

Welcare In Bromley

We welcome **Theresa Louison** who joins the team working for 3.5 days per week. She joins **Barbara Wilson**, our social worker manager who continues to work full time.

Welcare in Bromley now operates from Community House (the old magistrates building) in Bromley town centre. The building houses a number of other charities and is easily accessible by public transport and has a community café and rooms available to hire for meetings and events. The website has been updated, new leaflets will be available in due course but for now please amend the address to:

Community House
South Street
Bromley
BR1 1RH
Bromley@welcare.org
020 8466 0399

The phone number and email remain the same.

Work with children and families throughout the Covid-19 crisis

Many families experienced unprecedented challenges over the last twelve months of the Covid-19 crisis. Families who have never faced financial difficulties before have found themselves at breaking point and have been impacted by job losses and illness and have been left unable to feed their children or provide warm clothing. Welcare staff and supporters responded to these challenges by launching our **Families in Crisis** to supplement the local food banks and emergency grants and funds we can access from local grant-making trusts. Welcare purchased supermarket vouchers, sourced laptops for children being home-schooled and worked closely with voluntary sector partners to ensure we were targeting support where it was most needed. The practical and financial support by Welcare has been much appreciated, and needed, by many families and provided a financial lifeline at a time of great need.

The most prevalent issues that families have turned to us for support with since April 2020 include:

- An increase in mental health/emotional well-being challenges in both parents and children/young people. This is in part due to anxieties arising from Covid-19 itself and to the practical consequences of the lockdown.
- An increase in the incidence of domestic abuse and parental conflict.
- Parental support for children out of school and the challenges of home-schooling. While some children appear to have managed well while out of school for others it has been extremely challenging with the rupture in routines resulting in challenging behaviour and reduced access to academic support (often related to no IT or broadband being available), anxiety about being isolated and not having access to friends and about returning to school after lockdown.
- For children with special educational needs, this has been a particularly difficult time with accessing appropriate specialist advice and resources a key issue. Families living in overcrowded conditions have made it difficult for children to keep up with schoolwork and have placed additional pressures on family life.
- Social Isolation – especially for first-time parents, those experiencing post-natal depression or social isolation due to the special needs of their child.

Families In Crisis Appeal

This year we will ask supporters and churches to donate to our Families In Crisis Appeal rather than donate toys to Welcare. This enables us to use the funding flexibly which includes purchasing gift vouchers for the most appropriate local supermarket including Co-Op, ASDA etc. Supermarket vouchers also enable parents to purchase schools uniform, warm clothes, cleaning and personal hygiene products. For churches who are reluctant to move away from the traditional Toy Services, the following paragraph may be helpful.

Welcare continues to adapt our support services to the ever-changing environment and needs of the children and families we serve. We have found that some of the changes adopted as a temporary measure during the Covid-19 crisis have merit as permanent features. We have focused increasingly on the need for funds to enable us to give specific client grants including the most appropriate local supermarket voucher. This flexibility enables us to work closely with the parent giving personal choice or to use the funding available to purchase an item that will make a huge difference to the family. Examples of this include a carpet for a family home, help with transport costs or even a man and a van to help a family leave an abusive domestic situation. We can also purchase an age-appropriate toy, or toys for all the children rather than relying on the items that are donated to us, which are often more appropriate for younger children. We understand the desire to donate toys, especially at Christmas but we believe we can best serve the needs of the whole family through supporting our Families In Crisis Appeal which allows our staff to use their knowledge of the family and other local agencies to target help and support where it is needed most.

Attached Case Study

The Franks Family.

With thanks for all you continue to do to promote the work of Welcare with parents and children up to the age of 13 in the borough of Bromley.

Barbara Wilson will attend your next meeting in March 2022 to discuss our work in partnership with local schools.

Anna Khan

October 2021