



See  
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Every online  
donation between  
**2 and 9 December**  
will be **doubled**  
through partnership  
with the **Big Give**  
Christmas  
Campaign



## Romsey Mill creates opportunities with children, young people and families

We are a local charity committed to overcoming disadvantage, challenging injustice and promoting social inclusion with young people, children and families.

Each year, we work with over 2,800 individuals and families, from Cambridge city and across areas of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, including:

- young mothers and fathers
- young people who may be struggling at school, at home or in the community, including the most at risk and vulnerable

- autistic children and young people and their families
- pre-school children and their families

Our work is long term, relational and needs-led. We work with participants to develop their confidence and to enable their progress towards training, work and positive involvement in the community.

**Cover photo:** Children at Romsey Mill's Pre-school setting have been learning about autumn and all that the changes of the season brings



# the Advent of belonging



**Neil Perry**, CEO of Romsey Mill, writes:

### Belonging Matters.

Belonging is also tricky to define.

It is a complex interplay of personal and social factors. It's about feeling at home, being part of a wider community, and being both seen and valued.

Belonging has been described as:

**"...the feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group."**<sup>1</sup>

Put more simply, belonging relates to a yearning for connection to others.

The need for belonging is universal.

Belonging is our primary human need. Beyond food and shelter, nothing promotes human flourishing like having a people and place of belonging. We long to belong.

Why is it, then, that the importance of belonging often seems to be undervalued?

Earlier this year the UK Government released a new Civil Society Covenant<sup>2</sup>, described as 'a new principles-based arrangement for re-setting the relationship between UK Government and civil society'. The Covenant states that:

*Britain's civil society, including volunteers, charities, faith organisations, co-operatives, trade unions, philanthropists, social enterprises, social investors and purpose-driven businesses, are part of the fabric of our nation.*

That said, the document doesn't go on to express anything very much about belonging but rather emphasises partnership.

To be fair, this is because the focus of the Covenant is collaboration – working with- more than it is connection – being with. It does acknowledge that civic society 'strengthens the bonds that bring our communities together'.

**“Belonging is ... the feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity”**

“The need for belonging is universal.”

The University of Cambridge recently launched an important report setting out their own renewed civic approach and introducing a Civic Framework, shaped by insights from over 1,700 individuals across our region.<sup>3</sup>

Young people who Romsey Mill is alongside shared their experiences and insights as part of the listening that went into producing the report.

The consultation revealed a strong appetite for deeper, more inclusive engagement between the University and local partners and communities.

Romsey Mill is all for this.

As I hope you will appreciate in reading this edition of Mill News – connection, engagement, relationships, and belonging are at the heart of who we are, what we care about and how we act.

If you are able to make a donation to Romsey Mill's Christmas Appeal (see

page 12 for details) this would be vital support in all that Romsey Mill does in nurturing and valuing relationships and belonging.

As we move forward into the season of Advent, some words from the professor, podcaster and author Kate Bowler seem appropriate:

Advent invites us to remember something too easily forgotten: **You belong.** Not because you've finally gotten it all together (does anyone?), but because God has already made space for you – just as you are.

**God has something beautiful in mind that includes us all.**

**So come and risk it,  
enter into the restoration that is on the way,  
the Advent of belonging.<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> <https://diversity.cornell.edu/belonging>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-society-covenant>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cam.ac.uk/about-the-university/civic-engagement/civic-listening-report-summary>

<sup>4</sup> <https://katebowler.com/download/advent-blessing-learning-to-belong>

Please connect with us on social media



# YORKSHIRE 3 PEAKS TEAM CHALLENGE 15-17 May 2026

ROMSEY MILL

Join our team as they take on the **25-mile** challenge, climbing Pen-y-ghent, Whernside and Ingleborough



**Join our team of trekkers on the Yorkshire Three Peaks challenge 2026, as they raise funds for Romsey Mill.**

Romsey Mill is a charity committed to overcoming disadvantage, challenging injustice and promoting social inclusion with young people, children and families. Each year, over 2,800 individuals and families are supported across Cambridge city and areas of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

**If you would like to take part with us, please let us know via the QR code, or for further information, contact: [development@romseymill.org](mailto:development@romseymill.org)**



# the **strength** of quieter **service**



**Ruth Watt,**  
Aspire  
Coordinator,  
describes the  
important role  
our volunteers

have in the smooth running  
of our youth clubs.

When we think about volunteers, we may think of energetic, outgoing individuals who speak passionately, and seem to be everywhere at once. While these high-energy volunteers are undeniably valuable, there's another kind of volunteer who often goes unnoticed – the quieter one. The one who works steadily behind the scenes, avoids the spotlight, but quietly carries out their responsibilities. Isabella is one of these volunteers.

She has been with us for nearly two years and has been consistently reliable through this time. It has been a privilege to see her confidence grow as she has gently got to know the young people she works with. One of the most valuable skills in any setting – especially in community work – is the ability to listen. Quieter volunteers often excel at this. They're not busy planning what to say next or trying to lead every conversation, instead, they're listening, observing, and understanding the real needs of the people they're helping.



This is what Isabella has said about her time volunteering with us:

**"Volunteering at Aspire continues to shape me in ways I never anticipated. Working with Kat, the team, and the children draws out my strengths, challenges my assumptions, and deepens my commitment to truly inclusive practice."**

Each week, I join the children in games and activities, making their hot chocolate and toasties. In these small moments, I witness how connection is built – not through words or performances, but through patience, attunement, and shared space.

The children are my greatest teachers, and under Kat and the other leaders' guidance, I'm learning to trust my instincts, hold emotional space more steadily, and lead with care. This experience is not just developing my skills – it's reshaping how I understand belonging, relationships, and the kind of practitioner and person I'm becoming."

Isabella moved recently into another group at our request, as the number of young people in the group was growing and they did not have enough volunteers. We are very grateful for her adaptability, and she made the move in her usual calm style with no sense of fuss to make the transition as smooth for everyone as possible.

We recognise the value of quieter volunteers – and understand why they may actually be the backbone of many successful teams.

Many of our young people find mainstream school difficult: the overwhelming environment, bright lights, loud noises and crowded spaces can be difficult to manage as well as navigating social expectations and communication. In our setting, they need a sensory friendly environment and a patient, accepting approach that accommodates their communication style. Isabella helps to provide this, giving our young people opportunities to practice skills in a supportive and low-pressure way.

FRIDAY  
**27**  
February  
**2026**

**Doors 7pm**

Food 7.15pm

Quiz 7.45pm

City Church • Cheddars Lane • Cambridge CB5 8LD

Join us for the return of...  
**Romsey Mill's**

# Big Quiz

Come together with your friends and pit your minds against other teams while having a fun evening and help raise money for Romsey Mill

**Tickets £15 (includes food)**

**Raffle and bar**

**TEAMS OF 6-8**

Buy tickets via

**[www.romseymill.org/bigquiz26](http://www.romseymill.org/bigquiz26)**

To raise funds for

**ROMSEY MILL**



Registered charity no 1069905 • Limited  
company no 3556721 • [www.romseymill.org](http://www.romseymill.org)



# little piglets and happy babies

**Heather Duke**, Young Parents Programme Coordinator, reflects on a trip to Wimpole Estate on a sunny September afternoon.



If you search for images of parenthood on Google, it's amazing how everyone in those images is smiling. Pictures of tranquility, peaceful relationships, the perfect family. There often are lots of smiles in the early months of a baby's life, but the daily demands of caring for a little one can make it difficult



**The sun shone, we chatted,  
we walked and the fresh air  
felt good when it can be so  
hard to get out of the house**

to find joyful experiences within it. One of our hopes at the Young Parents Programme (YPP) is to facilitate experiences that bring joy and pleasure to both parents and babies, enabling them to enjoy the early months of parenthood together. We were incredibly grateful to Wimpole Hall when we made contact with them about taking a group of young parents and their babies for a trip to the wonderful farm there. They have a scheme in place intended to reduce barriers to people enjoying National Trust places. We liaised with their Volunteering and Community Officer, who kindly arranged for us to visit free of charge on an afternoon in September. We attended with four mums, one dad and five babies to enjoy the walk up from the car park, past the house and through the grounds to the farm.

We headed first to the pigs (avoiding feeding time which would put any newborn screaming into perspective!), and then wandered to see the other animals, ending at the café for hot chocolate, cake and a play on the lovely outdoor equipment. The sun shone, we



chatted, we walked and the fresh air felt good when it can be so hard to get out of the house.

Thank you to the team at Wimpole for facilitating this lovely trip, to the parents and babies who came along and made it such a fun outing, and to the piglets for being super cute (surely you agree?).

For information visit:  
[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/cambridgeshire/wimpole-estate](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/cambridgeshire/wimpole-estate)



ROMSEY MILL  
CHRISTMAS APPEAL

# brighten a young person's future

Throughout the year, Romsey Mill is supporting local young people, children and families with their mental health and wellbeing through our positive, relational youth and family work.

This Christmas, we are seeking to **raise £30,000** to help fund that vital work into next year.

“Romsey Mill helped me to be more involved and not just stay quiet. They’ve allowed me to feel more like I am a part of the group.”

**20%** of children aged 7 to 16 years, and

**23%** of young people aged 17 to 19 years

have experienced **mental disorder**

*Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2023*

We have received pledges totalling **£12,500** of match funding from friends of Romsey Mill and the Reed Foundation, through The Big Give.

Could **you** partner with us to help ‘**brighten a young person’s future**’ and make a donation to help us to draw down the pledged funds?

Every online donation made between **2 and 9 December** will be **doubled** through partnership with the **Big Give** Christmas Campaign

The **impact** of Romsey Mill’s relational youth and family work:

**90%** of parents of autistic young people said **mental wellbeing** had **improved**

**92%** of young people we work with said that their youth worker gave them the **support they needed**



donate: [romseymill.org/christmas25](https://romseymill.org/christmas25)

“It’s a safe space... where people ‘get’ him, and he meets others like him.”



# History on the pitch

**Romsey Mill is delighted to be named Cambridge United's charity partner for the 2025/26 season.**

Speaking about the partnership, Cambridge United CEO Alex Tunbridge said, "We are thrilled to be working with Romsey Mill this upcoming season as our official Charity Partner. They are an organisation that makes a real difference to young people and families in our community, and we look forward to championing their vital work throughout the year."

Prior to the charity partnership being announced, Romsey Mill had already engaged with the Fitzwilliam Museum and Cambridge United, coming alongside young people to design a kit

to be worn at a Cambridge United match as part of Black History Month. Young people who attend one of our Trumpington youth groups produced artwork based on the story of Olaudah Equiano, an 18th century African man who was sold into slavery as a child, but managed to earn enough to buy his freedom. He ended up living in Cambridgeshire and campaigned against the slave trade.

In October this year we took young people involved in the project to watch Cambridge United wear the kit in their match against Bromley.

Liam, one of the young people involved in the project, said, **"When I found out we were designing the kit I was really excited ... Not every kid gets to do something like this."**



# a joyful start to the pre-school year

Our Pre-school Co-ordinator, **Sarah Wygard**, talks about welcoming a mix of new and old faces, with our 2-4 year olds coming together in one setting for the first time, this autumn.



season brings. The children have been exploring lots of sensory and creative play with natural resources. Discovering crunchy leaves, smooth conkers, spiky pine cones and the beautiful colours of the natural world.

Outside, the children have been digging and planting vegetables and flowers in the soil. They have also enjoyed getting messy with leaf printing and sponge painting woodland creatures. Our harvest-themed activities have included songs about tractors and scarecrows and the story of the Enormous Turnip.

It's been wonderful to see the children grow in confidence and independence, supported by our staff and each other, especially those separating from their parents for the first time. Whether it's pouring pretend soup in the mud kitchen or weighing conkers and pumpkins on the tuff tray, these little ones are developing and learning all the time as they explore and create. We look forward to the season ahead and more fun as we continue to learn, play, and grow together.'

'It has been a new start for staff as well as children, as we sadly said goodbye to our lovely Pre-school Co-ordinator, Sylvia Briscoe, who warmly nurtured and supported the staff, children and families in her care and will be very greatly missed. I hope to continue her good work in taking on the role of Pre-school Co-ordinator, with the support of the lovely Pre-school staff team.

As always, the Pre-school room is noisy, busy and energetic as the children settle into their new routines, explore friendships, and begin their learning journeys together. At the start of this term, we have been learning about autumn and all that the change of



# Christian closes a chapter

**Christian Osbourne**, newly ordained curate, talks about being part of the Young Parents Programme (YPP) Team at Romsey Mill.



'I spent the last four years working as a Young Parents Development Worker in the YPP team. My role was focussed on young parents, mainly mums, who are under the age of 20 when they conceive. After receiving a referral from the Rosie midwifery team, I would work with the young parents during their journey into parenthood and up to the baby turning two years old. The work was really varied and tailored to the needs of the parents and child that I was working with. An average day would involve lots of WhatsApp conversations, meeting mums one-to-one, and supporting mums to engage with the Romsey Mill groups and courses. I also led the antenatal course which was a lot of fun!

The best moments were seeing the growth of confidence in parents. One mum comes to mind who was so anxious that she was

unable to leave the house. Seeing her and her baby joining the Babies and Buddies group and become one of the key members who welcomed new mums was a joy! The mum visited the Antenatal course to offer her peers the opportunity to ask her questions about her experience of breastfeeding.

One of the biggest challenges is engaging the young parents in the first place. Just because a parent has agreed to a referral doesn't mean that they will just rock up and attend sessions. It takes a lot of time and patience to slowly build a rapport and relationship with a young parent. Many of the



parents that YPP works with are both 'hard to reach' and often suspicious of the motives of professionals. That is where Romsey Mill is different to many other organisations: the offer is long term and truly relational. The team at Romsey Mill are amazing – so when work is harder there is always someone around to encourage you or make you laugh and see the funnier side of life.

I haven't gone far! I was ordained at Ely Cathedral in June and the very next day I started as a full-time curate at St Philips Church on Mill Road, Cambridge. Being a curate means that I am training in the community as part of the team at St Philip's church. My heart remains very much invested in those who are perhaps more on the edge of society and I am excited to take all the skills and confidences that I have developed at Romsey Mill into my role as a deacon (and priest). The work I do, and all my life, is inspired by my Christian faith, and in that way my new role is an extension of all that I was doing before. I am very grateful that I got to spend four years working with the Romsey Mill team – and I would wholeheartedly recommend it to anyone who has a passion for supporting young people to grow in confidence.'



# a place to belong

**Rebekah Adenaike-Fere**, Peterborough Programme Development Lead, talks about our work in Peterborough, as we continue to build on our existing provision and develop new activities in response to the needs of the young people.



Earlier this year, the Youth Development Team ran a pilot focus group at Hampton College aimed at supporting young black girls who were adjusting to a new culture and school environment after relocating from another country. The six-week programme provided a safe and empowering space for the girls to share their personal experiences, build new friendships, and grow in confidence. Over the course of the sessions, staff observed remarkable development in the girls' self-esteem and social connections. School teachers also reported noticeable positive changes in their engagement and overall wellbeing, highlighting the significant impact the group had on each young person.

Sandi Khumalo, Youth Development Worker in Peterborough, observed:

**"It has been encouraging to see the girls' progress. Over time they have developed greater confidence and have found a sense of safety and security within the group."**

The girls positively shared their experience of the group:

**"I was shy the first day, but now I feel like this group was a good idea and I feel really confident."**



**"I just wanted to say that I adore you guys so much for always listening to what I have to say."**

**"I didn't really have friends when we started, but the group helped to fix my friendship with someone and get close to the other girls."**

Rebekah, reflects:

"We started this group to support young black girls who have recently moved to England. We recognised the difficulties in relocating especially in the middle of the school year and wanted to be the support we wish we had growing up. Despite being met with some reluctance, the first few sessions proved that this group was necessary. By the end of the six weeks, we saw a significant difference in the girl's confidence and ability to navigate difficult situations. We have seen a massive change in all of the girls. This group reminds me of how important it is to continue to show up for young people. Consistency, positivity, and a safe space can make a huge difference to a young person's experience and positively impact how they navigate the world. I am looking forward to continuing to support the girls as they move through and change the spaces they are in and to

watch them grow in even more strength, confidence, and resilience.

We continue to meet with the girls after school within the community, providing ongoing encouragement and guidance as they navigate their individual journeys. Our aim is to sustain the positive progress made during the pilot and to continue fostering their confidence, resilience, and sense of belonging. We look forward to witnessing their continued growth and development as they move through each school year."



# impact through partnership

We are delighted to announce a fantastic new collaboration.

**Deloitte's** Cambridge and Ipswich teams have joined forces with Romsey Mill as their charity partner for the next three years, helping to support our vital work with young people and families.

To start shaping plans for initiatives, fundraising and events, the Deloitte team has been collaborating with us to develop creative and impactful ways to strengthen our work over this period –

opening up even more positive opportunities for local young people and families.

Special thanks to the wonderful team at Deloitte who have already begun volunteering with us at Bridge the Gap and with a big clear up at Romsey Mill Centre. We look forward.

**We can't wait to see the impact we can make together!**



If your company would like to partner with Romsey Mill, please email [development@romseymill.org](mailto:development@romseymill.org)

# In concert with Romsey Mill

Photo: © Paul Ashley (www.paulashleyphotography.co.uk)



**Saturday 7 February 2026 • 7:30pm**

West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge CB3 9DP

Romsey Mill has been named as charity partner for the **City of Cambridge Symphony Orchestra** (CCSO) concert on Saturday 7th February 2026.



### Important!

All tickets purchased with the code **"CHARITY"** applied, when making the online booking, will have 50% of ticket sales donated to Romsey Mill.

Anyone who chooses the option for Romsey Mill to benefit in this way will also be **invited to a pre-concert drinks reception**, with a talk from Conductor Robert Hodge.

### Programme

|                |                  |
|----------------|------------------|
| Anna Clyne:    | Masquerade       |
| Arnold:        | Trumpet Concerto |
| Shostakovitch: | Symphony No.7    |
| Reuben Anelay  | Trumpet          |
| Robert Hodge   | Conductor        |

For booking with reserved seating scan the QR code



For information on CCSO:  
<https://ccso-online.org.uk>

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**romseymill.org/christmas25**



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**Freepost CB1067**  
Cambridge CB1 3YD

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*giftaid it* I want to gift aid my donation to Romsey Mill, any donations I have made in the last 4 years, or from \_ \_ / \_ \_ / \_ \_ and all donations I make in the future. I confirm that I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each year (6th April to 5th April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify.

I understand that the charity will reclaim 25p tax on every £1 that I give. I will advise Romsey Mill Trust if these details change.

Signed ..... Date \_ \_ / \_ \_ / \_ \_

*Please detach this form and return with your donation.*

**Creating opportunities with young people and families** ROMSEY MILL

