

Family Support Service

Speaker key

RD Lorna Davis

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

RD My name's Lorna Davis, I'm a senior practitioner in the Family Support Team based in Peckham. Whilst working in the Family Support Team, my role is quite varied, so there may be days where I'll attend Child Protection conferences or children that are being looked after. I may have to attend their reviews. We also have corporate meetings. I also will visit children within schools. So it can be quite varied because there are lots of meetings that also I'm expected to attend, which may involve working with the police, education, health, housing. So it can be quite a busy day, basically.

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

RD In terms of development, through regular supervision you're able to address issues in terms of what training you would like to do, and obviously it's important that that's able to work alongside your job title. So there's that avenue also that you can pursue; and there are social workers as well that will be proactive and find training that's not necessarily in-house, that they're able to discuss it with supervision as to whether or not they're able to take part.

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

RD Because Southwark is such a big borough, and we're the second-biggest borough in London, there are lots of social work posts. And in Southwark in particular, there's [sic] opportunities to specialise, as well as obviously working across the board, because I, as I said, came as a student in 1997 and I've had the opportunity to be on the Offending team, to be based in Housing, also to be on the Referral Assessment Team. So there are lots of different departments within social work where you can have the opportunity if you want to to take onboard.

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

RD I think that Southwark does understand the pressure that social workers are experiencing, and there are regular meetings; you can have lunch with the chief exec, to update her, if you want. Also, there are listing groups that you can attend. As I said, you've also got the opportunity of supervision. And I'm aware that there may be a possibility of support groups available for social workers to talk about, for example, case studies in order to try and alleviate, and be able to have more of a creative way of

working. So I am aware that Southwark is supportive, and it's an ongoing progress, really.

[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 most.

RD Some years ago I was working with a young person, and, sadly, he was killed, and at the time, it was extremely, extremely stressful because I just didn't obviously expect it. However, my service manager at the time was very supportive; came and sat down and talked to me; wanted to get a clear understanding of my work and working with this young person, and ideas of how we could obviously move things forward in a positive way. The team was extremely supportive as well. And, again, I think one thing that's good with Southwark is the fact that they're continually reviewing cases, and so therefore that there was like a forum to look at serious case reviews, and to look at what we could learn from that. So if situations arise again, at least we've got some kind of forum where we can sit and have discussions. So, yes, in particular, my service manager was very helpful, and my practice manager at the time as well; and fortunately as well I had the opportunity to take some time off just to reflect and to take care of me, too.

[caption] Can you describe the resources available to you and your team, and how important this is to you in successfully carrying out your role?

RD There are lots of resources; one thing that I think is quite unique to Southwark: social workers have the opportunity to have a massage because our job is so stressful. Again, there's absolutely loads of training. In terms of, obviously, because the borough is so big, you have the opportunity of leasing a car; if you want a loan it, you can. There's obviously all the training that's available. Also, in terms of training, again, if there is something in particular that you want to pursue, then Southwark is quite creative with that too.

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

RD Like I said, I've been here since 1997, and whenever I meet new social workers that have come from other boroughs, I also say that if you can work in Southwark you can work in any borough. The borough is so diverse; it's transient; there's a lot of young people here; it's got a big African community. There are parts of Southwark that's quite affluent, and people are quite surprised when we do get referrals, but we get referrals right across the board. And I think that what's important to realise is how diverse it is, because I think the media tries to portray Peckham, in particular, which is the area that I'm working in, as quite a negative place to be. But, at the same time, I think it's important to acknowledge how there's a lot of positives coming out of this borough as well. And, sadly, people associate Peckham with the Damilola Taylor Centre. There's an amazing library just across the road that won an award; there are lots of things that are happening in Southwark; that's just one thing. So I love Southwark; I've been here since 1997. Corny as it may seem, you never know what's walking through the door, and I really enjoy the challenge, I like it.