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WE MIND THE
GAP™



WE GROW
Graduation 2024

Welcome to our family, friends, supporters & guests

Tonight is all about celebrating the successes and achievements of ten amazing young people as they reach the end of their six-month WeGrow programme in Flintshire with WeMindTheGap.

In October last year they put their trust in us as a team and committed to making the most of this unique opportunity. And they have made the most of it. It's been quite a journey, not much of it easy, and the results are here for all to see.

These amazing young people now have real choices, real aspirations and the real futures they deserve. Over these six months they have each completed four work placements, worked with their personal coaches, made firm friends, and developed their essential skills and qualifications.

There have been all sorts of challenges along the way from, canoeing across the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct in week two, to hiking, kayaking and ghyll scrambling, leaps of faith, to dashing around Cardiff.

None of this would have been possible without the commitment of Flintshire County Council. Thank you for your unstinting support and considered funding through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Joining us and the council in making this happen are so many businesses, Coleg Cambria, coaches and individuals. They have given us their time, their consideration, their support, and their expertise.

Not only do we congratulate our tenacious ten, we congratulate that vital community too; for helping us change futures with love and meaningful opportunities in this important corner of North East Wales. And now these young people, who have become our friends, will go out into the world as lifelong members of the WeMindTheGap Alumni family.

We will always be there with encouragement, support, love, hugs and cups of tea – just as any family is. They have already been building their community, supporting each other and making plans for trips out and staying in touch with each other. In the meantime, we couldn't be prouder of each one of them and we can't wait to see what they achieve out there in the world with their newly found confidence, shared experience and friendship.


Mark Rimmer
Skipper


Rachel Clacher
Founder &
Trustee


Ali Wheeler
CEO


Laura Columbine
Community
Maker


Jim Ellison
First Mate



Here's what we've been up to for the last six months

Qualifications & Training Sessions

- **Emergency First Aid at Work** Level 3
- **Essential Skills Wales Maths** Entry Level 3
- **Essential Skills Wales English** Entry Level 3
- **Essential Skills Wales Maths** Level 1
- **Food and Hygiene** Level 1
- **Food and Hygiene** Level 2
- **Behavioural Management**
- **NSPCC Introduction to Safeguarding**
- **COSHH**
- **Mental Health Awareness Course**
- **Communication Skills**
- **Self-care and Wellbeing**
- **Driving Theory Test** - Liam

Work Placements

- **IS Group** – Manufacturer
- **Wall Lag** – Electrical/Maintenance/ Painting and Decorating
- **Newydd** – Catering
- **Coleg Cambria** – Catering
- **Aura Wales** – Leisure and Libraries
- **Theatr Clwyd** – Entertainment
- **Wepre Park** – Grounds Maintenance
- **Hawarden Estate** – Warehouse/ Glynne Arms/Farm Shop
- **Clwyd Alyn Housing** – Maintenance/ Electrical/Cleaning
- **Wepre Primary School** - Primary Teaching Assistant
- **Ysgol Maesglas** – Primary Teaching Assistant
- **Outside Lives** – Community
- **Cafe Isa** – Community
- **Llys Eleanor** – Care
- **Lil Angels** - Childcare
- **River Link Donkey Sanctuary** – Animals
- **Greenacres Animal Park** - Animals



New Experiences & Skills

- **Team Building** - Army Reserves
- **Mindfulness**
- **Yoga**
- **Film-making workshop**
- **Canoeing over the Aqueduct**
- **Cooking and nutrition**
- **CV writing and mock interviews**
- **Adventure activities** – leap of faith, low ropes, gorge walking, mountain hiking, canoeing, rowing, white water rafting, inflatable park
- **Volunteering with Outside Lives and North Clwyd Animal Rescue**
- **National Trust visit to Erddig**
- **Visits to New Brighton, Chester, Loggerheads, Talacre Beach Liverpool and Cardiff**
- **Talks from:**
 - **VIVA LGBTQIA+**
 - **Andy Dunbobbin** - Police and Crime Commissioner
 - **Liz Stanton** - Get Safe Online
- **Visit to Airbus, Money Penny and Net World Sports**
- **Walking miniature donkeys at Moel Famau Donkeys**
- **Chester Zoo**
- **Ten-pin bowling**
- **Mountain farm reindeers**
- **Walk and Christmas tree picking at Delamere Forest**
- **Blue Planet Aquarium**
- **Healthy relationship workshop**
- **Pantomime at Theatr Clwyd**
- **First Aid**
- **Visit from the Owl Man of Big Ideas Wales**
- **Planning and hosting events including a launch and a Big Quiz Fundraiser**





Liam Stapley

Favourite moment? Shepherd's pie at launchpad!

Scariest moment? Standing on top of the pole and getting ready to jump from the leap of faith.

Best learning experience? Completing my driving theory test first time.

I have found a new love for: Being with people.

My words to sum up the past 6 months: Fun, enlightening.

Advice to next year's participants: Have fun and enjoy it when you can.

After graduation I will be: Working with Wall Lag as a labourer, which was one of my placements.



Jazz Burns

Favourite moment: A highlight was sailing across Lake Windermere singing sea shanties followed by hot chocolates at the cafe. I'll always have fond memories of that day, remembering the fun we had and the excellent team work!

Scariest moment: The journey on the way to launchpad, not knowing what was ahead of us for the next 6 months! Although this fear was eliminated pretty quickly after the bonding time we had at Chirk.

Best learning experience: The different opportunities and experiences I had through placements and life coaching. I cemented my passion for working with people and was given the encouragement to believe in myself.

I have found a new love for: Stepping into the unknown to take any and every opportunity available to me (even if it seems scary). The achievements I have gained wouldn't have been possible without taking a leap of faith or believing in myself when I thought I couldn't do something.

My words to sum up the past 6 months: The WeGrow programme reminds me of a roller-coaster; the initial butterflies due to the nerves and the excitement of the journey ahead. There are ups and downs with new twists and turns you didn't expect. But it's exhilarating and you're safe, surrounded by other people going through a similar experience. So buckle up to experience a life-changing ride!

Advice for next year's participants: Embrace every part of the next 6 months! You will meet amazing people and do even more amazing things! You can do this!! :)

Leah Griffiths

Favourite moment? The Liverpool trip, 'I love cities and the bakery was amazing'.

Scariest moment? Climbing up the pole of the leap of faith at Brathay then jumping off!

Best learning experience? Painting and decorating with Andy.

I have found a new love for: Being at work.

My words to sum up the past 6 months: Exciting, new adventures and fun.

Advice to next year's participants: Believe in yourself and do not give up.

After graduation I will be: A painter and decorator with Wall Lag.



Willow Humphreys



LIFE COACH

Nicola

Favourite moment? Recording a mock podcast about a Tesco Meal Deal.

Scariest moment? Singing during the fundraiser event in front of 50+ people (absolutely worth it).

Best learning experience? Learning that personal growth is a gradual process and that being surrounded by good people is a vital piece of the maturation puzzle.

I have found a new love for: Sketching and writing, which I've found surprisingly therapeutic.

My words to sum up the past 6 months: Vibrant, understanding, open, optimistic, positive and supportive.

Advice to next year's participants: If you are afraid of something, do it. If you can't, then learn to understand it. Everything gets more tolerable when viewed through a magnifying glass.

After graduation I will be: Volunteering at Jade Jones Leisure Centre. Eventually I want to go back to college for music production.

Favourite moment? Having a laugh with the others and going to the picture house.

Scariest moment? Standing on top of the wobbly pole and getting ready to jump from the leap of faith. Speaking in front of people.

Best learning experience? Teamwork activities and the picture house. Work experience has allowed me to be better at talking to people.

I have found a new love for: Movie-making.

My words to sum up the past 6 months: Challenging, useful for discovering what I like and don't like workwise.

Advice to next year's participants: Try to be in every day, try everything and expand your comfort zone.

After graduation I will be: Working more with Business Wales for starting my business. Possibly working in accounting or technical support.

Brittany Auld



LIFE COACH

Ray

Charlotte Smith



LIFE COACH

Elaine

Favourite moment? Chester Zoo because I love the zoo and going there was a nice day out. Hawarden Estate Farm Shop and sitting around the fire pit and having hot chocolate.

Scariest moment? Brathay leap of faith as I had to trust all my fellow gappies to control the rope when I jumped off and lower me to the ground.

Best learning experience? My placement at Ysgol Maes Glas. All the placements allowed us to see what sectors we liked or did not like.

I have found a new love for: Ghyll scrambling. I had never done this before and it made me step out of my comfort zone. It was something I would like to do again.

My words to sum up the past 6 months: Full on, challenging, tiring and exhausting.

Advice to next year's participants: Try everything and step out of your comfort zone. Always look at what and why you are doing something because there is a reason behind everything. You may not like everything but you will learn from it.

After graduation I will be: Wanting to do an apprenticeship as a teaching assistant. I will be continuing with education.

Favourite moment? The whole of launchpad was fantastic.

Scariest moment? The whaling boats at outward bound.

Best learning experience? Improving my social and communication skills.

I have found a new love for: Playing music such as the guitar.

My words to sum up the past 6 months: A brilliant experience.

Advice to next year's participants: Enjoy, relax and make the most of it.

After graduation I will be: Hopefully working.

Max Cain



LIFE COACH

Ray

Rosie Parry

Favourite moment? Getting to know everyone on the programme. Visiting and experiencing new places. Personal favourites include Moel Famau donkeys and volunteering at the animal rescue.

Scariest moment? Discovery day when meeting and talking to unfamiliar face, travelling independently and the leap of faith at Brathay.

Best learning experience? Going to the picture house and learning all about what it is like to work in the film industry, including lighting and the green screen equipment.

I have found a new love for: Performing arts and theatre, also being out in nature that benefits my health and wellbeing.

My words to sum up the past 6 months: An amazing time as my life is a wild journey. Thanks to my fellow gappies and the wonderful staff, I have achieved so many things.

Advice to next year's participants: You only do WeGrow once so make the most of every part of the programme. It will be an amazing opportunity and chapter in your life. It will help you maintain a bright and successful future.

After graduation I will be: Continuing my maths course by studying Level 1 at Coleg Cambria. Looking for driving lessons and hoping to get a job in catering or in the theatre.



Sasha Warner

Favourite moment? Going to Moel Famau donkeys, especially when they went a bit ballistic.

Scariest moment? Jumping off the climbing pole at Brathay, finding the courage was extremely hard.

Best learning experience? During work experience I found more clarity on what career path I want to pursue.

I have found a new love for: The polar bear dip I did in Brathay, the feeling you get from experiencing it is unmatched.

My words to sum up the past 6 months: I would describe it as being welcoming, valuable, hectic, diverse, fun, educational, challenging and uplifting.

Advice to next year's participants: Stay positive and open-minded, give everything a shot. I know everyone says it but it does go fast.

After graduation I will be: Continuing at River Link Donkey Sanctuary, while also job searching, and hopefully a sunny holiday abroad.



Favourite moment? Getting ready for work by getting my CV completed.

Scariest moment? Speaking in front of people at a charity event.

Best learning experience? The importance of turning up to work.

I have found a new love for: Outdoor activities and pushing myself out of my comfort zone.

My words to sum up the past 6 months: Brilliant.

Advice to next year's participants: Make the most of the programme and take every day at a time.

After graduation I will be: I am unsure of the work I want to do.

Ciaran Williams



Continuing to create the right opportunities for their future

Putting under-served young adults to work in real career paths isn't a miracle, as we have demonstrated through our programmes. It's an achievable reality if they are given access to the right support and opportunities.

Changing and challenging times mean that we must keep evaluating what we do and checking that it's still working. A global pandemic and a continuing war have placed us and our young people in troubling and troubled times with increased uncertainty. Social mobility has decreased and mental health issues have increased and too many of our young people feel isolated, disengaged and lacking a sense of belonging.

Our answer, post COVID, was to create a virtual programme known as WeDiscover and this continues to go from strength to strength. The programme connects isolated young people to new role models and allows them to grow in confidence, self esteem and, importantly, helps them plan their next steps. This programme is now a growing part of the WeMindTheGap portfolio, and in 2024 we are seeing more referrals than ever.

We now offer three distinct programmes – our online programme WeDiscover, our six-month employability programme WeGrow, and our graduate programme WeBelong, which welcomes all who have taken part in our WeMindTheGap family and provides lifelong support and encouragement.

Today, WeDiscover is being delivered across North Wales, WeGrow has expanded to become mixed delivery groups, and WeBelong now holds over 200 people close to its heart.

WeMindTheGap continues to grow both in impact and scale. With the publication of a report that calculates our social return on investment, we can now demonstrate impact in numbers: for every £1 we spend there is a social return on investment of £3.60 within 18 months and savings to the public purse of £2.90. Not bad! Imagine if every organisation had the same impact. And imagine what impact WeMindTheGap can have in your community over the years.

In 2023 we carried out a 'Big Conversation' with 18-21 year olds in Wrexham to ensure we continue to do the right thing for young people who deserve better and whose lives were affected by the COVID pandemic. In response to that, in 2024, we will adapt some of the content that we deliver in our programmes to 'Bridge the Gap' between young people and their communities. We will also try 'pilot programmes' of support in schools as an alternative route to employment. We look forward to sharing these developments with you and our wider community.

If you would like to have an impact in your community or know someone who would, please get in touch. We would love to hear from you.

You can contact us at
www.wemindthegap.org.uk



Thank You!

Thank you to all those who helped make this graduation event happen, and to all those who taught us new skills and new experiences.

Nicky Owen – for allowing us to volunteer at NCAR and walk the lovely dogs.

Hannah Williams Skinner – for organising for us to look around Moneypenny.

Wayne and John – from 157(Welsh) Regt RLC Army Reserves for giving your time for us to take part in team-building activities essential in the early stage of the programme.

Dan Wade – for being the most supportive work coach in Flintshire.

Linda and Rosie – at Mold Job Centre for your ongoing support.

Tom and team from Theatr Clwyd – for giving us fantastic ongoing support and never failing to deliver.

Alex at Viva LGBTQ Youth Cymru – for the talk you gave us about LGBTQIA+.

The Moving on Fund – for their continued support.

Kirsty Craig and Rachel Hough – for getting us interview-ready.

Alex and Lucas – the Tesco Community Champions for Broughton for providing us with a donation for our Big Quiz.

Sue Morris – the Morrisons Community Champions for providing us with a donation of food and drink for our Big Quiz.

The WeDiscover team – for a series of energetic workshops.

Linzi Jones (Coop Wales) – for lending us 10 laptops for the whole programme.

Team at TNR – for providing us with inspiration to complete the canoeing experience.

Nathan and Athena – for healthy relationships workshop.

Jill Blandford – for providing a yoga and mindfulness experience in the yurt at Outside Lives.

The Aura team – for putting up with us at Jade Jones.

Stephen Jones from North Wales Crusaders – for delivering our First Aid qualification.

Stephen Conroy – for giving us the opportunity to cook at Moreton Hall.

Kate and Matt – of Brathay Trust for giving us the best experience ever for our outdoor education week.

Mal, Kate and team at Picturehouse Films – for showing us their film studio and putting on a workshop.

Shell – of Coleg Cambria for delivering our education programme every week and never giving up on us, you were fantastic.

And, of course, our amazing coaching team: **Nathan Sarea, Elaine Rippon, Marian Rosefield, Ray Smith and Nicola Blythin**. You have been inspirational and showed unwavering support throughout the programme.



Thank you to our employer partners

Gwennan, Emma and Tom
Theatr Clwyd

Alison, Rob and team
Wall Lag

Lucy and Kate
Outside Lives

Chris Whitehouse and team
IS Group

Robbie Davies and team
Newydd

Martin London and team
Coleg Cambria

Annie and team
Clwyd Alyn Housing

Ste Lewis
Wepre Park Estate

The Aura team
Aura Wales

Lesley, Tony and Joel
Hawarden Estate

Mr Davies and staff
Wepre Park Primary School

Gill Lloyd and staff
Ysgol Maesglas Greenfield

Niki and Sarah
Cafe Isa

Marian
River Link Donkey Sanctuary

Karen
Greenacres

Natalie Morris
Llys Eleanor

The team
Lil Angels

Lynn and team
Aura Libraries

