Dear Parent / Guardian / Participant (over 18) September 2023

Please read this letter prior to completing the registration process for the Warehouse Open Centre

* Warehouse Open Award Centre Registration Form available online https://woc.org.uk/join-us

We have been operating for over fourteen years, offering the Award to young people, but demand for places is high and this means that only those young people who are really committed to the Award should apply.

We have a committed leadership team working in the Warehouse Open Centre, all are qualified volunteers, who have extensive experience of providing the Award locally over many years.

**Structure of the Award**

At each level the Award consists of four sections & an extra section at Gold:

**Physical** - learning a new sport, eg indoor rock climbing, dancing, squash, rugby etc.

**Skill** - learning a new skill. This can be anything from playing a musical instrument, to archery, to learning another language. There are literally hundreds of different options!

**Volunteering** - doing something for the community, eg volunteering in a charity shop, working on a conservation project, helping with youth work or clubs, or working in an old people’s home.

**Expedition\*** - Planning, preparing and undertaking an expedition which is self-sufficient in rural/open country. Training and assessment will take place in such locations as the Mournes or the Antrim Plateau.

*(A separate Medical form is required before practice and qualifying expeditions)*

**Residential –** (Gold Only) This involves spending 5 days and 4 nights away from home on a shared activity with people you’ve never met before. It may be that you want to build on a talent you’ve developed in another section, learn something completely new on an intensive course or do something to help others.

This IS a big commitment. Do you have the time and commitment to do this?

In the past, participants have found that D of E has taken up a lot of their spare time.

**Expedition Section \***

Training for the expedition section will commence in January on Wednesday evenings for approximately 10 weeks. In addition, there are one day practical sessions, practice and qualifying expeditions. Participants must attend all the training sessions and the weekend practice to complete the expedition section of the award. Further details will be issued in due course. If a group require additional training or do not meet the required physical or safety standards further practice expeditions may be necessary.

**Communication**

We have a website https://woc.org.uk which we use for distributing information to participants and parents. Please provide an email address on the application form for yourself and your son or daughter and make sure the consent box is ticked as these will be used to notify you of any updates and dates and times of activities that we will not publish on social media. We also have Social media pages available on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter .

**Policies**

At the Warehouse Open Centre, we strive to offer a safe environment for our young people and volunteers.

We have a number of policies in place to help create this environment and provide guidance and standards of behaviour. Our policies include Expedition standards, bullying, behaviour management, health and safety. Our policies are regularly reviewed, and copies are available at any time on request from info@woc.org.uk.

**Child Protection**

We at the Warehouse Open Centre have a responsibility for the safeguarding and child protection of the children and young persons in our care and we will carry out this duty by providing a caring, supportive and safe environment, where each person is valued for their unique talents and abilities and in which all our young people can learn and develop to achieve their full potential. A copy of our policy can be obtained on request from the Designated Child Protection Lead – safeguarding@woc.org.uk

**Fees**

The registration fees for the Warehosue Open Centre, covering the 2023/24 academic year are not being increased, and are as follows:

Bronze £75 Silver £99 Gold £135

*(Payment will be requested via an electronic invoice enabling online payment)*

These fees cover the cost of licencing with the Award, expedition loan equipment, expedition assessment fees, expenses, practices, training and expeditions along with a contribution to the running costs of the Centre, leaders training and insurance. There may be minimal additional costs involved in the young person’s expedition for cooking fuel and if the final expedition is held outside Northern Ireland, (normally only at Gold level). We will inform you of any such costs in advance.

Please note that we do not offer refunds of fees paid for any reason.

**Equipment**

While we have a range of modern expedition equipment that we can lend to the young people for their expeditions, which includes tents, rucksacks, sleeping bags, first aid kits, stoves and waterproof clothing.

We do not supply boots and other personal clothing. It is the responsibility of each young person to have adequate personal equipment, which is suitable for a multi-day expedition to mountainous areas (in particular for Silver and Gold).

All Loan equipment must be booked out, signed for and returned in good condition. (Damages will be invoiced)

**Points of note**

Based on many years of experience in delivering the Award, we would like to highlight a number of points, which are important to consider before any young person should decide to commence their Award. These are as follows:

1. Often young people underestimate the level of fitness required during their expedition, where they are expected to walk for a number of days in hilly terrain with a loaded rucksack. For Silver, this is three days and for Gold, four days, with each day’s journey time being around 8 hours. While an unusually high level of fitness is not required, we have found some young people’s fitness to be quite low and this is something they should begin to work on well in advance of the expedition.
2. We have continually invested in our equipment pool over recent years for the benefit of all participants. While we are very happy to lend this to the young people for both their training and qualifying expeditions, if it should be lost or damaged (beyond normal wear and tear), we will expect the participants to pay in full for the repair or replacement of the equipment. There will be no exceptions.
3. The qualifying expedition for Silver is three days and for Gold, four days. This means that time off school may be required as we normally run the expeditions during term time. Please be aware of this. We also may run training days at weekends, which inevitably involve Saturdays. While we try and fit around other activities, it is not possible to satisfy all young people’s preferences, otherwise we would be unable to complete their training. Again, please ensure this will not be an issue.
4. We will decide on the precise dates for training and qualifying expeditions as soon as possible. We cannot take account of everyone’s desire for differing weekends. We always aim to avoid the key exam times but cannot guarantee to fit around family weekends or parties (this is a more common request than you may think)!
5. Should we decide that your child isn’t of a standard to participate in an expedition, for example due to reasons of poor behaviour in breach of the expedition standards or a significant lack of fitness, then we will not allow them to continue. This is simply for their own safety and that of the other young people participating.

While some of the above points may seem unduly harsh, we make them only because we want to ensure the young people know what to expect and have the highest likelihood of obtaining their Award. It can be a lot of fun and very rewarding for everyone involved.

If you have any questions on these points or the registration documents, please contact us and ask for a Teams invite , where we will be very happy to chat to you regarding any aspect of the Award or, email me at mark@woc.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Mark Shaw

Centre Co-ordinator