

# **Referral and Assessment Team**

## **Speaker key**

CA Caption  
RB Rachel Brown  
LC Lindsay Colvin

CA Describe your specialist area and your day to day role.

RB My name's Rachel Brown and I am a senior social work practitioner in the referral and assessment team; my role specifically is to act as a hospital liaison with particular responsibility for some pre-birth work.

LC My name's Lindsay Colvin and I'm the health specialist in the referral and assessment team; I also undertake mainly pre-birth assessments, and also act as a health resource for the permanent duty team and the social workers in the referral and assessment team on duty.

CA What training and development have you received since arriving at Southwark, and how has this impacted upon your job?

RB I first came to Southwark six years ago on a bursary scheme which I applied for while I was doing my social work training, and since then I've had quite a lot of further one day training on various topics. I also completed the ABE training - Achieving Best Evidence - which is done jointly with the police on how to video interview children; I've also completed my post qualifying Child Care Award which is a one year course, plus a short course before that. So I've had quite a lot of training in the time that I've been at Southwark, and some quite intense pieces of training included in that.

CA What are the career progression opportunities like at Southwark, and has this had a positive impact on your career?

RB I think there are definitely opportunities for career progression, and I've been lucky because I've had the same manager for the majority of the time that I've been here; she's certainly encouraged my own career progression - she encouraged me to apply for a senior practitioner role and then, more specifically, to become involved with the hospital liaison work. There are definitely opportunities and there's a clear channel of progression within social work.

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

RB On an individual level I do feel really supported, both by my colleagues who work with me but also by the people I've been managed by over the years; I've always felt that I've had someone I can turn to when I've returned from visits, or somebody who would be concerned about me if I didn't come back from a visit - so I have always felt very supported.

CA 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.

RB I guess most of the cases that I work on I do feel supported; examples of the kind of things that happen are that whenever I've come back from a visit so see a client my manager has always remembered which visit I've been on, and will ask me how was Mrs So-and-So or that particular child, and she tends to remember things about that family - that's always helped me to feel quite contained and supported in the work.

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

RB Certainly in the referral and assessment team we rely on lots of resources, including each other, and Lindsay's role as a health specialist in our team is really vital to the work that we do. We also have workers in our team who are no recourse to public funds workers, housing workers and some other specialist roles.

LC Southwark's unusual in having this health specialist role in the referral and assessment team. I have been approached very recently by a child protection designated lead in another Primary Care Trust in London, asking for information about the role because they want to set it up there. I think it's very positive that Southwark has set this role up and supported it over the years, because I like to think that it is a valuable resource for social workers, and it also improves the link between health and social services, as my role incorporates advising social workers and managers about health, medical and child development aspects of cases. I also talk to social workers starting in Southwark about how health visiting works in Southwark, how to find health visitors, what can and cannot be expected from the health visiting service - and vice versa with health visitors, I talk about the referral and assessment, how to make referrals and about the process of the referral; I can also advise them about where a case is and so forth.

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

RB I think Southwark has quite a good reputation; I spoke to an ex-colleague recently on the phone, who used to work in Southwark and has gone to work for another local authority, and said that people always think that the grass is greener - but she's actually quite keen to return to Southwark. So I think it does have a genuinely well thought of reputation.