



Summary Young Parents Outreach Service 2013 – 2014

St. Michael's Fellowship has provided outreach support to young parents since 2000. The service is commissioned by Lambeth for residents who are young expectant parents and young mothers (up to and including 21 year-olds), young fathers (up to and including 24-year olds) and their children.

The service is intended to improve overall life opportunities for young parents and their children, with targets geared towards long and medium term outcomes.

In 2013 - 2014, the outreach team worked with 217 mums (including 88 pregnant mums-to-be) and 73 dads.

We are sensitive to individual needs, recognising the diversity within Lambeth. We offer support to all young mothers and young fathers including care leavers, those living independently for the first time, those who are gang affiliated, asylum seekers, and those with no recourse to public funds.

We are named as a delivery provider in Lambeth's Early Action Partnership's (LEAP) successful Big Lottery bid for £38 million, to which we contributed.

Referrals

We received 127 referrals during the year, a noticeable decline from the previous year but on a par with the declining rate of teenage conceptions: 43% from midwifery teams, 16% CYPs, 16% self-referral, 7%

FNP, 3% health visitors, 3% Wise Up to Sexual Health plus another 13 agencies.

Child Protection Plans

This year, we saw increased referrals from social care where the child is on a child protection plan. Often, the initial referral totally underestimates, or the referrer does not know, the complexity of the parent's needs. As staff work with parents they learn the true nature of the difficulties.

Housing

The number one reason for referral is housing issues. These include sofa surfing; living with parents who want them out or where they want to leave; inappropriate housing that is unsafe for a young child (eg very damp, requires lots of repairs); or young parents needing a supported housing association placement when there are no vacancies. For young fathers, key issues are sofa surfing and having few rights to housing.

Trends

Domestic Violence & Gang Affiliation

Three quarters of referrals include domestic violence. A quarter of the young fathers we worked with were identified as perpetrators of domestic abuse. As we get to know the young people, we learn of gang involvement, the dangers they experience and the dangers this can present to staff, including the growing number of young parents with fighting dogs.

Fall in conceptions

As well as the drop in the conception rate relating to first child we have seen a drop in the conception rate for subsequent children. Less than 10 of the 217 mums we worked with have had a second child.

Fall in age of children we work with

There has also been a change in the age distribution partly because of the upper age range of mums being reduced from 24 to 22 years. This has affected the age range of children. 94% are aged 0-2 years compared to 79% in the previous year. 5% are 3-4 years compared to 14% in 2012 – 13. This impacts on group attendance as most Children Centre crèches will not take babies under six months.

Targets

Our service delivery targets are:

- decrease in number of under-18 conceptions and teenage terminations
- reduction in number of young mothers having more than one pregnancy
- decrease in number of children of teenage and young parents on a child protection plan
- decrease in infant mortality for children of young parents
- decrease in low birth weight
- decrease in incidents of domestic violence
- decrease in accidental injury
- increase in number of young mothers breastfeeding and continuing to breastfeed after eight weeks
- increased numbers stopping smoking
- increased take up of immunisations
- children of young parents have safe and regular contact with their separated father
- young mothers and fathers move from NEET to EET

Outcomes

The bulk of our work is one to one work through establishing trusting, respectful, honest relationships. Some change may appear small; getting a young mum to leave her home and attend an appointment; giving her the self-confidence to come to a group; helping a young person to access their correct benefits and establish a plan for managing debt. All these achievements reduce stress so the parent is more available to the child.

Successes from the work done in groups are also founded on the individual work with parents. This gives them the confidence to come to the group and then develop within them along with their peers.

Key successes:

- 11% of children on a CP plan were deregistered during the year
- 88% of new mums initiated breastfeeding
- Five dads started having regular contact with their child having lost contact or had no contact
- 275 AQA certificates were awarded to 54 parents in 59 different units
- 20 parents were trained as peer educators
- 40 young parents found employment, training or started college.
- Staff raised over £2,000 from charity applications to provide 11 families with essential items
- Six families received safety equipment
- Our *Kim* film and toolkit used extensively with young parents was reviewed in Child Abuse Review as 'a resource that can save lives'.

Our emphasis on the importance of fathers is acknowledged to be unusual and highly valuable. We employ two male young fathers' workers and run a separate 'fathers only' group.

Our contact space Jigsaw means that children can have safe and regular contact with a separated father.

Commissioners ranked our service most highly of all external providers.

'Brenda'

Family circumstances

Brenda is 22 years old of mixed White British and Black African parentage. She first became a mother at the age of 15. She has had two children removed from her care who have since been adopted. She now has a third child and was placed into foster care with a Lambeth family.

She has no family support and, as a child in care, formed many inappropriate sexual relationships in what she now recognises as her desire to be loved. Brenda has been a prostitute with a series of violent and abusive relationships. She refers to herself as dirty, smelly and a whore.

She was referred to us by her foster carer who is familiar with our work. She attended a structured support group for women in abusive relationships, as well as therapeutic counselling. St Michael's young parent mentor helped her to access a college ITC course.

The young parent mentor has commented on the changes in Brenda; sticking to tasks, turning up for appointments and having a clear action plan. She communicates better and takes care of her appearance and personal hygiene. She now engages well

with her child and demonstrates good-enough parenting skills.

What differences did the service make?

Brenda has made friends with other young mothers and demonstrates to professionals that she is prioritising her child's needs over her own. Her child is meeting all developmental milestones and is up to date with all medical appointments and immunisations.

Staff accompanied a very nervous Brenda to a family court hearing. The court decided not to remove her child but for a new assessment, where she would be given more parenting responsibilities. At a second court hearing, she was granted a Supervision Order instead of the adoption previously sought

'Gary'

Family circumstances

Gary is a 24 year old Trinidadian lone father to his three- year old daughter 'Sarah', who was born in Lambeth. Gary had a very difficult childhood in Trinidad. In the UK, he lived in severe deprivation.

When he began a relationship with his daughter's mother, he was unaware of her mental health issues. Gary successfully undertook a St. Michael's Fellowship parenting assessment and was granted a Residence Order for his daughter.

Gary attended St Michael's Young Fathers support group and his many significant needs became apparent. When Sarah's social worker informed us that the child's case would be closed and therefore Gary's support package, St Michael's stepped in.

What differences did the service make?

We helped Gary:

- Budget to raise £400 to apply for indefinite leave to remain in the UK and submit his application
- Make a successful application for benefits to meet his daughter's needs, while awaiting Home Office decision
- Liaise with his housing officer, set up a standing order to pay rent and reduce arrears; secure beds from the housing association; obtain appliances and furniture
- Secure ongoing education and training through the London Youth Support Trust to fit around childcare
- Access to nursery education and support for Sarah, including nursery transfer; participate in summer trips

The holistic support that Gary has received means he is able to remain in the UK with his daughter, and meet her welfare and developmental needs, whilst improving his work prospects.

Services

Group Work

We are advisory board members for ten Children's Centres and facilitate young parent support groups everyday of the week (bar Sundays) in seven. During the year we facilitated over 267 groups on a wide range of parenting topics.

A fortnightly Saturday Dads contact group allows renewed contact between father and child.

'Because of this group I am able to see my daughter again. She was only weeks old when I last saw her, she's now two years old'. We are getting to know each other again. It's so wonderful, thank you.'

41 families attended activities and outings over the summer months.

Peer Education

'Youth Truth' is for young Lambeth parents aged 18-25 years offered training in peer education facilitation (AQA accredited), literacy and numeracy (if required) and Preparation for Work workshops (AQA accredited). Once they have completed the training, deliver workshops to young people in schools and youth settings on the realities of being a parent and/or sexual health and contraception

Workshops on Gang Grooming

Workshops based on our film 'Tiny' were shown to year 10 & 11 pupils. Pupils' feedback and learning evaluated very well. During one workshop a young person recognised that he was being gang-groomed and spoke to school personnel immediately. At another, a boy rang his friend and told him to come (which he did).

Young Domestic Violence toolkit

Kim, our film on domestic violence in young relationships, also produced in partnership with young parents, received a glowing review in Child Abuse Review, which said that it could 'save lives'.

Animation Project

We collaborated with [Pigeon films](#) and [Lambeth City Learning Centre](#) in a short animated film on fatherhood which was screened at the BFI.

Sexual health DVD *On Second Thoughts*

Funding from Lambeth's young people's health small grant scheme allowed us to work jointly again with [Latimer](#) and young parents to create a DVD focusing on preventing second pregnancies.

Work with young fathers

'It is a rare but lucky young dad who comes into contact with a group such as the St Michael's Fellowship in Brixton – a wonderful organisation that works with young dads in some of the most testing circumstances in Britain. 'David Lammy MP

Lambeth's youth offending service asked us to co-deliver workshops to young fathers in Cookham Wood Young Offenders Institution. Sessions aim to develop awareness of what it means to be a father, how to maintain contact with children whilst in custody and realistic expectations on release.

We held Dads' Walk 2 on the Father's day weekend of June, attended by 70 families.

Winner of our design competition for a logo for the New Dad pack was 24-year old Lambeth resident Myrto Williams.

Training

Parenting Programmes

Staff delivered one [Triple P](#) and two [FAST](#) parenting programmes. One father fed back that his child would be returning from foster care into his sole care, and felt parenting programme had contributed to this.

Training for Lambeth staff

Our training course *'Engaging and working with teenage and young parents'* was delivered for to 10 Lambeth staff.

Contract performance review

Our score of 47 in 2014-15 (maximum 50) improves on our previous two years' scores **and is the highest awarded by Lambeth commissioners.**

Conclusion

St Michael's Fellowship has a successful track record of delivering outreach services to young parents in Lambeth over the past 14 years.

We therefore understand the need to work flexibly and nimbly, keeping pace with changes to national strategy around childcare, legislation, local government structures and a volatile economy.

We are familiar with the specific issues in Lambeth, where a quarter of the population is transient. The borough has an unenviable reputation for gang violence. In contrast, in some areas the economy is thriving. There are notable successes such as the quality of children's centres and primary schools, and falling rates of teenage conception. This is the backdrop to our work.

St Michael's outreach is an early intervention which, as this reports sets out, is delivering significant outcomes. The financial implications are also highly significant.

The cost of a single child taken into care is more than £46,000 a year.

(Early Intervention Foundation).

Recommendations

1. Improve referrals

The source of referrals it is not an integrated pathway. Many different agencies refer to us, few in a systematic way. It would be sensible if all pregnant young women up to age of 21 were referred automatically by midwifery teams. By linking to the new births' list, we could follow up new births to young parents. This would capture those babies not born in Kings or St Thomas' but living in Lambeth. Inform social workers - we have seen huge churn of social workers. In the last two years no GPs have made referrals despite contact with surgeries.

2. Continue to work holistically and in partnerships

We believe that to be effective, we must continue to work in partnership with other agencies, local and national organisations. We must share knowledge and work as effectively as we do with the FNP (Family Nurse Partnership) if we are to secure mid to long term change.

Young parents have many more moves in their lives than older more settled parents. The main reasons for this unpredictability are housing, relationships and ill health, theirs and/or their baby's. This unpredictability is probably also a symptom of immaturity and lack of resilience as they get blown off course and it takes a while to get them back on track.

High turnover of social workers also poses severe difficulties, especially where there is no handover so that plans get lost or are not given the same priority. We aspire to collaborative working with our clients' social workers but this is a two-way process.

3. Develop new services and resources in response to changing need

For example, sexual exploitation of girls and young women is particularly prevalent in Lambeth and closely linked to teenaged parenthood. We are working with young parents to develop resources to tackle this scourge.

About St Michael's Fellowship

We aim to improve the lives of the most vulnerable children by working with parents. We look to break intergenerational cycles and keep families together where this is in a child's best interests.

Our services include parenting assessment and support; a community team, providing intensive; work with young parents; and peer education to encourage resilience and ambition. We work with partners and national networks to benefit from new research and programmes, and to disseminate our own knowledge and skills.

St Michael's has been working with vulnerable children and parents since 1903.

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to keep families together**

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