



**IST**

Childhood First



# Norfolk Friends

Spring Newsletter 2020



## List of Current Committee Members

- Trish Phillips (Chair)
- Dina Hambro
- Jennifer Walton
- Clara King  
(Fundraising & Events Manager, Childhood First)

## Message from Trish

### Dear Friends

Last year, for us, was very productive with a number of events, attended by a supportive group of people.

In May we had a lovely walk at Heggart Hall thanks to the Gurneys, and in June we had a wonderful visit to the gardens at Corpusty Mill. The Hambros opened their amazing gardens at the end of June.

While the children were away on their annual summer holiday a small group of people visited both Earthsea and Merrywood to get a feel for the care that the children are given.

As always there was a summer fete at Earthsea and the winter party at Merrywood.

Lastly, but by no means least, a very interesting walk around the cathedral grounds to learn about it's history.

In light of the current Covid-19 crisis we are pausing activities. We will continue to monitor the situation and keep you updated on future activities. I hope everybody is keeping well.

With warmest regards and gratitude for your continued support.

Trish Phillips

Trustee

## Childhood First

Childhood First provides residential care and treatment to children and young people who have suffered the most severe emotional trauma within their family setting.

Local authorities refer these children to Childhood First because of their outstanding reputation for delivering the highest quality of care and treatment that leads to the best possible outcomes.



### Earthsea

Earthsea House is a residential therapeutic community, with an on-site school, providing specialist therapeutic care, education and treatment for a group of up to 11 children aged 5-14.

Earthsea specialises in the treatment of children who present severe emotional and behavioural problems as a result of attachment difficulties usually rooted in early life trauma.

They transform the lives of children and young people whose outlook is otherwise unbearably bleak, so that they can overcome their abuse and ultimately thrive. 'Integrated Systemic Therapy' (IST) is a unique, clinically accredited and effective approach in which all staff are trained and which underpins the culture of the organisation.



### Merrywood

Merrywood House is a residential therapeutic community providing specialist care and treatment for a group of up to 8 young people aged 10-17.

Through the use of our unique Integrated Systemic Therapy, which focuses on healing trauma and enabling healthy attachments and relationships, children achieve exceptional outcomes in every aspect of their lives.



Out of respect for their privacy and in order to safeguard the children and young people in Childhood First's care, it wouldn't be appropriate to share images or further information about their adverse experiences. This can make it difficult to really communicate the breadth

and impact of Childhood First's work. Instead, we have included below some testimonies from Childhood First staff which begin to explain the healing process through their eyes, followed by a story of one young boy's incredible bravery.

## Staff Testimonials

*To see a child change from being incredibly violent, consistently violent, and then that starting to fade away and that child saying to me that they don't want to hurt me anymore, that to me is a profound thing. It's a massive thing.*

Link worker - 2 years at CF

*If they feel safe then they can start to progress in every aspect of their lives. That's the important thing, to help them feel safe and secure in their environment and their relationships. That's the challenge. And it can be very challenging.*

Deputy team leader and Supervisor - 3.5 years at CF

*There is always a pull to family. The children will always want to go back to or engage with their families. If I can help to improve that engagement, really, genuinely, any movement forward is good*

Placement and family support worker - 7 years at CF

*As you start to feel more significant and the child treats you as more significant and starts to seek more support and validation from you, that's when it starts to get more emotionally intense but for me it's a nice thing. It doesn't feel like a job. You start to live it and for me it's become a primary focus in life.*

Therapeutic Care-worker - 6 months with CF

## Martin's Story

**Martin was born into a family where both parents suffered mental illness. After the birth, he was transferred to a psychiatric unit with his mother, so that she could receive treatment for severe depression. Martin then went into foster care for eight months, following which he was sent home.**

Martin lived for four years in an environment dominated by drug use, domestic violence and suicide attempts by both parents. He was sexually abused by his father. He developed emotional and behavioural difficulties, including extreme physical aggression.

Martin was moved into foster care at the age of four, but was repeatedly reunited with his parents, only to be sent back to foster care. Martin came to us aged seven, when no foster carer could safely manage him anymore. By then he had moved home 40 times in his short life.

Our initial experience of Martin was a very angry and physically aggressive little boy. He was unable to conform to any boundaries and would break his toys repeatedly. Our first challenge was to keep Martin, and everyone else in the home, safe.

On the basis of our developing relationships with Martin, as part of the structured daily round of community life, we were then able to begin the painstaking work of piecing together an understanding of his inner world and working therapeutically to heal him.

As a result of sustained and expert therapeutic attention, Martin was gradually able to integrate his experience of himself and others, and to articulate and process what had happened to him. In a loving community, he began to develop the capacity for trust and for hope.

Martin's physical violence diminished as his ability to put feelings into words increased. He began to be able to accept adult reassurance and praise.

Martin left us at age 10, ready and able to cope in a residential special school, where he could mix with a wider group of children and be looked after and educated in a less intensive environment. Martin is 15 now and is working towards his GCSEs.

## Help them reach their goal!

In addition to their outstanding work caring for their young residents, staff at Earthsea have been taking on challenges up and down the UK to raise money. The children's healing is assisted by the designated recreational and therapeutic spaces and equipment they use. The funds they have raised will be used for this purpose and they are over halfway towards achieving their overall target of £10,000. See below what Kerri White, Team Leader at Earthsea and Child Psychotherapeutic Counsellor, had to say about their fundraising and if you would like to support them you can do so here:

<https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/Team/ChildhoodFirstNorfolk>



*First, we took on the National Three Peaks challenge. This involved climbing Ben Nevis in Scotland, Scafell Pike in England and Snowdon in Wales consecutively, totalling 23 miles of ascending and descending the mountains, with a combined ascent of 3064 metres. We spent 6 months training with the added complication of living in one of the flattest counties in the country!*

*We then took on the Yorkshire Three Peaks challenge, climbing Pen-y-Ghent, Wharfedale and Ingleborough and also walked the distance between them in one day.*

*We also walked 26 miles along the Norfolk Coastal Path!*

*It's fair to say this amounted to a mighty challenge, but the same team work and support experienced in our day-to-day work at Earthsea shone through. We've organised various other fundraising activities and remain committed to reaching our ambitious target and providing the wonderful children in our care the best chance of overcoming their trauma.*

## Covid-19 Appeal

The team at Childhood First are taking all necessary steps to ensure that they can continue to provide the children and young people in their care with therapeutic environments that have the expertise to heal their minds and hearts.

Childhood First children are mostly functioning in the mode of fight or flight, due to their earlier traumatic experiences and as a way of surviving. The Coronavirus taps into these primitive anxieties.

In response to Coronavirus, all that was in place to help the children feel less anxious and safe, i.e. routines, going to school, therapeutic structures etc. have changed and continue to change.

The charity will need to provide additional recreational spaces and activities, in addition to recruiting more staff to cover care worker absences. They are also providing temporary accommodation so that staff can stay locally and keep well enough to look after the children.

It is absolutely essential that a framework of normality is maintained for the children and Childhood First has launched an emergency appeal for donations to help them navigate the current crisis. For more information about the appeal and Childhood First's response, please follow [this link](#) to their website.



## Get Involved & Contact

If you require further information about how you can support Childhood First in Norfolk please contact Trish Phillips on

**[PACPhillips@aol.com](mailto:PACPhillips@aol.com)**

If you would like to contact the Childhood First Fundraising team directly, please contact Clara King on

**[cking@childhoodfirst.org.uk](mailto:cking@childhoodfirst.org.uk) | 020 7928 7388**



[www.childhoodfirst.org.uk](http://www.childhoodfirst.org.uk)

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