

APNI GAP SHAP

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We've been at it again, yet another non-stop year for Apna Virsa, seeing so many different events and appearances, projects and classes! The organisation keeps on growing, becoming an integral part of the community.

I continue to be amazed at what a few people with passion can do to bring communities together to support each other and celebrate not only our similarities but our differences.

Enjoy!

Billy

A Message from Bobbi & Seema.....



Another year has flashed by with some brilliant highlights:-

The mouth-watering HLF supported 'Khaana Khajana – Wealth of Food' project culminated in a fabulous booklet full of wonderful recipes that had been captured throughout the project along with some amazing pictures. Exhibitions and pop-ups in Slough over the summer period enabled hundreds more to share in this very tactile project. We loved working with our Partners, Aik Saath, on this project.

The 50 plus Community Ambassadors project continued at The Singh Sabha Sports Centre and we started a similar group in Langley, specifically for our Langley residents. This has really seen the community come together and feedback tells us that people feel less isolated and alone and the improvements in their health and wellbeing have really enhanced their quality of life. On the back of this, we were very pleased to be able to support an initiative to identify and support the 'hidden carers' in our midst. A great initiative led by Slough Council for Voluntary Services. As always, more details inside the newsletter.

Bhangra classes are going from strength to strength! The last term of 2016 having the biggest influx to the kids class than ever, with over 30 kids. Well done to our lovely tutors Kush and Veena for managing this many kids and please do read the wonderful story inside of the positive impact these classes have had on one of the kids, who kindly shared their story with us.

Sadly, we lost a tutor from the AV family this year. Rodney Mallinson of the 50 plus classes passed away in September. He was such an inspiration and even in his last few days he asked us to pass on his very best wishes to all at Apna Virsa and thanked everyone for making him feel so welcome. Rodney devoted a lot of time to the Slough Community so we were delighted to hear that he had been honoured with a Special Recognition award at the 2016 Slough Volunteer Awards Ceremony and were proud to be asked to say a few words in tribute.

As always, a huge thank you to all of our Partners, Funders, Tutors, Volunteers, Learners and Supporters over the year. With your continued support we look forward to a rip roaring 2017.

AV IN THE COMMUNITY 2016

A bumper year for our learners, supporting the community with performances at community and charity events! Great to see our Improvers and Intermediates getting involved—well done to all of you on superb performances! How many of your friends do you see?



Month	Details
February	Tesco Express Managers Charity Dinner Dance evening in aid of Great Ormand Street Hospital. Showcase dance from the Managers following some fun filled workshops with AV tutors & our own AV performance. Lovely flowers in appreciation.
March	Bhangrathon in aid of Sports Relief. An afternoon of Bhangra led by tutors with lots and lots of support from learners from our other classes. Wonderful afternoon.
April	Performance at the Slough Wrestling Championships & performance at Age Link annual charity event
May	Performance for Freedom for Minds Charity event at Baylis House
June	Bhangra workshops at Carers Week
July	Khaana Khajana HLF project Exhibition in Slough Library
August	Performance at Art in the Park, Milton Keynes
September	Performances and workshops in Queensmere as part of the Summer in Slough series of events
October	Bhangra workshop at World Mental Health Day conference & performance at AV Diwali celebration
November	Performance at Heston Big Local Christmas/Diwali celebration & Performance and workshop in Slough High Street as part of Slough Christmas Lights switch on

RODNEY MALLINSON

END OF AN ERA

September was a sad month for us as we lost one of our favourite tutors, Rodney Mallinson, to cancer. We were honoured and privileged to have known such a selfless human being, who was not just a tutor but a very dear friend of ours. Rodney found a real vocation working with Slough community groups and was a role model for many volunteers.



It was a privilege to be asked to say a few words as a tribute to Rodney at the 2016 Slough Volunteer Awards Ceremony held in November where he was honoured with a Special Recognition award for the lifetime voluntary contribution of an individual.

Rodney started volunteering with AV about 5 years ago and went on to be one of our most resourceful and enterprising tutors, helping with oral research for heritage projects, putting together materials for courses or delivering sessions in his own inimitable style.

(pictured conducting research)



One of the best things he created and delivered for us was the 'Healthy Eating' sessions for the 50 plus class in which he really and truly captivated the interest of the class. We had some great feedback with learners being impressed that they could make and eat Indian meals whilst watching their calorie count!

(Pictured teaching the 50 plus class)

In the last couple of years Rodney also volunteered for Slough CVS. He led their Patient Navigator pilot at the Bharani Medical Centre and motivational courses with patients that were referred by local GP's. Rodney so captured the attention of the GPs with this great work that he also developed a special stress relief course for them, which he delivered to Dr Kumar and his team of GPs.

Rodney was such an inspirational character. He motivated patients to take control of their own health and wellbeing and his motto in life was that he would have everything he wanted if he could just help enough people to get what they wanted in theirs. He certainly achieved that.

We will very much miss this truly wonderful gentleman who had a real 'Joie de Vivre' and a passion for helping others.



FOOD GLORIOUS FOOD

Apna Virsa's HLF funded Khaana Khajana project saw a steady stream of young volunteers from Aik Saath get involved with the older generation to learn about the heritage of glorious Indian food.

It was lovely to see them in discussions with the older generation and it was evident the older generation in turn enjoyed sharing their traditions and recipes with the youngsters.



Analysis of the research led to some fabulous cooking workshops, some specifically for youngsters and others for adults.

The idea of bonding through food went down a treat with everyone, including tutor Sonal, in action here with Aik Saath youngsters.

Participants from the various classes and workshops that were delivered by Apna Virsa over the last year commented on how they were able to impress family and friends, having improved their culinary skills and learned how to make a wide range of dishes, including many they had never sampled before.

Pop up demonstrations were enjoyed by many at various locations in Slough, eg Slough High Street, Britwell Centre and pictured here at Ramgarhia Cultural & Educational Centre.



A FREE booklet sharing some of the research and wonderful stories of this HLF project, along with recipes is available from Apna Virsa.



'HIDDEN CARERS'



Apna Virsa were pleased to be able to support an initiative to identify and support the 'hidden carers' in our midst. Slough CVS' SPACE project recognises how difficult it is for people looking after parents, siblings, neighbours or friends to even recognise themselves as a carer.

Carers are often so focused on those for whom they care that they forget to look after themselves, to recognise that they are carers, or to realise the help and support that is available to them locally. This can mean ignoring symptoms, unaware their health is suffering, or putting themselves last. This means that individuals to whom we owe so much end up without the help they might badly need.

We delivered some daytime bhangra fitness courses for carers in June and September and some of you will have noticed our registration forms now include a couple of questions trying to identify anyone that can be referred to local services for additional support. Please do refer friends and family members who might benefit from the services available.

LEARNER SPOTLIGHT

Every once in a while, we get such positive feedback on the impact that one of our classes has on an individual's life, that we feel compelled to share! This is one such time.

Our Kids Bhangra classes are very popular, and a great way for kids to get exercise, improve on their social skills by meeting new friends, and connect and engage with our culture. The focus is fairly and squarely on **FUN!** It also helps children develop concentration and focus, as they need to remember moves, routines and marry them with the music – easier said than done! Having said that –making progress in these areas is hugely rewarding for a child and builds confidence, which can only ever be a positive thing! So imagine how amazing it is when a child who faces additional challenges, joins the class and exceeds all expectations!

Meet Rhea Saini – aged 6.

Rhea joined the Kids Bhangra Class and has completed just one term – a 10 week period. The feedback was so powerful that we asked Rhea's parents if they would share their experience. They agreed, in the hope, that by doing this, other people may benefit and be helped in some small way.

I caught up with Rhea's mum, Navdeep, and Rhea, and here is their story.



Navdeep

'Rhea was always very different to her peers from birth really. I started to notice the things she did differently. She didn't cry much, didn't like crowded places, new faces and I had to stick to her daily routine otherwise I'd have a very unhappy baby on my hands. She has grown into a very calm, neat and tidy 6-year-old. Very honest and enjoys the company of adults rather than younger children.

Due to the difficulties she faced at school, loud noises, the playground, PE and making and keeping friends, we decided to have her assessed and sure enough she was diagnosed with borderline Autism.

My friend had been taking her daughter to the bhangra classes and suggested I enrol Rhea. If anything she got to interact with her daughter, Jiya, more. I was looking for a class for Rhea to join which was not competitive and I wanted to encourage Rhea to participate in a class and develop her motivational skills in her own time. This class proved to be excellent and exceeded my expectations. The enrolment process allowed for me to share that Rhea was Autistic. The tutor, Kush, picked up on this straight away and had a conversation with me, asking what the main issues and concerns were and of any limitations.

I just wanted Rhea to join and have fun and learn to move though dance and music without too much pressure on being perfect.

It was a struggle to get Rhea to go to classes, it took her about 4 weeks to get used to it and take control of her anxiety. The hall was big, the children and tutors unfamiliar and the music loud at times. Not only did she have to dance in a large group, she now had to learn the moves, listen to instructions and the music. She had to master movement and timing, which is difficult for a child with autism, but practise will help. Her class mates were able to do moves, she couldn't and Rhea is very aware of what she cannot do, which usually makes her give up. I had to offer a lot of praise and encouragement, but never pressure. I was always outside if she needed me. Initially Kush suggested that I stay in the hall while Rhea became comfortable with her new surroundings. After a couple of weeks Veena and Kush suggested I wait in the foyer, but let Rhea know that I was just outside the door if she needed me.

Rhea slowly started to want to go to class. I guess it was becoming a routine for Monday evening and she was now getting familiar with the class. The tutors played a huge role in this. They were understanding and encouraged Rhea without putting on any pressure. This was invaluable and has a huge part in contributing to the positive experience Rhea had.

Rhea now interacts with her class mates and the tutors. She joins in and does her best, but the best bit is, she does it all with a smile. This is the only indication I need to know she will be ok. When she got her Apna Virsa T-shirt she wore it with pride! The End of Term Showcase was emotional. My husband and mum also came to watch Rhea, fully expecting her to be standing alone, in a corner and not participating. They couldn't have been more surprised! Our little girl was enjoying herself and she had fun. She danced with the rest of her group and didn't give up!

Positive experiences can change our outlook on things and I believe that this one has. I hadn't mentioned to her school teacher that Rhea had enrolled in a new class and so I was surprised when her teacher asked me if we were doing anything different with Rhea as she had noticed a big change in her at school! She was growing in confidence and getting better at interacting with other children. Bhangra was the only thing that we could attribute this positive change to! I now have a very happy girl who enjoys going to school and just doing her best. She has overcome some of her fears with noise. We still have a long way to go but this is a great start.

I could have taken Rhea to any class, there is so much pressure on children to do things well and with perfection. Children learn through understanding and love and the tutors, Kush and Veena, were so lovely. They took the time to build up a relationship of trust with Rhea and myself and due to this she has flourished. Teachers play a huge role in a child's learning and if they are caring and build a relationship of trust and respect, any child would excel. So I would like to thank them for their time and support.'

Rhea

"Bhangra classes make me really happy! At school my teachers say that I am 'On Fire'! That means that I am really really good and I have really improved. That makes me feel really happy. I am looking forward to going back next term. I really like Kush and Veena, they are really good fun! Kush looked funny with her Red Hair for Halloween! I got very nervous about dancing in front of everyone, but it felt great!"



We are so proud of all our children, and so proud of Rhea – a true superstar!

A huge thanks to Rhea's family for sharing their story. These kind of conditions can be seen as a taboo subject within our community and so it takes courage and strength to share your story. I am sure that you will agree that this is a very heart-warming story and it offers hope to others who may be in a similar situation.

Of course, this would not be possible without our **amazing tutors**, Kush and Veena. A little bit crazy, sometimes whacky but ALWAYS FUN! Thank you both for your continued dedication and support to our little learners!

SLOUGH COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS



It's all about keeping fit, flexible and active, along with making friends and having fun with the 50 plus crowd. Here's a little snapshot of what they have been up to.

Yoga with Kieran



Basic IT skills with Urusa



Summer Gardening



Badminton with Urusa



Zumba with Anca



Bhangra with Jasmine



Bhangra with Sid



Funded through People's Health Trust, the Slough Community Ambassadors project is one of our most rewarding projects. This project not only gives us a sense of pride and achievement but also makes our jobs worthwhile seeing smiley faces, positive engagement and the health benefits to our elderly community.

Over the summer we introduced some taster courses and activities which were very well received. Courses like Gardening skills, Massage for Wellbeing, Spoken English, Badminton, Card making, Zumba, Bhangra and IT for beginners were delivered, targeting our 50+ learners. Their enthusiasm, eagerness to learn and commitment were to be admired.

We conducted a feedback survey towards the end of last year and are very pleased to share that almost 100% of the participants reported that they felt more confident and empowered. How remarkable!

Informal discussions, observations, focus group and recorded video messages by participants have further re-inforced this positive feedback on the increase in their confidence and their active engagement in the project.

Another couple of key elements that were highlighted by the feedback survey were that 100% of participants reported that they made new friends and social connections; and 100% of the participants reported that they felt stronger about their local neighbourhood and community.

We can see an immense increase in confidence through their body language, social interaction, communication and presentational skills.

All in all, a very successful project and we are well proud of our Ambassadors who are spreading this positive energy in our local community.

REGULAR SESSIONS CONTINUE IN 2017 AT:-
Singh Sabha Sports & Community Centre, Slough:-
Wednesdays – 10.00am to 11.00am
Thursdays – 9.30am to 11.30am

&

Holy Family Church, Langley (St. Josph's Room):
Wednesdays: 10.00am to 11.00am

2017

REGULAR BHANGRA CLASSES

Timetable for January 2017 term:-

CHILDREN'S CLASSES

Mondays 6.00pm to 7.00pm

at the Singh Sabha Sports and Community Centre , Slough
& at St Bernards Grammar School, 1 Langley Road, Slough, SL3 7AF

LADIES ONLY CLASSES

Wednesdays 8.15pm to 9.15pm

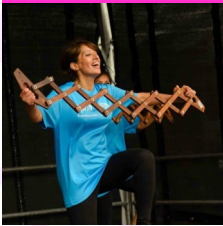
at Ramgarhia Educational and Cultural Centre

TUTOR GALLERY

VEENA



KUSHAM



NAVDEEP



NEHA



Childrens Classes & Ladies Only Classes



Our Super Kids Class Volunteers
Nav & Komal

(Huge thank you to the girls)



JAGGI



ADULTS CLASSES

Beginners
Improvers
Intermediates &
Advanced

SUKH



Timetable for January 2017 term:-

ADULT BEGINNERS

Thursdays 7.30pm to 8.30pm

at St Bernards Grammar School, 1 Langley Road, Slough, SL3 7AF

ADULT IMPROVERS/INTERMEDIATES

Thursdays 8.30pm to 9.30pm

at St Bernards Grammar School, 1 Langley Road, Slough, SL3 7AF

2017

FORTHCOMING PROJECTS

MARRIAGE OF MEMORIES PROJECT

This new project funded by HLF will provide access to explore and learn about the cultural heritage of many different wedding rituals, historical traditions, and valuable memories in our diverse ethnic community. The project will engage a range of learners, to interpret how traditional wedding planning and ceremonies vary between cultures, and where they share similarities. It provides a valuable way to retain and expand connections within our roots of family life, history and marriage. This is a fantastic opportunity to be involved and learn about the heritage and history of the local community. Volunteers are very welcome for this new project and will gain employability skills, receive training in interview techniques and research sessions, organise and participate in events and exhibitions. See flyer below for further details and information on how to register your interest.



DATE FOR THE DIARY - 19 AUGUST 2017 CELEBRATING 70 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE



Look out for details of our super celebratory extravaganza in August.

Goes without saying there will be performances galore and an opportunity for everyone to get involved to celebrate this momentous occasion.

CAN YOU HELP?

As a voluntary organisation we appreciate all the help that we can get! We are currently looking for help with Fundraising, marketing and sponsorships. If you would like to get involved please do not hesitate to contact us.

A MASSIVE Thank you to everyone who has contacted us and given their input and support to our events and opportunities last year! We could not have done it without you!

We look forward to seeing you at our events, classes, and project launches as volunteers, participants or guests!

Remember to check out our website and like us on Facebook!



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