

THE CIRCLE

SUPPORTER MAGAZINE



AUTUMN 2023



Designed for Restoration

Opening England's first revolutionary secure school



Cooking up community

Introducing the Oasis Kitchen in Bath



Oasis Summer Sessions

Thank you for an amazing summer!

Plus latest news... A Manifesto for Hope! • New youth centre in Croydon • Pop Up Couture

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Time for a radical reset...

As autumn begins, we are preparing to open Oasis Living Rooms again – providing additional space, activities, and support in local communities through the cold winter months.

While inflation has eased, the increased 'cost of living' continues to create hardship for countless households – highlighting how so many of our systems are failing the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. This is not simply an economic crisis. We need a radical reset, to invest in new and better systems and ways of working together that really improve people's lives.

That's the subject of Oasis Founder Steve Chalke's new book – A Manifesto for Hope. Reflecting on four decades of Oasis' work, Steve sets out ten tried-and-tested practical principles for how to develop joined-up, cost-effective, community-empowering work. This is the heartbeat of Oasis – a vision for building stronger communities, where no one is excluded.

You'll see this vision reflected in this issue of Circle magazine as we focus on the radical promise of Oasis Restore, England's first secure school. Behind the planning of Oasis Restore – and in fact, behind all our work – is a hope and an ambition that we can solve the most intractable social problems facing us today, and create a better future for children, young people, families, and communities everywhere.

We are so grateful that you are with us in the challenge, and part of the story of what Oasis is doing to bring about change. Thank you as always for your support and involvement.



Dave Parr, CEO of Oasis UK



THANK YOU for an amazing summer!



"All the children seemed happy as they knew they were in a safe environment away from problems that they deal with on a daily basis. They were allowed to express themselves and not worry."



We asked for your help to make sure this summer would be a life-changing one for children and young people in our communities. Thank you for your generosity! Summer has just flown by – and we've had heaps of fun, as well as providing families with essential food, positive activities, and support.

Maddie, Hub Leader at Oasis Isle of Sheppey, summed it up: "What was our best day? Every day was a good day – delivering Summer Sessions on Sheppey was really great, knowing we were able to provide something to keep young people engaged over a period of time which is sometimes difficult for families. We

got sad when we said goodbye to the young people at the end of the four weeks. As much as we had the best time, the young people really appreciated getting out, getting a hot meal, meeting new people and making friends – and really showed us why Summer Sessions are so important!"

Summer Sessions help fight holiday hunger, avoid isolation, and reduce the risk of violence for young people. In 35+ communities we played sports, we cooked together, went camping, learned new outdoor skills, did crafts (so many crafts!), painted, kayaked, baked, ate together every day – and went to the beach in all weathers! Thank you!

Thank you for an amazing summer!

A secure future for young lives



After four years of planning and preparation, Oasis Restore – England’s first secure school – will open its doors to our first intake of young people early next year. Oasis Founder Steve Chalke introduces the vision for transforming the lives of young people in the youth justice system.



When Oasis was appointed by the Ministry of Justice in 2019 to open and deliver the first secure school in the country, it was a revolutionary moment – the biggest move in youth justice in living memory.

I’m excited and proud that we were chosen to pioneer a new approach to rehabilitation, challenging the old ways of how society approaches the youth justice system.

At Oasis we are never afraid to challenge systems which are failing, and we are never afraid to take up a challenge. It has been at the heart of our ethos for almost forty years, ever since I founded Oasis back in the mid-1980s. Over the last four decades, I’ve seen the way Oasis schools, community hubs, housing projects, and youth work have grown across the country bit by bit, working alongside families to transform lives and give everyone the chance to thrive. We bring the same hope and belief to our secure school. We call it Oasis Restore because it will provide restoration and reintegration by building a safe environment and taking a holistic and integrated approach to education, care, and health.

A revolution in rehabilitation

The Government was right to take up the recommendation to introduce a secure school made by Charlie Taylor in his review into the youth justice system. This is the future of rehabilitation. While fewer children are entering youth custody than ever before, those who do end up detained are the most vulnerable,

and they have complex needs and behavioural challenges. Reoffending rates are still far too high, and too many young people have left youth offender institutions without the skills or opportunity to build a career or further their education. Crime – particularly violent crime and criminal exploitation – continues to blight many communities, diverts precious funding and resources away from other services, and destroys life chances.

Challenging the decades of failure to rehabilitate and reintegrate many of the young people in the youth justice system is crucial if we are to change the system permanently for the better and consequently turn around more lives, cut the cost of crime, and make our streets and communities safer.

How will we do it?

We know that many of our students will have lived through trauma and loss and will have had many adverse childhood experiences. We are challenging the way the system has often responded to these young people’s trauma. Rather than just locking them up for hours every day, we will be addressing some of the consequences of those traumatic experiences by providing therapeutic, bespoke support and using a psychologically informed approach to care.

Every student placed into our secure school will need to embrace the consequences of their criminal behaviour. Our job is to listen and understand the stories behind these behaviours, which will help us to develop integrated care plans that meet students’ individual needs, challenge negative habitual behaviours and reduce the risk of future harm.

We will be guided and supported by the latest practice and research into how the human brain develops, and what effect experiences of trauma and threat have on children’s development. Oasis Restore will be centred on what we know and have learnt about secure emotional attachments and the huge importance of building trusting relationships between our staff and young people.

Restoring hope

I believe there is huge untapped talent, imagination, and curiosity among the young people who are detained in the youth justice system. Working with them to help them develop new life skills and learning, by providing them with training or qualifications in areas in which they have an interest is an exciting prospect. We will be ambitious for every young person in our care and plan pathways for transition into the community or into the wider custodial estate from the first day that they arrive.

Interrupting the patterns of system failure that have held back too many young people will be a challenge, not only for us, but for the whole youth justice system. But I’m confident that the team we are building at Oasis Restore will create a secure school which revolutionises the way society rehabilitates young people, and which restores hope. We relish the challenge.

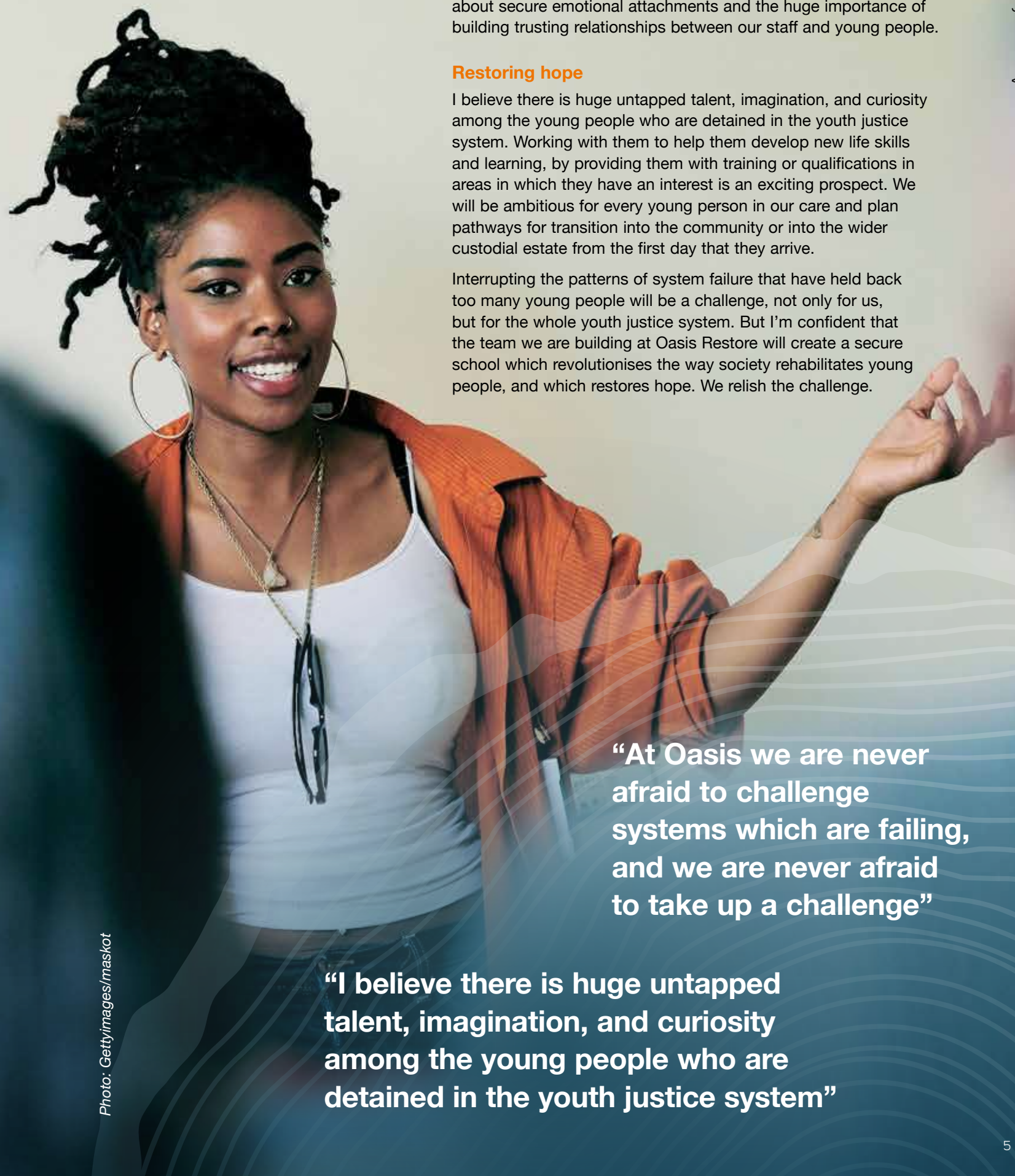


Photo: Gettyimages/maskot

“At Oasis we are never afraid to challenge systems which are failing, and we are never afraid to take up a challenge”

“I believe there is huge untapped talent, imagination, and curiosity among the young people who are detained in the youth justice system”

Designed for restoration

At Oasis Restore our staff will be teachers and youth workers, not uniformed prison officers. Our young people will be students, not inmates, and they will have bedrooms, not cells. The Oasis Restore team reflect on how the secure school is designed for restoration.

The door that slammed 116,800 times

On my first visit to the Oasis Restore site, I was given a tour of the old building. After the visit, there was one thing I couldn't get out of my head. It was the massive steel door to the children's bedrooms, and the clanging this would make when it shut. This hardened architecture made an echo so loud; you heard it all the way down the corridor. Honestly, it upset me that children would experience this every night.

A year later, I met a young adult with lived experience of custody. Talking with him about what we were doing at Restore, I explained about the wood-lined doors we sourced, which have a gentle, quiet closing mechanism, and the newly commissioned, un-barred windows, that children could open themselves. He told me that he didn't remember his door banging shut every night. He remembers every door on his wing of 20, banging four or five times every day. He explained that he still hears this in his sleep, a constant reminder of the trauma of being locked up.

I heard this door close once and it had an impact on me that I will never forget. I remember thinking to myself what the impact would be of hearing 20 doors close four times a day, 365 days a year, for four years. That's over 116,800 slams which go through your entire body. I have been excited about the development of Oasis Restore, the opportunity for an interdisciplinary model of education, health and care. But the thing that makes me smile every day, more than anything else, is that we now have 'quiet doors' and 'windows that can open'.

Andrew Willets, Principal Director

Asking 'What if?'

As Head of Safeguarding and Transitions at Oasis Restore, I am asked, and ask myself, "what if" questions daily. It is so easy to just keep children in custody locked in their rooms for long periods, allowing them out one at a time or in very small groups, so that they can't hurt each other or staff, go missing, or refuse to engage. But it also creates a culture where children can feel untrusted, always cautious of other's intentions, and expecting violence.

So, what happens if you open the door and if you get to know children? What if we show them the power of restorative practice, enable them to be curious with themselves and each other, and learn to live alongside one another? What if we build relationships between staff and children where they can trust us with their safety?

At Oasis Restore, safeguarding will be embedded in everything we do. Our practice model is designed to create an environment of safety through intentional and aspirational care and education, where relationships and building a home and community are at the heart of who we are and our practice. We will empower staff to listen to our children and work with them to build trust, create safety, and provide opportunities. Children and staff will have access to therapeutic intervention to discover themselves and process their experiences, alongside opportunities for restorative forgiveness.

The next time we ask "what if", let's ask ourselves different questions. What if children can discover their dreams, and flourish in education to achieve those dreams? What if we show the world the power of restoration?

Sara Corlett, Head of Safeguarding and Transitions



Photo: iStock/mixetto

"It was just a robbery"

'I hadn't understood it before', the 17-year-old said, his voice slightly cracking. 'I hadn't thought it made a difference, it was just a robbery.' Leroy (name and details changed) was a boy I was working with, in my role as a clinical psychologist in a Young Offenders' Institution (YOI). He was serving a two-year custodial sentence for a robbery and ABH (Actual Bodily Harm).

Leroy was a 'cheeky', charming kid who had spent most of his adolescence in and out of youth prisons. He'd been in care since the age of eight. Years later, his cheekiness masked anger and hopelessness, which emerged in his offending and in frequent fights in the YOI. I could see that somewhere, unconsciously, a part of him knew that he was lovable, but there also lurked an idea that men were violent and destructive, and inevitably, that he would be too.

But in that moment, as I sat with him, I saw that a profound transformation was taking place. The day before, he had been to meet the man he had robbed, in a Restorative Justice meeting. The man (Imran) had told Leroy what it felt like to find a stranger in his house, to be terrified, beaten and humiliated in front of his small children and his wife. As he listened, feeling his sense of shame rise, Leroy had started out defensive and cut off, trying not to engage. But as Imran started to cry, so did Leroy. In that moment, Leroy said, he realised that he had injured a real person, with feelings, a family, and a life that mattered. And that person was prepared to forgive him.

The impact of that meeting was seismic. Years later, Leroy wrote to me. 'I realised that I didn't have to be bad. This guy was giving me a chance. After prison I couldn't stop being a part of that life straight off, it took a while. But I could never fully go back to it either. That changed me.'

I've never forgotten Leroy and what he and Imran showed me about the amazing human capacity for reparation. This is what we want to do for every child at Oasis Restore. Meeting the survivors of their crimes may not always be possible, but having adults there who listen, who hold open a compassionate space for them to discover who they are, what they've been through, and to face the painful realities of what they've done, to support them to start to make amends and to find a way forward, in some small way, is the least we can do.

Dr Celia Sadie, Head of Care and Wellbeing



Some of the Oasis Restore Team



A teacher changed my life

I was 16 years old when I moved back to the UK after eight years abroad. I joined a sixth form a few days after landing and my new life began. I threw myself into my studies, and a part time job that very quickly became full time, and I was utterly miserable. I missed my friends, my extended family, my culture, the smell of the air... you name it I missed it. Before long, I was falling asleep in class, overworking myself to save for a plane ticket to visit home. One day, after falling asleep in Mr. R's class again, he invited me into his office. On the walk over I had prepped every excuse I could think of to get out of trouble for falling asleep in class. We walked into his office and sat down, as I looked at him, I could see concern, anger and I distinctly remember, sadness. He looked at me for a moment and then asked me one simple question – 'What do you enjoy doing?'

I was thrown, every excuse I had prepped flew out the window. I waited for a moment, but he said nothing else. He simply waited for me to answer. In the silence I started to consider the question, when was the last time I did something I truly enjoyed? It hadn't crossed my mind since the move, I had left my hobbies behind with my old life. He sat there patiently waiting for me, but I found I was unable to dislodge the lump in my throat for long enough to talk. 'Think about it' was all he said, before standing up to dismiss me from his office. Well, think about it I did.

As teachers we never know which moment made the most impact. Was it the pen we always kept handy for them? Was it that lesson we taught that unlocked something in them? For me it was that moment in Mr. R's office, the kindness, compassion, judgement free space he created for me to grieve, and discover hope powerful enough to shift my perspective from finding ways to get back to my old life, to planning my new one.

At Oasis Restore, we will be serving children desperately needing hope, deserving of love and care. Their adverse experiences go beyond what any of us could fathom, and they deserve an abundance of moments, created just for them, to provide opportunities for transformation. We are recruiting teachers who – along with the other Oasis Restore staff and community – will have this as their mission and their purpose. We can't wait to get started!

Cara Beckett, Director of Learning and Enrichment

You can keep up with all the latest news, job opportunities, and reflections from the team over the next few months before opening at oasisrestore.org

Cooking up community

Our work in local neighbourhoods is all about building stronger communities – tackling problems together, supporting one another, and creating opportunity. A new 'Oasis kitchen' project in Oasis Hub Bath has been doing just that.



'Oasis Kitchen' was a pilot project run at the beginning of 2023, the brainchild of *Food for Thought*, *Bath Mind*, and *Oasis*. The Hub in Bath already has a thriving Oasis Pantry that provides over 25 tonnes of food each year to households in the local community – equivalent to 58,000 meals in 2022. The 230+ Pantry members pay £3 or £5 a week to access £15-£25 worth of food. It's a lifeline for people living on a low income and makes use of surplus food as well.

As staff and volunteers have got to know Pantry members, the team wanted to create more opportunity for regular users to come together and socialise. Anja Haywood from collaborators *Food for Thought* explains: "The aim was to create a space for people to meet, learn new skills in the kitchen, explore cooking with different ingredients, as well as discussing tips for eating well-balanced healthy meals using the food that is available to them. We focused on recipes where ingredients can be substituted, as well as those that freeze well for batch cooking and reduce food waste – keeping in mind how increases in the cost-of-living are affecting everyone."

"We came up with creative ways of cooking meals using tinned food and frozen food, as well as cooking a three-course meal without the use of the oven. We created some delicious dishes using only a microwave! Throughout the eight weeks, the group's knowledge and willingness to try new things grew, and we were absolutely blown away – as were they – by what they produced. Members contributed their ideas for what they wanted to learn to cook and became more and more adventurous. We made filled savoury pancakes on pancake day, tortilla wraps from scratch for fajitas, and even made our own naan breads to accompany a curry. The penultimate session was an opportunity for members to cook for an upcoming Oasis Living Room session – and they did a smashing job, producing an absolute feast of Turkish food!"

Hub Leader Jo Dolby comments: "We have absolutely loved running these sessions. We made some delicious food together and people came away with a multitude of practical and useful tips and skills. But more than that – shared meals and shared time have created friendship and community that we hope will last beyond any project that people are a part of."

A Manifesto for Hope

Introducing A Manifesto for Hope, a brand-new book from Oasis Founder Steve Chalke. "A lifetime of experience in a remarkable book" – Steve explores ten tried-and-tested principles for transforming the lives of children, young people, and their families.

Steve says: "Many of our government-funding systems are failing the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. At the same time, we are sidelining our greatest asset: local people ... We need a radical reset: one that empowers local charities, grassroots movement, and faith groups in a more imaginative, less bureaucratic, more collaborative approach to community development."

The book draws from the experience of the past four decades of Oasis' work in local communities. Available from all good booksellers – you can also buy your copy direct from our website, where 20% of proceeds will go to Oasis' work!

"This book sets out vital steps for government, civil society and key stakeholders to create integrated care for our young people."

By Tony Blair
Former UK Prime Minister



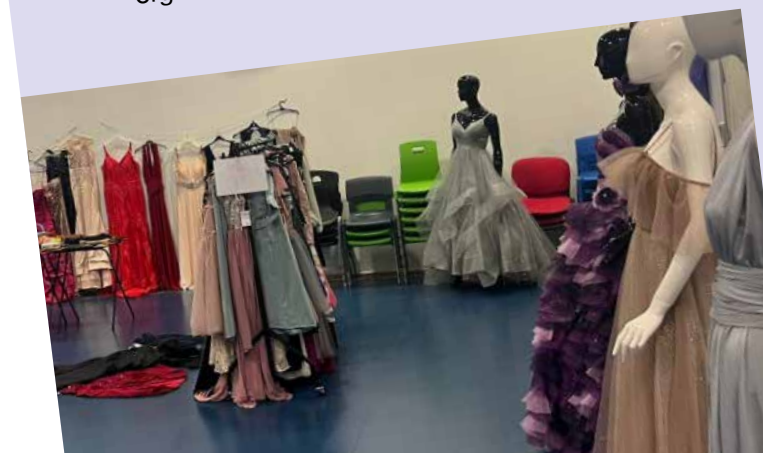
New youth centre for Ashburton Park

Following the tragic death of an Oasis student in Ashburton Park, in Croydon, in December 2021, we were determined to take action to honour him and other young victims of violent crime in the borough, by creating new and positive opportunities for young people in the local community to thrive, flourish, and explore their ideas and aspirations. That vision has come a (big!) step closer with the announcement of a new funding partnership with Oasis, Croydon Council, and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. As part of the successful bid to upgrade Ashburton Park, Oasis is developing a youth centre in the old park lodge, which will be known as 'The 360° Centre'. Not only does the name reflect the wraparound care it will offer – but, in time, it will become the nerve-centre of our new 'Oasis 360 Mentoring' project, providing a 'trusted adult' for every young person at risk of exclusion from mainstream education. As work on the centre begins this autumn, we're looking for volunteers to train as 360 mentors in Croydon – email Joe.Russo@oasisuk.org to find out more.



Waste not

Reducing waste through a sharing economy is a big theme in our local communities – with all sorts of innovative ideas to reduce, reuse, and recycle, from pre-loved uniform sales to prom outfit giveaways, and food projects making use of tonnes of surplus every month. Our latest initiative gives you an opportunity to be involved! We are running a Couture Pop Up Shop in London (at Oasis Hub Waterloo) on 25 October. We're looking for donations of couture or high-end high street items from brands like Zara and Ralph Lauren. Not only will you help reduce textile waste, money raised will be going to fund mental health support for children and young people in our communities. Email Bethan.Jeffs@oasisuk.org to organise a donation.

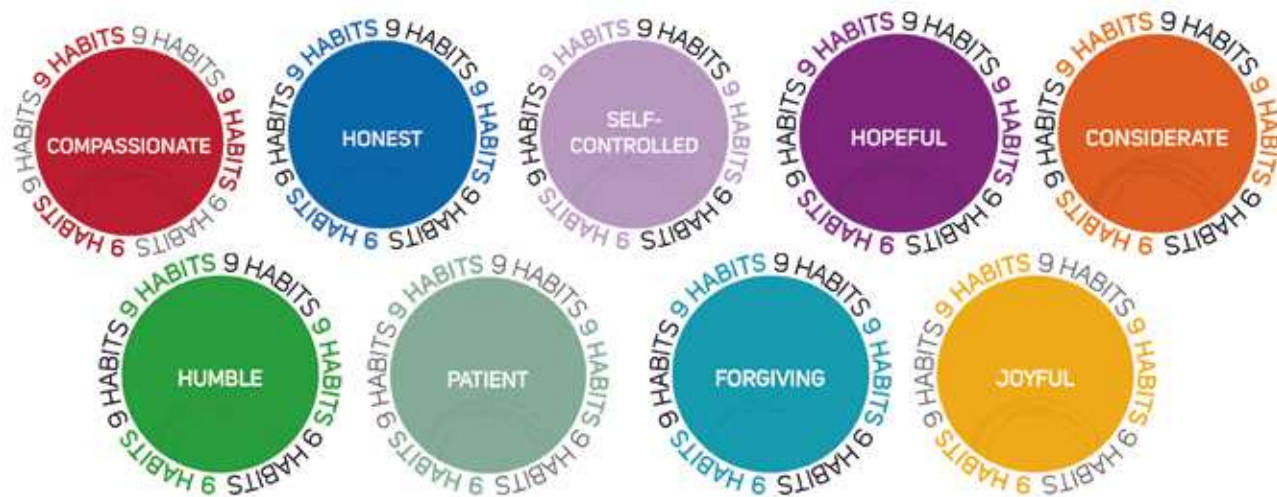


From sheep to soap suds

The latest Oasis Community Hub has opened at Oasis Academy Parkwood in Scunthorpe – and it offers everything from a mini-farm to free use of a washing machine! Oasis Academy Parkwood Principal Tracey Norriss and Business Manager Sarah Norton remember standing on the school playground three years ago, handing out food parcels from Magic Breakfast:

"It's become clear that our community needs help with more than just food – white goods, beds for children, our cycle hub, and adult education are just some of the areas where we're now able to offer support. We hope to continue growing and are really excited to see how this hub develops. We have a café open to all as well – a place for people to meet and build community together."





Force of habit

The Oasis Ethos is at the heart of everything we do. In each issue of Circle, Jill Rowe, our Ethos and Formation Director, takes us through the Oasis 9 Habits. This issue: **'Being self-controlled'**

There was an error with a recent electricity bill and so I had to call the company. Knowing I had to make that call was infuriating. There I was on the phone, hold music accompanying my waiting, occasionally interrupted by a voice announcing it may be quicker to use the online chatbot. Self-control was not winning the day. Frustration levels were rising and the longer I was on hold, the more I prepared my speech for the poor soul who would get the brunt of my frustration.

Just as I was thinking about what my first words would be, a gentle voice at the other end said, 'Good morning! How can I help you?'

Thank God I paused. I took a breath and somehow managed to find the way of self-control rather than being self-possessed. In that moment I decided to do the right thing – treating the person on the other end of the phone as worthy of my respect, an image bearer of the Divine. He hadn't done me wrong. It was the system that had gone wrong. I tried to picture who I was talking to. Maybe he'd had a difficult morning too.

"Thank you for asking" – I said, "I'm fine. I hope you are too. I need your help with something today."

Being self-controlled is not easy. But it is good, and it frees us of anger. This in turn transforms how we see those we interact with. It invites us to 'look again' and truly see those before us.

In Oasis, when we talk about the 9 Habits, we're leaning on the writings of St Paul who described a way of being human that was radical and life-bringing for all people – the way of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, tenderness, faithfulness, and self-control. The reality is that the more we seek to live this way, the more freeing it becomes.

By the way, I finished that phone-call by telling the guy I'd been speaking to that I hoped he had a good day. I meant it. He seemed to really appreciate it.



Jill Rowe
Oasis Ethos & Formation
Director



Listen to Jill and Steve Chalke on our new regular podcast, 'Different'. Find out more: linktr.ee/oasisuk



Read more about the Oasis 9 Habits www.oasisuk.org