

PRESS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION

REFUGE FOR MISSING CHILDREN UNDER THREAT

The charity experts in dealing with the plight of young runaways in London, St Christopher's, is today highlighting the threat of closure of the London Refuge one of its flagship services providing safe and successful care to hundreds of young people across London.

The issue will be a key feature of the BBC Inside Out programme to be broadcast across the London region on Monday February 8th at 7.30 pm. The programme will not only show the potential consequences of a failure to fund such a vital service but will also demonstrate its past success through the use of personal testimony from former residents.

For the past ten years St Christopher's has taken care of up to 250 young people every year in the Refuge and has provided information and support to many more. The majority of funding for the Refuge has in the past come from the NSPCC but this contribution cannot be sustained beyond March of this year.

Brian Smith, Area Manager at St Christopher's, explains;

"The London Refuge is the only safe direct access accommodation in London for runaway children under the age of 16. It provides a critically needed service to a high standard and it must be continued."

St Christopher's remains committed to the service, which also acts as a central point of knowledge and expertise on young runaways, and has made strenuous efforts to demonstrate the likely impact of closure. These efforts and the responses can be seen on the BBC 'Inside Out' programme on Monday.

ENDS

Further Information: Keith Francis, Director
St Christopher's Fellowship
020 8780 7800
or
mobile: 07872 118 132
keithfrancis@stchris.org.uk

Available for interview: Brian Smith, Area Manager
St Christopher's Fellowship
020 8780 7800
or
Mobile 07834 129 049
briansmith@stchris.org.uk

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. St Christopher's Fellowship (established 1870) is a leading charity based in Putney providing a range of care, housing and support for children and young people across the UK and the Isle of Man. Last year it provided assistance to over 6,000 young people.
2. The London Refuge is managed by St Christopher's and registered as a 'safe house' under Section 51 of the Children Act 1989. It is the only such resource in London, is inspected by Ofsted and has achieved results of 'Outstanding' and 'Good' in its past two inspections.
3. Young runaways are usually referred to the Refuge by police, Childline or emergency duty social workers. They can stay at the Refuge for up to 14 days whilst their circumstances are explored and plans made for their safety.
4. Due to the sensitive nature of the service, St Christopher's is not permitted to disclose the location or address of the Refuge.