

**St**CHRISTOPHER'S  
CREATING BRIGHTER  
FUTURES

## 16+ Services

*Supporting young people to independence*



Caring for children and young people since 1870

# About St Christopher's

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St Christopher's is a charity that has provided care and support to vulnerable young people for over 140 years. Alongside our fostering service and children's homes, we provide a range of housing and support services, including:

- safe, high quality, 24-hour staffed accommodation for vulnerable young people, including services designed for care leavers and for homeless young people
- visiting and floating support for young people moving towards independence
- homelessness intervention – education work in schools using peer educators
- mediation work with young runaways, homeless young people and their families to support and sustain a return home whenever possible.

Our services are specially designed to meet the changing needs of local authorities and the young people placed with us.

At the core of our services is our commitment to safeguarding the welfare of young people; providing a stable, safe environment in which young people are able to thrive.

In this brochure we explain what makes St Christopher's special and what we offer over and above conventional housing and support services – in particular, our:

- tangible results, including high levels of tenancy sustainment and successful move-on
- innovative approaches to working with young people
- track record in developing flexible, innovative and cost effective services.



## Tangible results

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Every young person placed with St Christopher's receives a tailor-made support package and leaves with **proof** that they have increased their independent living skills.

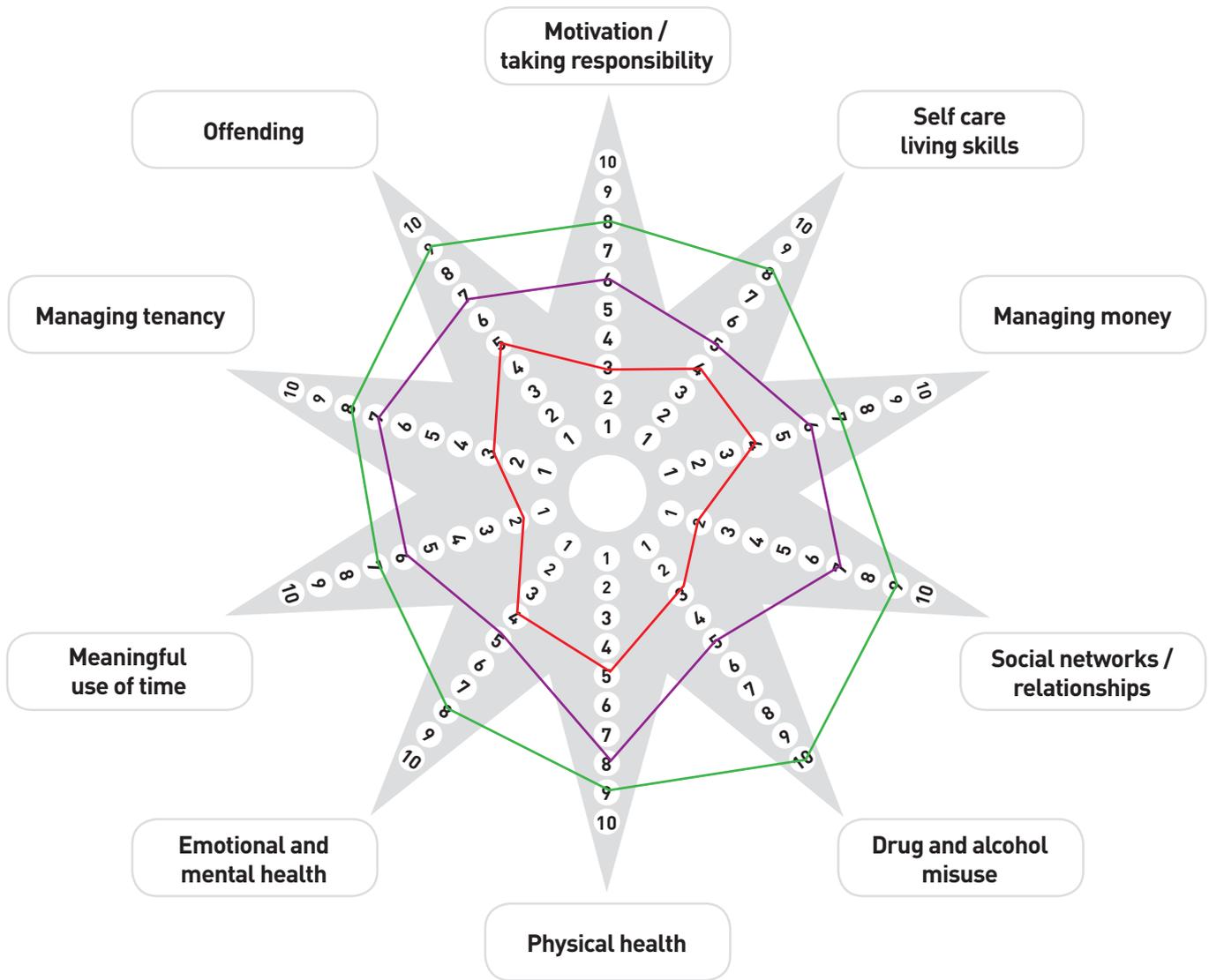
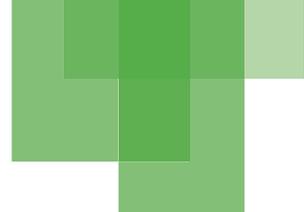
St Christopher's uses the **Outcomes STAR** to help shape and direct a young person's support journey. On arrival, each young person works with us to complete their initial STAR assessment, encouraging and enabling them to:

- assess their current strengths
- recognise areas for development and agree goals
- identify ways of moving towards those goals using AQA awards to support and demonstrate progress.

At subsequent assessments the STAR gives a quick pictorial representation of 'distance travelled' - as shown in the diagram on the next page. This helps young people to feel more in control of their lives and more confident about moving towards successful independent living.

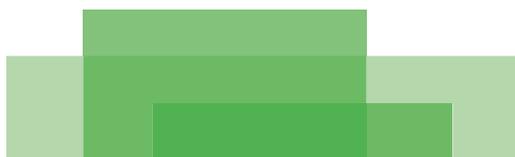
In addition to helping young people and their key workers in joint planning and assessment, the Outcomes STAR tool allows St Christopher's to benchmark performance within and across its services.

# The Outcomes STAR



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**“My key worker helped me to understand what areas I needed to focus on and what I was good at independently.”**  
James, 16



### Gaining valuable accreditation

To help demonstrate their independent living skills, St Christopher's also offers young people the opportunity to gain nationally recognised, accredited certification, using the **AQA Unit Award Scheme**. Each young person who spends time at a St Christopher's service leaves us with a portfolio of their attainment, including their progress on the Outcomes STAR and their AQA awards.

To complement individual attainment of AQAs, St Christopher's has also launched the **Life Skills Academy**, which delivers AQA Unit Award sessions in a group setting. While we recognise that one-to-one work is more appropriate for some, especially for those working on sensitive issues, we have found that for many young people, the group setting means they learn more effectively and have a chance to develop their listening and cooperation skills. An additional benefit is that the Life Skills Academy enables support workers to reach more young people and deliver more sessions – which means that, in many cases, we are able to deliver substantially more than our contracted support hours.



## Innovative approaches

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At St Christopher's we believe that one size does not fit all. We work with young people to devise programmes and activities that capture their varying interests and imaginations, whilst providing a vehicle for learning and for building positive relationships.

**“One of the most engaged and innovative providers that I have worked with”**

Community Safety Coordinator

**“I wanted to say how impressed and grateful we've been for your work with Lily. I've worked with lots of people from different agencies and organisations... and it's very rare indeed to come across someone with your level of commitment and expertise. You were so thorough in following things up, offering practical advice and help too, and were consistently active and proactive. I don't think Lily would have got any applications in without your support – and I think the difference you made goes way beyond that”.**

Higher Education Careers Adviser

## Building on popular culture

To help young people learn how to cook, manage a budget and work together, we have developed our own versions of 'Come Dine With Me' and 'Ready Steady Cook'.



## Acting on feedback

Consultation with young people showed us clearly that young people didn't read our leaflets because 'leaflets are boring'. They wanted us to use other media.

We now have budding film makers working with industry producers and directors; making films that highlight a range of important issues for young people and building their skills at the same time.

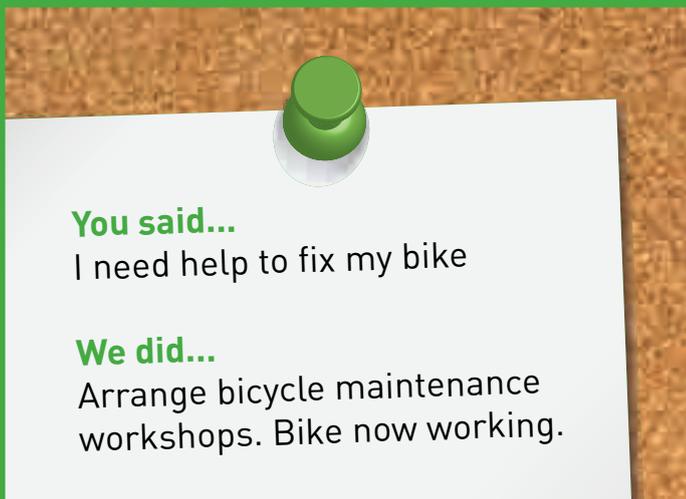


We also use young people's own preferred means of communication, such as social networking, as part of our regular communication with them.



## Young people as consultants

When we *do* use print, we ask our young people's participation panel, Challenge for Change (C4C), to check that it is easy to understand, free from jargon and to give it their seal of approval.



## Demonstrating that we listen

Our 'You said... we did' walls explain how we have responded to suggestions or requests made by young people.

**“Staff demonstrated a good understanding of the varied needs of young people and a strong ethos of empowering service users”**  
Local Authority Commissioner

## Get up and go

Our 'Go Fund' provides small grants to young people wanting to make changes in their lives.

**“The only bright point in my life was my interest in sewing and design - I'd always liked making clothes for my friends and family. Helen [key worker] encouraged me to enter a Young Designer competition and helped me to apply to the Go Fund for the entrance fee, which was £25. I was amazed to win 2nd place. I think it was the feeling that I was valued that made me realise I could go further. With Helen's support and advice I decided to apply to university to study textile design. This September I will be starting my second year at university. I'm really proud. I never thought I'd make it this far.”**

Marissa 19



## Cost effective services

Alongside the excellent support we give to our young people, we are committed to providing you with flexible, innovative, cost-effective services - whether as part of a block contract or on a spot purchase basis.

**“I visit many of the supported housing providers in the borough and feel I should say that St Christopher's provides one of the best examples of this kind of service.”**

### Drug worker

We deliver high levels of accreditation, tenancy sustainment and successful move on.

### Moving on; moving home

We recognise that young people often have better outcomes when they live with their families.

Where possible, and if it is safe for them to do so, we support young people in returning home and rebuilding their support networks.

Where moving home is not possible, we support the young person in preparing for what they will do when they leave us. Our programme '51 Steps to Independence' provides practical steps to achieve and sustain independent living.



## Flexibility

We pride ourselves on providing services that meet the needs of young people and of service commissioners.

### Flexibility in managing risk

Jade was referred to us after being rejected by a number of other agencies because of her serious drug problems and violent behaviour. We saw ourselves as her last chance to avoid secure provision.

We came to an arrangement with the local authority in which we provided support and accommodation, whilst they provided night staff. This allowed us to cater for Jade's needs whilst also ensuring that other young people living there were kept safe.

An important element of our flexibility lies in the excellent relationships we forge with partner agencies.

### Working in partnership

**“Over the last year we have seemed to have reached a new level in a partnership approach in dealing with ‘challenging’ young people. St Christopher’s is always very prompt in sharing relevant information and encouraging a multi agency approach.”** Community Safety Coordinator

**“Excellent consultation and feedback on all issues regarding referrals and young people. Thank you and keep up the good work”** Response from our annual stakeholder survey

## Innovation

We have an excellent track record in developing innovative services to meet local authority need. This includes our Runaways Project and our Homelessness Intervention Project.

Our Runaways Project offers swift and effective support to young runaways. Our team works with young people to explore and address their reasons for running away. We provide:

- guidance to families on how to support young people returning home
- someone for young people to talk to about their worries
- mediation in family disputes.

Our Homelessness Intervention Project (HIP) is a preventative approach to homelessness, which operates alongside our provision for those who have become homeless. The HIP involves training 16-24 year olds who have experience of sleeping rough and / or living in hostels as peer educators. We support them in shaping and delivering educational sessions in secondary schools. The content will depend on the young people involved but usually includes:

- a discussion on how homelessness happens – including the effects of behaviour patterns and dealing with conflict at home
- a challenge to misconceptions about what it is like to leave home
- personal accounts of the reality of homelessness.

**“I believe that your work has enabled students to make informed and mature decisions about their housing, and has prevented cases of homelessness amongst our young people.”**

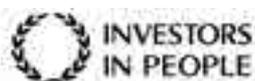
Teacher

Call our referrals line on 0800 234 6282 or email [referrals@stchris.org.uk](mailto:referrals@stchris.org.uk) if you are interested in making a referral to one of our 24 hour, transition to independence services.

Visit [www.stchris.org.uk](http://www.stchris.org.uk) to learn more or phone **0208 780 7800**

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