



# IMPACT REPORT 2019

**“Parenting is the biggest single factor affecting children’s wellbeing and development.”**

(Public Health England)



St Michael's  
Fellowship

# Welcome

I've been a trustee of St Michael's since 2013 and Chair of Trustees since 2016. As soon as I heard about the charity and its work with families, I wanted to be involved.

I'm fortunate. I come from a loving, stable family. That warmth and stability has played a big part in my life and now, as a parent myself, it's something I try to provide to my own children.

Many of the parents St Michael's works with have not been so lucky. And in turn, many of their children are not so lucky. But through the work of St Michael's, we see great transformations take place.

We are very proud of our staff who work so hard to improve the lives and futures of disadvantaged children and their families through their expertise, creativity and sheer dogged determination. We're also very proud of the parents who work so hard to be the best parents possible.

We're most grateful to our donors, those who support us with gifts and time and by raising funds, so that this work can continue.

Thank you, on behalf of everyone at St Michael's.

**Stephen Hair**  
Chair of Trustees



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**£56,000 – the average annual cost of a child in the care system**

## Clare – a young mum at St Michael's 35 years ago

When my parents found out I was pregnant, they said I'd have to move out if I was going to have a baby. It was 1984 and I was just 18. I found out about St Michael's and my son was born a month after I moved in.

I have the fondest memories of that haven for young mothers, house manager Sue, and the supportive, non-judgemental environment. I credit St Michael's with helping me to become the mother and person I am.

After I left with my baby, I worked in the civil service until I had my daughter Karis. Then at 28 I went to university before joining the probation service.

I now work in housing for a local authority, and also offer supported housing for young women leaving the care system – I'd always wanted to give something back.

In 2014 I got in touch with St Michael's and offered to help fundraise by running the London Marathon. I still get emotional when I think of Sue, who is now the Director, waiting for me that day at the finishing line. It was a wonderful surprise and lovely end to an amazing day.

**Clare**

# First Christmas



**Clare's daughter also ran the London Marathon for St Michael's in 2017!**

## Children, parents, family

Children are the focus of our work. We believe in the value of family. We believe that children, where safe, do better within their families, and that sibling relationships are vital. That's why St Michael's has always worked with families.

This conviction is the basis of all our work, in our houses and in the community.

We know that parenting is the single biggest factor affecting children's well-being and development. In fact, children living in persistent poverty with good parenting are more likely to reach developmental goals at five years than children from wealthier households who are poorly parented. (Public Health England 2019)

But issues such as domestic violence, neglect and abuse, and drug and alcohol misuse can have a long-lasting impact on children's development, on their relationships and on their learning.

Many of the parents we work with have been such children themselves – as have their own parents. We work to break this destructive cycle.

Research shows that the right support can combat the damaging effects of stress and trauma. This is borne out by our own experiences.

We know that people can – and do – change. We do everything possible to help parents make the necessary changes. Staff have very high levels of skill, openness to continual learning, patience and resilience.



## Residential Family Assessments



**“Don't think anyone is doing better or worse than you. Everyone learns and parents differently.”**

*Residential parent*

Each parent has a keyworker but the team works alongside to identify what needs to change in their parenting, and how those changes may be made. The relationship is based on trust and mutual respect.



**“Staff benefit from regular formal supervision, appraisals, team practice days and extensive training. The organisation commissions an external learning coach.”**  
Ofsted

For some time we have worked in partnership with researchers at Middlesex University's Centre for Abuse & Trauma Studies, building shared expertise and knowledge. Our staff use specific evidence based tools in their work developed by Middlesex. This allows Middlesex to evaluate how these tools translate to practice.

**“We understand that all families are different and need different things. When you come for an assessment at our centre, we will spend time with you and your family so that we can try to understand how you learn and what you might need.”**  
Handbook for residents

## Why residential assessments?

St Michael's Fellowship – a leading provider of residential family assessments since 1991

St Michael's Fellowship provides residential family assessments at four houses in south London. Last year we worked with 42 families at our houses. They came from 18 different local authorities.



Residential assessment centres may be used when a local authority is worried about the safety of a child living with their family. Residential family assessments help courts to make the best decision for the child's future. A typical assessment lasts for 12 weeks. However, we don't prolong assessments where it is clear that the parent cannot meet the child's needs.

“It's hard work but it's very rewarding learning to put your child first at all times.”

“Even though it was hard, staff helped me see that I couldn't look after my baby.”

## Why are families referred to our houses?

There are typically eight or more combined reasons why families are referred to our residential service. The five most common are:



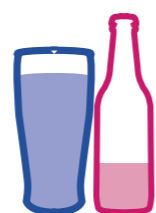
Neglect



Mental health issues



Domestic violence / abusive relationship



Drug / alcohol misuse



Learning difficulties

## Carole and Simon

Carole and Simon had one child. Carole had been sexually abused at a young age. Most likely as a result, she had a long history of mental health issues, drinking and drug use.

Before Carole arrived at St Michael's, she reported that she was alcohol and drug free. We needed to confirm this. We also needed to assess Simon's ability to put the baby's safety and welfare first if Carole's behaviour put the child at risk.

Carole went to many different sessions around drug and alcohol support but we saw patterns that concerned us.

In the first placement review after three weeks, we discussed our concerns with them. We revised the support package and worked with Carole on therapeutic strategies and techniques to help her regulate needs and emotions.

Carole was drunk several times in the following weeks. The third time, we asked Carole to leave. It was not fair to continue her assessment when she was clearly nowhere near recovery.

We continued to assess Simon's parenting, supported by his wider family, as the plan was for him and the baby to live with them. The final six weeks of the assessment were in the community.

We also offered background sessions to Simon and his family to discuss Carole's mental health issues, the links to substance misuse and the risks these posed to the baby.

Simon and his family engaged well and the court agreed that the baby should live with father and family. Carole has supervised contact with the baby.

Through the house setting we were able to obtain a real picture of Carole's drinking and her level of emotional instability. This was hard for her as it shattered the picture she wanted to give professionals. Carole was skilled at drawing the focus to her need for unending support, and away from her actual behaviour and the risks this posed to her child. 'Engagement' is not just attending a group or sessions. What counts is the level of involvement in those meetings. At the house, we saw how much she depended on alcohol to cope with her daily life.

One in ten parents at our houses had been removed from their own parents.



## Parents with learning difficulties Manager Jo explains the work of our specialist centre

We have a three phase assessment. We start by establishing a baseline, which may include PAMS, a specialist tool to support the assessment of parents with learning difficulties. This identifies the skills the parent may have already but also the teaching we need to offer. The second phase is the teaching phase. Over the next six weeks we work alongside families to support change. This includes the Five a Day for Child Development programme: reading, playing, talking, praising, a healthy diet. We may need to also support a parent to embed basic skills such as nappy changing, feeding, bathing. We connect parents with children's centres and community partners. During this phase we will also offer sessions on healthy relationships, independent living skills, self-esteem and previous concerns about their parenting.

We specialise in learning difficulties and disabilities and use material and ideas from many different specialist organisations. We also work with our local advocacy service.

There are several free and very good apps to help parents understand child development. As so many people now search the internet for information, we help parents to search for relevant information from reputable websites. To support many parents who lack confidence in areas such as reading, there are read aloud apps. For those who struggle with writing, there are dictation apps which type up the spoken word. We get a deeper understanding of parents' views and feelings by getting weekly feedback from parents, as well as during everyday conversations.

We're currently developing a skills book that identifies a parent's knowledge of parenting and independent living. This should mean we can tailor assessments even better.

In the third phase we step back when we can to identify the parent's learning and capacity for change, and whether this can be sustained without our direct support. This helps us to understand what the child's experience will be.

**“It is hard but you will get through it, you just need hope and to work with professionals even if you don't like them.”**



## Securing Change: What happens to families after their stay?

*“This year I've seen an increase in families using St Michael's after their assessment by visiting or phoning for support, usually when they are in crisis. Although this proves the good work we do, it does highlight the lack of support once the assessment is over,” says Jo.*

We've long recognised that mothers leaving our houses without their child are usually bereft of any support, exactly when they most need it. During the first year of our pilot service Securing Change to offer support for these mothers, we learned that many other parents needed help as well. That's why we're now offering some support to all parents who leave our houses.

*“My heart was crushed when my children were placed in care. I froze.*

*Securing Change took my call when I could not leave the court room and face the first afternoon without my son. They came to my home, gave me space when I needed to cry and celebrated the new milestones in my life.”*



**“I have to walk the path all by myself, but I needed help at first to get on the right path.”**



# Outreach Services for Parents in Lambeth

We have been making a difference to Lambeth's young families since 2000. Over the past 10 years, we have worked one to one with over 100 young parents each year.

The lives of the young parents who work with us are precarious and complex. To improve the health and wellbeing of their child we support them around housing and benefits, financial stability, child safety and development, moving to education or work, and healthy behaviours including around domestic violence and substance misuse.

Last year the team worked one to one with 104 young mothers, including 47 pregnant teenagers, and 32 young fathers.

We also run weekly groups at different children's centres in Lambeth. We help parents meet 'someone like me' and learn about child development, home safety, getting back to college, childcare, preparing healthy food on a budget and managing finances. This year, we're expanding our AQA programme which means parents gain credits for their learning, boosting both their confidence and CV.



We are Lambeth LEAP partners too.

This work is partly funded by Lambeth and we are grateful for the support of St James's Place Foundation and the City Bridge Trust which enables it to continue at the present level. Sir Walter St John's Educational Charity once again kindly helped fund our summer trips programme.

# Man to Man

Overwhelming evidence shows a father's relationship with his child plays a vital role in the child's health, social and educational achievements.

Fathers can influence their baby's welfare even before birth. They are powerful advocates for the mother to stop smoking and start breastfeeding. We support co-parenting where this is safe, because it promotes the best possible outcomes for the child, mother and father too.

We've employed a specialist young fathers' practitioner since 2008.

**“Young dads’ attitude – it’s a habit, can I put it that way? It’s hard to change a habit, to change your whole way of thinking and way of talking. You walk into these professional meetings where they are judging everything. From the way you smell, the way you look, the way you talk, your posture, the way you present yourself, how sincere you are sounding, or not.”**

*Arnold, young fathers practitioner*

The local authority recommended that Devon's daughter be put up for adoption.

*I was broken, I was literally broken. I thought, I am going to lose my daughter. It felt like an injustice.*

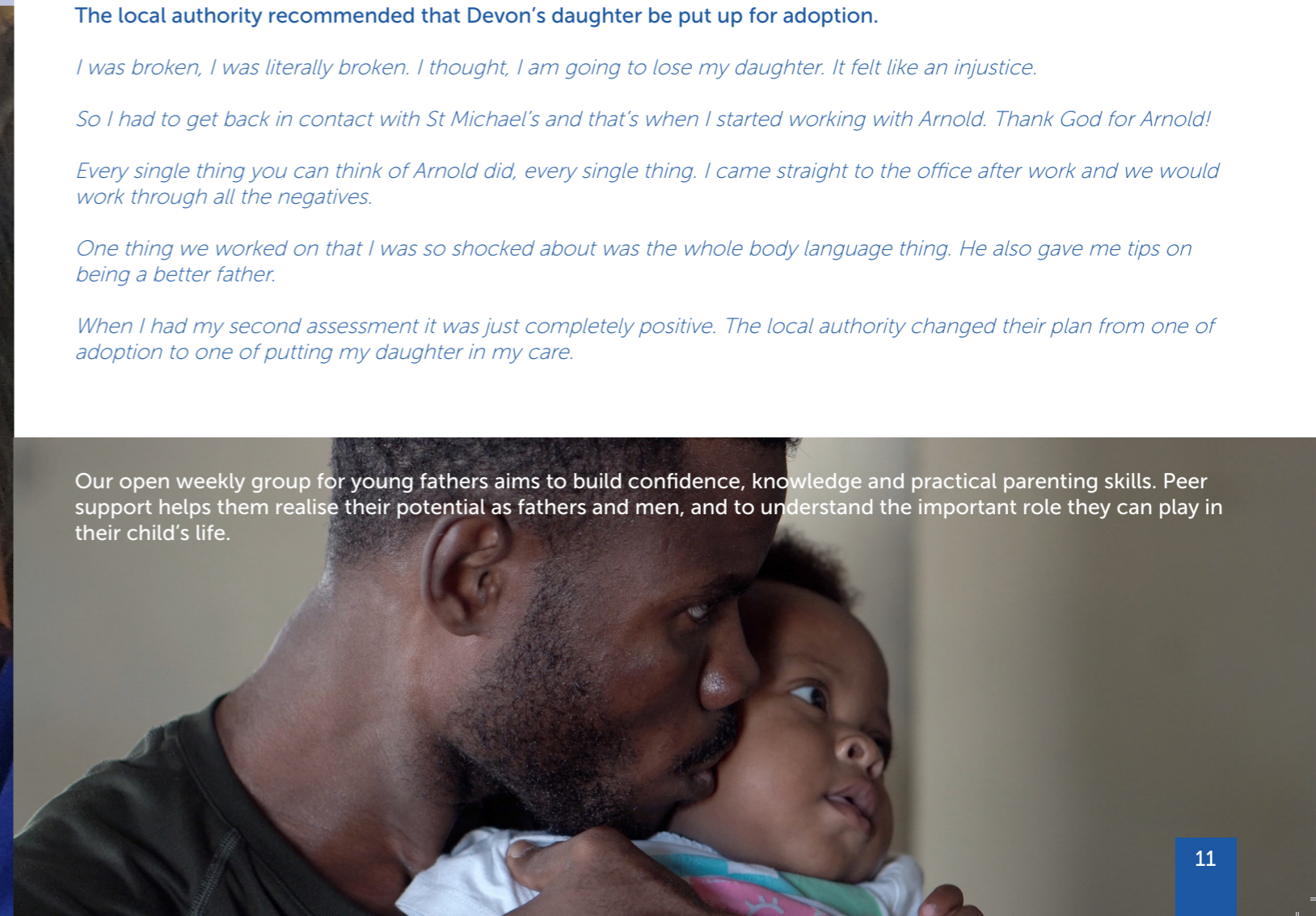
*So I had to get back in contact with St Michael's and that's when I started working with Arnold. Thank God for Arnold!*

*Every single thing you can think of Arnold did, every single thing. I came straight to the office after work and we would work through all the negatives.*

*One thing we worked on that I was so shocked about was the whole body language thing. He also gave me tips on being a better father.*

*When I had my second assessment it was just completely positive. The local authority changed their plan from one of adoption to one of putting my daughter in my care.*

Our open weekly group for young fathers aims to build confidence, knowledge and practical parenting skills. Peer support helps them realise their potential as fathers and men, and to understand the important role they can play in their child's life.



## Sharing what we know

St Michael's values curiosity and creativity and is always looking for ways to improve, learn and share our experience with others. Digital technology can help. We're exploring with parents different ways of communicating and working.

After we'd held focus groups with young mothers, we are using Instagram far more to explain the work we do. We're using other social media more too, sharing ideas and asking others.

Digital technology is also helping us share what we know with other organisations and workers around the UK and beyond. Through signing up to our mailing lists, you can access some services online. For example, Stronger Minds toolkit, which helps young people build emotional resilience. Project updates have included free training sessions.

The Kim toolkit which explores the difficult issue of domestic abuse in young relationships is free to download. Kim teaches how to recognise warning signs, how to get help and how to support a friend.



**“I used to go to a lot of baby groups but they were more for older people. We'd talk about babies and labour and then we'd have nothing else to talk about.”**



## Caring Dads – taking the lead in London

Caring Dads is a 17-week programme to help fathers value their children. We've now run four Caring Dads programmes. With Kingston University we're taking a lead in delivering the programme in London, training more facilitators here and abroad, and supporting projects in the UK to network and share their learning.

## Feedback from 2019 Caring Dads

**“Before I didn't know how to talk to my children. I was really too harsh for them. But since I have been here I have learnt more and there is a big change. I talk to them, I hear them. My children say I listen to them more, which is a big, big change for me.”**

**“I told the people – this programme should be before we have the bad problems.”**

**“Here they teach us a lot about self-control, the importance of the children in your life.”**

# Letter from Sue



Dear Friends

St Michael's was founded on principles of philanthropy and goodwill to those in need. Today, nearly 120 years later, as we pride ourselves on the forward-thinking and professional services we deliver to vulnerable families, that ethos remains at our core.

Our funds come from different sources: the local authorities who buy our services, trusts including The Big Lottery (now The National Lottery Community Fund); local churches and retailers; and individual donors, fundraisers and volunteers. We are very grateful to everyone who supports us – often for very many years. This means we can continue to develop the difficult and rewarding work we do.

2019 was a triathlon year for us. We had a team of 11 marathon runners: three super cyclists in the Prudential London-Surrey 100 mile event; and a cross channel swimmer. Together they raised more than £30,000.

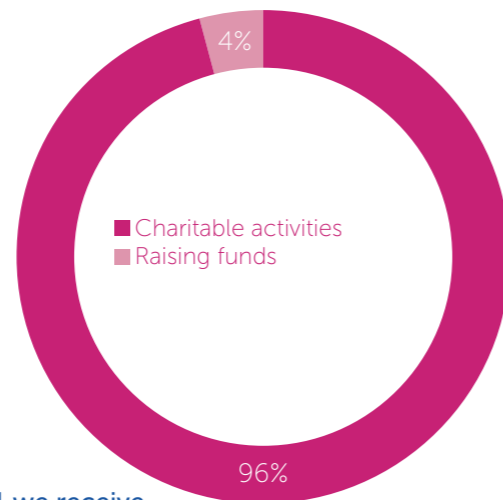
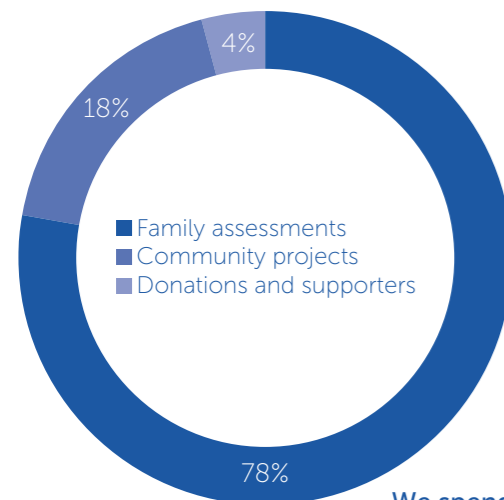
I was very sorry to hear earlier this year of the death of our patron Tessa Baring CBE who became involved with us in 1974, eventually retiring as Chair in 2007. I believe St Michael's had a special place in her heart as she did in ours. She was intimately involved in our development as an organisation. This also included fundraising to which we now add generous gifts bequeathed in her Will and from her family in memoriam.

If you would like to find out about ways to support us, do contact me or Hillary, our Head of Fundraising.

Sue Pettigrew OBE

## Where our money comes from and how we spend it

	2019	
<b>Income</b>		
Family assessments	1,833,773	78%
Community projects	408,499	18%
Donations and supporters	97,210	4%
	<b>2,339,482</b>	
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Charitable activities	2,355,469	96%
Raising funds	108,484	4%
	<b>2,463,953</b>	



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

# Small amounts add up to something amazing

Choose an amount to give by monthly direct debit to St Michael's and you can change a child's future for the better. [stmichaelsfellowship.org.uk/donations](http://stmichaelsfellowship.org.uk/donations) or phone Hillary 020 8835 9570

Or you may prefer to make a single donation. You can donate through our website, by bank transfer, or by posting a cheque payable to St Michael's Fellowship.

To find out more about a gift in your Will, download our legacy pack [stmichaelsfellowship.org.uk/get-involved/A-gift-in-your-will](http://stmichaelsfellowship.org.uk/get-involved/A-gift-in-your-will) or phone to have it posted to you.

Bank details: as above

Contact: Hillary [hillary@stmichaelsfellowship.org.uk](mailto:hillary@stmichaelsfellowship.org.uk), phone 020 8835 9570 or write to her at Head Office.



## Fancy a 2020 Challenge?

“GULP. This is actually happening. I hope I can do justice to the wonderful work you all do.”

“I have always wanted to do a marathon and to be able to do London was brilliant. It is a truly amazing event and something I shall never forget.”

If you or someone you know would like to join our runners or cyclists in 2020, contact us as soon as possible [fundraising@stmichaelsfellowship.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@stmichaelsfellowship.org.uk) or ring Head Office.

We offered 8 families 70 hours of subsidised contact at our Jigsaw Contact Centre – thanks to you.





## “Yesterday’s children: Today’s mothers and fathers”

Patricia Crittenden

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