### SICHRISTOPHER'S CREATING BRIGHTER FUTURES



# We worked with 983 children and young people in 2017-18 Thank you to the young people, staff, carers and families for helping with our Impact Report. The

### **Welcome to our Impact Report**

My name is Ryan and I live in one of St Christopher's 16+ homes. They also have children's homes, foster homes, a residential school, support services for running away and education and therapy, a Staying Close pilot, secure care home, specialist home for girls at risk, and support for care leavers across the UK and Isle of Man. They do so much more than just run homes – they change people's lives.

Living at St Christopher's is an interesting time. They have helped me when I am struggling with my emotions. They help me to realise exactly what is going on and that there is more than just what I am feeling. It helps me make sense of stuff and stop reacting in ways that don't help me.

There are so many different opportunities and people to learn from. You learn from every one of them and having a chance to try new things really helps your confidence. One that springs to mind for me is when we went to do The Color Run recently – that is one of the stories in this report.

They involve me through their football team. This is how they get to know the real me and then, because they get me, they can make sure that social services, employers and colleges understand me too and involve me in their decisions.

If I think about leaving St Christopher's it is a bit upsetting, but the way I look at it is that when one chapter closes another one opens and I will be ready for it. They will make sure I am ready for it. And I know that as long as I want to I can keep coming back and stay in touch with people. Even though I might not live with them anymore they can still be a part of my life.

Because of what St Christopher's do I have removed myself from the gang life I had previously and I can now see a future for myself and my son that I never thought I could have.

My advice to people moving to a St Christopher's home would be take every opportunity you can and speak with every person you get a chance to as it helps you get a wider perspective of life.

I can only tell you about me and my time at St Christopher's but I know they do lots more in other places with other people. That's what this report is about, them telling you the different things they do to help everyone. I hope you enjoy finding out about it.

Ryan, young person

### 80% of children and young people told us what they thought about our homes...

Every year we ask the children and young people living in our homes and services for their views on St Christopher's. This isn't about ticking boxes - we genuinely want to hear what our young people think and use their suggestions to alter our practice, design new pilots and develop our existing services so that they are as good as they can be.

"They are bothered what I am doing at school. They come to my parents evening, so I am like everyone else and then they find out what I do and tell my social worker and the rest of the staff. They make me feel proud."

"It was good when you gave me a chance to pay for the cupboard I broke. I didn't want to do it but it was a good way to be responsible.

don't shame you, but try to help you

understand you don't always get it right

first time. They help you learn

"They care because they try to get me. This is the first place that have tried to understand me and not change me. They asked me a lot of questions and took their time working it all out and then they showed me and they get it, this is what I am about."

"I don't want to be here but I have to be somewhere and this is the best place I have been before. It's little things that make it different – any place can have

"I don't feel good about myself all the time but

you kept believing and made me see that it can

"Staff help me find ways to

"They help me set my own targets but then they keep helping me with the bits I need to do to achieve them. It feels like a real achievement, like climbing a mountain, because they help you realise everything you do to get there."

This year young people told us how they felt about eight key areas in their lives that they picked as important for us to hear about: achieving, active, cared for, healthy, included, respected, responsible and safety.

"Having my anger sorted makes me feel good. I don't feel all stressed out and like I'm going to explode... It helped that people understood me and then gave me tips for how to spot being angry and different things to do instead of shouting or hitting someone."

"I felt responsible when you asked us what we think makes a good Team Leader and then used that for the interview and when I helped with the interviewing for people to work at other homes."

"They make me feel confident to say no. Before I would go along with stuff because I felt like I needed to. Then I got comfy in the home and didn't need to do that stuff."

"They come to stuff with me, like the boxing class. I probably wouldn't have the confidence to go to it on my own but they came with me and did it too and now I go there on my own and have made friends there. People are bothered if I don't come one week so I belong there, I guess."

"I don't know where I would be without St Christopher's. It is like a family. Staff, I know they are staff but it is real. They do stuff with me and when I leave here I will call them my friends."

don't want to tell them everything they respect that. They let me know I can tell them if I change my mind but they don't act like police."

"The staff know me. They can tell when I am to ask me about it or just be with me or

"I feel like people accept me for who I am. They don't judge me but they help me be more myself."

be OK. That's a bit like medicine."



# Putting attachment theory into practice



We have worked closely with experts at Middlesex University's Centre for Abuse and Trauma Studies (CATS) for more than ten years on bespoke tools that help us get to know every young person, understand them, and put plans in place to show them they are safe and cared for.

Attachment Style Interviews (ASI) assess how a young person builds relationships with family, friends or St Christopher's staff, whilst the Q Pack is a set of questionnaires measuring how young people feel about themselves and their skills. From these answers we tailor our care plans to boost young people's confidence and grow their independence, and we conduct follow up assessments to track the impact of our work.

Q Pack results show that young people in our residential services **experienced fewer negative life events** after living with St Christopher's for a year or more. Because of our thoughtful planning, they were **25% more comfortable confiding in staff** when things went wrong.

These tools evidence how our understanding of attachment helps to rewire young people's approach to relationships. But they also give us a starting point for talking to young people about their behaviours, without judgment or criticism.

Meghan was reluctant to spend time with a new manager and staff team at her home and her Q Pack showed that she had a really good relationship with someone who had recently stopped working there. She felt really down because it felt like a repeat of her experiences in care – people going back on their promises and leaving her feeling alone.

The team couldn't promise that staff wouldn't leave Meghan's home, but they could manage her expectations. She had an 'anxious avoidant' attachment style: a high need for company with a fear of rejection and separation. From this they came up with ways of addressing Meghan's anxiety, like developing her confidence so she felt brave enough to try tasks on her own. Their efforts showed her that there were other people who cared about her and were interested in her life, so she began to engage with them. She started to feel more comfortable around new people and open to building relationships.

Without Q Pack, staff would not have understood Meghan's experiences. Thanks to their creativity and flexibility, Meghan began to build respectful relationships with staff and other young people in her home, which contributed to reducing her missing episodes.

Please get in touch for the full ASI and Q Pack data.

# 320/0 of young people in our UK 16+ services are in education, training or employment\* mpared to 69% of ca

# Improving education – a key stepping stone to a brighter future

Education is a vital part of any young person's development. Not only can they gain qualifications for the future, it's also a chance to connect with others and build self-belief. For children in care it can be the one thing that has remained stable in their lives – teachers, lessons and friendships stay the same, despite the other chaos going on around them.

But sometimes children in care have to move house and change schools multiple times. They can end up missing large chunks of education, lose their motivation and fall behind all their peers. So St Christopher's supports young people to learn in a way that suits their needs, whether this is by helping them stay in school or finding another more appropriate provision.

Kyle was being bullied, but his angry reactions put him at risk of exclusion because he struggled to explain what was going on. He opened up to staff about what was happening and they supported him to understand when he was being bullied, to be assertive but not aggressive, and to move away from negative people. They spent time celebrating Kyle's progress so that he could see the good things he gets from school – and it worked, as he has maintained his attendance and stayed on top of learning.

"I wouldn't be at school without them. They help tell the teachers what is going on in my life so that they understand and are not angry. I can't communicate what has happened so I don't know what I would do without them."

Kyle, young person

However, mainstream school isn't the right choice for every young person, which is why this year we opened our first **residential school** in London using expertise from our Education team on the Isle of Man. Projects are based around traditional school subjects but are tailored to fit with young people's personal interests, like creating a map of the local area using skills in design, geography and research. By being creative and giving young people more power over their curriculum, they have the opportunity to build self-esteem, confidence and resilience – all the important skills that we want them to have as they move into adulthood.

"One young person came to us with no confidence and wouldn't speak in the classroom. Then one day, after she had been with us for some time, she finished a sentence out loud that I was reading from the board. It just blew me away."

Beverley, head teacher



### Loving, compassionate and skilled foster carers

We want our children and young people to know that they are loved. Nowhere is this more apparent than with our foster carers, who treat young people like members of the family right from the beginning.

From ASI and Q Pack results, we know that young people living in our foster homes have *improved attachment* security after six months thanks to the strong relationships they have with their carers. We also know that 87% of children and young people are better at keeping themselves safe after living with our foster families for at least six months. By using the same attachment tools across the whole organisation, we can compare outcomes and share best practice to help all children and young people, regardless of where they live.

"I would give it the gold buzzer. I've got people to play with, a nice bedroom and I like my carers."

Young person quoted in Ofsted inspection report

When Blake moved in with Julia and her family, he had no understanding of boundaries or family life. Through our expert tools, the team learnt that Blake could have an underlying attachment disorder – which would not have been uncovered without the ASI.

Now the staff and Julia knew what to do. Julia learnt that sometimes Blake could not control his behaviour and started to recognise the circumstances leading up to any outbursts. She gives him the time and space he needs to calm down before reaching out to him and, although it has been difficult, her change in parenting style has made a huge difference. Blake has remained in mainstream education and now has a good circle of friends.

"The ASI is a great tool that all children should have. It is recognised by all professionals I have spoken with and they now have a better understanding of Blake's behaviour too. It evidences the support St Christopher's give to carers and children and has supported a referral to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. Without the ASI, Blake would not be receiving the well-rounded care and support that he has in place today."

Julia, foster carer

The ASI helps us listen to what children are telling us – but it also highlights what they are not telling us. By involving young people in their own care planning, we can keep their views at the heart of everything we do.

# Staff care for young people as a good parent would. They talk openly and candidly with young people and protect them with determination and tenacity." Ofsted inspection report

# Child sexual exploitation: a new approach to managing risk

Child sexual exploitation remains an issue of national concern. Established practice often places young people at risk in secure care or rural placements away from their local communities, but this is only a short-term solution – the young person returns home and is stuck in the same cycle as before.

That's why we developed **St Christopher's Safe Steps**, a children's home in an urban setting where young people learn about their self-worth by building healthy relationships. Through collaboration with the Department for Education and local authority partners, we have innovated and challenged practice using our social pedagogic model. And the hard work paid off as this year our home was awarded an '**Outstanding**' grade from Ofsted.

"Young people benefit from highly personalised and nurturing care that enables them to make significant and positive changes in their lives."

Ofsted inspection report

Niamh moved in after becoming involved with drugs and violence and going missing for extensive periods of time. The team wanted to make her feel comfortable in the home to counteract the pull of these risky situations, so they took time to grow mutual trust and develop her self-awareness. They empowered Niamh to take responsibility

for her learning by supporting her to engage with education, complete her GCSEs and secure a place at college to keep her motivated for the future. Outside of school, bespoke life skills sessions and counselling with MAC-UK built resilience and prepared her for living independently. These changes opened up new opportunities, like going away for the weekend with staff, managing her own mobile phone, and looking after a pet.

"They have changed her thought processes. No running away for four months and she thinks about the future now."

Social worker quoted in Ofsted inspection report

Looking back at how things used to be, Niamh can reflect on how far she has come with the care and support of St Christopher's. She appreciates that staff take time to have conversations with her and give her space to make her own decisions, but that they are always there to look out for her best interests.

"Before I was crazy and uncontrollable, both emotionally and physically... I wasn't focused, I wasn't supported and I was easily drawn into all the bad stuff. But I feel safe here. The staff are supportive, flexible and loyal. I respect the house. This is my home."

Niamh, young person



### Moving on – but 'Staying Close'

Leaving care is often described as "falling off the edge of a cliff of support". Young people move on from children's homes whilst they are still teenagers, whereas their peers frequently live with parents into their twenties or thirties.

Managing all the challenges of adulthood without a safety net if things go wrong isn't easy. Care leavers told us they felt isolated, overwhelmed and unable to cope; a disproportionate amount of care leavers are homeless, in prison or experience mental health problems. We already provide training flats in children's homes for young people to "practise" leaving care and wanted to expand on the brilliant work these teams were doing.

So St Christopher's launched a co-produced pilot to improve the experiences of young people leaving residential care. **Staying Close** was developed in direct response to young people's feedback and supports care leavers to stay in touch with the people who matter to them the most as they transition to independence. By partnering with the Department for Education Innovation Programme and other providers, we can keep innovating and transforming care leavers' futures.

Young people are in charge of what they want from the service: developing life skills in areas they want to be skilled in; support to maintain relationships with the people who are most important to them; and the chance to trial independent living in safe accommodation.

When Monica moved in she explained what would make her transition easier. She wanted a continuing relationship with her keyworker, relevant life skills sessions based on a self-assessment of her own skills, and Sunday dinners at her former children's home. All of this would happen at a pace that suited her, as agreed in her co-produced support plan.

After a while Monica wanted to be more independent, so she changed her plan to calling staff if she needed them. But there were some bumps in the road as she struggled to manage everything at once. She wanted to increase her support – and because her plan was co-produced, she felt empowered to ask for these changes.

Without Staying Close, Monica would have been at risk of dropping out of college and getting into debt. Instead she has a structure to help her achieve her goals and a strong support network backing her all the way.



### **Tackling County Lines**

County Lines is touching an increasing amount of young people's lives. St Christopher's Runaways service has specialist knowledge of supporting these young people through independent Return Home Interviews (RHI) when they come back from being missing.

Gangs target young people to offer them the things that are missing from their lives, whether it's an alternative to poverty, a role model, or a "way out" from their current life. However, there are conditions attached.

They ask young people to do illegal things for them. It might start by transporting a small amount of drugs nearby, but soon grows into sending them miles away from home to somewhere rural with even more drugs. Young people feel like they owe it to their "friend" to do what is asked of them. They can witness awful crimes and be forced to do things they don't want to do.

When they try to break away from the gang's influence, their lives are threatened – and so are the lives of their families and friends. They can be missing for weeks or months at a time as their phones and money are confiscated to keep them in the area the gang needs them to be. By trying to leave one bad situation they end up trapped in something much worse.

George was a talented footballer at the youth team of a professional club. But he was hassled by some of his peers to forget football and take up a much more dangerous hobby – moving drugs on behalf of a local gang. Things quickly spiralled and George was sucked into the County Lines network.

After running away, George was found far away from home. St Christopher's conducted an RHI, where we discovered why he went missing and what happened whilst he had been away. As the "man of the house" he had felt pressured to make money for his family. He did not want to be involved again – it just wasn't worth the risks.

St Christopher's wanted to give George a purpose in life to keep him occupied and safe. We identified an opportunity at another football team, encouraging him to get back into his favourite hobby. It wasn't just George who needed help, so our team arranged for other agencies to aid his mum's job search.

Without the RHI things could have become much worse, forcing George into making risky decisions. Instead, the whole family now has a support plan to keep them afloat. Thank you to Oak Foundation for helping us to provide this valuable service.

# Children in care are FOUR IES MORE LIKELY to experience mental health issues compared to their peers Drawing by Kelly to represent her experiences of mental health

## Co-produced mental health support

St Christopher's is deeply committed to improving the emotional wellbeing of children and young people. Over the next five years we will be co-producing mental health services so that young people receive the right care for their individual needs. For this to work, we want young people to trust our staff and know they will be supported.

Young people who self-harm said they wanted staff to appreciate how important it is that they felt safe to express their emotions in their own home. Once young people have a positive understanding of their identity, they can work towards using alternative coping strategies.

"Other homes left me to it, and just patched me up or restrained me. Here they stick by me, and they won't leave me."

Young person quoted in Ofsted inspection report

Pooling all their thoughts together, our young people created some training to help staff respond to self-harm. Their suggestions were put into a pack so staff could think about making our homes feel safe and welcoming. One team created a noticeboard with positive messages in envelopes addressed to each young person. Another team designed a sensory box to soothe and regulate young people's emotions when they felt overwhelmed.

"Being informed by first hand experiences and using quotes from young people who had contributed to the training made it authentic and sink in deeper."

Sam, home manager

Not only did the end result contribute to young people feeling more supported with their mental health, making the training pack was a really positive experience too. By thinking about their journeys and hearing each other's stories, young people made sense of their emotions. Together, they realised they were not alone and reflected on how far they had come with St Christopher's support.

"That's it, that's how it is. They explained it better than I could. I am glad [staff] are having to read this."

Kareem, young person

This isn't a new area of work for us – our Wraparound therapeutic service on the Isle of Man has been providing support to children, young people, foster carers and families for three years. The team's expertise, combined with what our young people tell us, helps us grow new services.

# St Christopher's cared for 53 young asylum seekers in 2017-18

## Supporting asylum-seekers with a new way of life

St Christopher's has a long history of looking after young people from all over the world. Over the past few years we have been helping an increasing number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children settle into the UK.

For us, working with asylum seekers is not just about helping them fill in forms whilst they await immigration decisions. Many of these young people arrive with no belongings or family after facing hardships many of us could not imagine. We support them to address their trauma and experiences, both in their home country and during their journeys across the world. Sometimes this is about providing workshops to build resilience or finding connections from home in the local community, but we also just want them to have fun like any other young person.

"It is good. Everyone is kind. But things are different."

Aklilu, young person

A theatre heard about our work and kindly donated tickets to watch their play based on real life stories from unaccompanied asylum seekers about the close-knit community of the Calais camps. So, one cold winter's

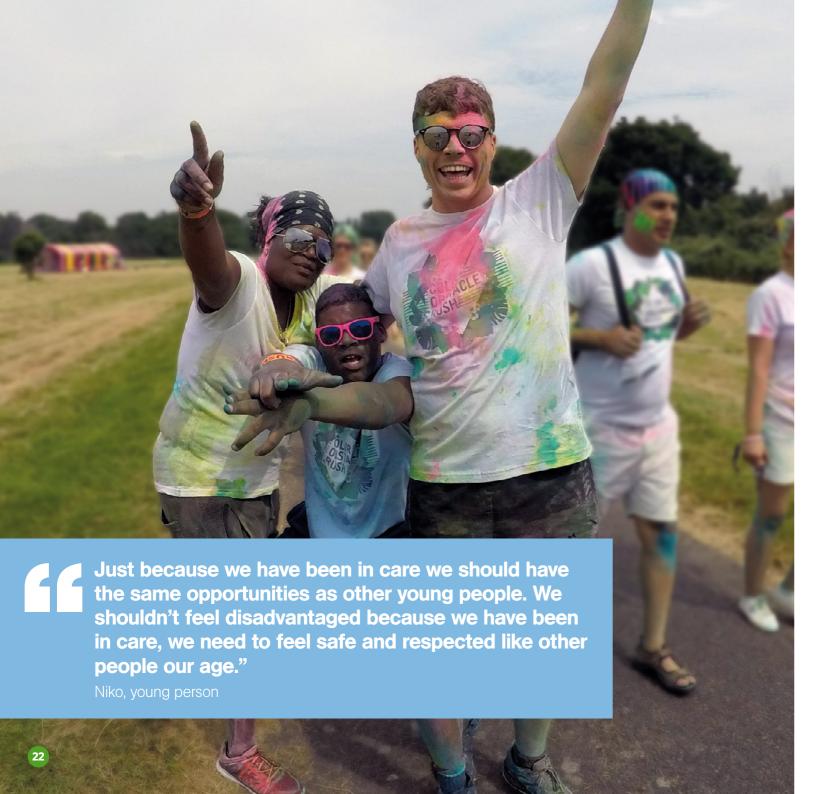
evening, young people from the UK and abroad went along with staff to watch the show. Some of the refugees had never been to the theatre before and were really excited to try something new.

Afterwards the boys from Calais said the performance was exactly like life in the camp. They spoke about the people they met, the food they had eaten, the difficult scary times and the fun happy times. Pride filled their stories – although they had been through some very tough times, they had come out of the other side and felt safe enough to open up about their experiences.

Attending this show was a learning opportunity for everyone in the home. Those from the UK had a greater understanding of how asylum seekers' journeys have influenced their lives, whilst the asylum seekers could revisit this period of their lives and remember that they were no longer alone – St Christopher's is there to help.

"I have no family and I can't network so the staff help me learn. For somebody who comes from the other side of the world this can really change their life."

Haben, young person



### Being young and having fun

Before coming into care, our children and young people might have missed out on experiences their peers take for granted – simple things like going for a meal, taking up a hobby or visiting the seaside. This impacts self-esteem and can make young people feel nervous to try new things, so they end up missing out even more. We believe these experiences are essential to a young person's development, so we look for ways to make them happen.

**The Diamond Fund** is just one way we do this. It is a pot of fundraised money available for all children and young people at St Christopher's that can support them into education and work, or to do something creative and fun with their friends, carers and staff.

"I have tried loads of stuff I would never have if I didn't live here, like activities and things. I think it is good that they do them with you so that you really can achieve."

Matt, young person

In one of our homes, staff and young people wanted to have something to look forward to as summer approached. They decided to do The Color Run, a 5k race filled with obstacles, paints and foam, but they needed financial help. So, with support from the Diamond Fund,

staff and young people signed up for the event so they could build relationships with one another. Everyone was really looking forward to getting messy and doing something they had never tried before.

Our runners had a brilliant day together in the sunshine tackling the rope ladders, slides and inflatables. Young people felt confident to take part because they were on an equal footing to the staff as they both tried something new for the first time. When staff and young people received their medals at the end together, it was the perfect way to round off a brilliant experience.

"Well-matched placements are clearly evident in young people's relationships with each other. They look out for each other and share a wonderful sense of fun."

Ofsted inspection report

With the support of our donors and corporate partners, our young people can have new adventures and the chance to make lasting happy memories with the people they care about. Now they know they can conquer The Color Run, young people can think about what else they can achieve, knowing that staff and their friends are always ready to help them.

### **Creating more brighter futures**

St Christopher's strategy for 2018-23 has three key aims: to have *more excellent homes, fostering and support*; *improved emotional wellbeing* for staff and young people; and *lifelong learning and thriving* to support young people well into the future. Rose, who lives in one of our homes, sat down with Chief Executive Ron Giddens and Chair of Trustees Hanif Barma to discover what this strategy means for young people in our services.

### What are your hopes and plans for St Christopher's, now and in the future?

**H:** Our strategy commits us to supporting young people for the rest of their lives. We want to achieve this through improved therapeutic input and timeless learning that they can carry with them.

**R:** As I am retiring from St Christopher's in Autumn, I look forward to a new CEO who is dynamic, forward-thinking and passionate. We have good succession planning in place so they can carry on leading the strategy forward.

#### What have you learnt at St Christopher's?

**R:** Young people and foster carers can teach us so much. It is a big step to say that young people know better than us and hand over power, but you need to take a risk and let them take the lead. I also love the passion and commitment

of our staff – when you visit a service they can describe the successes of every young person and it brings everything to life. It's just brilliant.

**H:** No one person has all the answers, so it's important to listen to others in order to make good choices.

### If you could give your 16-year-old self a bit of advice, what would it be?

**H:** I would like to have been more confident to express my views. You can't agree on everything, but by sharing with others we can learn to celebrate diversity.

**R:** This is a message I want everyone in our services to hear – go out and have fun! Life's too short.

### What have you achieved at St Christopher's this year?

**Both:** There have been so many achievements it's hard to narrow it down! We are particularly proud of the apprenticeships we started for young people in our care so they could experience the world of work.

"My experience of interviewing was very enlightening, especially as a young person, to find out some of the key aspects of what is achieved within St Christopher's and what plans they have for the future."

Rose, young person and interviewer



### **Finances**

Over the year St Christopher's has spent just over

£16,000,000

supporting children and young people

The main areas of expenditure were:



We spent £300,000 training staff

### Thank you to everyone who supported our work

As you have seen in this report, the work we do is only possible because of the support we receive from funders, organisations and individuals. Some of the added extras we are able to offer as a charity can make a huge difference to the way children and young people feel. From the largest contract through to the smaller donations and gifts we receive, each plays a vital part in ensuring children and young people at St Christopher's have brighter futures. Thank you to every one of our supporters including:

- Achieving for Children
- Albert Hunt Trust
- Batchworth Trust
- BBC Children in Need
- Bedford Borough Council
- · Birmingham City Council
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- · Central Bedfordshire Council
- Centre for Abuse and Trauma Studies, Middlesex University
- Coventry City Council
- Department for Education
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
   Luton Borough Council
- East Sussex County Council
- Fowler Smith and Jones Trust
- Gowling WLG (UK)
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Ipsos Mori
- Isle of Man Government

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- London Borough of Barnet
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- London Borough of Lambeth
- London Borough of Lewisham

- London Borough of Wandsworth
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- NPW
- Oak Foundation

- Peacock Charitable Trust
- Royal Borough of Greenwich
- Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
- Solihull Metropolitan Borough
- Souter Charitable Trust
- Staffordshire County Council
- Suffolk County Council
- Telford & Wrekin Council
- Thurrock Council
- Waitrose Putney
- Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
- Wolverhampton City Council
- Worcestershire County Council
- Young Vic Theatre

# StCHRISTOPHER'S CREATING BRIGHTER FUTURES

"We say it's okay"

This report has been approved by St Christopher's young people.

Looking for a placement or want to know more about the way we work? Contact us today:

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### Caring for children and young people since 1870 Goaill kiarail jeh paitchyn as sleih aegey neayr's 1870