

Impact  
Report 2023/24



# **GRASSROOT COMMUNITIES**

## **Mini Grassroot Activators Programme (GAP)**



**M**EMORIES, MIXING OF DIVERSE  
**P**EOPLE, MENTORS  
**I**NDEPENDENCE  
**N**EW BEGINNINGS  
**I**NNOVATE

**G**RASSROOTS, GROWTH  
**A**CION PROJECTS, AMBITION  
**P**ASSION, POTENTIAL,  
**P**RACTICAL & PURPOSE



## A WORD TO OUR SUPPORTERS

We would like to thank all the companies and organisations who helped fund the Mini GAP 2023/24 pilot programme and supported us in various ways:

1. Equinox
2. Redcliffe & Temple Bid
3. Ghyston
4. AdLib
5. Bristol City Leap
6. Burges Salmon
7. Jabez Trust
8. The Nisbet Trust
9. Places for People
10. UK Youth
11. Bristol City Council
12. University of Bristol
13. First Bus
14. Made for Impact
15. Triodos
16. Wellspring Settlement
17. Cafe Conscious
18. St Mary Redcliffe Hub





## A WORD FROM GC FOUNDER AND CEO BEN CARPENTER

The world is a fast-changing place, and we will need to adapt as individuals, communities, and societies. One thing that AI will not replace and improve is people-centred approaches, soft skills, trust, human connection, a sense of belonging, and more.

Following the successful pilot of our Yearlong GAP 2022/23, we spoke with other everyday people from 17-30 years old from across the city, and it started to become clear that many young people with all the talent yet limited opportunities could not engage in the Yearlong programme. Some of the reasons given were things like capacity, childcare, employment, mental health, trauma, gangs and violence in communities, educational needs, neurodivergence, confidence and focus...

This got me thinking: Can we create different formats of GAP to cater to different people's needs? For example, a shortened version of the Yearlong course? A programme that will still cater to the wants and needs of some young people we had spoken with and still support them on a journey of experiential learning, accessible to all, and importantly still working towards them realising opportunities based on their passions and interests?

Well, this is what we have done,  
and it's called Mini GAP...







## A WORD FROM GC FOUNDER AND CEO BEN CARPENTER

We purposely created new content for the Mini GAP modules - future-proofing the GAP Trilogy of programmes, as some young people may go through Youth GAP (12-18 years old), then Mini GAP (17-30) and then be inspired to enrol onto the Yearlong GAP (17-30) in the future. I listened to these young people, learned from our previous programme, and included content our GC youth work interns had previously shown interest in. I locked myself away in a darkened room to develop the new programme content for a week.

The Mini GAP delivery team then further shaped and tweaked the Connection Module. Following further discussions and meetings with the Bristol City Council Community Development team, we collectively shaped the next iteration of the Community Development Module for the upcoming Mini GAP pilot programme 2023/24.

The prospect of Mini GAP delivery being supported by young leaders who had previously engaged in the Yearlong GAP and were now embarking on a youth work internship with Grassroot Communities and a level 2 youth work course felt like we were heading in the right direction.

The challenge was set: Could we really support young people from 17 to 30 years old across the city with 5 to 4 months' worth of mentoring (much less in some cases) and 12 weeks of group work delivered over 1 day a week to be the changes they want to see and be?

Well, there were many ups and downs along the way, we will learn from these experiences, but I am happy to say change has 100% happened from the grassroots and up, and we cannot wait to share the young people's Mini GAP journeys with you all...

*Ben Carpenter.*



## OUR VISION

We at Grassroot Communities believe that young people have all the talent, but in many communities limited opportunities. We work with everyday young people 8 - 30 year olds from underserved communities in Bristol to be the changes they want to see. We seek to close the opportunity gap. We want all young people to be able to follow their passions and realise their dreams.

## OUR MISSION

Through utilising youth and community work principles and practices, nature-based learning and pioneering community led approaches to engage, challenge and inspire everyday people to have fun, grow in confidence and a sense of belonging, learn skills for life, believe in what is possible and take control of their own lives.

Working in education and community settings to deliver detached youth work, community projects themed around sport, creativity and nature and other targeted community led projects based on identified need, youth worker led 1:1 mentoring, young people led peer to peer mentoring, digital projects and podcasts and paid young leader and youth work internship pathways to employment.



## GC DELIVERY DIAGRAM





## MINI GAP

Mini GAP engages, supports, challenges, and inspires 17 to 30 year olds with a modular programme of experiential learning and informal education to create transformational social change in their lives and social action that positively impacts all ages of residents, groups, and their wider communities.

The Mini GAP staff team, programme content, and individually matched 1:1 business or VCSE mentors support the young leaders in closing the gap and realising future opportunities in education, employment, or experiences based on their interests and passions. Grassroot Communities supports everyday people and communities to be the changes they want to see from the grassroots up.





## THE NEED FOR GAP

Grassroot Communities was established in 2017 alongside the backdrop of austerity and years of devastating government cuts that systematically decimated the Youth Service across England and Wales.

In real terms spending on youth services fell by 64% between 2011/12 and 2021/22, from £947 million down to £341 million (House of Commons, Feb 2024).<sup>\*1</sup>

And new research conducted by Unison found funding cuts led to the closure of more than two thirds (1,243) of council-run youth centres in England and Wales from 2010 to 2023, leaving just 581 centres still in operation at the end of March 2023" (Unison, June 2024).<sup>\*\*2</sup>

A recent National Youth Agency study published in the Guardian showed that "Two thirds of young people say there are very few or some options, but not enough... 10% say there are no options at all.. Over half want more youth work in their area... More than half of people in their late teens are specifically calling out for more youth work that offers fun" (Guardian, June 2024).<sup>\*\*\*3</sup>

The decimation of so many critical youth provisions, services and a once world leading workforce of skilled, experienced and qualified youth work professionals has played a key part in the lost generations of many young people with all the talent, yet limited opportunities in Bristol and beyond.

In most cases, the voluntary sector has been left to pick up the pieces to try and navigate a way to best support underserved communities in truly challenging social, emotional and economic times. We are now seeing how this is playing out with adults who did not have the support they needed at formative times of their lives and are now becoming the parents of today and tomorrow.



## THE NEED FOR GAP

The following statistics help paint a realistic picture of the need for GAP and have been cited via the (Bristol City Council: Bristol Key Facts 2023, Nov 2023).\*\*\*4

As at Dec 2022, 28.1% of Bristol's school pupils (around 17,000 children) are classed as being Disadvantaged.

Bristol has 41 areas in the most deprived 10% in England for Multiple Deprivation, including 3 areas in the most deprived 1% in England from Hartcliffe and Withywood wards of Bristol. Key factors including education, employment, health and wellbeing, crime and more.

10 of the most deprived neighbourhoods in Bristol are all in the South Bristol areas of Hartcliffe, Whitchurch Park and Knowle West. At ward level, the greatest levels of deprivation in Bristol are in the wards of Hartcliffe & Withywood, Lawrence Hill and Filwood, the same as identified in 2015.

The inequalities gap in life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas in Bristol is 9.9 years for men and 6.9 years for women.



## THE NEED FOR GAP

62% of Bristol residents are satisfied with life, down from 68% the year before (and 75% pre-pandemic) and only 46% for people in the most deprived areas.

29.1% of people in Bristol by mid-2022 were between the ages of 0-24 years old, and around a third of the city's population is now 30 years old (Bristol City Councils: Equalities Statistics, January 2024).\*\*\*5

Nearly a third of people living in Bristol and rising identify as Minority Ethnic. E.g. 18.9% Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic... 9.5% White Minority Ethnic... 71.6% White British... \*\*\*4

Everything Grassroot Communities delivers starts with discussions and consultation with the communities and city we serve, which has allowed us to talk with people of all ages across South Bristol and, more recently, underserved communities across the city about what really matters to them.





## THE NEED FOR GAP

These are the following 3 key themes:

- Lack of realistic opportunity, role models and aspirations
- Fear of being at home, school or out in the community and of what the future holds for people and the planet
- Poverty of pocket, food, support, services and resources

More recently Grassroot Communities CEO Ben Carpenter embarked on a 18 month Fellowship at University of Bristol's - School of Education. Ben further researched GAP by talking with education establishments, VCSE organisations and businesses across the city and some national organisations to help identify a clear picture of their collective needs and develop the GAP programmes accordingly.

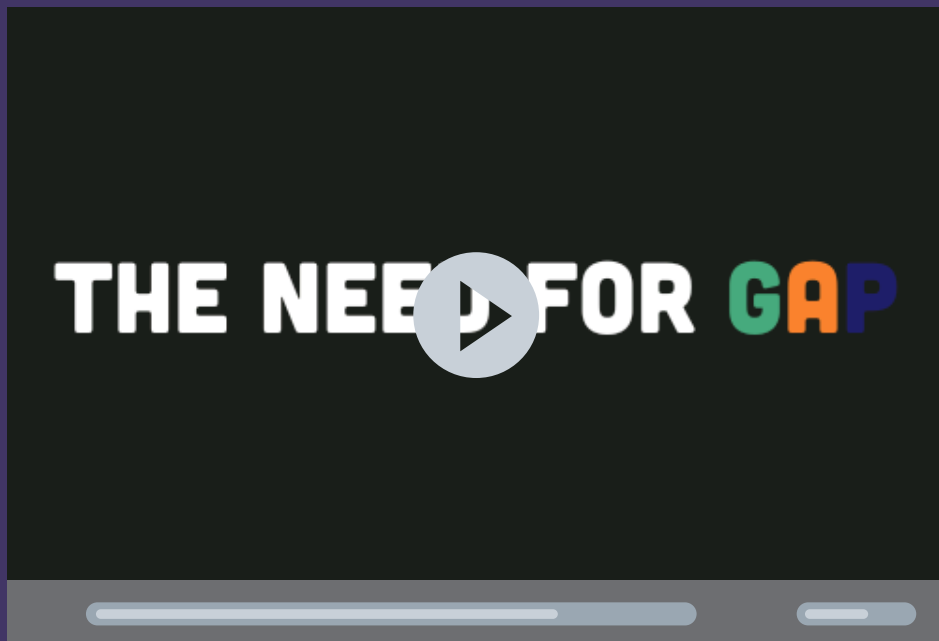
Grassroot Communities Yearlong GAP and Mini GAP programmes exist for everyday young people from 17 – 30 years old from across underserved communities of Bristol and beyond to come together, celebrate their similarities and differences, positively impact on their own and wider communities quality of life, and to close the gap on and realise future opportunities based on their interests and passions.







## THE NEED FOR GAP



\*1 (HOUSE OF COMMONS, FEB 2024) - [TRENDS IN FUNDING LEVELS FOR YOUTH SERVICES - HOUSE OF COMMONS LIBRARY \(PARLIAMENT.UK\)](#)

\*\*2 (UNISON, JUNE 2024) - [CLOSURE OF MORE THAN A THOUSAND YOUTH CENTRES COULD HAVE LASTING IMPACT ON SOCIETY | NEWS, PRESS RELEASE | NEWS | UNISON NATIONAL](#)

\*\*\*3 (GUARDIAN, JUNE 2024) - [HTTPS://AMP-THEGUARDIAN-COM.CDN.AMPPROJECT.ORG/C/S/AMP.THEGUARDIAN.COM/SOCIETY/ARTICLE/2024/JUN/30/TEENAGERS-CRYING-OUT-FOR-RETURN-OF-YOUTH-CLUBS-IN-ENGLAND-STUDY-FINDS](https://amp.theguardian.com/cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/amp.theguardian.com/society/article/2024/jun/30/teenagers-crying-out-for-return-of-youth-clubs-in-england-study-finds)

\*\*\*\*4 (BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL: BRISTOL KEY FACTS 2023, NOV 2023) - [FILE \(BRISTOL.GOV.UK\)](#)

\*\*\*\*\*5 (BRISTOL CITY COUNCILS: EQUALITIES STATISTICS, JANUARY 2024) - [FILE \(BRISTOL.GOV.UK\)](#)



# AN OVERVIEW OF MINI GAP

Mini GAP takes every day 17-30-year-olds in Bristol on a journey of learning, mentoring, and ultimately being supported to create a pathway to an opportunity in Education, Employment or an Experience based on their interests and passions. The 12 weeks of group work is delivered through experiential learning to ensure all young people can engage, develop and thrive.

## 12 WEEK PROGRAMME - MONDAYS 10.30AM-4PM

### TERM 1: CONNECTION & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MODULES

Delivered by the Grassroot Communities team, the Connection module brings the group together, they build trust, develop positive relationships and learn practical, creative skills & knowledge.

1. Induction and What Makes You Magic
2. Teamwork & Problem Solving
3. Communication, Connection and Belonging
4. Deeper Connection and Wellbeing
5. My Community and Social Action Introduction

Delivered by Bristol City Councils - Community Development team supported by Grassroot Communities. The Community Development Module directly prepares the young leaders with skills, knowledge and experiences enabling them to develop and deliver social action projects.

6. Introduction to Community Development
7. Practical Tools Share
8. Inspirational Community Visits & Speakers
9. Community Door Knocking & Engagement
10. Development of Social Action Projects



# AN OVERVIEW OF MINI GAP



## TERM 2: COMMUNITY BASED SOCIAL ACTION PROJECTS

Young people were split into 2 smaller groups where they worked together to practically put all the learning from the 1st term into action and mobilise, organise and deliver community based social action projects or online social action campaigns that positively 'improve lives.'

Each team was supported by 2 x Youth & Community Workers and 2 x Youth Work Interns from Grassroot Communities & 2 x Community Development Workers from Bristol City Councils Community Development Team.

The experience of young leaders delivering social action has a positive impact on their confidence, sense of connection and belonging and view on what is possible with hard work and showcases the power of civic duty.

The young leaders learnt to design projects that are based on the wants and needs of the local communities they support and serve. This improves their confidence, development of essential skills for life and creates strong role models and raises aspirations.

**[Please click here to read about the social change created by the young leaders via our Yearlong GAP Impact Report 2022/23](#)**



## MINI GAP – MENTORING

The Mini GAP mentor support is one mentor per young leader for 2 hours every other week, starting from December 2023 to the end of April 2024. The times of the mentoring is agreed by the mentor and mentee and shared with Grassroot Communities. The mentors are matched by understanding personalities, lived experience, professions and interests. The mentors have the remit of supporting the young leaders at every mentoring session on the following 3 targeted themes.

- **Personal:** How the young leader is getting on in their personal life, listen and offer support or advise where appropriate.
- **Programme:** How the young leader is getting on with the programme, what they have been learning, what's gone well, what could be improved and actions for the future.
- **Purpose:** What opportunity the young leader wants to work towards and ideally achieve by the end of Mini GAP and support them to work backwards and create a realistic timeline, connections and pathway to success.





## MINI GAP – MENTORING

Young people have all the talent, but in many cases have limited opportunities. Mini GAP won't change the world, but our collective support will change some young people's world. Mentors are not expected to do everything for young people; they are expected to support them in whatever way is needed so they are better placed to realise for themselves a future opportunity in education, employment, or experience based on their passions and interests.

The Mini GAP 2023/24 pilot and successful Yearlong GAP 2022/23 are shining a light on a new way to do things. They turbocharge everyday young people into opportunities that matter to them, positively impacting others across the city in the process—including the mentors!

Change is happening and will be from the grassroots and up...







# MINI GAP SOCIAL ACTION PROJECT EVALUATIONS



## REDCLIFFE SOCIAL ACTION FAMILY FUN EVENT



### Delivery Team:

- Jabez - Grassroot Communities, Youth and Community Work Manager
- Kerry - Bristol City Council, Community Development Worker
- Brandon - Grassroot Communities, Youth Work Intern

### Event Overview:

The event aimed to foster community cohesion by bringing together young parents and families to engage in various fun and educational activities. Held at Faith Space in Redcliffe, the event saw the participation of 14 families, totalling 50 attendees.

### Objectives:

1. To provide a platform for young parents and families to connect and engage in shared activities.
2. To enhance community cohesion through interactive and inclusive events.
3. To empower young individuals by involving them in the organisation and execution of community activities.

### Activities:

The event featured a range of activities designed to cater for all ages.



# MINI GAP SOCIAL ACTION PROJECTS EVALUATIONS

## **Interests, including:**

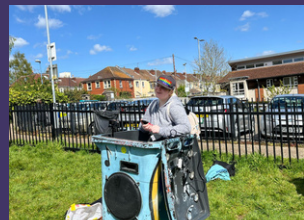
- Forest school sessions
- Arts and Crafts led by young leader Eliza
- Gardening workshops led by young leader Kyran
- Basketball coaching by young leader Jermaine
- A Mandala workshop conducted by a parent volunteer
- Music and free play areas led by GC and BCC staff
- Local Information is available from the Redcliffe Hub Team.

## **Outcomes:**

The event was successful in achieving its main goal of enhancing community cohesion. Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the enjoyment of the diverse activities and the opportunity to connect with other local families. Young leaders, such as Kyran, Eliza, and Jermaine, played pivotal roles in delivering the activities and showcasing their skills and passions.

## **Vocational Outcomes for Volunteers:**

- Kyran has secured a full-time position as a customer service assistant at Farm Foods.
- Jermaine has been accepted onto a plumbing apprenticeship.
- After a brief stint at Boston Tea Party, Eliza has an upcoming job interview with Travelodge and is looking into joining the army.
- Evan continues his studies and remains engaged in college activities. He is volunteering to learn how to produce the GC 'What Really Matters' podcast and is aiming to study Post Production and CGI at the Boomsatsuma University.
- Jayshree is actively seeking employment while caring for her child and aims to go back to college in September to get her Maths GCSE, alongside an access course, so she can then go to Uni as a mature student and study Law the following year.



## BARTON HILL COMMUNITY DAY



### Delivery Team:

- Ben - Grassroot Communities, Founder and CEO
- Julia - Bristol City Council, Community Development Worker
- Catherine - Grassroot Communities, Youth Work Intern

### Event Overview:

This group of Mini GAP young leaders aimed to bring all ages of residents and organisations together from across the Barton Hill community with the sole purpose of having fun. The event was like a festival and was delivered at Urban Park, Cafe Conscious and The Cage football courts in Barton Hill. The Barton Hill Community Day engaged 300+ people of all ages across the 3 venues.

### Objectives:

1. To provide an opportunity for the Barton Hill community to be heard and help shape a community event with and by the community.
2. To connect residents and local organisations at the event and support a meaningful and lasting impact within the community.
3. Young leaders to learn by developing a community led event and creating a platform to showcase their skills and that of the wider communities.





# MINI GAP SOCIAL ACTION PROJECTS

## Activities:

The event included a wide variety of activities, such as:

- Free food cooked by Mini GAP young leader Aelisha at Café Conscious and volunteers.
- Utrix Parkour activity led by Mini GAP young leader Louis and a team of volunteers.
- Mini GAP's young leader, Gabe, ran a circus skills area.
- GC Youth Work Intern Brandon and Mini GAP young leader Kai ran the GC 'Wheelie Bin Sound system', providing music to entertain the masses!
- Mini GAP young leader Faizaan led a free community raffle, 'Faiz's prizes,' with support from Gabe.
- The creative corner of the event included face painting by Mona of Wellspring Settlement, Henna from a local resident, Arts and Crafts from young leader Faizaan's family and a Street Art activity by Nick at Olas Art.
- Dr Bike fixed bikes for free.
- Bristol City Council – Transport Team provided a stand promoting sustainability and local transport options.
- Empire Fighting Chance delivered a free boxercise session.
- The Cage Cup – a football competition, was led by Luis from Wellspring Settlement on the football courts.
- Local PCSOs talked with residents, let children play in the police car and built positive relationships.
- Drum n Bass fitness activity

## Outcomes:

Over 300+ residents of all ages and organisations came out to show their support, have fun and build community cohesion. The event involved an army of 22 volunteers lending equipment, delivering or supporting activities, helping out in the kitchen and more! The young leaders put the skills learned from the Mini GAP modules into action and saw first-hand how they positively impacted people and the community.

The many activities, food and event management our Mini GAP young leaders delivered was a huge success.

Community Development Worker Julia, who supported the programme, says, 'I have loved supporting the young people's journey on Mini GAP over the past four months, resulting in the social action project in Barton Hill.



# MINI GAP SOCIAL ACTION PROJECTS

Watching the growth of young people as individuals and how they came together and worked as a team has been brilliant to watch. To see their confidence grow, unlock their potential and develop and discover their skills and capabilities to successfully plan and deliver this project in such a short time frame is a credit to their commitment, tenacity and character. They have been vulnerable through the process and supported each other, I am super proud of all of them, and feel very lucky to have spent time getting to know them and working with them, it has been a great experience to be involved in'.

Young leader Evan from the Redcliffe Mini GAP group filmed the Barton Hill event with help from Kai. Yearlong GAP participants, Grassroot Communities young leaders and youth work interns helped staff the event alongside many adult volunteers, some of who originally connected with GC staff through youth provisions decades ago! Showing the real power of community and the long-term impact of youth and community work.

Ultimately, the young leaders' energy, teamwork and commitment to make a difference at the Mini GAP social action sessions or in their own time led to the group's massively successful event.

Deniece, owner of Cafe Conscious, said, ***'I have been here for 12 years, and I have never seen a bigger or better event in this community. You should all be very proud of what you achieved'***

## Vocational Outcomes for Young Leaders:

- Aelisha is now volunteering and being paid as a community cook at Cafe Conscious, exploring paid pop-up food event opportunities and a festival food business with her Mini GAP mentor.
- Gabe is getting his short film edited by Films at 59, being supported by his mentor to get his film shown and navigate finding work in the film industry. He will soon be supporting production of Grassroot Communities 'What Really Matters' podcast series.
- Kai accessed volunteering with Fishponds library and applied for a Traveling Light Theatre volunteering opportunity and waiting to start the SWAP course.
- Louis has volunteered and is working towards a potential job in social care at Silva Care, whilst exploring paid sessional opportunities as a young leader for GC.
- Faizaan has got a job in retail at Home Bargains.

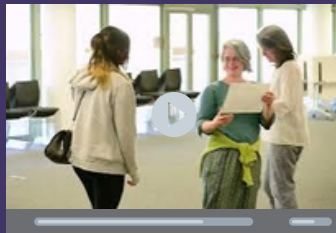
# THE SHOWREELS

SHOWCASING EACH YOUNG PERSONS  
JOURNEY THROUGH MINI GAP...

Made  
For  
Impact



Aelisha Dickson, 29, Easton



Eliza James, 20, Westbury on Trym



Evan Walker, 17, St George



Faizaan Chowdury, 20, Horfield



Gabriel Kelly, 24, Southville



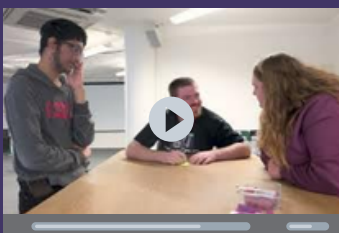
Jayshree Tailor, 22, Ashton



Jermane Hutchinson, 28, Knowle West



Kai Spicer, 20, Fishponds



Kyran Thomas, 29, Speedwell



Louis O'Connor, 30, Knowle West

## MINI GAP CASE STUDIES

**BCC Community Development Worker, Julia Foligno explains how GC has delivered Mini GAP:**

The way they build relationships and bring people together across the city is really important. They are able to engage people with a real mix of different views and different backgrounds. You can only do that if you have time and space to build those relationships and do that gently, takes time and nurturing. The way they work is quite unique and different.

It's a special model:

1-2-1 relationship building, offering a holistic range of activities and ways to build confidence and life skills, the timespan of working with people.

Mentoring is key. Young people getting advice and guidance from people who are successful in their careers.

From the group I supported many were offered jobs or volunteering opportunities, and pathways to other opportunities.

The fact that young leaders from the last cohort are now working with the new group, shows what can be achieved, developing young people.

Because Ben is a youth worker at heart, he has such a wonderful way of connecting with young people. Understanding young people and what they need in that moment. Because he and the GC team takes the time to build those relationships.

All young people grew in confidence massively, they started to identify and recognise their own strengths. Delve into what their passions were. Follow what they were good at. Excel in those areas. Fostering that self-belief. Having the mentor behind them, and Ben and the GC team and community development colleagues, to run an event in 6 days, develop all the skills to be able to deliver that was incredible. They came to a meeting and met local organisations and spoke and got them to support the event, talking to strangers in the park, knocking on doors. At the start they were hardly talking to each other, let alone strangers. They had a budget to manage, learned budgeting skills.

Young people from really different backgrounds (different cultures, sexual identities, etc), people they wouldn't usually speak to and now they are their friends. How that can change society.

They were so vulnerable with each other, really had each other's back. Really looked after each other. At the start they weren't even talking in a circle, by the end were going to continue meeting up.





## MINI GAP CASE STUDIES

They don't have one base, so they can be flexible about which parts of the city they work in. They meet the young people where they are, able to move to different locations.

***The Grassroot Communities Mini GAP delivery team of Ben, Jabez, Catherine and Brandon have all written a case study on a young person who engaged in the programme to outline their individual challenges, journeys and successes through Mini GAP.***

### **1. Grassroot Communities Youth Work Intern – Catherine's case study on Aelisha Dickson...**

Aelisha is a young person who experienced a hard childhood, has moved around England a lot, moved to Bristol a few years ago, and has been sofa surfing for most of her time here. She joined the programme to find the next step in her life.

She has joined in with the programme really well. The main challenge that arises is when she struggles with her mental health and doesn't feel like participating. However, Aelisha has shown true resilience. She was open with us and worked with us so we could support her and help her join in even when she was struggling (if appropriate).

Aelisha gets on well with the rest of the group and has this open-hearted, loud personality that allows for everyone she meets to build a fantastic relationship with her.

Her passion is around food and allowing all to experience good food. Since starting the programme, she has shared her positive experiences with food like the Super Supper Club and has gained more experiences, such as her new volunteering and paid work opportunities with Cafe Conscious, where she helps cook good food for the community of Barton Hill. This opportunity came directly through relationships built on our Mini GAP social action sessions.

Aelisha has also told us about her potential opportunity to run a pop-up kitchen in a pub owned by her mentor. This is still in conversation, but she is really positive about the idea. She is also still looking into how to start cooking at festivals, as that was her original plan, and again talking with Julian, her mentor, about the best ways to do this.

Since going through Mini GAP, Aelisha has a new found belief in the power of community and wants to somehow connect this with whatever she does in the future as well.





## MINI GAP CASE STUDIES

### 2. Grassroot Communities Youth and Community Work Manager – Jabez’s case study on Eliza James...

**Introduction:** Eliza, a young participant referred by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), embarked on a transformative journey through the GAP vocational programme. Under the guidance of her life coach, Lee Jarrett from DWP, and with support from GAP staff, Eliza entered the programme with significant challenges in confidence and self-esteem, often feeling nervous and quiet in group settings.

**Objectives of the GAP Programme:** The GAP programme aims to empower young people by enhancing their interpersonal skills, professional abilities, self-confidence, passions and interests through practical engagement and social action projects. For Eliza, the programme offered a structured environment to explore her interests and develop both personally and professionally.

#### Journey in the Programme...

**Enrolment and Initial Training:** Eliza's initial days at GAP involved face-to-face training, covering a number of modules. In particular Eliza really benefitted through participation in team building and engagement with the community through action research questions. This phase was crucial for helping her transition into a more confident participant, as she interacted in various settings from small to larger group discussions, supplemented by one-on-one support.

**Personal Growth and Development:** A significant turning point for Eliza was the division of the group for two separate social action projects. Assigned to a project aligned with her interests, Eliza thrived, displaying increased confidence and taking on a leadership role in planning and execution. Her passion for art was integrated into the project, where she successfully ran arts and crafts activities aimed at engaging local young parents in Redcliffe, enhancing both family fun and educational experiences.

**Employment and Entrepreneurial Pursuit:** Parallel to her participation in GAP, Eliza secured a job at the Boston Tea Party, where she gained invaluable experience in the hospitality industry.

Although her employment there has ended, her ambitions remain high as she continues to pursue opportunities in hospitality. Eliza is also exploring entrepreneurial ventures, specifically a business idea to design prints for biking apparel, with ongoing support from her work coach. Finally, Eliza is exploring the possibility of joining the Army Reserves and is working on her fitness currently.

**Outcomes and Development:** Eliza's journey through the GAP programme has been marked by remarkable personal and professional growth:

- **Skill Enhancement:** Eliza developed critical interpersonal and leadership skills, alongside specific artistic skills that she applied in her social action project.

## MINI GAP CASE STUDIES

- **Confidence Building:** Engaging with new people and tackling various project roles significantly boosted her confidence.
- **Career Exploration:** Eliza is not only pursuing further opportunities in hospitality but is also considering starting her own business in the creative industry, alongside joining the Army Reserves.

**Conclusion:** Eliza's experience with the GAP programme exemplifies its effectiveness in transforming the lives of young individuals. Her journey from a quiet individual with low self-esteem to a confident young woman ready to explore entrepreneurial opportunities reflects the profound impact of vocational programmes tailored to harness and nurture inherent talents. Her closing thoughts highlight the overarching success of the programme in enhancing her creativity and opening new career pathways.



"Meeting new people has helped my confidence. I have learnt a lot from different experiences whilst on GAP. GAP has enhanced my creativity. GAP has also helped me think about career opportunities and starting up my own business." **Eliza**

Eliza's story is a testament to the transformative power of targeted vocational training and the importance of supportive environments that cater to the diverse needs of young people.

**Supporting statements:** **Kerry Rowe, Community Development Worker** who co delivered and supported the GAP programme throughout...

"To hear Eliza talk about things she is interested in is a real development - from the first time she was in the circle and her voice was almost in audible - she has gone on to talk confidently about her passion for motorbikes and drawing. She has been one of the most committed members of the group - finding her way to new places in Bristol on her own and communicating well if she wasn't able to attend."

**Lee Jarette, DWP Work Coach** who has been supporting Eliza in finding employment...

"Eliza has come from strength to strength by showing improvements with her confidence and her ambitions to join the armed forces. She has shown courage and dedication to attending all her appointments and her Grassroot Communities programme which has now led to showing a positive can do attitude to achieving her goals."



## 3. Grassroot Communities Youth Work Intern – Brandon’s case study on Kyran Thomas...

**Overview:** So, before Kyran joined the Mini GAP programme, he was a shy, autistic, young adult who had housing problems, lived in a hostel and shared housing and said he suffered from a lot of body/head problems. He lacked a lot of confidence and didn't have great people skills and felt like he didn't fit in with groups.

**What went well:** Since he joined Mini GAP, everything has flipped around. He has become more confident and has now found a gardening opportunity to volunteer with a person from a local organisation in Redcliffe. Kyran worked with this organisation on the social action project and will be gardening in the local community. He also has a job with Farm Foods after doing the programme.

Most importantly, he met others and made friends on Mini GAP from different backgrounds. Which is something he said he really wanted to do and has made him very happy.



**What could be improved:** Kyran has a lot of growing still to do, even though he has improved his life somewhat. I think he would benefit from more 1 to 1 support (like with his Mini GAP mentor). I know he can't help it, but Kyran would also benefit from improving his people skills and learning to understand and read the room better.

## 4. Grassroot Communities Founder & CEO – Ben Carpenter’s case study on Louis O’Connor...

Louis is someone I have known for many years. A youth worker colleague supported him in setting up a youth-led free running group and park, and I worked with him to deliver parkour activities at a community event called WildFest in Knowle West.

He has had a challenging upbringing at times and from a young age had to move away from his dad to live with mum. Some of these past traumas came up in the Mini GAP social action sessions as we were based in Barton Hill, where he used to live.





## MINI GAP CASE STUDIES

I initially contacted Louis about Mini GAP, after speaking with his partner Charlotte who suggested the opportunity might suit him. Louis told me he had been struggling and was on medication for his mental health and had been a stay-at-home dad for a few years, which could be challenging. His daughter was just about to start nursery, and the prospect of getting out of the house and being supported towards getting a job sounded appealing. However, he was wary that it might be too much for him or not fit his family's needs.

Louis called me prior to the Mini GAP induction session and told me he was very anxious. It was really noticeable how close Louis kept to me for the whole session to help with his nerves and anxiety.

When I think of the person who presented himself to me at that first Mini GAP session, compared to the Louis whom I see before me today, the personal progress and positive impact that Mini GAP has had on him are hard to put into words—it's huge.

There have been multiple challenges Louis has had to deal with throughout the course, such as mental health, family bereavements and more. I spoke with Louis on the phone one Sunday afternoon; he told me that the night before, he had tried to revive a teenager who had been stabbed to death outside his house in Knowle West. Yet, he felt the continuity of Mini GAP and the relationships he had started to build on the programme were helping him move forward and wanted to attend on Monday.

Louis slowly started feeling more and more at ease in the group as time went on, eventually becoming more vocal and confident, and by the end of the programme, a real leader. Louis's dry sense of humour and straight talking became a fun and helpful part of Mini GAP sessions and particularly coming to the fore in his social action group. He added a lot of energy to developing the Barton Hill social action event, putting in time and commitment outside of the normal sessions to talk with people and businesses who might support the event and getting personal friends to volunteer.



What has now become more apparent is how Luis has also supported others in his group through challenging times. For example, Kai attended the first term of Mini GAP and struggled to engage in the social action module for personal reasons. Unbeknown to the rest of the group, Louis was in contact with Kai throughout that term, offering him encouragement and support. This instigated Kai to return for the recent social action event and attend the Mini GAP Celebration event.



## MINI GAP CASE STUDIES

Louis has worked in social care for 10 years and, most recently, has been a team leader. He faced challenges at his most recent job around the pandemic and thought he might find it difficult to work in this sector again. The pairing of Louis and Matt Moore, his mentor, has also played a critical role in Louis starting to turn his life around. As I write this case study, Louis is awaiting his DBS and will be volunteering at some taster sessions with a view to realising a social care job at Silva Care. **Matt Moore** says 'nothing will be given to Louis, he won't be getting any special favours, he needs to realise he has lots of experience and is a really nice guy with lots of ability'.

Also, Grassroot Communities are exploring paid young leader opportunities with Louis to support the Multi Sports Club in Hartcliffe and Withywood and potentially other GC youth provisions if it can be worked around any other future employment.

Louis told **GC Chair Brian Hall** at the social action event 'Mini GAP has been excellent for me, the opportunity has changed my life. Coming out of Mini GAP I can now see a way forward that will support me, my family and a way back into work'.

**Julia from the BCC Community Development team** who supported Mini GAP said 'When I first met Louis he was one of the quieter members of the group, as I got to know him, he talked about his experience working in a care home previously and his parkour club. With a gentle and unassuming manner, Louis was able to bring a lot of his skills and experience to the team and as his confidence

in the group has grown, he has contributed more and more to the project. He has always shown commitment and communicated well, not only when things have been difficult in his personal life but also with great humour and team spirit when working with others. He has shown leadership and was a driving force behind the event using his parkour expertise to share with others to enjoy. He has talked about his mentor and job opportunities ahead demonstrating he is trusted and can be depended on. I hope Louis can continue to grow and contribute his skills as he has a lot to offer the world, he just needs to believe in himself as others do'.





## A WORD FROM THE MINI GAP MENTORS & MENTEES

### **Julian McLauchlan, Event Bar Supplier/ Bar Owner - Mentored Aelisha Dickson.**

Julian said 'It's always been great meeting Aelisha and I have always left with a smile on my face. It's great to see someone with so much enthusiasm who, despite challenges, is trying to improve themselves... We had good conversations about how to get into the world of catering (both inside and outside), without dampening spirits we have set some achievable targets... I think me and Aelisha will stay in contact, and I would like to think that she would pick up the phone if she thought I could help. I see this is the start of something, rather than a winding down.'

Aelisha said "I've made connections, tried and tested some of the food I aspire (and have had offers through Julian and the place I volunteer) and I feel a part of a community, feel good and am continuing to make further connections... It's made me feel more capable as I have worked in a team, been able to trust other people to help me and help with what we achieved. Still need to work on asking for help, but I'm sure I'll get there! I am glad I completed the course, the event was a big success and people have bonded."

### **Eleanor Freeman, Director of Storyville Festival CIC/ Bristol City Council - Green Party Councillor for Bedminster - Mentored Eliza James.**

Eleanor said "I really felt valued and trusted by Eliza. It was nice to see her opening up and seeing me as part of her support network... Our first meeting felt like hard work, but by the last time we met up she didn't stop talking! I think her confidence has grown, and we have talked about her various options... She has been working (and losing jobs and going for interviews!) and the army is still in the mix. Eliza sent me her writing, which I felt very honoured by, and we have talked about her options for that."



Eliza said "Mini GAP has made me feel like I have more opportunities to get involved in because of the activities we did in the programme with exploring new things and helping the community. It has also had the impact of improving my confidence, since at the start I didn't really want to talk to anyone, but now feel I have made good friends and am able to talk to anyone, especially people I don't know without worry... And on a last note, paid work is in progress, am currently looking for a job and lined up with interviews."



## A WORD FROM THE MINI GAP MENTORS & MENTEES

**Ruth Pitter (MBE), Equalities and Development Manager and Community Activist and Martin Ralph, Online Editor and Visual Effects Artist for Films at 59 - both Mentored Evan Walker.**

Ruth said "Mini GAP has been great in elevating Evans confidence, feeling a part of a team and being motivated by his peers... The Monday groupwork sessions worked well for the young people... Proud of the young people and fantastic that the city has this to offer."

Ralph said "I have felt good about mentoring, I strongly believe in helping young people get into a career they want... Evan comes across as a very switched on chap who has a lot of enthusiasm for Post Production... I think Evan's plan is to go to Uni and study Post Production film and TV. I would like to continue to help him with this."

Evan said "Mini GAP has made me feel much better about my future and has given me an objective for what I need to do next... I loved the team building exercises as well as the social action event we all did... I appreciate getting training through my mentor, so I will be able to secure myself a place in the postproduction industry... I'd love to recommend this programme to my friends, so they may receive help in any objective they might want."

**Steve Dale, Civic Partnerships Manager at University of Bristol - Mentored Faizaan Chowdury.**

Steve said "I've enjoyed mentoring, managed to find the time and would do it again... Look at what Faizaan has achieved in these few months: Got up in the morning and attended all GAP and mentoring sessions! Been great at communicating with me and been really organised. He's always on time. Always in the right place. Always well-presented. He's polite and enthusiastic and listens well. He's travelled all over the city by himself. Faizaan has taken risks, tried new things. Attended events in unfamiliar places. Engaged with new learning opportunities. Applied for a job, got an interview and been offered the job!"



Faizaan said "Mini GAP was an amazing experience and was nice to meet everyone who is in a similar position as me. It has also given me confidence and helped me learn about organising events.... It helped me find my first paid job, which I'm really excited about. It also given me an idea about what I want to do in the future as well."



## A WORD FROM THE MINI GAP MENTORS & MENTEES

**Rich Warren, Lecturer in Film and Creative Media at Bath Spa University – Mentored Gabriel Kelly.**

Rich said “It’s been a real eye-opening experience to mentor a young person through this process... Mini GAP has demonstrated to me that much more could/should be done to empower motivated young people to kickstart their careers... Gabe had all the tools needed to succeed, just needed a little more motivation and a lot more focus... Through the mentoring sessions and the work within the wider cohort, Gabe has since produced tangible examples of his ability to work and impact professional and community environments... I found the mentoring really rewarding and I intend to stay in touch with Gabe and continue the support in an informal way.”

Gabriel said “It’s made me feel useful and productive. Holding the event made me feel really good and gave me wholesome feelings about bringing joy to the community... The programme has made me more comfortable with where I am in life. I feel more connected in Bristol and able to make things happen... Although the planning was difficult and came with many challenges, the execution of the event went better than anyone could have expected! So many people turned up and there were very few issues with the running of the event. Everyone in the crew played their part excellently and had a good time themselves... I have gained a lot of knowledge and confidence with continuing my creative journey.”



***Young leader Jayshree struggled to engage with the mentoring element of Mini GAP due to childcare and personal challenges.***

Jayshree says “Mini GAP has been a great opportunity for me and has allowed me to start thinking and starting the process of getting myself back into education. I feel like it gave me the motivation that I lacked and taught me that as-long as I have a routine, I’m able to complete whatever I put my mind to even around my children... Hopefully in September of this year I will be able to get back into college and complete my maths GCSE, alongside an access course and then next year will have everything I need to enrol into university to study Law.”



## A WORD FROM THE MINI GAP MENTORS & MENTEES

**Dan Lewin, Community Development Worker for Bristol City Council – Mentored Kyran Thomas.**

Dan said “The impact on Kyran cannot be understated. There were periods early on in the programme when he found attending very challenging and didn’t feel he could stick at it. Thankfully he did and by the end his whole outlook had shifted in a much more positive direction. The family day his team put on and the very successful activity he ran there obviously gave his confidence a big boost and around the same time he also managed to get a job. The combination of these achievements was a source of great pride for

Kyran and he was suddenly very hopeful for the future... It’s been hugely rewarding, and I have learnt a lot in the process. Kyran saying at the end that he had benefitted from our chats made it all worthwhile.”



Kyran said “Mini GAP was an amazing experience to gain skills and an experience that led me onto successfully landing a full-time job... From the very beginning of the programme, I was very anxious about working in large groups of people, but the Mini GAP staff helped me overcome this... The one thing that went well on Mini GAP was that it gave me the ability to broaden my horizons and hear other people's ideas. All in all, there isn't a single feature that could be improved at all... Another brilliant feature of this programme was that I had a mentor, who was matched to my hobbies and me and him got on well throughout and it was nice to have that extra support through the programme.”

***Young leader Jermane stopped attending the mentoring aspect of Mini GAP as his plans changed on what he wanted to achieve following the programme and decided his mentor was not best placed to support this change.***

Jermane says “Mini GAP has made me feel part of something constructive, doing stuff for the community to make an impact on family's lives... Belonging, I've felt welcome throughout the sessions and always felt there was a place for me, even when I've had my own issues going on... Self-motivated, at times I wanted to give up. However, I had to remind myself why I started in the first place and this motivated me to get up and go... Character building, well out my comfort zone on the big event day, however after it was all said and done, I felt as if I could go to a seminar and speak in front of thousands of people... I need to give myself a little more credit and not doubt myself as much.”





# A WORD FROM THE MINI GAP MENTORS & MENTEEES

**Michelle McMorrow, Youth and Community Worker for Bristol City Council - Mentored Kai Spicer.**

Michelle said, "At the beginning, it appeared that Kai was engaged with the course and wanted to see it through to the end. Unfortunately, there was another young person on the course with whom my mentee had some previous difficult dynamics, which put them off finishing. In the time we did spend with mentoring, he had found a voluntary opportunity at the local library cafe and was looking to find a nursery assistant course... What else went well was watching Kai grow in confidence and finding ways to overcome the social anxiety he has. Considering they were uncomfortable with a certain other Mini GAP young person, they remained connected to the group and attended and were involved on the day in the social action event."

Kai said, "Mini GAP has made me feel happy because I've met new people. At first, I was shy and nervous, but now I feel more confident. What went well was making new friends and getting advice. Mentoring was calming, and I could talk about my barriers to employment and how to improve on them."

**Matt Moore, Director at Silver Care Ltd - Mentored Louis O'Connor.**

Matt said, "Mentoring has made me feel like I am helping someone I wouldn't necessarily come across and try to give them a leg up... I hope it's made Louis feel like he has a clear direction which could be his direction for many a year... Talking to Louis, he has found mentoring to be the most useful part, having someone to have 1-1 time with and for them to lightly guide and comment on a way forward. Louis got that my time was precious, and this was something I didn't have to do and took advice therefore. My mentoring experience was quite easy. I was concerned that I may not have had time to meet the needs of the individual, but once a fortnight with the flexibility to move around timelines helped."

Louis said, "I loved the experience, and it has made me feel more confident, but my biggest feeling is shock! Hearing about this experience, I really didn't expect it to work, and it truly did. I can't believe something so simple can truly make a difference. I want to take this last sentence to say how amazing this thing you have created is and say thank you for letting me be a part of it."





## A WORD FROM THE MINI GAP MENTORS & MENTEEES

**WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL THE AMAZING MINI GAP MENTORS WHO WERE MATCHED WITH AND SUPPORTED A YOUNG PERSON THROUGH THE PROGRAMME. AND A MASSIVE THANKYOU TO THE MANY OTHER MENTOR'S WHO OFFERED THEIR SUPPORT, BUT WERE NOT MATCHED THIS TIME. WE LOOK FORWARD TO GETTING THEM INVOLVED IN FUTURE GAP PROGRAMMES...**

**THIS IS WHAT THE YOUNG PEOPLE SAID ABOUT THEIR MENTORS...**

"Another brilliant feature of this programme was that I had a mentor, who was matched to my hobbies and me and him got on well throughout and it was nice to have that extra support along the way through the gap programme."

"Mentoring was calming and I could talk about my barriers to employment and how to improve on them."

"My mentor has been a great help even with just making me feel like I'm spending my time productively... I have gained a lot of knowledge and confidence with continuing my creative journey."

"I feel the mentoring program has helped me so much. It's gave me the chance to bond and get to know someone who can help me work around issues like figuring out a way around working while being a parent."

"I loved my mentor, we speak occasionally, and we are soon to meetup where we will discuss postproduction and I will show him my progress in a personal project."

**100% OF THE MENTORS  
WOULD RECOMMEND MINI  
GAP MENTORING TO A  
FRIEND**

"Me and Julian are planning on continuing our connection. My goal was festivals, but I've got experience to gain first and he's helping to do that."

"My experience of mentoring was good, my mentor has helped me a lot with all the things I discovered I want to do, before and after gap, such as starting a business, joining the army reserve, and writing my book."

"Very well suited mentor."





## THE IMPACT OF MINI GAP

Made  
For  
Impact

**MINI GAP HAS HAD A TRANSFORMATIONAL AND LIFE CHANGING IMPACT ON ALL THE YOUNG LEADERS LIVES IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS AND A POSITIVE RIPPLE EFFECT UPON ALL AGES OF RESIDENTS ACROSS THE WIDER COMMUNITIES OF BRISTOL WHO ENGAGED IN THE SOCIAL ACTION EVENTS.**

**PLEASE CHECK OUT THE BELOW (SHORTCUT) MINI GAP 2023/24 OVERVIEW FILM TO GET A VISUAL TASTE OF THE IMPACT OF MINI GAP...**





# THE IMPACT OF MINI GAP

*"I want to take this last sentence to say how amazing this thing you have created is and say thank you for letting me be a part of it. And over the coming years I want to see this continually grow, it's been amazing. "*

**10 OF THE 11  
PARTICIPANTS WHO  
STARTED MINI GAP  
COMPLETED THE  
PROGRAMME**

**100% OF PARTICIPANTS  
WOULD RECOMMEND  
MINI GAP TO A FRIEND**

**100% OF PARTICIPANTS  
FEEL MORE CONFIDENT  
AND CAPABLE OF REALISING  
A FUTURE OPPORTUNITY IN  
EMPLOYMENT OR  
EDUCATION BASED ON  
THEIR INTERESTS AND  
PASSIONS**

*"At the start I didn't really want to talk to anyone, but now feel I have made good friends and am able to talk to anyone, especially people I don't know without worry. "*

**80% OF PARTICIPANTS  
HAVE ACHIEVED CURRENT  
OR FUTURE  
OPPORTUNITIES IN EDUCATION,  
VOLUNTEERING,  
TRAINING OR EMPLOYMENT**

**\*20% WORKING TOWARDS  
UNIVERSITY AND ATTENDING  
JOB INTERVIEWS**

**24 ADULTS OF ALL AGES  
VOLUNTEERED TO SUPPORT  
THE DELIVERY OF THE 2  
PLACE BASED SOCIAL  
ACTION PROJECTS IN THE  
COMMUNITIES OF  
REDCLIFFE AND BARTON  
HILL IN BRISTOL**

**AT THE END  
OF THE PROGRAMME  
100% OF  
PARTICIPANTS  
FELT MINI GAP HAD A  
POSITIVE IMPACT ON  
THEMSELVES AND  
IMPROVED THEIR  
QUALITY OF LIFE**

**MINI GAP PARTICIPANTS  
ENGAGED AND POSITIVELY  
IMPACTED ON 350+  
PEOPLE OF ALL AGES WHO  
ATTENDED THE 2 SOCIAL  
ACTION EVENTS**

*"GAP was an amazing experience to gain skills and an experience that led me onto successfully landing a full-time job. "*



## COME JOIN THE GROWING GRASSROOT COMMUNITIES TRIBE OF SUPPORTERS BY:

- Sponsoring a young person through GAP or Internships
- Mentoring a young person through GAP
- Providing GAP work placements
- Making a donation to continue the much needed wider Youth and Community work of Grassroot Communities
- Volunteer
- Skills Share
- Connecting GC with Leaders and Change Makers to amplify our impact

If you would like to explore how you could support young people in Bristol to be the changes they want to see...

Please reach out and contact our Founder and CEO Ben Carpenter at:

[ben.carpenter@grassrootcommunities.org](mailto:ben.carpenter@grassrootcommunities.org)

And to get a flavour of our wider life changing youth and community work across underserved communities in Bristol and beyond check out:

[www.grassrootcommunities.org](http://www.grassrootcommunities.org)

And on our GC socials:



**CHANGE IS HAPPENING AND ITS 100% FROM THE GRASSROOTS AND UP!**