

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a basketball game in progress on an outdoor court. In the foreground, a man with dark skin and dreadlocks, wearing a blue mesh basketball jersey with red trim and light grey shorts, is seen from the side, looking towards the left. To his left, another player in a dark blue jersey is partially visible, holding a basketball. In the background, another player in a yellow jersey is visible near the basket. The court is green, and the background shows a brick building and a clear sky.

111 3PILLARS PROJECT

PILLAR TO POST

ISSUE 1

JULY 2025

**TRANSFORMING
LIVES**

BEHIND AND BEYOND BARS

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FROM THE FOUNDER

I'm delighted to welcome you to this first issue of Pillar to Post . A magazine created for you and with you in mind. I hope you will find inspiration in some of the stories and recognise that wherever you are, you are not alone. There are others who are facing similar challenges, and that you are capable of overcoming them.

At 3Pillars Project, we believe in potential that is waiting to be unlocked, and in the power of community. We work alongside people in custody and post release through rugby based mentoring — not just to play a game or build fitness but to grow confidence, discipline and hope for the future.

I founded the programme almost 10 years ago after volunteering in Feltham Young Offenders Institution. I was struck by the potential of the young men in there and I have been inspired by so many of the people I have met ever since.

You will find real stories in these pages, from people who have stood where you are now. People who faced setbacks and found a way forward, whether through sport, coaching, work, training or simply deciding to take the next right step.

This magazine is part of that journey. It is a place for connection, encouragement and tools you can use right now. Whether you're thinking about what comes next or just trying to get through today, I hope that there is something in here that speaks to you.

Founder and CEO,
3Pillars Project



***WELCOME
TO PILLAR
TO POST***

FROM STRUGGLES TO STRENGTH

“IT’S THAT KIND OF SUPPORT THAT MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE WHEN YOU’RE TRYING TO BUILD A BETTER FUTURE.”

When I first came across 3Pillars, I was in HMP Stamford Hill, just trying to find something that could lead me to a better life. I noticed an advert for a ROTL (Release on Temporary Licence) placement in London, which included working towards a Level 2 Gym Instructor qualification and helping deliver fitness sessions in the community.

Although I wasn't a fitness fanatic at that time, I had always gone to the gym intermittently. More importantly, I just wanted to do something, anything, that could break the cycle of where I was.



At the time, I didn't know much about 3Pillars, but the opportunity sounded interesting. I'd put myself forward for a few job opportunities, but I didn't really care what role I got. I just wanted to move forward.

When the interview day arrived, there were about 10 of us being considered for the job. I had never had a job interview before, but I wasn't nervous. I guess I felt like I had options, even though I wasn't entirely sure of what to expect. However, that all changed as soon as I walked into the interview room and learned more about what 3Pillars does.

The vibe was unlike anything I had experienced. The staff were warm and welcoming. They weren't just looking to fill a position; they were genuinely passionate about giving people a real chance to turn their lives around. In that moment, I knew that 3Pillars wasn't just another organization, it was a lifeline! After the interview, I could sense that everyone felt the same way; we all wanted the job.

I thought I had done well in the interview, and I felt a real connection with the team, so when I found out I was selected, it was a mixture of excitement and nerves. This felt like a real turning point in my life, and I knew I was on the cusp of something important.



“I WAS TRULY PART OF A TEAM”



But just as I was gearing up to start this new chapter, tragedy struck. My mum passed away. We had always been very close and losing her was devastating. I was in shock, unsure of how I could cope with such a massive loss. At that point, I wasn't sure how I was going to navigate the next steps, but 3Pillars stepped in when I needed them most.

On the first day of the placement, I went to the office with Ryan, another guy who had been selected. To be honest, I was worried about whether I would feel out of place or like I didn't belong. But right from the start, I was made to feel welcome. It wasn't just a job placement—it was an environment where I felt like I was truly part of a team, something I had never experienced before. The staff wanted to invest in me, and that made all the difference.

Being a part of 3Pillars has taught me so much. I gained my Level 2 Fitness Instructor qualification and have become passionate about fitness and wellbeing. I've acquired skills in public speaking, networking, and different roles within the fitness world. I've learned the value of investing in myself and now have so much more confidence. It's not just about the technical skills, it's about understanding my worth.

One of the most incredible things 3Pillars has done for me is supporting me to get my driving license. They've been helping me with theory test practice every day, something I never would have expected to receive, especially in such a personalised way. It's that kind of support that makes all the difference when you're trying to build a better future.

What stands out to me most is that 3Pillars isn't just about short-term projects, it's about building a community. No matter what direction my life takes from here, I know I can always reach out because I am part of something bigger than just a job or a program. It's a network of people who genuinely care and want to see me succeed.

For someone like me, who isn't used to having others invest in me, the experience has been life changing. I am so grateful for everything that 3Pillars has done for me, and I'm excited about what the future holds.

BY SIKIRU DOHERTY

TRANSFORMATION

INTERVIEW WITH FREDDIE

A YOUNG MAN WE MET AT HMP DOVEGATE



What a difference 2 years, a new style, a new suit and a whole new outlook can bring about. When 3Pillars first met Freddie (name changed for anonymity) in 2023 at HMP it was clear he was an intelligent, inquisitive young man who had such great potential. But being unable to control his anger at times, meant that he was not always able to make the best of opportunities.

Fast forward to 2025, lessons learned, 3Pillars remaining in his corner, Freddie today successfully completed an internship placement with one of our supporting companies, a Barristers chambers.

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR JOURNEY THUS FAR?

Freddie had never attended an interview before, and we had fun practicing possible questions. The important thing with an interview is to be yourself and go in with a positive attitude, believing in yourself.

There may be a question that you can't answer directly as you have no prior experience; be honest and say that, but you can say 'if I was in that situation I would'..., or you could say I have no experience of that, but I once had a situation when..., and talk about something that could be similar.

COULD YOU GIVE US A GLIMPSE OF THE INTERVIEW DAY

The day of the interview Freddie dressed up in the suit and tie he had bought, and in that moment something shifted. Freddie said that walking around town he felt that people looked at him in a completely different way. Gone was the 'drug dealer, gang member, criminal' image that he felt was almost tattooed on his forehead as he walked down the street. Freddie said he walked with his head high in a way that he had not felt before; 'I felt like I had instantly transformed into someone different, someone the world could accept and respect'.

A VISION OF WHERE I CAN BE

By the second week I felt like I had become part of the team, and when the last day of the placement came, I felt gutted! I met so many great people who helped me to see that I can have a different life than the one I had become used to.

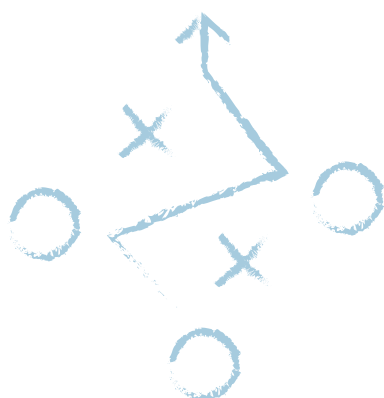
What a journey it has been! Freddie said, '3Pillars sees beyond what I can see for myself. You guys have a vision of where I can be which gives me confidence and optimism'.

Freddie's story is far from over, but he knows that as a graduate of a 3Pillars programme in custody, they are always going to be there to support him through the highs and the lows. For us, his story is a powerful reminder of why we exist: to walk alongside those who are ready to build a future grounded in community, purpose, and possibility.



TRUST OR BUST

THE LADS AT HMP/YOI WERRINGTON



COMMUNICATION IS KEY,
ENCOURAGEMENT FOR YOU AND ME,
ENTHUSIASM, STRETCH SO YOU GET NO MUSCLE SPASM,
ENJOYMENT, WITH THE BOY DEM,
TEAMWORK, MAKES THE DREAM WORK,
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY,
SPORTSMANSHIP, LIKE FRIENDSHIP,
TRUST OR BUST!

I COME FROM POEM

I come from...

I come from expectation and faith,
The belief that everything has it's place.
That planned or unplanned, destruction and chaos is fine,
As long as order and peace take it's place over time.

I come from a place where life expectancy was low,
For young black boys never taught to want more,
Than drugs, gangs and repping the ends,
And killing other kids for killing your friends.

I come from the church, where my family raised me,
Praise Jesus, do good and don't let people frustrate me.
Taught to follow the rules and share the good word,
To all I meet, even the less deserved.

I come from a family with unspoken issues,
Where they'll smile in your face and say they missed you,
But despite the smile and false niceties,
Would rather talk behind your back and fake sobriety.

I come from depression, stress, anxiety,
Autism too, then lost my sobriety.
Self-harming then graduated to suicidal,
Tried a few times, but it was me I lied to.

So I come from a mix of good and bad,
A loving mum and a degenerate dad,
The safety of church and risks of depression
A container of conflicting feelings, never ending.

As I said before, everything has it's place,
To find my own has been a race
The darkest shadows come from the brightest light,
I come from both, an endless fight.



A POEM BY F

COACHING DOGS, COACHING PEOPLE — AND BELIEVING IN BOTH

AN INTERVIEW
WITH JAKE



1. Had you heard of 3Pillars before you came on the course?

I had heard of 3Pillars from others before I came on the course, but I was also lucky enough to watch the action as I worked next door. My commitments to my other job at the time stopped me from joining the programme but I was given the impression the team were good people as they were always polite in passing.

2. When you signed up for the 3Pillars programme what were you expecting?

When I signed up for the programme, I didn't really know what to expect. Like I said, the team running the project seemed friendly and polite, and I expected to learn more about Rugby. But other than that, I went in with pretty much a blank mind. That helped as I was quickly caught up by the positive energy of the team and made to feel extremely welcome. I have always enjoyed watching rugby but never played but that didn't matter.

The coaches were patient and more than happy to help me learn and now not only do I understand what I am watching better, but I like to think I can play a little better... Still can't catch for S*** mind you.

3. What has working with 3Pillars given you that you were not expecting?

I think the thing I was not expecting that 3Pillars has given me, is my continued enjoyment and personal growth from it. I am just about to start my third group now, this time as an 'ACAM' (Assistant Coach and Mentoring programme). With each cohort not only do I learn a little more about playing rugby but a little more about myself. I am finding a confidence in myself I thought I had lost. With better understanding, and confidence I am better able to help others who are new to the project, with certain skill sessions or even their Level 1 workbook.



4. Has the work you have done with 3Pillars changed the way you think about yourself and other people?

The work done with 3 Pillars has definitely changed the way I think about myself. As mentioned, my own confidence and self-belief has improved a great deal. I think being in a place like prison can take those things from you. Working with 3Pillars has helped me build that back up again whilst giving me the soft skills to keep improving myself. It has also helped me improve on skills I hope to apply to my future endeavors. One other thing I've always considered myself as someone who learns differently. Watching the team and coaches adapt to this and make the project enjoyable for everyone has been inspiring.

5. Has working with 3Pillars changed the way you react in difficult situations?

I believe everyone has a fuse, when it burns out, people react. I have often thought I have a long fuse, I feel I manage to keep calm. However, I have found myself getting, 'passionate' during games. I don't see this as a bad thing as it just shows how much I enjoy playing. What I will say though is that working with 3Pillars shows people how to react better to all things. I have recently began working on 'The Aboellis Foundation' with the 3Pillars team and the knowledge they have imparted on us so far has been eye opening and highly interesting.

6. 3Pillars is working to build a community of people, on the inside and in the community, who support each other. Have you felt this? Explain why...

The community of people 3Pillars has created is a credit to the project in my opinion. The 'ACAM' team are always a great laugh to be around. There is never any judgement and everyone groups together to help everyone out. People who may or may not have come together in the normal populace all appear to enjoy themselves and that filters out.

I have often found people I never knew chatting with me outside of 3Pillars; thanks to 3Pillars..

7. What are your hopes for your future? In sport? In life?

My hopes for the future are to set up my own dog training business. It may seem bizarre but working with 3Pillars has been an important influence in my belief that I can do it. My worries for achieving this goal were around my own skill for coaching and teaching people. I have the knowledge to teach dogs, but I struggled with people. Through the help of 3Pillars I now believe I have the ability to coach and train people and will only continue to get better with the help of 3Pillars.

8. Have you been able to use any of the personal development tools you have learnt to support someone else?

I often find myself trying to help my younger brother plan his time better and communicate better with others using the basic skills taught to us in the workbook. Who knows if it works, kids, hey!



9. What other fitness activities do you take part in regularly?

I did train at the gym once upon a time but lately I have been focusing more on education. I guess I am guilty of not planning my time myself. Every time I start up at 3Pillars I say I will head back to the gym but I am yet to do so. I tell myself it is not too bad as my job is pretty labour heavy.

3PILLARS - BY LEVI

Levi is a Participant of our Rugby Academy and wrote this poem to be read out on the last day of the course in front of the friends and family who came to the celebration. Whilst Levi wrote the poem, he didn't want to read it aloud so one of his teammates read it on his behalf.



THE FEEL OF A PILLAR IS COMFORT,
THE STRENGTH OF 3 PILLARS IS FOREVER.
WHEN YOU THINK OF A PILLAR, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF?
SOMETHING TO LEAN ON, STRUCTURE, STRENGTH.
THE REAL MEANING BEING UPRIGHT SUPPORT, A STRONG SUPPORTER.
IT'S BEEN A LIFE CHANGER IN 8 SHORT WEEKS,
"LET'S HEAR THE CLAPS"
NOW LET'S GET BACK ON TRACK.
A WARM SHORT AND ENLIGHTENING JOURNEY,
WE'VE GAINED EVERYTHING MENTIONED AND LOTS MORE.
THE WILL TO SUCCEED WILL LEAVE YOU WANTING MORE, MORE AND MORE.
IT'S DEFO THE WILL TO SUCCEED THAT WILL GET US ALL IN OUR FEELS,
GOOD TIMES, FUN, LAUGHTER, SCREAMS AND HIGH-PITCHED SQUEALS.
TEAMWORK. NOW DON'T FORGET THE THREE C'S,
CALL, CLEAR, COMBAT, WILL HAVE YOU ON THE TURF, ALL BLOODY ON YOUR KNEES.
STAND TALL, ENCOURAGE, GOOD ATTITUDE, EFFORT, AND IT WILL ALL BE A BREEZE.
SAME AS CAT B, CAT C, CAT D,
TOUGH BATTLES, TEAMWORK, THERAPY.
NOW A FEW WISE WORDS FROM A REAL-LIFE G:
I AM THE MASTER OF MY FATE.
I AM THE CAPTAIN OF MY SOUL.
THE WILL TO SUCCEED.
3 PILLARS, STRENGTH, STRUCTURE, SUPPORT,
FREE SPIRITS, NOW AT EASE.

A SKETCH: JONNY WILKINSON

This was drawn in HMP Dovegate by an artistically talented course participant, a gift for 3Pillars as a thank you for the rugby academy course he attended. It took him 24hrs.



7 HOURS, 1 MINUTE, 58 SECONDS: THE STORY BEHIND THE RECORD



BY BEN ELLETT

In 2023, while serving time at HMP Dovegate, Ben took a chance on something he'd never heard of before: the 3Pillars Rugby Academy. At that point, fitness wasn't on his radar. Ben had spent much of his life battling drug and alcohol addiction, but something inside him had changed. He'd already lost five stone and, with the thought of making his son proud, he was determined to make lasting changes.

3Pillars Rugby Academy was his first step. He showed up, gave it everything, and something clicked. On the field, Ben's natural ability stood out. But what truly made a difference was the structure, the challenge, and the belief others had in him. A semi-professional from Nottingham Rugby Club, one of the course leaders, became a powerful influence on Ben with his unwavering attitude, discipline, and encouragement.

**HOW BEN
FOUND
REDEMPTION
ON A ROWING
MACHINE**

THE MOMENT IT SANK IN: “DID I REALLY JUST DO THAT?”

Then, during the course, 3Pillars Custody Programme Lead, Sarah, handed Ben Redemption by John McAvoy. He devoured the book in two days, and that was the spark that ignited his journey.

Fast forward to September 2024, when Ben found himself at HMP Sudbury, the same prison where McAvoy had once served time. Under the guidance of Mark Sheriff, a PEI who had trained McAvoy, Ben's commitment to training ramped up. It wasn't about setting records, it was about pushing his limits. But as his training progressed, both Ben and the gym staff realised he was capable of far more than he ever thought. Our Post Custody Lead, Fay Dellimore, sat down with Ben to hear his incredible story.

Q: Ben, you didn't set out to break a record, so when did that idea start to take shape?

Ben: It all started with a charity event. I was doing 7,000 meters a day on the Concept2 SkiErg for a month, raising £1,000. As the days went on, it started to feel easier. I did some research and discovered the record for 100,000 meters was 7 hours, 22 minutes, and 51 seconds.



Honestly, if you'd asked me a year ago if I could break a fitness record, I would've laughed. I was deep into addiction back then, so the thought of doing something like that seemed impossible. But based on what I'd been doing in the gym, I thought, maybe I could actually do it.

Q: I am sure it wasn't all smooth sailing, though. Did you encounter any major obstacles along the way?

Ben: Oh, definitely. Training took a serious toll on my body. Blisters were a major problem. Blood pooling in my feet was another big issue. I had to adjust my foot placement to avoid it becoming a bigger problem, potentially halting my training, and the attempt itself.

Q: You had initially planned to break the record in May, but you ended up doing it in January. What changed?

Ben: I was in the middle of a five-hour training session, and at 60,000 meters, the gym staff noticed I was on track to break the record. They had already set up the machine with a memory stick, so all the data was being recorded. After a quick chat, we agreed to go for it there and then! It's strange how the mind plays tricks with you and right after I made that decision, I was ready to quit just 4,000 meters later. But the gym staff pushed me through that rough patch. They were amazing!

Q: How did you manage to keep your mind from wandering and focusing on the time?

Ben: Food was my biggest motivator. In prison, we don't have access to much, no sports gels or drinks, so, I was fuelled by plain water, wine gums, oranges, and Bakewell tarts!

FROM MCAVOY TO MOTIVATION: A BOOK THAT LIT THE FIRE

RECORD-BREAKING DAY: A SPONTANEOUS ATTEMPT, FUELED BY WINE GUMS

Q: And how did you feel when you knew you knew you had actually done it; setting a new record of 7 hours 1 minute and 58 seconds; just over 20 minutes faster than the precious record?

Ben: To be honest, I didn't really know how to feel for about two days. I was in shock. Did I really just break a record? I didn't sleep for 24 hours, even though I was exhausted. My hands were clawed up for days, covered in blisters. But it didn't fully sink in until a couple of weeks later when some new guys came in from another prison and excitedly told me they had heard about my achievement. That moment made it all feel real.

Q: You've mentioned being inspired by John McAvoy. What about his story resonated with you?

Ben: John McAvoy's story blew my mind! To think someone could set a record whilst in prison, and use fitness to turn their life around, it made me believe I could do the same. If he could go from a life of crime to inspiring people around the world, surely, I could find my way too.

Q: Is there anyone in your life who has kept you going when things have got tough?

Yes, absolutely! Sam, who was my girlfriend but has recently become my fiancé. She has been by my side through the good and the bad. I have found that everyone wants to know you when things are going well, but there are very few who stay by your side when life gets hard. I find it unbelievable how loyal Sam has been, and I know I am a lucky man to have her.

Q: What does Sam think about your recent achievements?

Sam says I am a completely different person. She can't believe how calm I am these days, and she finds it amazing that I have gone from being an unfit addict to a fitness record holder.

Q: Looking ahead, what are your goals for the future?

Ben: My ultimate goal is to follow in John McAvoy's footsteps and do an Ironman. I've read that Ironman Lanzarote is one of the toughest, so that's my target.



But beyond that, I want to use my platform to help others trapped in addiction and crime. Breaking a record in something I once thought was impossible has shown me that anything is achievable. I want to pass that lesson on, showing others, they can turn their lives around too.

Our final thoughts

Ben's journey from addiction to breaking a world record is nothing short of inspiring. He has proven that change is possible, and with the right mindset, anyone can overcome their past and build a brighter future. 3Pillars is looking forward to supporting Ben to achieve whatever goals he sets for himself in the future.

PUSHING THE LIMITS: MY ICE MILE CHALLENGE



FAY DELLIMORE

A 3PILLARS' PROGRAMME LEAD'S STORY

3Pillars Post Custody Lead, Fay, is no stranger to tough challenges. She's swum the English Channel solo, completed ultra endurance events, and even finished a double Ironman. But the Ice Mile, a swim of one mile in water below 5°C, wearing only a swimsuit, cap, and goggles took her to the edge in a way no other challenge had

Even her son noticed a shift: this time, she had doubts. Not about quitting, but whether her body could endure the cold. That uncertainty made the Ice Mile both thrilling and terrifying.

On February 22nd in Doncaster, Fay was the last of seven swimmers to take the plunge. The lake was calm, her mind focused. Supported by a crew in a boat, she began strong, but at some point, things changed. She lost conscious memory of the swim, entering a kind of autopilot. Footage showed her stroke slowing dramatically as she pushed through the final stretch, unaware of her physical decline.

Once out of the water, her memory was patchy. In a dazed state, she gave instructions to keep warm — training kicking in even without conscious control. Recovery was brutal: intense shivering, pain, and discomfort followed. But it was what she had trained for.

A CHALLENGE LIKE NO OTHER

It wasn't until a week later, in conversation with a 3Pillars teammate, that she fully processed what happened. He reminded her the body can endure more than the mind believes. In that moment, she had pushed past both.

Fay completed the Ice Mile in 54 minutes in 4.8°C water, becoming the 599th person in the world to do so. Even without full memory of the feat, it remains one of her life's greatest achievements.

A low-angle shot of a person with long dreadlocks, wearing a bright green sleeveless shirt, reaching their right arm high into the air to catch a basketball. The background is a vast, bright blue sky filled with soft, white clouds. The sun is visible in the upper right corner, creating a lens flare effect. The person's head is tilted back, and their left hand is also reaching up, just below the right hand. The basketball is a standard orange and black ball, positioned just above the person's right hand. The overall mood is one of aspiration and achievement.

WRITE TO US

**SEND US AN
EMAIL OR
WRITE A
LETTER**

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