

# Early Intervention Team

## Speaker key

PW Peter West

[caption] Describe your specialist area and your day-to-day role.

PW My name is Peter West. I work for the Early Intervention Team, and that's part of the resources of Southwark Youth Offending Team. My responsibility, really, is to work with young people who are aged eight through to 16 who we think are at risk of getting in trouble with the police.

[caption] What training and development have you received since arriving at Southwark and how has this impacted on your job?

PW Since I came to Southwark I became a specialist, really, in working with the young people who are at risk of committing sexual offences, and since I've been here I've been allowed to go on a number of training resources that have really supported that work. It was a new area for me, and I think by coming here I've actually learnt a lot more about that subject.

[caption] What are the career progression opportunities like at Southwark and has this had a positive impact on your career?

PW There certainly has been the opportunity for me to progress, but actually I like this job so much, and was a manager in my previous job, that I actually like this fieldwork. It may be in a couple of years that I'll consider a management post, but at this stage I'm really interested in this job.

[caption] What level of understanding do you feel Southwark has of the demands social workers are placed under?

PW I think there's a recognition amongst the management in the Early Intervention Team that this work is demanding. The levels of supervision, especially over the last two years, have been really good and that's crucial to supporting staff. Within Southwark I think there's a lot of young people involved in offending, and so there is a pressure on us to actually have a high caseload, but my feeling is that the caseloads have been held pretty appropriately, really. They haven't got too high, so that's been of value. Out of things that have happened, I think they've supported us. Just a little opportunity, a little thing, was on one occasion we were offered massage; when the stress levels at the Youth Offending Team got really high a masseur was brought in for those staff who opted for that. So, although it's a small thing, it's also a good reflection of care for the staff.

[caption] What is your view on the level of support provided at Southwark? Give an example of when Southwark was there when you needed it the most.

PW I think, in my case, because I'm quite an experienced worker, I tend to get quite risky cases, and so most of the cases that I've actually got are cases of young people who are a risk to themselves and other people, prior to getting in trouble with the police. I've always had the opportunity of talking to other staff members here, which is very supportive. But also, at a management level, the current supervisor that I've got, is an experienced officer, and so that's very supportive. Just an example: one of the young people we work with was a 12-year old who's been in care for the last three and a half years, since he was eight years old, and he's got special needs, what's called a conduct disorder, and he's got a fascination with fire, which obviously makes him vulnerable. He's set fire to things in his bedroom, he's set fire to other people's property; and at this stage it's not too serious. But, also, because of his own vulnerabilities, he tends to want to carry knives; and when he first came back from care he stole five or six knives from his house and hid them in his area because he thought that would protect him. And so part of our work has been actually to try to allow him to see the risk he's putting himself under, but also to monitor the risk he poses to other people.

[caption] What do you think the perception is of Southwark (as a place and employer) in the market place?

PW In terms of Youth Offending Team officers, I think there's a recognition that Southwark is an area where there's a lot of risk of young people offending and a lot of young people who offend. So it's certainly a frontline service, and I think that's certainly recognised.