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The Warehouse Project 2023 Report

The year started just like any other year. It was what you would call normal. We had earned a break over Christmas and New Year and were now about to begin our youth programmes for 2023.

We had everything planned out for youth clubs and drop in and specific projects that we would do during the year, beginning with a healthy living project. Over the first few months of the year things were going well and pretty normal.

However, nothing could have prepared us for what was to come in April and May as we lost one of our young people to suicide. Olivia was only 13 years old and one evening came home at tea time. Her Mum put a pizza in the oven for her but by the time the pizza was done Olivia had ended her young life. Olivia was known to us for many years from she was a very young child. She made herself very useful in the youth club always to help out with the tuck shop and with cleaning. This was difficult to take in that she was gone.

That week the centre was flooded with hundreds of young people struggling with emotions and trying to make sense of everything. I need to thank our volunteers who though completely out of their depth were amazing in providing support and a safe space for the young people to come and grieve.

This year has really been about recovering from this tragic loss and learning to move on and support the young people we continue to work with. Out of the loss of Olivia some good things have emerged. We received a lot of ongoing support from Extern who consistently came to our youth club and supported the young people in their trauma and grief. Through Extern we are able to provide counselling for the young people and are currently working on future projects that will help young people with their mental health issues.

Summer Jam 23

During our summer project we have been able to provide a summer scheme for the young people as around 50 young people attended this project to play games, hang out and receive continued support.

As part of our summer work we took 30 young people on a residential to Ganaway youth retreat centre in Millisle. During this week the young people really bonded and connected through team building exercises and outdoor activities. The kids who were away continually talk about going back again in 2024.

In October we began a new Sunday night outreach for smaller groups of young people where they can connect and learn new skills such as dance, musical instruments or singing etc.

While dealing with the loss of Olivia this year has still been an incredible successful year that has seen us grow closer to the kids and develop new relationships and deepen current ones. We have definitely seen growth and development in relationships with the kids and are looking forward to seeing how this all develops in 2024 and beyond.

Currently we have around 100 kids attending the youth club and around 30 attending the new Sunday night outreach with various numbers attending either specific projects or midweek drop in.

I would like to thank all the volunteers who make this project possible and provide a place of safety for the young people to come and have fun. I would like to thank Extern for their support this year and to Cruse counselling who were a great support during the days and weeks after Olivia.

I would also like to thank those who have funded and financially supported us during the year.

Education Authority
Souter Trust
John Moores Foundation
Cash 4 Kids (Cool FM)

