

Another great project that we have been running throughout the year to help struggling families is the community wardrobe where we give families free school uniform, this project runs every 3 weeks we use the time in between to collect as much as we can, we have had local supermarkets donate us brand new items too, this year we have helped 236 children with school uniform, hopefully by the time this is read we would have helped 300.



Its more than just giving stuff away that helps the community though, the most important thing we can give is the knowledge and support for people to help themselves, we have made a point of having features on our shows given money saving tips and advice, including Jason our community chef giving out a weekly one-pot money saving recipe, local DWP advice sessions and regular MP surgeries where the community got the chance to ask him for advice and support, our presenter of the surgery is also very good at holding the MP to account and fighting answer at least. Healthwatch Kent have a regular slot to raise awareness of all things self-care and medical, particularly when it comes to cost cutting. We also help run a men's mental health group which has massively increased in numbers since the cost-of-living crisis, this group encourages men to talk it out with other men, but they also go on outings together. We signpost people to the right places if they need support but most importantly our door is always open, and our kettle is free to use.



We have been working with the DWP to have job spot on the stations, they supply the jobs available we promote them and then give them application details, so far, it's a good working relationship and hopefully helping people get employment.



Our war on waste project is still in full swing and we arrange many community beach cleans, and street cleans, we also act as a recycling centre taking in plastic, crisp packets, ink cartridges, batteries and more.

We like to think at Sheppey FM we are much more than a radio station, we are a big community project offering something for everyone and always look at what our area needs from us, if we see anything lacking in the community and can do something about, we will, we are always open to suggestions and will help anyone we can.

