



THE
MERCERS'
COMPANY

St Vincent's Family Project

SVFP is a Christian Vincentian charity supporting families in South Westminster

CASE STUDY

Prepared by K. Swain for The Mercers' Company, 2022.

St Vincent's Family Project

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In a Nutshell

St. Vincent's Family Project (SVFP) aims to address the issues of parenting, child welfare and social exclusion by providing services for parents and children. It provides a safe space and a community for young families to play, relax, have fun and get parenting help and support. Their mission is to strengthen families, so they **“survive and thrive.”**

Making a Difference

By working with vulnerable families in South Westminster who are experiencing deprivation and the wider effects of poverty, SVFP aims to offer an experience of community that inspires, supports and enables positive change in the lives of those who use its services.

Feedback from parents and Key Workers illustrates the positive impact the project is having on families in terms of the practical help, advice and training. It also provides an opportunity for parents to connect with one another and develop valuable lasting relationships.



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Key Worker

Progress was made towards the projects intended outcomes during the first year of funding. Although COVID-19 inevitably reduced the numbers, they are still proud of how many families they’ve managed to continue working with, albeit in different and often in a more intense way. SVFP monitors and evaluates the programmes internally using questionnaires, measurement scales and informal feedback.

“SVFP has created such a safe sanctuary for someone like me, I’ve never had anything consistent in my life.”

Parent

“This place has done so much for me I am eternally grateful... [named staff] have made me come out of my shell and make me want to get up in a morning.”

Parent

How Mercers' Support Helps

SVFP has been awarded £48,240 of funding from the Charity of Sir Richard Whittington over three years, starting July 2020. They welcomed the flexibility of the funding and genuine support offered, particularly during COVID. The Project Lead valued the ongoing communication which was always 'helpful' and 'friendly'.

"What I really liked was the contact from [Grant Manager] who wanted to know more about us... you don't often get approach." Project Lead

"The programme helped me re-connect with my child in a much more positive way after going through a lot as a family: we both love our quality time together."

Parent

"I see a lot of them [parents] blossom, when I first meet them they don't have a lot of confidence or belief but I notice how they develop over the weeks... the difference between week 1 and now is incredible."

Volunteer

A free crèche for 0-5 year olds is provided alongside additional support for families.

The parenting programmes are delivered by paid trained staff with vital support provided by volunteers. SVFP also work closely with key partners who provide specialist support where necessary e.g. therapy sessions, access to health visitors.

COVID-19 and Other Challenges

COVID-19 had a big impact on SVFP and its delivery, particularly during the first lockdown. They were unable to see people face-to-face, which is a large element of their work. They quickly had to move to remote ways of working and develop new and innovative ways of delivering their parenting programmes - offering online coffee mornings, yoga and art sessions, whilst also keeping in regular contact via Zoom and other remote channels on a one to one basis. They are now operating in-person services again.

"Lockdown was difficult, tensions had risen between me and my eldest... SVFP understood that, they continued to support me throughout."

Parent

Managing staff and volunteers remotely during the pandemic was also challenging, ensuring they were well supported. On a positive note, adopting new working styles has made their service more flexible.

How the Work is Done

The grant awarded by the Charity of Sir Richard Whittington contributes to the delivery of five different parenting courses:

- **Triple P** (Positive Parenting Programme) - focused on positive parenting and managing behaviour
- **Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities**, in partnership with Race Equality Foundation - focusing on parenting for different cultural groups
- **Mellow Parenting** - for Mums for those who suffered abuse as a child
- **Non-Violence Response** - dealing with violent behaviours amongst children
- **Stepping Stones** - for parents of children with disabilities.

“I’ve learned how resilient people are... and how to encourage and incorporate self-esteem in everything that we do, and not take anything for granted. Our clients really lead the way and they’re amazing people.”

Project Worker



The Future

SVFP are keen to keep learning and adapting. They would like to integrate therapy into their parenting programmes and undertake more work with fathers. They would also like to attract new families, whom they are targeting via outreach work. They have a range of ideas for generating income besides grant funding and will be doing more events and fundraising activities.

The programme offers holistic support and uses a person-centred approach which is tailored to each families’ needs.

SVFP is a faith-based charity with Christian values, which underpin their work. However, they accept everyone regardless of faith / no faith.

Inclusiveness, trust and building positive relationships with families and partners are key to SVFP’ success.

“We know the local area really well... we make it our business to keep maintaining that knowledge and work in partnership with other organisations.”

Key Worker

“We changed [project plan] to be more realistic [because of COVID] but what was great was they were still willing to fund us... they were prepared to allow us to do that and be flexible.”

Project Lead



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The Mercers’ Company is a Livery Company focused on being a philanthropic force for good

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