

Amber

transforming lives



get set!

The twice yearly newsletter from Amber - Spring 2011



Everyone is facing hard times ahead and not least charities, including Amber. We have already seen cuts to some statutory income and it is getting harder to secure the much needed funding that allows us to continue to offer the service we do. However, it's not all doom and gloom. There are opportunities that are appearing that Amber can and will try to tap into.

A new scheme to the UK (although a similar initiative has been working successfully in the United States) is the Social Impact Bond, which is currently being piloted in Peterborough. In simple terms this involves companies, individuals or

grant making trusts "investing" in an organisation such as Amber. The government then pays a "dividend", or "percentage", of the savings that the organisation has made to society. It is very early days and the system has not been fully finalised but it is something we are investigating as we believe Amber is ideally placed for such a scheme considering the tens of millions of pounds in crime and associated costs that Amber has saved the community over the years. With Amber's track record, I am confident that if we can secure an agreement with the government to pay on results, an investment in Amber would be a sound one.

That's why I am very grateful to The Minister for Prisons and Probation, Crispin Blunt MP, for visiting Amber recently. Mr Blunt's department is responsible for the payments by results pilot at Peterborough prison and his visit gave us the opportunity to discuss Ministry of Justice policy and how Amber might fit into it and access funding.

I am also very grateful to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Iain Duncan Smith MP, for his visit just the week before. Mr Duncan Smith's visit similarly gave us the chance to discuss policy and potential funding opportunities.

Unfortunately whilst local government cuts are happening now, most of the new government funding programmes are still being formulated, creating a period of uncertainty and lack of immediate access to new sources of funding from the statutory sector. Our advantage is that we have a track record, we have a good reputation and we are well known for taking people at Amber who other organisations will not take, so I am confident that we will access the required funding to maintain our service, but as with most organisations, we are trimming our sails a bit to ride the storm.

Charles Drew, Chief Executive



Secretary of States visit Amber

Iain Duncan Smith MP, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, visited Ashley Court to see at first hand how Amber is helping to address tough social issues. Mr Duncan Smith spent a lot of time talking to Amberteers as he was shown around the centre. As a keen football supporter he was very interested in hearing how Davy Killen came to take part in the Homeless World Cup football trials.

After lunch there was a 'Question Time' session in which Amberteers asked Mr Duncan Smith a number of questions relating to both the UK

and abroad, from changes to the Disability Living Allowance and any plans for more houses in rural areas, to the situation in Japan and Libya.

"I very much enjoyed visiting the Amber project in Devon. Amber's work is highly effective in helping young people in difficulty take control of their lives and get work ready. Our welfare reforms are all about helping people out of poverty

and dependency and into work, and I am delighted to see this ethos put into practice by such a strong voluntary sector organisation."

Iain Duncan Smith MP, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

The following week saw a visit by the **Minister for Prisons and Probation, Crispin Blunt MP**, to Farm Place. Mr Blunt spent the morning looking around the centre and speaking to the Amberteers. He was very interested in what had gone wrong in their lives and what in their opinion could have been done to stop them going down that route.



"No-one can fail to be impressed by the support being given at Amber to young people who are emerging from crime and addiction. The test of our rehabilitation revolution will be in there being many more places like Amber to address today's high re-offending rate."

Crispin Blunt MP, Minister for Prisons and Probation





A game of two halves – Amber v Trowbridge Police

It was Jason Spooner's idea – a football match between Bythesea Lodge Amberteers and the local police. Jason spoke to local beat officer PC Paul Woolley who thought it was a great idea and soon Jason was booking a pitch for the big game.

The whole of Bythesea Lodge got caught up in the momentum and all had a part to play in either organising, training or playing. Bythesea Lodge were on a roll and led

the match in the first half. It was 5-3 what could go wrong? Valuable police substitutions and injury to some Amber key players - this was to tell the tale of the second half! Despite Ben Williams having an outstanding game in goal, which included saving a penalty, the police won. Final score 5-10. Everyone played in good spirits - but a re-match is being planned!

Gareth Evans, Team Leader, Bythesea Lodge

Culture day in Bristol

The Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol was well worth a visit. When a group of us went the vast white rooms were housing interactive art installations to do with light and sound. One room had masses of switches and a set of instructions to solve a code – if you solved the code a poem would appear downstairs on a big screen; we didn't manage to solve the code though!

After that we went to the Bristol Old Vic theatre and watched a piece of theatre by 'Animo' which was really



cool as it was all improvised, using a range of everyday material objects. The audience shouted out ideas for locations and characters and the actors used these ideas to construct their piece of theatre. We ended up with three very strange yokels from Somerset with hilarious consequences as they went about their journey through the countryside. Another improvisation involved several rolls of cellotape unraveled and hung across the theatre space to represent security lasers, into which was introduced a bank robber mouse...such an entertaining day and something we won't forget for a long time!

Stevio Hartman, Amberteer, Bythesea Lodge



Through to the national trials!

In February four Amberteers, Davy Killen, Jed Shaddick, Phil Northmore and Aaron Sumner, were invited to the south west trials in Exeter for the Homeless World Cup British team 2011. A scout had spotted them taking part in a football tournament in Exeter with their team leader Karl.

We were all very proud when Davy was invited to the next stage at Old Trafford to train at the Manchester United Foundation training ground "The Cliff" and to take part in the national trials. This was an awesome achievement and a huge compliment to Davy's attitude and ability to play good football. If successful Davy will be travelling to Paris in August – everyone at Ashley Court wishes you all the best Davy.

Geoff James, Centre Manager, Ashley Court

A Spooky Day Out

As we entered The London Dungeons we were plunged into a gruesome world of death, torture and terror. We came across Jack The Ripper, Sweeny Todd and his cut throat razor, a medieval torture chamber and London during the plague...The lights went off and as they came back on we found ourselves in an operating theatre with blood-splattered walls and an array of saws, chisels and other unpleasant looking implements. A blood-soaked sheet partially covered an unseen human corpse...suddenly a young woman appeared, put her hand under the sheet and yanked out a

beating heart. We screamed and the lights went out. Around the next corner we came face to face with Medieval Inquisitors who accused and condemned one of our team, Chris, to be burnt at the stake. They read out a list of charges and tied him up to meet his fate. We cheered and left him to it!! As the lights dimmed flames roared and it all went black...as the light slowly returned a burnt corpse with an eye hanging out, appeared before us. It had been good knowing Chris...it had been a great Spooky Day Out!

Leon Steer, Amberteer, Bythesea Lodge



Teamwork, Leadership and Communication

The TLC course at Bythesea Lodge is giving Amberteers experience of working in teams, leadership and developing communication skills. In the last few months 27 Amberteers have put their new found attributes to the test over 5 days of command tasks, navigation and problem solving. They have organised and planned a day trip and everything that went with it including transport, health and safety, staff, food and water, journey times, fuel etc. The course culminated in a day of orienteering where the team had to complete a course and gather up to 50 checkpoints in less than 4 hours.

Steve Upton, Assistant Manager, Bythesea Lodge

Eddie Jordan 'Rocks' in Covent Garden and at 'Amber Rocks'!

Always keen to push the boundaries, Eddie Jordan decided to do something new on the streets of London in aid of Amber. He joined young recording artist and regular Covent Garden busking favourite Luca on the West Piazza in November. A large crowd formed to watch, many of whom had learnt of the session from the

number of 'tweets' posted by Jake Humphrey the previous week. By the end of the 40 minute session over £709 had been collected for Amber.



Following this one-off performance, Eddie, together with Jake Humphrey, hosted Amber's third 'Amber Rocks' event which this year was held at Kensington Roof Gardens and raised an amazing £125,000. Yet again it was an unforgettable evening, with guests, including Simon le Bon and Nick Mason, enjoying music from Eddie and his band The Robbers, Graffiti Classics, Rick Parfitt Junior and Finbar Furey.

And then...

When the stars came to Amber!

Eddie and friends, including Mike Rutherford of 'Genesis' and 'Mike and the Mechanics' fame caused a flurry of activity and excitement when they visited Farm Place in February.

Elkie Brooks in concert in aid of Amber

Saturday 16th July at Knepp Castle, West Grinstead, Sussex. For tickets (£25) call 07769714661 or email L2PCP@aol.com



After a guided tour by Amberteers, Eddie gave a motivational and inspiring talk, along with input from Mike and the other guests, which led to many questions from Amberteers keen to know about life in Formula 1, what it's like to play in 2 of the biggest bands in the world and how they got to be such successes.

After a fantastic meal prepared by the Amberteers, the evening ended with an enthusiastic sing-a-long led by Eddie and Luca – reminiscent of their busking in Covent Garden!

It was wonderful to be able to welcome Eddie and guests to Farm Place after the fantastic sum of money they helped raise for the centre with the Amber Rocks events.

A very big thank you!

Visits by the Lord Lieutenant and High Sheriffs

The Lord Lieutenant of Surrey, Mrs Sarah Goad, and the High Sheriff of Surrey for 2010, Mr Robert Douglas CBE, spent a day at Farm Place talking to the Amberteers and seeing some of the work that they do at the centre, from art work to vegetable growing.

"We found the atmosphere at Amber extraordinary, providing a wonderful place for ex-offenders to get their lives back together again. The Amber 'magic' to which the residents themselves often referred, seems to offer tranquillity and serenity allowing the residents time to gather their thoughts, order their lives and prepare for a new future."

...and a few months later...

The incoming High Sheriff of Surrey for 2011, Professor Michael Joy OBE, and 18 Surrey magistrates visited



the visitors had the chance to talk to Amberteers about their experiences as they were shown

Farm Place to see what Amber does and how it helps young people caught up in the criminal justice

system. The visitors had the chance to talk to Amberteers about their experiences as they were shown around the centre before a presentation by the Chief Executive and a great lunch prepared by the Amberteers. The overwhelming comment at the end of the visit was "inspirational".



Picture this

Valentines Morning and I am going into my daughter's school (much too her embarrassment) St Johns Marlborough with 2 very nervous Amberteers to talk to them about Drugs and Alcohol.

We have 2 assemblies of 500 children each – aged 11 to 16 – how scary is that! After a short introduction on Amber, Jason and Amy take to the stage to tell their life stories and how they got involved with drugs and alcohol and what they plan to do now. I have never experienced such silence as they spoke. You could have heard a pin drop.

It was so effective. I know of a few people in the school that have taken the words spoken to heart and have stopped their previous habits. Amber also received £1,400 so an amazing result all round and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Amy and Jason for having the nerve to stand and tell their stories. Well done!!!

Katie Fairfax-Ross, Practical Training Regional Manager

Amber is the Hilton Hotel Swindon's charity of the year. Visit www.amberweb.org 'events' page for details of their fundraising events and how to support them. Or call 01793 881777 (option 1).



Amberteer takes to the stage

Pokeynose was this year's village pantomime, a spinoff of Pinocchio. Once again Amberteers painted the scenery, which was fantastic, but this year an Amberteer was invited to take a part as well – and that was me!

My role was to be one of the toys in the shop, a 'Major'. I was a bit nervous as I hadn't really done anything like it before, but it was really nice to be within the community and working with such

friendly people. On the first night I was worried about forgetting my lines, and nervous at the thought of Amber staff and Amberteers coming to watch me, but it all went really well and in fact was such a great success that it was a sell out on all 3 nights!

I clearly had such a good time because although I have since left Amber and am at college, I'm now helping with...

...'Amber Presents the Chicken Bomb'

Amberteers including me have been working with MA Applied drama students at Exeter University and have devised a play called "Amber Presents the Chicken Bomb". It's based on Koreans using a chicken that lays eggs which when cooked release a gas that turns people into chickens - and then the chicken goes missing and its the soldiers job to find it to get the cure!

The play was written by Amberteer Phillip Northmore and stars Phillip, Jed Shaddick, Aaron Sumner, Beau Taylor and me and is being directed by the drama students Sarah, Rachael and Lauren. We're performing the play at the University and I think that it will be a great laugh for everyone who comes to see it and really fun for us to do.

Andy Parr, Amberteer success, Ashley Court



Volunteers at Amber

"Maintaining the Mary Rose is part of our volunteer work at Bythesea Lodge. We enjoy working on the boat but we also enjoy getting to know the Amberteers, coming alongside them and spending time with them. We are becoming part of the team at Amber getting to know the Team Leaders and staff and working together, helping the young people to turn their lives around and have a fresh start. For us it is all about showing the love of Jesus Christ in a practical everyday way, serving where we can be of most help."

Reverends Barrie and Dorothy Dearlove, volunteers

Demi Chef with Marriot hotels

Nic left us in 2001 to pursue a career in catering and recently came back and cooked a superb meal for some of the staff and trustees. Nic had been a street homeless addict beaten up and left for dead before he came to us but since Amber he has never looked back. He is a highly respected employee at a Marriott hotel where he has worked for 8 years and is currently Demi Chef. He is also a very proud husband and father to two young children!

Nic, Amber success



Working in retail

Joe and his Mum had never got on and at 17 Joe found himself homeless and sofa surfing. He was bullied at work and ended up in prison for burglary. Joe heard about Amber in prison and says it was his life saver. It gave him back his confidence and self-esteem and the opportunity to discover new things. After a week volunteering at a combined study centre and farm in Somerset, Joe was offered a 3 month placement which was extended by a month as Joe had done so well and to coincide with the start of his new full time job at a Matalan store.

Joe, Amber success



Working in an office

In recent few years I've built up a criminal record so lengthy it's horrible to think about. It all began from mixing with the wrong crowd and the more trouble I got into the more that came my way. I was in prison 5 times, spending over 3 years behind the door. It got to the point armed police were raiding our house searching for firearms and I knew it all had to stop.

I was on remand facing a 3 year jail sentence and my Mum knew that if I stayed in jail for that length of time I would always be stuck in the system. She wrote to people asking for help and that's when she found Amber! She wrote explaining my situation and at the court hearing Amber's Chief Executive came and explained Amber to the Judge who decided to send me to Amber rather than prison...but this was my one and only chance, and if I messed up I was facing 3 years behind bars.

Amber gave me hope, it gave me a chance and if it hadn't been there for me I would be in

Amber successes

a prison cell just waiting to start the cycle again...

I would have never changed.

Since leaving Amber I have missed the people I left behind but for the first time in a long time I am working and receiving honest pay! I am working in an office but I'm keen to get involved with mentoring people in prisons so I can show them that there is a way out of crime and prison, and they don't have to be stuck on that roundabout anymore. Thanks to Amber I'm living proof!

James, Amber success



Studying practical electrical operations

I began drinking to help me cope with the horrors of my life. By 17 I was an alcoholic drinking in excess of 3 bottles of vodka a day but managing to hold down a job. For over a year I was in and out of hospital. I was given 3 months to live if I carried on drinking like that which is when I heard about Amber.

I'd been addicted to alcohol for so long I didn't know how to change or even if I wanted to. After months of hard work at Amber I'd changed a lot – but not enough. I left thinking I'd be OK but deep down alcohol still ran my life and it wasn't long before I was back on the drink. Within 2 months I'd been in hospital 4 times before they kept me in and detoxed me. Thankfully Amber took me back and then I knew what I needed and wanted to do, it was just bringing myself to do it and own it for myself.

I knew it wasn't going to be easy but this time something was different. I had the determination and with the help of the staff at Amber, Addaction, and most of all myself, I am now beating my addiction.



I did so much with my time at Ashley Court, such as helping at an orphanage in Bulgaria. I've gained qualifications and so much confidence that I even took part in the village pantomime this year and am helping with the play at Exeter University.

I am now at college studying Level 2 in practical electrical operations and also facilitate for Addaction to help others. I aim to get everything I can out of life and feel with my drive I will achieve what I set out to achieve – and that's all down to Amber!

Andy Parr, Amber success

Working for TalkTalk

Sometimes life doesn't work because we don't have direction and we wander aimlessly not knowing what we want to do. Wandering in the dark took me to some darker places than I could ever imagine but in the end Amber became my light. I was due to leave prison and I was scared, scared I would leave and everything would be the same. And it was. Same people, same places, different mind set. I didn't want the past I wanted the future and Amber gave me the answers. Amber showed me that I don't have to live by my mistakes, I just need to take time and listen and accept life for what it is, turbulent maybe, but full of positivity.

Sam, Amber success now working for TalkTalk



Amber successes



Self employed carpenter

I desperately needed time and space to clear my head and stay away from drugs. Amber let me do that. It gave me time to think about my future and I became fit and healthy for the first time in ages. The staff were great, helping to keep me motivated when I was feeling low, to stay focused and to realise it just isn't worth messing your life up with drugs. I'm now doing carpentry and able to help my Dad in his business, so really feel I have a future to look forward to.

Ben, Amber success



Working on the Railways

Before I went to prison I was using drugs, I was homeless, things just weren't going well in any area of my life. It was a messy life out there but then I went to Amber and found the whole Amber experience really made me think about what I wanted in life, why I wanted it and how. Now I'm working on the railways as a trackman for Network Rail and I'm also doing an asbestos removal course. I'm flat out with work and loving it.

Thanks to Amber I now lead a clean and healthy lifestyle and there is no way on this earth that I could have done it without their help. In fact, if it hadn't been for Amber I'd either be dead or spending the rest of my life in prison through drugs and crime and various things I was getting into. Amber saved my life really.

John, Amber success

Running a leaflet distribution company

An attack led Beth to use alcohol as a coping mechanism and to blot out her traumatic experience. She lost her job and was shunned by her family. Beth felt very alone and the more she drank the more she despised herself. Rehabs didn't work but then she found Amber.

"It was like a big family where you could feel safe, something that I hadn't had for

a long time. Amber gave a sense of belonging back in society again where you were valued. Amber cared and noticed and concentrated on what you could do and not what you couldn't. It was great being an Amberteater and I was proud to be one."

Beth now runs her own leaflet distribution company



Amber successes

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What Am I Here 4?

***What am I here for I asked myself
To work in Tesco and stack a shelf?***

***But that's not for me I'm going to be better
So I'm putting my plans into this letter***

***I want to achieve my goals in life
Maybe one day have kids and a wife***

***To succeed in these things I need to build structure
Commit to what I want and look to the future***

***To become a soldier and battle for Britain
And achieve in the other things that I've written***

***So I came to Amber to make all this possible
Now I'm confident and believe I'm UNSTOPPABLE!***

Jed Shaddick, Amberteer