

Amber

get set!

The twice yearly newsletter from **Amber** – Summer 2023



Welcome to our new edition of get set!

I am delighted to share the news from around the centres in the summer edition of Get Set. There has been a huge amount going on and it is always wonderful to see it all pulled together in this newsletter.

It is particularly nice to be able to reflect back on our first year at the Downsview centre in Ashford, Kent. It really has flown by and it has been great to get to know the Kent community and build positive working relationships with many referring partners. As you can see on the next page, we hosted a celebration event at the centre, giving those that have been so supportive of our work in the first year an opportunity to come and meet some of the young people and experience the centre for themselves.

It is also wonderful to read about the variety of partnerships that have been developed with companies located around our centres. They have been offering work experience, work taster days and employment, which is of course hugely beneficial for the young people that we support.

These sorts of opportunities really help young people build the confidence that they need to move on positively from Amber and this can be seen in the fantastic case stories towards the end of the newsletter, where we feature Corran, Abbey, Ez and Olly.

A huge thanks for your continuing interest in and support of Amber.

Paul Rosam, *Chief Executive*



Celebrating our first year in Kent

We were delighted to celebrate our first year at Downsview, our centre in Ashford, Kent.

Despite the wet weather, the celebration was very well attended by the many people who have been hugely supportive as we have established ourselves in Kent. The Lord Lieutenant of Kent, Lady

Colgrain attended, cutting the official ribbon at the end of the event. It was also wonderful to see the Kent Ambassadors, Leaders of local authorities, supporters, grant makers and the local people who have all helped us in our first year of being in Ashford.



The young people made cakes for our visitors to enjoy and spoke about how Amber has been helping them to transform their lives. Guests were even able to enjoy some piano playing by Alf, a young person at Downsview, as they looked around the centre.

There were speeches by Amber's CEO Paul Rosam and Richard Oldfield, Trustee of both Amber and the Henry Oldfield Trust, which generously supported the purchase of the property. Guests also heard from Dan, a young person staying at Downsview and another Dan who fondly remembered his time at Ashley Court in Devon. He is now in the Air Movements Squadron in the RAF and he talked about how Amber helped him turn his life around at a time when things were difficult.

Thank you to all those who attended and we look forward to seeing you again soon.



Interview Skills with Hays

In May, staff from the Exeter branch of **Hays PLC** delivered an employability workshop with some of the young people at our Devon centre.

Hays staff ran brilliant presentations on interview skills and writing CVs, then conducted mock interviews with each of the young people who came.

Regional Director, Jim Fearon, said how grateful they were for the opportunity to make a positive impact

"This was, without doubt, one of the most rewarding things I have done in my job over the last few years.

I would like to thank the team at Amber for welcoming us into the fold. We are looking forward to developing a deep relationship with the team. I feel we're at the start of a journey that will play a small part in helping to bring dreams into reality."



Work experience with Ringway Highways

We are proud to have partnered with **Ringway Highways** in Guildford with young people from Farm Place, our centre in Surrey, taking part in work experience placements. The young people really impressed while on placement. So much so that two were offered permanent jobs!

Ringway have been so supportive and understanding of the barriers young people face when entering employment, specifically around driving licences. They have generously supported two young people to obtain their driving licence and given them extended job offers to allow them to complete this and find suitable accommodation. Thank you so much for all your support Ringway.



Kent business supporting young people

Local plant hire firm **GSE Ashford** have supplied a site and equipment for Kyle to obtain his licences in excavators and dumper trucks with the training kindly supplied by Ian of **Acro Training**. We have also formed partnerships and volunteered with other local charities such as the **Kent Wildlife Trust**, **Fetcher Dog** and **PRIDE Canterbury**, all of which have provided excellent opportunities for young people to develop their skills.

We love working with businesses in this way so if you feel your business has something to offer young people at Amber please do get in touch with us info@amberweb.org



Getting involved with our local communities

We love getting out and involved with our local communities and the last few months has been no exception.



Devon County Show

This year we were delighted to be the Devon County Show official charity of the year!

We had a great show with staff, young people and supporters coming out in force to help us raise awareness and funds for Amber's work with young people locally.

As official charity we were gifted a stand plus a marquee and were the only charity allowed to collect around the show ground. We also attended the Stewards' and Stockmen's Suppers to speak to attendees about Amber's work with young people and to run fundraising raffles.

On top of this, **Lakemoor Alpacas** and **Little Orchard Alpacas** fundraised for us by offering alpaca walks and a photo booth each lunchtime.

Pig farmers **WA and UG Uglow** also got involved, after hearing about Amber at the Stewards' Supper, and ran a hog roast for us the night

before the show started.

Stewart Lee, who was at Amber 15 years ago, came along to help and talk about his time at our Devon centre and his recovery. He also sold copies of his recently published book 'Me and my Addiction'.

We were so pleased with the support we received from volunteers from long standing supporters **Crediton Boniface Rotary** who came out in force to help with collecting. We also had some lovely supporters from Exeter businesses including staff from **Stephens Scown solicitors**, **Your Digital Future** and members of **The Business Network**.



Getting involved with our local communities

Young people from Bythesea Lodge, Wiltshire, get out and about

Encouraging young people to be creative whether that is through art, music or writing is an important part of the Amber programme. It can often help young people process their past traumas, improve their self-esteem and support them be more hopeful about their future.

To inspire her team, Amber Team Leader Tracy, took a group of young people to Bristol to explore the city's amazing street art. Back at the centre, her team got to work on the re-decoration of their team room updating

old furniture and making the room look bright and vibrant using spray paint. Tracy said, ***"They learnt new skills and techniques....Wes was particularly good, I even let him spray a pair of my precious Docs!"***



Now that summer has arrived, young people at our Wiltshire centre have been busy trying out new hobbies. This month they visited **Melksham Rugby Club** with Support Worker Joe. They had a great evening meeting new people and learning new skills too.

It is that time of year again! Our canal boat, **The Mary Rose**, is now back out and enabling young people to explore the beautiful Kennet and Avon Canal. This month, young people and staff from Bythesea Lodge in Trowbridge enjoyed a relaxing day on the narrow boat and gave it a much needed ***'Spring Clean'***.

In addition, a staff team from the centre successfully renewed their helmsman licences, so are all looking forward to many more trips out on the water this summer, where young people can enjoy and benefit from the peaceful surroundings.



Setting sail with Ocean Youth Trust

Amber has partnered with Ocean Youth Trust (OYT) for a number of years and young people from Amber had the fantastic opportunity to set sail again this year. Crew members work towards gaining a sailing qualification while learning team work and communication skills.

They set sail for Yarmouth on the first evening and then motor-sailed to Weymouth in light winds the next day. There was lots of sunshine and music and everyone had a chance to learn to steer and how to fill in the logbook, as well as taking part in hoisting sails.

On day three the young people did some training towards their sailing qualifications and then had a relatively short sail to Ringstead Bay for lunch, sailing back to Portland in the afternoon for a BBQ on Chesil Beach.

The final day was a really big sail, all the way round the south of the Isle of Wight to Cowes, where they saw another beautiful sunset and young people took a keen interest in learning about navigation buoys and cardinal marks as they passed.



We spoke with a few of the young people that went on voyage shortly after they got back on dry land.

Luke, who is staying at Bythesea Lodge said,

"It was amazing. The best bit was the navigating at night, I really enjoyed it and felt like they really trusted me to do it. Working as a team all week and then to see it all coming together was great.

I can't wait to go back. They have invited me to do some volunteering work for them which includes some winter maintenance on the boat. If

I had the chance, I would do it all again."

While James, staying at Amber's Ashley Court said,

"I feel really recharged – it is like the voyage reset me. It was amazing to see a different way of living and to travel and make new friends. Before Amber I lived in Torquay and I'd see these big boats in the harbour and thought they were only for really wealthy people. This experience has shown me there are opportunities available even if you aren't a



millionaire. I feel like I've got the beginnings of a specialist skill with my Competent Crew certificate."

Well done team!



Amazing support from our communities

Hike the Hill

On Sunday 11th June, 28 supporters came together to walk and fundraise for a bed space at Farm Place, our Surrey centre. The walk took in all the beauty the Surrey Hills has to offer – including beautiful viewpoints, woodlands, Surrey heathland, a pine forest and Leith Hill Tower, which is the highest point in Surrey standing at 294m above sea level! Teams of walkers came from the office of the **Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner, HJP Chartered Financial Planners, Wienerberger and Mole Valley Ramblers**. Thank you to **Co-op Rudgwick** for providing the walkers with a healthy and delicious goody bag.

Special thanks to the Surrey Hills Society for planning the beautiful route and supporting on the day. 17,000 steps, 11km, 66 floors climbed and £4,000 raised – well done to all who took part and thank you for supporting Hike the Hill!



Swindon Rotary Club Charity Ball

This year our Wiltshire centre has had fantastic community support from **The Rotary Club of Swindon**. The President of the club, Robert Gillespie, came to visit Bythesea Lodge with Wiltshire High Sheriff, The Marchioness of Lansdowne to observe Amber's programme of support and to meet some of the young people.

Support from our local communities is extremely important to us at Amber so we were delighted when the club invited us to attend their meeting to talk about our work. As a result, the club asked us to make an application to their Committee and were thrilled when they chose as a beneficiary of the 2023 Rotary Club Ball.

Charity Ball Chair - Richard Deacon said, *"This is our Club's single biggest annual event. Since its inception in 1989 it has been a feature of Swindon's charitable fund-raising scene and an event which over the years has raised approximated £1 million for local charities."*



The Ball was a huge success and Laura Fenson our Fundraising Manger will be attending the cheque presentation evening at the end of June.

Racing to support Amber

We are overjoyed that **SIM Motorsport** in Ashford have recently announced that Amber will be their charity partner and to celebrate we will be hosting an exciting event with them on the 27th September. Keep an eye out for further details - it will be a **'not to be missed'** experience!



Corran

Corran, 26, has now moved on from Amber's Wiltshire centre after finding a full time job at a large supermarket chain and securing accommodation.

A number of factors contributed to Corran finding himself homeless and on the streets.

"I left home when I was 17 and had always got on well at school but things started to get hard when I became a Dad. My ex-partner could not look after our Son so in the end I tried a father and baby placement in foster care. It was a really tough time in my life. I tried everything I could to keep custody of my little boy but in the end, it wasn't enough. To give him the life he deserved I agreed for him to be adopted."

After Corran's foster placement ended, he found himself without a home and completely broken.

"I had no tent, I just moved around with my suitcase at night, using it to lean against. In the day, I would go to friends' houses but I could never stay for any length of time. Sometimes I would be lucky and get a place for the night at a hostel; camp beds would be lined up in a church or village hall."

In 2022, the Council referred Corran to Amber.

"Phil, one of Amber's Team Leaders came to collect me. When I arrived I



was so relieved to have somewhere to stay, sharing a room didn't bother me at all. Thinking back, I didn't really speak much when I first arrived, I just kept myself to myself for the first couple of weeks.

The staff at Amber have been really supportive and have helped me to work through what I have gone through. The counselling that Amber offers has also made a big difference."

After engaging in Amber's programme of support, Corran is now ready to move on.

"After securing my job, I now want to focus on building a career for myself and keep moving forward with my life."

Abbey

Abbey, 23, moved on from Ashley Court, our centre in Devon, to a room in a shared flat.

Abbey came to Amber because she was fleeing an abusive relationship.

"I didn't feel like I had other options and I was in fear of my life."

A friend suggested Abbey reach out to Amber for somewhere to stay so she looked it up and referred herself.

"I was so nervous at the start. I did not think I would end up staying longer than a week. But I felt so safe there and everyone was so supportive."

Abbey spent 6 months at Ashley Court and in that time attended a range of workshops and sessions which she found really helpful.

"I feel I had a lot to improve on. The sessions were really relatable."

While at Amber, Abbey decided she wanted to work in the care industry. Since moving on, she has secured a job in a care home and has a flat of her own nearby.

Abbey is now looking to the future with hope.

"Amber saved my life – it genuinely did. I think I'd be dead if it wasn't for this place. Moving on does feel like a big achievement though and I am proud of myself but I wouldn't have done it without the positivity

of everyone at Amber. I want to say the biggest thank you to them for supporting me and helping me get through everything I have! I will always cherish my time at Amber and be grateful for the amazing people I met."



Oilly

Having started smoking and drinking at the age of just 10 years old, Oilly found himself in a downward spiral in his late teens with addiction and homelessness. He spent a year on the streets in Sussex before coming to Farm Place in Surrey. That was when Oilly decided to change:

"I never wanted to be homeless again and that's what ended up happening due to my using. There was a click and I gave up everything – I was done with it all. I knew something had to change and Amber was there to support me."

Amber gave Olly stability and helped him to readjust to being around people without having to use drugs or drink. Amber supplied Olly with a laptop so he could attend courses online and he is now studying for his GCSEs as he left school at 13 without any qualifications. Whilst with Amber, Olly gained certificates through partnerships with VIY, Gasp Motor Project and Ocean Youth Trust. Olly suffers with anxiety, depression and PTSD but found the gym at Farm Place extremely beneficial:



“I’ve got quite an addictive personality, since I’ve got clean I use the gym to my advantage, it’s a good thing to be obsessed with. At Amber you get what you put in. I had a lot of help with my

mental health including talking therapies and on-site counselling, which has really helped me with my anger issues.”

The support the Team Leaders gave Olly was life changing, he found that they were supportive, they became a trusted adult and helped Olly with his self-confidence. He also found the special activities such as bowling, rock climbing, kayaking and swimming really beneficial. Olly says:

“The activities are extremely valuable to the young people at Amber. A lot come from traumatic backgrounds and to go out into the world and feel safe, and do things – it shows you there’s more to do in life than using drugs or drink or sitting around indoors. I’d never done archery, which was really fun. There are so many opportunities at Amber if you’re willing to take them.”

Olly is moving forward into a labouring job; eventually Olly would like to study mechanical engineering, once he gets his GCSEs. Although moving on is nerve-racking for Olly, as he has spent the last 5 years homeless or in supported accommodation, he’s also excited about all the possibilities that lie ahead for him:

“I can build my own life. Since being at Amber, I have the tools to build a successful foundation to move forward. I’ve made a lot of progress.”

Ez

Ez, 19, hasn’t had an easy start in life. Her relationship with her parents has always been volatile and she experienced abuse and neglect as a child. After she left school, Ez got a job as a bar tender but despite working all the shifts she could she was falling short every month to pay her parents rent. So, they kicked her out.

Unable to find anywhere affordable to live, Ez slept rough on the streets of Staines. Once homeless she also lost her job. ***“I thought life ended when I was homeless.”***

Ez then spent a month sleeping rough before the job centre referred her to Amber after she applied for Universal Credit. Within 2 hours, Ez found herself on a train heading for Farm Place, our centre in Surrey: ***“it was a pinch me moment. I thought I was dreaming. I remember reading in an Amber leaflet you have to choose to transform your life, and I thought that’s brilliant, I’ll keep that in mind.”***

Despite Ez’s traumatic childhood and upbringing, and being told she would not do anything or go anywhere, Ez found herself adjusting at Amber; ***“it’s a fantastic place for people who are at their lowest. Everyone is treated the same here, whether you’ve come straight from prison or been on the streets – everyone has a fair chance.”***

Ez has learnt a lot from her Amber journey, along with the support of her peers and the staff: ***“the staff here are the backbone of Amber, they go above and beyond and nothing is too much trouble. They help you even on their one-hour lunch break, which I learnt to appreciate. They always make you feel included, and if you have an issue and you talk to staff, you feel they’ve lifted the burden a bit and they try to help.”***

While at Amber Ez attended weekly counselling which she found extremely beneficial; ***“it feels like I can get everything off my chest, I can let it all out and a huge burden has been lifted. You feel comfortable talking and it’s the one place you can speak and let it go in that room. If I didn’t have counselling it would make me feel more shut in, and the longer you repress it you feel awful and feel like you’re at breaking point.”***

Ez put in a lot of hard work and effort with the support of Amber staff. It has now paid off as she has a new job as a housekeeper, with live-in accommodation provided. She is feeling ecstatic about living independently and sees this as a fresh start in her life; ***“you have time to learn at Amber, there’s no pressure and you can take it at your own pace. I’ve learnt that life will find a way, there’s a continuation and it doesn’t have to end with something bad.”***

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Amber supports homeless unemployed young people in crisis **24 hours a day 365 days a year.**

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For more information on leaving a gift in your Will, please contact Stephen Ballantyne on stephen.ballantyne@amberweb.org.


With your help many more young people like Corran, Abbey, Olly and Ez could have a future to look forward to. Please help us by sending a donation today.



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