THE LIGHTHOUSE



LIGHTHOUSE STORIES

July - September 2026

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Here we share some of the stories, moments, and events from across our four Lighthouse hubs between July and September. Over the past three months, we've seen lives touched and transformed in so many different ways, through connection, kindness, new opportunities, and simply finding a place to belong.
(**Any names have been changed to protect people's identity)

IT STARTED WITH A CROISSANT

For weeks, Andrew** walked past The Lighthouse Guildford without coming in. Our welcome team would say hello each morning and gently encourage him through the door. But he wasn't quite ready. Then a team member said, "There's a croissant inside with your name on it." That did the trick!

Since then, Andrew has become a familiar face at The Lighthouse Guildford. And during last year's Festival of the Arts, while looking at a painting of the sea, he mentioned something almost in passing: He hadn't been to the beach since he was a child. We remembered. So in July, The Lighthouse Guildford took its first beach trip. For Andrew, it meant returning to the seaside for the first time in decades. He absolutely loved it and hasn't stopped talking about it since.

There's something lovely about the journey from those early mornings walking past our doors to now: joining in, trying new things, making friends, and having experiences he never expected to have again. Sometimes connection starts with something very small; a hello, a croissant, and a place that makes you feel welcome enough to come through the door.





MORE THAN A DRESS, MORE THAN A SUIT

September brought the dresses and suits back to The Lighthouse Aldershot. As families returned them, they brought something else with them: stories.
One mum had been putting money aside every month for her son's Prom suit, yet still wasn't sure she could afford one. She arrived at The Lighthouse with no expectations. She left with the perfect suit and a huge sense of relief.

For another family, the dress became one of those 'you'll never forget this' moments. Her daughter was photographed in it on Prom night, and the picture was later published in the local newspaper. Her mum told us people had been calling it the best dress at the Prom.

And then there was the suit that had a life beyond Prom night. One young man wore his Lighthouse suit to a job interview and he got the job! Perhaps the most moving story came from a dad who cried when he saw his daughter in her dress. She hasn't worn a dress for 12 years, This time, she found one she loved.



These are some of the moments behind the Prom Project. It eases financial pressure for families. And it also gives young people the chance to walk into an important moment feeling confident, celebrated and proud.

And perhaps that's why the project has grown into something bigger than dresses and suits. When people see what is possible, they want to be part of it.

Which brings us to a group of local dads in Woking...





WHEN THE COMMUNITY SEES AN OPPORTUNITY, SOMETHING SPECIAL CAN HAPPEN

It started with an idea from a group of local dads. They'd heard about the Prom Project at The Lighthouse Woking, Aldershot and Guildford and wondered:

"What if we could help young people arrive at their Prom in style?"

So they offered their cars and their time to make it happen. It was a new partnership, and it felt like a natural fit.

The Prom Project is all about making sure young people can enjoy a moment that matters, and this was another example of the community coming together to make that possible. On Prom night, the cars arrived. Young people climbed in, dressed up and ready for their big evening. And what might have been a simple journey became part of the memory.

One family described it as the "perfect finishing touch" to their son's Prom. Another told us their daughter was still talking about the experience with her friends afterwards. This is what can happen when people look at what they have, their time, their skills, their resources, and ask how they can share it.

At The Lighthouse, we love seeing those connections happen: people bringing what they can alongside others who need it, and together creating something none of us could have done alone.

FROM A HANDFUL OF SEEDS TO A WHOLE COMMUNITY



It started with some tiny seeds. Earlier this year, children at Thursday Family Tea planted carrot seeds in The Lighthouse Aldershot's Community Garden. Now those carrots are growing and they're making their way into the Community Grub Hub, helping to nourish people across the wider community. That's the lovely thing about this garden. What gets planted here doesn't just stay here.



Every week, guests and the team spend their time getting their hands in the soil, sharing stories, learning from one another and watching things grow. And through our new partnership with Farnham Community Farm, we're sharing seeds, cuttings, time and knowledge too, making the most of what we have and helping the garden flourish.



And another reason to celebrate. The Lighthouse Aldershot Community Garden received the Rushmoor in Bloom Community Garden Award 2026, recognising the care, creativity and community that have gone into creating it. From tiny seeds planted by children, to fresh food shared with neighbours, this garden is becoming something much bigger than a place to grow vegetables. It's a place where people grow things together and then share what grows.

A WALK, A CHAT, A LITTLE MORE CONFIDENCE

It started with a walk. Every week, the Pathways group at The Lighthouse Woking heads out together walking, talking, noticing what's around them and, sometimes, just enjoying being alongside other people.



Over time, something has shifted. One participant told us that they've grown in confidence and now feel able to join conversations more freely. Another summed up what the group means to them by simply: "It helps my mental health".
And then there's the routine. "It's just so nice. I get to spend time with my friends and build a routine that helps me."

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Before the summer break, the group decided to do something different: they organised their own litter pick, filling bags with rubbish as they walked. It was a small act, but a lovely sign of what happens when people find their place in a community. The group isn't just walking through Woking anymore. They're getting to know their town, caring for it, and making it a little better along the way. Sometimes community starts with simply taking the next step - together.

A STATEMENT ABOUT DIGNITY

Step inside Jigsaw Storehouse at The Lighthouse Woking and it feels different. Clothes are beautifully displayed. Toys are ready to be discovered. Families can take their time, browse, and choose what they need for their children. Because needing help shouldn't mean having less choice. And receiving something you couldn't otherwise afford shouldn't mean feeling less valued.



The refreshed Storehouse has been designed with that in mind. Every detail has been considered to create a beautiful, welcoming space where families can choose with dignity. We've created a more boutique style, more "what would you like?" than "this is what we have."

For one parent preparing for a new baby, the Storehouse and Hub baby group provided practical support for a time when money was tight, alongside the reassurance of finding community. Their words say more than we could:

"We had nothing, and now we have everything we need.", "I have never felt so special", "So, so grateful".

That's what Jigsaw Storehouse is about: meeting practical needs while reminding every family who walks through the door that they are valued, they have choices, and they belong.







A PLACE TO PAUSE. A PLACE TO GROW

"I felt so welcome."



That was the response from a woman joining the Nurture group at The Lighthouse Barnsbury for the first time. And that's where Nurture begins, with making space for people to be known, to breathe, and to discover who they have been created to be.

This term, Nurture at Barnsbury will be exploring healthy habits, paper crafts, and the benefits of journaling. Creating a little space to pause, connect, and recharge is exactly what this group offers.

A BUTTON, A NEW SKILL, A LITTLE MORE CONFIDENCE

It started with a button.

At The Lighthouse Barnsbury Cafe, a guest asked one of our volunteers for help sewing it back on. Instead of simply doing it for them, our volunteer showed them how.



A few stitches later, the button was back on, and the guest had a new skill to take home.

It's a small moment. But it says something about life at The Lighthouse: we all have something to share, and we all have something to learn.

MORE THAN A DAY OUT

A BBQ, bouncy castles, face painting, Back to School backpacks. Family Fun Day has all the ingredients of a brilliant summer afternoon.

The thing that stayed with us the most was seeing so many familiar faces.



In July, The Lighthouse Guildford joined Emmaus Rd Church to welcome families from across the local community. We created a Lighthouse Lounge at the event which gave families the chance to catch up with our team, collect their Back to School backpacks, and simply spend time together.



Some of the families we saw had first connected with The Lighthouse through Christmas Kindness. Others through Back to School or different Lighthouse projects. We heard how they were getting on. We caught up with the families we hadn't seen for a while. We laughed together and picked up conversations that had started months before.

And that's what made the day feel like more than a day out. Because community isn't built in a single project. It grows through relationships, familiarity, and knowing that you're welcome to come back.



A TABLE FULL OF STORIES

For one evening, there was nowhere else our Lighthouse Guildford volunteers needed to be. No sessions to run. No jobs to get done. Just good food, conversations and time together.

We began the new term by bringing our volunteers around the table for an evening of celebration, a chance to pause, look back on the year, and enjoy being together away from the usual busyness of The Lighthouse.





There was home-cooked food, plenty of stories, and lots of laughter. Because behind every welcome at The Lighthouse are people who choose to give their time, their energy and a little bit of themselves to the community.

Our volunteers help make The Lighthouse Guildford what it is: a place where people are known, welcomed and able to belong. So this evening was a chance to do something simple, but important. To stop, to say thank you, and to celebrate the people who help make the welcome happen.







EVENINGS AT NONNA'S KITCHEN



Throughout the summer, The Lighthouse Woking hosted monthly Nonna's Kitchen evenings in partnership with our wonderful Lighthouse Ambassador and Ms Galaxy Surrey 2027 finalist, Rosa Farrugia.

Each evening brought together delicious homemade food, lovingly prepared by our Italian Nonnas, wonderful company, plenty of laughter and beautiful opera!

These evenings were more than just a meal, they were celebrations of food, friendship, and community.

We are so grateful to everyone who joined us and helped make these events such a success. Every ticket sold has helped support The Lighthouse's Back to Life appeal, bringing hope, connection, and practical support to people across our community.

A SAMPLE OF OUR IMPACT OVER THE PAST 6 MONTHS

January - June 2026

Wellbeing	*Youth*	*Meals*	*Resources*	*Creativity*	*Children*
2,649	**1,212**	**3,200**	**4,035**	**1,002**	**2,312**
Guests supported	Young people supported	Meals provided	Resources provided	Guests attending	Children supported