

What of the future?



David West-Mullen
Project Manager

This Summer will see the sixth year of my role as Project Manager for the gap and I can honestly say it has been a real privilege to be part of the journey God has been leading us all on in helping the young people we have engaged with to feel secure, valued, loved and encouraged.*

Parts of the journey have been tough, both as an organisation and for some of the young people we have worked with and those we are still working with. But we have always been driven by Jesus' example of being non-judgmental, compassionate, empathetic and caring, regardless of the final outcomes. It seems God has opened up (and closed some) doors for us through projects that have come about in order to meet the needs we face with a number of these young people. Our HeadSpace and AdaptED projects are now well underway and look to be accelerating faster than we can get volunteers for them. Although this confirms our need for setting up these projects in the first place, it also means that we are in danger of becoming victims of our own success.

The other major (and more urgent) issue is the, often sticky, one of funding. Working only two days a month for us, our Fundraiser has been hugely effective in raising funds, especially for the 'projects' we have proposed. However the bulk of the funding required for the gap* is for the sustainability of the paid part-time workers (those being Hannah and myself). As the Charity goes forward it becomes more and more difficult to procure external funding for sustainability. So this has to be raised by donations. We are eternally grateful for the sacrificial giving of our regular supporters, some of whom have been supporting the gap* well before myself or Hannah came on the scene. However, our latest financial forecast seems to indicate that without some significant financial input, the gap* will be well into the red by the end of the Summer this year and thereby putting it's future in jeopardy.

Whilst all this may sound a bit gloomy, God is clearly at work, opening new doors for our projects, providing funding for new part-time youth worker, and establishing the role of the gap* as a pivotal service in the schools and local community as well as further afield. We believe God is well capable of providing all that we need if it falls in line with His will and we earnestly seek that will (*John 16:21-24*), and that the last 2000 years of church history is littered with stories that illustrate His amazing and timely provision.

I would ask you to prayerfully consider whether you would be able to either increase your support for the gap*, become a regular financial supporter or be able to offer a one-off gift. For our part, we are looking at an annual fundraising event, raising our profile in events such as the Great Midlands Fun Run, becoming the designated Charity to local schools we currently work in and through on-line giving (<https://www.thegapsuttoncoldfield.org/donate>). We firmly believe God is wanting the original vision of the gap* to be fruitful and we get a glimpse of this through the doors He seems to open for us...so we trust in our Jehovah Jireh (the God who provides).

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The gap* Sutton Coldfield



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Supporter's Meal 2017

Our 3rd annual Supporter's Meal will be held at Oikos Cafe/Church, Erdington High Street, Birmingham on Friday May 5th. As with previous occasions there will be a two course meal, live entertainment and a chance to hear from the staff, Trustees, volunteers and some young people about all the gap* has been and is currently doing. It is also our way of saying a thankyou to all of you who support us. The venue can accommodate up to 85 so places will require booking. This can be done by contacting us via mobile numbers or email address on the green column on the left hand side of this newsletter. This will be an evening not to be missed... so book your place ASAP!

FESTIVE FUNDRAISER!

It seems an age ago now but last November saw us hold our first ever fundraising event. Helped by the generosity of the lovely people at Harvestfields Centre, we had a fun night that revolved around a quiz, cakes, cards, photobooth and prizes.



A number of our drop-in visitors assisted as 'Santa's little helpers' in serving cakes, selling Christmas cards, being runners for the Quiz and just being friendly to people who came in... we love 'em! Live music came courtesy of two students from Walsall Studio School. The event raised over £600 for the gap* and with over 100 people in attendance has encouraged us to hold another one later this year, so watch out for details about that!

THE VENUE news

The Venue has gained new faces since our last Newsletter. The lovely Chloe has recently joined us on Mondays at the drop-in. She hails from sunny Cornwall and her positive personality is having an impact on some of the young people. Back in February we had student, Chris join us for a 5 week placement linked with a local church that supports the gap*.



His main interest is sport especially Tennis (although he is a proficient pool player!!) By the time you read this Chris will have left us but we have greatly valued his input with some of our young people and wish him great success for the future.

We have been busy with a number of our young drop-in visitors recently, having helped out with housing, food parcels and bus-passes. We have also got two young men onto apprenticeships, supporting them through the process and keeping tabs on them once have got onto the course.



Partnership prevails at Walsall Studio School

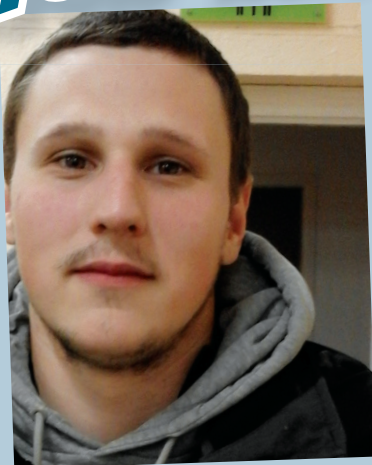
We have been working in partnership with Walsall Studio School for the past year and currently have three gap* people seeing around twelve young people on a weekly basis under the HeadSpace project. The school have chosen to make the gap* one of the Charities that they financially support through their regular performances and events. There are also an additional music-related partnership project being planned towards the end of the Summer holidays this year. Pictured above are WSS Deputy Principal, Darren Perry and gap*'s Project Manager, David West-Mullen.

Projects update....

HeadSpace, our mental Health Support project is accelerating rapidly with three of us now seeing around 18 young people on a weekly basis with more being referred all the time. We are currently looking at setting up our own in-house training allowing us to encourage and equip more volunteers to meet this ever increasing need... surely a reflection on these times for young people.

AdaptED has just finished working with it's first young person who has felt confident enough to sit her exams and is now waiting for results. We hope to work with her on the next stage of getting into work. We have three more referrals lined up and have taken on two more volunteer tutors (one male, one female) bringing our current total to four. We hope to have all of them engaged with a young person over the next few weeks.

HOW WE HELP...



Kirk was a young person who regularly came up to the Venue along with a couple of his mates. As a group they were not intentionally troublesome lads though we needed to keep a regular watch on them as they could get up to mischief if left totally unchecked! Chatting with Kirk on a regular basis helped build a trust that allowed him start to share personal things about himself and his family. His use of recreational drugs was always an issue and he would often tell us stories of run-ins with the Police though he himself had never been arrested...as time went on we saw less of him and when he did return, he was doing casual work with a Landscape gardening company. He once spoke quite seriously of trying to start his own business in this area but despite our offer to help him in this, it never quite worked out. Kirk is a very articulate young man and likes to debate issues. He also has a very engaging personality and holds strong views on certain subjects however, he is always willing to listen to others.

Kirk did eventually get serious about having full-time employment and being able to pay his way. He is currently still in and out of casual work in the both construction and landscape gardening. We are quite proud of how Kirk is maturing as a young adult and we believe he has yet to reach his full potential. He has been happy to talk about how the gap* has guided and encouraged him through the years.

The gap*, Our Place Community Hub, Farthing Lane, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham B72 1RN

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