





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: Aspire, our work with autistic children and young people, provides safe spaces for them to be themselves and establish friendships.



Spot the difference

Neil Thompson, Romsey Mill's Fundraising and Communications Manager, writes:



The more observant regular readers of Mill News will have observed, already, this slight change in proceedings!

In my time with Romsey Mill, when meeting some people for the first time and introducing myself as 'Neil, from Romsey Mill', I have often seen a small look of confusion followed by the growing realisation that I am not 'the other Neil'.

To be fair, I do share certain characteristics with Neil Perry, Romsey Mill's CEO, who usually writes this foreword to Mill News. Both bespectacled men, of a certain age, with enthusiasm for the work of Romsey Mill, the difference isn't always obvious!

Whilst Neil Perry is on annual leave, I am writing this Foreword to the Spring edition of Mill News.

In a few short weeks, Spring will have arrived. Officially, the season begins on 20 March, but signs of the approaching new season will be in evidence before then. Small signs, almost imperceptible, but still significant.

Snowdrops are an early tell of the change to come, along with the sound of the dawn chorus on morning walks, and buds on trees.

Small signs of change are also evident throughout the work of Romsey Mill, as those we are alongside grow in their confidence and sense of worth.

“Small signs of change are evident ... as those we are alongside grow in their confidence and sense of worth.”

“Relationships are agents of change in a world that is crying out for positivity, warmth and a brighter outlook.”

When a young child shows the confidence to choose the book that they want to be read to them and hands it to the Pre-school worker before settling into their favourite place on the sofa.

Or in the way that the young people start conversations with their youth and family workers, or as they begin to make friendships with others in their youth club or 'babies and buddies' session.

Relationships are at the heart of all that Romsey Mill does. Relationships are agents of change in a world that is crying out for positivity, warmth and a brighter outlook.

This issue of Mill News is chock full of references to the power of relationships and the vital role that they play in helping to grow community and our sense of wellbeing.

Romsey Mill helps to provide safe places for children and young people, where those positive relationships can be nurtured and thrive, supported by members of our compassionate, caring and committed team.

Relationships also play a key role in the ways that we seek to raise vital funds to facilitate the work of Romsey Mill.

We are delighted to be able to announce another corporate partnership in this issue of Mill News. And I am personally delighted to see quotes from our supporters, who have undertaken challenges to help raise funds, refencing the friendships and connections made whilst doing so.

I take this opportunity to invite you to partner with us and support our **Aspire Appeal** (see pages 12 – 13) as we seek to create more safe places for autistic young people, places that help to make a difference.

Please connect with us on social media



“One thing I would change in this world”

Kat Rudge, Aspire Youth Development Worker, talks to one of our young people, Kit, who is part of Aspire.



Aspire at Romsey Mill delivers youth clubs and support, in Cambridge city, South Cambridgeshire and Peterborough city, for around 250 autistic children and young people.

Romsey Mill has known Kit for many years now, having come along to Aspire since he was 15 and is now part of our Aspire Plus group. Kit has faced more than his fair share of challenges and continues to surprise us time and again with his resilience and perseverance.

When Kit first came to Aspire, he really wanted to make friends. It is lovely to see him now and his close friends, James and Oli, together. They have such a firm friendship based on mutual respect, and a love of discussion of whatever subject is on the table that day!

One of the reasons I think autistic people make such good friends is their lack of judgement of others.

I am currently helping Kit to pass his English Functional Skills exam in order to go to university later this year. When I gave the following question to Kit to answer as a practice question, I had an idea his answer would involve diversity of some kind.

What a wonderful world it would be if everyone was as kind and inclusive as Kit – a genuinely lovely human being.

The question I asked Kit was: 'If there was one thing you would change in this world, what would it be?'



Kit Gower-Thomas wrote:

"We're all human. So, why do we attack each other over differences that are small compared to the similarities we share?"

One thing I would change in this world is for people to see past these small differences, and make peace. So what if the person who sits next to you is a different gender or gay or even from some other place? They're a person, and so are you.

For one thing, why does it matter if a boy wears a dress? What's wrong with a boy wearing so-called "girl's clothes"? Also, when it comes to your gender, why should I care about anything but what you say you are? If you say you're a boy, you're a boy. If you say you're a girl,

you're a girl. If you say you're some other thing, you're that other thing. Frankly, if, say, someone says she's a boy but says to use 'she' and 'her' rather than 'he' and 'him', then it's her right to be a boy who goes by 'she' and 'her'! If someone says they're sometimes a boy and sometimes a girl, who am I to judge them? If someone says they don't have a gender, they are valid.

What's more, why ought it matter who you are in love with? Why should it matter if a boy is badly in love with some other boy? After all, it is true love. Who am I to judge? If a girl is madly in love with another girl, then she is valid. If a boy is in love with a girl, each to their own – but don't just make out in public! We aren't all fans of public displays of affection!"

“We’re all human. So, why do we attack each other over differences that are small compared to the similarities we share?”

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Do you want to be a Romsey Mill trekker?

15-17 May 2026

For the past three years, a team of trekkers has taken on the Yorkshire Three Peaks (Y3P) to raise vital funds for Romsey Mill.

We are looking for enthusiastic walkers to be part of the team, this year (15th-17th May).

People aged 18 – 70 have taken part before, testing fitness on the 25-mile challenge and making new friends along the way.

Past participants have found the Romsey Mill Yorkshire Three Peaks experience both inspiring and rewarding:

"The walk is challenging but exhilarating when accomplished with new friendships made along the way. This will be my third Y3P with Romsey Mill. I am already looking forward to it!"

Lino

"Doing the Y3P with Romsey Mill has been one of my annual highlights for the past three years! The beautiful landscape, the sense of achievement, but most of all the wonderful people I've met and walked with over the years keeps me coming back for more. The icing on the cake is knowing that money raised from sponsorship helps Romsey Mill to 'walk with' young people and their families as they navigate challenges, giving them opportunities to thrive that they might not otherwise have."

Emily

Are you interested in being part of something really special?

Sign up today!

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



Y3P
YORKSHIRE PEAKS
TEAM CHALLENGE

a lifelong love of books

Our Pre-school Co-ordinator, **Sarah Wygard**, talks about the love of reading within Pre-school.



At Pre-school, we love books! We want to share our love of books with the children, as reading provides so many benefits for early development and a foundation for nurturing curious minds. Reading strengthens language skills and builds memory and concentration, as well as capturing imagination. Reading with babies and young children is something that all families can enjoy together. It can often be a part of a bedtime routine, helping children to unwind with a familiar book, ending the day with a special moment of comfort.

To help families enjoy reading at home, we encourage children to borrow books from our Pre-school collection, helping

them to choose a book that excites them. This could be a well-loved classic or a book about dinosaurs, space or vehicles. We want the children to love books and always want more!

In our Pre-school, reading is woven into each day. Throughout the session children explore picture and story books alone or in small groups, and we encourage them to talk about what they see and hear. At the end of Pre-school, we have a story time together. Children love hearing the same story again and again and repetition helps them to learn new words, understand story structure, predict what will happen next and join in with confidence.

Reading with children doesn't need to be complicated. A cosy lap, a favourite book, and a few minutes of shared attention can make a world of difference. Every child can develop a lifelong love of stories and books.



Aspire Appeal 2026

Help us to create more spaces for autistic young people.



Autistic young people are amazing!

They are brave, brilliant and creative, but often face significant social and sensory challenges, leading to anxiety and isolation.

Aspire is Romsey Mill's work alongside autistic young people and children, between the ages of 9 and 19 years, in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

We provide safe spaces for 250 autistic young people attending weekly autism-friendly youth clubs and offer invaluable life-line support to their families.

Now, we need your support as we seek to continue to respond to the significant need for autistic young people in our communities.

Every penny and pound helps to make a significant difference in the lives of young people in Aspire, to be themselves, make friends, feel secure and thrive.

98%

of parents say their child feels safe and supported at **Aspire** youth clubs

94%

say attending **Aspire** youth club has had a positive impact on their child's wellbeing and mental health



Quotes from parents of young people attending **Aspire** youth clubs:

“It gives him independence and a trusted adult to talk to.”

“A safe space away from home and being around others.”

“It feels like a safety net.”

Any donation
would be
gratefully
received!

Thank you!



To support
Aspire...

Go to
[Justgiving.com](https://www.justgiving.com) and
search for 'Romsey
Mill Aspire 2026'



Building relationships

We are delighted to announce that construction company Morgan Sindall has chosen to make Romsey Mill Aspire their charity of the year.

Jamie Shearman
(Area Director –
Cambridge) said:

'We are delighted to be supporting a local charity that is doing vital work and providing safe places for young people who are experiencing the challenges associated with being autistic, and providing lifeline support for their families.'

To have a local charity that we know our colleagues, friends and family care about deeply is very important to us and we very much look forward to supporting their brilliant work.

The partnership we will develop with Romsey Mill – Aspire is very exciting for us, as we know many of their existing youth clubs they operate are in locations close to where we work, live and play.'



**MORGAN
SINDALL**
CONSTRUCTION

From the Young Parents Programme to...

...forever friends

Cookery, creative arts, conversations about self-esteem. These are some of the elements of our Young Parents Programme. In themselves, they can build both skills and confidence, as well as being lots of fun. **Heather Duke**, our Young Parents Programme (YPP) Coordinator, spoke to two of our young parents about a deeper, long-lasting element that has come from their participation in some of these activities.



Lexy and Anna-Lena first met on the Young Parents cookery course in September 2024, and at our weekly baby group for new mums and babies. Both single mums to incredible little boys, they arrived at the cookery course not knowing who else would be

coming. It was not difficult to see why they would get on well – they are both strong women and wonderful mums. Week by week they came along and cooked together, enjoying the successes (Anna-Lena's giant Yorkshire pudding) and failures (Heather's inedible hummus). From light-hearted laughter to deeper sharing, the friendship grew naturally week-by-week. From the cookery course, they went on to complete the creative arts course together with another lovely friend. And while they built up skills and friendship, their babies were cared for in the YPP creche.

Soon, they started hanging out more outside of YPP. Seeing one another through big life changes such as house moves (and decorating!) to every-day hanging out. Lexy observes, "Our friendship has helped loads with getting through being a mum. It's nice to have someone going through the same thing." Through getting to know one another more deeply, they have discovered common ground and



“Our friendship has helped massively – stopping me from feeling isolated”



shared interests, and life experience that they feel can only be understood by those in the same boat. Anna said, “Our friendship has helped massively – stopping me from feeling isolated as we have similar situations that my non-mum friends just wouldn’t understand”.

And it’s not only Lexy and Anna-Lena whose friendship has blossomed. “Luca and Lorenzo used to annoy each other 😊 But now they love each other and chat to each other”. Little partners in crime when they come to Romsey Mill, they confidently strut their stuff and teach the younger babies at YPP all their most mischievous tricks. They have developed lovely relationships with the programme staff too.

Learning new skills, enjoying hot food, singing and playing at baby group – all these things are great in themselves and matter. But Lexy and Anna-Lena’s

friendship says something important about the heart of YPP. Underlying all we do is a desire to build community, to enable parents to form deeper relationships with one another which can offer long-lasting support. Lexy and Anna-Lena show us that we were created for community, to love and be loved. Which is exactly what they do for one another.

Thanks to our amazing supporters, we can currently extend support to young parents from the antenatal stage until the babies turn two. Luca and Lorenzo both turn two in the early part of this year, and so – having got to know them as bumps – we are now preparing to say farewell. We will miss them, but we feel thankful that they have one another and in doing so have built for themselves, and their sons, long-lasting and invaluable support.

“Our friendship has helped loads with getting through being a mum. It’s nice to have someone going through the same thing”





Christmas Appeal 2025 – *thank you!*



We are delighted to share that Romsey Mill's Christmas Appeal helped to raise **nearly £45,000!**

A huge thank you to everyone who supported our Christmas Appeal, whether making pledges and donations as part of the Big Give, or making your gift through other channels.

Our Big Give campaign alone raised **over £25,000**, as people took the opportunity to have their donation doubled, thanks to those who made pledges, worth **£7,500** and our Big Give Champion – **The Reed Foundation** – who are providing **£5,000** of match-funding.

This funding will make a significant difference in helping us support mental health and wellbeing locally through our positive, relational work with young people and families – especially at a time when this support is so urgently needed.

Thank you!



Cambridge Half Marathon

Join us in
2027

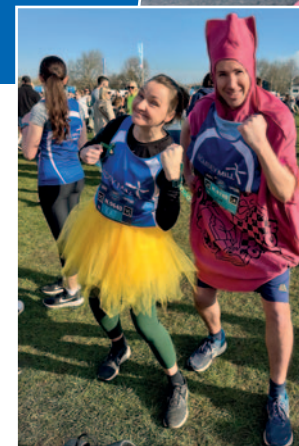
In recent years, the number of people running the TTP Cambridge Half Marathon for Romsey Mill has grown from one runner in 2019 to a team of **42 runners in 2026**.

This event raises around **£10,000** for Romsey Mill each year, which helps to fund our vital work with young people and families in Cambridge and surrounding areas.

We are already receiving expressions of interest for the Cambridge Half Marathon 2027. If you would be interested in joining our team and raising funds for Romsey Mill, please e-mail development@romseymill.org.

Alternatively, you can register your interest here:

Thank you!



active opportunities



Jon Sanders, Youth Development Team Coordinator, talks about the role of sport in youth work.

Sport plays an important role in creating spaces where young people feel valued and build community. Last year, over 400 young people engaged in sports projects with Romsey Mill, including quad biking and bowls!

We currently run football projects in Hampton, Northstowe, Cambourne, Orchard Park and Abbey (in partnership



with Cambridge United Foundation and Abbey People), providing free, welcoming environments with an emphasis on community rather than coaching. These shared experiences help young people develop friendships with their peers and build trusted relationships with youth workers, enabling further support. Last summer, a tournament between these projects saw Hampton coming out victorious!

Alongside football, we run a boxing project in Cambridge. This allows young people to channel energy, manage emotions and build self-discipline in a supportive setting. Research shows clear links with playing sport and improved mental health. One young person who is part of our boxing group said:

"To me it's an escape and an opportunity to practise my craft for free. It helps me to get fit and stay active."



Running the **London Marathon** for **Romsey Mill**

Two members of the Romsey Mill team will be taking part in this year's London Marathon on Sunday 26th April. They share their reasons for taking part and why they have chosen to raise funds for Romsey Mill.



Naz

Running the London Marathon this year feels profoundly personal to me. It is not only a test of endurance, but also a powerful reminder of why Romsey Mill's work matters so much. As a Fundraising and Data Officer, I see every day how important our work is, especially at a time when so many families are facing rising costs and increasing pressure.

Last year, I pushed myself through the Cambridge Half Marathon while fasting during Ramadan, battling thirst, exhaustion, cramps, and some truly terrible footwear. Even on my hardest day, my experience was nothing compared to the challenges faced by the amazing young people and families we support. This includes young people at our sessions for autistic children and our groups for young parents, who describe our programme as the only place they feel safe and supported.

Their resilience inspires me. I am running 26.2 miles so we can continue offering free, life changing support to those who need it most.

I would be so grateful if you could sponsor me. Your support genuinely makes a real difference.

**To support
Naz...**

Or go to
JustGiving.com
and search for
'Nasser Ameen'



Kathy

I joined Romsey Mill Aspire, last July, after finishing my Master's in Developmental Psychology in the Netherlands. I understood the need for, and importance of, specialist support for autistic young people, but nothing could have prepared me for the impact that Romsey Mill Aspire has in the young people's lives.

Seeing friendships develop and flourish within Aspire groups is one of the most rewarding aspects of the job.

The youth clubs are a space where they feel accepted by others who are like them and they feel supported by our team. We also offer a safe space in 1:1s for those struggling at school and with their mental health, to develop tools for mental wellbeing, practical life skills, and alternative education. In addition, we support families engaging with other services to ensure their voice to get the best care for their children does not go unnoticed.

As well as taking part in the Cambridge Half Marathon, I have a personal entry place at the London Marathon, and it makes it even more special to use it to raise money for a service that I can see every day makes such a huge difference to the lives of so many.



**To support
Kathy...**

Or go to
JustGiving.com
and search for
'Kathy Farrell'



Donate online today
romseymill.org/donate



By BACS transfer:

Bank: NatWest
A/c name: Romsey Mill Trust Ltd
Sort code: 60-04-41
A/c no.: 54728487

By cheque:

Payable to: "Romsey Mill Trust"
Send to: Romsey Mill Centre,
Hemingford Road,
Cambridge CB1 3BZ

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* By providing my email to Romsey Mill I consent to being contacted for News, Fundraising and Communication purposes. You can opt out at any time by emailing development@romseymill.org

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 _ _ / _ _ / _ _

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Creating opportunities with young people and families ROMSEY MILL

