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30th anniversary!

Next year is Romsey Mill's 30th anniversary. If you know anyone who used to be involved in the life of the Mill, who might like to join in the celebrations, please put us in touch so that we can invite them.



“Everyone knows Romsey Mill.

The workers take you for who you are, not what people think you are”

A young person

Meeting them where they are

Young people don't just fall out of the sky. Thankfully. So how do we contact some of the hardest to reach young people in Cambridge?

We don't simply advertise sessions, in an attempt to cram in as many young people as possible. Instead we go to where the young people are and start to get to know them, build relationships and share in the experience of their lives. This is known as '**detached youth work**', which we're currently doing right across Cambridge, in areas with pockets of deprivation: Abbey, Kings Hedges, Arbury, Queen Edith's, Cherry Hinton, Romsey and Petersfield wards (and soon to begin in West and East Chesterton).

For some, detached youth work may seem like an easy job where all you do is chat and kick a ball around. But there's far more to it than that. Through it, we aim to:

Build relationships. We get to know young people, many of whom have few positive relationships or avenues for support. When you know someone you will trust them, and let them in to your life, more.

Bridge gaps between young people and local communities;

develop a two-way understanding where previously each often saw the other in a negative light.

Identify needs and interests.

Every young person is different. There's no 'one size fits all'.

Empower. Enable young people to take more control over their lives.

Detached work isn't a short term activity; it's almost perpetual for Romsey Mill. It takes a long time for people to get to each other. Doing it this way allows work to be centred around the young people's needs and interests, rather than requiring the young people to have the courage and motivation to turn up in a new environment where they don't know anyone and in which they feel largely powerless.

Once we've built relationships, we establish a common interest - like football, music or mechanics – and begin a group. [We may also arrange one-to-one mentoring with some, perhaps around struggles with school or home.] We base or 'embed' learning, development and discussion in these positive activities which young people choose, and own, helping them to develop confidence, skills and to realise their great potential.

Valuing people

One of the guiding principles that inspires Romsey Mill's work, and to which we continually aspire, is *valuing people*.

We want to make the most of every opportunity to recognise the immeasurable value of every individual. In working towards that goal, we give priority to those who are excluded, disadvantaged or neglected in our society because they are among those most likely to feel under-valued.

I hope that as you read this edition of *Mill News* you will be encouraged by all the positive activities going on, which are a sign of our valuing the children, young people and families we work with.



Left: Rachel Briant (we now have 3 Rachels!)
Right: Claire Swales



New staff members have joined, or are about to join, the Romsey Mill team - Rachel Briant (Young Parents Outreach & Development Worker), Claire Swales (Admin Assistant), Lucy Stevens (Children's Centre Admin Support), Mike Farrington (SIP Youth Development Worker, North Cambridge). At the same time Steve Rudkin, our Mental Health Worker is reducing, to 15 hours per week, the time he works with Romsey Mill and is commencing a new part-time role with The

Cogwheel Trust, a Cambridge-based counselling charity underpinned by a Christian ethos. We value greatly all the members of the Romsey Mill team, staff and volunteers, and the amazing work they do.

We continue to value our partners – organisations and individuals – who pray for us, support the work financially, collaborate with us. Thank you.

Easter time offers us an opportunity to reflect on how much God values people and consider the full extent of God's love. Let's make the most of the opportunity.



Neil Perry, CEO

Daunting changes

For young people affected by Asperger Syndrome and other high-functioning autistic spectrum conditions, the prospect of facing such a significant change as the transition between primary and secondary school can cause high levels of anxiety. The differences in routines, school size and student numbers once at secondary school all have the potential to add to this anxiety.

Then there's the added fact that at least 60% of young people with Asperger Syndrome experience bullying. All these factors can lead to a challenging



time for these young people, who as a result may suffer from a deterioration of mental well-being and may become school-refusers.

This year the Aspire Programme is working with six young people who are preparing to take the step between primary and secondary school. We are tailoring the resources developed by the Transitions Programme to take into account the particular needs associated with Asperger Syndrome, and using them in one-to-one sessions. Each young person is different and will have different anxieties and difficulties but we

hope that by offering this targeted transition support we will help to improve their chances of making a positive start at secondary school.

The owl and the pussycat

The Fitzwilliam Museum kindly invited one of our young parents groups to a special preschool session. Apart from one, none of the young parents had never visited the museum and were intrigued by what lay inside. Museum staff read the children the story of *'The Owl and the Pussy Cat'* in one of the galleries. They were able to examine the artefacts and especially loved the armoury. We then went to an art studio for the children to have a go at making their own owl and pussy cat from clay.

The staff at the Fitzwilliam were so welcoming; they quickly put fears at ease and encouraged the parents to come back at other times to try out their museum activity packs. The parents were impressed by the friendliness and approachability of the staff and the welcoming atmosphere of the museum. The trip gave them new ideas for free activities to educate and entertain their children within their own community. We would like to thank Kate and Alison for their hospitality, imagination and care.

Below: Young mums and children with their clay owl and pussycat models



Making kids proud

Sarah* is juggling two young boys and a full-time course in Childcare with the YMCA, at NVQ Level 2. And she's only seventeen.

Sarah's wanted to work with kids since she was nine, but she was bullied, and bunked school a lot to hang out with friends and get drunk: a self-confessed 'tear-away'. She only got three Ds at GCSE, partly because she sat her exams whilst seven months pregnant. Then she had her own children (which she wouldn't change for the world) and began to think it would never happen. Who would take her, and how would she manage childcare for her boys?

Through Romsey Mill Sarah did antenatal and parenting groups, met other young mums, did textiles and literacy courses, and got to know key worker Emily Barton. Emily helped Sarah to get an interview for the NVQ, to arrange childcare and funding, and – most importantly – to have the confidence to do it. Sarah says, "If it wasn't for Emily, I'd still be sitting at home – I wouldn't have known how or had the guts to do this course. Emily's so easy to talk to, if I have a problem she helps me to sort it out."

Nearly half-way through the full-time course, which involves two days a month at college, regular assignments, and the rest on placement at our Playgroup, Sarah says, "It's the first time I've stuck with something for more than 6 weeks; I'm very proud of myself. It's not easy, but Emily encourages me to keep going, and I'm doing it for my kids. I want them



to be proud of their mum, to see they can do whatever they want to do if they put their minds to it."

Making education compulsory to 18 is a brilliant idea, in Sarah's view: "Given the choice, what 16-year-old would do more study? But actually if they stay in school they're more likely to be able to do what they want later in life. I wish I'd stayed in school."

Sarah would like to be a TA in a primary school once she's qualified, so she can be there for her children outside school hours. "Hopefully when I qualify I'll be able to find a job. Then I won't have to struggle and I can stabilise my children's future."

*name has been changed

Youth worker in training

You may remember that in the last issue we told you about Karl Lewis, one of our former young people now wanting to train as a youth worker. He's now completed 2 of 6 units on 'Engage', a one-year youth work training course. He's finding the study a challenge but is really enjoying learning more about youth work and then being able to put it into practice within Romsey Mill. He's very grateful for the kind financial support that has enabled him to get this far. He still needs £390 for the rest of the course, so if you would like to help please contact Marie at Romsey Mill.



Out-of-school groups

"It gives me an opportunity to be calm and talk about how I feel and know I will be listened to."

"The group is great because I have no expectations on me, I can just be myself."

These 12-13 year-olds are talking about a group we run within the Transitions Programme for vulnerable young people in north Cambridge. It's one of many set up to provide continuous support in a variety of ways both in and outside school, after we've helped young people to negotiate their transfer up to secondary school.

Each out-of-school group has individual aims and takes a different form (drop-in groups, a girls group, a football club, a singing group, school year-based groups) but all groups aim to:

- offer a safe, supportive and age-appropriate environment;



- offer positive activities and build life skills;
- offer supportive intervention into issues the young people face;
- provide guidance and advice;
- promote affirming peer interaction and participation.

"Girls Group is great because we feel safe and looked after and we get to do lots of things we wouldn't get the chance to otherwise."

Now spring is here, our groups from Years 8 & 9 in Coleridge Community College have begun volunteering at Anglesey Abbey, for which they were recently given a High Sheriff's Award.

One girl said, "I have a lot of responsibilities in my life, I have to look after myself and younger siblings a lot to help my Mum. The group is great because it is my time to be with my friends and be my own age for a couple of hours a week".

Youth: active citizens, today

While no-one argues with the fact that children and young people are valued, it is not always easy to communicate this to them. Their potential as responsible citizens is mostly underestimated and underutilized.

Children and young people tend to experience the consequences of, and yet have little or no say in, decisions made by adults.

My job is to urge and support all organisations and institutions working with children and young people to consider greater involvement by their young clients in the development of their programmes; to enable young people to participate and feel included. This should not be a tokenistic involvement programme but one which seeks to fully support young people to be active citizens in their own right. The aim is to have young people who understand that they have rights, but more importantly that they have a part to play in developing and sustaining their services and their communities.

If you would like some assistance designing a project or programme to improve the involvement of children and young people in decision making and positive activity, please get in touch with me at Romsey Mill, preferably by email (jackson.nazombe@romseymill.org).

You can also join a number of networks which exist to share resources, good practice and professional support. One of these, the Champions' network, is for adults chosen as key advocates for children and youth participation. It works with its members to design tailored support and offers access to training and consultancy.

Children's and youth participation is one of the ways to make sure that the young know that they are valued, responsible citizens *today*.

Jackson Nazombe, Children and Young People's Participation Officer for City and South Cambs



Paris Marathon

"After 3 months of gruelling training; motivating ourselves to go out in the snow, wind and rain, running across muddy fields, icy paths and jumping over puddles, we're nearly ready to embark on the 26.2 miles ahead of us," say Emily and Ben Barton.

"We wanted to do something practical to raise money for Romsey Mill," so they took on the challenge of running the Paris

marathon in April. "The training has been hard work, we've struggled with injuries, blisters and even being chased by a massive dog! But we're sure it'll all be worth it as we run the race and raise money for the projects at the Mill. It's been such an encouragement to know the support of so many people behind us. We would like to thank everyone who's taken an interest, sponsored us and encouraged us along the way."

If you would like to help Emily and Ben reach their £1000 target,

please visit <http://www.justgiving.com/emilyandbenbarton>, or you can sponsor them via Romsey Mill's office.



The Bartons take a break from training



Music for an English summer's afternoon

Writtle Singers conducted by Christine Gwynn

Including works by
Byrd, Morley, Holst and Vaughan Williams

Saturday 27 June 2009, 3.15-4.15pm
Gonville & Caius College Chapel, Cambridge

No charge – retiring collection in aid of Romsey Mill

www.writtlesingers.org.uk

Sponsored events

Romsey Mill is now registered with **justgiving**—an internet site which allows people to easily collect sponsorship for fundraising events. If you could run, climb, be silent, go carbon-free, knit, sit in baked beans or anything else please do so in aid of Romsey Mill and visit www.justgiving.com/romseymill