

Impact
Report 2022/23



GRASSROOT COMMUNITIES

Grassroot Activators Programme (GAP)



A WORD TO OUR SUPPORTERS

This report draws on and shares the key findings from The Social Impact Report that was conducted for Grassroot Communities by Equinox. To understand the success of the GAP, the Equinox Consortium (comprising its joint venture and supply chain partner organisations) conducted a survey with all participants at: the outset of the programme (early September 2022), the mid-point of the programme (mid-February 2023) and at programme end (early July 2023). The survey contained 28 questions focussing on the participants' physical activity, health, wellbeing, individual development, community development and future passions and aspirations. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who were fundamental in producing this report.

We would also like to thank all those companies and organisations that funded the full year pilot and supported the programme in various ways:

1. Equinox
2. Redcliffe & Temple Bid
3. Ghyston
4. AdLib
5. NatWest
6. Asdan
7. First Bus
8. Quartet Community Foundation
9. Bristol City Council
10. Nisbet Trust
11. Burges Salmon
12. ICAEW
13. Ecclesiastical
14. Ameresco/ Bristol City Leap
15. School of Social Entrepreneurs
16. The ReWild Project
17. BCFM
18. Climate Fresk
19. Creative Youth Network
20. Made for Impact
21. UK Youth
22. The Wave
23. Kirk Thompson
24. Barton Camp
25. Springfield Allotments
26. Voscur
27. University of Bristol
28. Hartcliffe Club for Young People
29. University of the West of England



A WORD FROM GC FOUNDER

The pandemic hit young people hard...

Rising mental health, rising youth unemployment and rising levels of deprivation and youth violence particularly in marginalised communities. There was already a crisis before covid...

The youth service has been decimated over the last 10+ years, leaving many communities with limited to NO youth provisions. Young people have inherited a planet at tipping point and an education system that hasn't dramatically changed over the last 100 years and is still reliant on exams and memory. Does this really provide everything future employers are looking for or improve the quality of young people and their wider communities' lives?

We spoke with employers who said they look for 'Soft skills and essential skills for life like communication, teamwork, problem solving, creativity and practical skills'.

Since 2017 Grassroot Communities has delivered a wide variety of successful youth, community, intergenerational and nature based projects in schools and communities across South Bristol and now the wider city.

We support young people to be the changes they want to see and be, based on their wants, needs, problems and passions.

Everything we do starts with consultation and these are the 3 re-occurring themes:

- Lack of realistic opportunity
- Fear
- Poverty

All of this has instigated us developing the Yearlong Grassroot Activators programme (GAP) for everyday people from 17-30 years old from underserved communities from across the city.

The experiences, skills, knowledge and networks of people gained throughout GAP builds confidence and creates the stepping stones for them to grasp future opportunities in education, employment and opportunities based on their passions and interests. Providing transferable skills for life and importantly developing a rich kit bag of learning and solid foundations for future leaders of tomorrow.

I am proud to say we have now piloted and developed a solution in the Yearlong GAP, that won't change the world, but has now been proven to change the lives of young people and communities involved in the programme.



OUR VISION

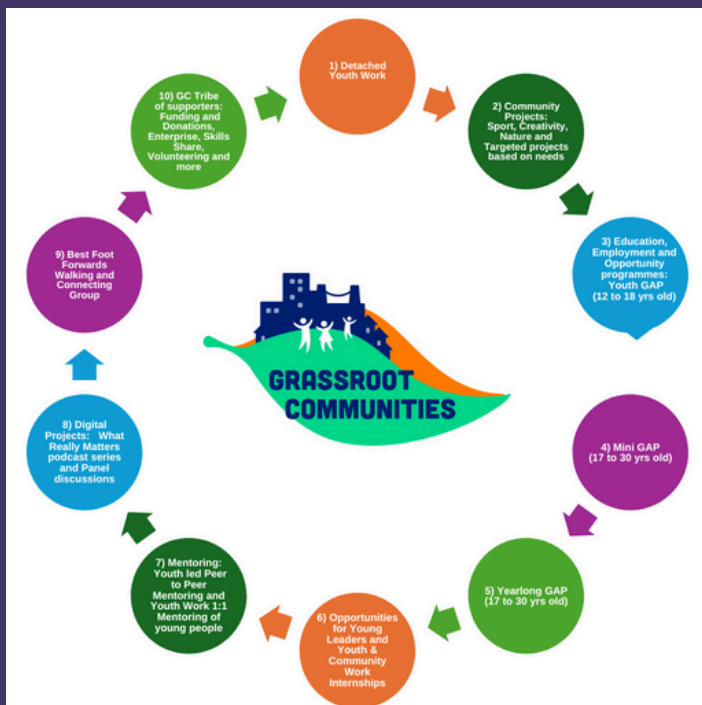
We at Grassroot Communities believe that young people have all the talent, but in many communities limited opportunities. We work with everyday young people from underserved communities in Bristol to be the changes they want to see. We seek to close the opportunity gap. We want all young people to be 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





GRASSROOT ACTIVATORS PROGRAMME (GAP)

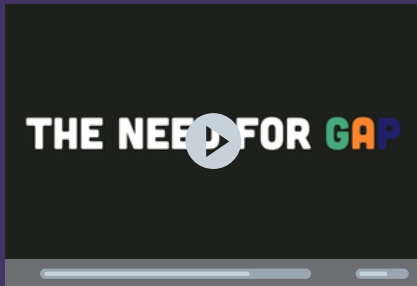
The Grassroot Activators programme (GAP) engages 17-30 year olds with a modular programme of experiential learning and informal education to create transformational social action, social enterprise and environmental action projects that positively impact on all ages of residents, groups and their wider community's lives. GAP supports the young leaders to close the gap on and realise future opportunities in education, employment or experiences based on their passions.

Grassroot Communities are supporting everyday people and communities to be the changes they want to see from the grassroots and up.

THE NEED FOR GAP

Bristol is a diverse city made up of 34 wards. It has a rich, vibrant cultural landscape known for its graffiti street art, theatre, festival and music. It also is known for its colonial history, diaspora communities and its universities, both The University of Bristol and University of West of England, and sadly for its huge discrepancy in quality of life based on the postcode where children are born.

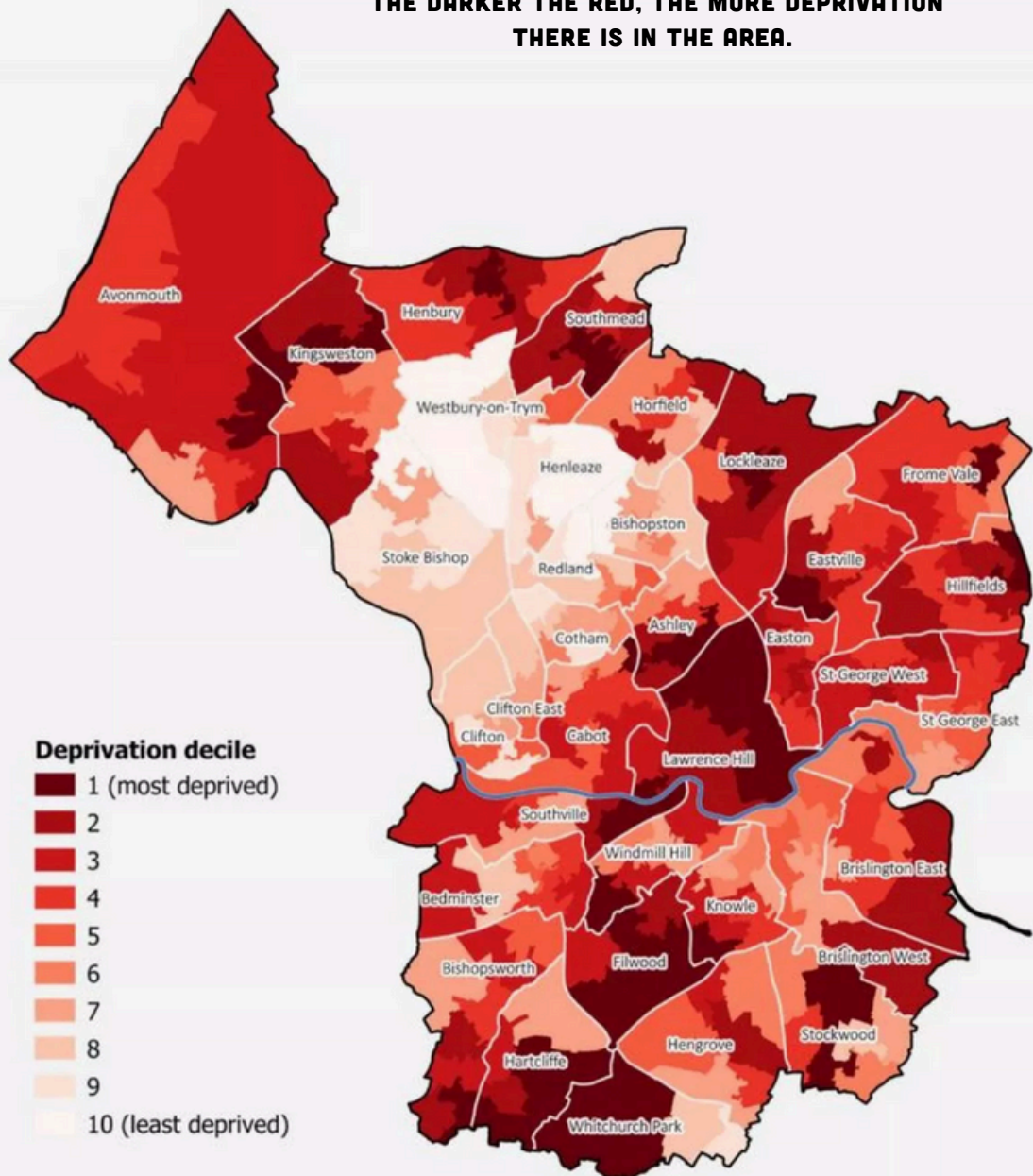
There are serious gaps that divide these wards in health, education, aspiration, and opportunity. The 10 most deprived wards in Bristol are in the south, where GC run detached teams and community projects. There is a 10 year life expectancy difference between the most deprived ward of Hartcliffe & Withywood and the most affluent ward Clifton. Hartcliffe & Withywood have the lowest educational attainment rates in the city with only 15.8% of the ward population holding a higher level degree qualification compared to Redland where 66.9% of the population do. Grassroot Communities exist to close these gaps for everyday young people in underserved communities across Bristol.



POWER, B. AND DESKTOP (N.D.). WARD PROFILE REPORT HARTCLIFFE & WITHYWOOD. [ONLINE] AVAILABLE AT: [HTTPS://WWW.BRISTOL.GOV.UK/FILES/DOCUMENTS/1974-HARTCLIFFE-AND-WITHYWOOD-WARD-PROFILE-REPORT/FILE](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/files/documents/1974-hartcliffe-and-withywood-ward-profile-report/file).



A MAP SHOWING BRISTOL'S WARDS ACCORDING TO THE DEPRIVATION AND POVERTY IN THE DIFFERENT AREAS. THE DARKER THE RED, THE MORE DEPRIVATION THERE IS IN THE AREA.





AN OVERVIEW OF GAP

The programme has been designed to engage young people and others in their neighbourhoods to be the changes they want to see, improving the quality of life and creating real social change. The idea for the programme was born from working with young people living the harsh realities of their postcodes. Two of the participants, Catherine and Tannika were fundamental in inspiring GAP.

The GAP is a year long pilot that was delivered in central Bristol over 2 days a week for 17 to 30 year olds from marginalised communities across Bristol. It sought to raise aspirations, create role models and develop realistic pathways to future opportunities.

Key aims of the programme:

- Train a cohort of young people with lived experience in marginalised areas of the city in youth, community and nature-based work;
- Provide steppingstones for young people to achieve their full potential in employment, education, volunteering, apprenticeships and training;
- Develop young people as active citizens within their own communities and the wider city;
- Design teaching methods and models of engagement that build young people's capacity to participate in community and environmental leadership in the city;
- Establish a framework for others across the UK, and internationally, to enable them to run a similar programme.

GAP FOCUSES ON:

- LEADERSHIP
- YOUTH WORK
- MENTORING
- COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
- COMMUNITY SOCIAL ACTION PROJECTS
- ENTREPRENEURSHIP
- WORK PLACEMENTS
- SOCIAL ENTERPRISE PROJECTS
- NATURE CONNECTION AND SURVIVAL ADVENTURE
- COMMUNITY FOOD GROWING AND COOKING
- WELLBEING
- ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PROJECTS

There was no way into youth work in Bristol. There's a lot of alleys that don't have a way to get young people to where they want to be. Ben created the course so young people, along with the help of their mentors can create and find their own opportunities and their own way to get to where they want to be in Bristol," Catherine, 19.

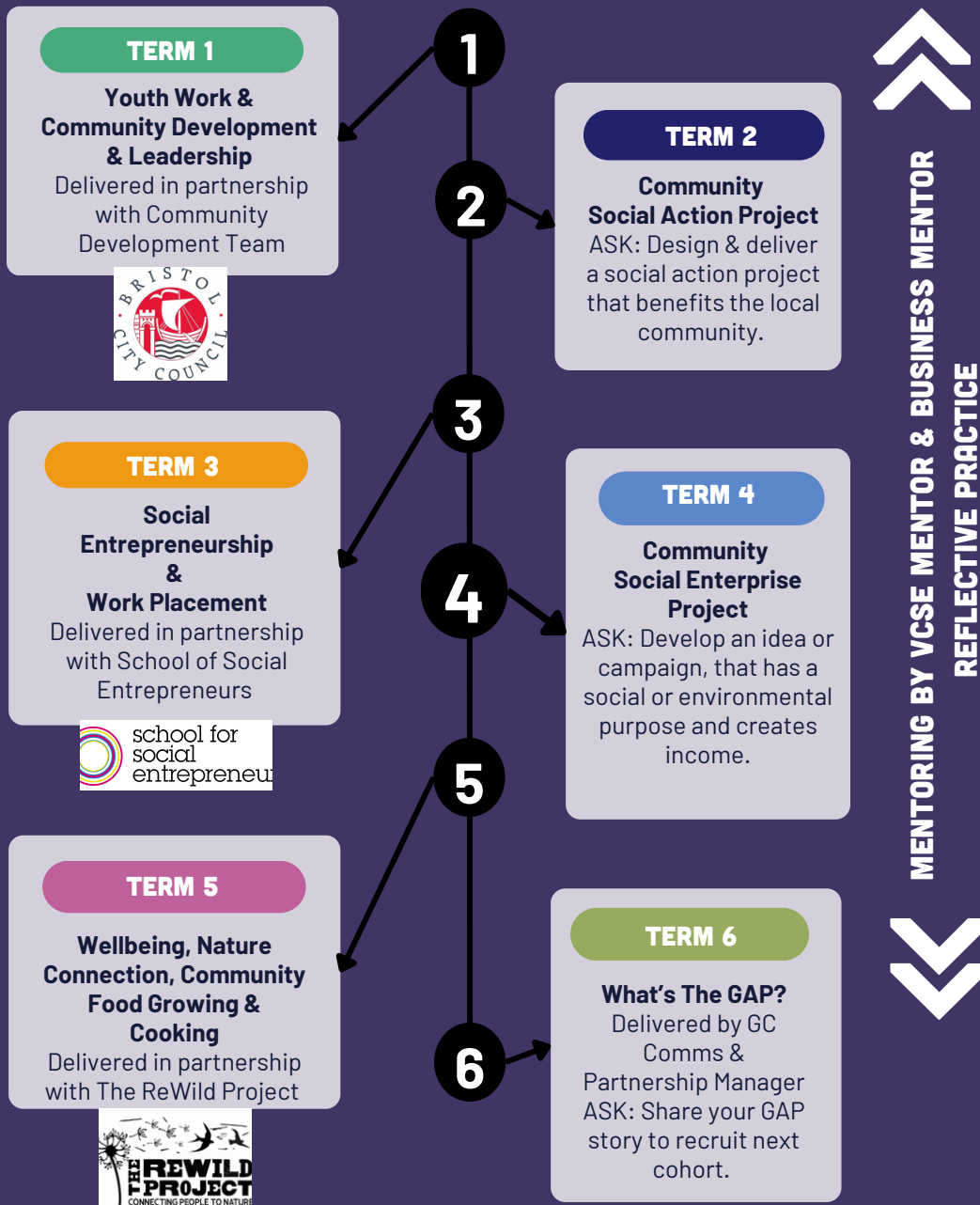


GAP DELIVERY MODEL



WATCH BEN EXPLAIN THE MODULES

- 12 MODULES DELIVERED ACROSS 6 TERMS
- EACH MODULE ENGAGED KEY PARTNERS TO DELIVER SPECIFIC UNITS OF THE MODULES.
- EACH YOUNG PERSON WAS MATCHED TO TWO MENTORS FOR THE 6 TERMS
 - 1X VCSE MENTOR
 - 1X BUSINESS MENTOR





THE MENTORING

A core element of the programme is mentoring. Each young person was matched with a Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises (VCSE) Mentor and a Business Mentor. When the young person was onboarded to the programme, they completed a form asking them about what they are passionate about and also what change they wanted to make to their communities. These answers form the basis of the matching process.

THE ROLE OF THE VCSE MENTOR

The VCSE mentor's role was to support a young person holistically through the programme, including helping them make connections to other voluntary sector groups who could collaborate or support with the social and environmental action projects and social enterprise projects. The VCSE mentor helped their mentee make connections for potential future placements or employment opportunities. The VCSE mentor could also practically support with advice and help when delivering the social action/ enterprise projects in the community.



Solomon with his GAP mentor, Steve Bluff, Director Redcliffe & Temple BID team.

GAP provides a priceless opportunity for young people to explore their socially entrepreneurial passions, while being supported and empowered to grow and elevate.
The programme is truly pioneering, innovative and needed.
Darren Alexander, MD
Aspiration Creation Elevation (ACE)
Mentor to Martin

THE ROLE OF THE BUSINESS MENTOR

The Business mentor's role was to build a relationship with their mentee and support them to confirm a relevant work placement in Term 3 based on their passion and interests. Longer term, they were asked to support the young person to clarify what it is they want to do following GAP and to make the relevant connections and open doors where possible for this to happen e.g. further education, volunteering, apprenticeship or employment.

SOLOMON'S STORY

When Solomon started GAP he was struggling with his mental health and did not really know what direction he wanted his life to go. Solomon's business mentor Steve uncovered Solomon's passion for food and arranged for him to do his work placement in the kitchen at the Novotel Hotel.

Despite a rocky start where Solomon was still learning about time management, Solomon was so dedicated to learning that the Chef there offered Solomon a paid traineeship Chef role. When he completes his training he will be able to travel the world working for Novotel, which is one of his lifelong dreams.

"Personally it was great, I really enjoyed it and to get a job after it is the cherry on top of the cake".

SOCIAL ACTION PROJECT: CREATIVE WAVES BEDMINSTER

Team Members: Catherine, Martin, Solomon

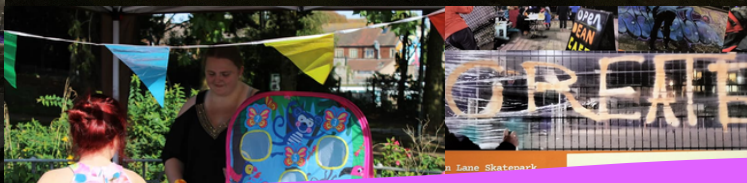
On a frosty night at Dean Lane in Bedminster, 60 spirited attendees of all ages came together for the Creative Waves event, orchestrated by the inspiring Bedminster GAP group. The young leaders' dedication and collaboration with local businesses provided a memorable evening filled with food, drinks, skateboarding, graffiti workshops, sports, arts and crafts, and break dancing. The heartwarming community support showcased the incredible potential of empowering young people.



"The event was brilliant and got local residents of all ages out in the park having fun together, at a time of the year where everyone is normally at home trying to keep warm. We would definitely like to support this group of young leaders to put on future creative events in the park".

Chair of Dame Emily Park Friends Group

ATTENDEES: 60
FELT MORE PART OF COMMUNITY: 100%
MADE POSITIVE IMPACT IN COMMUNITY: 87.5%
AVERAGE AGE: 33
GENDER: 62.5% MALE, 37.5% FEMALE



Following GAP, the Creative Waves team went on to pitch and were awarded 3k of Bristol City Council Safer Streets funding to run their event two more times. In October 2023, the team welcomed over 300 people at Dame Emily Skate Park.

Catherine shared "We are three young local people who met through the Grassroot Activators programme. We realised that the 3 of us had a passion, Catherine's being community, Solomon's was quality food and Martin was all about everything creative."



**WELL DONE
CREATIVE WAVE TEAM**



SOCIAL ACTION PROJECT: KNOWLE WEST

Team Members: Emma, Brandon, Abbey

On a starlit night, Knowle West's GAP young leaders enchanted locals with a Northern Slopes Affirmation Walk. After traversing icy terrain, they returned to the roundhouse for refreshments and an emotional talking stick circle session. The evening, filled with warmth and camaraderie, concluded with s'mores and a campfire meditation led by the young leaders, celebrating their impressive teamwork.



"I was brought to tears when we did the guided meditation, it was really emotional. The whole event was really positive and my daughter had a great time"

A local resident who brought her daughter to the event .

ATTENDEES: 16

FELT MORE PART OF COMMUNITY: 100%

MADE POSITIVE IMPACT IN COMMUNITY: 100%

AVERAGE AGE: 31

GENDER: 34% MALE, 66% FEMALE



The Northern Slopes

Tracey Messina · 18 h · 🌐

As a sufferer of health anxiety it was lovely to see affirmation hanging on trees today my walk is were I practice mindfulness I practice these everyday big thanks x

👍 Becca Trex and 6 others



Like



Comment



Share



Please come and join us at the northern slopes (Davenport Rd entrance) for an amazing fun filled evening.

We will be holding our affirmation walk on Wednesday the 14th of December from 5pm til 7pm.

Please do note to dress warm as it might rain and children under 13 to be accompanied by an adult. - anyone can join in on the fun!

Contact: info@grassrootcommunities.org



SOCIAL ACTION PROJECT: SOUTHMEAD

Team Members: Leigha, Theo, Racaine, Tanikka

The GAP social action event at Southmead's Greenway Centre had over 53 local people of all ages participating in youth-led well-being and festive activities. The atmosphere was vibrant and supportive. The young leaders displayed incredible generosity by donating the £25 earned from their festive raffle to the Greenway Centre for further charitable use. A testament to positive change, the event showcased the power of youth-led, grassroots initiatives.



"That was really special tonight. Kids doing an event about Mental Health for everyone in the community. Can't ask for any more. Fair play to them."

A local resident

ATTENDEES: 53

FELT MORE PART OF COMMUNITY: 82% YES, 18% NO

MADE POSITIVE IMPACT IN COMMUNITY: 100%

AVERAGE AGE: 35

GENDER: 23% MALE, 77% FEMALE



YOU ARE INVITED

Mind! Your Business

■ Tuesday 13th December ■
The Greenway Centre Cafe, BS10 5PY
4:30 - 7 pm

A mental health awareness and emotional well-being event with a festive twist you won't want to miss!"

Free Family Friendly Christmas Event

Fun & games **Meet Santa** **Raffle**

Connections **Light refreshments** **Arts & crafts**

📍 07999752148 @ meadersmeet23@gmail.com



SOCIAL ENTERPRISE PROJECT

WHAT CAN I DO?

Team Members: Abbey, Racaine, Tanikka, Brandon, Catherine

The group wanted to support other young people with their mental health and wellbeing. They decided to create a series of workshops that drew on their insights and reflections from their lived experience of what would or did support them in tough times.

Tanikka – shared her story and led activities and discussions around Trust and Relationships.

Racaine – shared his story and led activities around Sport and discussion on Mind, Body and Soul.

Brandon – shared his story and led a Music and Performance activity and discussion about the struggles and things that helped us all when growing up.

Catherine – shared her story on being a young carer and led a discussion based activity on 'what makes you a Young Carer'.

Abbey & Catherine – shared their challenges with Mental Health and led an interactive '5 ways to wellbeing' activity and discussion.

YOUNG PEOPLE ATTENDEES: 75

4 WORKSHOPS:

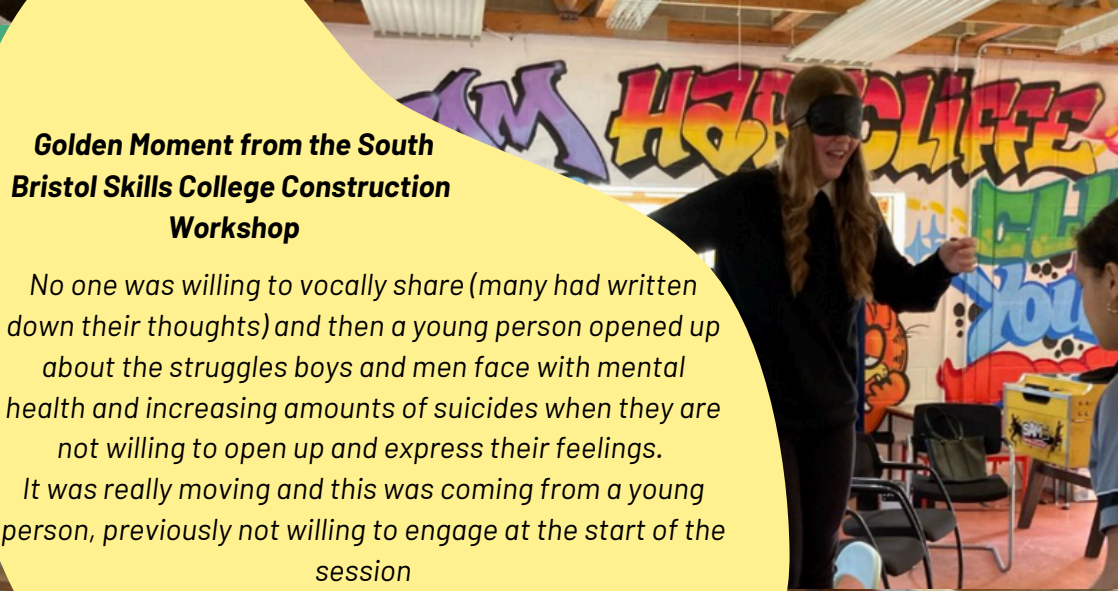
- 1.MERCHANTS ACADEMY: 15 YOUNG PEOPLE FROM YEARS 7–11 (PILOT)**
- 2.SOUTH BRISTOL SKILLS COLLEGE: 20 MALES ON CONSTRUCTION COURSE (PAID £120)**
- 3.SOUTH BRISTOL SKILLS COLLEGE: 20 YP ON ANIMAL & SOCIAL CARE COURSE (PAID £120)**
- 4.HARTCLIFFE CLUB FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: 20 YP FROM SENIORS NIGHT (PAID £120)**

TOTAL: £360



Golden Moment from the South Bristol Skills College Construction Workshop

No one was willing to vocally share (many had written down their thoughts) and then a young person opened up about the struggles boys and men face with mental health and increasing amounts of suicides when they are not willing to open up and express their feelings. It was really moving and this was coming from a young person, previously not willing to engage at the start of the session



SOCIAL ENTERPRISE PROJECT

COLLECTIVE COMMUNITIES

Team Members: Emma, Leigha, Martin, Theo, Solomon

The group wanted to make Bristol safer for all, in particular making it safer for women. Inspired by Emma's experience of being a bouncer and also from the personal experience of some of them in the group. The end product idea was for a CollectiveKeyChain, the modern day Swiss Army Knife of safety.

The aim is to improve the protection of people with their CollectiveKeyChain. They collaborated with students from the University of the West of England. The CollectiveKeyChain is a new and exciting key chain that brings protection to your pocket. Like a modern day Swiss Army Knife, version of a key chain with a variety of safety features that are needed most on the streets in the modern world. It includes a whistle, and a seatbelt cutter. They wanted to collaborate with Bristol Artists in order to support and magnify the collective elements and showcase the impact of creativity on humanity.

To begin they produced a questionnaire focusing on the wider experience of victims and how their stories can be used to empower, educate and improve the safety of people for a combined good. Alongside the key chain they wanted to deliver self-defense and lived experience workshops.

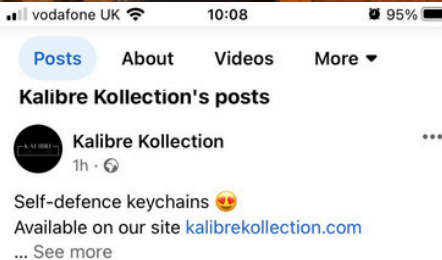
The CollectiveKeyChain, was designed to be a sustainable item made from responsibly sourced materials. The group also tested several products and visited and made links with the University West of England design department with the support of their School of Social Entrepreneurs (SSE) mentor Annie Anghard.

The group confidently presented their research, survey findings and the reasons why the Collective Communities – CollectiveKeyChain is needed now at the recent GAP Celebration event

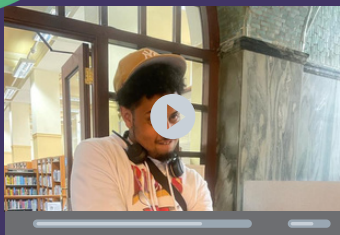
COLLABORATED WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF WEST OF ENGLAND

BEGAN CONNECTING WITH THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (VAWG) CITYWIDE WORKING GROUP WITH BCC AND THE POLICE.

BEGAN SELLING & PROMOTING ON A FACEBOOK PAGE



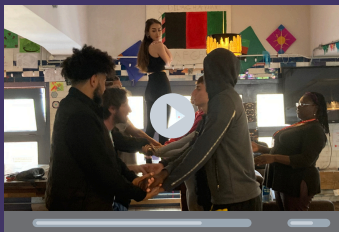
THE SHOWREELS



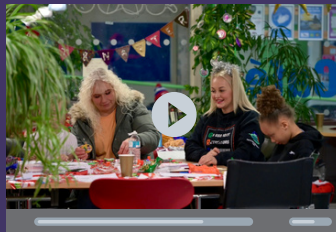
Brandon Trembath, 20, Knowle West



Catherine Rowe, 19, Bedminster



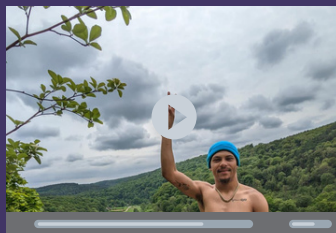
Emma Perry 18, Knowle West



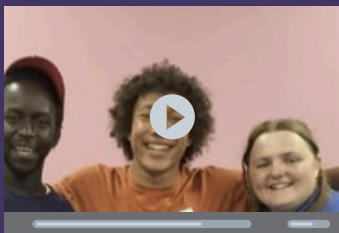
Leigha Hoover 24, Filton



Martin Mendy, 31, Easton



Racaine Wright, 20, Hartcliffe



Solomon Ferguson, 19, Withywood



Theo Wilson, 18, Southmead



Tannika, 17, Hartcliffe



"GAP made me feel like I could achieve anything as long as I put my head in to it, it's helped a lot with my social anxiety and has gave me amazing opportunities for the future, it was a blessing to be a part of GAP 23" 😊

Brandon's journey has been one of remarkable transformation. Before being introduced to Ben at a jobs fair, he was not in employment, education, or training. Despite lacking formal education, his ambition and drive were evident. He expressed a desire to work in social media, start his own podcast, and develop his fashion business. However, his dyslexia posed a significant challenge.

"Truth be told, I was in trouble, I was just doing bad stuff," he said. "I didn't really have a purpose, I didn't know what to do. I've always had a passion for media, and since I've gone on this course, I've got my own podcast..." "It's got me into a mindset where I know what I want in life and I'm going to go get it.

Throughout his time at GAP, Brandon's aspirations evolved. Although he initially wanted to pursue a career in youth work, his determination to create a podcast was also evident. With support from his GAP mentor, he managed to establish and produce the podcast, interviewing influential figures from the black community. His involvement in the podcast exhibited his entrepreneurial spirit and determination to overcome obstacles related to his dyslexia.

Brandon's experience with GAP has had a profound impact on his life, as evidenced by his statement that the programme has been life-changing and that he looks forward to mentoring other young people. His current role as a Grassroot Communities intern, working toward an NVQ Level 2 in Youth Work, indicates that he is actively pursuing a career aligned with his interests and passions. Overall, Brandon's journey exemplifies his resilience, adaptability, and the positive outcomes that can result from receiving the right support and opportunities.

"GAP made a huge difference to my life. When I first started GAP I lacked confidence, however I gradually felt myself getting more and more confident and comfortable allowing me to believe in myself due to everyone else believing in me and pushing me to be the best version of me."

Abbey has faced significant challenges with her mental health and overall well-being throughout her life. She experienced anxiety that made it difficult for her to engage in sessions and even leave her house. 'When I'm not at GAP, I don't leave the house'.

One remarkable moment was when she bravely shared her personal experiences with miscarriages and wanted to use them to advocate for better support for individuals facing similar struggles. Additionally, she was able to secure a placement at a Care Home, despite struggling during a previous interview. This opportunity has been empowering for her, and she expressed genuine joy in helping the elderly residents.

Despite the ongoing challenges, Abbey's gratitude and acknowledgment of how the programme has positively influenced her development are heartening. Her transformation from struggling with anxiety and adversity to finding fulfillment in her work and feeling a sense of personal growth is truly inspiring.



(Image: PAUL GILLIS / Reach PLC)



(Image: PAUL GILLIS / Reach PLC)

Ben has known **Catherine** since she was 7. She has been involved in many youth projects. Despite facing ongoing challenges, including taking on the role of a young carer for members of her family, she has demonstrated remarkable resilience and determination. Upon completing school, her passion for youth work led her to seek guidance from Ben, revealing a lack of clear pathways into the profession given the absence of face-to-face level 2 or 3 youth work courses in Bristol at the time.

"I just finished college and I had no idea what I was going to do afterwards. I knew I wanted to go into youth work, but I had no idea how. GAP taught me the skills to become a youth worker. My mentors got me work experience at the Hartcliffe Club for Young People, where I then got offered a job, I work there every week with SEND group, and I absolutely love it."

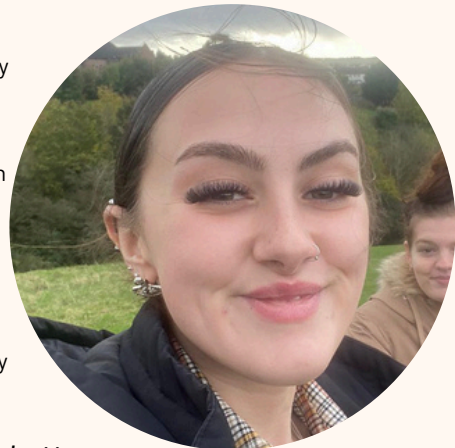
GAP through its experiential learning has enabled her to build relationships with other young participants and grow in confidence. Her dedication and leadership skills were evidenced through the success of her group's social action project, Creative Waves, a community initiative she is still actively funding for.

During her time in GAP, she expressed her passion for youth work and nature, a combination she aimed to merge. Notably, her enhanced confidence led her to partake in a wilderness survival expedition in Canada, aligning with her interests. She is engaging in a work placement at Hartcliffe Club for Young People, Imalya and is completing an NVQ Level 2 Youth Work qualification, supported by her role as a Grassroot Communities Roots Rising Intern.

Catherine's journey exemplifies the transformative impact of tailored programmes and genuine support in empowering individuals to overcome challenges, pursue their passions, and achieve professional aspirations. Her resilience, commitment to community engagement, and willingness to seize diverse opportunities exemplify the profound impact of holistic youth development initiatives.

"The key thing for me about GAP is it is allowing us to grow our own opportunities and build ourselves while getting to see everyone else getting to where they want to be. I've got a job from it that I absolutely love. I have worked with my mentors to improve myself. I have built myself and how I work since starting GAP. Its going to help me long into the future."

Emma's journey through the GAP programme has been marked by resilience, determination, and profound personal growth. Her early experiences of upheaval and adversity, including her parents' divorce and exposure to violence and poverty when she was moved to Knowle West, have shaped her resilience and strength. Additionally, her role as a young carer for her mother, coupled with personal struggles with mental health and an eating disorder, reflect the significant challenges she has overcome. Emma answered to our online promotion for GAP and said she wanted work in Mental Health or Youth Work. When she joined GAP she was working full-time at Lidl and was desperate for a 9-5pm job. Emma has always stood out as committed, capable and straight talking. Again, she is a leader within the group and doesn't take any messing about!



"I feel so much happier in myself & feel so much better. I'm eating more and putting on weight, which is great."

Upon joining, Emma was working full-time at Lidl and expressed a desire for stable 9-5pm employment. Her commitment, leadership qualities, and straight-talking nature quickly set her apart, positioning her as a driving force within the group. However, as she progressed through the programme, the pressure of leading a group project took its toll, particularly when her peers faced mental and physical health struggles. This resulted in a moment of vulnerability for Emma, highlighting the immense personal and emotional investment she had placed in the project. Subsequently, the group's event, an affirmation-themed walk in nature, culminated in a remarkable success, underscoring the resilience and dedication of Emma and her team.

Emma's journey through GAP speaks to the transformative power of personal support and experiential learning in overcoming personal challenges and achieving professional aspirations. Her ability to channel vulnerability into strength, resilience, and leadership not only contributed to the success of the project, but also demonstrates the profound impact of tailored support in nurturing personal and professional growth.

"GAP has made a huge difference in my life, I am much more confident in meeting and interacting with new people, I also discovered in my time at GAP that I am a natural leader, I also discovered that I am entrepreneurial when given the chance! I would recommend any young person to join in, I can easily say I've made friends for life in this programme!"



Leigha was initially unemployed and facing housing challenges, she found hope through GAP, which she discovered through an online advert. Despite experiencing recent hardships and uncertainties, she expressed her aspiration to work with young people, particularly around mental health, an area where she had also struggled. Her commitment and active engagement in the GAP reflected her dedication to personal growth and professional development.

As a result of her participation she secured accommodation through the council and a work placement at The Vench Youth Club. The prospect of starting paid youth work sessions and receiving support to pursue a level 3 youth work course, with the potential for future employment, marked a significant turning point in her life. This accelerated progress, achieved just a third of the way through the programme, exemplified the positive impact of the GAP initiative in providing tangible opportunities for its participants.

However, amidst her progress, Leigha faced the additional challenge of domestic violence, which required her to make difficult decisions regarding her personal safety and well-being. Despite this hardship, she was offered paid employment in Spain, which was agreed as the safest option for her at the time. We were so delighted that Leigha could return to be part of the Celebration. Her perseverance and determination to enjoy her life despite adversities has been an inspiration.

"Everyone should get the chance to learn similar stuff that's in GAP, as its things that prepare you for life and helps you find opportunities that you actually want to do'."



Ben's first encounter with **Martin** revealed a profound sense of urgency and determination, as Martin expressed a critical need for support and guidance akin to what the GAP offered, clearly shown when he stated "I need this". It is for this reason that Ben made the decision to expand the age range, so that Martin could participate. Martin was the oldest member of the group aged 30. His journey reflects arduous and diverse life experiences. Following his upbringing in Gambia and subsequent relocation to the UK, Martin faced significant challenges, including navigating a new educational system, racial discrimination and contending with mental health struggles. He was the only black person in his school and felt like the education system did not provide a platform for him to learn and express his creativity. Despite these obstacles, he exhibited a strong desire to cultivate his creative passions and build a sustainable future pathway. Inspired by the Creative Waves social action event at Dean Lane, Martin's commitment to carving his own trajectory became stronger.



(Image: PAUL GILLIS / Reach PLC)

As a result, he transitioned into a paid young leader role with the Grassroot Communities' Growing Streets Together project and engaged in a work placement at ACE, an organization offering creative opportunities for young people in St Pauls. Additionally, his involvement in a break dancing group and collaboration with the Sparks initiative in Bristol underscored his dedication to expanding creative opportunities for a diverse range of individuals.

Martin is testament to the transformative impact of GAP as he expressed, "Doing GAP has helped me see what is possible and connected me with people who can help me do the things I want to do." This sentiment highlights the pivotal role of mentorship, tailored opportunities, and community support in empowering individuals to pursue their passions, gain valuable skills, and build a fulfilling professional path. Martin's journey serves as a powerful illustration of resilience, determination, and the potential for personal and professional growth when accompanied by the right support and opportunities.

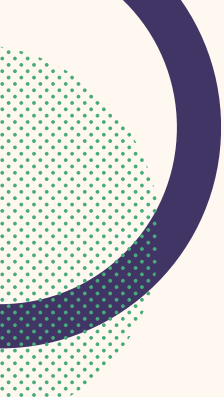
**"Through GAP, I've managed to let my ideas flow freely without limiting thoughts.
Still working on self-motivation and drive to take action toward dreamed goals.
But in all I am more keen to make changing action since I did GAP."**



(Image: PAUL GILLIS / Reach PLC)

Before **Racaine** joined GAP his life was a rhythm of sport, work, sleep repeat. Despite facing formidable challenges, including being surrounded by criminality, dyslexia, a serious knee injury, and struggles with mental health, he has consistently demonstrated exceptional strength and leadership qualities. His background in Hartcliffe presented numerous obstacles, yet his involvement in sports, particularly Rugby, served as a source of focus and stability during his formative years. Following the shattering of his dreams to become a professional Rugby player due to injury, Racaine encountered a period of profound mental health challenges and depression. Nevertheless, he emerged from this experience with a resolute mindset and a profound sense of optimism.

Racaine's inspirational resilience has left a positive impact on both his peers and staff within GAP. His leadership within the group and ability to leverage his reflective experiences to guide others demonstrate remarkable personal growth and emotional maturity. Furthermore, his insights into the practical real-world skills GAP provides and his aspiration to join the RAF as a PT instructor underscore his passion for community service and personal fulfillment.



In order to support Racaine's aspirations and aversion to seeking or receiving help, both of his GAP mentors provided him with tailored support, enabling him to volunteer in his community, deliver sport-related sessions, and pursue opportunities aligned with his career goals. This included providing wellness sessions, connecting with relevant military organizations, and joining men's wellness hiking groups. Although he initially struggled to accept this support, his mentors diligently guided him through the process and helped him move forward in his pursuit of joining the RAF.

Recent experiences and a familial loss due to knife crime have further fueled his determination to contribute positively to his community. As a result, he currently serves as a young leader on our detached team and as the youth lead on our Multi-Sports project. He is a natural leader who thrives in community work. Racaine's journey exemplifies the transformative impact of mentorship, tailored opportunities, and community support in empowering individuals to overcome adversity. His determination to forge his own path is a real asset and GC are exploring more opportunities for Racaine to realise his passions.

I'm here to take the experience. I like to meet new people. When you grow up you stick to what you know. You stick to the people who are like you, but I don't want to be like that, I want to be able to fit in with everybody, I want to meet new groups, new people with different aspirations. I want to fit in to any type of group and be able to be comfortable,"

Solomon's Mum contacted Ben after she heard GAP being advertised on the local radio. Two significant personal losses incredibly close together weighed heavy on him and his grief understandably caused him to struggle with his mental health. Despite this, he showcased remarkable resilience and determination. His ADHD, while presenting initial challenges, did not impede his participation in GAP; instead, he found the constant change in topics and activities to be conducive to keeping him engaged and focused. This underscores the importance of personalized approaches in accommodating and leveraging individual strengths and propensities.

Solomon's energy and commitment have been instrumental in his success within the programme, enabling him to actively engage in various modules and social action projects. Solomon has an energy that is contagious. He lights up a room. Despite encountering challenges from peers, he demonstrated exceptional maturity and navigated such situations without compromising the positive impact of the experience. His group's successful delivery of a creativity-infused social action project at a skate park, which engaged a broad cross-section of the community, is a testament to his leadership and commitment to community engagement.

His evolving interests in cooking and engineering, alongside mentorship from both his GAP youth work mentor and a business mentor, underscored the importance of tailored guidance and support. As a result, Solomon's work placement at Novotel, shadowing their Head Chef, became a transformational opportunity. By the end of GAP, he was accepted as a trainee Chef employee at Novotel, illustrating the profound impact of the programme in enabling him to secure employment aligned with his passions and aspirations.



"GAP has had a drastic impact on my life. It helped me through the tough times that I'm dealing with and helped me get a better picture of what I want my future to be. The most impactful part of the course for me was the work placement module and the community/ social action modules. As through the work placement I was offered a job as a trainee Chef and am still employed there! Then through the community/ social action modules my group managed to successfully get funding from BCC Safer Streets to put on more Creative Waves events for the community."



(Image: PAUL GILLIS / Reach PLC)

Tanikka became known to GC when she was hanging out on the streets of Knowle West. She is from Hartcliffe and because of all the gang problems and violence in her community she felt safer in Knowle West, which was in an ongoing gang problem with young people from Hartcliffe. She stood out from her friends as someone who wanted to make a difference in other people's lives.

Tanikka's journey is undeniably full of challenges, and yet her resilience and determination to make a positive impact stand out. Despite facing distressing circumstances and growing up in environments plagued by violence and abuse, she exhibited an exceptional willingness to drive change in her community. Her involvement in volunteering activities and support for various social action and sports projects underscore her commitment to creating a more positive environment for others.

In an environment marked by a lack of quality face-to-face youth work training, Tanikka played an instrumental role in the establishment of the GAP initiative, reflecting her dedication to ensuring that other young people would have access to the support and opportunities they needed.

Notably, she actively shared her story with influential figures and even had the opportunity to meet renowned individuals, including Astronaut Tim Peake and HRH Princess Anne. These experiences showcased her bravery and determination to use her voice to advocate for change despite the multitude of challenges she has faced.

It's evident that Tanikka's ongoing struggles with mental health and her partner's similar challenges have not hindered her from making significant strides in her own development and contributing to her community. Her commitment to the paid young leaders programme with GC and her involvement in supporting Mutli Sports and other community projects testify to her remarkable strength and her drive to make a difference.

Overall, Tanikka's journey is a powerful testament to her resilience and her dedication to bringing about positive change despite the adversity she has experienced. Her story serves as an inspiration and highlights the impact of providing tailored support and opportunities to those facing significant challenges.

"I ended up volunteering and did a lot of detached youth work, I got offered a paid role, I met Princess Anne. It's been amazing, even just planning to start the course, I've absolutely loved it...It's GAP that has literally filled a gap in my life and built bridges that has lead to greater things and opportunities for me."





(Image: PAUL GILLIS/Reach PLC)

“Theo was recommended for GAP by his youth worker in Southmead. I’d just finished my A-levels, I just wanted to do something. I was a bit lost,” he said. “I was up in Southmead just sat there thinking ‘what am I meant to do?’ I had this really passive mindset around doing stuff. I would listen to it, but I won’t do it, at school and college. I just backed out of stuff. I didn’t take many opportunities,”

Ben immediately noticed that Theo struggled to make eye contact, was visibly anxious, but seemed interested.

Theo admits “We had a little talk. I thought ‘yeah I’ll take it into consideration’. But I knew in my mind I was going to go home and say ‘yeah I can’t be bothered,’” Ben persisted and supported Theo to say yes to being on GAP.

Theo had a very difficult time whilst living in Knowle West with his mum who was suffering from drug addiction. He says that any friendships he made in primary school, where soon lost when he started secondary school. Although very clever and academic, he left school with limited GCSE’s and a fear for what the future holds. However, he has cited the GAP experience as helping him to believe in himself and feeling like he belongs. Theo not only engaged in his own groups social action project in Southmead, but he came along to support the other 2 groups projects as well, which were all a great success. He was so committed to the whole groups success and was a massive support to others.

There were days where Theo really struggled and other days where his knowledge and passion for learning lit up the room. Theo’s confidence has sky rocketed through this programme and particularly when out on the streets of St Pauls trying out the community development skills learnt by the group. He was clear, confident, caring, articulate and clever in how he engaged with different people.

The opportunity for Theo to shadow a teacher at an SEN school in Bristol not only aligned with his aspirations to support others but also provided valuable experiential learning and a sense of purpose. Working closely with his mentors, he found the encouragement and support to pursue higher education and apply for University, marking a significant milestone in his personal and professional development.

The emotional impact shared by Theo’s mentor, Stuart Woodburn, at the Celebration event underscores the profound nature of the mentoring relationship, highlighting the reciprocity and mutual empowerment that can arise. Stuart’s revelation about feeling empowered by Theo to embrace his own disability and champion it exemplifies the deep connection and transformative influence that can emerge from mentorship. This two-way process of growth and empowerment not only reflects Theo’s personal journey but also underscores the mutual benefits and transformative potential inherent in mentorship and guidance.

Theo’s journey through the GAP is a testament to the mutual empowerment and profound impact that can result from mentorship and support. His deep commitment to supporting others on their journey into adulthood, combined with his personal growth and resilience, exemplifies the transformative potential of GAP.

‘GAP has changed the way that I think about myself and what I am capable of achieving’. Whilst on GAP, he received an offer letter to study Psychology. He is now attending University of Surrey full-time.

“GAP has helped me become myself, helping me grow my confidence, make new friends and take part in opportunities that I never thought I’d be able to, it helped me build qualities I didn’t even know I had. The mentor help is very useful not only for the course but for general life as well.”



THE SOCIAL VALUE OF GAP

- PARTICIPANTS EXPERIENCED POSITIVE CHANGES IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:
 - LIFE SATISFACTION
 - HAPPINESS
 - GENERAL HEALTH
 - RESILIENCY
 - CONFIDENCE
 - SELF-EFFICACY
 - LEVELS OF TRUST IN PEERS
 - PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS
 - COMMUNICATION CAPABILITIES
 - LEADERSHIP CONFIDENCE (FOR SOME)
 - SOCIAL MIXING
 - COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERING
 - ATTITUDE TOWARDS ACADEMIA



GAP HAS MADE SUBSTANTIAL POSITIVE IMPACTS ON THE WELLBEING, PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT, SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT, AND EDUCATIONAL AND EMPLOYMENT READINESS OF ITS PARTICIPANTS.



THE SOCIAL VALUE OF GAP

"GAP has had a drastic impact on my life. It helped me through tough times and to get a better picture of what I want my future to be."

**PARTICIPANTS WHO
VOLUNTEER IN THE
COMMUNITY MORE THAN
DOUBLED**

**80% OF PARTICIPANTS
RESPONDED WITH A LIFE
SATISFACTION GREATER
THAN "7"**

**GOOD HEALTH
AT THE END OF THE
PROGRAMME 100% OF
PARTICIPANTS FELT
THEY WERE IN GOOD
HEALTH, COMPARED
TO 67% AT THE
START.**

"My confidence has hugley grown through taking part in the GAP, its definitely helped me out of my shell."

"The increase to my confidence has helped me realise that I have a place in the world."

**100% OF PARTICIPANTS
FELT THEY HAD THE SKILLS
AND EXPERIENCE TO GET A
JOB IN THE FUTURE,
COMPARED TO 50% AT THE
START.**

**The Social Return on
Investment ratio of 1:
1.46, indicating that
for every £1 invested,
a social return of
£1.46**

**RESILIENCE
AT THE END OF THE
PROGRAMME ALL
PARTICIPANTS AGREED OR
STRONGLY AGREED THAT
THEY KEEP TRYING IN THE
FACE OF DIFFICULTY,
COMPARED TO 58% AT THE
START OF THE
PROGRAMME.**

"I've got goals and I'm ready to smash them. The next year is going to be good. Im excited to see where life takes me!"



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...

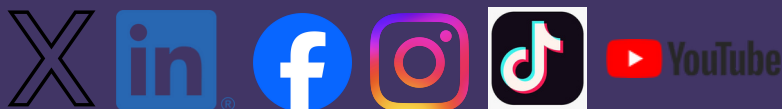
Please reach out and contact our Founder and CEO Ben Carpenter at:

ben.carpenter@grassrootcommunities.org

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

And on our GC socials:



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