



Yellow Ribbon

NEWSLETTER

WELCOME to what we hope will be the first of a regular series of newsletters. We hope that you will find them helpful and encouraging and that you will be able to use

them as a basis for prayer and information. Yellow Ribbon

has emerged from the recent pandemic with a new focus and a new team. Our staff team is a balance of lived experience and professional expertise. We have worked hard to build a strong sense of community both to enable the team to work well together and to provide a stable and healthy community life for our clients. The community is built on our spiritual values of peace, accountability and honesty, and is underpinned by Yellow Ribbon's foundation of Christian faith.



Pauline Mack

ABOUT YELLOW RIBBON

Established in 2013, Yellow Ribbon is a Community Chaplaincy charity which provides support for men on release from prison, providing a vital bridge to effective life in the community. We also work with people who present with complex needs in the community, including mental health, addictions and homelessness. At the heart of our work is the provision of supported accommodation across Telford, Stafford, Walsall and Shrewsbury.

EVIDENCE SHOWS THAT THERE IS A LINK BETWEEN HOMELESSNESS AND REOFFENDING; PRISON LEAVERS WITHOUT SETTLED ACCOMMODATION ARE 50 PER CENT MORE LIKELY TO REOFFEND.

Lord Wolfson, 19th January 2022

We believe that forgiveness and reconciliation are key to helping people back into society. We befriend, assist, challenge and change behaviour that may have led to offending.

We offer a through-the-gate service, meeting potential clients in prison, where they are interviewed and offered one-to-one mentoring and support as they prepare for release. Through the provision of secure accommodation, one-to-one mentoring, and engagement in purposeful courses and programmes, we hope to address concerns and to help clients begin their path to recovery and progress to make a positive contribution to the communities in which they live.

Yellow Ribbon's work is currently funded through grant making bodies and through donations. We very much appreciate the support we receive and welcome contributions from new partnerships, faith communities and individuals.

CLIENT STORIES



VICTOR HUTCHINGS

Victor joined Yellow Ribbon in February. He had been struggling with depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. Victor's relationship had ended, and he was homeless and in pain. Victor attempted suicide but was found by an elderly gentleman who called for an ambulance. Consequently, Victor spent three and half weeks in the hospital recovering. After being discharged from hospital, Victor contacted Yellow Ribbon. Victor describes the encounter with Yellow Ribbon as “a blessing”. In the Yellow Ribbon office Victor met another client, Lee Fisher, who invited him to come to church. Victor explained “I was an atheist but went to church with them.”

During the service, Yellow Ribbon staff prayed for Victor, and he recalled that he “felt the love of God” and “was emotional and felt light after church”. Subsequently Victor has been baptised and has become very active at the

Telford Minster Church where he is pleased to serve as part of the Welcome team and assists in the leadership of a fitness and wellbeing club for young people.

Victor engaged with the Building Better Opportunities project and is currently studying for both Mental Health Level 3 and Counselling Level 3 courses with Telford College. He participates in the ‘Imagine’ life skills group every Wednesday at Yellow Ribbon and the Music therapy group on a Thursday. What might the future hold for Victor? He would like to study Level 4 in Mental Health and work as a mental health professional or paramedic. He wants to continue engaging with the Church, particularly in their work with vulnerable people and helping those seeking a relationship with God. Personally, he would love to see his children and rebuild his relationship with them.

LEE FISHER

Lee first heard of Yellow Ribbon whilst in Stoke Heath Prison. He met with Chaplain Mark in the Prison Chapel and came to Telford when he was released on the 13th of January 2022. Lee had been active in Chapel life during his life in prison and had regularly read his Bible and prayed. In the past Lee had spent time living with Betel. In prison his faith became really important to him and despite his struggles he now says that he thanks God for his life. Lee was baptised whilst with Yellow Ribbon and now goes to church every Sunday, attending a Bible study every Monday. He has found a passion for gardening, saying it helps him to, “keep safe and have a clean mind... better get busy living than get busy dying!”



Recently he has been working hard volunteering at Meeting Point House, re-establishing and replanting the plant beds outside the Yellow Ribbon office. His greatest hope is to reconnect with his children and keep moving forward in his recovery.

STAFF STORIES



ROY BURLEY SUPPORT WORKER

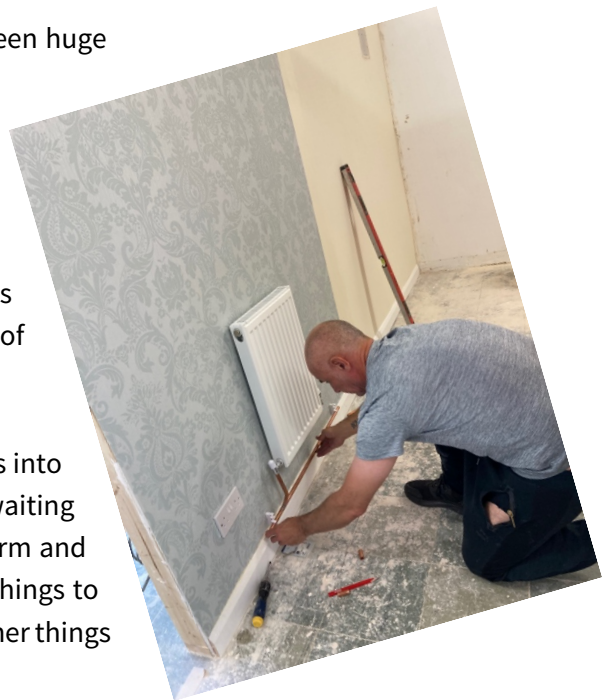
Over the years I have come to realise that those who are in most pain or emotionally hurt often seem to be the ones ready for change. The therapeutic work done in Yellow Ribbon seems to be able to bring change in their lives. The reason for that is that in Yellow Ribbon there are no judgments about what people may have done. There is a complete acceptance of them as a person. There is empathy and understanding as to why our clients are the way they have been. Together we are fighting addiction and moving toward discovering their true identity.

The future of Yellow Ribbon is about helping these guys to live to their full potential and helping each other to grow and give back to the community. What has made us successful is the unity of the team, sharing values and working together with humility and hope.

RITA WILKINSON PROPERTY AND OFFICE MANAGER

I have been with Yellow Ribbon since the beginning and have seen huge transformations in people's lives. Transformations not only with clients but also with our staff team. We are a very strong united team working and praying together to bring about change. I have seen men who have been very broken, mentally and physically, gradually being built up into strong men who have regained confidence, motivation and trust. This journey has been miraculous and life changing. This is the reason I get out of bed every morning.

We have invested much energy and effort to make our properties into welcoming homes. Our beds are made up on arrival, ready and waiting for a good night's sleep, safe in the knowledge that they are warm and secure. We then provide support to help enable all the regular things to be done, setting up Universal Credit, Debt Support, and all the other things that guys have massive hurdles with when coming out of prison.



One of our younger lads said it took just a month with YR to make life changing behaviours. He now gets up every morning, gets himself washed and dressed, has breakfast and will tidy up his room etc. These were things that never happened previously as he was in a fog of cannabis, staying in a darkened room all day and night, playing his Xbox. When we met him, he was dirty looking, terrified of interaction and ashamed. Now he is bright, bubbly and keen to play football, he has some good caring friends and is doing really well. This particular change caused his officer to say that "YR was the gold star of support throughout the various Telford projects".

MIKE HARRIS SUPPORT WORKER

I have been working at Yellow Ribbon for about a year. I found the first few months to be very challenging as I was adjusting to the new set-up and trying to support clients with addiction and other issues. What I love about Yellow Ribbon is how the staff are in complete unity with each other - so much so that it feels like family - and that whilst that environment is being established with the staff so it is also rubbing off on the clients. Many are finding places of belonging, love and acceptance. As this develops, we are seeing many of our clients come into a living relationship with Jesus Christ. One of the highlights for me has been taking the 'Twelve Steps' principles and talking them through with a group of about 15 clients and staff. It has been a real privilege to see them engage and connect with their 'higher power' and start to deal with the deeper issues of life and addiction which many of them face.

MATTHEW 25:36-40

'I NEEDED CLOTHES AND YOU CLOTHED ME, I WAS SICK AND YOU LOOKED AFTER ME, I WAS IN PRISON AND YOU CAME TO VISIT ME.'

THEN THE RIGHTEOUS WILL ANSWER HIM, 'LORD, WHEN DID WE SEE YOU HUNGRY AND FEED YOU, OR THIRSTY AND GIVE YOU SOMETHING TO DRINK? WHEN DID WE SEE YOU A STRANGER AND INVITE YOU IN, OR NEEDING CLOTHES AND CLOTHE YOU? WHEN DID WE SEE YOU SICK OR IN PRISON AND GO TO VISIT YOU?'

THE KING WILL REPLY, 'TRULY I TELL YOU, WHATEVER YOU DID FOR ONE OF THE LEAST OF THESE BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF MINE, YOU DID FOR ME.'

MERCY ANNE SALIFU RESEARCHER AND VOLUNTEER



It has been a great opportunity working at Yellow Ribbon. It has always been my dream to use the knowledge I have acquired in education to help people who are hurting and to do the work of the master. Working with the clients brings me joy and fulfilment. I have developed so much love for God and the things of the Kingdom growing in love and enthusiasm and energy for God. There were occasions where I had to counsel them, pray with them, and encourage them to aspire for more, which most of them have done.

One of my happiest moments was when I prayed with a client and the next day all the charges against him were dropped. Oh! What a great God! At Yellow Ribbon we are all the same and so it is. Together we are fighting for complete DESISTANCE.

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CHARITY NUMBER 1168292



BBO Herefordshire
BBO Shropshire
where will your journey take you?



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"We are proud to launch our #weseeyou campaign to drive greater diversity in workplaces across the UK."