



## Annual Report 2023 - 2024



# Engaging with and investing in the lives of young people.



The Gap (Sutton Coldfield) was originally established in 2008 with the intention of engaging with and investing in the lives of hard-to-reach or marginalised young people in Sutton Coldfield town centre and its immediate surrounding areas. During September 2023 the charity changed its name to The Gap (Midlands) to reflect the wider area it was now operating within, though Sutton Coldfield remains its main priority.

The Gap looks to step into the gap between exclusion and acceptance, between condemnation and understanding, between apathy and hope. We seek to demonstrate by what we do that actions speak louder than words.

“ Every young person deserves a chance to develop and succeed and we are committed to empowering them to achieve their dreams. ”

Our objectives are to create opportunities for excluded and marginalised young people from ages 12-18 by assisting

them in developing their skills and capabilities to realise their full potential. The first step to achieving these goals is to build trust and relationships, engaging on their terms and in non-judgmental environments.

We carry this out through running a number of projects: The Venue is our after school drop-in right in the heart of the town centre; The Gap Studio, our recording facility (based in the Venue) that encourages young people to express themselves through music and in creating their own podcasts (we call this GapChat). In addition we have our detached youth work project, Out There, where staff and volunteers are on the streets of the town centre engaging and forming relationships with young people within the local community. Finally there's HeadSpace, our schools project, where we train staff and volunteers in mentoring, equipping them to support students with any wellbeing, mental health or behaviour issues they may be struggling with.





## A message from the Chair of Trustees.

Welcome to our first official Annual Report, detailing the current and developing aspects of The Gap over the past year. The Gap has been

built on 15 years of supporting young people through the various stages of their teenage journey, developing spaces and initiatives that welcome them, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, class, religion or background. By building relationships through care and compassion, we engage with young people, identifying their needs and investing time and resources that help bring them to understand their true potential.

In my current role, (having stepped down in 2020 from having been Project Manager for nine years), I am encouraged to see what has been accomplished in the last few years where we have seen many charities and organisations struggling through a very challenging season.

I am also very excited to see the implementation of a recently refreshed image for The Gap. I consider it to be a positive move to update our 'branding' in order to continue to be relevant and professional in the ever-changing area of youth work. These past months have seen our image reviewed and revived, especially online, in order to make sure that we are still expressing effectively who we are.

On behalf of the Trustees, I want to thank our brilliant staff team as they explore and develop new connections and possibilities in this much needed area of work. I am also grateful to my fellow Trustees, our Fundraiser, Treasurer and admin people, our amazing volunteers, our fabulous donors and all who support us in any capacity. Each one has played a part in helping us through a challenging season. I pray that this support will continue, so that The Gap can continue reaching out to the young people we desire to help.

*David West-Mullen*



# Trustees and Key Personnel

The Gap is driven by a group of Trustees plus our Treasurer and Fundraiser. The Trustees are responsible for the overall management and vision of the Charity, with each Trustee playing a unique role or roles. Trustee Philip Palser is also the Operations Manager, and line manager for the staff, working in tandem with the Treasurer.



Philip Palser  
Trustee



John Walker  
Trustee



Reuben Pearse  
Trustee



Christine Morphet  
Trustee



Dave Hodgkinson  
Trustee



Steve Smith  
Treasurer



Bob Candlin  
Fundraiser



Lynda West-Mullen  
Safeguarding Lead &  
Training Coordinator



Kaye Adkins  
HeadSpace  
Administrator

## Our Youth Workers

**Chloe Spoors**  
(Youth Worker)

“ I started working for The Gap in October 2023, straight after finishing my degree. I have a real heart and passion for helping young people thrive. The Gap has really helped me grow in so many areas, including in my mentoring skills and youth engagements. I am so very excited to see what the future has in store for this next generation! ”

**George Griffiths**  
(Senior Youth Worker)

“ I’ve worked for The Gap for just under 3 years now. I have been blown away by the work that has been done over the years and how many kids have received support that has been life changing to them. I feel very blessed to work alongside some amazing people who are equally passionate about seeing young people thriving in life. ”





The Venue is the Gap's youth drop-in centre and is one of our main points of engagement with young people aged from 12 -18. The building interior underwent a radical internal refurbishment in 2014, and it continues to serve its purpose as a place for young people to relax, chill-out, play games or just meet up and chat. Through these opportunities to engage with the young people in a safe and open environment over a free hot chocolate, conversations are had and trusting relationships are built. Aply supported by staff and passionate volunteers, Venue opens it's doors every Monday, Wednesday and Friday after school time and attracts a steady stream of young people, predominantly from secondary schools and Sutton Coldfield College.







Within The Venue drop-in is The Gap's recording Studio, a facility that helps young people develop their abilities and talents through music, singing and the production of podcasts. Young people are encouraged to create their own music, develop songwriting skills or to sing/rap over backing tracks. Participants can take away recordings for their own use. All of this is carried out with our youth workers overseeing the processes.

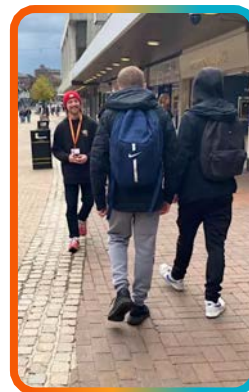
Accessible on The Gap's website and social media platforms, the podcasts (under the name GapChat) allow and encourage young people to express their views, feelings and opinions on topics that impact their everyday lives. There is also a mobile version of this project that the team take into schools and colleges.







This is the name The Gap adopts for its detached youthwork in Sutton Coldfield Town Centre. Out There allows the team to connect with young people in their own spaces, which often brings about a different approach in communications. This work also allows The Gap to be seen as having a visible presence on the streets, which benefits both the young people, town centre security staff and the Police/PCSOs. It helps in bringing about a more coordinated and holistic approach to the work with young people in their community.





Utilising both staff and volunteers, HeadSpace offers support programmes delivered by mentors trained in Level 3 Mentoring with the capacity to update their skills via relevant supporting courses. Working on a referral basis, there is a high demand for our services in this area of work. Mentors strive to create healthy working relationships with the school's pastoral staff to ensure that all safeguarding and GDPR protocols are in place, observed and adhered to whilst undertaking this ever-growing area of need.



*“ I passed all of [my exams] and to be honest I think it's down to my mentor. Before I started seeing her I was naughty at school and I never turned up. I was in such a bad place but then I started seeing my mentor and everything changed, I got so much better. She impacted me so much! If I walked out of school on a Tuesday and I wasn't very happy the first thing my*

*boyfriend would say is have you not seen your mentor today and I think that just shows how much of a help she was to me. I can't thank her enough for everything. ”*





*“ I have learnt that I can talk about anything. Literally anything. And feel safe and listened to. Before these sessions my thoughts were really negative and dark, and although HeadSpace hasn't completely stopped those thoughts, I now know how to cope with them better. I also feel that through my relationship with the support worker that I am able to be more patient and understanding with other people. ”*

*“ The sessions helped me a lot. Before I used to just want to punch people and feel really angry, now I feel more relaxed and see that walking away from people annoy me is better. ”*

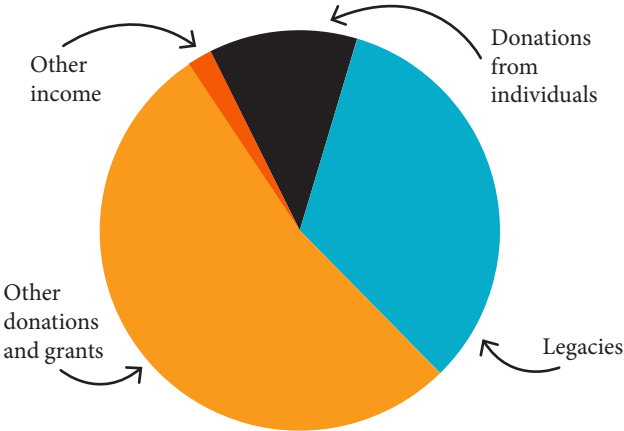


*“ When I was in year 10 I struggled a lot with my mental health. Most days I had no motivation to do anything I had no hopes or dreams for the future and I was stuck in a constant cycle of battling with my mental health. That's when I was introduced to The Gap where me and my mentor had one-to-one sessions every week which helped me so much. It was such a relief that I had someone who I could speak with openly about how I was feeling with no judgement or worry. Throughout my journey at school, my mentor stayed with me and we continued our sessions every week. She would give me a better outlook and strategies I could use when I was feeling like that and I've got to say that there has been occasions where if I didn't have my sessions with her, I don't think I would be here. ”*

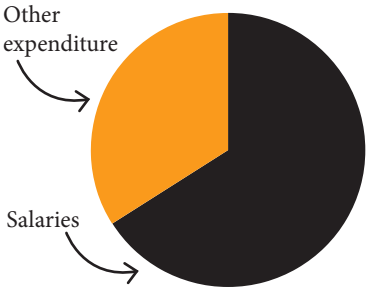
# Finance

The data below represents The Gap’s annual income and expenditure over the last year, boosted by an unexpected one-off legacy. We are continually looking to expand our base of regular donors.

Income	
Donations from individuals	£10,856
Legacies	£28,678
Other donations and grants	£47,143
Other income	£2,000
Total	£88,677



Expenditure	
Salaries	£21,922
Other expenditure	£11,251
Total	£33,174

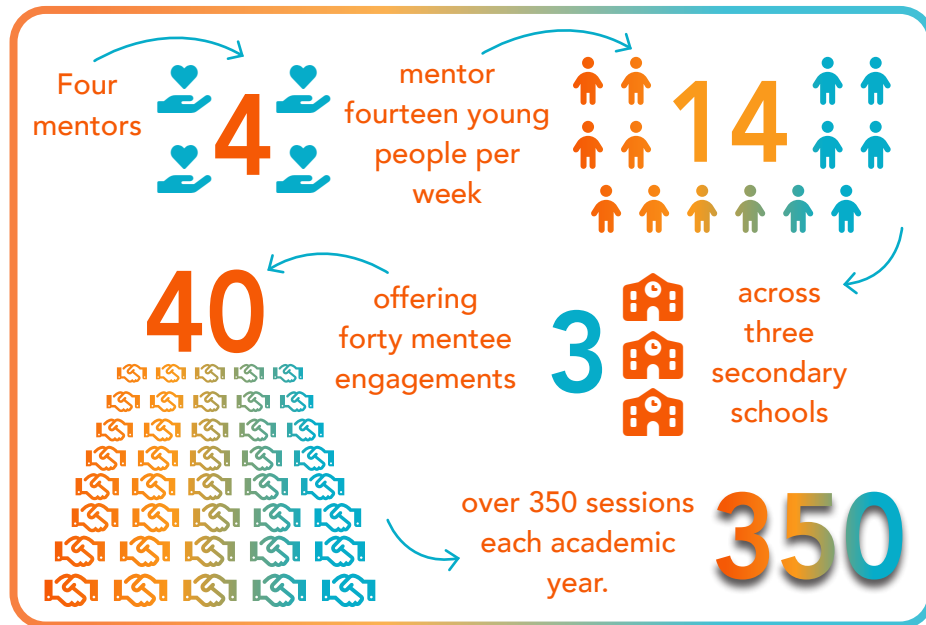


Full accounts can be accessed via this QR code.



## Our volunteers and some statistics.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of The Gap. Without our amazing volunteers we would be unable to offer the level of support to young people that has been undertaken. In the past year these brilliant people have given over 750 hours of support through the Venue and the HeadSpace projects as well as through administration and training. We are always eager for new volunteers to join the team and become part of The Gap family. The figures and statistics below represent the last 12 months.



## Community Support and Partnerships



Chloe, Jodie and George at  
Riverside Academy

“ Riverside, an education provision for SEND students, is thrilled to partner with The Gap. Our intention is always to inspire and raise aspirations, developing potential in all young people. Chloe and George lead insightful workshops for our students to create podcasts for GapChat, fostering personal growth. Students engage in meaningful conversations, aligning with our Social, Moral, Spiritual, and Cultural calendar. They are encouraged to share their thoughts on various topics. Additionally, we organise fundraising events to demonstrate our support for The Gap’s work. Together, we aim to empower young minds and create positive change in our community. ”

**Jodie Vail, Careers Lead, Riverside Education**



**BIRMINGHAM  
CHILDREN'S TRUST**

“ When I saw Becci\* last she told me about how the sessions have helped her with her self-confidence, she feels listened to and valued by staff, she feels it is happy safe environment to come in to, and she tells me she tries to visit three to four times a week, she also enjoys the hot chocolates! She told me she has recently participated in a podcast which I had to get hold of to share with her social worker – we also shared this in our team too as it was great to hear one of our young people excelling and engaging in such a positive way all because of you and your team supporting her. ” **Hannah Moseley (Vulnerable Young People: Prevention Service)**

\* name changed for safeguarding purposes.

# Thank you

We could not undertake the work we have done over the this past year without the many Charitable Trusts and Foundations who have supported us. We also are extremely grateful to all our individual donors without whose committed and continued support we would be unable to offer our services and support local young people.

The Albert Hunt Trust

The Blakemore Foundation

The Entertainer

GJW Turner Trust

The Goodenough Charitable Trust

The Grimmitt Trust

The Heart of England Community Foundation

The Lillie Johnson Charitable Trust

The Masonic Charitable Foundation

The Roughley Trust

The Skipton Building Society (Sutton Coldfield Branch)

St Chad's Ladies Fellowship

Bishop Walsh School

Duke Street Church

Adore Church, Aston

The Estate of Arthur Beresford-King Smith

Alfred Haines Charitable Trust



***“ The Gap has helped me tremendously! I first started going to The Venue drop in when I started college in September. I had a lot of problems in my first year... My mental health had gotten worse and my anxiety caused me to have panic attacks. I started seeing a mentor. Now I have started an apprenticeship at a Chartered Surveyor and am pushing myself to reach my dreams. The Gap doesn't only help people but it's also family! I hope it helps others in the future like it has helped me through my toughest times. ”***

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