

Gangs Disruption Project

Speaker key

CA Cathy Ferguson

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

CA My name's Cathy, and I work on the Gangs Disruption Team at Southwark Youth Offending Team. My main priority is to develop an ongoing project for primary schools, which is delivered as a whole class project, trying to help children to see the risks and dangers around gang issues and general personal safety when you're out on the street, and to understand their rights and responsibilities as children who've got to the age of criminal responsibility.

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

CA I've been quite fortunate since returning to the Youth Offending Team; I had previously worked here before and I left to train as a teacher, and I've come back to develop this project. I've been very lucky because I've been given quite a lot of time to read and research around gang and gang-related issues. I've also been at some training by people who are already doing work with trying to disrupt gangs, and things around attachment. The thing that's quite good about Southwark is if you find the training that you really want, so, for example, we're going to be doing some training around ADHD quite soon, and that's been set up because we've said we'd like this training and can we go ahead and organise it? And they've said, well, yes, that makes sense, do it.

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

CA I have been given the opportunity to have a huge amount of responsibility over the project that I'm developing. So coming from a teaching background, they've let me get on with it and design things, and evaluate them, and consider how the best way is it to do it. So I've got quite a lot of autonomy over my job now.

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

CA I think the demands are really high in Southwark and I think that is recognised; it is a borough that does have quite a lot of youth crime. I suppose the main support for that is your work colleagues; there's always somebody else to talk to, and we do get regular supervision and stuff. If there is something that's really a problem, you could always go and find someone to discuss that with.

[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?

CA I think, again, one of the main resources is your colleagues, and we're really lucky in Southwark, because there's lots of people with different work specialisms [sic] and stuff. You can always call on them for advice and support over different issues. And, then, on a more practical level if there are certain resources that we need, particularly with my manager, you can just create a wish list and say I'm going to need these things, and get them, if they're needed.

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

CA I think in terms of the gangs work, Southwark is probably seen as a Youth Offending team that is quite pioneering in that work. We don't shy away from using the terms and recognising it as a problem, and we've developed lots of different group work, activities and ideas, and I think perhaps other YOTs have seen what we've done and are quite keen to develop similar strands of work.