

|  |
| --- |
| Midcounties Co-operative Head Office  Warwick Technology Park, Gallows Hill, Warwick, CV34 6DA |

There is a critical need for young people and their families to have spaces where they feel welcome and safe.

Spaces of welcome and safety play a crucial role in supporting young people living in disadvantaged areas, providing environments that foster emotional well-being, community connection, and empowerment.

Spaces can be physical permanent spaces or environments created by trusted/ safe people. According to Mackey,[[1]](#footnote-1) these safe spaces are essential for promoting resilience and providing a supportive community where young individuals can thrive despite their challenges. They allow for self-expression without the fear of judgement, greatly contributing to mental health[[2]](#footnote-2). Furthermore, Schwartz and Finnegan[[3]](#footnote-3) highlight the significance of these spaces in helping marginalised young people and their families develop a strong sense of cultural identity, which is often overlooked in less supportive environments.) Fostering such encouraging environments is essential for facilitating positive outcomes in the lives of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds[[4]](#footnote-4).

Youth workers are invaluable in creating and maintaining safe spaces for young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. They serve as critical facilitators who not only provide support and guidance but also act as advocates for the needs of young people. According to Wernick, youth workers play a pivotal role in building trusting relationships with young people, fostering an environment where they feel comfortable sharing their concerns and experiences. This relationship-building is essential for helping young people navigate challenges and develop coping strategies.

The involvement of youth workers from Young People First in developing such spaces (in the community and in schools) will help create a bridge between young people, families and the resources available in the community. As noted by Roberts, this connection can strengthen family dynamics, as parents and guardians become more aware of the support options and opportunities available for them and their children.

Young People First are already working within the Sydenham area but would like to increase this support, and working in partnership with the Community Safety Team increase the level of support available for the community through improving the youth club and the provision there and developing some significant family support through the development of a ‘safe’ community space within the Fallow Hill Area.

Young People First have been delivering a youth club from the SYDNI centre, but have very limited resources to use to engage the young people, thus behaviour management can be challenging (as the young people don’t have enough to do). This funding will allow a significant increase in resources and equipment to enable the young people to fully participate in positive activities within the club. As the space is multipurpose, and the room itself cannot be completely kitted out as a ‘youth club’ there is a need for portable equipment.

The development of family support within the area, based out of a safe space within the Fallow Hill community, we believe will be transformative for the young people living there as we can develop relationships with families and look for ways that we can support and signpost them to areas where they can get help and boost their resilience, confidence as parents and carers and general wellbeing.

Young People First are also working within various schools, working particularly with young people who are struggling to engage, who are at risk of exclusion and who don’t always feel safe and supported in an academic setting. The resources detailed below will help Young People First to develop these spaces further to help young people feel safe and be able to regulate themselves, work with youth workers on developing their resilience and life skills and ultimately enable them to engage with and continue in education.

1. Mackey, J. (2017). Creating Safe Spaces for Youth in Poverty: A Model for Empowerment. Journal of Community Psychology. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Wernick, L.J. (2015). "Safe Spaces in Youth Programming: Building a Supportive Community." Youth & Society. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Schwartz, S.J., & Finnegan, E. (2017). "Adolescent Development in a Multicultural Context: Challenges and Opportunities for the Future." American Psychologist. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Roberts, R. (2018). "Support, Resilience, and Safe Spaces: The Role of Community in Youth Development." Children and Youth Services Review// Youth Services Insider. (2018). "The Role of Safe Spaces in Youth Programs." Social Justice Solutions. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)