

**St**CHRISTOPHER'S  
CREATING BRIGHTER  
FUTURES



**HEAD HEART HANDS**

**IMPACT REPORT 2017**





## Welcome from our Chief Executive, Ron Giddens

I have been at St Christopher's for 17 years now, with most of my time spent holding responsibility for operational services in the UK and on the Isle of Man. In 2016 Jonathan Farrow retired after 19 years as Chief Executive at St Christopher's and I was proud and pleased, if a little daunted, to step into his shoes.

It's been an exciting year and we have lots of achievements to celebrate with you. We cared for 1,108 children and young people across our different services. These include foster homes, children's homes, a secure care home, supported housing for care leavers and homeless teenagers, support for young people who run away from home and specialist outreach services. This means we can combine our expert knowledge with our passion to provide the right support for each young person in our care, working in partnership with their families and our commissioners.

Most importantly, we're further developing our approach of supporting young people to take the lead on their own care. We recognise they are experts on their own lives, so we work to ensure that their voice is heard and that we act on their views.

Young people have been increasingly integral in designing new services and recruiting new members

of staff and this year have played a key part in helping us to adapt our staff appraisals to ensure that they capture the areas that are important to them.

As you will read in this report, young people have told us very clearly that it is the staff or foster carers, who make their homes a home. And I couldn't agree more – without our dedicated carers and staff, we couldn't provide the warm, homely, loving, yet professional and expert care to the children and young people we look after and support. That's why we invest in our people through training as well as providing additional support through counselling, cognitive behaviour and other therapy. In addition, we supply enhanced computer skills and a range of other training and mindfulness sessions as well as relevant professional qualifications like the Diploma Level 3 or 5 in Residential Child Care.

We're proud of how many of our managers and senior staff are "home grown". We aim to support even more of our team to develop their careers over the next year, in order to continue providing the best care and support for all the children, young people and the families who we work with.

I hope that you enjoy reading about the impact our work has had over the last year.

*Ron Giddens*

Ron Giddens, Chief Executive

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Social pedagogy is our core philosophy of care and our practice is based on the head, heart, hands approach. The head is our knowledge, the heart is our values and the hands are what we do in practice.

Thank you to young people, staff and families for helping with the images. The photographs do not match the stories. The stories are real but we have changed the names.

# Our homes and services

We have 28 children's homes and homes for homeless teenagers and care leavers across England and the Isle of Man, as well as 49 foster families and seven outreach services. With these services we can provide care in either a residential home or foster home for up to 242 children and young people at any one time.

Our children's homes are in a variety of locations - some are in inner London, others are in smaller towns, whilst some are rural. They are different sizes too, ranging from one to eight beds.

Some of the homes provide specialist services, such as our secure care home for young people who are placed with us in custody, on remand or on welfare grounds. We also run specialist provision for girls who are at risk of child sexual exploitation and other community threats.

This mix of provision means we can ensure each child or young person lives in the home most appropriate to their individual needs, and that we can share best practice across our services.

Whichever home they are in, it is most important to us that all of our homes are loving and welcoming and that young people feel safe and cared for.

"Young people are happy in the home. Staff offer consistent warmth and support, and hugs and cuddles are readily available. One young person commented, 'I love it here, staff really look after me.'"

Ofsted Report North London children's home

We focus on supporting young people to build positive relationships that give them the confidence to succeed.

"I'm glad I'm here you know. I haven't been here long and you have already done so much for me. Like given me work experience, helped me understand how I feel about things. It has given me hope. Sometimes I think, if I had been here from the start how different my life would be."

Liam, young person from one of our 16+ homes

We don't see young people as clients or beneficiaries, or as damaged or broken, needing to be fixed. We see them as people in their own right, with a wealth of potential to offer their friends, families and communities.

"The balance between children taking risks whilst keeping themselves safe was addressed by the home in various ways. These included individualised risk assessments which recognised that each child was different and therefore required different measures in place."

Inspection Report Isle of Man children's home



# St Christopher's approach

**We make sure our actions reflect our values. Working in this way allows us to build trust and empower people to do their best, whatever their role.**

Social pedagogy is our core philosophy of care, drawing together theories and concepts from related disciplines such as sociology, psychology, education, philosophy, medical sciences and social work. Our use of social pedagogy centres on attachment theory and building positive relationships with young people to bring out their full potential and find their inner "diamond".

"Staff are well supported in their work by routine psychological consultancy, and an underpinning relationship-based ethos which influences all [staff's] work. In practice, this means that they offer a highly nurturing environment where young people are routinely praised and motivated within clear boundaries. Young people value this emotional warmth, and quickly become close to their key workers."

**Ofsted Report West London children's home**

We have been growing and developing our use of social pedagogy over a number of years - from developing homes using a socially pedagogic approach, to training staff across all of our homes and throughout the

organisation. Over the last year we have started rolling out this training to our foster carers.

Our practice is based on the head, heart, hands approach:



## Head

We use theory and evidence to learn and develop alongside our young people. This is especially apparent through our pioneering work on attachment with Professor Toni Bifulco and her colleagues at the Centre for Abuse and Trauma Studies (CATS) at Middlesex University. For over ten years CATS have been training, supporting and evaluating our use of Attachment Style Interviews (ASI) and related assessment tools. This analysis has shown a reduction in mixed or disorganised attachment disorder for young people in our residential services, improvement in their ability to relate to others, and a decrease in levels of anger, mistrust or fear of rejection.

Our Wraparound service on the Isle of Man, which provides specialist therapeutic support to children in care, leaving care and those on the edge of care and their

families, worked with more than 100 children and young people using a range of assessments. These include Clinical Outcomes Routine Evaluation (CORE) to monitor therapeutic change, Parental Role Interview to assess the viability of children returning home, in addition to the ASI. Interventions include art and play therapy, psychotherapy and counselling using different theoretical models, and family and systemic therapies to work with families and system dynamics.



### Heart

We use our emotional intelligence and relational skills in our reflective practice to help us develop relationships with young people, their families and our colleagues.



### Hands

We empower young people to learn, develop and heal from previous trauma by using creative, practical activities.

Since we started our formal programme of social pedagogy training, staff and foster carers have become more confident in their skills. They tell us that they feel better equipped to advocate on a child's behalf because they understand the theory behind our approach.

"Helped me to understand the different ways to handle behaviour in a positive manner."

"I have already taken some of the learning into my various roles and it has benefited me in a multitude of ways."

"Fantastic course and knowledge enhancement. I have gained confidence to improve my working with young people."



Children are not people of tomorrow they are people today. They are entitled to be taken seriously. They have a right to be treated by adults with tenderness and respect, as equals."

Janusz Korczak, renowned pedagogue.



315 children lived with us in 2016

## Welcome to your new home

Our homes come in all shapes and sizes. Key to making a house a home is making sure it is the right place for each child or young person that comes to us. Getting the balance right, whether that be a foster placement, or moving into a shared house, is often the difference between it working or not. To help in this, children and young people get a chance to look around and meet staff before they move in.

For Brendan, who works at one of our homes for care leavers and homeless teenagers, showing young people around and telling them what they can expect is one of his favourite parts of his job.

“One of the best bits of my job is when someone new comes to view the home to potentially move in. Engaging with them for the first time is a great feeling.”

It all starts at the front door. And whilst we don't script our welcome, we always spend time thinking about how we would feel going to a new place for the first time. That first impression lives with you. If you are greeted like you are welcome and wanted you instantly feel far more relaxed.

“I want them to know how excited I am to meet them. It's genuine, I really am excited and intrigued about the potential journey we will be on together over the next months and maybe years.

“As I show someone around I know they are going to be wary. Most of those I show around come from a care background. They are wary of adults, wary of new places, wary of the young people already living at the home. So it is important that they know that, along with the expectations we have and house rules and culture, we also have a lot of fun. I am also proud of our home and the culture we have developed.”

This is our social pedagogic approach played out for real. Positive relationships are at the heart of our work and building those relationships start the very first time we meet a child or young person. Gaining their trust is never taken for granted and often takes some time, but the first impression is vital.

Brendan said: “It is possibly the first time in a long time someone has showed them energy, passion, honesty, and a real interest in who they are today and could be tomorrow, rather than what has been done in the past.”



In 2016 our young people were awarded 642 AQA's<sup>1</sup> in 78 different subjects. They participated in 64 employability sessions and over 150 cookery sessions

## Learning is at the heart of our homes

St Christopher's is committed to ensuring that children in care receive the education and life chances that all children deserve. Our care staff and education teams work to ensure all of the looked after children in our care learn to be confident in school or college, and that their learning can continue despite their changing circumstances.

Our Education team on the Isle of Man are based in the island's secure care home, Cronk Sollysh. Engaging with young people who have been remanded in secure care can be both rewarding and challenging. Most of the young people have had negative experiences of school and education; many have missed significant chunks of schooling, are behind their peers in educational attainment and have lost confidence in their abilities.

Ann Grass, Education Manager, describes how the team developed a bespoke education package for 17 year-old Peter, a young man who had been in custody. They worried that he had little incentive to engage in training.

"We were confident that we could find a way to excite, motivate and challenge Peter. We spent time getting to know him and to understanding his interests, skills

and aspirations. With his input we built a creative learning programme for him focusing on music, art and magic! Amongst many directions we took, we tried to imaginatively develop Peter's interest in card tricks by arranging for a local Magic Circle magician to come in and give him lessons."

This very unusual direction really boosted Peter's self-esteem and made homework in other more vocational subjects a lot more fun! With the team's support and commitment, Peter has gained a Level 2 qualification in Sports Leadership and is now working towards his Level 3 qualification. And his self-esteem is sky high!

"It was the diversity of the learning opportunities and Peter's willingness to try new things that has made this such a success. What started as a challenge to think of ways to engage a young man for 25 hours has led to all sorts of developments and his self-esteem has been raised to new levels. He has really settled in, helping in the garden and learning all sorts of new skills. His life is not without challenges, but the sessions have helped him overcome many of them and he has maintained at least an 85% attendance level, something that few believed was possible."

<sup>1</sup>AQAs are accredited qualifications that support our young people to enter employment and training.



# What young people think about St Christopher's

During the Autumn of 2016 we invited children and young people living in our homes to give us their views on what it feels like to live at St Christopher's and to suggest things that could make it even better. This was designed as a piece of participatory action research with young people as researchers and active participants in the activities. The methods they used to gather the information included sculpture, poetry writing, sports activities, art and craft activities, cooking, gardening and drama amongst other things.

**116 children and young people gave us their views - this was 87% of the children and young people in our homes in England at that time.**

Young people chose the areas they wanted to give feedback on. Here are some of the highlights.

When we asked children and young people what the best things about their homes were, 100% of them said that the best things were the staff who worked in them.

"That's easy, it's them, the staff. The staff. If it wasn't for them I don't know. They're the ones who talk to you,

make you smile, tell you what's going on in the world, make you feel like someone is interested and they help you sort stuff out, do stuff for you, but not just do stuff for you. I think about everything they have helped me do for myself too, they have helped me learn. Sometimes something happens and I just think it has happened and I might be sad about it, or I might be happy about it, but they help me see what I have learned from it. They make my life seem worthwhile."

Kyle

"It's good to know someone cares. First it's scary. I haven't always had it before and you get scared about what if it goes away. Every single one [staff] is kind and they make you feel wanted."

Jamie

"I've never known something like this. I didn't believe them at first. I thought it would be like everywhere else I've been. I pushed all the buttons, fire alarms, stealing keys but they just kept trying. They passed the test. I'll never forget that!"

Leah



100%

of children and young people said that they felt cared for in their homes.

100%

of children and young people said that they felt respected in their homes.

100%

of children and young people in our homes said that activities offered were fun and enjoyable.

95%

of children and young people said that they would like for there to be even more activities for them to do.

97%

of children and young people said they felt safe in their homes.

91%

of children and young people said that they found their key work time useful.

Not all of the feedback was positive and young people were very clear about some of the things we need to get better at.

The teams used their feedback to inform their annual plans for the homes and as an organisation we made commitments based on the young people's feedback.

Following their feedback we have committed to and commenced a £125,000 two year improvement

programme to improve our Wi-Fi and computers so that young people (and staff!) will have faster, more reliable, internet access in their homes.

Young people asked for more opportunities to learn through work experience and AQA sessions. So we have increased our capacity in the life skills team this year and are growing our work experience and apprenticeship opportunities.





In 2016 our foster carers cared for 132 children and young people

## Fostering

**It is hard to overstate the value of foster care and the dedication that carers bring to their role.**

"I am not just classified as LAC [looked after child]. I am a person, and I am the person I am because of my foster family."

Shauna

More than 53,000<sup>2</sup> children are living with foster carers across England. That represents around 74% of all looked after children. Foster carers play a key role in the way we look after children. There is still a national shortage of foster carers with estimates that we need around 7,000 more fostering households in England<sup>3</sup>.

There are a lot of myths and misconceptions about who can foster children. But the truth is that we welcome potential carers from all sorts of backgrounds. Their common quality is a deep desire to change a child's life and being patient and understanding.

Keith, one of our carers, wasn't sure he would be accepted as a foster carer simply because he was a man. However he had a special motivation. His partner

had been fostered and was so grateful to the support her foster parents had given, both Keith and his partner wanted to give something back.

"Actually, as a man you are so important. Kids need strong positive role models and many have simply not had male role models in their lives."

So having seen their own children grow up and leave home they applied and were accepted as foster parents and have supported several children so far. Keith has even gone on to encourage his brother to become a foster carer.

This year children in St Christopher's foster homes contributed to the Government's fostering stocktake. One of the key messages they wanted to get across was how much language matters. They told us that they do not like being referred to as fostered or as Looked After Children and whilst they understand that LAC is a technical phrase, together they used the letters "LAC" to describe themselves as "Loved And Cherished" children instead. This they feel is a better description of their experience of being in foster care.

<sup>2</sup> Office of National Statistics

<sup>3</sup> Fostering Network



“

When I was 14 I didn't know CSE existed. I was a child. Didn't know what was going on... didn't know I was being exploited. Now I'm moving forward.”

## Child sexual exploitation

In 2015 we launched our Safe Steps pilot with support from the Department for Education's Innovation Programme, and in partnership with the West London Alliance and North London Children's Efficiency Programme. Safe Steps was developed as a response to an increasing number of children being identified as sexually exploited or at risk, which could lead to placement in secure children's homes or in homes far from their own area.

Instead, the Safe Steps model allows girls to remain in a community setting where they can learn how to keep themselves safe. This approach seeks to understand and address the trauma of the past and help girls move on, whilst building positive relationships to develop self-esteem and provide opportunities that take them away from the "pull" of perpetrators.

Kim was one of the first girls to be referred to Safe Steps. She was 15 years old and was struggling after finding out that her mum had cancer and couldn't look after her anymore. She had been staying with different family members, but repeatedly went missing. Everybody was worried about her and the local authority placed her on their "at risk" register. When she arrived at Safe Steps she was very angry with her mum, the staff in the home and with the 'cards' she had been dealt.

At that time Kim was being groomed by a 25 year old man. She saw him as her boyfriend; he had a nice

car, money and bought her lots of gifts. He was also abusing her; sexually, physically and emotionally. We worked with Kim and her social worker to consider what was needed to keep her safe.

Initially she needed someone to accompany her when she went out. To keep her safe sometimes the very difficult decision had to be made that it wasn't safe enough for her to go out at all. We also asked her to hand over her phone so her perpetrator couldn't make contact.

The journey Kim then took with the staff was focused on building trust, self-esteem and understanding what had been happening whilst also working to rebuild her family relationships. Staff encouraged her mum to visit and, while she was well enough, she would come to the home, often cooking meals for her daughter and the other girls living there. When she became too poorly she would come just to be with Kim and enjoy pamper days together. Staff supported Kim and her mum during her mum's illness and after she had passed away.

This has been a very difficult time for Kim, but she has since started a new chapter in her life. She has been able to move in with a foster family and is completing an apprenticeship with a catering company. She still comes back to visit and tell us how she is getting on and says she can see just how much the team care.



## In 2016 we cared for 70 unaccompanied asylum seeking children

## Work with unaccompanied asylum seeking children

After the closure of the Calais refugee camps, in the autumn of 2016, the Home Office asked us to be part of the solution to caring for children on their arrival in the UK. We were pleased and proud to welcome some of the very first children who came over and to ensure that they were safe and felt welcomed and cared for.

As these children needed caring for urgently, staff from across our teams pulled together to open a new home in just a few days and volunteered to cover extra shifts to ensure that the children were looked after. These first young people stayed only for a few days until the Home Office and local authorities had arranged for their safe reunification with their families, but we hope that we made their journeys to this country a little less scary.

Staff went above and beyond, including picking children up from the airport, and on one occasion accompanying them to Ireland to meet up with their family, as well as ensuring that the children were protected from the intensive media coverage at the time.

But this was not the first time St Christopher's has worked with unaccompanied asylum seeking children. We have worked with young refugees for many years, so our staff are skilled at integrating children from all backgrounds in creative ways. With our support, young people from all

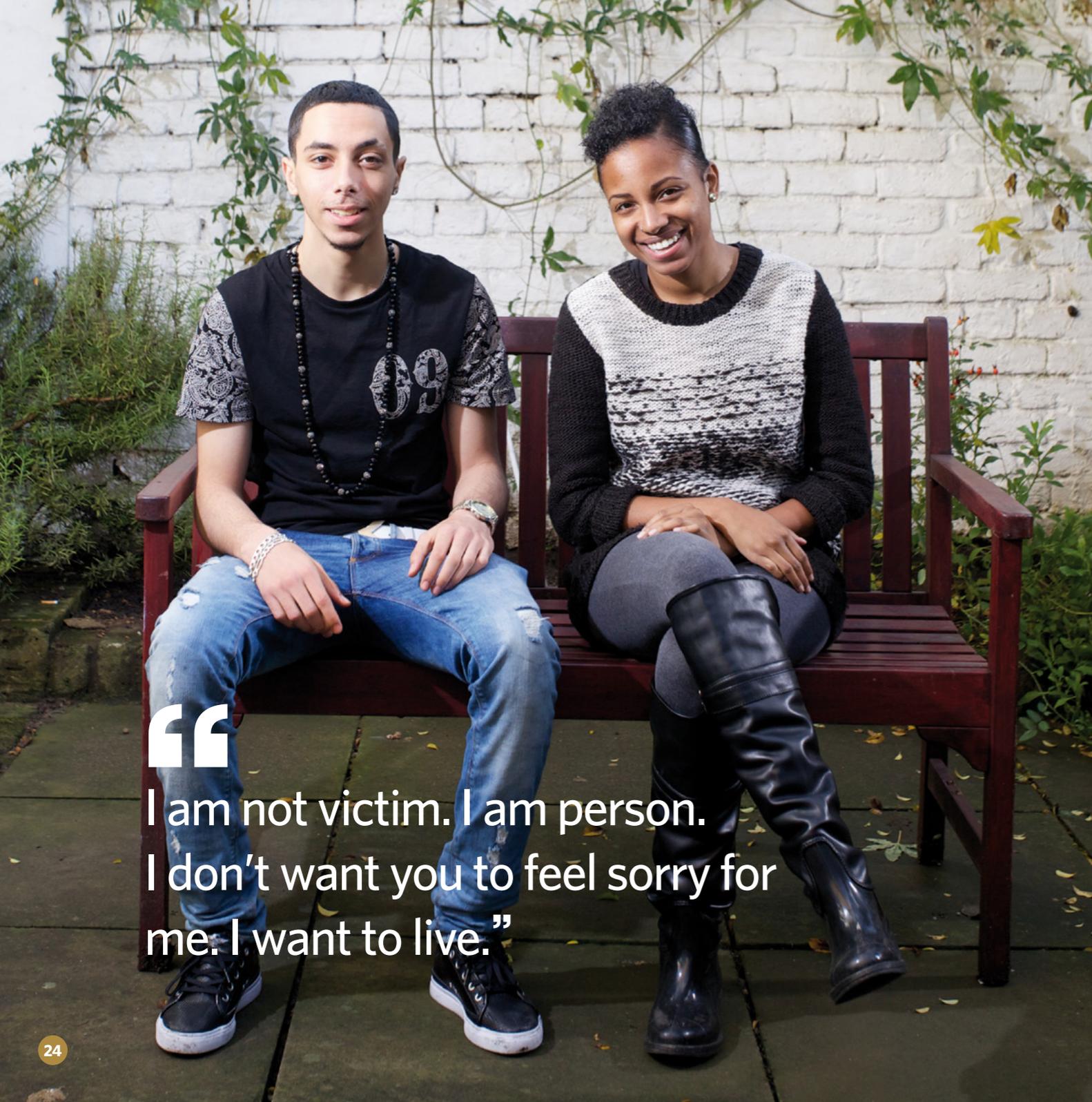
over the world have had a head start at settling into life in their new communities in the UK.

One Saturday evening last winter four 17-year-old girls from North East Africa arrived at one of our homes. They turned up from Calais, relieved, tired and confused.

They came with nothing - no clothes, money or toiletries - so the first job was to go shopping with one of the team. It was the girls' first experience of London and the they were overwhelmed and initially felt like they did not belong. We had received many donations when we set up the emergency home and were able to access these too. We found that it was some of the small things that had been donated that made a big difference. When they enrolled in college each girl had a rucksack, note books and pens. They suddenly felt like they belonged. They walked tall into college that day because they had what everyone else had and for once they didn't stand out. They were equal.

The big things matter, but sometimes the small things can also make a big difference.

The girls are still with us, they have a good grasp of English, are doing really well at college and see London as their new home.



“

I am not victim. I am person.  
I don't want you to feel sorry for  
me. I want to live.”

## When the supported become the supporters

Many of the children and young people we work with spend hours in meetings with people who are working to help them; our staff, social workers, housing teams and mental health workers. They are constantly seen as a person who needs support. So what happens when the dynamic changes and they are given the chance to show what they can do?

In our homes we work hard to support unaccompanied asylum seeking children to integrate into the local culture and the community they are now part of. For one particular group, we ran a weekly film night alternating between films in English and films in their native language. One of these films had no English subtitles and so the girls sat in hysterics, laughing at the jokes whilst the other young people and staff were left bemused. For once everything had been turned on its head - they were the ones that understood everything and we were the ones needing things to be explained to us.

This theme continued on another trip out. A local football team had decided they wanted to support our work, they put their hands in their pockets and donated £160 in cash so that we could take the girls out for a

meal. We took the girls along with other residents and staff to an Eritrean restaurant the other side of London. On the journey there was much excitement on the top of the bus as one of the girls from the UK gave a guided tour pointing out all the famous landmarks.

The dynamic completely changed the moment the group entered the restaurant and everyone from the UK was in a new environment, whilst the girls from Eritrea suddenly felt completely at home. They guided the group through the menu and showed them the traditional way to eat the meal. At the end they insisted that everyone should take part in a coffee ceremony. For other diners the restaurant staff would normally perform the ceremony that includes roasting and grinding coffee beans at your table, but the girls wanted to lead and took over. One of the girls who had been withdrawn since arriving suddenly opened up. For the first time since arriving in the UK she was in her element and felt free.

Based on their experiences our young people have since helped us develop the materials to deliver training on supporting unaccompanied asylum seeking children to social workers from across the country.



## Young runaways

Each year 100,000 children run away from home or care<sup>4</sup>. Most return home within hours, but the longer they are away the greater risks they face. One in six end up sleeping rough and are at risk of abuse and exploitation.

<sup>4</sup>The Children's Society, Make Runaways Safe.

Our Runaways team support children who have been reported missing and their families. We do this in several ways:

- Identifying and dealing with any harm the child may have suffered.
- Working with the young person and their family to understand and address the reasons why the child or young person ran away. We use tools such as the Independent Return Home Interview within 72 hours of the young person being found or returning home
- Providing on-going one-to-one support to prevent further running away. This kind of support also helps increase the young person's attendance at school

and identify children at risk of sexual exploitation. There are numerous reasons why children and young people run away from home – many of the young people we work with are facing some very adult problems and risks that no child should have to navigate.

Jonas is just one of the young people our runaways team has worked with. He'd had a difficult home life and had been in trouble with the police, caught up with gangs and felt in over his head – he wanted out, but didn't know how to do this. He was worried about the threat of retaliation against his mum. He felt a lot of

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## In 2016 we worked with 454 young runaways across 3 London boroughs

guilt about bringing trouble to his family and decided he ought to be tough enough to sort it out himself. Everyone was worried about Jonas and he was put on the local authority's 'at risk' register.

Meanwhile Jonas was worried about the gang attacking him or his family and tried to live under the radar – it was difficult. Members of the gang went to his school so he stopped attending, but he would still see them on the streets near his home.

One Sunday morning while attending church with his mum he saw some of the gang members and was so scared that he climbed out of the church's bathroom window and vanished. Jonas was missing for four months. His mum was fraught, worrying about his safety and not being able to help him, or even talk to him.

When Jonas was picked up by the police 200 miles away from home after being missing for four months, his social worker called St Christopher's Runaways team and asked

us to help support him and his family. Jocelyn, one of our Runaways team, went to Jonas' home to speak to him and his mum about what had been happening for him. Jocelyn said "He was clearly very scared. He said the reason he kept running away was that he didn't feel safe in the local area. But while trying to survive on his own he was recruited by drug dealers to collect the money they were owed by drug users. Jonas was subjected to escalating violence and was mixing with some very dangerous and scary people. He didn't want to live like this but he still felt he was doing the right thing, that by being away from home he was keeping his mum safe." This had become his normal way of life; he is just 15 years old.

Jocelyn explored what had been going on with Jonas and his mum and they talked through what options they had as a family and how his mum could help him to be safe. With our support, Jonas and his mum managed to move to a place where they are safe and can start afresh.

Thank you to the Oak Foundation for supporting this work.



“

You are suddenly in a new place where you have nothing and no one and just at a time when I need them most to help with all the things that are hard and new about living independently”

## Leaving care

Young people have described to us that leaving care can feel like dropping off a cliff edge. Suddenly you are all alone and are an adult, but at the same time you are just a teenager. Most young people’s transition to adulthood extends well into their twenties, returning home if things go wrong. But young people leaving care have a complex and accelerated transition to adulthood.

We support young people to make a successful transition to adulthood through outreach support, floating support, move-on accommodation and our life skills team. The young people have time and opportunities to experience life after care and then discuss what they have learnt so that when the moment arrives it isn’t a shock.

When we first met Karim it was a tense meeting! He was living with foster parents who were desperately worried about him and angry at the situation that brought us all together. Karim had previously had a psychological report written that indicated he was incapable of living independently and yet his case was due to be closed at 18 and he would have to move out as he did not meet the criteria for adult social services. Nothing made sense and it seemed that all support for Karim would just fall away on his 18th birthday.

Step one was to help Karim develop the life skills needed including reading, writing, social and relationship skills that his assessment had shown were not sufficient to live alone. But as the team started to work with him it was clear that his skills didn’t match his report. Karim said that the whole

assessment process had reduced his self-belief and made him feel stupid just before he was assessed. It was clear that the system had failed him.

What both Karim and his foster parents needed was time and support. Over the following months, as well as working with Karim we also kept in touch with his foster carers and listened to their concerns, something they felt had not happened in the past. At the same time we kept in contact with Karim’s real father to help resolve some tensions between him and the foster carers.

Karim is now working full time, has a good social life and his relationships with his father and extended family have vastly improved. He is still voluntarily living with his foster family.

This year we are increasing this support through enabling young people to test drive living alone, stay close to their previous children’s home, stay put with foster families and to develop a series of ‘pop home’ beds so young people know there is support for them as they grow.

“It’s not that I know how to cook fajitas, although that is pretty handy. It’s that I always have that memory. So when things are hard and I need to laugh, I think about that time when we were cooking and the wok handle broke and everything fell on the floor. I still laugh every time I think about it! And when I think it has all gone wrong I remember that day and laugh and think it will all be OK.”

Jemma, young person at St Christopher’s



# Staff training and development

**Our young people tell us that the people who work in our homes are what makes them a home. When young people were asked what were the best things about their homes they all told us it was the staff.**

“That’s easy, the staff. They’re the ones who talk to you, make you smile, tell you what’s going on in the world, make you feel like someone is interested and they help you sort stuff out. I think about everything they have helped me do for myself, they have helped me learn. They make my life seem worthwhile.”

Lara

So having the right people and investing in their development is crucial. Our training team, alongside the home managers, ensure that each member of staff has a detailed development plan that matches the work they do and equips them to be knowledgeable, creative, calm, supportive and confident in whatever situation comes their way.

Including statutory training, new residential staff receive up to 19 days training in their first year. This includes children’s rights and participation, working together, working with trauma, mental health, empowerment, dealing with behaviour crises and staff well-being and resilience. All designed around our social pedagogy approach.

Our discretionary training fund has also allowed more experienced staff to develop specialist skills in areas such as counselling and cognitive behaviour therapy.

“Sensitive and skilled staff understand the reasons behind young people’s behaviour and address these issues in key work sessions.”

Ofsted Report West Midlands children’s home

Future talent is identified through our annual appraisal system, where we are able to encourage project staff to step up to more leadership roles and our Management Development Programme has been so successful that the majority of our team leaders and managers are all “home grown”.

### What young people say about staff

“It has not been easy. I know I have given the staff a hard time and have not been the easiest. But they have always been there. They don’t take stuff personal and keep trying to show me how I am good and help me achieve stuff.”

Carly

“They’re good because they don’t let you down. If they say they are going to do it then they just get on and do it. Not like some people who promise you something and then it never happens and they never tell you why.”

Sami

82%

of our team leaders and managers in our homes for care leavers and homeless teenagers are internal promotions.

73%

of all of our team leaders, deputies and managers are internal promotions.



“  
If I say what I think people will take notice  
and try to fight for me. Things do change  
when you get involved. Before this I  
would never have thought I could make a  
difference but now I want to get involved.”

Serika

## Having a national voice

**We are always looking for ways to improve the outcomes and experiences of looked after children and young people; we seek to continually improve our services and share our learning with others.**

Children and young people are experts in their own lives. Through our participation and skills for life programmes they are able to have their voices heard and have been shaping service delivery and policy.

This year young people told us that they wanted the key people in their lives to better understand some of the experiences they had with self harming, with anger management and as unaccompanied asylum seekers arriving in England, and for us to use this knowledge to help support and care for them. Groups of young people co-produced a training programme that was delivered to our staff and foster carers and to social care professionals outside St Christopher's.

“This has been a fantastic example of our young people leading and shaping the care they receive. We were hugely grateful to the young people who shared their experiences to help us to better meet their needs.”

Geneva Ellis, Director of Corporate Services

As well as shaping the care that they receive, our young people have been sharing their views with policy makers. Our young people contributed to Sir Martin Narey's national review of children's residential care and his national fostering stocktake. They also fed into the Social Care Institute for Excellence's consultation on the mental health of children in care. A special well done to our young people from the Isle of Man who made the journey over to London to take part.

We see it as our responsibility to share our learning to improve practice in care. As examples, we are pleased to have contributed to Sir Martin Narey's review of residential care through the secondment of one of our team, through submissions to his reviews, to be part of the Department for Education's expert group informing new practice guidance on restriction of liberty of movement (following our lobbying and Safe Steps work) and to have been included in the Children's Commissioners review of evidence on the views of children in care. We are also pleased to have presented the findings of our learning at the DfE's Innovation Day and also at two local conferences arranged by St Christopher's.

# The future

Hanif Barma has been a Trustee of St Christopher's since 2007 and was appointed as Chair in 2015.

"Thank you for reading our Impact Report in which we've been delighted to share some of the work we've been doing over the last year. I am incredibly proud of what our young people achieve - their tenacity, strengths and energy - and I've enjoyed hearing about their successes, be it academic results, sporting achievements, or simply having the bravery to try something new or to build new relationships.

In ending this report, I'd also like to tell you about our plans for the future.

We are focused on listening to young people, to understand what they need and work together to achieve it. We are developing more co-production projects rather than believing that adults always know best. We are proud of the developments we have made in this area and are very pleased that we have been able to increase the capacity of the participation team this year - enabling us to work in more depth



We want to continue to promote the voices of our young people in the external world. Their insightful contributions to policy issues can help to continuously improve outcomes for all children in care."

and with more young people. We plan to increase capacity further in our team in the next year, as well as increasing our presence in the wider sector to share our learning in this area.

With support from the Department for Education, we have begun working with young people in care, care leavers, local authorities and private sector partners to test how to make 'Staying Close' work for young people. This crucial service will pilot ways to support young people leaving residential care to maintain vital relationships and have appropriate tailored support to maintain accommodation. This will result in a more gradual transition into independence and adult life.

Over the next year we will be developing and expanding the work of our education teams. We want to work with more young people who are not in employment, training or mainstream education. We are very grateful for the support of the Isle of Man Government to enable us to expand both the Isle of Man Education team and the specialist Wraparound service. Work is also underway to open our first independent school in London, allowing us to support children who are unable to access mainstream education. We are also building and growing our apprenticeship schemes across our organisation,

offering more learning opportunities to more care leavers to enable them to get a secure footing in the world of work.

There is still a national need for more foster homes and we are working to grow and develop our fostering services.

Lastly, but importantly, we want to continue to promote the voices of our young people in the external world. Their insightful contributions to policy issues can help to continuously improve outcomes for all children in care, teenagers leaving care and young people who are homeless.

I want to end by thanking everyone who makes St Christopher's the special organisation it is; children, young people, their families and foster families and our staff.



**Hanif Barma**  
Chair

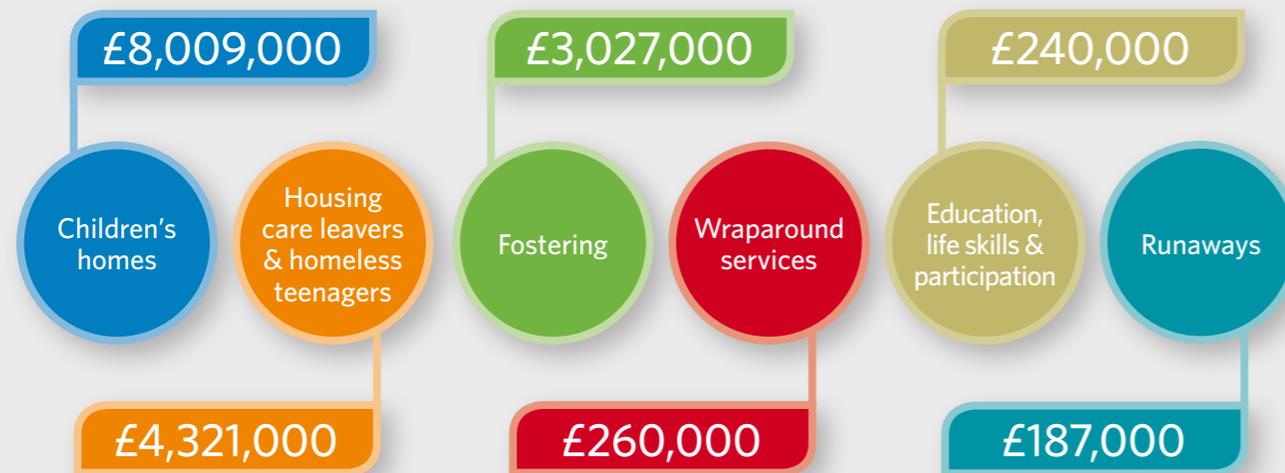
# Finances

Over the year we spent just under

**£17,000,000**

supporting children and young people

The main areas of expenditure were:



We spent **£300,000** training staff

# Thank you to everyone who supported our work

The work set out in this report and the differences made are only possible because of the faith funders place in us and the support we receive from a wide range of organisations and individuals. As the report shows, some of the added extras we are able to offer can make a huge difference to the way children and

young people feel. From the largest contract through to the smaller donations and gifts we receive, each has its part to play in ensuring children and young people at St Christopher's have brighter futures. Thank you to every one of our supporters including:

Achieving for Children  
 Albert Hunt Trust  
 Batchworth Trust  
 BBC Children in Need  
 Bedford Borough Council  
 Bedford Lions Club  
 Birmingham City Council  
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