

TRANSFORMING LIVES TOGETHER⁺

Filling the Gap



What is Filling the Gap?

At a time when many families rely upon the provision of a free school meal to supplement their budget, school holidays and the lack of this essential provision puts an already challenged family under even more pressure.

Finding extra food is one thing but providing safe, enjoyable activities can also be difficult and as children return to school after the holidays, they want to be able to tell a story about what they did and how much fun they had.

Filling the Gap can help to do both:

- We can relieve some of the pressure on families by providing food
- We can provide children with a fun time and a 'story to tell'
- We can provide space for parents to interact with their children in a relaxed and supportive environment
- We can promote 'community' by involving families and others from the local area

We have put this leaflet together to support you in setting up 'Filling the Gap' at your church. All the information has been gathered from the experience of churches already offering this service, both within our local areas and from across England.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us if you have any questions:

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Mobile: 07787712783

Getting started

Meet with others in your church to discuss what, where, when and how to run Filling the Gap:

- What sort of provision do you want to offer? Will it be just for children or for children and their parents/ carers? The number of potential volunteers you have may influence your decision about this.
- Where can you hold your event/ activity? What facilities does your venue offer? This can/ will affect the food you will provide.
- When will you hold your event/ activity? How long will it last? It's fine to start small, for example one day in half term.
- How are you going to run your Filling the Gap event? You may decide to offer a variety of activities which children can join in with as they like. You may want to organise something more structured.

It is always worth considering getting together with others working in your local area to gather as much support as possible. Do you have any existing partners? What about Churches Together, Foodbank, schools, supermarkets, community groups, local councillors or Public Health contacts.

Some churches have created templates of forms which may be useful e.g. registration, feedback, photography permission and risk assessment forms. These are available on our website as part of our Resource Pack.

It may be helpful for you to visit another Filling the Gap provider and Wendy will be happy to sort that out with you.

Funding

Sometimes churches are successful in running Filling the Gap using their own resources and donated food and do not require additional funding. However, it may be necessary to purchase materials, games, sports equipment, drinks, additional food and, if preferred, activities provided by external organisations. Our experience has shown that churches have obtained funding from Scout Post collections, local councillors, funding applications (updates of local funding opportunities can be found on CVS websites e.g. Cheshire East <https://www.cvsce.org.uk/funding/latest-funding-news>). We have also included some ideas in our Resource Pack.

Publicity

Now that you have decided to be a Filling the Gap provider, how can you get the word out that you are offering wonderful food and activities?!

- Get in touch with your local primary schools and let them know what you're doing. Ask them to put up posters and spread the word on their Facebook page. We want to be sure that families accessing free school meals know about your activities but it is best to include them in a wider invitation list and not target them specifically.
- Use your own social media pages
- Ask to put posters up in your local library, Children's Centre, other churches, cafes etc.
- Let all the groups already attending activities at your church know what's happening. Even if it's not relevant to them, they may know of families who would love to come

Food and activities

There is a huge variation in the type of food offered by Filling the Gap providers, from breakfast, to sandwiches to a hot meal. This will partly depend on the number of people you have helping out and the kitchen facilities that are available for your use.

It is a good idea to have juice or water readily available throughout the session and tea and coffee as well if parents/ carers are staying.

We have found churches working well with local supermarkets (some have staff specifically responsible for community liaison and support) to source free food donations and some of these even provide staff to volunteer. You can also contact Fareshare <http://fareshare.org.uk/>, they charge a fee for membership. There are lots of ideas for recipes in our Resource Pack.

Our churches have come up with some great ideas for activities for all ages, you can also find this in the Resource Pack.

Volunteers

Some churches have said they can more easily recruit volunteers if they put up a list of time slots for them to sign up to, that way they don't have to commit to the whole session. It is also worth giving details of what you need doing and when. Our experience is that volunteers come from a wide variety of contexts including uniformed youth organisations, members of the local community, church members, local businesses and parents. Holy Trinity church in Blacon near Chester have developed a volunteer recruitment form which they are happy for others to use, this can be found in our Resource Pack.

There is information in the pack about safeguarding and we also include a self-disclosure form which can help you to explain what is required of adults working with children.

Evaluation

It is always worth taking some time at the end of your holiday provision to find out what people thought worked particularly well and what they felt the challenges were. This is mainly so that you can build on the experience and make things easier or more effective next time but it also encourages the staff and volunteers and provides great feedback for partners, church members and funders. We have gathered lots of ideas for evaluation so please get in touch with us if you would like some help with this. It really helps your final evaluation if you can take photographs (with adult permission) throughout the scheme and note down any comments you hear children, volunteers or parents make. Some churches also collect feedback at the end of each session.

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