

THE CIRCLE

SUPPORTER MAGAZINE



AUTUMN 2020



Tackling the crisis in youth mental health

How 'Talk It Out' drop-ins will help

New secure school

Revolution in youth custody

Summer Sessions

You helped us serve up 32,000 meals this summer!

Plus... News • Events • Fundraising updates

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Thank you to our models from Oasis Academy South Bank in London



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Chalke Talk



As I write I've just completed well over a hundred media interviews since Covid-19 hit in March.

But this is not about me looking for fame! It's about Oasis looking for change!

Never let a good crisis go to waste, said Churchill and at Oasis we have been doing our best to bring to public attention through the media, the effects of Covid-19 on the most vulnerable people in our society.

We serve 30,000 children in our Academies, many of which are in areas where 59% of families live below the poverty line. When schools closed, we were concerned about children getting enough to eat. We also felt that for vulnerable children, with difficult home situations, the risk of returning to school was far less than staying at home with no access to online lessons. Oasis became one of the strongest voices calling for a return to school under Covid-compliant conditions.

Summer Sessions

Over the school holidays, we put out a call to our staff and with just three weeks' notice, they created thousands of socially-distanced 'Summer Sessions' activity places in 22 Oasis venues. We proved that there is such a thing as a free lunch because we served up 32,000 meals this summer thanks to your support for our Plate Up appeal.

Our foodbanks and pantries had to close their doors so instead we started delivering parcels to people at home. We teamed with churches and schools and even a central London hotel to cook freezer-ready meals – shepherd's pies by the hundred! We took a thousand calls from people in need on the 'Your Neighbour' phonenumber.

The great thing is the food pantries are going to carry on in the form of social supermarkets (see page 9); our Academies are set to give all our pupils an iPad device so that everyone can work from home; and all our teachers are receiving training in mental health support.

UK's first secure school

Covid-19 is still with us but at Oasis, we're not slowing down. We start the Autumn term with an exciting new project – the UK's first secure school. We're working with the Ministry of Justice on a new vision for a holistic, therapeutic approach to youth justice and resettlement. Care not punishment! It's a milestone moment. We couldn't do this without your support.

Thank you. God bless you. Stay safe!

Children and mental health: bridging the chasm

Even before Covid-19 hit the UK, **12.8% of children aged 5-18** needed help with mental health issues. Now post-lockdown, things are even worse and there's a yawning chasm between what services are available and what children need. With your help, Oasis can start bridging that gap.

Imagine being the parent of a young person who is anxious or self-harming and having to wait months to get an NHS appointment.

This is what Oasis youth workers see regularly among the young people they mentor and support.

'There can be such a long wait for young people to be able to access services, that we often see them ending up in places like A&E because they reach a crisis point,' says Cat Still, Project Co ordinator at Oasis Hadley in North-East London.

'Their parents can often feel scared and helpless too so we aim to work with young people and their families or carers in their own local community to prevent their condition from deteriorating.'

In a January 2020 briefing, the Children's Commissioner, Anne Longfield, warned about the effects of children and teens not receiving mental health support early enough:

'Those who don't get help early on end up getting worse and being excluded from school or sent to residential centres miles away from their friends and family.'

In 2018, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS) were only able to treat a third of the 338,000 children referred to them. Another third went on to long waiting lists and the rest were deemed 'not serious enough' to receive treatment.

"The common story I hear is how mental health issues developed, and very often got worse, before they got any help."

Anne Longfield, Children's Commissioner



Facts & Figures

- 12.8% of 5-15-year-olds now have a mental health problem
- £60 million extra spent on children's mental health 2018-19
- 53 days – average treatment wait time (but up to 2 years in some NHS Trusts)

Source: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/the-state-of-childrens-mental-health-services/

Anxiety after a gang assault

Tyler, aged 15, was referred to Oasis Youth Service (OYS) workers by doctors after an admission to A&E.

He was assaulted by members of a local gang twice last year and dared not leave the house for fear of further violence. Only when his father was able to drive him, did he visit a friend.

He missed six months of school, gained weight and lost all hope for his future.

The OYS team worked with Tyler to rebuild his confidence in gradual steps, first taking short trips out to local parks and then accompanying him on various activities, such as dog walking.

They also supported Tyler and his family in their meetings with the Education Welfare Officer to find a new educational placement where he could feel confident.

A year later, Tyler has just been signed off from OYS. Despite missing so much education, he gained several GCSEs, began eating healthily and attending the gym regularly. He is now at sixth-form college and is keen to forge a career as a nurse or police officer.

**To protect privacy, the photo is a model and the young person's name has been changed*

Talk It Out

Expanding mental health support in our Hubs

To help tackle child mental health issues, we will soon be launching an appeal to expand our current youth mental health provision and set up more 'Talk It Out' drop-in sessions for 5-16 year-olds in as many of our Community Hubs as possible.

'We will offer a safe and friendly space for young people offering workshops, art and craft-based therapy,' says Janet Berry, Director, Oasis Community Partnerships. 'Somewhere quiet to think or simply have a cuppa and chat with a person who will listen and try to help work things out.'

'Young people tell us they are scared. Others say they have no future.'

Cat Still, Project Co ordinator

Oasis already have a tried and tested mental health support structure in place in many Oasis Community Hubs, all with strong links to our Academies serving 30,000 children.

'Young people tell us they are scared,' says Cat Still, 'others say they have no future. The thing is they don't always want to talk formally to professionals. Somewhere like a 'Talk It Out' session is an ideal place to talk privately with a trusted youth worker and ensure young people get the help they need as early as possible.'



Don't smother me!

Don't keep asking 'are you OK?' Ask me once, then let it go. I'll raise the issue when I'm ready. Don't smother me

I just bottle it up

My Mum's generation didn't talk about mental health. We all know there's a problem, but we pretend it isn't there. I just get on with my gaming.



We need someone we can trust

When I'm feeling really anxious, I talk to my youth worker. They listen to me and help me work through solutions.

What we did this Summer

Thanks to your support, our Community Hubs were able to keep going and run Summer Session activities for young people in 22 locations, serve up 32,000 free lunches, run foodbanks and pantries and support families in need.



Little Mermaids show what they made in a craft workshop at a Summer School Session in Oasis Hub Ashburton Park



Tie dye workshop at Summer Sessions



Art workshop at Oasis Hub Grimsby Summer Sessions

The Bike Library brought bikes for 10 families on low incomes at Oasis Hub Wintringham in Grimsby



Aisling Bennett, Hub Leader in North Bristol delivered free data devices to families not able to access lessons online



Aldi were one of the many supermarkets who generously supported our food programmes with free produce over the Summer



Just one of the scores of Hub volunteers who delivered food parcels in lockdown.



Park Plaza Hotel lent us a huge kitchen and storage area in London where we cooked over 20,000 meals for delivery



Children signing in to Covid-compliant Summer Sessions in Oldham



Many of our staff like Community Manager, Felicity, delivered their usual family support sessions online



Steve Chalke being outskipped by a school pupil at a Summer Sessions sports activity in London.

News from Oasis

Shinnel is signed up



Oasis teacher, Shinnel Paris, is heading up a team of tutors delivering a new education programme for young footballers in a joint venture between Oasis and Crystal Palace FC Academy.

Shinnel will be supporting young footballers in Years 8-11 to fulfil their potential both on and off the pitch.

'Our goal is to set a high standard of achievement academically as well as in football,' says Shinnel, who was previously Head of Sixth form at Oasis Academy Hadley. 'We'll also emphasise character development to help our young players cope with the highs and lows of the sport and of life in general.'

Oasis India fashion social enterprise



Oasis India has launched a fashion social enterprise called 'Madras Fuse' to create employment for women rescued from trafficking in Mumbai and from the disadvantaged communities in Chennai.

Women who were afraid to leave home are now working in good conditions for fair wages. The online company has a strong emphasis on ethical fashion, sourcing materials locally. See their beautiful designs at www.madrasfuse.in

Hedgehog therapy

Nigel the hedgehog is doing a great job at Oasis Farm Southampton helping children who are not in school at the moment.

'Lots of children have not gone back to school yet,' says Education Officer Rachel Thomson, 'those with learning disabilities

or with anxiety issues, for example. They can come to the farm and have a 1-2-1 session with me. We chat while we care for the animals and it's amazing what a calming effect the farm has.'



BAME pupils need BAME role models

'What we cannot imagine, cannot come into being' is the theme for the third 'Break The Cycle' online conference Saturday, 7 November 2020 from 10am-1pm

Key Speakers are Marvin Rees, Mayor of Bristol, and Prof Kevin Fender, Public Health Regional Director for London.

Tickets are free via Eventbrite <https://bit.ly/breakthecycleNov2020>

Free bikes for families

Ten families can now enjoy family cycle rides thanks to Oasis Hub Wintringham and the Bike Library.

R-evolution brought 32 bikes along to Oasis Hub Wintringham over the summer together with helmets, locks, lights, stabilisers and baby seats.

'One Mum and her four children who are living in refugee accommodation were delighted to all get bikes,' says Hub Leader Michelle Donner, 'they can now all go out together and see more. Thanks to our links with local schools, we know which families can really benefit from a scheme like this.'

Youth workers for police custody suite

Youth workers from Oasis Hub Hadley in North London will be providing a new support service for young people aged 10-18 based in the Metropolitan Police's Wood Green police custody suite.

The initiative, called 'Operation Alliance' has been formed through a partnership between the Met and charities Oasis Hub Hadley and The Children's Society, as well as Haringey and Enfield Council Children Services. It will see four youth outreach workers embedded in Wood Green Custody Suite until March 2021, with the aim of continuing this programme longer-term.

'We will meet with young people at the point of arrest,' says Hub Leader, Sam Ellis, 'and then again when they are released to help them find positive ways forward and to access helpful services in the community.'

'The aim of the pilot is to help young people start their journey towards positive choices, breaking the cycle of violence and offending.'



A new kind of foodbank



When a friend of Hub Leader Megan Tucker told her she was glad to get food parcels in lockdown but had eaten lasagne three times in one week, Megan got the idea for the FAB Pantry – a new kind of social supermarket

The FAB Pantry launched this Autumn on a trial basis in a former school caretaker's bungalow at Oasis Hub Foundry and Boulton in Birmingham.

'Local families pay a small fee each week and in return, get at least 10 quality items, including fresh and frozen produce, toiletries and store cupboard staples,' says Megan, 'it's a huge saving'.

www.yourlocalpantry.co.uk

Supporting homeless post-Covid

Oasis Community Housing has set up a Re-settlement Team delivering 7-day-a-week support to the hundreds of people they temporarily housed under the Government's 'Everyone In' scheme.

The team is also maintaining a lifeline to those evicted from temporary accommodation and others too frightened to even take up the offer - including one woman who was living in her car having fled domestic abuse. Some 15,000 rough sleepers were moved into temporary accommodation at the height of the Covid-19 emergency.

'We adapted quickly to ensure that the people placed in hotels in our locality were provided with support,' said Phil Conn, Director of Programmes. 'This is because we're firm believers that accommodation is only one element in the solution to homelessness; it is not the complete solution.'





Oasis Restore: A youth justice revolution

Oasis is working with the Ministry of Justice to create the UK's first secure school, a replacement for youth jail, in the biggest move forward in youth justice in living memory.

Oasis has been appointed to run a new kind of provision to care for children aged 12-17 years held in youth custody.

The secure school will be called Oasis Restore and is due to open in late 2022 in an extensively refurbished centre in Kent. We are working with the government, NHS England and a range of cross-sector partners to create a place of care where every child is given an opportunity to thrive.

The current situation

While fewer children are now entering youth custody than ever before, those who are detained are more vulnerable, have complex needs and behavioural challenges.

'We want to focus on restoration,' says Steve Chalke, 'many of our students will have lived through trauma and loss and we want to address some of the consequences of those experiences by providing therapeutic, bespoke support and pathways for successful transition onwards.

Our work will be psychologically informed which means we will be guided and supported by theories that help us understand how the human brain develops, and what effect experiences of trauma and threat have on children's development.

What is strong, not what is wrong

The majority of our students will not have enjoyed the traditional classroom setting, so our goal is to tap into their curiosity and talents to develop skills for life and learning while providing them with training or qualifications in areas in which they have an interest. We want to focus on what is strong, not what has gone wrong.

As well as an ambitious education offer, Oasis Restore will provide our students with:

- A safe, holistic environment with inter-disciplinary care
- A therapeutic model of care with a growth mind-set
- Pathways for transition into the community from day one

Oasis believes an integrated therapeutic model of care, education and health is key to unlocking the potential of vulnerable children in custody and empowering them to live positive, productive lives as active members of their communities.

70% drop in children in youth custody

69% No. of children in youth custody who reoffend in first year of release

£76k min. cost of child in custody (2016-17)

Fundraising update

Oasis would like to welcome Sport & Motion on-board as a new corporate partner. The London based company is supporting our Plate Up campaign.

'No child should be going hungry during the school holidays or otherwise,' says Managing Director Colin Nell.

'So when we saw the massive effort Oasis is making to respond to this crisis, we knew it was something we wanted to partner with them for.'



Here's your chance to get involved

Royal Parks Half Marathon

We have three spaces left for this popular event set among beautiful scenery.

Date: Sunday, 11 April 2021

Distance: 13.1 miles

Registration: £40

Minimum Commitment: £375

Vitality Big Half, London

Ideal if you miss out on a place for the Royal Parks Half!

Date: Sunday, 25 April 2021

Registration: £40

Commitment: £250

For information about events contact diana.steele@oasisuk.org

Super Supporters

Meals & More have been a committed partner of Oasis since 2019, donating over £10,000 to our Plate Up programmes to date.

It's not surprising as the two organisations have the same aim - to ensure children who live with poverty get healthy nutrition and educational activities in the school holidays.

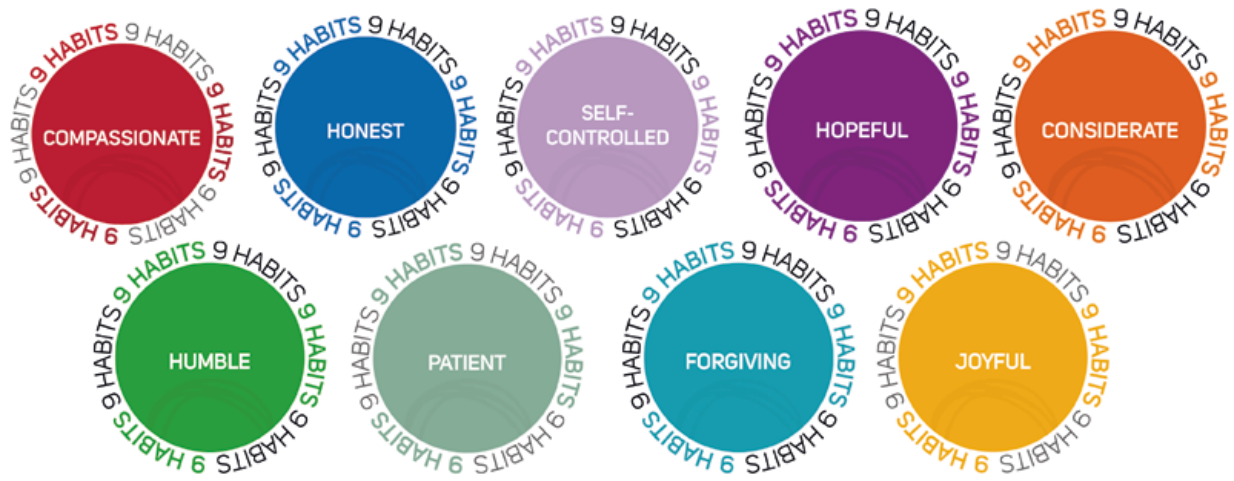
Meals & More is a charity founded by Brakes Foodservice, a major food and distribution company supplying the catering industry in the UK.

'We prefer to work in partnership with organisations like Oasis,' explains Operations Director, Peter McGrath, (pictured right), 'then we can work together to improve life chances and contribute to happier, healthier children and families.

Every child matters and deserves to have a good start in life not just at school but throughout the year.'

Meals & More
Happier. Healthier Children





Force of habit



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

It happens to all of us at some point - a friend or family member or someone at work does something that upsets or hurts us. How we respond makes a world of difference. We're faced with a choice - to forgive or not.

Not forgiving can escalate fast. Someone hurts us, we feel wounded and before long, we've turned our woundedness into a grudge that starts to fester. It has a toxicity that spreads and ends up driving our behaviour as we seek revenge or an opportunity for pay back, like for like - an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth!

However this desire for revenge, this lack of forgiveness, can end up causing us more hurt and pain. It can feel like we're carrying a heavy load.

It's exhausting and it's a joy stealer. It impacts us physiologically, emotionally, and relationally too.

There's a rumour that forgiving is about forgetting. But forgetting just isn't possible. Instead it is about letting go. To forgive isn't saying that what hurt us didn't happen or doesn't matter. It doesn't mean denying the need for fairness or people being held accountable for their actions. But to forgive is to refuse to allow what has hurt us to determine who we are, how we are or to shape our future. It's choosing to be free.

When we do this, when we let go, the heavy weight of unforgiveness is lifted. Hatred and retaliation are taken out of circulation.

Like all of the other 9 Habits, this practice of being forgiving brings benefits to our personal health and wellbeing. Evidence highlights how it can lower blood pressure and reduce stress. Relationships become stronger, anger is managed in a positive way, and we experience a greater sense of peace and purpose.

But these benefits don't stop there! What is good for us ends up having a positive impact on others too. Our practice of being forgiving changes the way we relate to one another. It's a powerful, transformative force for good. Imagine, just for a moment, if every home, school, workplace, church, community, even society, was characterised by being forgiving.

Now that is worth working for. And it's a habit worth practising.

 **oasis**