

WAM YOUTH



Helping young people build resilience for life

ANNUAL REPORT
2021

CHARITY NO. 1170638



CHAIRPERSON'S STATEMENT

Another year passes with just as many challenges and once again the staff have risen and overcome the challenges thrown at them through a changing year of never really knowing which way Covid would turn, lockdown or no lockdown, masks or no masks. A very big thank you to all of our staff both past and present.

More young people have been supported by WAM this year and the woodland is being used by more schools more which is great.

We are grateful to God for his provision of Finances which has enabled us to move forward in providing more support that the young people need and increase our volunteer base. For whom we are ever thankful for their willingness to give of their time.

As we go into another year we know there will be changes, new challenges, knowing that we will cope and succeed.

Colin Impey
On Behalf of the Trustees



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A NOTE FROM GEMMA...

It's been another busy year at WAM, the team has grown, our services have grown and we've seen the benefit of the foundations laid in previous years providing a base from which to build on. One of the highlights for me has been seeing our long held desire to reduce our mentoring waiting list realised. Thanks to funding from Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) we've been able to grow the staff team so that young people now only face a 1-2 month wait rather than the 6-8 months previously. Another highlight has been seeing the woods come alive again as school groups return to connect with the space. We've also been able to commission two external audits this year in safeguarding and in HR. Another achievement was the creation of a 3 year business plan. All of which have been useful proactive investments of time and resource to strengthen WAM's organisational foundations.

We've faced some significant challenges this year as well, both with withdrawal of access to premises from which to run our youth work and our office space and in cuts in regular giving. However in these challenges we've been so grateful for the support from our local community, particularly Winchcombe Scouts and Guides & St Peter's Church for their provision of premises & my personal thanks to the individuals who have walked alongside us this year in various ways. Special thanks has to go to Richard Hastings for his help with strategy and finance, much of the progress we've seen wouldn't have happened without his input. He has given more hours than he probably cares to remember in analysing figures, putting together projections, writing reports and keeping me on track! Two other key volunteers are June Yeates and Linda Teague. Both have worked so hard in our office providing a much needed common thread between the various administrative tasks across all the different projects and staff. June "retired" in the summer & we were so grateful to be able to employ Linda in January 2022 thanks to funding from GCC. We've also said goodbye to three staff this year, Carla, Eloise and Leanne. All have contributed so much during their time with us and we are so grateful for how they've shaped WAM.

Our biggest ongoing challenge remains securing adequate, ongoing core funding. As the public purse is tightened, emergency covid recovery funding pots run out and the cost of living increases impact on donations we are not naive to the challenges ahead. As we continue to work towards reopening a physical youth centre building in our town a large part of that effort is in working to secure an increase in regular financial support to sustain not only the service but also the building.

Funding for universal (i.e. open access community-based) youth services in Gloucestershire has been cut from £61 per capita in 2011/12 to £1 in 2019/20. That's a cut from an annual spend of £73200 to £1200 on young people in our area. The cuts in statutory youth services have meant that grassroots voluntary organisations like WAM Youth have not only had to increase their provision to fill the gaps left by the withdrawal of statutory services but have also had to find the funding to do so themselves, having to fund their own overheads and organisational costs in addition to youth service delivery.

We are based in a rural market town in North Gloucestershire with poor transport links that leave young people particularly isolated and unable to access youth services. Without the services we provide the vast majority of the 1200 children and young people in our area (our town and the villages it services) would not have access to any comparable support. Reopening a physical space that is accessible and welcoming to young people is vital to providing the support, safety and community they so desperately need, particularly in this post-pandemic, economically vulnerable and uncertain world. That's why it is essential that charities like WAM continue to operate in the coming years and why it is important for us to ensure our strategy is not only robust enough to weather the financial storms we're all likely to experience this year but also flexible enough to allow space for creativity and imagination. Without those we have little hope of helping young people see a brighter future, one where they have influence, where their voice matters and one they look forward to inhabiting.

As well as growing our regular income streams to support our increased costs we have two other strategic priorities for the next 3 years. One is ensuring we empower staff and volunteers and that additional responsibilities are only given with accompanying additional support and opportunities to upskill, increasing their capabilities and capacities. We are exploring potential collaboration with other Gloucestershire-based Youth Charities to develop co-ordinated training programmes. We've also set up a staff mentoring programme this year where each staff member has access to a personal external mentor or coach to support them in their roles.

The final priority is to provide space to evaluate and critically reflect on our practice. It is more important to us to grow in depth and quality than numerically. We need to be able to invest into our own impact evaluation, to keep aware of other local and national research and allow that all to influence our own practice. We want to strive to be continually improving our services and innovating in response to the ever-changing needs of young people around us as well as be able to share with others our experiences and learning. Our sustainability as an organisation is inextricably tied to WAM being a dynamic and resourceful organisation that recognises its core strength is in its people and their capacity for imagination and hope.

So on that note all that remains is for me to say thank you to the incredible team of staff, trustees and volunteers who enable all that WAM does, to the funders who facilitate the work, to those who pray/hope on our behalf but most importantly to the young people who are willing to allow us to journey with them. A journey we may think is primarily for their benefit but more often than not we learn from them more than we can measure.

Gemma Madle

GEMMA MADLE

Director of WAM Youth



WAM Outdoors

In a nutshell....



It has been a busy year with the organisation receiving multiple requests for support, subsequently taking on many of these requests, in addition to taking on more staff to run the extra work. We have seen an increase in provision since the easing of Covid restrictions and we have also seen a start in returning to normality with provision to group sessions from mainstream schools - something which was completely on hold during the earlier stages of the pandemic. In all, the outdoors project has worked with and communicated with approximately 22 separate organisations in relation to 1:1 sessions and group provision. These are a mix of schools, county councils, other charities, and the Police. We took on four new sessional staff in Winter to cope with the extra demand. Then Tara joined us from Youth Support Team in September as a new Youth Work Co-ordinator and we said goodbye to our Outdoor Education Officer Leanne in December so there's been a few changes!



Dave Willcox

WAM Outdoors Project Manager



Our Activities....

- 1-to-1 mentoring-style alternative provision
- Home Education Groups & Courses
- School Group Woodland Skills Session (for large and small groups!)
- Duke of Edinburgh Award
- Volunteering opportunities
- SEND Family Days
- Hiring of our space to school & youth groups & other youth charities
- Holiday & Activity Fund programme of Activities for children in receipt of Free School Meals

Our Woodland....

- Expanded our car park to accommodate a minibus!
- The arrival of "The Chalet" our shipping container to provide secure storage & a dry changing area for children & young people who get extra muddy!
- Thinned out compartment 1 with the help of Park & Landscapes
- Installed security cameras with the help of Cotswold Security Group
- Created a Tower of Hanoi Tyre Challenge & a Giant Draughts & Chess set with the help of our DofE Volunteers

Our Plans....

- A second composting toilet to be built at the northern end of the woodland
- The start of provision for water and electricity has been verbally agreed with the owners of the industrial site building work. They have agreed to run water and cables up to the entrance of the woods at no cost to us, which will, in time enable us to get connected and have our own supply. Building of this next phase is due to start around April 2022.
- We also hope to build our longhouse
- We plan to create an archery range
- Purchase another container for an office space and indoor meeting room. This will mean we can continue to operate 1:1 Sessions in poor weather conditions.

WAM Mentoring

In a nutshell....

“It's been another eventful year for the mentoring project at WAM and the main reason for this (aside from covid!) is that we have finally been able to expand our staff team. We are thankful to Gloucestershire County Council and CHK Foundation because it has meant that our desire to increase our capacity in order to be able to respond to young people's needs in a more timely way has begun to be realised. Right now, we are addressing the waiting list that has built over the last few years, but moving forward our hope is that we will be able to be far more responsive, so that when we are contacted by a referrer about a young person needing support, we will be able to start work with that young person within a month.”

Ali Kirkwood

WAM Mentoring Project Manager



Highlights....

- In May we took on a Male Mentoring Youth Worker, Matthew, with a particular focus on mentoring boys and supporting male youth workers.
- We also employed a Mentoring team administrator. Joanna has worked with WAM previously and it has been great to have her back again.
- The young people we have supported over the year attend 9 different secondary schools and 5 primaries across the county. We have also supported a few older young people who attend college/university and some who are home educated.
- Sophia joined the team in December to develop WAM's contribution to the Gloucestershire Mentoring Programme. This is a collaborative effort between 7 local charities to co-ordinate support for girls at risk. Sophia has previously worked for WAM & it's like she never left!

Our Future Plans....

- We are looking forward to working with the other charities in the Gloucestershire Mentoring Programme following funding from CHK foundation. This will enable us to work with an additional 20 girls alongside the work our existing mentoring team have done in reducing our current waiting list. It will also provide us with a collaborative learning environment to share and shape best practice in mentoring.
- We will also be exploring ways we may be able to develop our service to support parents & carers.
- We will be looking to develop more partnerships with local organisations and schools to support young people in their communities more effectively.

WAM Community

In a nutshell....

It's been a challenging year in many ways for WAM's Community Youth Work. The frequent changes to restrictions meant it was a stop-start experience for our Youth Groups & we all had to navigate the changes from face to face meetings to Zoom meetings to face to face & with masks and without masks and back again! We also faced challenges with available premises as Encounter Church were uncertain of their continued venue's availability going into 2021. However Winchcombe Scouts, Guides & St Peter's Church came to our rescue providing venues for our various community activities and groups! We also said goodbye to two staff at the end of the year, Carla Thraves & Eloise Ashworth both of whom left their mark on WAM in significant ways & we were grateful to all they brought to WAM in their time with us. Notably completion of a community consultation, establishing a Youth Council and trialling SEND provision. We looked forward to the arrival of our new Community Youth Work Project Manager, Bryoni Newell, in 2022 & to hopefully seeing some progress in our efforts to reopen the Old Boys School building to young people in Winchcombe and the local area. We have lots of plans for the future!



Gemma Madle
Director of WAM Youth

Our Activities...

- We have trialled a lot of different activities this year as part of our community consultation. This included:
 - Detached Youth Work
 - Special Educational Needs & Disabilities sessions in partnership with Allsorts Gloucestershire
 - Kintsugi Hope Wellbeing Groups
 - Community Trails
 - Drop-in sessions at school lunchtime
 - Weekly youth groups running from different venues
- We also supported a group of young people to establish Winchcombe Youth Council, this group now has a non-voting seat on Winchcombe Town Council and is beginning to start its own projects.

Our Future Plans....

- We will continue to commit our resources to enable the reopening of a youth centre building in Winchcombe. Our aim is to have a centre that is open every day after school for secondary school age young people
- We plan to develop our schools work so that we can provide more connections between our community youth work and our other projects
- We will also be exploring partnerships with other organisations & groups to enable more effective collaboration in our local area.

IMPACT STORIES

We first met Jack when he was 12 and his parent had referred him for support. He was struggling with school and with friendships. It took a while to get to know him as he was quiet and withdrawn and he seemed to struggle in processing things. Jack loves art and creativity. In time, we were able to introduce him to mentor Simon, unfortunately it was via video calls because it was a time of lockdown. However, they built a strong relationship through regular zoom sessions where they enjoyed playing online drawing games. When everyone felt safer, they began to meet in person and decided to make a comic together. This has been something they enjoyed doing and through it, Simon has been able to explore some of the things Jack has been facing in life. During the year, Jack was assessed by an educational psychologist and since then school have made some adaptations to their support for him. Jack seems much happier and more confident.

66

young people accessed
our youth groups

149

young people accessed
our outdoor education

33

young people received
mentoring

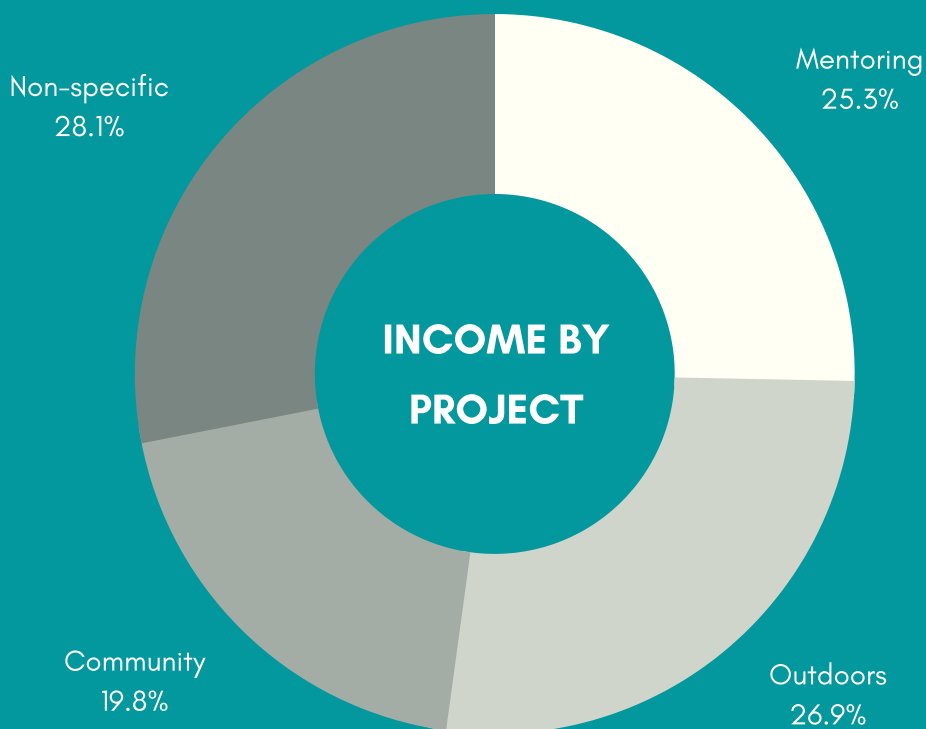
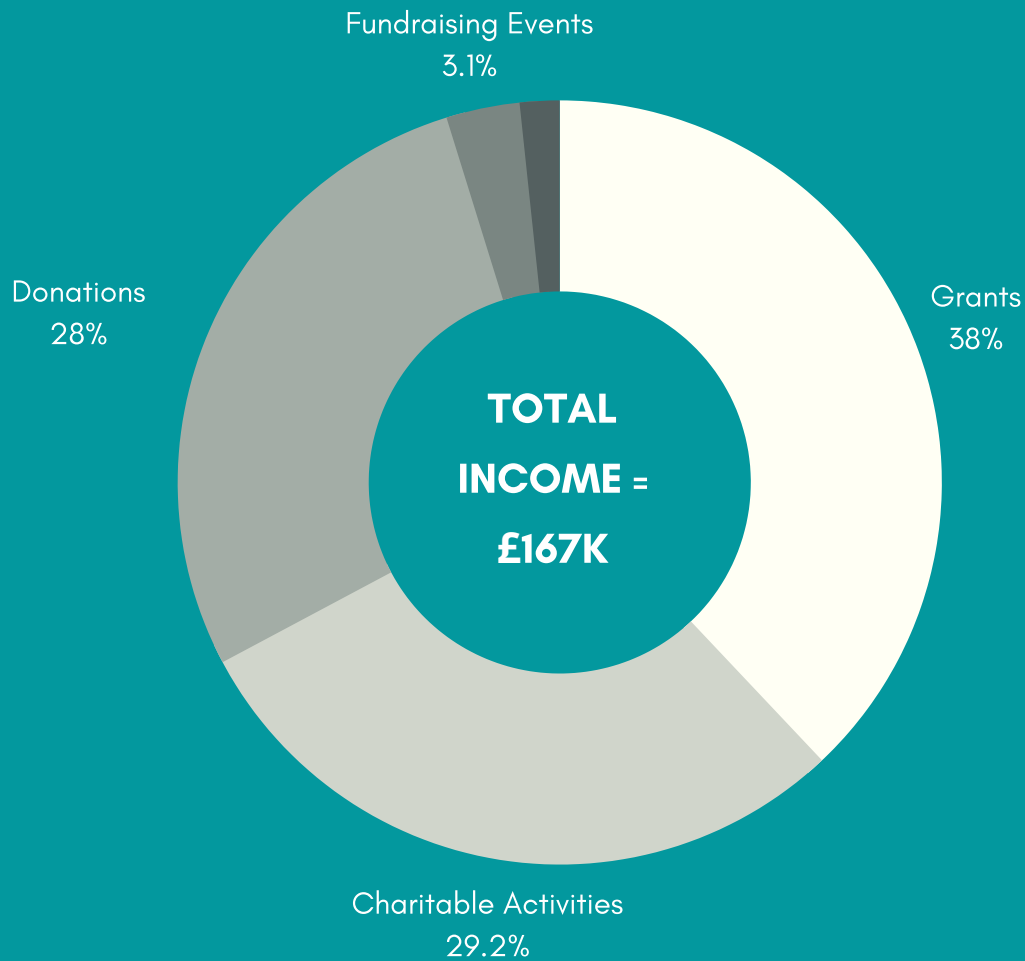
400+

young people took part
in WAM sessions
at their school

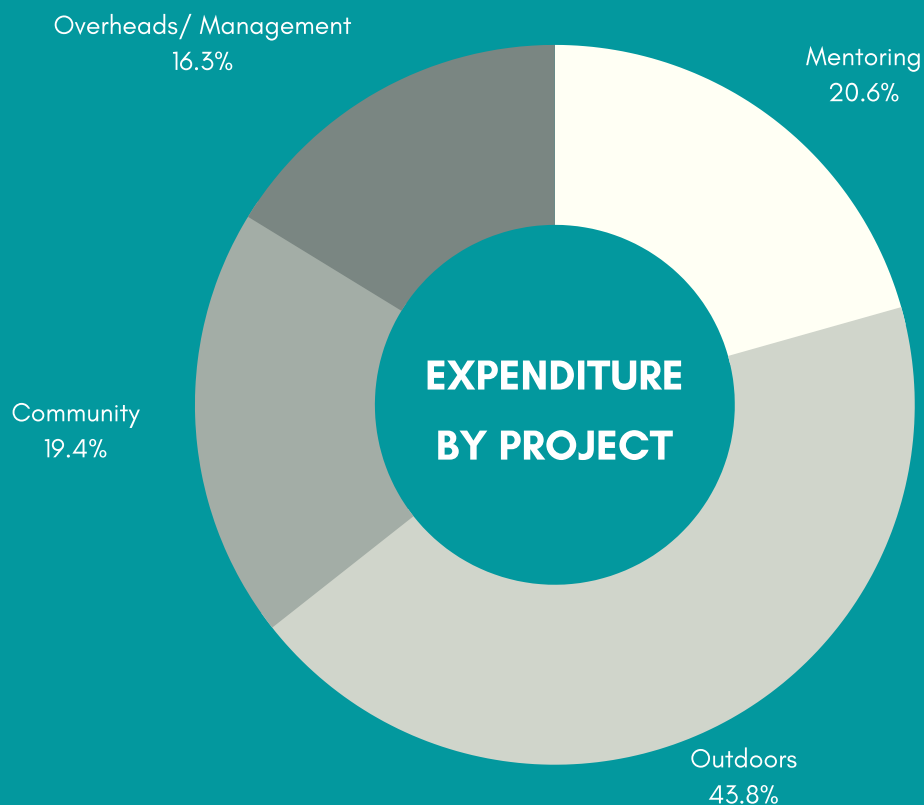
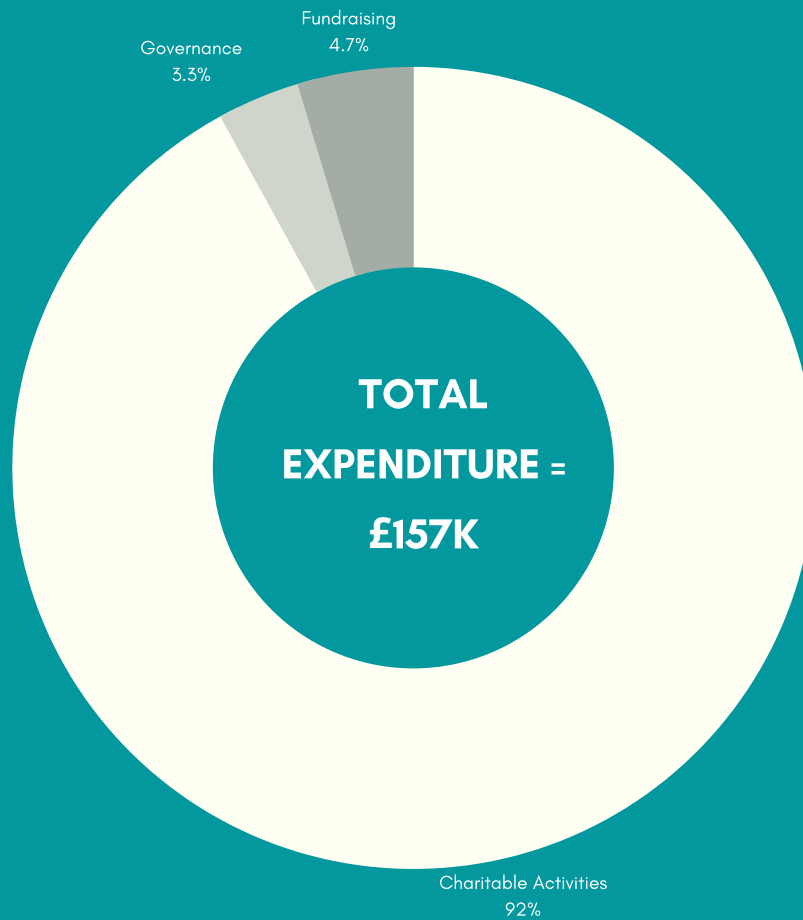
Keasha was 13 when we first met her. She struggled with extreme anxiety and had suspected ASD and hadn't been able to settle at secondary school, so was being educated via the hospital education service. The local authority were seeking an appropriate school for her. She told me she wanted to be an architect when she was older, so we tried to find her a mentor who could support her career choice. Thankfully Angela was able to help and they have now finished over a year of mentoring together. Some of this was during lockdowns, which they also used for drawing, but to a more technical standard, and for exploring the world and it's vastly different architecture, virtually. More recently, Keasha and Angela have enjoyed meeting up and playing sports together. This has helped Keasha develop more confidence in the outside world which will hopefully help her with her education in the long term.

ANNUAL INCOME

A full set of accounts is filed with the Charity Commission each year. This is an overview for Sep 20–Aug 21



ANNUAL EXPENDITURE



WITH THANKS

Thanks to the following organisations who have supported us this year both financially and practically!

Bromford Housing, CHK Foundation, Churches Together in Winchcombe, Encounter Trust, Gloucestershire Community Foundation, Gloucestershire County Council, Gilbert Lane Trust, Julia & Hans Rausing Trust, McInnes Communications, St Peter's Church, Tewkesbury Borough Council, UK Youth, Winchcombe Abbey Primary Parents Association, Winchcombe Cycling Club, Winchcombe Rotary, Winchcombe Scouts & Guides, Winchcombe Town Council, Winchcombe's Townswomen's Guild, Winchcombe Youth Partnership, Young Gloucestershire and the many individuals whose donations have made our work possible.

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