

125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service

June 2019

**Welcome to our 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service of Thanksgiving and thank you to St Gabriel's College steel pan band for your rhythmic and inspiring introduction, and your choice of the appropriately titled piece, 'Confidence,' to set the tone of our worship this morning.**

My name is Anna Khan and I am the Chief Executive and proud custodian of the work of Welcare. I feel truly humbled being amongst so many staff, volunteers and supporters, who have given so generously of their extraordinary skills and time over the last decades, to further the work of our charity and by so doing enable us to improve the lives of children and families who are struggling with the challenges of poverty, mental and physical ill health, domestic abuse and social isolation.

In an increasingly secular society, our role is to respond to human need with loving service, and to do this we are supported by the diocese of Southwark, and many individual churches and congregations in the deaneries of Bromley, Beckenham and Orpington, and the Hampton Deanery in the London Borough of Richmond. Welcare provides practical and emotional support, helping children and families who may otherwise fall through the safety net provided by statutory services. We serve children and families in need in south London, Bromley and East Surrey, whoever they are, and wherever they have come from. We continue to provide one-to-one support, group work programmes and volunteer mentors for parents, carers and children, blending the skills of volunteers with those of our professional staff.

So what is our vision for Welcare? How will we move forward to support the next generation, and what will be our legacy to those who may stand in Southwark cathedral 25 years from now, in 2044, and **what** is CapeAbility?

First, we will continue to provide one-to-one and group work programmes for families in need with children up to the age of 13. This is a key strength as it enables us to work with the whole family, and reinforce our interventions for young people with individual and targeted help for their parents - to give parents the skills, confidence and support to be the very best parent they can be, whatever their circumstances. Our services are constantly evolving to fill gaps in provision and to meet changing needs. That is what inspired us to work with older children, and have a focus on those aged 11-13. We recognised an enormous un-met need when children transition from primary to secondary school.

Feedback from those we work with highlighted the transition between primary and secondary school as a key developmental period where less help is available from other services. But it can be a turning point in the lives of young people, where the wrong path can lead to poor self esteem, risky behaviour, exclusion from school and possibly serious youth crime. This is particularly true for those who have been exposed to domestic abuse in their own family. Statistics show that domestic abuse affects as many as one in four families, regardless of their culture or socio economic status.

The young people we work with are also often very concerned about their personal safety, especially if living in areas where peer and youth violence is common. That is why we deliver MySpace, our domestic abuse recovery programme, which is designed to prevent abuse in adolescent and future relationships, to increase confidence and to build emotional health and well-being.

This age group is also the focus of our CapeAbility campaign, a digital campaign targeted at schools and junior churches, to raise awareness and support for our work with a new generation. The campaign uses the metaphor of super heroes (hence the **Cape** in **CapeAbility**) to encourage children to thrive, to care and to inspire others and recognise their own individual strengths and talents, and to give them opportunities to test themselves, and so become super-heroes themselves. But our mission will always be to work **alongside** parents to give children secure and confident childhoods and to enable them to **thrive** in the future. We hope that through the CapeAbility campaign we will be able to help to give the next generation of young people a brighter future.

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To illustrate our work I would like to introduce you to Jo Josh. For the last decade Jo has been a volunteer at our centre in Redhill, and she has painstakingly updated our history from our beginnings in 1894 to include a selection of our work in the 25 years since our centenary. Jo also conducted interviews with volunteers and staff, as well as families we have supported in the last 12 months, to give you an insight into our work. There are more details in the commemorative brochure, Welcare 1894-2019, which will be available after the service.