



*“It has changed my life  
in terms of parenting and self”*

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## Impact Report 2016



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## Welcome



“It has changed my life in terms of parenting and self” a parent told an Ofsted inspector earlier this year, speaking about St Michael’s services. A wonderful example of how we break cycles of disadvantage to give children the best chance in life.

St Michael’s is unique – that’s not a cliché but a fitting description of a charity whose work spans more than a century of profound change, and yet remains at the forefront of innovation and research in its field.

St Michael’s longstanding director Sue Pettigrew was awarded an OBE in 2016 for her services to children and families, an award she richly deserves. She heads a highly experienced staff team combining passion and skill, backed by a board of immense dedication and knowledge.

Above all, we are most grateful to all our supporters. You enable us to continue to develop our services at a time when an increasing number of families need our help. Your support is transforming the lives of children and families as this report highlights.

Thank you

**Stephen Hair**  
Chair of Trustees

# Our Work

*“There is a culture of continual reflection and analysis to inform further improvement.”*

(Ofsted)

St Michael’s Fellowship is a charity working with disadvantaged families in London and the south east to improve their lives and futures and to secure the best possible future for their children. We have a head office in Streatham, south London and provide three services to help families change their lives: residential family assessments and support; Jigsaw family contact service to keep families together where possible; and outreach to young parents in Lambeth.

We aim to break intergenerational cycles of poverty and underachievement so that children may become healthy, confident and financially independent citizens.





# Services

*"I want to thank everyone for supporting me, pushing me and believing in me."*

(Parent)

St Michael's runs four houses in south London providing comprehensive residential assessment services for families where there are serious concerns about parents' ability to look after their children.

During the assessment, which typically lasts six to 12 weeks, the family lives their day to day life in the house, caring for their child, preparing meals and attending appointments. We offer parents support, assistance and training to ensure safe, secure and positive futures for their children.

The parents' needs are complex. We know they have multiple issues; abuse and neglect in their own childhood, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, learning difficulties, mental health issues, substance misuse. Many have been in care and some are still young enough to be 'looked after' children.

*"Partnership arrangements are forward thinking, highly effective and well embedded resulting in a life enriching experience for families."*

(Ofsted)

We work with parents in a respectful and enabling way to prevent family breakdown wherever possible. Whilst protecting children, we recognise and work with difference and difficulty. We offer parents real opportunities to reflect and to change their behaviour.

Keyworkers and specialist staff use many different assessment tools, together with learning and therapeutic sessions. With our partners the Centre for Abuse & Trauma Studies (CATS) at Middlesex University, we have pioneered using the Parenting Role Interview in residential assessment.



# Residential Assessment and Support

*"Without this essential work it is likely the child would have been removed and placed for adoption."*

(Ofsted 2016)

*"My client would listen to staff which was something I had not witnessed before. If it was not for St. Michael's, I do not think this mum would have made the changes she has."*

(Social Worker)



During 2015 – 2016 we worked with 67 families from 24 local authorities. This included 74 children. The majority (72%) were babies. This is important because with the earliest intervention, the child has the best chance for a secure future.

Three houses were inspected by Ofsted during an eight

month period. Two were graded 'Outstanding', one for the third consecutive time, the other for the second consecutive time. The third house was graded 'Good' with Outstanding features. There the inspector noted, "The organisation excels in their commitment to innovative practice, research and

their contribution towards improving families' lives and the overall social care sector."



*"The majority of parents come here already affected by their own childhoods. This is a huge challenge for a small but creative and motivated team with only six to 12 weeks to address fundamental dynamics and entrenched concerns."*

(House Manager)



# Residential Assessment and Support

*“Staff work in a highly transparent manner”*

(Ofsted)

## Our ethos: creating the space for change

St Michael's services are founded on values of respect for families and belief in the capacity for change. Our touchstone is that the safety and welfare of the child is paramount.

This ethos fosters a culture of reflection which encourages parents to develop a sense of responsibility for what has gone before, which is essential for change.

We work with parents to continually improve our services and support. Together we have adapted many standard forms and texts so they may be used by parents with literacy issues, and we use digital media extensively for learning.

Parents who have left, with and without their children, return to take part in the parents' forum, to prepare new families for their assessment.

With researchers at Middlesex we have developed a semi structured questionnaire to ask parents who have had previous

children removed what support they would have liked before and afterwards.

This culture of honesty repeatedly results in a significant number of families from residential centres returning home with their children (from over a third to nearly two thirds in recent years). This includes

families where previous children have been removed.

In 2015-16 a total of 61 previous children had been removed from 30 families. Of these 30 families, 21 returned home with their current child. And in total, nearly two thirds of families (63%) returned home with their children.



*“I was really scared when I first came as I had been somewhere like this before and I had my baby took off me. This place is so much nicer and you were honest with me. You lot told me what to do and I did it. Now I can leave with my kid and start a new life together.”*

(Mother)

*“The centre excels in its involvement in research, which is having an impact on families within the centre, the organisation, the locality and nationally.”* (Ofsted 2016)



*“I’m having the support I have always needed my whole life.”*  
(Parent)



## Jigsaw Family Contact and Assessment

Jigsaw is a wonderfully child-friendly, bright and comfortable self-contained flat in the same building as our head office. Where parents are separated, the non-resident parent can spend time with their child at Jigsaw. Where children are in foster care, Jigsaw can help them to maintain their relationship with their parents.

*“Magical! The staff really made easy what was an increasingly difficult situation. I’m forever grateful. Without this service, I wouldn’t have made the progress I have regarding contact with my boys.”*

(Father)

Jigsaw is accredited by the National Association of Child Contact Centres for supervised contact. Staff observe all aspects of childcare and family dynamics and provide a detailed report. Notes are shared with parents to help them build on strengths and better understand their child’s needs. Notes are evidence-based and help local authorities to plan what is best for the child.

Jigsaw is also available for supported contact, during which staff advise and guide parents, and as a space-only hire for separated parents who have no suitable accommodation where their child can visit them.



*“You are the only professionals who have ever worked with me that have done what they said they would do.”*

(Parent)

### Who uses Jigsaw?

#### Marcus and Poppy

When Marcus found out that he was the father of a nine month old baby girl called Poppy, he was no longer in a relationship with the birth mother. The baby’s mother was unable to care for Poppy who was in a foster placement.

Marcus was desperate to build a relationship with his daughter and become a loving and responsible full time father. Supervised contact at Jigsaw was the first step.

As his daughter met him regularly, she transformed from a screaming baby scared of being separated from the foster carer to a child familiar with her father and curious to build a bond. Our reports to court and professionals confirmed, with many examples, how well Marcus could look after his daughter and he became her legal guardian within six months.



# Young Parent Outreach

## Family Support in the Community for Young Mums and Dads



Our Young Parent Outreach Service works with young mums and dads in Lambeth aged 24 and under to improve overall life opportunities for them and their children. We are a partner in Lambeth's Early Action Partnership (LEAP): Better Start programme.

and emotional support may take many months. Parents' progress towards being able to tackle problems by themselves, without this specialist support, is rarely straightforward. Issues may reach back into their own childhood. Helping parents to recognise

this and establish a different pattern, offering their own children a better life, takes time.

Once the family situation is stable, parents are encouraged to use general services such as Children's Centres, where St Michael's runs open groups for young parents, and to consider options around education, employment and training.

*"I used to be a violent and very negative person. I've learned so much. St Michael's helped me to be open and confident, to say, 'I can do this, regardless of how old I am, how immature I was in the past, I can be a great dad'."*

(Young Father)

## One to One Support

Last year, the outreach team supported 51 pregnant teenagers, 102 young mothers and 40 young fathers with individual, tailored support. Parents are referred by health and social services or they may self-refer.

Some are expectant new mothers and fathers, others have a young baby when referred. The young parents have complex problems. Many have been in care for part of their childhood and domestic abuse is an all too common denominator (75%). Tailored practical, behavioural



# Groups for Young Parents

## Open Groups

Free weekly groups offer young parents the chance to meet their peers, to learn about aspects of child development and for their children to socialise. One group provides the opportunity for expectant teenage mothers and fathers to discuss their anxieties and to learn how best to care for their baby before and after they are born. Another helps parents learn to cook (and then enjoy!) healthy meals on a budget.

Families also enjoy a series of outings during the summer helping them gain confidence to access the many free events and museums London has to offer.

## St Mich's Cooks

This was a five week mini project around preparing meals from scratch, developed with young parents. They decided they would cook food from around the world and agreed countries and dishes: fried chicken and potato salad from the Czech Republic, pizza and fruit tart from Italy, chicken wings, burgers, coleslaw, chips and milkshake from the US, moussaka and salad from Greece and an 'international mix' - Caesar salad, macaroni cheese, caramelised chicken wings, fresh fruit salad, quick fruit tart and fresh lemonade.

*"I really enjoyed these groups. I learnt how to cook new dishes from all over the world. I really rely on this group to socialise with other mothers and also for my son to play with his peers as we don't have a lot of money to spend on recreational activities."*

(Young Mother of Toddler)





# Domestic abuse

## Supporting mothers, supporting fathers, protecting children

### The DiVa project for young mothers

DiVa supports women to leave abusive relationships, improving their lives and those of their children. St Michael's has been supporting young mothers in Lambeth around domestic abuse since 2000 and the DiVa project has been running since 2007.

DiVa consists of a weekly facilitated peer support group, one to one support work and training on domestic abuse indicators for Children's Centre staff.

This is the only domestic abuse group for young mothers in Lambeth and was developed at the request of young mothers. DiVa continues to evolve in consultation with group members past and present. In 2015, 40 of the 44 young mothers we worked with around domestic abuse had children with a Child Protection Plan, where attendance at the DiVa group was often an expectation of the Plan.

In the first six months of 2016 we worked with 25 mothers. Fourteen were new to the group. Eight mothers attended each session on average. In six months:

- 5 mothers accessed counselling
- 5 children were deregistered from Child Protection Plans
- 2 mothers obtained non-molestation orders
- 13 mothers attended other open groups
- 2 mothers joined training courses
- 3 mothers found employment



### Caring Dads

Caring Dads is a programme to ensure the safety and well-being of children by working with fathers who have neglected their children or exposed them to domestic abuse.

Last year, St Michael's ran a small pilot which was distinct in four ways. In addition to weekly group work, we offered one to one support. We knew the true family situation because the outreach team worked with the birth mother too. We are working with younger fathers (aged under 25) whose children also tend to be younger, so the intervention comes at an earlier stage. We have worked in Lambeth since 2000 and have a deep local knowledge of specific problems around gangs and violence against girls and women.

The pilot was successful and a follow up is now being funded by The Rayne Foundation and Lambeth, to evidence longer term value.

*"The work is extraordinarily powerful in changing young men and women's attitudes to gangs and offending; it improves their relationships and helps them to sustain the care of their children safely."*

(Ofsted Children's Centre Inspector)

## The Future



Throughout our 113-year history, services and their delivery have evolved to fit a changing society and different attitudes. So, for example, in 2008 we began a dedicated programme of work with young fathers.

We are currently developing a new service, 'Securing Change' with our partners at Middlesex University to support women leaving our residential assessments without their child. We do have a well-established track record of success working with parents residentially. On page six we describe how last year, the majority of families went home with their child, even those who had repeatedly lost children to the care system.

Nevertheless, each year mothers do leave St Michael's houses without their child and with no support in place for them to grieve and consider how things could be different. The chances that they will go on to have another child are high. Securing Change will support these mothers after they leave to improve their life skills and address their particular issues.

Securing Change builds on our experience in residential and community assessment and support services. It is informed by the needs and opinions of parents who have had a child removed.

We hope that in time Securing Change will be available to all parents leaving without their child as a service to complement residential parenting assessments. As well as the moral imperative, there is a strong business case for this work – the cost to the public purse of repeat care proceedings, where children are removed time after time from the same family, is huge.

**Sue Pettigrew OBE**  
Director

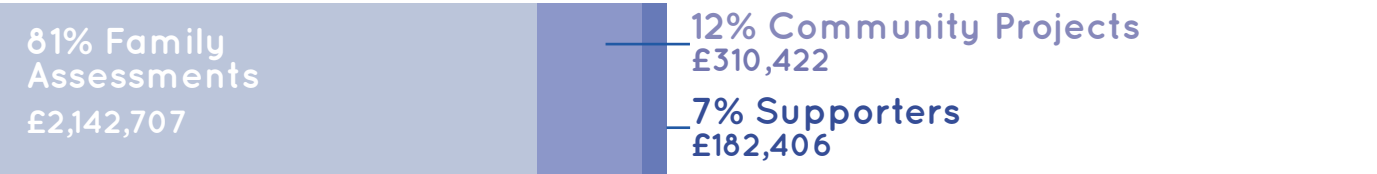
*"If you got the opportunity to put your mistakes right and not to make them again, especially if you want to have more children. You need to look at what went wrong."*

(Mother who had previous child removed)

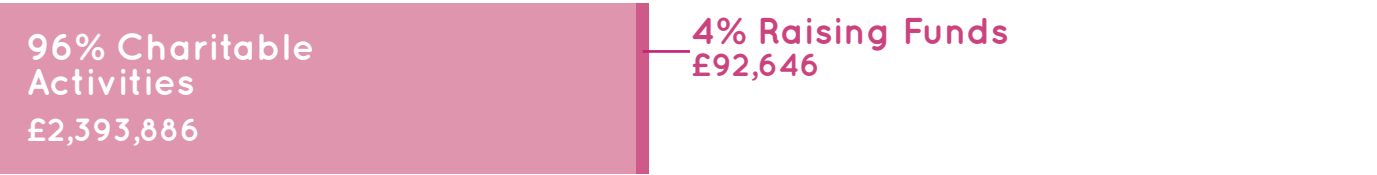


Where our money comes from and how we spend it

Income



Expenditure



- We spend 96p in every £1 we receive delivering services to families.



**Thank you**

With many thanks to everyone who has supported us; the individuals who donated, local branches of Santander and Sainsburys, the congregations of All Saints, Immanuel & St Andrews and St Saviours, our fabulous team of London Marathon runners, cyclists and many trusts and foundations.

We are also very grateful to the OR Society for pro bono support.



Young parents in the Quiet Room after renovation

**Thank you to our Capital Appeal donors**

We are delighted that our Capital Appeal reached its target. This means we have been able to upgrade two meetings rooms and replace tired décor and furnishings at our houses. Following an Eco Audit by 3 Acorns, we have also been able to invest in some eco adaptations, which will save us money in future.

We all want a society where children are valued, protected and able to succeed regardless of their background. If you would like to help us ensure a bright future for children, whatever their history, please support our work.

Donations

You can make regular donations by setting up a direct debit from our website or email [hillary@stmichaelsfellowship.org.uk](mailto:hillary@stmichaelsfellowship.org.uk).

Donate by bank transfer :  
St Michael’s Fellowship: Nat West Clapham Common Branch, 145 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7SN  
Account No. **82008329**  
Sort Code **60 05 34**

Or post your cheque payable to St Michael’s Fellowship.

A gift in your will

If you’d like to find out more about leaving a gift in your will, please contact us.

St Michael’s Fellowship will not pass on your details to any other organisation.

If you would like to keep informed of our work, sign up to our enewsletter and follow us on Twitter @stmfellows.





# Working together to keep families together



*“The organisation are leaders in their field and there is an exceptional commitment to research and innovative work. This enables them to dynamically influence the social care sector.”*

(Ofsted)

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