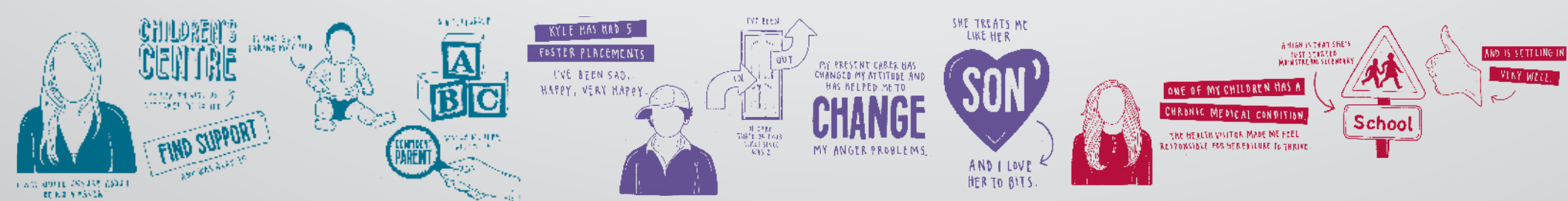


# 1000 JOURNEYS

What you told us...

...and how your stories helped set Southwark's priorities for children, young people and families



**BEST  
START**

**SAFETY  
AND  
STABILITY**

**CHOICE  
AND  
CONTROL**

# OUR VISION FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES IN SOUTHWARK

“Every child, young person and family in Southwark thrives and is empowered to lead a safe and healthy life. We will work together to deliver high-quality services that make a measurable difference in helping to overcome inequality and disadvantage, and strengthen families’ abilities to raise their children successfully and independently.”

**We are Southwark’s Children and Families’ Trust and we developed the Children and Young People’s Plan to set out how we will improve services for children and families in the borough over the next three years to 2016.**

We began developing the plan in June 2012 when we went out into our communities and workforce and asked you to tell us about a story or journey you have had. We were delighted that more than 1,300 children, young people, parents, carers, staff and practitioners responded. These journeys have shaped our plan for local services.

We also looked at the demand and performance of local services and talked to senior decision-makers about what services they felt were working well and what needed to change. We took all of this information and developed three transformation priority areas in the Children and Young People’s Plan:

## **Best start**

Providing the right services for children, young people and families at the right time in their life

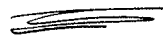
## **Safety and stability**

Providing support for our most vulnerable children, young people and families to bring about safe, positive and lasting change

## **Choice and control**

Providing seamless, personalised support for children and young people with a special educational need or disability

*Presented in the following pages are just a few of the many stories you shared with us.*



# BEST START

We promise to make sure that children, young people and families can access the right support at the right time – from early years to adolescence – giving them the best start on their journeys.

## **What does this priority mean?**

We all need a little help at some point in our life – maybe when we are a new parent with a new baby, when we are starting school or when we are recovering from a difficult situation in your family life. So we are committed to making sure that you can access the services you need when and how you need them, to help you on to the path to success.

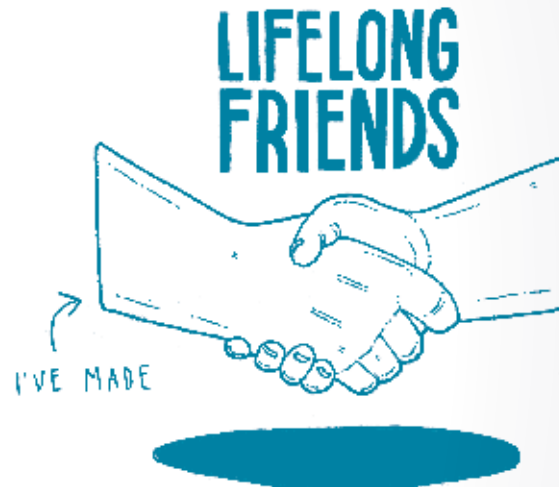
## **What can you expect to change through this priority?**

- To find it easier to use local services such as antenatal services, childcare or services in children's centres
- More children having their health and education checks and immunisations, and more having better health and taking up free early education places
- Fewer young people missing school or being involved in crime
- More families achieving permanent positive changes more quickly following support from specialist services

## BEST START FOR YOUNG FAMILIES

**"I have lived in London for nearly 20 years,** and have two children. When I had my children, I was surprised at the level of services provided by Southwark. My eldest was born in 2008 when there were a number of SureStart activities to attend. This meant we met many people in the area, feeling part of a community, which is unusual in London. My eldest also had the opportunity to learn a second language and do music. I have recently returned to work after the birth of my second child, and have been supported by fantastic nursery provision. Juggling work and childcare will be the next stage of my journey."

**"I was quite unsure** about being a parent and was glad to find support. My health visitor referred me to the children's centre. I've made lifelong friends. It was great taking my child to a playgroup every day, and building myself up by enrolling on courses. I'm now mentoring someone and watching them become a confident parent as well."



**"I came to live in London in 1995.** I have a nine year-old daughter now, and 4 years ago I got my registration to be a child minder. It is the best thing – this lets me spend time with my daughter. When I started my child-minding business, I learnt about all the services and help available, including the children's centres. My first language is Spanish, so would like to do English language courses. My child minder coordinator was very helpful, as were the staff from the centre – they gave me lots of information and opportunity to participate. This built my confidence to be more involved with other parents and children."

**"Difficult living conditions,** no job and having my second daughter pushed me into severe depression. My GP referred me to the mental health care team – they helped a lot by looking for activities that will let me get out and about. I also use the asylum seekers group. I'm now looking to get back into work although it's not always easy to stay on an even keel."

**"Got pregnant at 22** through drugs; social workers got involved. No one to check on me; health visitor only came twice. Some people get guidance but I got left on my own."

ALSO USE THE

ASYLUM

SEEKERS

GROUP

**“The thing that made the biggest difference** was having a non-judgemental service to support me with my mental health and my parenting alongside empowering me to grow personally by befriending. What could have been different is support in pregnancy that could have prevented my post-natal depression being so serious and earlier positive bonding with my child.”

**“If parents and the community are not accessing available services,** are the services providing what they need?”

**“I feel so happy having support,** friends, and good services for my baby and me. When I had my daughter, the health visitor gave me a ‘let’s go’ magazine, and advised to go to baby groups, then I went to the children’s centre. The English courses also really helped me. These experiences have made me want to be a child minder and care for children.”

**“With more joint working and collaboration,** we are increasingly dependent on others to deliver our priorities. The question is how do we effectively monitor and evaluate these services and their impact?”

### **SOUTHWARK FAST-FACTS:**

- ❏ 65% OF LOCAL CHILDREN’S CENTRES ARE JUDGED GOOD OR OUTSTANDING BY OFSTED.
- ❏ NEARLY HALF OF 2 YEAR OLDS DON’T GET THEIR HEALTH VISITOR CHECK-UP.
- ❏ 64% OF SOUTHWARK CHILDREN ACHIEVED A GOOD LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT AT EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE IN 2012 (LONDON: 59%).
- ❏ 69% OF THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS IN FREE EDUCATION ARE IN GOOD OR OUTSTANDING SETTINGS (LONDON: 71%).
- ❏ TAKE-UP OF THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLD FREE EDUCATION IN SOUTHWARK IS 81% (LONDON: 89%).

**“I am a mum of two girls** – one is in primary school, the other is a baby. I find the bulk removal service very useful – with a new baby you need to buy a lot of things, and update your furniture. I go to the baby clinic for my baby’s check-up, but the clinic is under-staffed, and too hot. I waited over two hours for a check. My health visitor is very good at advising on services. I want to return to work next, and will need to get a nursery place.”

**“My first child was born in 2005.** My health visitor told me about my local children’s centre, and Bookstart. I was on maternity leave and wanted to take my baby out to meet other children. I didn’t know what to expect because I had never heard of children’s centres. I felt very happy when I went to the children’s centre, and Bookstart groups at the library. It was the highlight of our week. The centre has given me a lot of help and support over the years. This made me want to become a volunteer. The Kick Start Your Life course gave me direction on what to do once my children are at school.”

**“I am nearly finishing my final year at university** – I am a mum of two. I got pregnant at 21 and had to leave college. Things were tough – I was struggling to get my life in order. I was getting help from Southwark: I had a personal advisor who helped me set goals. I was also in touch with a family support worker who helped me secure accommodation and to make sure I paid my bills.

She helped me secure nursery for my son when I wanted to go back to college. When I wanted to start university, my family support worker helped. I expect to graduate soon and start work."

**"I came to the UK with many expectations**  
– to find a better life. At the beginning, I was a bit afraid and worried as a foreigner. I'm a mother of two children, but not having my extended family in the UK was difficult. I remember seeking support and help from health visitors, GPs, midwife, local services, community centres – I had good advice from friendly people. The crèche services really helped me learn without stress or interruption."



BUILDING MYSELF UP  
BY ENROLLING ON COURSES

**"My first child was born when I was 17**  
– I was a single parent. I was upset and embarrassed quite a lot. I was shy and scared of using services. I thought people looked down on me. The outreach worker at the children's centre really made a big difference to me. Now, my children are in school – I was so proud when my first child started school. I want to help my children get a good education."

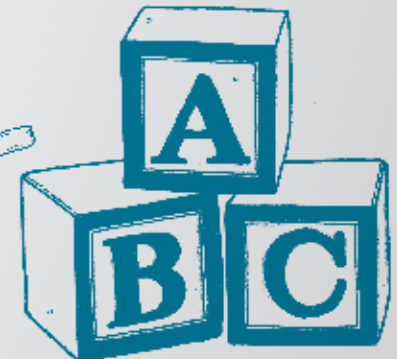
**"After my first child was born,** I started to find out about different playgroups and baby services. I met a lot of people – staff, other mums, childcare workers – that provided support. Children centres are places to learn about all the services that are provided – helping me when I was feeling frustrated and locked in with my kids, by giving me a place to go. They're places where my children can have fun and learn in a safe environment."



**"My two children are in primary school**  
– we are looking at secondary school choices for my son. By both working part-time, my partner and I share childcare – we were very busy attending all the activities, groups, and training available. My outreach worker was so important to us and became a real friend. She encouraged us to really engage with our children's learning. The local parent forum helped us get involved in planning activities for parents. I found that getting out and about was really helpful in keeping my spirits up when things got tough. I was able to go to something every day. I could always find someone to talk to, and share experiences with friends and practitioners – always someone to help with advice. What really helped were all the SureStart services, breastfeeding café, parent and toddler groups, Bookstart, Tiny Gym, numerous parenting courses, crèche facilities, Parents as Partners in Early Learning. The next part of my journey will be helping my kids enjoy their school experience; giving my kids as many opportunities as possible."



TO A PLAYGROUP



HERE IS A SELECTION OF JOURNEYS ABOUT FAMILIES DEALING WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS, SUCH AS DEPRESSION OR SUBSTANCE MISUSE.

## BEST START FOR FAMILIES WITH CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES

**"I referred Mo following the birth of her child.** Mo has depression, with a history of drug and alcohol abuse although she has been clean for two years; the father has a history of drug possession too. Mo has moved four times since the birth. She's very difficult to engage, although not when she knows you."



I REFERRED MO  
FOLLOWING THE BIRTH  
OF HER CHILD

**"I'm a good girl. I just have some trouble at school.** I'm a sensible girl. I'm looking forward to going out of Summerhouse and back to my school now I can be sensible. I ended up carrying a knife; it was scary." In 2008 I was brought to London to look after kids and cook. I expected to study or go back to school and learn a trade. I was excited to be brought to London, thinking life will be very good. I wanted to learn how to read, write and speak English. I left those that brought me to London, and met a friend with whom I shared my feelings – she encouraged me, and advised me to leave. I had to leave because I was being mistreated. Social services helped with support and advice – and sorted out a college for me. Now the biggest difference is being at school and having my own place. I have freedom and no longer suffer domestic abuse. I want to study hard and understand more English – be able to use it well in my day to day life, and to own my own hair and beauty salon."

### SOUTHWARK FAST-FACTS:

- ❑ OVER A QUARTER OF REFERRALS TO FAMILY SERVICES ARE FOR 'BASIC CARE', SUCH AS MATERNAL DEPRESSION AND HEALTH
- ❑ NEARLY A THIRD OF HEALTH VISITORS' CASES ARE FOR CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS – THAT'S UP TO 100 CHILDREN PER HEALTH VISITOR
- ❑ THE LEVEL OF CHILD POVERTY IN SOUTHWARK IS WORSE THAN THE ENGLAND AVERAGE, WITH ABOUT A THIRD OF UNDER 16S LIVING IN POVERTY



**"I came to London from Nigeria** in 2001 for a better life. I live in an overcrowded room – I have 3 children. My 9 year old has special needs. I'm worried about my children's future and safety. The biggest difference has been when I got counselling."

**"I was low, and feeling like I was worthless.**

My partner had been violent, and I was in shock. My son's father was in prison. I knew I was on my own, and didn't know where to turn. I expected to lose my son, and was scared. I got help and support. The outreach worker was lovely, and listened. I didn't trust her at first: 'why does she want to help me?' I thought. She made me feel better about myself, and that I could do something with my life – I was a good mum to my son. Social services helped me with forms and advice. Sometimes I would just cry and talk – they told me I was OK, and would come though. I have just finished my volunteer training – I want to help other mothers who are alone. I want to give back to the community. I feel much happier and have made friends on the course."

**"I am now in Southwark as an asylum-seeker** – my partner is the main applicant, with me and my three children dependants. The people here are friendly – they love children, as I do. The children's centre is very good for the children and parents – I like to be there with them. Family information service helps a lot. The playgroup helps me learn about things here. I try not to let our situation depress the kids, but I hope to remain in the UK."



BUT IT  
BECAME WORSE  
WHEN I HAD MY  
FIRST SON.

**"My depression started when I was 14,** became worse when I had my first son. Referred myself to Newpin, they've helped a lot. When I got arrested for assault in 2010 I knew my aggression was out of control. I've a 'team around the family' plan at the moment – it helps – and am attending a family English course. I've got problems now with my eldest son at school, he won't attend, has been excluded three times, and is emotionally hard to deal with."

**"The measure of success** should be a reduction in serious youth crime, as this can only be achieved when the whole family, including parenting ability, is considered."

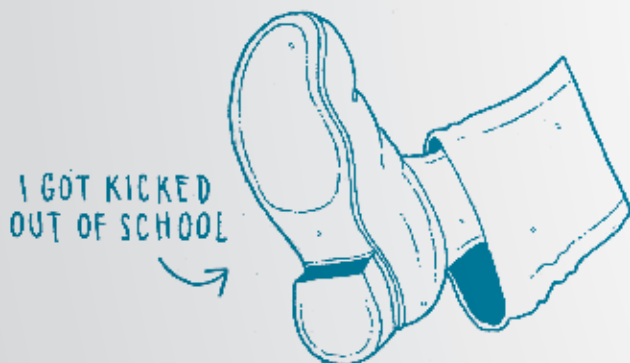
WHEN I GOT ARRESTED  
FOR ASSAULT IN 2010.



I KNEW MY AGGRESSION  
WAS OUT OF CONTROL

## BEST START FOR ADOLESCENTS GROWING UP

**"I used to get into a least three fights a week** at primary school. I had poor handwriting, terrible spelling, bad attitude, always late, so I got kicked out. My dad doesn't care about me. My key worker tried to get me back in school, but I ended up in the pupil referral unit. I dropped out, needed to make money, was dealing and got referral order. Got in with the wrong crowd, I felt untouchable – getting a buzz from all the activities. I'm looking at college now. I'm not a bad kid. I want it to be different."

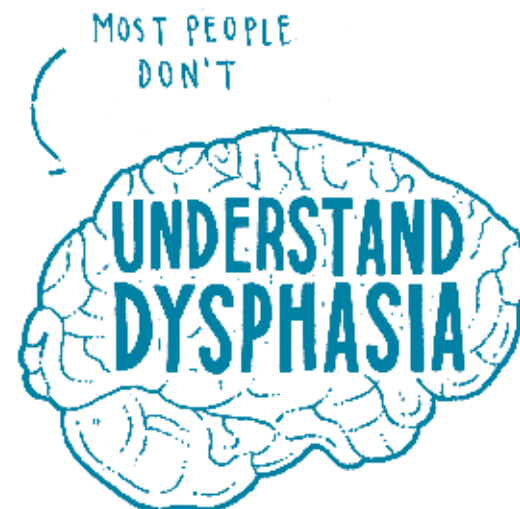


**"I didn't do well at school** as most people don't understand dysphasia. My youth worker is brilliant though and gave me positive constructive advice. I'm at college now, teachers are supportive and helped me get my GCSEs and A-levels. The work experience and qualifications I've now got will help me find employment that will give me satisfaction."

**"In school I would act like a fool** because I thought I needed to be cool. So I ended up here; brought fear and tears to my mum's eyes. Everyday I try."

**"The biggest difference was being able to go to the youth centre** and clear my mind and have a place to relax and be happy."

**"I am studying at college for a BTEC.** I play American football, just finished as a junior, starting senior soon. My influences are my mother, best friend, close friends, girlfriend, teachers, coaches, social workers. Mom went to prison so I was left on my own to sort out everything for myself without having anywhere to live properly. Friends and my social worker helped me stay positive. My expectations were a little non-existent at the start of my journey but a lot has changed with the help of my social worker and the youth services."



**"The pupil premium is available** for children not reaching [attainment] targets – the potential is there, schools have to publish what support they offer children with special educational needs, and there are early help services available. It's about making better use of services."

**"Troubled children are often excluded.** There needs to be early intervention from the first exclusion – there needs to be a 'toolkit' for dealing with that child, looking at the context around the child."

**“My journey started a year ago when I left my parent’s house at 17.** I found it difficult to live with my parents and their strict ways – I didn’t feel safe and secure. I got a studio flat and had to do life on my own. Social services have helped me a great deal. They have provided me with information that I needed. I had an advisor who was always by my side. They were encouraging me to study and finish my education. I think I was lucky to have people to guide me along the way. The bit I remember most is the day I left my parent’s house. I am still not sure that I made the right decision and sometimes I wonder how my life would be if I had stayed at home. But, I wanted to be the one who made decisions about my life. I am not really happy with the way I am – I have a way to go yet. I really miss my brothers and sisters. I want to start thinking ahead and being responsible for my actions. To get there I’d like to find a role model and a mission in life. I need to start to trust people and to make contact with the right people. I will go back to my parents and show them that I am still their daughter and that they didn’t waste all their efforts on me. I want them to be proud of me.”

**SOUTHWARK FAST-FACTS:**

- ☒ NEARLY 75% OF YOUNG OFFENDERS ARE KNOWN TO CHILDREN’S SOCIAL CARE, AND A CHILD WITH A FIXED TERM EXCLUSION IS MORE LIKELY TO BE KNOWN TO SOCIAL CARE THAN A CHILD WHO HAS BEEN PERMANENTLY EXCLUDED
- ☒ OVER 90% OF EMERGENCY CHILD PROTECTION INVESTIGATIONS FOR 15 TO 17 YEAR OLDS END IN NO FURTHER ACTION BEING TAKEN

**“My journey began in year 7 at secondary school.** I am now in year 11. I have problems in maths and I’m easily distracted. My support teachers have helped me; some other students have helped me too. They help me with my schoolwork, and to stay focused. I used to get in trouble in school and at home. I felt angry, depressed and fed up. I used to get into a lot of fights. The thing that has made the biggest difference to me was growing up and learning to listen more. I want to plan for my future, work hard and apply to go to college – I want to be a pilot or work in a library.”

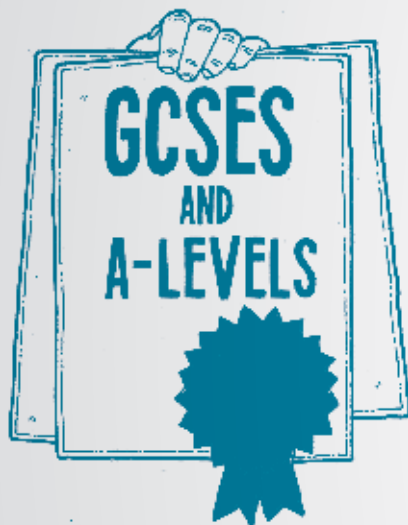
THE WORK EXPERIENCE  
AND QUALIFICATIONS I’VE  
NOW GOT WILL HELP ME



**“When I moved house to a different area,** I had to make new friends. I am in secondary school now in year 9. I am choosing my options for GCSEs. In primary school I had a great time, but then at secondary school some tried to put me down and spread rumours. I felt like I wasn’t wanted. My mum and teachers helped me when I was bullied. They are helping me to deal with these things. But, I need to focus on school so that I can pass all my GCSEs. I want to be a midwife like my aunt. If someone else was being bullied I would tell them to tell their family and their teachers and not to keep it bottled up inside.”

**“I have got my GCSEs,** and I’m at the beginning of my AS Levels. Going from year 11 at secondary school to year 12 has been daunting, but exciting. My goal is to become an architect. I did work experience in an architect’s firm and it was good to experience the life of an architect. It has given me motivation to stay focused and work hard.”

TEACHERS ARE SUPPORTIVE  
AND HELPED ME GET MY



**“When I lost my job,** Southwark Youth Services gave me motivation and now I’m in my first year at university. The people who have helped me the most are: my youth worker (love her), my mother, my brothers, and my nanny. My youth worker helped me to prepare for university. My Dad has also been a big inspiration. I remember he gave me the biggest hug when I got in to uni. I expect that I’m going to have lots of course work and revision and less time to see my friends, but I also expect to make my mother proud and make my youth worker smile.”

**“I was at my friend’s house when I first saw my girlfriend.** A few weeks later we started seeing each other and a few weeks after that we found out we were going to be a family. At the moment I’m doing a class with my girlfriend to help us to be a good mum and dad. A high is having a family to look forward to; I want to be a good father and boyfriend. Sometimes I worry whether I’ll be a good enough father, but my support worker helps me and gives me advice. ”

**“My journey started when I came to England** in 2004 because of the civil war in Somalia. I didn’t know any English and I wasn’t sure how I would cope. I went to college to learn English so that I could talk to people – talking to people without an interpreter was a big achievement. My care worker has helped me along the way – helping me to enrol with the library and to use the leisure centre. The teachers at college have encouraged me to learn in order for me to have a better life in the future. I want to do an NVQ Level 2 in social care so that I can work as a carer.”

#### SOUTHWARK FAST-FACTS:

2010/11 PRIMARY STUDENTS: 17,873

2010/11 SECONDARY STUDENTS: 12,485

#### NO. OF SCHOOLS:

> PRIMARY – 70

> SECONDARY – 16

> SPECIAL – 9

> INDEPENDENT – 9

> INDEPENDENT SPECIAL – 1

58.8% OF SOUTHWARK CHILDREN  
GOT 5+ A\*-C GCSE AND EQUIVALENT  
RESULTS IN 2012

**“When I was eight years old my parents broke up.** Not knowing why my parents broke up was hard – I felt it was my fault. My parents arguing with each other before they split up was bad. Now my parents are happy with other people instead of being unhappy together. My mum has a boyfriend who I get along with, as well as his son. My father has a girlfriend and she has 2 kids who I get along well with too. Recently my little half brother was born. My friends and family have helped me to understand that I am lucky to still see both parents. I want to be a game developer because I like creating things on a computer because I like how games look when they are put together and I want to be a part of that.”

**"My dream is to be a music producer.** My mum has always supported me by commenting on the tracks I make. I am learning how to make music at college and at Bede Youth Club using their Mac. My tutors at college have taught me how to produce beats. I am hoping to get a job and to get a BTEC qualification."



I FELT  
UNTOUCHABLE

**"I live with my mother and brother.** I find myself in situations because of my brother. I always stick up for him, but it isn't always the right thing to do. I got thrown out of school because I didn't listen. I could go to prison and live the thug lifestyle, or get a job and become a business man. I want to move out of London to get away from all the badness. Bad memories make me angry and upset – I don't know how to deal with them, especially when I am on my own. You have to keep yourself busy so you don't end up thinking about stuff – but this can mean you are doing the wrong thing."

**"I am in the pupil referral unit.** I was fighting a lot in mainstream school. Other people were always starting trouble with me. The people here have helped me a lot. I feel angry and sad. I am learning how to control my temper so that I can be good and do what you're supposed to do in lessons. I want to leave here and go back to school. I want to finish and get good GCSEs."

# SAFETY AND STABILITY

We promise to make sure that our most vulnerable children, young people and families receive timely, purposeful support that brings safe, lasting and positive change – providing safety and stability which might be otherwise missing.

## **What does this priority mean?**

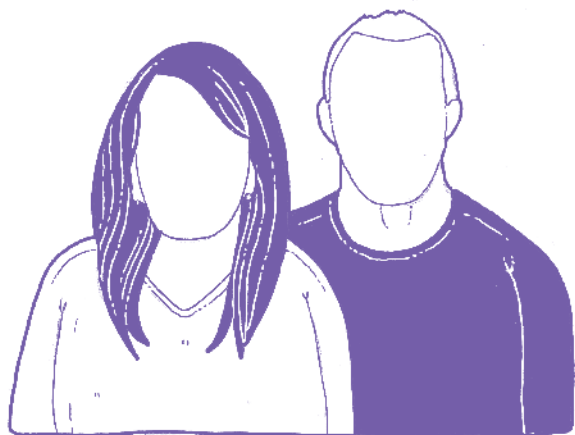
Every child and young person should grow up in a safe, loving and stable home – and it is everyone's responsibility to make sure they do. So we are committed to working to support families and communities to keep children safe, and help them lead happy, healthy and safe lives.

## **What you can expect to change through this priority?**

- More effective help for parents struggling to care for their children
- More children and young people living in a permanent and stable home
- More foster carers and children being adopted
- Vulnerable children and young people succeeding better at school

## SAFETY AND STABILITY FOR FAMILIES FACING CHALLENGES

**“The Akondi family is well known:** the mother was a teenage parent, the father an addict. Three children were adopted at birth, and there are child protection plans for the other six. There’s a history of domestic abuse, shop lifting, anti-social behaviour, and rent arrears. When the mum is pregnant again, a section 47 leads to a child protection plan for the unborn child. Things deteriorate further: the eldest son is in trouble with the police, the father too has been arrested for drugs, the other children are not attending school, the eldest son goes missing, and there are concerns about the poor health of the younger children. The eldest daughter is now pregnant.”

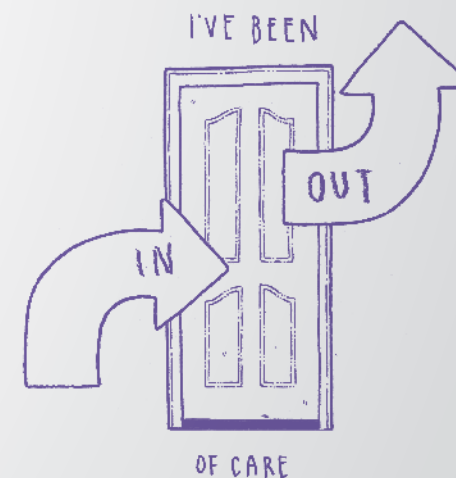


**“Complex families need more bespoke solutions** to their needs. If we empower practitioners, we need to empower the resources and have the right tools in place.”

**“I had my daughter at 17** and wanted to go into rehab with her. This wasn’t allowed so I lost custody. Accessing funding to go into rehab a few years ago really sorted me out; also funding for detox; I couldn’t have turned my life around without that. I was a thief and an addict and I thought that working was a mug’s game. But now I can give myself permission to be a person who can try and reinvent. I now have a close relationship with my adult daughter. I’m a grandma now too. I have a new boyfriend, and may have marriage in my future and some financial security.”

**“Social workers need the tools and training** to be clearer and more confident about how their child protection plans and work can make a difference to a family.”

**“I was fostered at 6 months** to a couple in Essex – one of four children fostered out. When I was eight, my sister came to join me. I had a very unhappy childhood, despite having my sister. I started college in London, but had to get through the hostel system – independent living at 16. I finally met my birth mother after 10 years. But I didn’t have a great relationship with her. I came to Southwark in 1994 and was self-sufficient until I had my son. I stopped working then, but was looking for childcare. As a first-time mum, I didn’t have any support – I wasn’t able to rely on the father’s family. I had to do it all by myself. Contact with my Health Visitor started once I had my son. She was very good – encouraged me



to make contact with children's services. I made sure my son and I got out as much as possible. In the last couple of months, I've been diagnosed with depression. Issues with my childhood are re-surfacing now. My GP referred me to CBT, then parental Mental Health – this has been helpful. As a parent, you have ideas about how you want your child to be – and I want to be a good mum. The thing that made the biggest difference was knowing there were places to go. Networking though SureStart helps you meet other mums. My hopes are to find work, raise my son to be a good citizen; find a new relationship and have more children."

#### SOUTHWARK FAST-FACTS:

☞ SOUTHWARK HAS THE THIRD HIGHEST REFERRAL RATE IN LONDON; BUT NEARLY A FIFTH OF THESE REFERRALS END IN NO FURTHER ACTION

☞ SOUTHWARK HAD THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF CHILDREN ON 'REPEAT' CHILD PROTECTION PLANS IN LONDON IN 2011-12

☞ THE BOROUGH HAS ABOVE LONDON AVERAGE TIMELINESS IN COMPLETING ASSESSMENTS



WITHOUT EVEN UNDERSTANDING THIS WAS MY OWN ISSUE.

"My eldest son had many fixed term exclusions which meant disrupting my work to attend school and services. The youngest was beginning to act up, I had police at my door. It was only when he was sent to court for possessing a knife that I realised I needed support to know how to parent. The youth offending service answered my cry. After its programme, conversations with my son showed me he wanted more independence, more praise. I had set him up for failure without even understanding this was my own issue."

"I was originally referred to the Mellow Parenting programme for support in managing my elder child's behaviour, but hadn't engaged due to my lifestyle: substance misuse and an abusive relationship. When I was pregnant with my third child in 2010, the older children were placed in foster care due to my substance misuse. I realised then my lifestyle had to change – I stopped using drugs. My youngest had stayed in my care for 16 weeks (mother and baby unit). Then I went to the perinatal drop-in – I found it hard, but had to attend as my youngest was on a supervision order. With time, as I got to know people and didn't feel judged, I started to feel more comfortable and enjoyed going. My baby and I started attending support services three times a week – we enjoyed being around other mums and children. It helped me to know others who had similar problems; to be given advice about things that would help me and my child, and not to be criticised about things I might be getting wrong. I have suffered depression now for about 20 years, and have spent some time in hospital with it. Not being isolated is very important, has helped me not get depressed anymore; it's definitely helped me be more confident and have better self-esteem. I'm also able to socialise and relate to people without drugs."



MY  
**DEPRESSION**  
STARTED WHEN I WAS 14.

**"I suffer from severe depression.** The depression stems from the death of my father when I was aged six. I have never been able to get over this, and have never liked life at all since. I didn't find it easy to talk to people; was always on guard, which made me 'hard-faced' at times. I used to stay in most of the time, drink quite a lot and smoke cannabis constantly, even when I was pregnant – which is not something I am proud of. I've slowly but surely cut my cannabis use. I've done the 'mellow parenting' course – it teaches about the right ways to discipline children. My depression has got a lot better, and the course has let me build new friendships, something I never thought would have happened. For the first time in a long time, I felt fantastic and proud of myself. The bond I have with my son has been improved hugely; as I always used to get stressed with the stages a baby goes through. I've learnt new ways of coping, which has made me realise its OK to get stressed sometimes, and understand that children feel what we do."

**"We need more services at the front door,** so families get the support they need earlier. Are we using the wider system as best we can?"

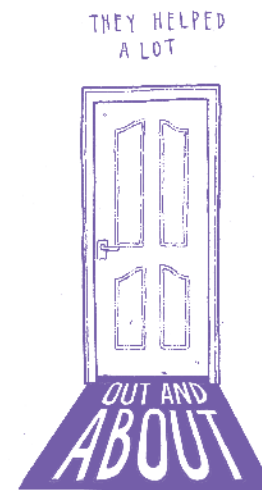
WITH A HISTORY  
OF DRUG &  
ALCOHOL ABUSE



**"We need to think about** how current health visiting capacity is used in regards to vulnerable children in identifying and managing need – we could work differently."

**"I grew up in Southwark** and am a mum to two girls. I was 20 years old when I had my first girl. Although the pregnancy was unplanned, I was happy and looking forward to being a mum. I had been with my partner for about 18 months, but as we both had mental health problems, it was not the most stable of relationships. I'd probably been depressed for quite a few years at this point but never got any help for it; I just got on with things, as that was the ethos of my family. For the first month after my first girl was born, everything was amazing – we were the perfect little family. But then things changed – I started to feel like I wasn't coping. I started to doubt my ability to parent her. Within weeks I was no longer interacting with her. Things between my partner and me were strained – he was not supportive. My confidence was gone. I stopped talking to my family, and became even more withdrawn from everything. Things went downhill very fast. When my little girl was 18 months, her Dad started to visit and we got back together. I became pregnant with my second girl – I knew I needed help. On my first visit, I thought this wasn't for me. But I knew I needed help, so decided to keep trying to attend. After a while, I started to engage with staff and attending every day. It gave me a safe space to discuss my feelings and be helped by others. I finally had a support network for the first time since having my daughter. I am now feeling better in myself – things are improving. I am on the road to recovery, but still have a long way go. I have started

volunteering in a playgroup. I am socialising more with my family, who are also supportive. The children are both in school and doing well. I am hoping that soon I will be well enough to start to plan my future."



**"I moved to East Dulwich about six years ago.** I entered full-time work and had to get childcare from 5am each morning I'm from Ghana – and caught between bringing up children in the traditional West African way, or by western culture. I'm just recovering from severe depression, after having my second daughter. The Mental Health Care Team helped a lot with activities and programmes that let me get out and socialise more. I've also used the Asylum Seekers' group. I've got clothes and shoes, a nice lunch, and was able to socialise and make new friends from the group. But, migrant families are not given enough advice on help available to them in times of difficulty. It would have been better if I had asked for help earlier."

HERE IS A SELECTION OF JOURNEYS ABOUT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES NEEDING SPECIALIST CARE.

## SAFETY AND STABILITY FOR THOSE NEEDING STATUTORY HELP

**“After my third child,** I thought I was fine. But I started feeling low and wouldn’t open the door to others. The children were missing school. The health visitor visited and referred me to a perinatal mental health team, and also my GP, who wanted me to have medication, which I didn’t want. I started going to children’s centres. I didn’t like the breastfeeding café but liked the ‘keeping well post birth’ group. I was feeling good and my first child’s father came to stay and we went on holiday. But then I started struggling again. The children were late for school; I was drinking before the groups. I wish I could stay on an even keel and get back to work. I need ongoing support to get there.”

**“We need a more child-centred approach** around complex case families in which all agencies look for a solution together rather than having to go into battle, when eventually the family will have to be supported anyway. It’s a waste of time and totally demoralising for the family.”

**“My children’s father kept disappearing** when I needed him the most. I didn’t care about myself, just focused on the children. I asked for help. I couldn’t cope. I regret saying something because social services took my children away. I had a police order. My house situation disintegrated.

Have a Children in Need plan. I want to see it through. I feel guilty about my children and want them to be old enough to understand. No blaming me for taking them away.”

**“The 1,000 journeys work has changed my mind** – there is a much bigger role for the voluntary and community sector in providing support for vulnerable families, particularly in providing longer term support and capacity to families.”

THERE'S A  
HISTORY OF  
**DOMESTIC  
ABUSE**



**“My journey started when my mum left.** My dad is abusive and doesn’t care about me. I should have told someone about my dad. I have been kicked out of school. I got in trouble, and started dealing – my cousin gave me the load to deal. I feel I’m easily influenced. But being in hospital, I realised it was time to turn my life around. Things could have been different if I had not taken drugs from my cousin. I’m good with girls. I’d like to get married, have kids, get a dog. My key worker tried to get me back into school. She was the only one who would listen, and showed she cared. I need to try to go to college, and get qualifications.”

**“I was referred by my school at 14 years old.** I was involved in robbery and have been in custody for malicious communication. Both my parents are involved with drug misuse. I break down, hear voices and have cut myself. I have been on a youth rehabilitation order, and have had poor engagement with this. I am thinking about running away from everything and everyone.”



**“When I was younger, I saw my dad threaten my mum with a knife.** There have been other times when my dad threatened to hurt mum – including the times when he’s threatened to kill her, and torch the house. I can’t get around and do things other kids do. I’m big, and have something wrong with my heart. My mum gets an allowance – to do with my health. I get in trouble at school – have been excluded nearly a dozen times. Sometimes me and my mum argue and fight.”

**“My journey started when I had to go to court.** I was involved in a gang and doing crime and fighting. Now I’m at college and playing football. My football manager has been a big influence. So have my friends and family; they supported and encouraged me even when I let them down. Before, I just wanted to live a life where I had money to buy things so I was doing all those things for money and popularity. I was confused and angry, but I also felt untouchable. The crossroads was when my friends started going to jail and a close friend was killed. Being in a police cell and knowing my family was disappointed in me was a low. My pastor and church, and my college have been really positive for me. They have helped me see there’s another way and now I’m going to go to uni. I want to get a good job or be a professional footballer.”

### SOUTHWARK FAST-FACTS:

- ☒ SOUTHWARK CHILDREN ARE THREE TIMES MORE LIKELY THAN NATIONALLY TO BE ON AN OPEN CHILD PROTECTION PLAN FOR OVER 2 YEARS.
- ☒ NEGLECT IS THE MOST COMMON INITIAL CATEGORY OF THOSE MADE SUBJECT TO A CHILD PROTECTION PLAN, OR REASON FOR REGISTRATION; ON AVERAGE MAKING UP MORE THAN HALF OF ALL OPEN PLANS.
- ☒ ALL CHILD PROTECTION CASES WERE REVIEWED WITHIN TIMESCALES IN 2011/12.
- ☒ SOUTHWARK HAS THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF CHILDREN BEING SUBJECT TO A SECOND OR SUBSEQUENT CHILD PROTECTION PLAN

**“Things went a bit mad for a number of years.** I grew up in outer London, and was 14 when I left school. Since 15, I’ve worked with a treatment programme – helped me get off methadone. I’ve been clean for 4 years, and now I want to move away from it and get sorted. When my dad died, I felt completely alone. I didn’t have a good relationship with my mum. I only speak to my brothers, and my sister comes to see me a lot. Having my children has motivated me – I felt I had to do it by myself. I have parental responsibility for my youngest – she lives with my partner’s nan, but my eldest is in a permanent placement. I have plans to have her live with me again, but not until I work on things. I want to complete college and get back into work.”



I HAVE A CRIMINAL CONVICTION IT IS REALLY HARD.

HERE IS A SELECTION OF JOURNEYS ABOUT CHILDREN WHO ARE LOOKED AFTER.

## SAFETY AND STABILITY FOR CHILDREN IN CORPORATE CARE

**"I've been sad, happy, very happy.** I've been in and out of care three or four times since I was 2. My present carer has changed my attitude and helped to change my anger problems. She treats me like her son and I love her to bits."

**"I am a foster carer.** I sometimes don't feel like the child is at the centre of the system. The system has gone process mad sometimes."

SHE TREATS ME  
LIKE HER



**"My link worker would pull out all the stops,** they are always there when I need them and nothing is too much trouble. I don't think I could do it without them."

**"I'm a single parent** living in a low-support mother and baby unit. My mum kicked me out so I got placed in a foster home. Moved to two other hostels before I am where I am now, and then had my son. I still don't speak to my mum – my family is now me and my son. I expected to finish my college course before I got pregnant. I was shocked when I got pregnant – it really only sunk in when I had him, and I saw my son for the first time. Thinking about moving is depressing. I had to stop contact with my son's dad, as he was abusive and controlling. The next part of my journey will be trying to make a better life for my son."

**"I learnt everything from my foster carer** – when I moved to independent living I did the stuff she did like register with the doctors; I had never been to the doctors before I went to live there."

**"A good social worker** does not bring up your past, is more forward looking."



IS IN TROUBLE  
WITH THE POLICE...

**"I got arrested** and when I came out social services put me in a foster home. I'm now living in a semi-independent hostel, and still working with the Youth Offending Team (YOT). I see my mum every day – we are OK with each other, she helps me with everything. YOT has also helped by teaching me stuff, such as health and safety. I try not to lose my temper – but I need help with this. I feel angry when they blame my mum for my behaviour. YOT have helped me – teaching me why I get angry, and how to deal with this. It was great when YOT found me an apprenticeship and gave me something productive to do with my time. With support from my friends and family, I'll get a job and my own place."

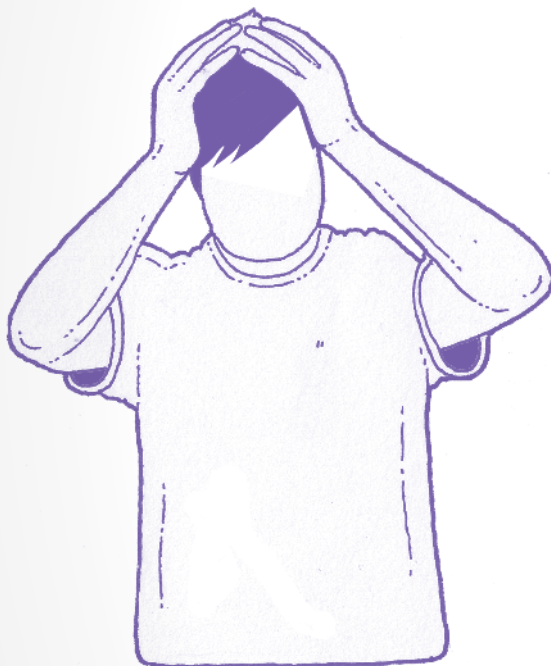
**“The public sector reputation is not justified.**

Our [adoption] social worker was on top of everything all the time...we need to dispel the myths – they are passionate, driven, hard working, considerate and actually extraordinary!”

**“Dropped in it!** Mum dropped me at Nan’s – then Nan took me to McDonald’s and told me I’d be going to foster care. I remember crying into my burger. I’ve had about 11 years of foster care. I’m in a daily struggle of independence. I wish I was ignorant so life would be easier, but I am anxious about things before they happen – I see the bigger picture. I don’t see myself as an inspiration to others – can’t carry people – have to look after myself, and then, when grown up, take responsibility of immediate family. You can only give so much to people, then people have to look after themselves.”

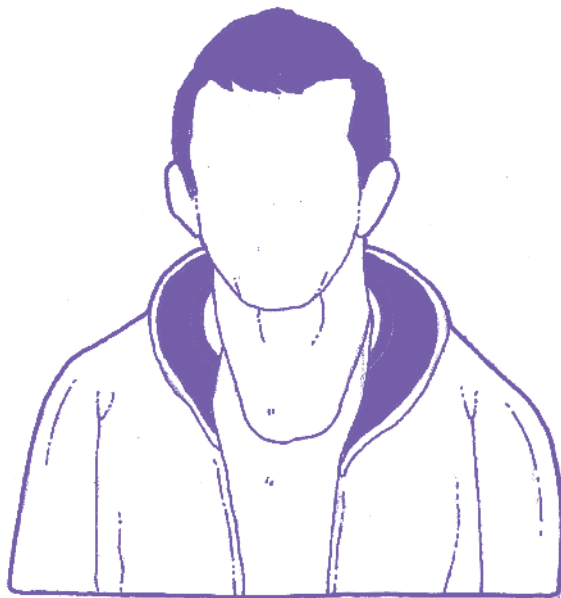
**“I began work in the Referral and Assessment team** – now I am a senior practitioner in a long-term child protection team. Colleagues have been supportive and encouraging during some difficult times. I will always remember removing my first child; having success in court; awful cross examinations in court. I want to continue to help and care for people – and to find ways to cope with the stress at times.”

**“My foster carer family** is my family. They have been there ever since I remember.”



**SOUTHWARK FAST-FACTS:**

- ☒ THERE ARE AROUND 570 CHILDREN IN CARE, WHICH IS HIGHER THAN NATIONAL AND STATISTICAL NEIGHBOUR AVERAGES
- ☒ ALTHOUGH IMPROVING, THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN A STABLE PLACEMENT IS BELOW SIMILAR AUTHORITIES
- ☒ OVER 8 IN 10 CHILDREN IN CARE GO “HOME” WITHIN THREE YEARS BUT ONLY 1 IN 10 OF THOSE AGED 5 TO 14 LEAVE CARE WITHIN THE YEAR
- ☒ 7% OF THE CHILDREN LEAVING CARE ARE ADOPTED, WHICH IS BELOW THE NATIONAL AVERAGE OF 12%



**"I came from Jamaica** from a big extended family. I've had different foster placements – brought up in care since I was three. My sister died at 25 (suicide) – was a big shock. I didn't cope and started taking drugs with people around me as I hated to be on my own. My brother took responsibility for me which was good, but he was into drugs, which impacted on me. Social Services tried to help me until I was 22, and I got pregnant. The thing that made the biggest difference was having a family environment, stability and routine – structure. I need to go to detox/rehab, then onto training and education – to get a clear mind and clear system."

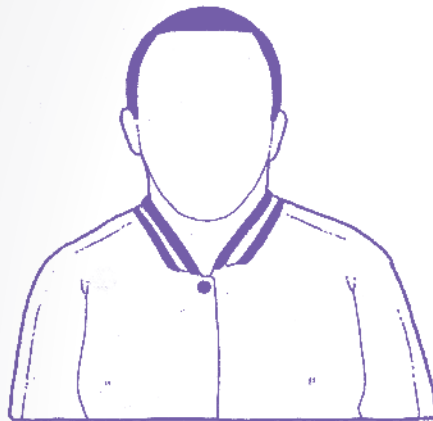
**"My journey began when I was three and was brought into care** – my mother couldn't cope. My foster parents and my social worker have been of much help. I am currently on catering/hospitality training. I have had encouragement, coaching, mentoring, education and role-modelling from my foster parents, and all the services supporting me."

**"I was not really helped at an early stage** to deal with the emotions coming into care brings. They are always there and can cause some really bad behaviours through confusion, hatred, doubt, misunderstanding."



**"I am approaching the end of my time in care,** as I'm turning 18 next year. It is going to be daunting and scary. I'm going to try to live an independent life. I was shocked when I had to leave my first carers, because I expected to be adopted by them. Luckily I moved in with another couple when I was nine – they really cared and looked after me like a mum and dad. I was confused at first, but when I settled in, I was explained a lot of things, and made to feel special. This had the biggest impact on my life, and helped me achieve so much. Sometimes I get depressed and angry, and think I can't cope, but I get help from the Mental Health team. They were kind and talked to me a lot and gave me some medication. I've seen my sisters struggle and have their babies taken into care, and decided I could do better. It's a shame my real mum and dad couldn't look after me. Just recently I've got an apprenticeship job at a large hotel chain. I am so lucky. I want to do really well at my new job, and get a permanent placement – and move into my own flat at 18!"

**"In 1998, my dad passed away** and my mum couldn't cope on her own. I am still in care. I have other siblings, and am the youngest. I have moved school many times. My social worker helped to move me into the same care house as my sister, and that was helpful. My eldest sister has always been there for me. I wanted to be a professional dancer, because I'm good at it. Felt emotional and sad in care because my foster carers weren't good to us – used to beat us, before I moved. Have moved carers five times – my present carer has changed my attitude and has helped me manage my anger problems. My present carer treats me like her daughter – I love her to bits. I am going to college, but I am not getting on well."



**"I am a Social Worker** at Southwark. After graduating, I worked for several agencies working with vulnerable young people, particularly women. I have established relationships with parents who have previously been considered difficult, evasive and hard to engage. I have also been able to ensure the safety of children; whether within families, or within local authorities (Looked After Children). Every time I have helped a child to understand and improve their life has been a highlight. There have been times when I have felt unable to make a difference, where change has been needed. I will never forget the first time I removed a child from their family to ensure their safety – the various and conflicting emotions were very challenging. I feel similarly every time I tell a child that they can't stay with their family or carers. I would like to move to the Looked After Children Service next – to become a more skilled and experienced social worker with whom children have a positive and worthwhile experience."

**"My foster carers were all good.** I'm not in contact with any of them anymore, life just gets in the way and people move on. But I don't have any complaints about them – my experience there was better than it was in children's homes."

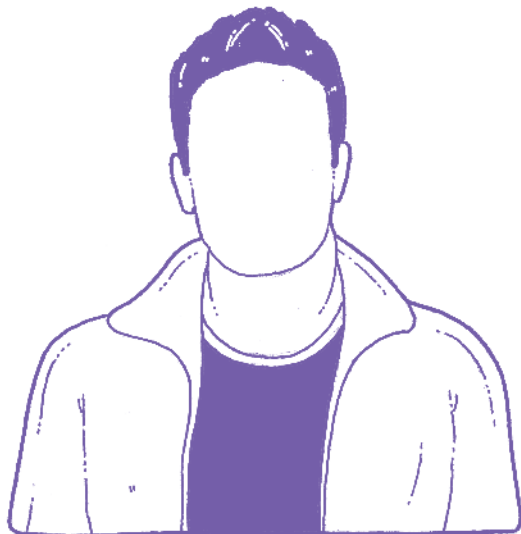




**“The first foster carer I had was good,** I’m still in touch with her now and she’s a big part of my life.”

**“My relationship with my foster carer is great,** that’s my mum. She’s never treated me as a foster child – she’s always treated me as one of her own. She was open and understanding; she never tried to take my mum’s place and worked hard to keep her spirit alive. She made the house very welcoming, put pictures of my mum around the house and stuff. I grew a strong bond with her and she even adopted me when I was 17.”

**“My foster carer was really good to me;** she was like a mum to me.”



**“I work in Southwark now,** after qualifying. I feel very strongly about the children and their lives and experiences. I can feel frustrated if the children aren’t getting the best service – this could be because of systems, or because we can’t get enough change in parents/carers. I am also very committed to the social workers and want them to feel supported so that they can do their job properly. What helps is when we are all focused on the children rather than red tape; having good competent social workers. I would like more time to give to research and theory. I remember my worst case – not feeling supported – but I didn’t give up and eventually the children were made safe.”

**“Much of our money for children in care** is tied up in traditional and certain ways of doing practice. How can we reinvest those resources, particularly by thinking about ways to help children go and remain at home?”

ARE WE RECRUITING  
ENOUGH YOUNG PEOPLE  
INTO THESE ROLES?

# CHOICE AND CONTROL

We promise that children and young people with a special educational need or disability and their families will be able to access a local offer of seamless, personalised support from childhood to adulthood.

## **What does this priority mean?**

Every child and young person deserves to live a full, happy and independent life – and a special educational need or disability should not prevent this. So we are committed to making sure that these children and young people are able to choose the services they need – regardless of whether they need health, education or social care support – in order to live life to the fullest.

## **What can you expect to change through this priority?**

- More children and young people who need it being offered integrated support spanning health, education and social care services
- More services of the kind you need and want to be available, and for it to be easier to find out about them
- Eligible children and young people to have the right to a personal budget – which means they have the freedom to buy the services they need
- More young people supported right into adulthood – up to the age of 25 – helping them to be independent and successful

HERE IS A SELECTION OF JOURNEYS ABOUT GROWING UP WITH AN ADDITIONAL NEED.

## CHOICE AND CONTROL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE BECOMING INDEPENDENT

**“Petra is 17. She has Down ‘s syndrome** and learning difficulties. She’s just finished an independent living programme at college. Her mental health worker says she has deteriorated quite substantially in the past 12 months and is not responding to anti-psychotic drugs. They are not sure what is going on and have instructed the support of other medical services. Her parent says she just wanders, appears distressed and is pulling at her hair. She was not known to social care; they are now assessing her. Her previous college feels it can’t support her as a lot has changed since she left her special school. A meeting to agree what happens next is planned.”



**“One of my children has a chronic medical condition.** The health visitor made me feel responsible for her failure to thrive. I had to fight to get physiotherapy and education support. A high is that she’s just started mainstream secondary school and is settling in very well. A low is at home – I have been waiting two and half years for adaptations so that my daughter can access the kitchen and learn some independent living skills.”

### INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAMME

**“My journey began when I had my first baby.** After family support services were removed, social services helped me gain a nursery place for my son, who has autism. Speech and language therapist, nursery staff, GP, health visitor and benefits advisor have all helped. There were times when we was fighting red tape that I felt very angry and frustrated, and times when I felt elated at the responses I got. My next journey is supporting my son into school.”

**“I am a young person, 19 years old, with a disability** and I have recently moved into supported living where I am living semi independently. Learning how to cook for myself, shop for myself, do my own laundry, and learning how to travel independently to college. At Lewisham College I am doing art and design. The people who have helped me include my foster carer, my key worker, my social worker, and staff and friends at the Youth Club. When I have been on residentials with the youth club I was able to take part in everything which made me feel proud of myself. I would like to work in childcare, go to college and get a qualification in childcare.”

**“I started in a mainstream school but dropped out because I was bullied.** I was diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome at 15. My head teacher at my mainstream school suggested I go for an assessment. I met my advisor, and she helped me to understand work, and how to construct a CV. She found me a course in a hospital, and helped me get work experience at a farm. I have 4 GCSEs.”

**“Transition means different things to different people.** Childhood to adulthood but also changes in condition, social circumstances. Changes in life can be ‘transitions’. If you want to take an integrated approach you need to understand these transitions.”

**"I am in Year 11.** I need help with my concentration. I sometimes lose my temper at teachers because they grab or shout at me. I like meeting friends at school. The thing that made the biggest difference was meeting friends. My teacher has helped me because she always tells us to try our hardest. I need to be focused and try my hardest. I want to become a professional boxer or football player."

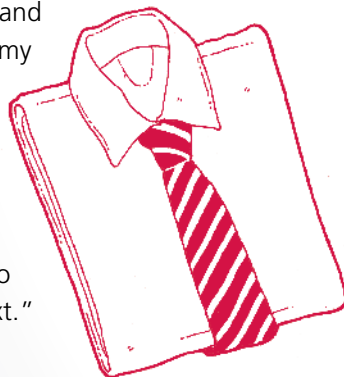
**"I have problems in maths,** and I am easily distracted. I used to get into a lot of fights. My support teachers and some students have also helped me. They have helped me with my work, and also with my distractions. I used to remember getting in trouble in school and at home. I used to feel angry and distressed and fed up. My family, teachers, and friends help me with my troubles. My teachers help me with private tuition, because I have problems with my work."

**"I live with my mum and sister.** I go to Roots and Shoots college. I learn retail. I want to work in Sainsbury's. I go to Fast Forward Youth Project. On Thursdays I do cooking, art, basketball and I get to see my friends. I also have a carer from Southwark Carers."



**"My brother was in hospital** and my mum had to stay with him. So I went to stay with my Nan on the Isle of Wight. I went to school there for a few weeks. I didn't know any of the kids there and played on my own most of the time. Now I'm back at school – and it's good. My brother had to get his legs cut off – sometimes he uses a wheelchair. I meet him at a wheelchair basketball club, and now I play too. I used to need help in class with my Maths, but now I'm quite good. Sometimes people wind me up and I get angry and push people. Teachers tell me off. I want some help so I don't get angry. I want to be a builder like my dad."

**"The mainstream school has no understanding of my child's special educational needs.** I expected to have my son in a school where he's understood. I've felt unsupported, sad, and alone. But getting my son in the right place has been so positive. I'll need to get a statement of needs to find a secondary school to meet his needs next."



### SOUTHWARK FAST-FACTS:

- ❑ THERE ARE AROUND 1,500 SOUTHWARK CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH A STATEMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS, AND AROUND 150 OF THESE HAVE A CARE PACKAGE AS WELL
- ❑ THE THREE MOST COMMON NEEDS FOR A STATEMENT ARE AUTISM, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES, AND LEARNING DIFFICULTIES
- ❑ AT 40% OF ALL STATEMENTS AUTISM IS THE MOST COMMON PRIMARY NEED
- ❑ OVER 50% OF PUPILS WITH AUTISM ARE BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH (56%) WHICH IS 2.5 TIMES HIGHER THAN THE NEXT LARGEST ETHNIC GROUP – THOSE OF WHITE ETHNIC BACKGROUND

## HERE IS A SELECTION OF JOURNEYS ABOUT FAMILIES FINDING AND ACCESSING SUPPORT FROM LOCAL SERVICES

# CHOICE AND CONTROL FOR FAMILIES SEEKING SUPPORT

### **“My son was diagnosed with autism at 12.**

He had just started at a secondary academy. He was not given adequate support at school, which resulted in challenging behaviours and he was permanently excluded. I would've preferred that he stay at the secondary school, with support like he would have in a special school. I was also angry with the school – how dare they treat my son this way.”

AND HE WAS



### **“Since our child has been diagnosed with**

**autism,** it has been a struggle and battle to get the right support and advice. We have had to learn, investigate and find the right people ourselves. We felt isolated and alone against

something we'd never experienced before.

We privately contracted tutors. If we had to wait for a statement, our son would have been without support for nearly two years, which is unacceptable knowing that the early years are the most important.”

### **“For parents, the time spent ‘outside the**

**system’** coping with difficulties means that when they enter the system they are not in the right frame of mind to work with services; interventions need to happen at the early warning signs.”

### **“With the high numbers of cases not**

**proceeding to an assessment for a statement,** we need to consider thresholds and step down to early help, making sure help is available from non-statutory services.”

### **“My son became ill and disabled 16 years ago.**

I have to keep fighting to obtain help for him, day after day. I expect my child to remain at school until he is 19 years old. I expect him to get into college. It's been a long journey so far. I feel the struggle continues; I have to keep going. Hospitals helped with care and support, along with the school team, social services. I hope that my son will be able to attain independence in growing up to become an adult.”



**"I'm a mum with 2 children** attending Southwark schools. One child is being assessed by Sunshine House, which is very useful. But it would help if there was more follow up in the future, and not discouraging the child when they have problems, i.e. in writing. I think there should be a meeting with the parent and school and child regarding the outcome of the assessment. Salmon Youth Centre is over-subscribed and children wait for a long time to access services. I think that Southwark should have tutors for children that are falling behind in school, if needed. I have the problem of getting my son into a secondary school that would be good for his needs. I hope Southwark helps me to support my son's needs – there is a need for more schools in the area."

**"The local offer of services is a great opportunity** to get things right – agencies have to publish what they do to support children with special educational needs."

MY HEALTH VISITOR  
REFERRED ME TO THE  
**CHILDREN'S  
CENTRE**



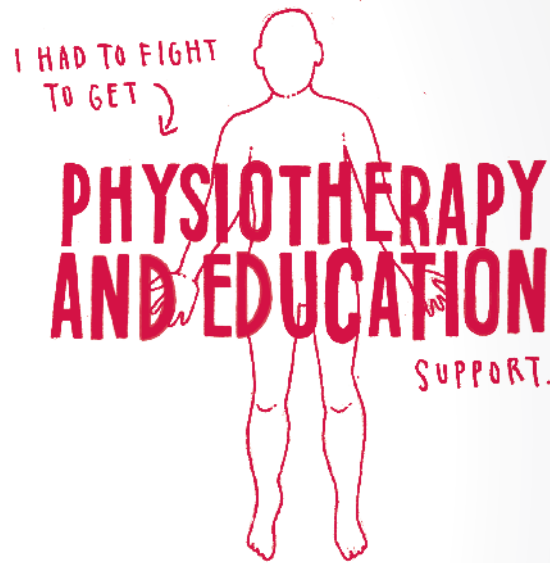
**"Me and my wife are taking care of my autistic child** with behaviour and learning difficulties – his epilepsy sometimes leads to seizures. My son is being educated in school; year 11. He uses GPs and King's Hospital a lot; also we get support from Charlie Chaplin's (playground) – to improve his day to day activities. We don't have any extended family to help, so my work is affected. I hope my son can survive in this world on his own, independently functioning, without help. But he is non-verbal, and rarely communicates. My wife and daughter have to be involved all the time. I think the school and the council are working hard to help us. I hope further cuts on people with disabilities would stop; and look for better ways in helping them improve their lives."

#### SOUTHWARK FAST-FACTS:

- ☑ ALL SOUTHWARK'S SPECIAL SCHOOLS ARE JUDGED BY OFSTED TO BE GOOD OR OUTSTANDING
- ☑ PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ACHIEVE WELL IN SOUTHWARK SCHOOLS, WITH ATTAINMENT ACROSS THE KEY STAGES HIGHER THAN THE LONDON AND NATIONAL AVERAGES
- ☑ OF THOSE CHILDREN IN THE BOTTOM 20% AT EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE PROFILE, 25% HAVE AN IDENTIFIED SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS, COMPARED TO 9.1% OF ALL FIVE YEAR OLDS
- ☑ OF THE CHILDREN EXCLUDED IN 2010/11, HALF HAD SCHOOL ACTION OR SCHOOL ACTION PLUS STATUS, AND 9% HAD A STATEMENT

**“I’m a lone parent to a child with complex learning difficulties.** He was born with Down's Syndrome; autistic; hyperactivity disorder; oppositional defiant disorder. My son's relationship at school is very positive; progress better than before. Our poor relationship with social services – constant legal battles for respite. Foster home – I'm devastated. I've had to have faith in myself, and in my relationship with my two eldest kids (both adults). I hope to live a full life, and to feel supported with my son.”

**“I am a single mother of two boys; one is 14 with a rare chromosome disorder;** the other is 4 – mainstream. I have also worked with children for 18 years – mainstream and special needs. My son was diagnosed at one year. As the years went by, my son would receive more diagnoses. I had to fight for all the help I could get including speed therapy, physiotherapy, and home learning. I'm struggling at the moment – my son is deteriorating. He cannot walk, and uses a wheelchair. He is losing the little bit of independence he has, and it's heart-breaking. On a positive note, my son signs very well, and has a fantastic relationship with his brother. My eldest would never really play – but since his little brother has come along, he enjoys playing. Once my son's routine was established, he was a changed boy – more like a young man. The next part of my journey will be sorting out a college place for my eldest son, and securing funding. I'll need lots of help and determination.”



**“The new Children and Families Bill has parents and families at the centre,** involved in writing plans. What is the role of the voluntary and community sector? Trying to make individualised and personalised support is resource intensive.”

HERE IS A SELECTION OF JOURNEYS ABOUT FAMILIES' EXPERIENCES OF USING LOCAL SERVICES.

## CHOICE AND CONTROL FOR FAMILIES RECEIVING SUPPORT

**"My daughter was diagnosed from the very first scan.** I've had good support and also get 4 hours' a week respite. I work part time which helps me cope and my daughter attends activities to help her development. I rely on friends whose children also have a disability. We support each other. I do wonder why I have a child with a disability but she brings me great joy and I do all I can to help her learn to reach her full potential."



I RELY ON FRIENDS WHOSE CHILDREN ALSO HAVE A  
**DISABILITY.**  
WE SUPPORT EACH OTHER.

**"At secondary school,** it is harder to provide an integrated, joined-up service via the school as there are more and more academies."

**"My son, who is 4 years old, has just been diagnosed with autism.** I care for my elderly mum too (and she cares for us too). When my son was one, he was speaking but then he stopped – that got me worried. At 3 years the pre-school was also worried. The school observed him for a while. We were referred – Sunshine House to a speech therapist. I changed from a non-communicative GP to a really good one. The school has a support worker. The school seems to understand him

and his needs. My GP, Sunshine House, their support worker and the Autistic Society all help. I have had to be resilient and find out everything about autism. Sunshine House and the support worker gave me a space to cry and get support. Mixing with other parents with children with autism is great. 'Early Birds' – learning new things. Speech therapists, key worker in school have also helped much. Knowing I have someone to call makes my life better. I would have liked to have had more information earlier. Also I would like more information as my son gets older – I need information for every stage of his education. I also hope to get approval of his statement."

**"The letter describes (and I quote):**

'A is somewhat frustrated by the number of clinicians involved and the apparent difficulties with communication amongst the network particularly between King's and the Evelina. This was heightened as F had fasted and then woken up early to attend an MRI at Evelina which she could not have as there was a lack of clarity as to whether there was any metal work present following her neurosurgery performed at King's. F is also unclear as to the outcome of F's medical appointments with the different clinicians which is exacerbated by her limited English.



Mum finds it difficult to know who to approach about different concerns as the GP just refers her back to hospital staff. The GP had suggested she speak to ICU staff about some symptoms which is obviously not possible (ICU staff do not run an outpatient clinic). The letter copies 8 health professionals involved in F's care. I do not know if other agencies are involved but suspect that they are.' As a health professional we need to address the issue of children with multiple difficulties and coordinate care so they do not end up seeing numerous different specialties with poor liaison and communication."

**"Direct payments are here to stay** – could we take a more proactive stance? Direct payments by default?"



**"My journey began when I had my first baby.**

I am now a parent to three children: 2 boys and a girl. After family support services were removed, social services helped me get childcare for my son. At first he was 2 days a week, but when he turned three years old, after a long battle of red tape, he was granted a full-time placement. Also, he was diagnosed with autism. At secondary school, it is harder to provide an integrated, joined-up service via the school as there are more and more academies. I was supported by special services (who fund his placement), a speech and language therapist, the nursery staff, GP, and Health Visitor. The Early Intervention Officer for autism helped me get a better understanding of his needs, and I attended early bird training. Family support was varied, but professionals were better able to guide me on a better path. There were lots of times when advice was scarce, and red tape in social services meant the help I needed was not forthcoming. This was hard when family life was tough enough. Learning that my son has autistic spectrum disorder was scary but rewarding. Looking at the road ahead was daunting. With the support of some professionals around me, I found myself on a helpful road of information and support. I try not to think negative thoughts, and feel I have achieved the best scenario for my son and me. My next journey is supporting my son in his transition to mainstream school. I hope the nursery will continue to support me and point me in the right direction."



**"I have a son, just diagnosed with autism.**

I had to be resilient and find out everything about autism – did a lot of research on the internet. I expect to take one day at a time, and to have support from school for my son to progress. I found it difficult to accept my son's condition – Contact A Family really helped. Meeting people, and them being nice. I'm gradually getting more confident. Sunshine House and my support worker gave me a space to cry and get support. Knowing I have someone to call makes my life better. The biggest difference was when people listened – services, friends. When these things are in place, I can plan and that really helps. I want my son to be safe and in a good environment – for him to be comfortable when he goes out, and for Southwark to provide for him."

Southwark's Children and Families' Trust is the partnership of local agencies which safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children, young people and families in Southwark.

The partnership consists of representatives from key agencies with responsibilities for children and young people including: Southwark Council, Southwark Clinical Commissioning Group, Southwark Police, and representatives from local health providers, schools, and the voluntary and community sector.

**For more information, or to get a copy of the 2013–2016 Children and Young People's Plan,**  
call: **020 7525 3674**, email: **childrenandfamiliestrust@southwark.gov.uk**  
visit: **www.southwark.gov.uk**

**Write to us at:**

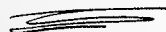
Southwark's Children and Families' Trust, Children's and Adults' Services, Southwark Council, PO Box 64529, London SE1 5LX

If you would like a copy of this brochure in large print, please call **020 7525 3674**

If you would like this brochure translated, please take it to your nearest one stop shop and ask for the 'Language Line':

**My Southwark customer service point**, 11 Market Place, Southwark Park Road, SE16

**Peckham one stop shop**, Ground Floor, Library, 122 Peckham Hill Street SE15



**BEST  
START**

**SAFETY  
AND  
STABILITY**

**CHOICE  
AND  
CONTROL**

**Southwark's Children and Families' Trust**

Children's and Adult's Services

Southwark Council

PO Box 64529

London SE1 5LX

020 7525 3674

[childrenandfamielistrust@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:childrenandfamielistrust@southwark.gov.uk)

[www.southwark.gov.uk/childrenandfamielistrust](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/childrenandfamielistrust)

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