ROMSEY MILL

Creating opportunities with young people and families

Overview

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About Us

Established in Cambridgeshire in 1980, Romsey Mill is a charity committed to creating opportunities, inspiring hope, overcoming disadvantage, challenging injustice and promoting social inclusion with young people, children and families.

Each year, we work with over 2,000 people across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Our work is long-term, relational and needs-led. We work with participants to develop their skills and to enable their progress towards training, work and positive involvement in their community.

History

Romsey Mill's project with autistic young people and their families is called Aspire.

Aspire was started by a group of parents around 2003 and taken on by Romsey Mill in 2005. In 2005 we had 1 youth club of 8 young people.

Our Aspire work in Cambridgeshire has been running for over 20 years; there are now 13 weekly youth clubs and we support 180 autistic young people every week.

In 2023 we received funding from the ICB and Peterborough City Council's Short Breaks to launch our Aspire programme in Peterborough. We currently have four weekly youth clubs running.

Aims (Aspire)

We aim to:

Improve mental wellbeing

Increase belonging

Reduce loneliness

Improve engagement with education

Provide respite for families

Create opportunities.

Delivery

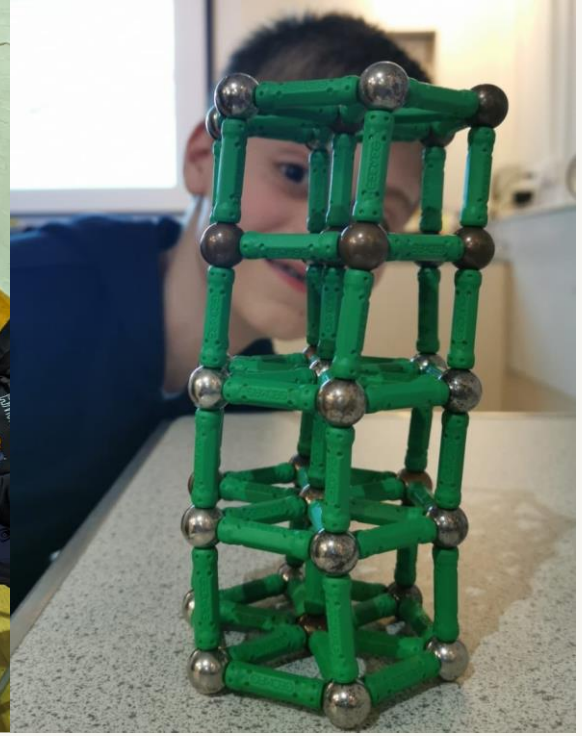
We run weekly term time only youth clubs for children and young people, covering a range of ages and locations. Our youth clubs seek to help reduce social isolation and improve the mental and emotional wellbeing of those who attend.

We offer:

- A variety of activities including card and board games, craft, Lego, and games consoles.
- Group members are supported in social interactions by youth workers and volunteers.
- Targeted support grows out of conversations in the group and close contact with parents/carers.

Alongside our youth clubs we aim to offer:

- One to one support
- Advocacy
- Mentoring
- Family support
- Alternative education provision (Cambridge)



Peterborough Youth Clubs

We currently have four established youth clubs in Peterborough. Two youth clubs for school years 7-9 (Hampton and Orton) and two youth clubs for school years 10-13 (Hampton and Castor). Both of our year 7-9 groups include young people in school years 5 and 6.

Young people can access our service from school years 5 up until the summer after they turn 18. The aim is to continue to develop more groups and respond to the needs of young people and their families, moving young people from waiting lists, into groups as quickly as possible.

Outcomes and Feedback

80% of parents agree or strongly agree that their child feels more socially confident since attending Aspire youth clubs.

70% of parents agree or strongly agree that staff understand how to support the mental health needs of autistic young people.

80% of parents agree or strongly agree that the team responds quickly when their child's needs change or escalate.

90% of parents agree or strongly agree that attending the youth club has had a positive impact on their child's wellbeing and mental health.

60% of parents agree or strongly agree that their child is better able to manage their emotions since attending the youth club.

60% of parents agree or strongly agree that being part of the youth club helps their child cope better with the pressures of education.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE TOLD US

“I have become more independent and confident over my years of attending.”

“The youth club has helped me improve my social skills and confidence.”

"Gives me a space to be me which isn't just me being on my own.”

PARENTS HAVE TOLD US

“I truly believe that Aspire was instrumental in supporting my daughter through some tough times where suicide was a very real possibility.”

"He wanted for years to meet other autistic children, and this group was how we finally achieved that. It was really important for him to fit in somewhere.”

"It is the only place he feels safe to go alone (away from a member of family). Without the Aspire group my son’s isolation and SEMH would have not improved. They have allowed him to grow.”

"It is the best thing that has ever happened for our son, we have a confident child who isn't ashamed to be autistic anymore, he knows there are many children like him and it doesn't mean he can't succeed in life.”

Criteria/ Referrals

To access an Aspire youth club a child/young person needs to:

- Have a formal diagnosis of autism
- Be in mainstream school in year 5* or above, up to age 18 (we will consider young people being home educated, on a case-by-case basis; those attending independent schools are also eligible).
- Live in Peterborough, Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire or the catchment area for Bottisham Village College in East Cambridgeshire.

To refer a child or young person, please contact admin@romseymill.org with:

- Area lived in
- School attended
- Year group.

Admin will then send full referral information.

For more information on our Aspire programme, visit: www.romseymill.org/aspire

*We accept referrals for children in school year 4, referrals received for this year group will be allocated to the waiting list and contacted before the child is due to start school year 5.

Thank you for listening.

Any questions?