

MANAGED WORKSPACE CENTRES

INSIDE THE HUB OF

CREATIVITY AND COLLABORATION

IN FOCUS WITH - RHAPSODY ACTIVITIES

DIRECTORY - FIND, CONNECT WITH OTHER BUSINESSES

MANAGED WORKSPACE CENTRES IN ENGLAND: WHERE THEY CAME FROM, HOW THEY EVOLVED

AN INSPIRATION FOR OTHERS: DENT AND COOK MORTGAGE BROKERS

THE DIY SOS BUILD:
RICK BYRNE CARPENTRY AND
JOINERY



INSIDE THE HUB EDITORIAL Allan Rookyard Managed Workspace Centres Manager **DESIGN** Mike Young **Business Development Officer CONTRIBUTORS** THIS ISSUE Rhapsody Activities Dent and Cook Mortgage Brokers Rick Byrne Carpentry and Joinery Brandon Willby, Nigel Lendon, Mike Young Socials @hccmwc @hccmwc @managedworkspace hccmwc Centres -Louis Pearlman Centre Goulton Street, Hull **U** 01482 612 478

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FROM THE MANAGER



Dear Valued Members,

Welcome to Issue 15 of the Managed Workspace Centres magazine!

This edition is full of stories that reflect the very heart of our community - resilience, creativity, and collaboration. From care and compassion to enterprise and innovation, the features within these pages celebrate the diverse ways in which our centres and their members make a real impact.

We're delighted to shine the spotlight on Rhapsody Activities, a remarkable service based at the Bespoke Centre, where dedication and empathy are transforming the lives of children and young adults with special needs. Their story is a reminder of the power of personalised support and community spirit.

Our feature on creativity and collaboration explores how managed workspaces aren't just buildings - they're thriving hubs where businesses connect, share, and grow together. It's this collective energy that makes our centres so much more than office spaces.

You'll also read about Rick Byrne Carpentry & Joinery's involvement in the BBC's DIY SOS: The Big Build, a powerful example of local expertise contributing to national impact, and the moving story of Dent and Cook Mortgage Brokers, where entrepreneurial courage and determination offer inspiration for anyone considering a leap into business ownership.

Finally, we take a deep dive into the origins and evolution of Managed Workspace Centres in England, reflecting on how they began, how they've adapted, and the vital role they continue to play in supporting start-ups, regenerating communities, and fostering innovation.

As always, our magazine remains dedicated to you — our MWC business community. It's a celebration of your achievements, an encouragement in your pursuits, and a platform to connect and collaborate. Together, let's continue to build on our shared successes and embrace the opportunities ahead with renewed energy and enthusiasm.

Wishing you an inspiring and successful quarter ahead.

Enjoy the read!

Best regards,

Allan Rookvard Managed Workspace Centre Manager

You can read back issues by visiting the website

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JAYNE GRANT RHAPSODY ACTIVITIES

Based at the Bespoke Centre, Rhapsody Activities is a bespoke (pun intended) day care services for children and young adults with Special needs.

Established in 2015, Rhapsody was initially set up by Amy Grant with Jayne supporting as a silent partner. Motivated by personal experiences and a shared passion, the duo set up the business as they recognised, that as a smaller service, they can offer a personalise approach to care. Placing emphasis on the more nuanced personal aspects, that can make a real difference. As Rhapsody expanded and the service grew. Jayne eventually took a full-time role, bringing to the table her vast wealth of knowledge and experience.

Rhapsody's service users join from referrals, with their individual needs thoroughly assessed and commissioned by the council. This ensures that each person receives support that is tailored to their needs.

No two days at Rhapsody are the same! The group engages in a variety of interactive activities from drama and singing to dancing and sensory play, whilst also providing independent living skills and social skills activities. All of which is designed to suit each individual needs. Their nine-seater minibus, backed up by a seven-seater car allows the group to venture away from the centre, exploring the local community and allowing them to attend external groups, adding excitement and a variety to their routine.

Located in the heart of the Bransholme community, the Bespoke Centre offers Rhapsody the perfect home. Their easy access unit and the reliable parking is a game changer, allowing smooth and efficient movement in and out of the centre. The location is central to where many of the service users are from, reducing travel barriers and fostering a strong sense of community.

The Rhapsody team includes five dedicated staff members and one casual worker, all committed to delivering high quality support. At is core Rhapsody is more than a service; it is a community. Through Jayne and Amy unwavering commitment, they have created a space where individuals with special needs are not only supported but celebrated.



For information or to make a referral, please email Rhapsody at rhapsody-activities@hotmail.com

MANAGED WORKSPACE CENTRES IN ENGLAND: WHERE THEY CAME FROM, HOW THEY EVOLVED, AND ARE THEY WORKING AS INTENDED? By Allan Rookyard I'd like to think I know a thing or two about Managed Workspace

I'd like to think I know a thing or two about Managed Workspace Centres – but do I enough? This article explores the origin story – how these came, and are they doing what they set out? Given my role and position, the hardest part of this will undoubtedly be being neutral.

What are they?

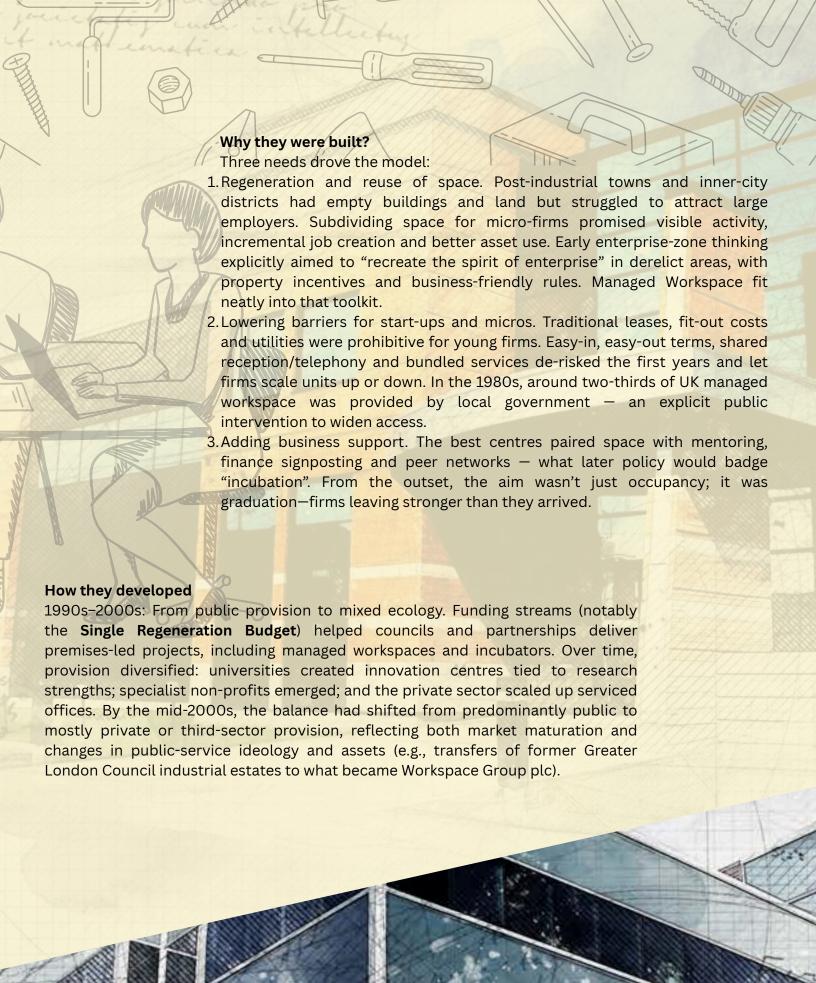
Managed Workspace Centres (known often as MWCs) are buildings subdivided into small, flexible units — usually on "easy-in, easy-out" terms — with shared services (reception, meeting rooms, complimentary broadband) and, at their best, on-site business support. They sit on a spectrum from council-run enterprise centres, university incubators, through to private serviced and co-working spaces. In the UK context, this model took root in the 1980s as part of a broader push to support small firms and regenerate places hit by deindustrialisation.

From idea to implementation: the 1980s foundation

The idea blended two currents. First, urban regeneration policy — enterprise zones, urban development corporations, the Single Regeneration Budget (later) — sought place-based levers that could crowd-in private investment. New, small firms were central to that vision, but they needed affordable, flexible premises rather than long, inflexible leases. Second, policymakers and university leaders toured early U.S. incubators and science parks, importing the concept of "curated space + support" for local start-ups.

One emblematic implementation was St John's Innovation Centre in Cambridge. Inspired by a 1984 U.S. study tour, St John's College opened the centre in 1987 to house and nurture knowledge-based firms. It is widely cited as the UK's oldest innovation centre and a pioneer of the "managed-workspace-plus-incubation" model. Its timing and positioning, plugged into the emerging Cambridge cluster, show how managed workspace was meant to catalyse local tech ecosystems, not just provide cheap desks.

Meanwhile, local authorities and enterprise agencies across England converted mills, workshops and municipal buildings into small units with shared services. By the late 1980s and into the 1990s, evaluations and trade press described "managed workspaces" as a core plank of local small-business policy: affordable, flexible units, often publicly owned or grant-supported, acting as a base for advisory services.





2010s: The flexible workspace and accelerator wave. Cloud tools, mobile work and a startup boom fuelled rapid growth in co-working and flexible office brands alongside traditional managed centres. By 2018, one industry audit tracked 5,320 flexible office centres across the UK, with London alone exceeding 1,300 sites—evidence that "managed space" had morphed into a mainstream corporate real-estate category as well as a public-policy instrument. In parallel, the UK saw an explosion of incubators and accelerators: a 2017 government-commissioned mapping identified 205 incubators and 163 accelerators, many interfacing with or embedded in managed workspaces.

Late 2010s–2020s: Integration with local industrial strategies. National research led by BEIS, Nesta, the LSE and partners made two things clear: (1) incubators/accelerators (and by extension, managed workspaces hosting them) are often justified by local economic development and regeneration goals; and (2) the sector receives £20–30m per year of UK and EU public funding, but robust, transparent evidence on long-run impact and cost-effectiveness remains patchy. LEPs and growth hubs increasingly treated centres as part of regional innovation infrastructure rather than stand-alone buildings.

Are they achieving what they set out to do?

On access and survival: Survey and case evidence suggest managed and open workspaces do lower entry barriers and help early-stage firms survive the "lean years". In London-wide research, two-thirds of users reported they would not have started their enterprise without access to such space, and curated, shared environments supported collaboration and knowledge spillovers — something 1990s "serviced office" models were weaker at delivering. That aligns with the original goals of affordability, flexibility and supportive environments.

On jobs, innovation and growth: The 2019 BEIS/Nesta/LSE study found positive signals, especially where centres/programmes add mentoring, networks and investor access - but cautioned against blanket claims. Notably, while some outcomes (e.g. fundraising or revenue growth for participants in well-designed programmes) look stronger, the **relative cost-effectiveness** versus alternative policies (tax credits, direct grants, network-building) remains uncertain due to data gaps and evaluation challenges. In short: managed workspace can be an effective tool in the mix, but its impact depends on design, context and wrap-around support.



On place-based regeneration: Premises-led projects can animate derelict assets and build entrepreneurial density, but broader studies of regeneration warn that property-led schemes on their own rarely transform local economies. Where managed workspaces are integrated with skills, finance, supplier pipelines and sector strategies, and connected to universities or anchor institutions, their contribution is clearer and more durable. Where they are isolated, they risk becoming low-rent offices with high churn. This mirrors lessons from earlier regeneration rounds (e.g. SRB): capital projects are most valuable when tightly coupled with people- and business-support interventions.

What the English experience teaches

- 1. Form follows purpose. Centres built primarily to fill vacant buildings tend to underperform those designed around a clear sector/cluster thesis (e.g. life sciences near a research hospital; digital around a university lab). The Cambridge example shows how marrying space with ecosystem assets raises the ceiling on impact.
- 2. **Management matters**. The "managed" part isn't reception desks, it's curation, coaching and connections. Evaluations consistently find that outcomes improve when space is combined with structured support (mentors, investor networks, supplier introductions) and when programmes collect and share outcome data.
- 3. Markets have matured public roles have shifted. With a deep private flexible-workspace market, the public sector's role is less about generic supply and more about targeted gaps (e.g. affordable labs/makerspace), geographies the market won't serve, and quality/impact standards tied to funding or planning obligations.

My Conclusion

This was a difficult one for me to write, given my job and naturally biased opinion, but I feel I have been as fair as can be. Managed Workspace Centres in England began as a pragmatic response to industrial change and rigid property markets. Over four decades they've evolved from mainly council-run enterprise centres into a mixed ecosystem of university incubators, third-sector hubs and private flexible workspaces. They have delivered on core aims — by lowering barriers and creating supportive environments for start-ups, especially when combined with curated support. But on the bigger questions from the research I have conducted (long-run job creation, productivity uplift, and best-bang-for-buck), the evidence base is somewhat uneven. The centres that meet their original ambitions most convincingly are those embedded in local strategies, designed around real cluster strengths, and managed as platforms for support, not just buildings full of desks.



AN INSPIRATION FOR OTHERS WITH **DENT AND COOK MORTGAGE BROKERS**

The fear of starting your own business is a common sentiment among many aspiring entrepreneurs. It can stem from various sources, including the fear of failure, the unknown, financial insecurity, judgment, and stepping out of comfort zones. However, these fears are manageable and can be overcome with the right strategies and mindset.

Here we hear the journey of one such young entrepreneur Tom Dent, who has quickly established himself along with business partner Liam Cook, and whom we warm-heartedly welcome to Craven Park Training and Enterprise Centre.

I began my financial services career back in 2014 where I secured an apprenticeship at Barclays Bank. As a young 21 year old I felt the world was finally my oyster and I had somany diferent directions I could go in. During my tenure I studied for my Certificate in Mortgage Advice and Practice and became a qualified mortgage adviser.

"Taking this leap is the scariest thing I have ever done. Going from a secured company and stable salary to having no income and no customers is a terrifying experience."

After a hard working 4 years I made my huge leap to leave the comfort of a well known high street bank to a local mortgage broker in Hull. Initially hired as a case manager, I worked my way through several roles including customer care, compliance and eventually to my goal of becoming a mortgage adviser. I spent 4 further years at this company before moving to a large fee free mortgage broker where I spent a further 2 and a half years.

Despite these achievements, I was always frustrated with not being able to provide the honest service that I always wanted. To be able to put my customers at the core focus and to build my reputation as a trustworthy adviser. So now with 5 years of mortgage advice experience, I decided to take my even bigger leap into being self employed. With this I am now able to provide the service and experience that I believe customers deserve when speaking about their finances.

Taking this leap is the scariest thing I have ever done. Going from a secured company and stable salary to having no income and no customers is a terrifying

experience.



Tom Dent

However I would never have been able to achieve my own business and my own freedom without taking the jump. And now I get to provide mortgage advice and submit mortgage applications to a wide range of customers from first time buyers, people looking to remortgage, those with bad credit and even more closely to my heart now - the self employed.

Not only do I also get to help these people achieve their goals but I also get to help them protect what matters most including their homes, their lives, their families and their lifestyles with all forms of personal protection. I am immensely proud of what I have achieved and will





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In a remarkable show of community spirit and national support, the BBC's DIY SOS: The Big Build recently completed a life-changing project in Beverley, East Yorkshire, creating a permanent home for the Cherry Tree Youth Club—a vital resource for young people in one of the UK's most deprived areas.

Since 2016, Cherry Tree Youth Club has been a safe haven for over 90 young people each week, offering meals, activities, and emotional support. But after losing access to its original venue during the pandemic, the club operated from a gazebo in Mudhills Park—exposed to the elements and without basic facilities.

The DIY SOS team, led by Nick Knowles, arrived in Beverley with hundreds of volunteers and tradespeople from across the UK including Louis Pearlman licensee Rick Byrne of Rick Byrne Carpentry and Joinery. Their mission: to build a fully equipped youth hub in just eight days.

Rick has been back in the carpentry and joinery business almost 20 years after swapping his tools to become newspaper photographer returning to the trade, he spent almost 17 years working in after leaving school.



Rick who is usually working for both commercial and private clients, from building furniture to fitting skirting boards, swapped his time to work on the programme. From retired tradesmen to national contractors, every volunteer played a part in this incredible transformation. Local companies came together to build not just a structure, but a future.

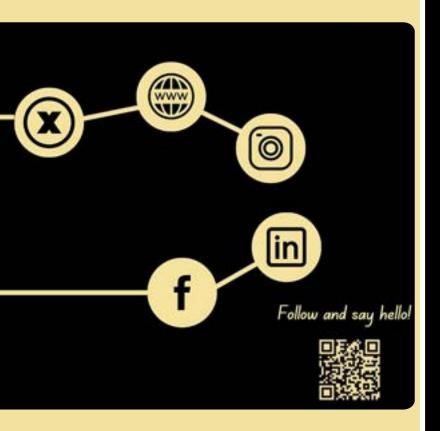
Stay tuned for the broadcast of this special episode - it's one you won't want to miss.



Image: (L) Rick Byrne along with Billy Byrne of BBC DIY SOS

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