

get set!

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

Amber



Amber continues its vital work - Welcome to our winter edition of get set!

As always, it is wonderful to look back over the last few months and share the news from across the centres in this issue of Get Set. I think you will agree that there has been a huge variety of activities, events and hard work going on. This new winter edition is an excellent reminder of how Amber supports the young people that come to us.

We strongly believe that providing the best possible programme of support will enable young people in key areas: gaining the skills and experience they need to find a job and accommodation, focussing on their personal development and improving their physical and mental health. I am therefore delighted to see that we have interviewed one of the highly skilled Counsellors, Karen Ruddell, who works at Downsvie in Kent. She gives an important insight into how counselling can support young people that find themselves homeless and in need of a way to work through their challenges.

I am really pleased that we have continued to be well supported by a number of local and national businesses. Johnson's Cleaning and B&Q have been particularly busy at the centres. Not only do they give up their time to volunteer and hold fundraising events but they also provide us with materials and expertise in a number of different areas.

And finally, it is wonderful to be able to share the stories of Paul, Aidan, Dan and Hattie, who have all recently left Amber. We are incredibly proud of them all and I thank them for sharing their stories with us.

We are so very grateful for your continuing support and interest in Amber.

Paul Rosam, *Chief Executive*



How counselling can aid recovery for young people that come to Amber

Young people experiencing homelessness and unemployment are very often struggling with their mental health. That's why each centre has its own part-time qualified counsellor. This service provides once a week on-site sessions, which can be accessed easily.

We thought this issue of Get Set was the perfect opportunity to get to know Karen and the vital work that she does....

Karen, tell us a bit more about yourself and your past counselling experience...

The majority of my counselling experience has been at a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre. Many of the people I have supported have experienced homelessness and unemployment alongside substance misuse. My work in this field has enabled me to support people who have experienced trauma and this has given me an insight into the challenges they may face.

Why do you think on-site counselling is important?

Having an on-site counsellor at each centre allows us to provide timely support to a young person in crisis. I have found that being present at the centre often means young people build their trust and confidence in you. Several of the young people who have accessed the opportunity have done so after being encouraged by another young person who has had a positive experience of the support we offer.

Could you give us an insight into what areas you cover in counselling?

Many of the young people who come to Amber have experienced very complex family histories, early childhood trauma, relationship breakdowns and feelings of rejection. Some have also experienced the care system. All of these factors can often result in a young person finding it difficult to trust others and many have extremely low self-esteem.

A counsellor can often work to help the young person stabilise, feel safe in the counselling space and begin



to make better sense of their own responses to what is happening in their everyday life.

As we move through the sessions, there is time to reflect on how they have managed their thoughts with healthier choices, how a situation that might have previously seen them fly into a rage, has been handled without the loss of control.

How do you feel young people have benefited from counselling?

Exploring the young person's life experiences and reflecting on these gives them an opportunity to begin to make sense of themselves and empowers them to believe they have choices about their future.

It is evident that feeling heard is really important to young people and it is a real privilege to provide that space for them to explore their own truth, gain greater understanding of who they are and begin to see the potential they have.

Being an Amber counsellor is a very worthwhile role. I feel lucky to be able to work with young people who are on the brink of life changing choices. Our work aims to lead them to a more positive, happier future.

Young people work alongside businesses to gain experience

We are so grateful for all the support from local and national businesses - whether it's to deliver a workshop to the young people, providing work experience opportunities or volunteer at the centres. Thank you to the countless people who support Amber year in year out.



Over the last few months we have welcomed **B&Q** and **Johnson's Cleaning** to our centres. Both companies connected with Amber after using **Neighbourly**, a platform connecting businesses with thousands of local good causes, to donate volunteer time, funds and surplus products.

At Farm Place, in Surrey, a team of 10 volunteers from **Johnson's Cleaning** cleared and pruned the allotments back, ready for winter. The company is opening up a new factory nearby in Crawley next spring so we look forward to engaging with job opportunities again next year!

We were thrilled to welcome teams from **B&Q** to both Bythesea Lodge, our Wiltshire Centre and Ashley Court in Devon. At Bythesea Lodge they came fully prepared with soil, tools and plants and spent the day building raised beds and planting flowers with the young people. It has made such a difference to our seating area so we would like to say a huge thank you.

In Devon, a team from the **Barnstaple B&Q** came with wall panelling and roofing sheets. They worked alongside

young people to build a new workshop space, teaching them how to use various tools safely.

Also in Devon, **Stephens Scown**, a leading South West law firm, made a visit to the centre at the beginning of September. They had a great morning finding out about our work and meeting young people.

Young people in Surrey have attended job fairs, had a careers talk from **Willmott Dixon** which included interview

techniques and role play and have started regular volunteering with a flower farm, **Froggetts Farm Flowers**.

We are pleased to report that we have partnered with a local brickworks company in Surrey;

Wienerberger, who invited a group of young people to tour their site. After, four young people had a work experience day there, with two of them applying for permanent jobs.



Amber hosts Arts Alive

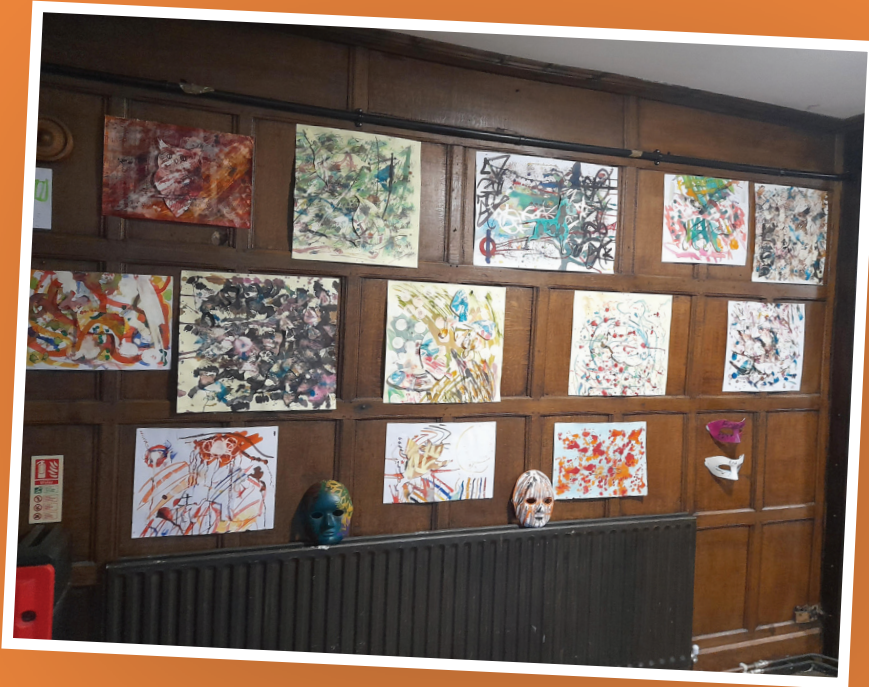
Last month, we threw open the doors to Farm Place for the annual **Mole Valley Arts Alive** open morning. We welcomed a whole host of wonderful guests,

including the Chairman of Mole Valley District Council, the Chair of Arts Alive, local Councillors as well as many referrers from in and around Surrey.



Artworks displayed on the day included ink and bleach on paper pieces with hidden spirit animals, hand moulded clay works and individual handprints, which represented the young person's culture. We also had two presentations and a tour of Farm Place all finishing with tea and cake in the dining room where you could pick a dahlia flower bouquet!

We are proud that art, music and creative workshops feature throughout the work that we do. It seems to provide a welcome release for many. Whether a complete novice or rediscovering an existing interest.



A party to remember!

In October, our amazing patron, ex Formula One boss, **Eddie Jordan OBE** welcomed his guests to a night of entertainment, great food and even better company. Eddie's fundraising event Amber Rocks was held at the Bloomsbury Ballroom in London. The evening featured performances from **Rick Astley**, one of the most iconic singer-songwriters of all time, opera star **David Webb** and musician **Grace Gachot**.

We were extremely proud of Abbey – a young person who moved on from Amber late last year. Eddie welcomed her on stage where she spoke candidly to the guests about how she has turned her life around with Amber's support. Head of Fundraising Stephen Ballantyne said ***"What an amazing night! Eddie and his guests made it a hugely successful evening with the input of Mark Webber and auctioneer Charlie Ross too. We'd like to say a massive thank you to Eddie, his incredible team, the event crew and of course to the performers."***



Mark Webber makes a visit to Farm Place

This summer we welcomed nine-time Formula One Grand Prix winner and TV pundit Mark Webber to Farm Place, our centre in Surrey.

Amber's Patron, Eddie Jordan, first introduced Mark to Amber's work who has attended several of our Amber Rocks charity events over the last 10 years.

Earlier this year we were delighted when he agreed to become an Amber ambassador so invited him for a

visit. He had a tour, saw our facilities, met young people currently at the centre and enjoyed a game of rounders.

Mark said, ***"It was great to spend some time with these guys. They have chosen to put crime, addiction and homelessness behind them. With the help of Amber they're determined to find a better way."***



News from across the centres

Downsview (Kent)

Taylor Wimpey Golf Day

On the 7th September, Taylor Wimpey held a golf day to support the Amber Foundation's work at Downsview. On a glorious sunny day at Birchwood Golf and Country Club over 80 golfers took part in a fantastic day's golf. The day was rounded off with a raffle and an auction and raised a whopping £18,000! Thank you so much to Helen, Tim, Alex and Mo from Taylor Wimpey for organising such an amazing event for Amber.

Later on in the month, we welcomed Helen and Alex back to the centre as they presented us with a cheque. They were given a guided tour around the centre and spoke to young people about their experiences of coming to Amber.

One of our trustee's Richard Oldfield also visited the centre to meet the team. Not only has the Golf Day been a great fundraising event it has given us the opportunity to make some fantastic contacts with local

businesses, many offering their support with volunteering at the centre or offering apprenticeships to young people.



Farm Place (Surrey)

The past six months has been a hive of activity at Farm Place. Young people have participated in an enriched programme to develop their leadership, communication, self-confidence and team-working skills which will stand them in good stead for future employment. They have taken part in forest bathing in the Surrey Hills, in conjunction with UCL,

weekly drumming circles and a peer mentoring training course.

We are so proud of the young people that have taken part and challenged themselves in all that Amber has offered. They have utilised their skills by conducting tours of Farm Place and engaging in public speaking, which is fantastic for their confidence.



News from across the centres

Ashley Court (Devon)

Working with the Barn Owl Trust

We love working with other charities at Amber to offer young people new experiences and opportunities to learn new things. We have recently welcomed the Barn Owl Trust to our centre in Devon. Mateo and Josh from the trust delivered a fantastic talk on Barn Owls, their habitat, diet and current threats.

Afterwards they ran a workshop showing the group how to build barn owl nest boxes. They all had a go working in pairs to create their own box. It was a fantastic afternoon, which everyone really enjoyed. We are now reaching out to local landowners and farms to site the boxes near to the centre.



Comedy, Canapés and Conversation

Funny Business is an ingenious concept; a fundraising comedy event plus canapés and networking held at The Terrace, a gorgeous venue in Exeter.

The Funny Business team choose a different charity to benefit from each year and we are so grateful to them for choosing Amber to benefit from Funny Business 3.

We are also very grateful to Stewart Lee who opened the evening. Stewart was at Amber 15 years ago and still

credits his stay with us with helping to save his life.

Thanks so much to the event sponsors Fresha Café and The Family Law Company by Hartnell Chanot and everyone who came and who donated raffle and auction prizes.

It was an ace evening with over £3,000 raised towards our work supporting young people facing tough times build a better, brighter future for themselves.

News from across the centres

Bythesea Lodge (Wiltshire)

Mixed ability rugby

Giving young people opportunities to try new things and develop new hobbies is a vital part of our programme at Amber. On Mondays a group from our Wiltshire centre attend Melksham Rugby Club.

September saw young people starting back for the season and taking part in their first training session. They all had a treat (including Team Leader, Phil) as Josh Bayliss from Bath Rugby came along for a run around with the team!



A visit from Wiltshire's PCC

We were delighted to welcome Police and Crime Commissioner Philip Wilkinson to our Wiltshire centre, Bythesea Lodge. We have recently been awarded funding through the PCC's Community Action Fund.

During his visit, Philip met Jake who referred himself to Amber after dropping out of school at age 17, before finding himself homeless and turning to drugs and alcohol.

PCC Philip Wilkinson said: ***"It was an honour to meet Jake and hear firsthand how he's turned his life around. He was starting to fall into the very dangerous cycle of excessive drinking and drug use, which often leads to more serious crimes. However, with the support of Amber his future now looks bright."***



"Jake's story is proof that anyone who is involved with drugs or county lines can get support and rehabilitate. My office is investing in these services to show our commitment to providing young people with alternative positive pathways, whilst also tackling the impact of drugs on communities."

Jake said: ***"If it hadn't been the support of Amber, I would never have even thought about college or university. I am very thankful to the organisation for having faith in me and steering me back onto the right path."***

Paul

Paul had been sleeping rough on the streets in London and Staines for around two years before he came to Farm Place, Amber's Surrey centre. Paul embraced Amber's programme of support and took part in all the workshops that were on offer; focussing on employability, health and wellbeing, personal development and independent living skills. Paul is very artistic and creative and really enjoyed the art therapy workshops.

Amber supported Paul and he found the Team Leaders welcoming and helpful: ***"the Team Leaders do a lot for you. I couldn't have got anywhere without them. I didn't have a fixed address which I needed to get a job."***

Paul is moving forward into a welding job, making road sweepers from scratch. Paul has been welding for a few years but this is more artistic and well suited to Paul's creative side. Paul is grateful to have come to Amber: ***"Changing area, moving away from stuff like addiction has given me a fresh start and sorted me out. I'd still be using and getting into trouble. Coming from London, there's amazing scenery at Farm Place. It took me a while to get used to it though. I did everything I needed to do – you get whatever you put in at Amber."***



Paul's dream is to own a houseboat and have two dogs as he loves dogs. And Paul has never been abroad on holiday and would like to visit Spain and the Caribbean. Paul has really made the best of his three months at Amber: ***"I'm happy I've got a new job, I don't want to go back down to where I was – I don't want to end up there again which I won't as Amber's given me a new life."***

Hattie

Hattie, now aged 26, has just spent the last six months at Amber's Surrey centre Farm Place. Hattie self-referred as she was brought to her knees by a drug addiction; her life had become so unmanageable and chaotic, and Hattie wanted to change.

The routine and structure at Amber were beneficial for Hattie. She also found the on-site counsellor helped with setting boundaries and her recovery. During her stay Hattie took part in Amber's peer mentoring programme, where she learnt how to be more compassionate and supportive of others: ***"I loved the peer mentoring course. I gained greater understanding of others which is a great skill for me to take forward."***

Hattie found the Team Leaders really encouraging and they helped her with her self-confidence, and how to apply and use her skills. Whilst at Amber, Hattie enjoyed taking part in the activities which were on offer: ***"Going swimming was relaxing and therapeutic. The activities on offer are great for team building and boosts confidence. Lots of the young people here haven't had the opportunity to do these types of things before, so they're great new experiences."***

The next chapter for Hattie is exciting but daunting, Hattie is moving forward into a customer service role

in Crawley: ***"I've valued the support at Amber and how there's always someone there for me so I'm a bit scared of the next step, but I'm also excited to start a new life in a different area and use the skills I've learnt whilst at Amber."***

Hattie's goal is to start some evening courses once she's settled into her new job and new area. She's interested in learning something new and would like to learn more about artificial intelligence.

"I'd like to stay sober and hold down a job for a long period of time. And I'd like to learn as much as I can. Amber has been a great stop gap to get my life on track and given me the ability to stop using so I can start my life afresh."



Aidan

Aidan, 24 has now moved on from Amber's Wiltshire centre. After a rigorous interview process he has successfully secured a full time job at The Ministry of Defence specialising in Cyber Security.

A number of factors contributed to Aidan finding himself homeless and unemployed.

"I left home after experiencing abuse from my stepfather who lived with us at the time. It was a really awful situation; I had lost all of my confidence and motivation and ended up having to leave the University that I had just got a place at. I just couldn't cope."

His local council then referred Aidan to Amber.

"When I arrived at Amber I was very nervous and apprehensive. I quickly realised that I was unprepared for life. I didn't know how to look after



myself properly and relied heavily on guidance from the staff.

After settling in, I started to learn valuable life skills and enjoyed being a part of a community again. I learnt how to talk and communicate with people, how to cook and took part in workshops focussing on things such as council tax and opening up a bank account. All of this has helped me to become more confident in myself again and ready for life after Amber."

After taking part in Amber's programme of support, Aidan felt ready to start looking for employment again.

"I felt ready to focus on my future. With some support from my Team Leader, I decided to apply for a job at the Ministry of Defence. Computer Programming has always been a passion and hobby of mine so I thought I would apply for a job that focussed on research and development and a position came up in cyber security. It was a really long interview process and the security clearance took over 7 months. At points, I thought the day would never come but I finally got the job offer."

I can't wait to start, it's what I've always wanted to do. I am really looking forward to the next chapter in my life and I feel ready to move on and to live independently. I have accessed the Rent Deposit Scheme too which has really helped me.

If it wasn't for Amber I wouldn't have made it."

Dan

Before Dan referred himself to Amber, he was street homeless in Devon. He was also struggling with addiction issues and feeling at a loss after seeking help from a number of other charities. What was incredibly helpful to Dan was having the option to move away.



"I wanted to change my life and knew I needed to leave Devon to do this. So when the opportunity came to move to Kent I jumped at the chance"

All the staff at Amber have given me so much support. For example they have helped me attend meetings to support me with my addiction issues and helping me secure volunteering and work experience opportunities at Chapman's Restaurant in Canterbury"

During his time at Downsview, Amber's centre in Ashford, Kent, Dan took and passed a Level 3 catering qualification at Canterbury College.

Alongside his college course, Dan also took part in Amber's in house development programme, which he

found extremely valuable. This helps young people with a range of things for example sessions on managing mental health and improving job-seeking skills.

Another important part of Amber's approach is to challenge young people to do things they have never done before.

"In my first couple of months I went with a member of staff to give a presentation at McArthurGlen Outlet Centre in Ashford. I gave a speech and talked about my experiences to over 50 people. It gave me so much confidence and it was then I realised what I needed to do to transform my life"

Dan has secured a rented property in Canterbury with his partner and a job as a chef in a pub nearby. He has also successfully reconnected with his family; something he wanted to do for a long time but needed help to do so.

"Without Amber I'd probably still be homeless and I think I would have given up hope by now. I am moving on feeling very excited and positive about my future. I have no self-doubt anymore, I know I have made the right decision and confident my life is back on track. I have made some friends for life at Amber and the staff have all supported me so much"

Dan will never forget the support he had at Amber though and is keen to give back by coming back to Downsview to tell his story to new young people moving into the centre.

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A gift for the future Helping young people into sustainable employment is key to their continued success when they leave Amber. One of the ways you can help us continue to provide this support for the years to come is to leave us a gift in your Will. We are so grateful to everyone who gives in this way.

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

We need your support to help us continue our work with young people. So we are asking that once you have taken care of your loved ones, please consider leaving a gift in your Will to Amber. With your generous support we will be able to continue reaching out to young people who feel they have no future, no hope and no chance to succeed.

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 Paul, Hattie, Aidan and Dan could have a future to look forward to. Please help us by sending a donation today.



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