

Wandsworth Practice Spotlight submission

Category: Supporting & Strengthening Our Workforce

Supporting materials

Feedback from Social Workers who are part of “Care Space”. Care Space is a Family Therapy Clinic working with families and carers of Children Looked After across a range of areas – including reunification, family time (contact arrangements) and improving relationships. The clinic is supervised by a dual trained Family Therapist/Social Worker and the Social Workers in the clinic have a range of Systemic training from those currently in training, those trained and a Social Worker who is a Trainee Family Therapist. Children and families attend the clinic with their referring Social Worker.

“What I learn and how I develop in Care Space impacts how I work with families outside of Care Space for the better. It helps me apply systemic theory to practice and be more confident in systemic practice”

“I appreciate learning from the team, each others and learning from families too. Working collaboratively in a team provides a richness of ideas and multiple perspectives that families benefit from too”

“Care Space is a really supportive environment. We’ve created safety with families helping them to open up, share vulnerability, build connection and stronger relationships, draw upon their strengths, and help family members to see and relate to each other in ways that are more aligned with how they want to see each other. We’ve helped families to manage rupture and repair and address unequal power dynamics in family relationships”

“Families tell us and show us that they feel valued, respected, validated, and empowered. We work ethically and pay attention to context, power and difference. This make our interventions focused and purposeful.”

“It has been so helpful to reframe problems from individual ones to relational ones, which has helped families reflect on their role in the problems and motivated them to think differently.”

Feedback from a newly recruited experienced Social Worker following a new starters induction session with the DCS and a young person from the Children in Care Council (CLICK).

“The new joiners “Tea with Ana” meeting was a breath of fresh air and exceeded my expectations! It did not feel like a tick-box exercise. Ana was genuinely welcoming and took time to get to know us as well as share some priorities for the service. I met other interesting new people, and it was a nice touch to meet a young person who shared the importance of the work we do (and how we do it) as social workers and child practitioners! I’d encourage all new joiners to attend and engage fully in the discussions to get the most out of it.”

Feedback from an Experienced Social Worker about the impact of systemic training on their practice

“Wandsworth has adopted a systemic approach to practice in the past few years. This is the first borough I have worked in where systemic ideas and practice was formally introduced and thought

about. Since joining Wandsworth I have completed my Foundation Level Systemic training and I am currently enrolled on the intermediate level course. I ascribe to the systemic way of thinking. Having this training has shaped how I practice in my social work with families. It has given me the skills to think more broadly about families meaning I now recognise that family life is much more dynamic and multifaceted than purely existing through the lens of their family 'problems'. The focus of systemic practice is relational and I find that this approach has really helped me work alongside families. It has made me think more about who I am as a person/practitioner and what I bring to the work with families. Systemic thinking and approaches has developed my skills and has allowed me to work more creatively with families. The response from families has been great and they feel that they are being listened to and seen by me as the family social worker. How I explore family needs and problems is much less binary now and much more systemic and this often allowed for me to better understand the families I work with. My Intermediate Level development can now be used in my role as Practice Specialist. These are skills and ideas that I can support colleagues with. There is a zest for systemic ideas in the service and I can see that this approach is improving the overall practice in the service. Having the service committed to working systemically also means that the contextual constraints have been limited as much as possible and we are supported by the organisation to work creatively with families."

Feedback from people supported by us

"I have an open and trusting relationship with [Social Worker] and the rest of the network of professionals who are involved with me and my daughter. I have found the involvement of these professionals supportive more than I ever had in the past... I am definitely 100% involved in making the plans for me and my daughter. I am listened to by the professional network I trust their advice and feel open to share my thoughts with them." - [Care experienced Mother whose child is being supported through a Child in Need Plan](#)

"Having [Social Worker] helped my mental health tremendously. I felt alone before and felt that no one understood what I was going through. I was not sleeping and anxiety was through the roof. I could not cope without this support which has made a huge difference in my family's life and for my Mental Health" - [Feedback from a Mother who's child is being supported through a Child in Need plan](#)

"[Social Worker] was just like an 'angel' who had helped with the enormous weight of the situation. His support and intervention made an enormous difference. Thank you so much for your amazing help in supporting us during the most painful experience of our lives. When I couldn't think straight, you were always focused on what was best for the children. You were always respectful of our family and our decisions. You were absolutely right to listen to [Child] even when we were a little doubtful. So a huge thank you. I couldn't have navigated these few months without your help which was always sensitive to our family needs." - [Feedback from a Mother who was receiving support through a Child and Family Assessment](#)

"[Social Worker] has worked really hard for our family and does everything that she says that she will. You can see it in how she is with the children - she is very thoughtful and kind and the children really like her. We are really glad that she is with our family and we are very glad that we have been able to stay together... We are included in everything... She has been kind and very good. The children are so much happier now than previously" - [Feedback from an Uncle whose nieces and nephews were being supported through a Child in Need Plan](#)

"It has been good to see that there are people that can help. [Personal Advisor] has been really good. Having that extra adult, a male figure showing him the right way, how to make his way in life... my son has been in trouble since he was 13, [Personal Advisor] has been a person who showed he cares, that the system cares, and that there is help out there for my son." - [*Feedback from a Mother whose son is Care Experienced and currently being supported by the Leaving Care Service*](#)

"Since [Social Worker] has started working with us, she has always been kind. She has time and makes me feel like she wants to support us. I do not feel like I am a burden on her. There is nothing too much for her to support us with. I feel very lucky to have her. I was apprehensive when the previous social worker left but I am so grateful for [Social Worker]."- [*Feedback from a Grandmother whose grandchildren are in her care as their Special Guardian*](#)

"My relationship with my daughter has got better. I hope my relationship with my other daughter has got better too. [Social Worker] has provided a lot of help and support. She has a lot of good things to say and has really helped me to open up and makes me feel I am doing well. [Social Worker] is really encouraging and very supportive. I feel safe in her presence."- [*Feedback from a Mother whose children are being supported through a Child and Family Assessment*](#)

"I trust him (Social Worker). I don't trust many people, it's taken a while to develop that. He has my children's best interests at heart, I know he does. He's helpful."- [*Feedback from a Father whose children are being supported through a Child in Need plan*](#)

"(Social Worker) is clear and approachable and has helped me understand things. I really like that we go through things together. I feel included in decisions made. (Social Worker) is a kind, gentle person and he puts me at ease. I feel like I have a voice and that I am respected. He has really helped me to think through how my Granddaughter might be feeling. For example, when she asks about her Mum and Dad. (Social Worker) supported me in finding things to say that will best help her. That has helped my granddaughter too, as I can find the best ways to answer her questions and help her to understand things. My Granddaughter adores (Social Worker)! She talks about him all the time, 'he's my friend' she says. So much so that a friend of mine thought my Granddaughter was speaking about a little school friend! I don't know what she will do when we don't need to work together anymore. He has been a real positive in our lives. He is so respectful. It's like this is our life and he is trying to help us in the best way he can. It has helped us to have a different sort of relationship with social workers. Just a big thank you. (Social Worker), you are amazing!" - [*Feedback from a Grandmother who is a Special Guardian for her granddaughter*](#)

(Social Worker) is very understanding and respectful. We have had social workers before but no one like (Social Worker). He really gets us and my daughter is so comfortable with him. She has opened up in a way that she has never done with anyone else. He understands family life and is very reassuring. We listen to him. What he says makes sense. (Social Worker) reminds us of what is normal. My daughter and I butt heads. She's 14. (Social Worker) reminds us that this is usual, and not to worry. He is absolutely brilliant with my daughter. Please understand, she does not talk to anyone usually. She's like a closed book. Then (Social Worker) comes along, and within minutes, they are both in hysterics. He can really reach her in a way that I haven't seen before with a professional. That's a big deal to us. (Social Worker) talks in a way that helps my daughter to listen. (Social Worker) has introduced us to community resources that we didn't know were there. He is very resourceful and that has encouraged

us to link with what is around us. Our relationship is so much stronger because of him. Thank you, (Social Worker), please know the difference you have made to our lives. We really appreciate you.” -

Feedback from a Mother whose daughter is being supported through a Child in Need Plan

“(Social Worker) listens and greatly understands the challenges I face. Over time we’ve formed a special bond between us which makes it easier for me to speak up, sad issues become lighter when I speak to (Social Worker). It is a great pleasure having (Social Worker) as my social worker.” -

Feedback from an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young Person who is looked after

“(Social Worker) has been very clear with us. He has been respectful, and he has really listened. That has helped us to have good communication between us. (Social Worker) explains things well and he checks with us what we are saying. He will think of different ways of looking at a situation. We have found that very helpful. He hasn’t come to judge us; I can see he is here to help us. Sometimes we need support to think about things in a different way. He says things in a way that helps us to think. He has helped me to think about different ways I can respond to the children. When there are a lot of children it can be difficult to always get things right. He has helped me to think about how they are feeling. The children really like him. he gets on well with them. It’s his manner, he has a nice way about him.” – *Feedback from parents whose children were subject of a Child Protection Enquiry*

“I wasn't sure what to expect when I received a phone call to invite me along to a MLM support group, I was hesitant and apprehensive as to what to expect, I need not have been. What I discovered was a caring safe space to share my thoughts, feelings and frustrations with the facilitators and other women in the group who were in similar situations. This gave me the platform to get honest, firstly with myself and to take a look at what my part was in the current situation and what action I needed to take to improve mine and my children's lives going forward. It was very easy to continue to be angry and point fingers in every direction about the predicament I found myself in but all the time I was stuck in the anger I couldn't move forward. With the support of the group, I was able to identify what I needed to do to improve my situation for the best possible outcome in the future. When I started to attend the MLM I was in a domestically violent relationship and I was drinking alcohol every day, I am an alcoholic. My daughter wasn't living with me, and my son didn't want to have contact with me for those reasons. The relationship with my children was severely fractured. It took time to register and muster the strength to make changes and do things differently and I made mistakes along the way but MLM was always there giving guidance and I know that they genuinely care about me. They showed compassion and were sincere, there was no hidden agenda, they truly wanted to help. Since attending the group I've been able to make the necessary changes that were so desperately needed. I got out of the DV relationship that I was in, I had to take out a non-molestation order and it was incredibly hard but with support doable. I met another mother in the group who had alcoholism and had used AA to combat her addiction and had been sober for many years. This gave me inspiration as she had found something that worked and I wanted what she had, sobriety. Nothing positive had ever come from my drinking, in fact I was getting more and more terrible consequences... My health, my finances, my relationships, criminal record - a lot of my poor decisions were due to my drinking and it made life totally unmanageable. I started to attend AA and I've now been sober for eight months, a year ago I thought this was impossible. I also have made friends with other women in recovery. As a result of ending the toxic relationship and putting down the bottle my life has improved dramatically. My daughter moved back home and now I see my son regularly, sometimes several times a week but more importantly I am

able to be present and a positive influence and part of their lives. Since I've made these changes both are now thriving. I'm supporting my son through his GCSE's and with next steps for further education. My children have peace of mind now and this stuff is priceless. I'm also applying for work and seeking employment and most importantly I'm in recovery! The sign posting to other services and support such as employment and training advisers, the additional help - food banks, toys and cinema tickets are incredible in these hard times. It's a real struggle some days... The group facilitators have always been there for me, they go above and beyond to help me and other women in the group to come to a place of accountability and change, change that when I arrived would never of dreamt was achievable. I shudder to think where I would be now if I had stayed on that hamster wheel, the next three things that were going to happen was lose my flat, be in prison or be dead in any order. This group is life changing and there is no support like it for a Mum like me :-)." - *Feedback from a Mother attending Mother's Like Me, a group for Mother's whose children are not in their care. This Mother's children are Looked After and a Care Leaver*

"As a kid I was often neglected, with not much support from other family or the community. I was excluded from school, in and out of care, and had people taking advantage of me. A social services referral said this was exploitation and I was the victim of child slavery. To deal with past trauma I relied on substances, which made me very emotional, upset and angry. Social services have been around me all my life. They worked with me when I was put in care. However, it was when I was arrested for possession of drugs, weapons and ammunition in 2022 that the support stepped up for me and I was referred to Evolve. My worker was someone I knew from a charity that supported me in the past (Carney's Community). He had worked with my sister and had really helped her, so I agreed to being referred to him. Initially I wasn't sure about anyone really wanting to, or being able to help me. I would miss a few appointments and not really open up as much as I could have. I was angry at my situation and didn't think anyone understood. After I started working with Evolve I was arrested a couple more times, but it was when my worker called me to say my mum had been arrested because of stuff I had left in my house, that I really thought I needed to change my life. It was my worker who told me about her being arrested (my sister had told him). He came and picked me up and I opened up about the exploitation. I showed him snap chats from people threatening me and trying to force me to sell drugs for them or hold things in my house. He knew about this sort of thing and helped me put a plan together for how to move away from those people. It was difficult, because I still lived in the area that they hung around in, but I was able to get involved in a local charity, where I could access boxing fitness sessions and food, as well as meet people that wanted to help me. I kind of felt like I belonged there and was appreciated. I needed money as my mum had got into a lot of debt and I needed to help her, but did not want to turn to crime as I had started to recognise that the people trying to get me to work for them, were just taking advantage and exploiting me. So I did some job searching with my worker and he introduced me to another charity that had a social enterprise called "Feel Good Bakery". He referred me for a job with them and I got it! It was part time and started early, so I could avoid being out at the same time as the people I was avoiding. I enjoyed working and started to recognise I had something to offer. Although there were a few issues at work, my worker helped me to resolve these and I even went on to deliver customer services to the rest of the staff team there. Around the same time I also got involved with CLICK (Children Living in Care Kouncil) where I met more positive people who wanted to help. I changed my whole friendship group and started doing things I would never have thought about doing before. I even got to go to Wimbledon Tennis, with my worker, who had helped my sister get a job there. Once my contract finished with "Feel Good Bakery" I told my worker I was ready for full time work. So he told me about an advertising company he knew, that were looking for staff. I met with them and was honest about my past. They must have appreciated that, as they offered me a full time job as a business executive. I've been working there full time, since January 2024, and have only taken time off to take my first trip abroad, in May. I went over to Kenya, to support the Feel Good

Bakery's feeding program, which made me feel very proud. I continue to meet with my worker weekly and also volunteer on a weekly basis, trying to help people that have experienced similar issues to myself. I have helped out at fundraisers and am one of the "Young Influencers", which means I attend events to advise on how agencies working with young people should deliver their services and have sat on interview panels for both council and voluntary groups. I've also had some sessions with a therapist, who has helped me with dealing with some of my childhood issues and I have a worker from the Future First (Leaving Care) team, who is helping me with getting my own house. Whilst I'm aware it is me that has changed my life, I'm grateful to everyone who has supported me and opened up opportunities for me, which has helped me to get out of the situation I was in and to be the person I am proud to have become." - [*Feedback from a care experienced young person*](#)