


lambourne end

centre for outdoor learning

inspired to inspire

Stories from Lambourne End Centre



A collection of
extraordinary journeys

Registered Charity Number
1105063

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You?

Do you have a story from Lambourne End Centre to share?

Some names have been changed to protect the young people we work with and the photos do not always depict the person whose story is being told

Alfie's Story

14-year-old Alfie watched as his father was violently murdered. How could any child bear to face something so devastating?

With us, Alfie got to do things at his own pace. He connected with others through animals and found a happier path to pursue with better aspirations.



After witnessing the murder of his father Alfie was unable to cope. He dropped out of school and got caught up in drug taking and other crimes. Nothing within the mainstream system was able to help Alfie, but that was when he found Lambourne End Centre.

Alfie came to us with a cap covering his face and a hoodie over the top. He outright refused to talk to other young people and found talking to staff difficult and uncomfortable. Alfie was only willing to work with those who couldn't speak his language – the animals.

Since he wasn't ready to join a group of his peers, our staff created a work placement style course, just for him. This allowed Alfie to work independently on practical tasks which he excelled at. This low-pressure environment gave Alfie time to just be a teenager and helped his confidence to grow.

Around the animals, particularly the chickens, Alfie was able to relax. Working with the animals led to conversations with other people and, slowly, the hood and cap were replaced by a smile.

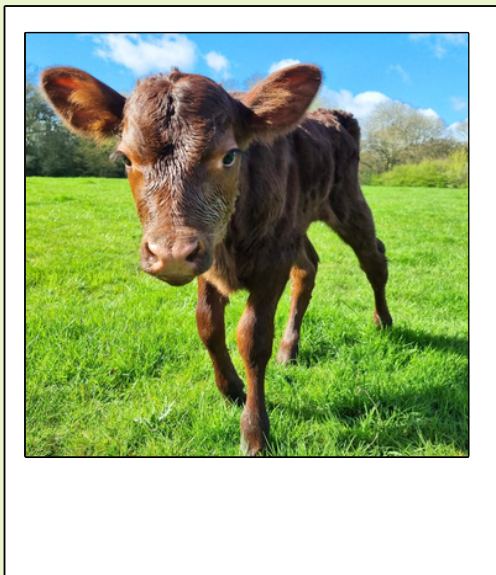
Alfie came to trust the adults he was working with and allowed them to support him through Level 2 and 3 qualifications in Animal Management. In being able to access a programme which was adapted to meet his interests and needs, Alfie reengaged in learning and was able to thrive.

Alfie has said that at his lowest, "Lambourne End Centre was the only positive thing in his life."



Dealing with the death of a loved one is difficult enough. To witness such brutality at such a young age and to have to deal with that loss afterwards is almost inconceivable. When Alfie came to Lambourne End Centre he was adrift and no one knew how to help him. We gave him time and we persevered with a relationship which was often one sided. This is all Alfie needed from us. He needed somewhere safe where he could be a teenager and Lambourne End Centre was that place. The world moves so quickly, there is always so much to do and so much we expect from others. Alfie was a child who had endured immense trauma. His story reminds us how important it is to give each other time to grieve and time to adjust.

Anna's Story



Anna is a refugee of the war in Ukraine who was forced to flee her home and leave behind everything she had known. In a new country, with a new language, Anna had to rebuild her life from little but memories.

With us, she has been reminded of how capable she is, found purpose in helping others and a place which feels like home.

Anna was 12 years old when her country was invaded and she was forced from her home. She grew up in Kyiv, Ukraine and spent most summers at her grandma's farm in the West of the country. She describes that farm as her "paradise," but when war broke out it became her refuge and the place she felt safest.

She spent two months living with her grandma and waiting for her temporary visa to be granted so she could get to the UK. She couldn't go to school or meet up with friends, she was isolated and her future was uncertain. The animals became her connection and caring for them her purpose as she continued to wait and wonder.

When Anna finally made it to the UK, in April 2022, her life was once again changed beyond recognition. She had left her family and everything that was familiar to her. She was in a city bigger and far different to any she had experienced. She was in a country where they spoke a language she did not understand. Anna felt lost and alone.

It was less than a year later that Anna decided she didn't want to be lonely anymore. She had started school but found this very stressful as it was hard to make friends when she struggled to understand them and to be understood. She wanted to meet new people with similar interests to her and wanted the security of being surrounded by animals which she had always felt in the past. This was when she found Lambourne End Centre.



Anna didn't know what to expect from the Centre and was worried when she first arrived. However, she soon found that even if she didn't know what the farm tools were called in English, she knew how to use them. Anna was able to get stuck in with any job on the farm and to help others who weren't as skilled or experienced as her. This helped Anna's confidence to soar.

Anna told us how good it feels to help others and to feel useful. She enjoys being able to get lost in a farm task and forget about everything else which is going on in the world. But most importantly Anna says that Lambourne End Centre is the place where she feels "closest to home."



Anna is a young woman who was forced to grow up far too quickly. She was made to leave everything that was familiar to her or risk losing her life. She was dropped into a country which didn't speak her language and had no alternative but to adapt. In the face of all this, Anna has been determined to carry on, to make the most of her education and to pursue her passions. Lambourne End Centre has given her the opportunity to reconnect with some of what she lost and to forge new connections.

Conor's Story

Conor was struggling to navigate his journey into adulthood.

With us, he has developed the confidence and the skills to become independent.



26-year-old Conor has been coming to Lambourne End Centre for over 12 years. It has been his point of safety and comfort as he has journeyed into adulthood.

Conor first came to the Centre on an after school club where he had the opportunity to take part in various adventurous activities alongside his friends. Conor has Global Development Delay, Cerebral Palsy and Autism and this structured social time was vital in helping him to connect with others.

Conor loved his time on after school club so much he decided to join our Food for Thought programme where he was able to work on the gardens one day a week. Conor really enjoyed growing produce and assisting with maintenance tasks which helped him to develop his practical skills. He also says being able to work outdoors has been good for both his physical and mental health.

Conor then began spending more time at Lambourne End Centre through school which gave him the opportunity to complete qualifications in Land Based Studies at Entry Level 3.

These qualifications enabled Conor to move on to college, but he quickly realised this was not the right environment for him. The work was mainly classroom based and Conor did not feel he was being given the support he needed. He also felt he had not had the same opportunity to practice independence and that no one was listening when he raised concerns.

Conor decided it was best to return to Lambourne End Centre full time.

At the Centre, Conor has been given personal responsibilities which have helped him to become more confident working independently. Staff have also supported him to develop fundamental life skills which are put into practice every day at 10:30am when Conor's Café opens for business. He gathers tea and coffee orders from colleagues before making them, delivering them, and finally doing all the washing and drying up. This has improved Conor's ability to retain information and problem solve.



The skills Conor has learned at the Centre have led him to find work experience at a local hairdresser's once a week and are helping him work towards his goal of moving into supported living.

However, what Lambourne End Centre has given Conor above all else is confidence. When he first arrived on after school club, he was shy and really struggled to talk to adults. Conor now says the social aspect of coming to the Centre is the part he loves the most.

For Conor, who really struggled to believe in himself, growing up came with an extra set of obstacles. Having access to Lambourne End Centre provided him with an environment in which he felt more comfortable exploring these changes and people he could rely on to support him through the unfamiliar. Having somewhere safe and constant while everything else shifted has enabled Conor to develop the confidence to work towards becoming independent. Every young person has a unique set of needs as they transition into adulthood. Conor's story demonstrates that the mainstream system does not suit everyone's style of learning and reminds us we need to tailor the support we give in order to best prepare young people for the future.



Emily's Story



Emily is a 17-year-old with autism, her school was unable to keep her safe and support her through turbulent teenage years.

With us, she has found an environment in which she feels safe, accepted for who she is and happy.

Emily's autism meant she was extremely vulnerable when she entered secondary school and this was a really challenging time for her. She was groomed and put in life threatening circumstances due to her mental health and difficulty understanding the intentions of others.

Emily's school could not keep her safe but, fortunately, she was able to find a nurturing environment in Lambourne End Centre which has supported her through her growth into a young adult.

Initially, Emily feared she would face the same obstacles at Lambourne End Centre which she faced in school and entered the placement tentatively. However, she has been able to build trust with staff and now has a support network she can access when struggling.

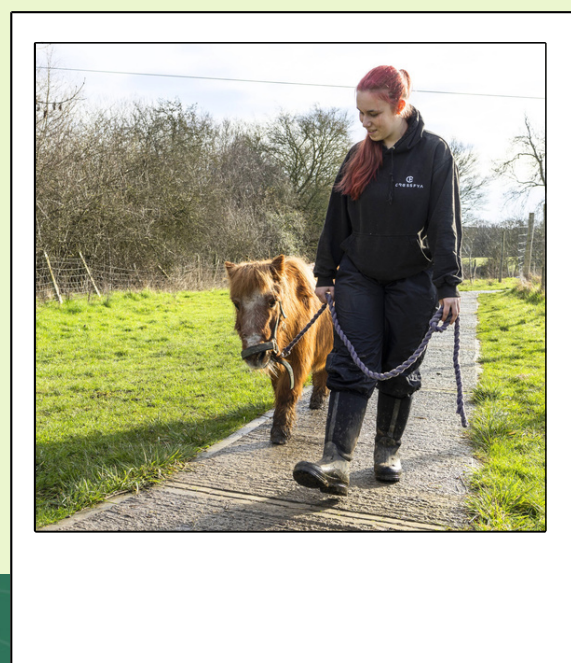
Emily has said that being at Lambourne End Centre has made it easier for her to learn. Since she first came to us in 2020, her confidence, her resilience and her independence has grown immensely. Despite her initial reluctance to work towards a qualification, she has now completed a Level 1 Award in Land Based Studies and is working towards a Certificate.

With our support, Emily is working to take the same confidence she has found at Lambourne End Centre out into the rest of the world. Our joint aim is to eventually support her transition to agricultural college but crucially, when Emily does move on from us, she will do so with nationally recognised qualifications.



What is most important to mention about Emily is her absolute passion for animals. Being allowed to care for the animals at our centre has been vital to supporting Emily through her lower periods as this provides security, familiarity, and the control she needs. Her family have said not only did Lambourne End Centre save Emily, but that they themselves benefitted from the care and support offered by the charity during immediate crisis. Lambourne End Centre has become an integral part of Emily's identity and she lights up when she talks about it.

Emily is a capable young woman who without Lambourne End Centre would be without qualifications and aspirations for the future. Her story is a reminder that a school environment is not right for everyone. However, with people around them who support and encourage every young person has the potential to achieve. We are humbled by Emily's determination to create positive change in her life and feel lucky that Lambourne End Centre is the place where she feels safe enough to take on this challenge.



Dan's Story



Dan had lost his purpose and was on the verge of taking his own life. He genuinely did not see a future for himself.

With us, he found a place and people he cares about and, more importantly, hope for the future.

When Dan first arrived at Lambourne End Centre he was unable to cope. After losing his daughter and being arrested, Dan's mental health rapidly deteriorated. Dan struggled with self-harm and was on the verge of taking his own life. He explained to us that without his daughter, he had nothing to care about and no reason to get up in the morning.

Lambourne End Centre became that reason to get up in the morning. Animals had always helped him to feel calmer and the opportunity to keep busy allowed him to focus on something other than his grief.

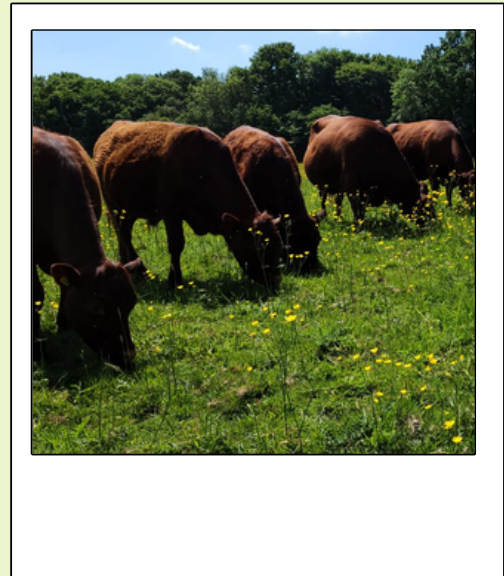
Dan went to extraordinary lengths to get himself to us. Not only did he fight to get himself up and out into the world, but he also had to contend with the buses and then the half an hour walk from the bus stop to the Centre.



As a volunteer, Dan has become an invaluable member of our team, turning his hand to any task that needs doing. Initially, he spent much of his time on the farm and gardens, which suited his affinity for the animals. But in more recent years, he has turned his hand to many of the maintenance jobs, helping to keep our site running.

We now employ Dan to venture into Hainault Forest, multiple times a week, to check up on the cows we take care of for another farmer. This is Dan's first official part time job and something which he takes pride in doing.

Dan has said he plans to stay at Lambourne End Centre for as long as he can. He first came for the animals, the outdoors and something to do. But he stays for the people, who have become a vital support network for him.



When asked what the Centre means to him, Dan would say "there are no words, it's just magic". Lambourne End Centre is Dan's something to care about and it doesn't replace what he's lost, but it makes every day a little bit easier.

At some point every one of us will face obstacles we are not sure we can overcome. These will look different and affect us differently, but that feeling of being completely overwhelmed is not unique. Dan's story reminds us of how important it is not to let anyone face these obstacles alone. Dan is a caring and dedicated individual who because of the heartbreak he had experienced was contemplating ending his own life. Through Lambourne End Centre, he has found a purpose again and work which he can take pride in. The strength he has shown in accepting this support is inspiring.

Hal's Story

Hal is deaf and has learning difficulties and when he told his teachers in a mainstream school that he wanted to work on a farm when he grew up, they laughed at him.

With us, Hal was given the opportunity to exceed all expectations and the confidence to fulfil his dream.

Hal's parents were unsure if he would ever be able to spend a night away from home. Hal is deaf, and has learning difficulties, and for a long time lacked both confidence and independence.

But, at the age of 8, Hal joined a group of children with additional needs who came to stay at Lambourne End Centre for a weekend of adventure. During his stay, he discovered just how much he was truly capable of.



Hal continued to visit Lambourne End Centre regularly with his parents and was brave enough to try the activities, like caving, which even his dad was scared to do. Hal has said that this made him "confident for [his] whole life."

More than this, Hal's roommate from that first weekend is a great friend of his to this day. For him, coming to Lambourne End Centre offered the opportunity not just to try new things but to form new and lasting connections.

This includes the strong bond he formed with the animals on the farm. It was in that same weekend that Hal realised his dream of working on a farm. While many couldn't see how that would be possible for a young man with learning difficulties living in London, Hal had a plan.



Hal is now attending college but spends every Friday on our Food for Thought Programme. This is one of his favourite days of each week. Hal spends his time, growing produce, feeding cuttings to the livestock, and fulfilling his dream of working on a farm.

We have seen the change in Hal since he first arrived at our centre as an 8-year-old boy, scared to be away from home. Hal told us that Lambourne End Centre has made him a happy and confident person. We are privileged to have been part of his journey and to have been inspired by Hal whose story proves that everyone has the right to follow their dreams.



Harry's Story



For a long time, Harry's autism and epilepsy meant he was unable to have the independence and freedom every young person deserves.

With us, and with the right support, he has developed skills, found his own way to communicate and carved out a unique role within our Food for Thought team.

When Harry first arrived at Lambourne End Centre in 2016, spending half a day with us, once a week, was as much as he could manage. Harry's difficulty with balance and fine motor skills meant he struggled to get involved and the fact he is non-verbal meant he couldn't communicate what tasks he enjoyed doing. Harry had very little independence or control over how he spent his day.

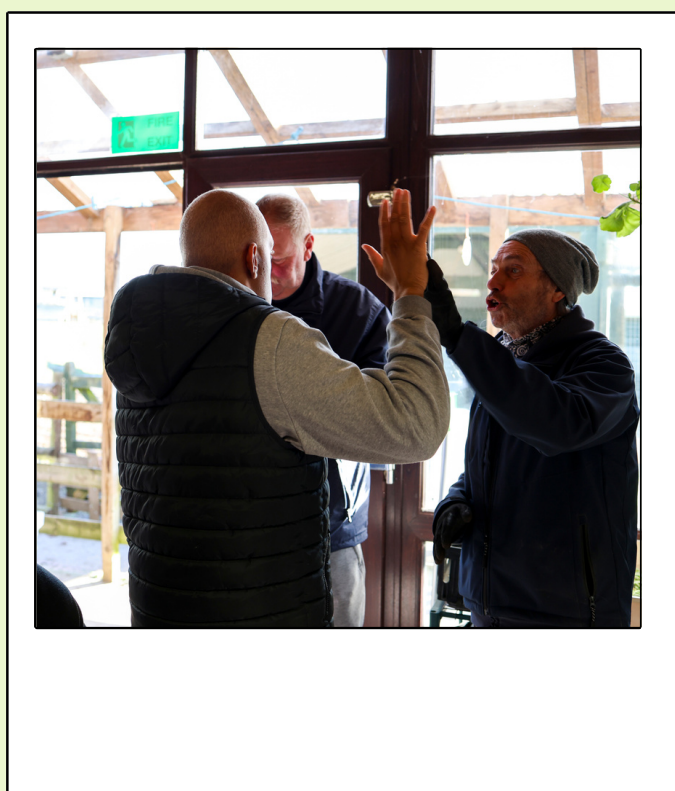
Over time he has become a vital member of our Food for Thought team and spends three full days a week with us. We are really proud of the practical skills he has developed. However, what has brought us most joy, is seeing the effort Harry has put in to better being able to communicate with those around him.



Three years ago, Harry's support worker discovered he was able to read. With the help of our staff, she developed a simple alphabet board which Harry uses to spell out what he wants to say. This has given him more independence, more control over the tasks he takes on and allows him to communicate his needs. Harry has also been able to use his alphabet board to achieve an Entry Level 2 Certificate in Land Based Studies and is now working towards an Entry Level 3 Diploma.

His parents told us how much change they have seen in Harry since finding the right environment for him at Lambourne End Centre.

Harry has also taken big steps by himself. He recently developed a friendship with a young man on another learning programme which has been wonderful to witness. This young man struggled with his behaviour and has had some difficulty with learning and concentration. However, with Harry, he sits quietly, plays cards, and has even taken the time to learn Harry's own version of Makaton so they can call each other "friend."



Harry's story is a reminder that sometimes all a young person needs in order to thrive is someone to help remove the obstacles put in their way. Harry is an intelligent, kind, and capable young man, who because of his disability had not been granted the same opportunity as others. Now, Harry has found a place where he can continue to learn and grow in his own way. Harry's dad told us that Lambourne End Centre has massively exceeded the expectations he had for his son. But we think it is Harry who continues to defy expectation!





Isaac's Story

Isaac was used to being told the things he wanted to do were impossible for him.

With us, he found the confidence to prove that with enough imagination and determination almost anything is possible.



Isaac was born with Limb-pelvis Hypoplasia; he has no arms, short legs, a weak pelvis and a wicked sense of adventure. Isaac has always wanted to push himself to achieve things others deemed impossible for him, but he didn't always have the confidence. He describes Lambourne End Centre as the piece of the puzzle which had been missing and the start of his journey to where he is now.

As a child, Isaac got used to being different and being treated differently to his peers. When he first heard about the activities on offer at the Centre, Isaac expected to spend most of his time watching other young people have fun. However, this was not the case. For the first time, outside of school, Isaac felt included and staff encouraged him to give everything a go.

Isaac always felt comfortable at Lambourne End Centre and being here helped him to discover his voice. To speak up about things he wanted to try and communicate his needs to those he was working with. Isaac has tried almost every activity the Centre has to offer; caving, raft building, wheelchair abseiling, zip lining. Taking part in each of these has required a lot of trust on Isaac's part and a lot of teamwork.

Even Isaac doubted that caving would be possible for him, but when he told staff it was something he would love to try, the answer was "okay, let's find a way to make that work." And when his group had been programmed to go Mountain Biking in the local forest, instead of asking Isaac to wait at the Centre, staff attached a bike trailer which he could sit in allowing him to join the group. Isaac fondly recalls how this gave him the opportunity to experience the world from a whole new perspective.

He also describes participating in team building activities as a big milestone because of how truly included he felt. He remembers one activity in particular where there were two competing teams and in the interest of fairness, someone from the opposite team was put in a wheelchair. Isaac says not only did this make him feel included, it helped others to appreciate the challenges he faces on a daily basis.



Isaac has gone on to achieve incredible things. From skiing, to sailing, to skydiving, to being the first person down our wheelchair abseil. He continues to achieve his goal of redefining what is possible for people living with physical disabilities. More than this, he uses his platform to support and inspire others. His work earned him an MBE and the opportunity to meet King Charles which was a big honour for him.

This journey started at Lambourne End Centre, the first place he felt part of a team and the place he told us has helped to shape him into the person he is today.

At some point, we've all been told not to run before we can walk. How about, skiing and raft building and abseiling. Who is going to tell Isaac that because he can't walk, he can't do any of those things? It takes an unbelievable amount of courage to demand more for yourself when others expect so little. Isaac would tell you he is fortunate because he discovered a place where he felt included and met people who were committed to helping him to defy expectation. Every young person deserves the opportunity to bring their dreams to life. And if they need support to achieve this, and if it requires thinking outside the box, then it is our responsibility to do so. Isaac says, Lambourne End Centre is needed because it allows people to shine. We are incredibly proud to have helped Isaac discover and develop the strength he always had within himself and we want to continue to do this for as many young people as possible.

Lacey's Story



Lacey was being failed by the intuitions responsible for supporting her. Her mental health was deteriorating, she could not control her anger, and she had a number of undiagnosed disorders.

With Us, she found people who understood her, supported her, and fought for her.

School was difficult for Lacey. She didn't feel she had a safe place to go to when she was struggling or that anyone truly understood her. Lacey was angry and easily triggered, and once she was upset found it hard to calm down. Lacey's mental health was deteriorating and this was only exacerbated by lockdown.

Then, in 2020, her school brought her to Lambourne End Centre. She didn't know if she would enjoy it and was scared to be in a new and unfamiliar place. However, as soon as Lacey arrived at the Centre, she knew she had found the placement she wanted to stick to. She described being hit with a feeling of home.

Lacey didn't just connect with the place, she connected with the people. She made friends amongst the other students on the Hands On programme and made incredible bonds with the tutors. Lacey described feeling more relaxed knowing she was finally surrounded by people who understood her.

As a result, Lambourne End Centre became Lacey's safe place and the environment in which she felt most able to be herself.

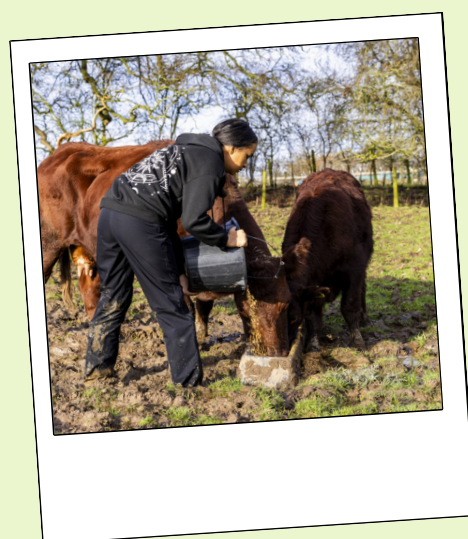
Lacey says her time here helped her to better understand how she feels and to develop strategies for managing these feelings. In meeting different people from across various programmes, Lacey also came to understand not everyone uses the same strategies she does. This exposure has helped her to become less frustrated with people who have alternative ways of doing things. She has made massive improvements in controlling her anger and avoiding conflict.

Lacey still struggled with her mental health while at the Centre, but she benefited from knowing that she had people she trusted and a place she felt comfortable to keep coming back to. School eventually broke down for Lacey and she was moved to college which was also very challenging, but throughout she thrived on the consistency Lambourne End Centre was able to offer.

Lacey was provided with one to one academic support which enabled her to complete a Level 1 Award in Land Based Studies. She was given the opportunity to discover her desire to do practical work which has led to her applying for an apprenticeship in construction. Lacey feels a great sense of achievement when she recalls her time here.

Our staff also pushed for Lacey to be formally diagnosed with ADHD, ASD and personality disorders so that she could access the support she needs. Since leaving the Centre, she has also been diagnosed with PTSD.

Lacey's childhood has been incredibly tumultuous, but her time at Lambourne End Centre has given her so many happy memories and so much for her to take pride in.



Lacey had fallen through the gaps. She was in need of far more support than she was given within the mainstream system. We saw her thrive during her time with us but by that point, she was already fighting an uphill battle. Lacey's family was doing everything they could to support her, but they needed help and they should have received it sooner. For us and for Lacey, her time at Lambourne End Centre was a success, she finally felt understood and accepted and that allowed her to feel safe. She gained nationally recognised qualifications and the experience to pursue the practical careers that interest her. However, her story should encourage us to look past the behaviours young people are displaying and to consider the emotions underneath. Lacey was dismissed as being a naughty child, in truth she was a young woman crying out for help navigating intense trauma and a whole host of emotions she couldn't understand.

Laurelle's Story

Laurelle was not coping in a school setting.

With us, she discovered a new way of learning and raised her aspirations which gave her direction.

When Laurelle first came to Lambourne End Centre, she was not in school. She was an intelligent young woman who was full of potential, but she hadn't found a setting which was right for her.

Laurelle found it really difficult to connect with her peers and to work alongside them. She needed help to develop her social skills, but at that time was struggling to recognise there was a problem.

She joined our Transition programme where her time was split between on site tutoring and participating in farm, garden, environmental and adventurous activities.

Laurelle had never been to a farm or any place like Lambourne End Centre before. However, while learning to trust the adults around her and work alongside her peers was a slow process, she instantly connected with the animals.

Looking after the animals became Laurelle's favourite part of being at the Centre. Being able to take responsibility for caring for them helped to develop Laurelle's confidence and self-belief. It also gave her something to aspire to. Deciding she wanted to work with animals in the future, Laurelle became committed to getting herself back into school so she could get the qualifications she needed to make that happen.



She embraced the Transition programme and even though farm work was her passion, she also got stuck into the gardening and site maintenance projects. Laurelle eventually built trust with the adults around her and demonstrated excellent team working with staff. She knew she was surrounded by people she could rely on and this gave her the confidence to be herself.

Laurelle struggled as her time at Lambourne End Centre came to an end. She was desperate to return to school to continue her learning, but no placement had been identified for her. This period of uncertainty was incredibly challenging for Laurelle and she found it difficult to manage her emotions. However, she remained committed to developing the skills she needed to help her in the future.



Eventually, Laurelle returned to school full-time to complete her GCSEs before moving on to agricultural college to study animal care.

Laurelle was excited to return to Lambourne End Centre for work experience as part of her course. She was full of confidence and openly spoke to staff about how much her time on Transition had helped her. She was proud of what she had achieved so far and had a very clear plan for her future.

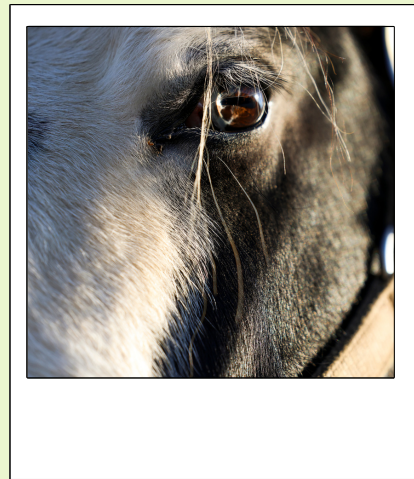
When Laurelle first arrived at Lambourne End Centre, the relationship she had with school was not good. She had come to associate it with very negative experiences and emotions. While here Laurelle learned that school could instead be the stepping stone which helped her reach her goals. Her commitment to getting herself back into school was inspiring and the transformation she underwent during her time at the Centre was extraordinary. For us, her story highlights the importance of second chances. On one hand, the Transition programme was Laurelle's second chance, giving her the opportunity to learn in a way which she was more comfortable with. On the other hand, it encouraged Laurelle to give school a second chance and she has thrived, just as we knew she would.

Millie's Story

Millie struggled with her mental health throughout her early teenage years. She self-harmed, attempted to take her own life and spent substantial periods in the hospital.

With us, Millie got to breathe. She could escape her worries for a little while and enjoy being a teenager with people who understood her.

Before Millie came to Lambourne End Centre her mental health was something she really struggled with. Despite a substantial amount of time spent in hospital, Millie hadn't found anything which helped. However, when she came to the Centre with her school, she felt instantly connected with the site. Millie had found her safe space where she felt happy and valued.



Millie fell in love with the goats, the horses and finally found people who understood her. She was able to connect with those who had experienced similar struggles through their shared love of animals. She began volunteering with us at the weekends and over time she became more and more confident.

Millie formed a particular bond with one of our horses, who has a bit of a reputation for being difficult to work with. Millie thought she was just a little misunderstood. She worked confidently with her where others were apprehensive and when given the opportunity to show the horse at the City Harvest Festival, jumped at the chance. This filled Millie with pride and helped her to see just how much she was truly capable of.



Sadly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Lambourne End Centre was forced to close for several months. This period brought new pressures and worries for Millie and without a safe space to visit or a place to belong, things proved too much.

In 2020, Millie took her own life.



Millie's story is a reminder of how difficult it is to be a young person in today's society. The pressure and expectation that children and teenagers face would be difficult for anyone to deal with. Without support, without safe spaces and the opportunity to escape this pressure even momentarily, it can become too much. Lambourne End Centre needs to be able to continue its work because there are young people who need us. Millie needed us.

Paige's Story

Paige struggled to make connections, always feeling like an outsider, still searching for her passion.

With us, she finally found where she fits in.

Paige had tried almost every extra-curricular activity out there. She found many of them enjoyable, but she hadn't found anything which felt like her. Until she found Lambourne End Centre, that is.

When she first arrived at the Centre, she was shocked to find that farming is not always as smooth sailing as she had seen on TV. She discovered that it's a lot of hard work, mucking out and sweeping up.

She had never found it easy to connect with others, but being surrounded by people with similar interests and working in a team to care for the animals gave her the confidence to try. Paige has met some of her best friends through the Centre. They have bonded through working hard as well as their shared experiences of the ups and downs of farm life.

In her time here, Paige has become far more resilient. Working on the farm she has learned there are things beyond her control and things will not always work out as she has planned. Staff at the Centre have helped her come to terms with this and to better cope with the unexpected.



She has also become far more comfortable speaking to people she has just met or is not as close to. One moment she recalls as a breakthrough in her confidence was representing Lambourne End Centre at the City Harvest Festival. She was excited to camp onsite with her friends and to prepare all the animals for the show, but the thought of talking to the judges and members of the public made her incredibly nervous. By the end of the day, she had forgotten about the nerves all together. She could only remember the excitement and the pride she felt being part of our team.

Paige says the Centre has equipped her with the skills she needs to continue on to college and to pursue her dream of becoming a dairy farmer. Animals are her passion and caring for them helps Paige to maintain her mental health. Knowing that she is able to make a positive impact is what brings Paige the most joy.

We always ask young people what they want to be when they grow up. How can we expect them to have an answer when they may not know what interests them? Having access to Lambourne End Centre has given Paige the opportunity to find the answer to that question and to discover what she is most passionate about. However, her story is a reminder of how lonely it can be for young people who haven't yet found their passion. It can be hard to deal with when you don't know what you want to be or where you fit in. Young people need places like Lambourne End Centre where they are given the time and the space to explore who they really are.



Pat's Story

Pat's autism meant that following school, he found it tough to find his place in the world. Instead, he spent 2 years in his bedroom playing video games, becoming more and more disconnected from the real world.

With us, Pat went from social isolation to being ready for a career. He found people who understood his needs and gave him space to figure out who he was.

It took some persuading from his mum for Pat to give Lambourne End Centre a chance. At first, he would sit in the car for an hour and go home again, too anxious to get out. Slowly, he built up to walking around the garden and then attending Food for Thought for half a day per week. Pat was meticulous about his time keeping and always made sure he left at exactly the same time to get home. However, he began to help with jobs on the gardens that made him feel valued and part of the team.

Soon after, Pat was attending two full days a week and travelling in alone on public transport. As he began to feel more comfortable at the Centre his confidence increased and his practical skills developed rapidly. He worried less about leaving on time and focused more on completing his task, such as staying late to water the plants on a hot day.



Over the next four and a half years Pat's role within the Food for Thought team continued to grow. Not only did he have more areas of individual responsibility, but he also became a mentor and role model to others. Pat then decided he wanted to gain formal qualifications and spent a further two years working towards a Level 2 Certificate in Horticulture where he earned a distinction.

Pat continued volunteering to help others whose situations were similar to his. However eventually, having discovered a confidence and self-belief which years before had seemed impossible, Pat decided he was ready to move on and look for a full time job.



Pat is someone who found it difficult to connect with others and for whom navigating the world beyond school was daunting. Pat was becoming more anxious and more afraid until he found an environment which suited him. At the Centre he became a valued part of a team and project which is stronger because of Pat's involvement. We gave Pat the time and space to build confidence and improve his self-esteem. We helped him to develop skills and gain qualifications. We were overjoyed when the young man who didn't want to get out of the car came to us and announced he was ready to move on and discover what the rest of the world has to offer.

Rowan's Story

At one stage Rowan believed he would end up either dead or in prison. After becoming entangled with crime and drugs at a young age, the weeklong residential programme at Lambourne End Centre which he attended with the Prince's Trust felt like a last chance.

With us, Rowan was able to "escape the chaos" of his younger years and raise his aspirations by embracing the outdoors and finding a passion that helps his community.



For Rowan, taking a place on the Prince's Trust residential trip to Lambourne End Centre was the last roll of the dice. His childhood had been lost to crime and drug abuse and he had very little hope for the future. He knew it was not the life he wanted, but he couldn't see a way out. Thankfully, when he arrived at the Centre, it was love at first sight and we were able to give him the escape he had been looking for.

Within a week, Rowan had found a place he didn't want to leave. Away from all the external pressures, he could be himself. And so, when Rowan was given the opportunity to do two weeks work experience at Lambourne End Centre, he jumped at the chance.

In those two weeks, Rowan fully embraced Lambourne End Centre and tried his hand at working on both the farm and adventurous activities with a variety of groups. However, he knew within an hour of being on the gardens that he had found his fit. This led to Rowan applying for an Apprenticeship to work with the young people on our Food for Thought programme.

On Food for Thought, Rowan built skills for his future. He learnt practical skills in gardening which he used to go back to college and gain formal qualifications. He developed his positive communication, confidence, and independent decision-making. He enjoyed helping others facing their own obstacles especially through engaging them in his passion for gardening. And once again Rowan decided that Lambourne End Centre was where he wanted to be.

Soon, Rowan was a full-time member of staff and did fantastic things with us before spreading his wings and setting up his own business. He is now a lead community gardener for the National Trust.

Rowan shared with us the story of a friend he had when he was younger who was never given the opportunity to take a different path. Sadly, that friend was shot in the face and will be blind for the rest of their life. Rowan believes this could have been him and told us with certainty that he owes his life to Lambourne End Centre. More than anything, we are proud of the work Rowan has put in to change his own life and we are grateful to have been able to give him the opportunity to raise his aspirations and escape the life he always knew he never wanted.



Tim's Story

Tim grew up afraid of people. At 15-years-old, he arrived at Lambourne End Centre for work experience introverted, lacking self-confidence, and expecting to be rebuked for "being weird."

With us, Tim was shown the kindness and care that allowed him to believe in himself and find friends in others, not fear.

Tim now describes arriving at Lambourne End Centre for the first time in a "state of terror." He was an introverted, non-conforming 15-year-old who struggled to communicate without whispering or looking at the floor. Tim was used to being told off and rebuked for not fitting in.

When he arrived at the Centre for work experience, he instead found a place where he was accepted with people who appreciated him.



During his work experience, Tim was too shy to express through words how transformative this time was but had found a place he wanted to come back to.



Tim returned as a volunteer and although he still struggled to communicate with others, that didn't stop him from showing he cared by making tea for them.

Tim felt inspired by his new colleagues to make changes in his life. Within a couple of years, he became more confident, happier, and learned to accept himself in the same way he had been accepted that very first week.

In the years since, he has tried his hand at various jobs, both at the Centre and elsewhere. Maintenance, blacksmithing, jewellery making; he can do it all!

But for Tim, Lambourne End Centre is "Home." The place he returns to when the rest of the world is overwhelming, when he wants to re-set or to check in with the friends he has made here.



Tim's story highlights how difficult it can be for young people to express themselves when they don't have an environment in which they feel safe. Tim is a caring and joyful person who didn't have the confidence to use his voice. We have had the pleasure of witnessing and being part of his growth into someone who believes in himself and celebrates his individuality.



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**Do you have a story
from Lambourne End
Centre you want to
share?**

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