

Deacon Centre

CATERHAM

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Contents

Who? What? Why?	2
Who was Joey Deacon?	2
What we offer	3
Why is the Deacon Centre needed?	4
Who is the Deacon Centre for?	6
Care workers matter too!	6
Where to find us on social media?	7
Funding and donations	8
How to donate	8
Meet our Trustees	9
Benjamin Nunn (Chair)	9
Uma Misir-Nunn (Executive Director)	9
Kat Kenward (non-Executive Treasurer)	9
Thomas Boland (non-Executive)	10
Would you like to join our team?	10
Looking back... ..	11
What our initial research and trial sessions told us	11
What we've done	12
Looking forward... ..	13
Our Roadmap for 2022 and beyond	13
By Q2, 2022	13
By Q4, 2022	13
By Q3, 2023	13
By Q3, 2024	13

Who? What? Why?

If you haven't heard of us already, the Deacon Centre is **a disability arts charity based in East Surrey**, taking our name and our inspiration from **Joey Deacon**.

We believe strongly that being able to **express ourselves creatively** is very important to our **well-being** and that disabilities should not be a barrier to creativity.

We strive to create spaces where everyone with physical, learning and communication disabilities can achieve their **creative goals** – whether that be through writing, music, art, drama or something unique to them.

Believe. Achieve.

Who was Joey Deacon?

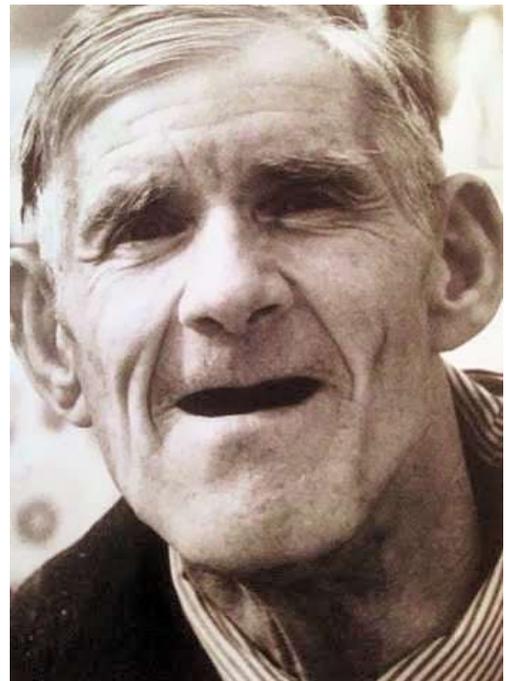
A resident of Caterham for most of his life, Joey overcame a severe form of Cerebral Palsy and life-limiting communication disabilities to become a successful author and TV personality.

Sadly, these **remarkable achievements** were only fulfilled during the final years of his life as Joey, and many others like him, had been 'written off by the system'.

But times change.

In 2020, 100 years after Joey's birth we founded **The Deacon Centre** in Caterham, with an aim to provide opportunities to facilitate creative expression in a safe, non-medicalised and non-judgmental space.

And we think that's something Joey would approve of!



What we offer

The activities hosted by the centre are offered to adults and older teenagers with physical, mental, neurological, learning and communication disabilities, and include **Creative writing**, **Music making**, the **Visual arts** and **Drama**.

Activity sessions for small groups are led by local artists, musicians, teachers and other specialists, and we work with the NHS, the care sector and other local charities to ensure that opportunities are available to all those who can benefit from what we do.

The centre is run from hired premises in the Caterham area, such as church halls and Community centres, along with 'visitation' sessions at day centres, care homes, hospitals and rehabilitation facilities, depending on demand.

Our longer-term plan is to establish a permanent, physical presence in the town, potentially including a café bar and public performance space, and offer activities on a daily basis, as well as general 'drop-in' facilities.

The centre provides freelance work opportunities for local activity coordinators specialising in various fields of the arts, while in the longer-term there will likely be vacancies for part-time and eventually full-time staff, benefitting the local economy.



Why is the Deacon Centre needed?

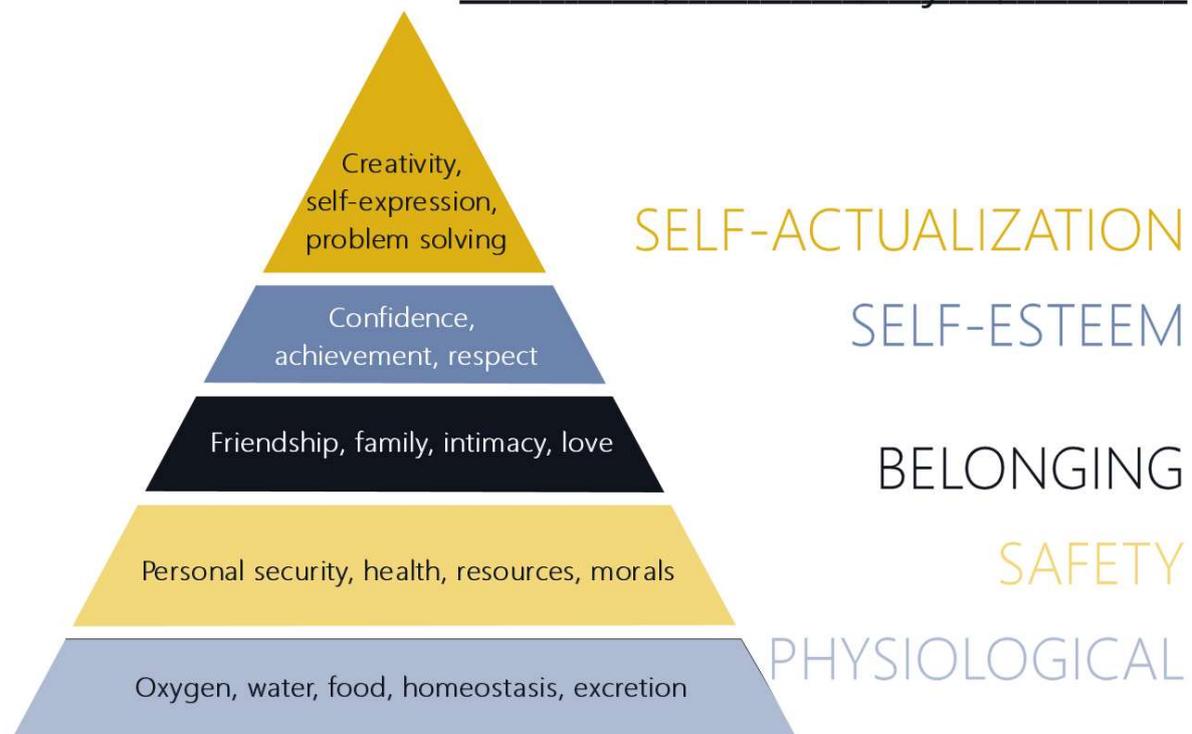
It's a good question – there are lots of charity projects around, both national and local. Some are well-funded, others are struggling. On balance, there are probably too many charities in the UK, many competing in the same space, rather than co-operating with one another or joining together.

That doesn't mean that there is no case for a new charity venture, but our existence must be justified, and there must be strong evidence of a need for the services we intend offering in the local area. Why are we needed, and how do we differ from other services available?

The East Surrey area has **a high concentration of service users with complex needs** who will form the basis of our target audience. For several years we have garnered feedback from this community about their lifestyles, interests and aspirations and developed an understanding of what is and isn't available to them.

According to the widely-accepted psychological modelling of Dr. Abraham Maslow (the '**Hierarchy of needs**') the fundamental requirements that enable a human being to live a fulfilling life can be broken down into 'levels':

Maslow's Hierarchy of needs



For Service Users in the local area, 'lower level' requirements are typically fulfilled to a satisfactory level, in that they feel safe and have shelter, food and medication. However, there is a marked lack of opportunity within this community for self-actualization, expression and creativity. In essence, **the opportunity to 'live' rather than to merely 'exist'**.

This situation is not new. Indeed, Joey Deacon would likely not have had the opportunities to succeed, were it not for the persistence of his friendship circle at St Lawrence's Hospital, who enabled him to overcome communication barriers and translate his internal thoughts into externalised output in the form of his book *Tongue Tied*.

Some service users may harbour a desire to express themselves musically, or on canvas, or through dance. Some may have latent creative talents that have never been encouraged, or have been actively suppressed. Feelings like **"I always wanted to play an electric guitar"** or **"I'd love to try pottery sometime"** or, in Joey's case **"I have an idea for a book"**.

What little provision already exists locally falls short in some key areas – activities are often scheduled for mornings, yet for many typical service users, particularly those with complex medication regimens, this is the worst time of day to attempt activities. We will offer late afternoon and early evening sessions.

Additionally, activity is often presented as 'education', taking the form of 'classes'. Again, we have noted that for many users who have had poor experiences with the education system this can be off-putting and unhelpful, so our approach will be one of discovery rather than simply teaching.

Our ambition is to offer this community opportunities for creative fulfilment and through it the possibility of reaching the 'top level' of the Hierarchy of Needs.

It might be that some of the hitherto hidden talents that are unearthed at the Deacon Centre eventually lead on to bigger things – an inspirational poet, a captivating singer or a uniquely gifted painter – but the priority is enabling creativity **so that service users feel better about themselves** and bringing these unique opportunities to the East Surrey area.

Believe. Achieve.

Who is the Deacon Centre for?

The activities on offer at the centre are available to anyone over 18 (or 16 with guardian consent) receiving residential or at-home care who suffers from some form of physical, mental, learning or communication disability.

This may include, but is by no means limited to:

- Cerebral Palsy
- Brain injuries
- Para/Quadriplegia
- Severe forms of Autism
- Severe Anxiety or Depression
- Severe Epilepsy or Dravets
- Downs Syndrome
- Speech, Motor or Coordination disabilities

Our service users are typically based in East Surrey and Outer South London.

Oh, and there are some other very important people we hope will enjoy the facilities on offer...

Care workers matter too!

Our Safeguarding policy is a simple one – all Service Users making use of the programmes offered by the Deacon Centre must be accompanied by their Carer or Support Worker, who will remain responsible for their wellbeing.

But this isn't just a policy, it's **a great opportunity to give something back to those working in the sector** as well as providing facilities for the Service Users themselves.

We know that looking after people for a living is not easy and can be a thankless task at times. So from day one at the Deacon Centre, Carers and Support workers will be actively encouraged to join in the activities on offer, and to collaborate with Service Users on their creative projects.

Taking a couple of hours out of a long working week to spend some time writing poems, drawing or making music can be extremely rewarding. We believe that **working collaboratively on a creative endeavour** is a great chance for Carers to get to know the Service Users better and build stronger relationships with them.

We hope that Support Workers will find activities at the Deacon Centre just as rewarding and fulfilling as the Service Users.

Where to find us on social media?

Facebook: www.facebook.com/thedeaconcentre

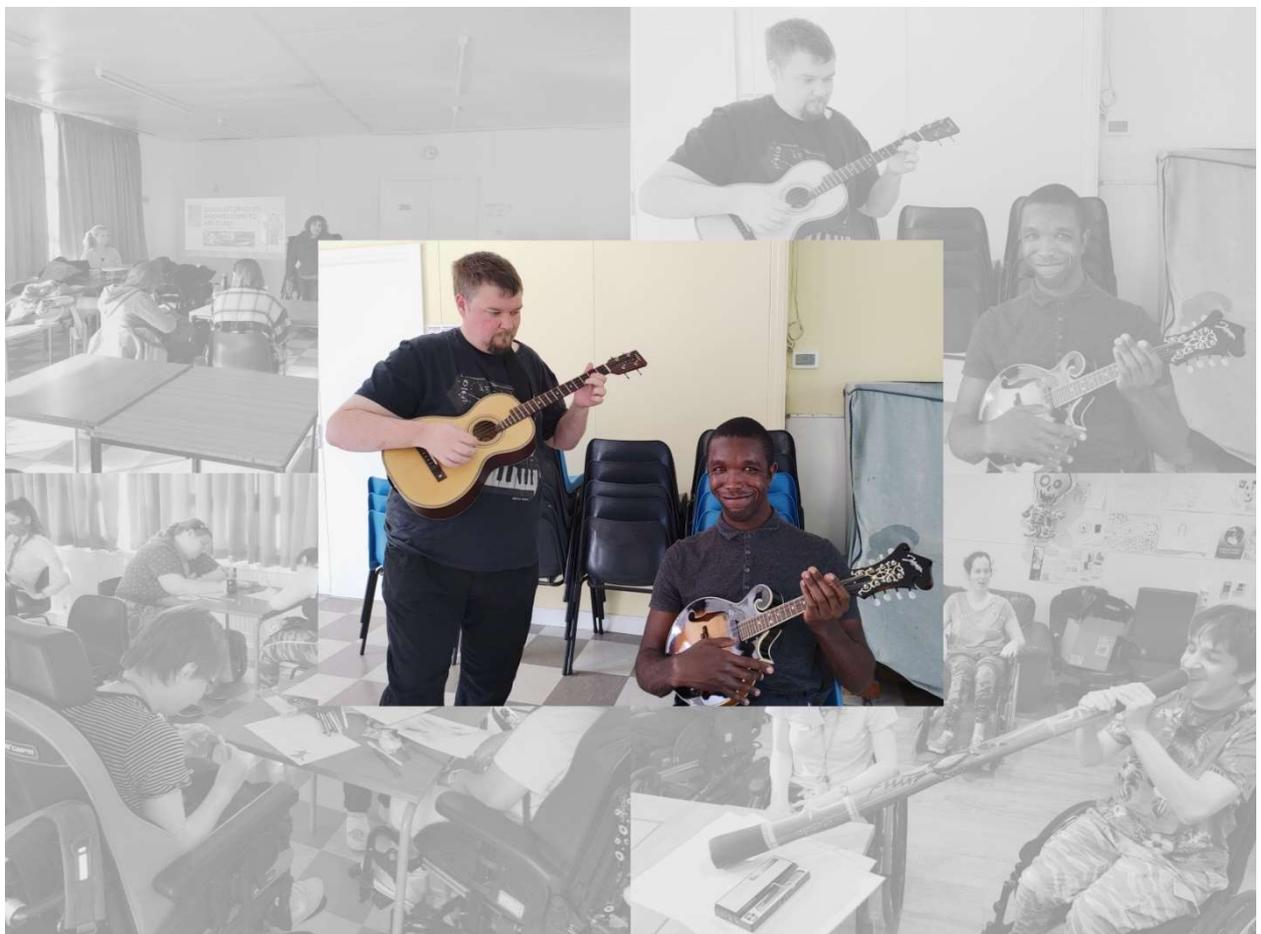
Twitter: twitter.com/CentreDeacon

Instagram: www.instagram.com/thedeaconcentre

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/the-deacon-centre

And of course we have a good old-fashioned website: www.deaconcentre.org.uk

Oh, and email. Let's not forget poor old email: hello@deaconcentre.org.uk



Funding and donations

We are an independent, local charity, funded entirely by donations and grants.

We depend on the kindness and generosity of individuals and small businesses, so **please consider donating to the work we do** – every donation will help us to run more workshops and offer a greater variety of activities for our service users.

How to donate

There are many ways in which you can support our work financially:

- Online via JustGiving (www.justgiving.com/deaconcentre) or LocalGiving.org (localgiving.org/charity/deaconcentre)
- (If you run a business or department) by nominating the Deacon Centre as one of your chosen charities, and partnering with us through a regular monthly donation scheme – we'll be happy to discuss these options with you, and as a registered charity, all contributions are tax-deductible.
- By shopping with Amazon Smile (smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/1192500-0) who will donate to the Deacon Centre whenever you shop there, which in turn will make you feel less guilty about buying stuff you don't need from a big, corporate money-monster
- By clicking the 'Donate' button on our Facebook page.
- In person, with good old fashioned cash, if you see an official Deacon Centre donation box in a shop, pub or café.

And if you are a local business or community fundraiser with an idea for a special event to help us raise money, please get in touch with us at hello@deaconcentre.org.uk and tell us all about it.

Bake sale? Parachute jump? Celebrity appearance on a TV game show? We're open to all your suggestions!

Meet our Trustees

The idea for the Deacon Centre was first conceived by Benjamin and Uma Nunn, a couple who live in Caterham Valley, who set up the initial working group to explore the feasibility of the centre and begin the foundation of the charity.

Our board of Trustees currently comprises the following individuals:

Benjamin Nunn (Chair)

Benjamin has served as a **senior consultant to the charity sector** for several years, specialising in **programme direction**, digital innovation, and **production management**.

A keen singer-songwriter and chorister in his spare time, he comes from a background in **music** and **creative writing**, having started out as a BBC writer in the late 1990s.



Uma Misir-Nunn (Executive Director)

Uma comes from a **legal background** and worked directly in the **adult care sector** for more than ten years.

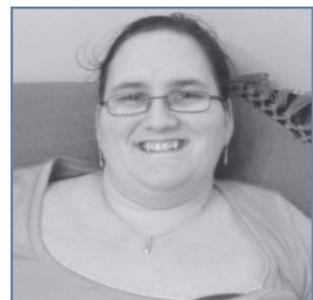
She also has a strong personal interest in the creative arts, particularly **crafting**, **life drawing** and **improv drama**.



Kat Kenward (non-Executive Treasurer)

Kat has a background in **Finance**, both in the Charity and Corporate sectors and until recently **worked full-time for a major care provider** in the East Surrey area.

She has been involved in **charity fundraising** through her local church and enjoys **arts and crafts**, particularly making personalised greetings cards.



Thomas Boland (non-Executive)

Thomas joined the Board of Trustees in 2021.

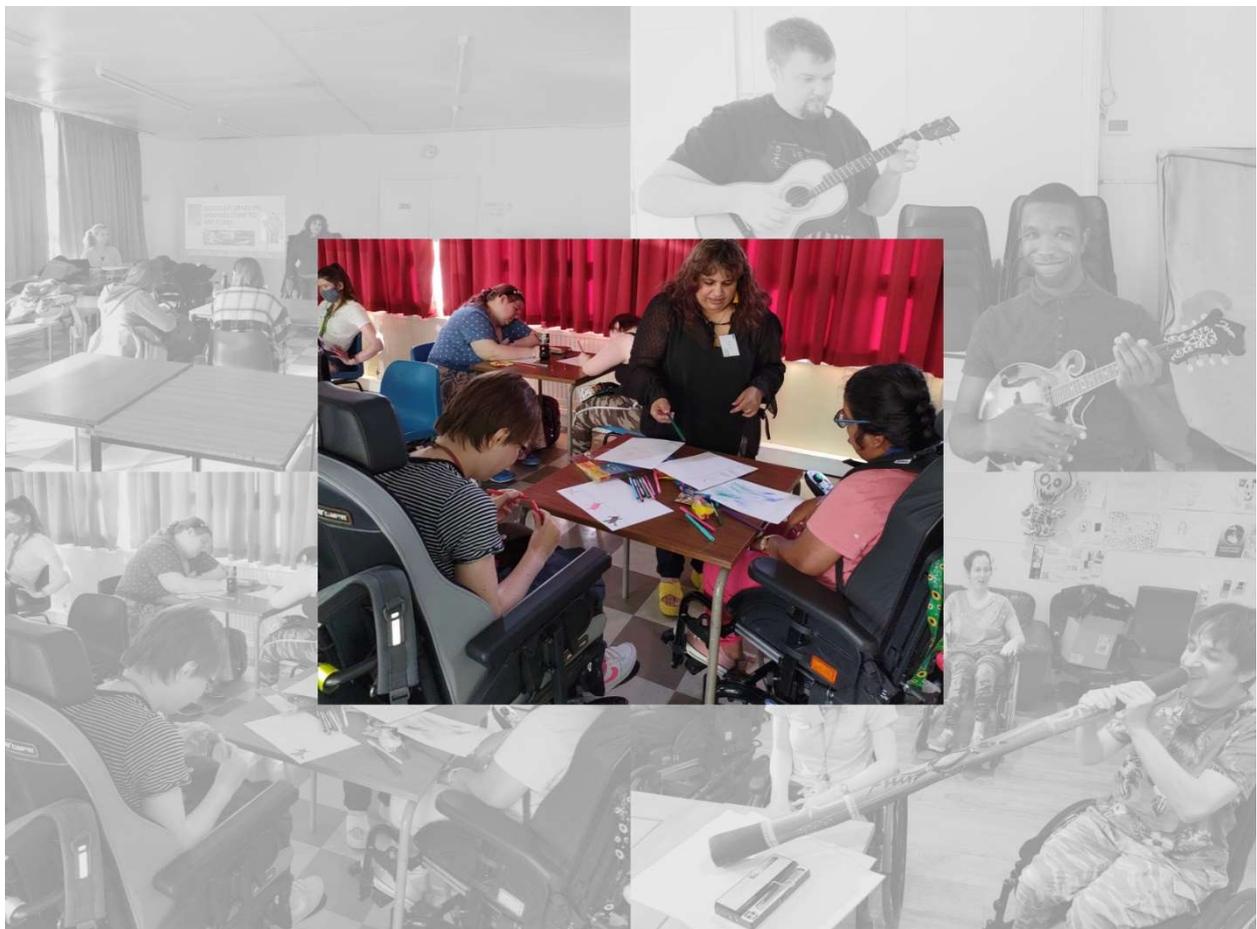
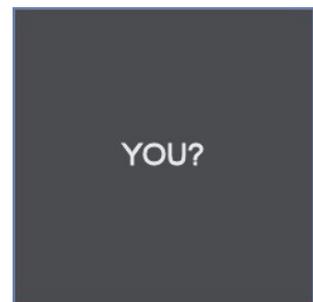
Having suffered from a physical disability for many years, he advises The Deacon Centre on **accessibility** issues.



Would you like to join our team?

We are currently looking to recruit one or two additional non-Executive trustees living in or near the Caterham area. Qualified teachers/instructors, and candidates with experience of charity fundraising and expertise in adult mental health are especially welcome to apply.

For further information, email hello@deaconcentre.org.uk



Looking back...

The Deacon Centre was born on May 24, 2020 - on what would've been the 100th birthday of Joey Deacon – when our three original trustees met in an official capacity for the first time, following many months of wider discussions as part of an informal working group.

We had collectively identified the need for something like this to exist (see '[Why is the Deacon Centre needed?](#)') and moved forward with the incorporation of the charity by drawing up our constitution, with a view to commencing our work once the COVID-19 pandemic had subsided.

At the time we had no idea that COVID-19 would still be with us 18 months later!

Nonetheless, we did as much work as we could 'in the background', and during our 'setup' phase we talked to around 150 Service Users and their Carers/Support Workers, all based in or within a 10 mile radius of East Surrey about their interests, ambitions and requirements.

This 'anecdotal' allowed us to build up a useful profile of what exactly a successful Deacon Centre would look like.

What our initial research and trial sessions told us

- **98%** of those surveyed thought that **there weren't enough creative opportunities** for users with disabilities in the area, with a similar proportion thinking that the Deacon Centre would be a good idea.
- The vast majority (**over 80%**) were very much in favour of the centre offering **a variety of activities**. This was confirmed by the diversity of the responses with regards to different activities:
 - 94% were interested in drawing/painting, 84% in crafts, 64% music and singing, 49% creative writing and 44% drama.
 - Other activities identified as being of potential interest included food/baking, photography, knitting/crochet and gaming.
- A significant number of users surveyed volunteered the point that **'it shouldn't feel like being at school'** and that it would be better if the focus was on creativity rather than 'education'.
- 100% of support workers agreed that early starts are not typically beneficial as service users, particularly those with complex medication regimes, are generally far more active later in the day and consequently supported a policy of running sessions primarily in the afternoons and early evenings.

What we've done

As well as talking (and, more importantly, listening) to our potential users, we also got on with some of the boring but important stuff like registering The Deacon Centre with the Charities Commission as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and drafting formal policy documentation for the charity around day-to-day running, safeguarding, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, and financial/business conduct.

We secured short-term leasing arrangements, making sure they were always fully accessible, and with a separate 'quiet space' to which Service Users could retreat if and where necessary.

We began to build up our network of 'activity coordinators', all experts/specialists in their various fields.

And **the best news of all** is that despite the ongoing pandemic...

We were finally able to commence running our activity sessions in the middle of 2021, and haven't looked back since!



Looking forward...

In the long term we have **ambitious, aspirational plans** for the Deacon Centre.

In the short term we have **realistic, achievable goals**, coupled with the flexibility to negotiate anything that life throws our way and, if necessary, to change our plans.

Our Roadmap for 2022 and beyond

By Q2, 2022

- Recruit one or two additional trustees and/or staff/volunteers to manage fundraising and Social Media.
- Set 2022-23 fundraising targets and ramp up activity.
- Expand our 'Friends of the Deacon Centre' Membership scheme for supporters.

By Q4, 2022

- Acquire leased working space as a semi-permanent home of the centre, with capability for 'full time' operation if required.
- Employ part-time staff as required.
- Have at least one celebrity participate in a TV Game Show with the Deacon Centre as their nominated charity!

By Q3, 2023

- Purchase/develop building to become permanent home of the Deacon Centre in East Surrey.
- Achieve annual turnover of ~£300,000, with around 2-4 full- and part-time employees.

By Q3, 2024

- Achieve turnover of ~£500,000, with around 4-6 full- and part-time employees.
- Expand Deacon Centre brand to other regions, benefitting Service Users beyond our current catchment area.

2022 is going to be an exciting year for The Deacon Centre. We hope that you are able to join us on our journey in some way.

Believe. Achieve.