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Children's Centre
services at
Romsey Mill



Children's Centre

It's official!

Romsey Mill is now designated as a Sure Start Children's Centre.

What's a Children's Centre?

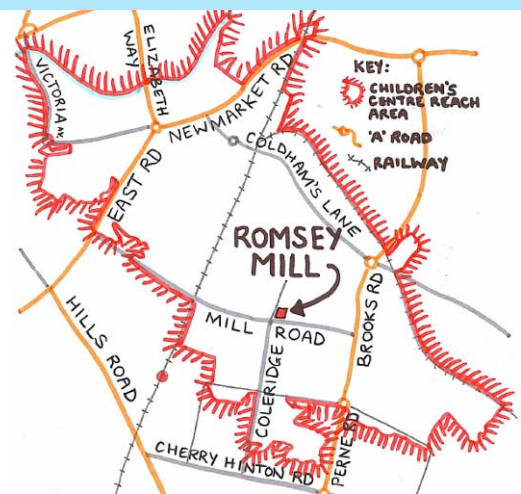
It's a centre for information, activities and support for parents and carers of children under the age of 5. Sure Start is the government programme 'to deliver the best start in life for every child' - bringing together early education, childcare and health.

Weren't you already doing that?

Yes. This is a recognition and endorsement of our existing services. It will also bring a strengthening of partnership work with local agencies, and increases in outreach work and other services accessed through the Centre by March 2010.

What difference will it make?

We will now officially be the 'gateway' for all early years services in our 'reach' (catchment) area (see map), which covers the following wards: all of Romsey, most of Petersfield and Coleridge, and some of Abbey and



Market. People will come to Romsey Mill to find out about everything for under 5s in the reach area. We will receive Sure Start funding to deliver such services.

Who will manage it?

A Partnership Board of those working with Under 5s, including parents. Steve Watts is the Children's Centre Manager and Rachel Matthews will continue to coordinate the programmes.



Congratulations!

James (SIP Coordinator) & Rachel (YPP Coordinator) are now Mr & Mrs Bennett

ROMSEY MILL
Creating opportunities with young people and families



So this is Christmas

As I sit down to write for Mill News there is a week to go to Christmas Eve. I wonder how you are feeling? I am sure many of us are busier than ever, feeling exhausted and wondering how it has come to this! So are you delighted or disaffected, enchanted or alienated, by the excitement and the drama of Christmas? Some of you may not read this until after Boxing Day. How was it for you – uplifting or overwhelming?

Amidst the hustle and bustle of Christmas and New Year many people find themselves drawing breath now and again and

wondering what it is all about. On the one hand, there is the exhilaration of the 'season of goodwill', the decorations and music to brighten our lives, the time with friends, colleagues or family, the special food and present-giving that lifts us out of the normal pattern of short days and long winter nights. Where would we be without it? On the other hand, there are constant reminders that Christmas is not an enjoyable time for everyone. Loneliness and poverty, homelessness and isolation can be exacerbated at Christmastime.

It was into such loneliness and poverty, homelessness and

isolation that God, in Jesus, came to be with us that first Christmas. In celebrating his birth, Christians celebrate the coming of the one in whom we can discover hope and a better future.

As we look ahead to 2008, with your ongoing support and partnership, Romsey Mill will continue to share this hope through being with young people and families, helping to create opportunities, encouraging the development of learning and skills, and improving personal, social and spiritual wellbeing. Thank you for your interest, investment and involvement.

Neil Perry, CEO

Aspire young volunteers

Volunteers in Aspire's social clubs for 9-16 year-olds with high functioning autistic spectrum conditions have traditionally been Cambridge University students. They're fantastic but are limited by their short terms, and so we've often had to stop running the clubs before the end of school terms. In a search for volunteers available year-round, to compliment the students, we have discovered an enthusiastic pool of volunteers at Hills Road Sixth Form College. Upper sixth formers Hannah, Alivia, Amber & Nicola started helping in Aspire's younger club this term.

They've all thrown themselves into the tasks and are really enjoying it. Alivia says, "*I wanted to volunteer for work experience – I want to be a teacher; and to assist my learning in aspects of sociology and psychology. But now I go for a fascinating and great time with the guys and staff. They teach me something new continually and enjoy laughing at my poor efforts with table tennis!*" The best thing for the children is that their club runs for the whole term!

Can you help? We still need more volunteers, mainly for the older group (aged 12-16). Regular availability ideal, but reserve cover volunteers also welcome. Please contact Ruth on 07795 315700.

A young mum's story

This story highlights the relational, varied & specialist support provided in the Young Parents Programme.

Katie* was 18 years old and 8 weeks pregnant when she was referred to our Young Parents Programme (YPP). She was suffering with depression, found it difficult to go out after witnessing a violent assault, and consequently struggled to access services.

Over a number of weeks our Mental Health Worker Steve visited Katie in her home and built up a relationship with her, which enabled her to grow in confidence. Six sessions of counselling from Steve then helped her to begin to look at some of the unresolved issues contributing to her depression. She also saw her GP who commenced her on a course of antidepressants. After the counselling Katie was able to leave the house without suffering panic, and to a sufficient degree to allow her to socialise.

After 6 months of visiting, Katie attended an antenatal session at Romsey Mill. Although initially low, Katie's confidence grew to the extent that she became one of the group's most active participants. She developed very good relationships with the midwife

and other staff, frequently asking questions about her pregnancy and around child development issues.

In December '06 Katie texted YPP staff to say she'd given birth to a boy! They visited her with her new baby and encouraged her to return to the antenatal group to talk about her experiences of giving birth, and being a mum. This she was keen to do, and to show her baby to her friends from the group.

With transport support and continued home visiting Katie has since attended the parenting group with a few of the young women she met through the antenatal group. She also started supporting other young women within YPP.

Through the programme and work with the Mental Health Worker she has looked at the bonding process with her baby. In addition to all this, and with the support of the Progressions Worker, she has successfully gained a Literacy qualification and has just completed an accredited Self Confidence course.

*Name has been changed

'I wouldn't be where I am now – I am truly grateful for all they have helped me with!'

'Katie'

Transitions: news in brief

Ready to go!

Based on her experience of the Transfer programme Ellie Howes has produced a fun and informative workbook for students to fill in throughout the course, which they can then keep as a record of their achievements. We believe this is the only tool of its kind available, and therefore hope to distribute it more widely to others who would benefit. Thanks to the Children's Fund who have supported the production of the book.



Meet Emily Nicholls

I came to Romsey Mill in October on a 100 day placement for my second year studying Social Work at Anglia Ruskin University. The staff at Romsey Mill are fantastic and have made me feel incredibly welcome.

I'm based within the Transitions Programme, where I'm having a really positive experience. I feel very lucky to be given the opportunity to work alongside such dedicated and experienced staff on ongoing and developing projects.

This term I have enjoyed working with interesting and inspirational young people, and planning and running an art project with the theme 'Me and Landmarks around Cambridge' and a creative Christmas crafts session.

Inspired and excited so far, I'm looking forward to whatever may be next!



Christmas activities

- A Transitions group were on radio 'singing down the sleeps until Christmas'.
- Romsey Mill's charity shop volunteers, the Over 60s group and the staff, all had Christmas meals complete with singing!
- All Under 5s groups came together for a fantastic party with Father Christmas, the Christmas story puppet show, bouncy castle, crafts, cake stall—the works!



Under 5s: news in brief

Dealing with temper tantrums

We have begun small groups (during toddler groups) looking at parenting issues such as temper tantrums, sibling rivalry, second babies and potty training. These came out of listening to needs of parents, and are proving an effective way of supporting parents, and of referring on to a health visitor or nursery nurse if necessary. One parent said in amazement,

"I tried everything you suggested... it worked!"

More Playgroup, by popular demand

From January our Playgroup will run on a fourth morning each week. Now the only Playgroup in the Romsey, Petersfield & Coleridge areas, it will take up to 24 children each day. Places for the new morning (Tuesday) are already full!

Volunteer opportunities

We would welcome a few extra volunteers in the Playgroup or toddler groups, so if you are available any morning Tue-Fri please contact Rachel Matthews on 566102.

Foot juggling with people

Simon Carter, Cambridge Community Circus

My involvement with Romsey Mill dates back 10 years to the last time the main hall was redecorated. The Mill's main hall seemed a suitable location to hone my juggling skills; it was certainly high enough.

Chris Rose (Romsey Mill's former CEO) was keen to see the space used by as many different sorts of groups as possible so in return for practice space I became involved in the Mill's innovative approach to youth work, centred around creating long-lasting and cohesive groups of young people who organised their own programmes. Thus one of the activities on offer was juggling workshops; dozens of young people learned the basics of juggling and diabolo at the Mill. These workshops were occasionally held for groups of 2 or 3 teenagers who had been permanently

excluded from school, to give them an opportunity to learn non-competitive and co-operative physical skills.

As Romsey Mill developed its programme, so did Cambridge Community Circus. Their acrobalance class, which now occurs in Romsey Mill's beautifully redone sports hall, began in 2000. Acrobalance - or acrobatic balancing - is a form of doubles acrobatics more about lifts, balances and handstands than tumbling. Think ice-skating lifts without the skates, or foot juggling with people, and you should get a mental image which is fairly close to the reality.



For more information please visit www.camcircus.org

Vocational paths

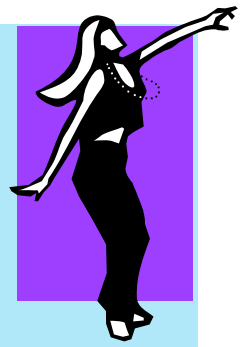
It's been a busy term for the Vocational Course. Firstly, it has seen the beginning of what is hoped to be a lasting relationship with the National Trust property at Anglesey Abbey. The young people have worked hard to help create a footpath for future visitor use. This will be a lasting monument to the hard work of the young people. It also provided informal educational opportunities around ecosystems, the environment, employment opportunities, job satisfaction, hard work, challenging preconceptions, identity and team work.

Secondly, the course has taken the young people on visits to Cambridge Regional College to discuss future educational options, and on an exciting workplace visit to Cambridge Airport. Here they had a chance to talk with Terry Holloway, Group Support Executive of Marshall's Aerospace, regarding employment, education and life progression as well as having a tour of the different aircraft being worked on.



Dance "Hysteria"

'Hysteria' - a dance and friendship group of eight young women - went on a weekend trip to London with youth workers Shaz and Kath. They stayed at St. Peter's Church in Hackney, who were very kind and hospitable. The group often meet to practice dance at Romsey Mill, and even performed at the Strawberry Fair last summer, so the highlight of the weekend was undoubtedly an exclusive two hour dance session at Pineapple Dance Studios, in Covent Garden, with a teacher from the professional dance agency Rudeye. This went very well and the young women were really inspired to do more.



The group also had a go at creating a food budget, shopping and cooking. They had the opportunity to film for a documentary of their weekend using camcorders from Romsey Mill. This will be followed up later in the year with a chance to learn editing skills and to reflect on what they have filmed.

Everyone had a brilliant time!

Veteran volunteer

After 27 years of devoted service with Romsey Mill, Joan Harman has retired. During her time at St Philips Infants, Ross St, she was on the first Executive Board at Romsey Mill. She looked after her mum until her death in 1980 and then started to help with Youth Club

and Mums 'n' Toddlers at the Mill. In 1990 she began to help at the shop, which she has done tirelessly ever since. Now retired she enjoys travelling and gives talks on her travels. Charity Shop Manager Hilary Jolly says, "*Joan has been a long term and indispensable member of the shop team. She is greatly missed but still active at St Philip's church and we wish her well.*"

*Joan Harman
"indispensable
member...
...greatly
missed...
...wish her well"*

Wylie's Watershed Way

Trustee Malcolm Wylie raised an impressive £723 for Romsey Mill through a sponsored 100 mile walk from Chard to Exmoor, as part of his amazing mission to walk along the entire British watershed from

John O'Groats to Land's End. Sponsorship came from church members, colleagues, friends and neighbours. Well done Malcolm, and thank you to all his sponsors! If you would like to take up a challenge or run an event to raise money for Romsey Mill, please contact Marie on 566492.



Online giving

It's now possible to donate to Romsey Mill online using a credit or debit card. Just go to the '[Get Involved](#)' section of our website and click 'donate now'!

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