

Introduction

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Gap-mending is an approach that enables students, practitioners, teachers, service users and researchers in social work to reflect upon what, in social work practice, increases, maintains or mends gaps between professionals and service user groups.

Mend the Gap programmes are co-produced, challenge existing structures for involvement.

Increased involvement of most marginalised, excluded voices.

Focus on outcomes – what difference does involvement make?

background/development

- Began at Lund University, Sweden, in 2005 this method of teaching aims to provide a platform where:
- **People in traditionally different positions of power can develop a mutual form of learning, on as similar terms as possible.**
- In 2009 a similar course began in Lillehammer University College, Norway.
- In 2011, Shaping Our Lives took the lead in England and the PowerUs international partnership began.
- In 2015, First gap mending programme in the UK (North East)

Structure/Pillars

- Service user/client trusted body-like charity
- Institution or body/s you wish to influence
- Resources and facilitation skills

Learning from each other

- Co-participatory research project involving students of social work and criminology and young unaccompanied minors.
- Focus on UASC arriving aged 16-17 years.
- Housed in supported accommodation.
- Several facing refusal of their asylum claim.
- Lack of information and guidance.

Step one – meeting with people with lived experiences to identify gaps

Step two – inviting students and practitioners to join programmes

Step three – introduction day. Programme discussed. Gaps identified, form themes for weekly dialogue.

Step four – agree who to include in dialogue, build in time for R and R (relationships and relaxation)

Step five – reflection throughout, identify outcomes, gaps which can be mended.

Step six – evaluation, outcomes, celebration of achievement and participation.

Challenges and concerns identified by UASC

Restricted access to Education and constructive activity.

Too much time on your hands.
Impacts on mental health and future opportunities.

Not confident that you are being told what your rights are.

Communication
language barrier, different conceptions.

Age Assessments

Doubts about credibility.
Feelings of being unwanted / don't belong.

Lots of people involved!
Clarity about their roles.

People not doing what they said they would do.

access to care plans and looked after reviews.

Lack of clarity and parity of entitlements.

Celebration event



Outcomes and next steps

- Co-produced guidance for local authorities.
- Advocacy support for all UASC.
- Training programme for foster carers and social workers.
- Working in partnership with migration partnership.

- Tackle isolation and improve mental health.
- Improve integration and community cohesion.
- Supporting entry into education.
- Providing leaving care/advocacy support for former UASC.
- Implementing UN convention of Children's rights.

Mending the gaps between single parents and social workers



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Key concerns

- Accommodation.
- Feeling unsafe.
- Not understanding people's different roles.
- Fear of complaining.
- Scared social workers will remove kids.
- Mental health.

Outcomes and next steps

- Informed update of home office guidance on asylum seeker life in the UK.
- Informed update of home office guidance on accommodation.
- Parents experiences informed decisions re new accommodation provider-all parents with children moved from unsuitable shared housing to single houses.
- Working with migration partnership to improve support to parents
- Establishing monthly drop in within local asylum support service co-facilitated with a social worker.

- Increased knowledge, understanding and confidence of requesting support from social workers.
- New insights and learning about different cultural perspectives.
- More informed about people's rights, how to challenge and support.

Thank you for listening