



# St. Michael's Fellowship Impact Report 2018



# Welcome



Stephen Hair with young parents

At St Michael's Fellowship, we believe that no child should be disadvantaged because of the circumstances of their birth.

Every year, we help hundreds of children to have a better start in life by working directly with families. This Impact Report outlines some of our recent achievements and projects we are developing.

Most of the parents we work with have complex problems. A

disproportionate number have been in care and experienced neglect and abuse in their own childhood. They may live in poverty and struggle to re-enter education or find employment. We see each parent as an individual and help them with practical, emotional and therapeutic support so that their own children can flourish and become healthy, confident and socially responsible adults.

Our work has national impact. We are a local charity with an office in Streatham. But our experience and skills are recognised by those working with children and families across the country.

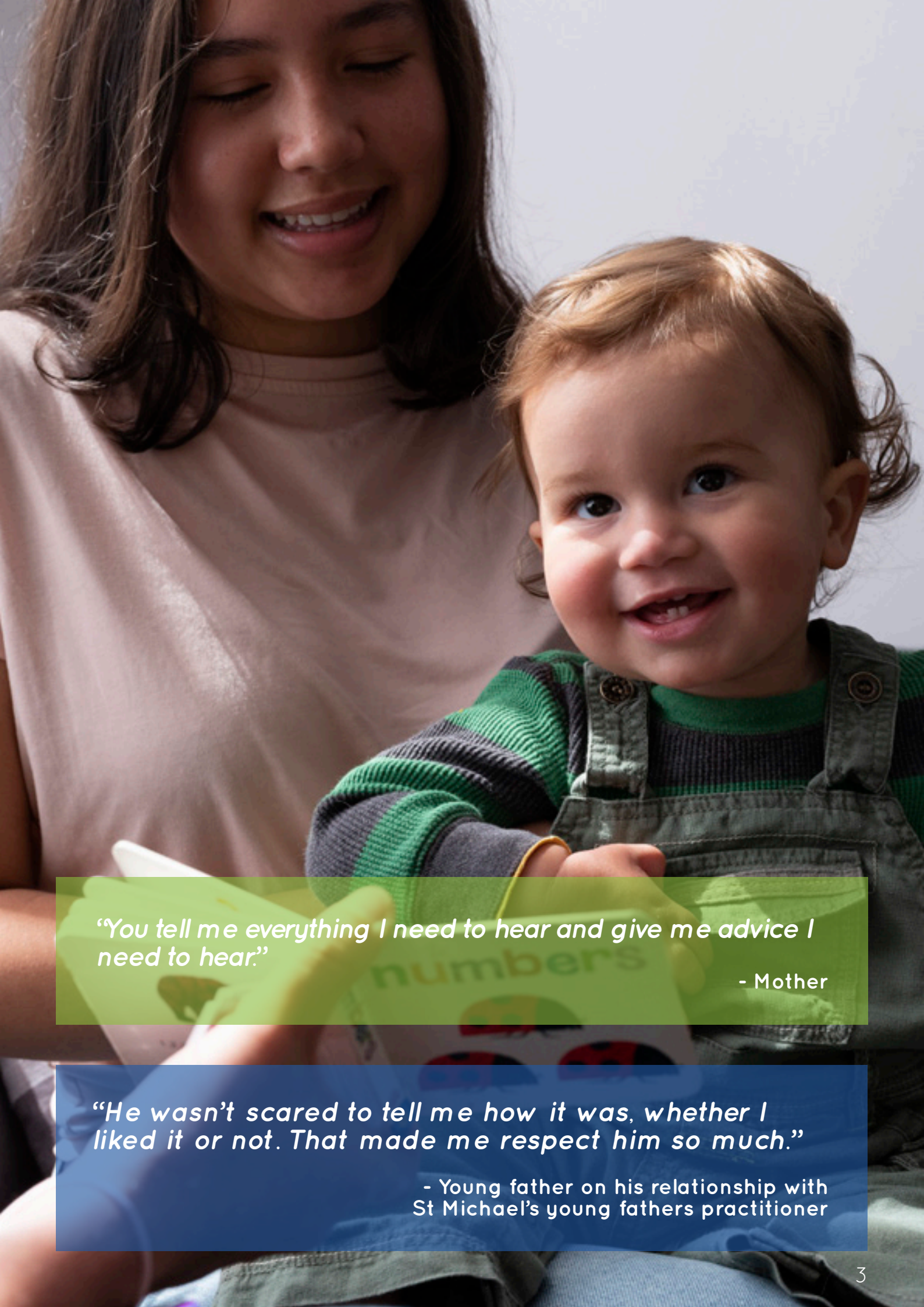
St Michael's was founded in 1903 by Agnes Parr. She wanted to help single mothers to keep their babies and find work to support themselves – a revolutionary idea at the time. We continue her work, developing new services and ways to help children and families in the twenty first century. We could not do this without our supporters and on behalf of everyone at St Michael's, I am most grateful for your help.

Thank you

**Stephen Hair**  
Chair of Trustees

## Contents

- p4 Residential Family Assessment and Support
- p8 Outreach with Young Parents in Lambeth
- p12 Stronger Minds - building emotional resilience
- p13 Securing Change - for mothers whose child has been removed
- p14 Finance
- p15 Support Us



*"You tell me everything I need to hear and give me advice I need to hear."*

- Mother

*"He wasn't scared to tell me how it was, whether I liked it or not. That made me respect him so much."*

- Young father on his relationship with St Michael's young fathers practitioner



# Residential Family Assessment and Support

St Michael's Fellowship provides residential family assessment and support at four houses in south London.

Families are referred to our service by local authorities and courts. They seek an expert assessment and recommendation where a child may be at risk of neglect, abuse or both from parents or carers.

We believe utterly that everyone has the capacity to change. But we do not prolong an assessment if it is clear that the parent cannot make the necessary changes within the child's timescale.

For 2016–2017, the annual cost to foster one child was estimated as £33,592. The annual cost of a place at a voluntary sector children's home was estimated as £161,720. (Source: PSSRU)

We have been providing this service since 1991. Local authority commissioners, social workers and judges agree – St Michael's assessments are evidence based, clearly and fairly reported. Many parents agree; even where our recommendation is for their child to be removed.

During the past ten years (2008 – 2018), we've worked with 464 families in our houses.

We've learned that 8 in 10 parents will have four or more of the following issues:

- Learning needs
- Violence in the home
- Mental health issues
- Substance misuse
- Removal of a previous child
- A history of childhood trauma and abuse
- Be a very young parent

*"The parents themselves at the end of the assessment, and despite recommendations, expressed their gratitude for the support that the staff provided, particularly their key worker sessions."*

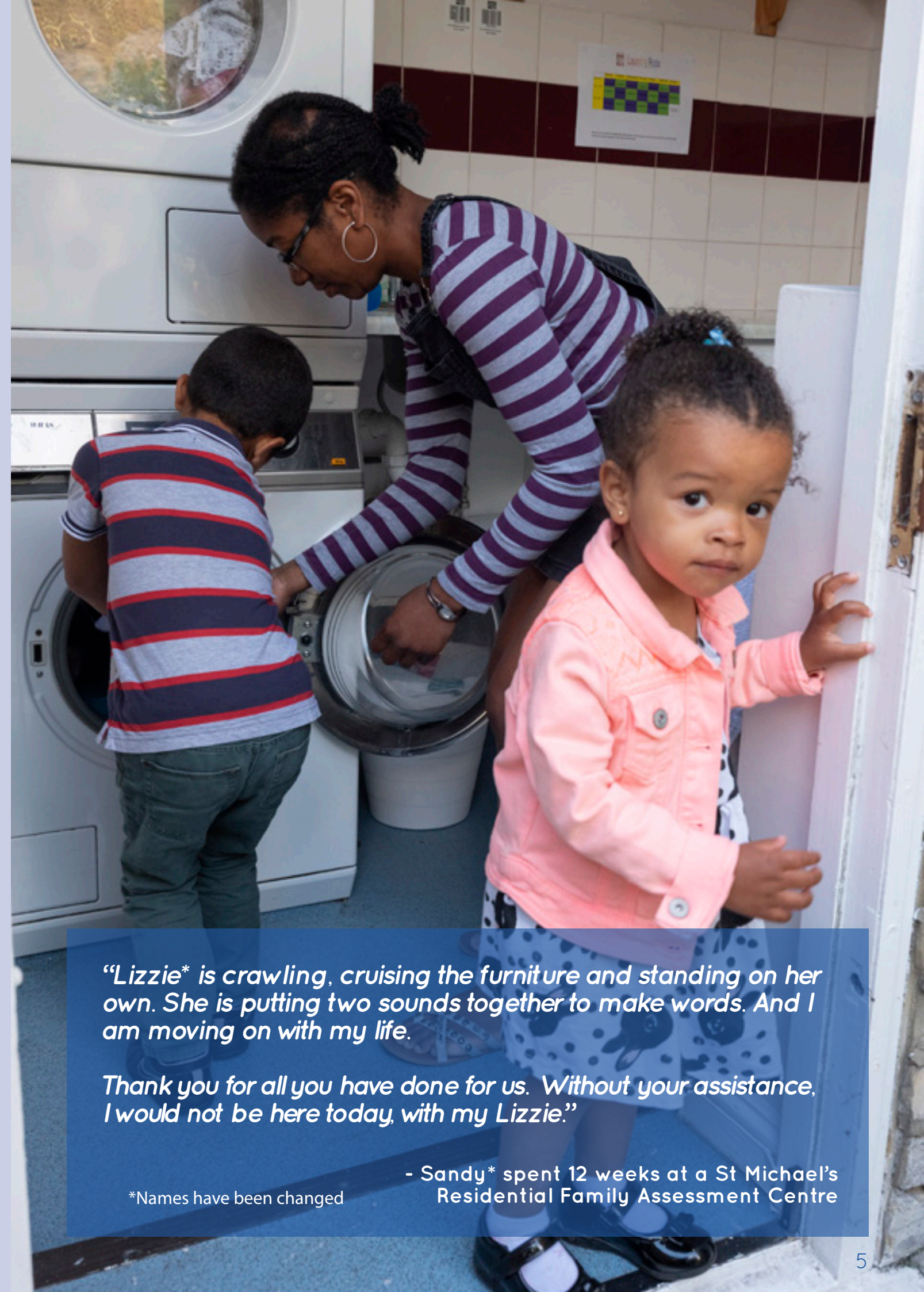
- Local Authority

From April 2017 to March 2018 we worked with 53 families from 24 different local authorities from London, the Home Counties and as far afield as south Wales. They comprised 71 parents (18 couples and 35 single mums), and 67 children.

A previous child or children had been removed from a third of the families. Two thirds of children were younger than three months when they arrived – the majority of them were new born. Four in 10 families returned to the community with their child.

***"You have helped me to understand my partner's learning difficulties and mental health much better and you have also helped me to understand my role as my daughter's main carer."***

- Parent



***"Lizzie\* is crawling, cruising the furniture and standing on her own. She is putting two sounds together to make words. And I am moving on with my life."***

***Thank you for all you have done for us. Without your assistance, I would not be here today, with my Lizzie."***

\*Names have been changed

- Sandy\* spent 12 weeks at a St Michael's Residential Family Assessment Centre



# Residential Family Assessment and Support

*“Day to day, you never quite know how deep is the impression you are making, or how exchanges you have with a parent will resurface for the positive sometime later.”*

- Mick Stephens, Deputy Director

Over the past 20 years, St Michael's has developed specialist expertise in a number of areas. These include parents with mental health issues, parents with learning needs and very young parents.

Staff can call on a wide range of tools and techniques. These include licensed programmes such as PAMS, programmes we have tailored such as 5-a-day for child development; videos, sometimes made by us for a

particular situation; mobile phone apps; and tools created in house such as the parenting keyring, a simple visual and tactile prompt to help parents complete basic tasks.

A quarter of the parents we work with at our family assessment centres have been looked after children.



## Grant's\* Story

*“I attended and failed an assessment at St Michael's a few years ago. I tried to go along with the assessment at first but my temper always got the better of me and I ended up becoming verbally abusive and threatening towards staff. After several weeks I was asked to leave. Soon after that the social services done an emergency removal of my son due to the erratic behaviour of his mother. Afterwards, she and I split.*

*I became homeless and was sleeping rough for about six months until I was placed in a hostel where I began a new relationship. We tried our hardest to help each other due to our pasts. Mine being losing my son and hers being in an extremely violent previous relationship.*

*We went to counselling and I went on to college to get my SIA [Security Industry Authority] licence. We are now engaged and living together.*

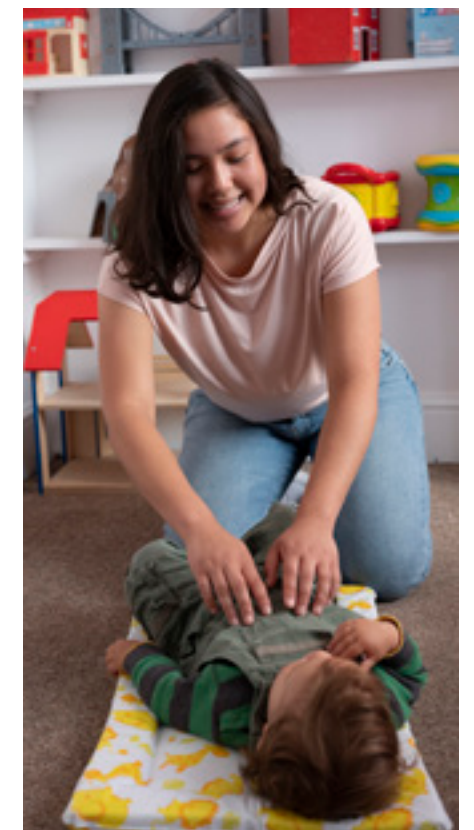
*We still ain't perfect as we are currently in temporary accommodation. I work full time as a security officer and my wife is at home but plans to start back to work once our little boy starts nursery.*

*I would really appreciate it if you could pass this email onto Ben\*. I know now that all he was trying to do was help me and look out for the best interest of my son.*

*Now that I have seen the error of my ways and dealt with them to improve myself as a person and a parent, I have a lot of respect for Ben and the rest of the staff there. I would love to go back to shake Ben's hand and thank him for some of the things he said to me. I know if he hadn't said them, I would most likely have spent time in prison by now.”*

*“Parents will always know how their assessment is progressing, as there is constant feedback in the form of daily sheets. They will also have the opportunity to add to, clarify or challenge the information. For me, this helped build a rapport that ultimately made the difference and I would like to thank everyone for their support during some very difficult circumstances.”*

- Mother in Residency





# Outreach Services

St Michael's outreach team works with young parents in Lambeth struggling with poverty, social exclusion and a range of other issues – such as homelessness, domestic abuse, mental ill health, loneliness and finding work that pays for and fits around childcare.

Outreach staff supported 39 pregnant teenagers, 120 young mothers and 25 young fathers during the year.

Young parent practitioners support parents by working with them one to one, offering practical and emotional support. We may help parents find a safe home, escape from domestic abuse or a gang, return to education or find a job.

At weekly groups young parents and their children can meet 'someone like me'. It's the chance to learn something new in a safe environment, perhaps have a hot meal – for some, their first all week – and feel they can talk about their hopes and fears with others who understand.

Young mothers at our weekly group for expectant and new parents told us:

*"The baby is weaning and I'm learning new things that I didn't know, like what foods to give him and at what age."*

*"Storytelling provided good bonding time with my child. I got time to learn with my baby without any distractions."*

*"I learnt sign language that I can use with my baby that will help us to communicate."*

*"My family's never done anything for me. These women are like my guardian angels."*

- Young mother



## Widening Participation with Brunel

Brunel University's Chrysalis Summer Programme, part of the Widening Participation initiative, is designed to encourage people who might not consider University an option such as care leavers and young parents. Each summer, they lay on a special day just for St Michael's.

Young mums on the 2018 trip wanted a career that made a difference - probation officer, social worker, psychologist, paramedic, animal rescue. They made these choices after becoming mums - having a child was a powerful motivator.

*"I'm excited about everything really. Just gaining more knowledge and seeing what it's like to be inside a classroom. So I know that when I am ready, I know what to expect."*

Less than a week later, this young mum had signed up for a science access course and St Michael's was helping her to arrange child care.

*"These sessions make a huge difference to what young mums think is possible. Hearing how other people did it and seeing them doing it is better than anything that you can read about."*

- Young Parent Practitioner

# with Young Parents in Lambeth

*"I had no education, my worker enabled me to start my English GCSE course. My family live far away, whenever I feel down I have someone to talk to, that's brilliant."*

- 19 year old mum with 11-month old baby receiving one to one support

## Working with Young Dads

We know that the best future for a child is where parents work together and make their child's interests their first priority, even when they are living apart.

It's our job to help young dads understand what is happening to them and their children and to look at how they can improve their lives and become the best father they can be towards their child and for their family unit.

We have a male young fathers practitioner providing individual support. We also run a Caring Dads group programme to help fathers become more child-centred.

*"They've helped me in different ways, like in terms of keeping me in education. Right now I'm doing electrical installation level 2. I'm happy, excited and positive."*

- 18 year old dad, with 5-month old baby receiving one to one support





## “I feel like I’m two people living in one.”

Clare\* witnessed domestic violence as a child, was violent towards her own mum and became involved with an abusive partner

Clare thought it was normal and as a teenager she regularly attacked her mother. Aged 16 and a young mother, she was referred to St Michael’s by social workers. She was abused by her long-term boyfriend but because of her own childhood experiences, didn’t recognise his behaviour as abusive or see herself as a victim.

Support from St Michael’s changed her life and that of her child.

*“I had a nice childhood until domestic violence came into it. That changed everything. My mum would run to me for protection. Then everything switched around. I thought, ‘Oh, if he can do it...’ I’d resist everything my mum said. I was a terror. I was rowdy, verbally abusive, I got into fights.*

*My life changed when I had my child. I had to prove to everyone I was going to be the mum.*

*My partner was violent. He went to jail but the abuse continued. He used to send me threatening letters. Sometimes it was phone calls. Social services recommended me to the St Michael’s DiVa group for young mums in abusive relationships. I didn’t want to go but when I walked in, I saw other young women, like me. I thought, ‘Oh, I’m not the only one.’*

*I didn’t say anything for ages, but I listened. It helped with the depression. Then one day, after a particular conversation, the facilitator said to me, “I can see you have issues.” I started to speak and I went on and on. You couldn’t shut me up.*

*I was never judged. The facilitator told me she didn’t agree with me, but I didn’t feel like an idiot. You do take the advice... I’ve learned to do that. It took me two years to go on my first St Michael’s group trip. Now I’m going to university. I feel like I’m two people living in one – they taught me you have to take some responsibility.”*



## Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are stressful events occurring in childhood. They may include domestic violence, parental abandonment (separation or divorce) or having a parent with a mental health condition. Other ACEs are being the victim of abuse, whether physical, sexual and/or emotional and of being neglected – physically or emotionally.

ACEs may have lifelong impacts on health and behaviour. And as the number of ACEs increases, so does the risk of certain health conditions in adulthood. Adverse and stressful experiences in childhood may have a long-lasting impact on their ability to think, interact with others and on learning. Adults with four or more ACEs are more likely to:

- Have been in prison
- Develop heart disease
- Visit their GP frequently
- Develop type 2 diabetes
- Have committed violence in the last 12 months
- Have health-harming behaviours (high-risk drinking, smoking, drug use).

But ACEs are not destiny. There are many ways to offer hope and build resilience in children, young people and adults who have experienced adversity in early life. St Michael’s works with parents like Clare to reduce ACEs for their children and alleviate the impact of ACEs from their own childhood, as well as helping teenagers and young adults to build resilience in one to one work, groups and special project Stronger Minds (page 12).

### Jigsaw – helping parents stay in touch with their child

Another way we help counter the effects of ACEs is through our family contact centre Jigsaw.

Children can build relationships with a non-resident parent and stay in regular contact with siblings, grandparents and other family members and carers. This can help the child create a strong support network.

Last year, 31 families and 38 children visited Jigsaw.

For five fathers in acute financial need, we provided a greatly subsidised service.





# Building Resilience

## Stronger Minds

How can some adults lead happy, fulfilling lives after a childhood of neglect and abuse whilst others suffer lifelong? It's a question researchers are grappling with.

Stronger Minds is a project with local partners to build emotional resilience in young people. The project is based on the evidence of what works, and also what we know works from young parents' experiences.

*"If you're resilient, you're not perfect. But you can return to your 'steady state' where you can function."*

Over six months of workshops led by the Resilience Foundry, 18 young people including St Michael's young parents, many from traumatic backgrounds, worked alongside seven youth professionals to co-produce a toolkit and series of workshops.

The toolkit can be downloaded from our

website and covers different areas; motivation, faith, religion and spirituality, emotions, relationships and physical health.

**Stronger Minds is an evolving project. Check the website for the latest news.**



# Securing Change



## Supporting mothers to break the cycle of repeat care proceedings

**Securing Change, our 3-year project to support mothers leaving our residential service without their child, began in May 2018 after two years of planning and fundraising.**

We commissioned a small research project with Middlesex University asking mothers referred to us, where previous children were removed, about their experiences and the kinds of support they would have valued.

During the three-year pilot, we will develop a service that meets these women's needs. The work will be person centred and address the needs of each woman as identified by her. Issues that we anticipate will be very common are: dealing with grief and perhaps needing therapeutic support, accommodation, benefits, contact with the child, exploring what needs to change in order to become a parent at some point in the future, isolation, regression to previous behaviours.

Securing Change is a development of both our family assessment and outreach services.

### The difference we will make

The changes we hope to bring about are:

- Mothers are able to resolve past issues, cope better with crises, have healthier relationships and are not involved in repeat care proceedings
- Mothers feel able to access general services, local groups and training



### Evaluation

Securing Change will be evaluated by the Centre for Abuse & Trauma Studies (CATS) at Middlesex University.

Securing Change is also funded by The Philip King Charitable Trust, The Pilgrim Trust, The Tudor Trust, KPMG Foundation, The Elizabeth and Prince Zaiger Trust, other trusts and individuals.

*"I think what [they are] planning on doing could save so many people's lives...  
...I'm not just talking about their mentality, I'm talking about their whole lifestyle, their whole mind-set, it could change them in such a way you wouldn't understand."*

- Patricia



# Thank you

Thank you to everyone who has supported us in the last year!

## Volunteers

Young parents have helped at weekly groups and focus groups, helped us develop services and pitch for funding. Parents have facilitated forum meetings at our houses. Local volunteers have also helped put together starter kits for parents in need.

## Donors

Generous individuals and trusts have helped to fund our continuing services and allowed us to develop new ones. The congregations from four local churches All Saints, Immanuel & St Andrew's, St Paul's and St Saviour's have continued loyally to support us.

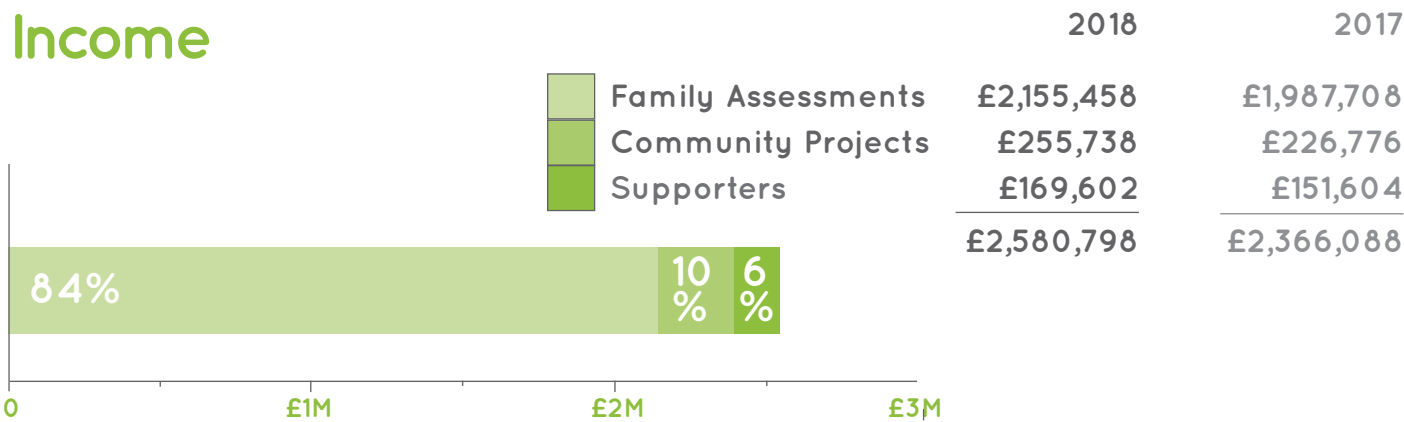
## Fundraisers

Eleven heroic marathon runners completed 288 miles through London in 56 hours and smashed their sponsorship targets on the way. We are also very grateful to those who raised money for us through community events or donations in lieu of a birthday gift.

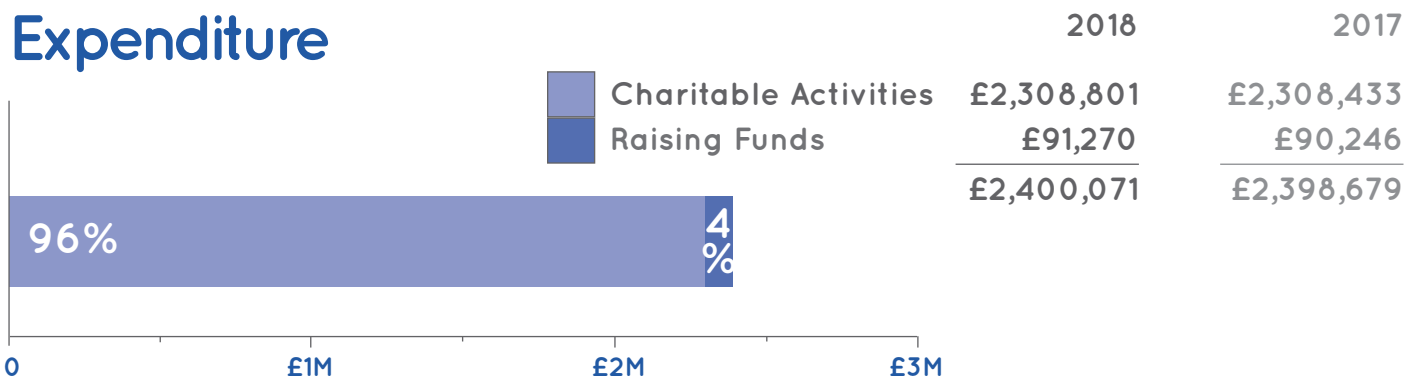


# Where our money comes from and how we spend it

## Income



## Expenditure



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

# Support Us

We all want a society where children are valued, protected and able to succeed regardless of their background.

## How you can help

### Fundraising

If you'd like to raise money for us by taking part in an iconic event, we have places in the London Marathon and the summer Prudential RideLondon-Surrey 100 cycle challenge.

Or you might like to create your own event with your local community group. Email [fundraising@stmichaelsfellowship.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@stmichaelsfellowship.org.uk)

### Donations

**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**

You can also make a donation or set up a **direct debit** from our website.

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. We promise that our fundraising and acceptance of gifts in all forms is legal, open, honest and respectful.

### Sign up to our newsletter

Subscribe to our email newsletter via the website to hear about our latest projects, help you understand the issues facing the parents we work with, and let you know how you can help with donations and volunteering opportunities. You can unsubscribe at any time.



*"It has always been something I have wanted to do and it has been wonderful to raise money for such a brilliant cause. Thank you so much for letting me run for you, it was such a fantastic experience!"*

Lauren, London Marathon Runner 2018



*“Thank you for letting us stay here to grow our bond and make me see things differently.”*

- Young mother and baby son



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