

# SHiFT TAMESIDE

## END OF PROGRAMME REPORT

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December 2024



**With thanks to Phoebe Minson,  
Eve Middleton, Carla Morris, Sally Dickin and  
all the Guides, children, and family members  
who contributed to this report.**

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# WHY SHiFT?

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## **Growing up is risky business.**

If, during this critical period of transition, children and young people do not have the right foundations and support, they can become caught up in worsening cycles of harmful behaviour; becoming exploited or exploiting others, and causing serious, sometimes devastating damage, to themselves or others.

Tragically, thousands of children and young people in the UK are growing up vulnerable in such circumstances. Some are causing serious harm and violence, some are victims of serious harm and violence, and most are both. Most are boys and Black, Brown, and Mixed Heritage children and young people are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system. The needs and vulnerabilities of girls at risk in the community and in conflict with the law are often overlooked. Teenagers are the fastest growing group in both child protection and care.

## **Business as usual isn't working.**

Despite the best efforts of dedicated professionals, children and young people with the highest unmet needs and who have experienced greatest cumulative disadvantage, are not getting the support they need to move to a place of safety and strength.

Too often, approaches to children in conflict with the law are risk first, episodic, and deficit-focused interventions delivered by a large network of frequently changing professionals. Children and families can experience services and systems as piecemeal and uncoordinated, shaped by statutory thresholds that create damaging cracks, gaps, and cliff edges. Existing services do not always enable professionals to make use of the considerable skills, experience and creativity they have, or allow it to develop within a relational context.

*'Government departments and safeguarding partners have failed to have an effective response to the risks that teenagers face. Different parts of the children's social care, police, education, justice, and health systems are responding differently to the same teenagers. Accountability for keeping these teenagers safe is lacking.'*

(Independent Review of Children's Social Care, June 2021)

**SHiFT is determined to change things, for the children we work with and for the systems that currently surround them.**

# BREAKING CYCLES

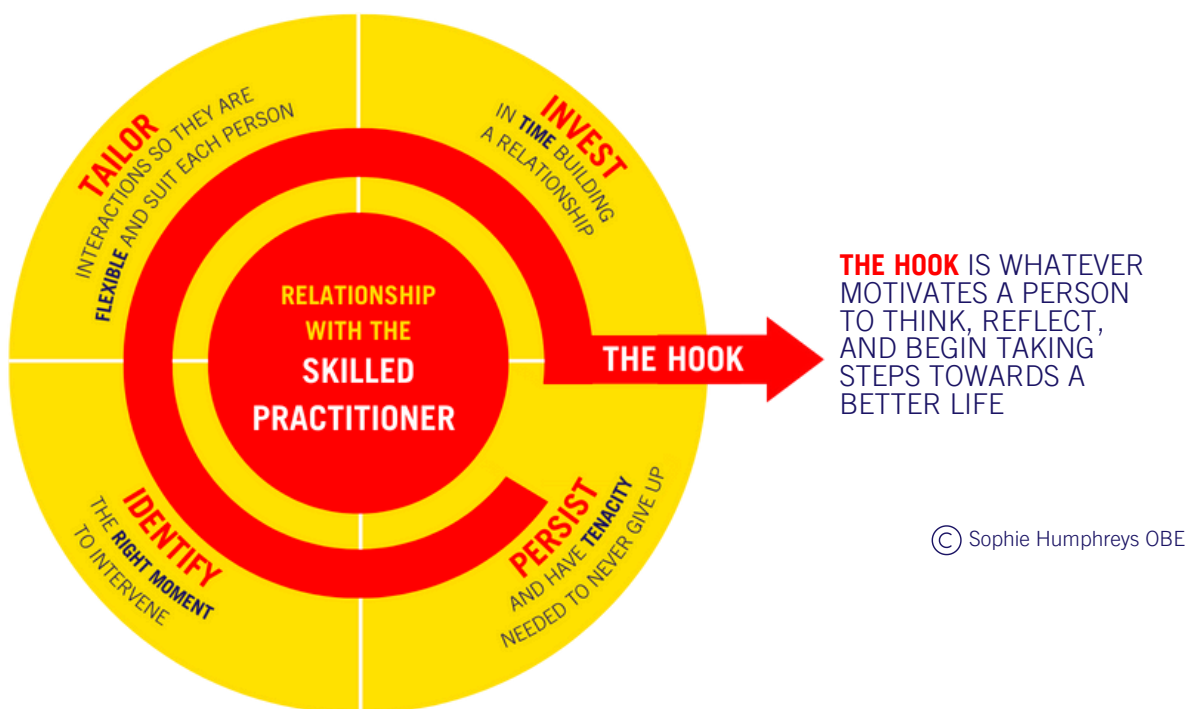
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At the heart of everything SHiFT is, and everything SHiFT does is Breaking Cycles – a dynamic and evidenced approach to enabling change, created and pioneered by SHiFT's Co-Founder, Sophie Humphreys, OBE.

The ingredients of Breaking Cycles have been tested and evaluated as successful at Pause, the organisation founded by Sophie in 2013. Pause works to prevent the damaging consequences of children being taken into care.

## BREAKING CYCLES: 'THE CORE INGREDIENTS'



Breaking Cycles centres flexibility and tenacity, tailoring everything to the individual, identifying the right moment to intervene and finding 'hooks' to motivate change. Rather than defining people by issues like addiction or criminality, Breaking Cycles focuses on people as individuals. We get alongside them to understand their hopes and fears and support them to develop the strong foundations needed to achieve their aspirations.

# PRACTICE PRINCIPLES

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The Breaking Cycles ingredients inform all aspects of SHiFT’s systemic, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive approach to practice. Our Practice Principles are the ‘invisible rules’ that guide our practice.

## DO THE RIGHT THING BY THE CHILD



### WHAT THIS MEANS

Holding the child’s interests uppermost and at the forefront of everything we do, how and why we do it.

### WHAT WE ARE TRYING TO AVOID

Professionals making decisions that feel comfortable for them, that prioritise systems and processes or how things have always been done over what might be best and needed by children and families.

## GO FOR GOLD



Insisting on exceptional over good; believing that change is possible; taking a hopeful, appreciative, problem-solving approach that opens spaces of possibility.

Fatalistic or unambitious narratives; a sense of things being fixed or stuck without a sense of agency or responsibility to change it; too much reverence to existing ideas and ways of doing things.

## HOLD AND PULL FOR HELP



Staying alongside the child and family no matter what; knowing when to draw on help as needed, but staying accountable to make and drive progress for children and families.

Children and families needing to navigate complex systems with a frequently changing cast of professionals, who assess more than intervene, with low / diffuse accountability for progress for the child and family.

## STAY IN THE COMPLEXITY



Holding multiple stories and ideas about what might be happening; staying curious and uncertain; taking both / and positions.

Reducing people’s lives to neat boxes or single stories that don’t reflect reality, including by omitting strengths; becoming too sure of ourselves or ideas such that single stories dominate and mislead.

## STEP IN TO STEP BACK

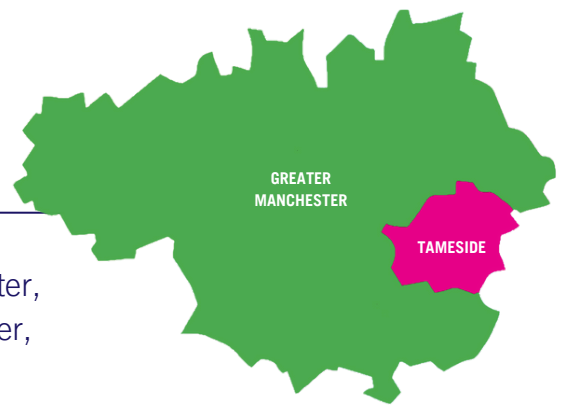


Holding clear purpose for everything we’re doing, stepping in and out flexibly as children need but always with the goal of children and families flourishing without the need for professional involvement.

Children and families being either overwhelmed or under-supported by not having the right support at the right time; practitioners not thinking from the start about how to create sustainable change with and for children and families.

# WHY TAMESIDE?

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Tameside is a metropolitan borough of Greater Manchester, located to the east of the city region bordering Manchester, Stockport and Oldham.

SHiFT and Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council began exploring opportunities for collaboration in 2022, with support from Damian Dallimore and the Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Unit, and Anthony Benedict, Executive Headteacher at Tameside Pupil Referral Service. When discussions began, there were significant contextual challenges for children and families and for effective partnership working striving for systems change in Tameside.

**Tameside had one of the highest rates of permanent exclusion in England.** A 2020 report from the Centre for Social Justice found that Tameside is one of five areas in the UK where children excluded from school have a ‘poor-to-zero’ chance of achieving good educational outcomes.

Over a year, Tameside had 102 recorded crimes per 1000 people. The top recorded crimes were violence against the person, stalking and harassment, public order offences and criminal damage and arson. When violent crimes were committed by under 18s, they were more likely to be committed in the most deprived areas of Tameside. The majority of modern slavery incidents in Tameside involve child criminal exploitation.

The adverse impacts of poverty on children caught in cycles of crime in Tameside was well recognised as was a poverty of aspiration among services and sometimes in family homes about expectations and ambitions for young people.

**Tameside’s Children’s Services has been rated as either inadequate or requiring improvement since 2016.** At the time SHiFT began working in Tameside, the Council had had four Directors of Children and Social Care in the five previous years and approximately 40% of Children’s Social Care staff were agency workers, with the result that children and families were experiencing frequent changes in key professionals supporting them. Professionals and families talked to us about wanting ‘truly shared accountability’ for young people, rather than them being ‘pushed around the system’ without impact.

Tameside’s geographical context was also discussed, with Tameside’s positioning in Greater Manchester meaning it had both urban challenges of bordering the city of Manchester while at the same time dealing with some of the contextual challenges of having more rural towns and the impacts of fewer accessible services. There was also some feeling that Tameside was an area sometimes overlooked compared to its close but more central Greater Manchester neighbours.

# IF TAMESIDE WAS A VILLAGE OF 100 CHILDREN



**4** WILL NOT ATTEND SCHOOL TODAY

**41** LIVE IN RELATIVE POVERTY  
*compared to 30 children nationally*

## ENGLISH AS ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE



## FROM ETHNIC MINORITIES



- 1 CHILD PROTECTION
- 1 CHILD LOOKED AFTER
- 1 EARLY HELP



32

**FREE SCHOOL MEALS**

14

**SEN SUPPORT**

5

**EDUCATION, HEALTH, CARE PLAN**

4

**SUSPENDED OR PERMANENTLY EXCLUDED**



# SHiFT TAMESIDE

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After a period of scoping to explore the viability of partnership between SHiFT and Tameside, it became clear that there was interest and appetite to do something different for children caught in cycles of crime in Tameside and that SHiFT provided the opportunity to do that.

**Given high levels of school exclusion in Tameside, and evidence of how school exclusion increases risks of exploitation and coming into conflict with the law, SHiFT Tameside emphasised improving outcomes for children who had been permanently excluded.**

Recruitment to the new SHiFT Practice began in earnest in late 2022 and, by February 2023, SHiFT Tameside began working with children and young people. SHiFT Tameside was SHiFT's fourth SHiFT Practice, and its first outside Greater London.

**SHiFT Tameside colleagues were 'insider-outsiders': employed by Tameside Council but trained and closely challenged and supported by the national SHiFT team.** This means that the Practice worked from within existing services (children's services, public health, policing and criminal justice, education, and housing) as well as working outside, as part of the national SHiFT changemaking community.

Children and young people were identified and invited for SHiFT support by combining insights from relevant data and professional judgment, focused around the question **'Who are the children and young people who are keeping you awake at night?'**, the children who would benefit most from intensive consistent support for at least 18 months, for whom 'business as usual' isn't working and things appear to be getting worse rather than better.

The Practice was based in the Youth Justice office at Tameside, and the SHiFT Operational Lead at the beginning of the Practice was Sally Dickin, who was Head of Service for Youth Justice and later joined the national SHiFT team after leaving Tameside.

The Practice has been closely supported by a SHiFT Practice Development Lead, Carla Morris, who also works with SHiFT Manchester, as well as Systemic Consultants employed by SHiFT to support weekly Child and Family Practice Discussions.

After Sally Dickin left Tameside, SHiFT's local strategic and operational leadership changed frequently, but SHiFT Tameside was most recently led within Tameside by Helen Greenough and Charlie Spencer.

## WHAT DID WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE?

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**SHiFT wants all children to have equal access to consistently high-quality support and services. Local, regional and national systems should be purposed and structured to properly meet even the most complex needs.**

### **POWER AND PURPOSE**

SHiFT wants children to have the tools and confidence to make choices in their lives, and the skills to cope with setbacks and advocate for themselves to ensure their voices are heard.

### **LOVED AND CARED FOR**

SHiFT wants children to know that they matter, to ensure that they are loved and cared for and that there are people there for them when they need it most.

### **SAFE AND STABLE**

SHiFT wants children to feel safe where they live, both in the community and with their friends and family, and have stable foundations on which to build positive, crime-free futures

### **HEALTHY AND HAPPY**

SHiFT wants children to feel physically and emotionally well, able to access the right wellbeing support, and find opportunities for the things they enjoy doing and that bring them joy.

## MEET THE PRACTICE

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**Eva** was a **SHiFT Guide**. She has experience managing an accommodation-based care leavers service in Tameside, working in schools as a drug link worker, and in custody settings providing support with housing and on housing projects. She has a BA in Social and Community Studies and is passionate about supporting families and communities who experience the ripple effects of the exploitation of young people. She enjoys exercising, reading, and watching her son play football on weekends.

**Mathew** was a **SHiFT Lead Guide**. He is a qualified social worker and had been a manager in a social work team in Tameside prior to the role. Mathew had also spent time in his career working with Barnardo's and in his spare time is an avid rugby fan.



**Faith** was SHiFT Tameside's **Practice Coordinator** and joined the Practice during its early stages in January 2023. Faith has previously worked in a variety of administrative roles in the education and human resources sector. Faith graduated with a BA in Childhood Studies in 2019.

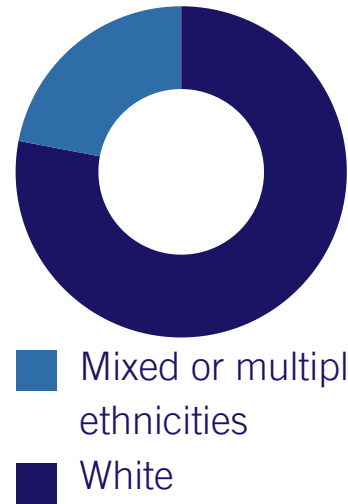
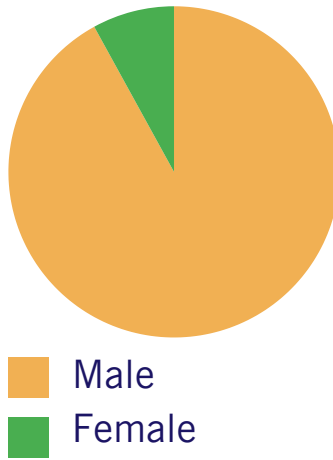
**Stephen** was a **SHiFT Guide** having previously worked as a Psychiatric Nursing Assistant in a High Dependency Unit, and as a Probation Officer for ten years. He worked as the Head of Wellbeing at a Specialist SEMH independent school and has worked in Youth Justice Services for 12 years in Halton, Warrington, Oldham and Manchester. He loves playing football, watching "the mighty Man City over land and sea", motorcycling, fishing, and learning.

**Robyn** was a **SHiFT Guide**. After graduating with a degree in Psychology in 2018, she worked in secondary education with children with SEN before working in a local Tameside secondary school as a Head of Year 10 and then Year 7. She loves going to the theatre, listening to music and long dog walks at weekends with family and friends. Her favourite quote is by Maya Angelou: "You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them".

**George** was a **SHiFT Guide**. His experience includes working as a teaching assistant in a mainstream setting before moving into alternative and specialist provisions in pastoral, teaching and leadership positions as DSL of two schools. After completing his MSc in Education, George taught business and employability in a Secure Children's Home before moving up to Manchester where he managed a PRU. In his free time George enjoys getting out to the Peaks or Lakes, going to gigs or boxing (from time to time!).

# CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

**27**  
CHILDREN AND  
YOUNG PEOPLE



Most children were either 16 or 17 years old. Three children turned 18 while working with their SHiFT Guide.



**19**  
OUT OF 27 CHILDREN

had been suspended or permanently excluded in the year prior to SHiFT, with 119 suspensions among them as well as seven permanent exclusions.

When children and young people began working with their SHiFT Guide:

**96% WERE BEING EXPLOITED OR CONSIDERED AT RISK OF EXPLOITATION**

**89% HAD EXPERIENCED DOMESTIC ABUSE**

**89% HAD A KNOWN HISTORY OF BEING MISSING FROM HOME**

**67% WERE OPEN TO CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE**

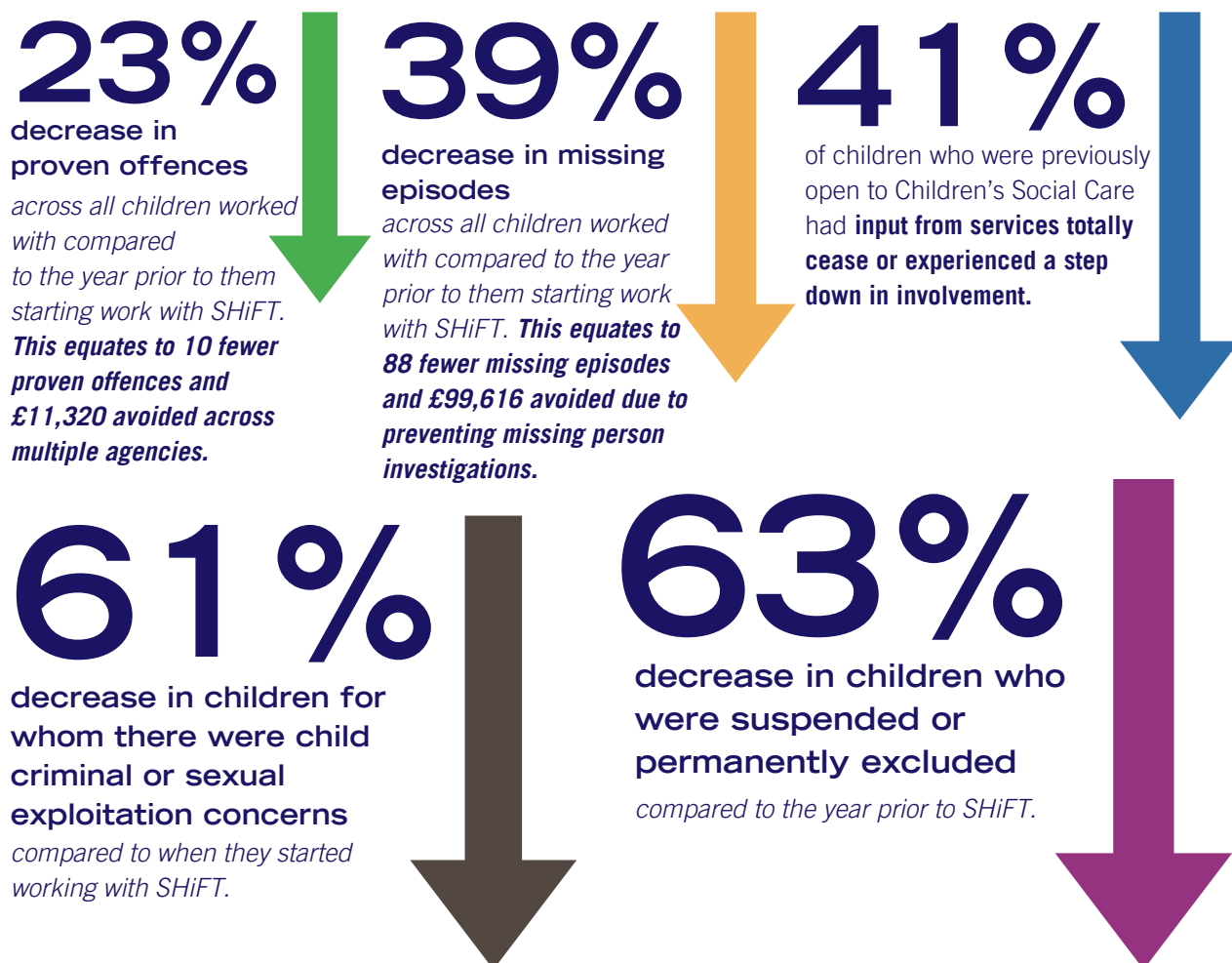
# WHAT DIFFERENCE DID SHIFT TAMESIDE MAKE?

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Each SHiFT Practice closely monitors progress for children and families on an ongoing basis, within SHiFT's Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework and drawing on support and expertise from within the national SHiFT team.

This report draws on insights from two sources of data: (1) monthly surveys completed by SHiFT Guides about the children and young people they're working with, sharing information relevant to each of SHiFT's four desired outcomes (e.g. number of missing episodes, arrests, A&E admissions, exclusions in the last month); and (2) interviews held part way through the Programme and at its end with children, family members and professionals who worked with a SHiFT Tameside Guide.

## HEADLINE FINDINGS FROM MONTHLY SURVEY DATA



## SHIFT TAMESIDE IN ACTION

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Interviews with children, young people, their families and other professionals working alongside them help us to learn more about their experiences, the difference SHiFT made, and how change happened.

A total of 16 interviews inform the insights that follow, with three children and young people (one girl and two boys), seven family members, and two professionals. All data informs this report but we are taking a particularly close look in this report at the stories of three of the children and families we worked with (Chris, Lucy and Aiden) to bring to life the work of SHiFT Tameside in action.

**Key finding 1: A persistent, flexible, longer-term relationship between the child, family and their SHiFT Guide built stable, valued and trusting relationships; the bedrock for all positive change that followed. Experiences pre-SHiFT were, by contrast, predominantly of perpetually disrupted relationships and being done to rather than with.**

Children and families talked about complex and difficult experiences in their lives and how working with professionals before SHiFT had often not helped or sometimes had compounded difficulties. They expressed low trust in professionals and low expectations for what they could offer. Many spoke about having a revolving door of workers visiting and then changing, and the frustration of having to start again telling your story to a new worker.

*'Before [his Guide] we'd had loads of other professionals: Social Services, safeguarding, health. He was just having none of it. There were too many of them and he is very untrusting. He's had bad experiences – we all have – of Social Services from then they were little. When we really needed them, they didn't want to help us. I've never asked anyone for anything in all my life, but I was pushed into a corner. I had three kids. The bus fares to get them to school were £72 a week and I was struggling with the food, gas, electric etc. I asked Social Services for financial help, and they said they couldn't help me because their mum was still getting their benefits. They said I had to get the money off her. I couldn't believe it. The kids were on Child Protection, [child] was hard work even then, so I was trawling the streets at 1 and 2 o'clock at night looking for him and trying to hold down my job. All I needed was a bit of help – for them to do something to actually help us.'* (Elizabeth, family member)

SHiFT's centring of the relationship between the Guide and child, committing to it for at least 18 months, and investing in work to strengthen all valued and trusted relationships around the child, was seen as vital for making positive changes. It was also seen as different to previous experiences of services, and especially important because there was often a need to 'earn the trust' of children and families due to their mixed previous experiences of services and professionals.

We see the power of a persistent commitment to relationship building reflected in Chris' story, where it took several months of his Guide showing up at the family home, and creating a working relationship with his Grandma, before Chris trusted his Guide enough to start working with him. The risks to Chris of being remanded into custody or facing further physical harm from other people in the community were high, but by 'holding on' his Guide was able to find a window of opportunity, 'a hook', when Chris was arrested that showed through actions and not words that his Guide was someone who could possibly be trusted, and who might be able to help him to navigate his world to achieve his goals.

*'He's persistent with [child / young person]. It doesn't matter if [child / young person] is silly or fobs him off he still comes back – he gets that he's young and hasn't really got on with other people who have come in and out of his life. [Child / young person] seems to be different when he's with [Guide]. Out the house he can be "I'm the big man" but [child / young person] and [Guide] connect and [child / young person] feels safe with him. I think [child / young person] at first thought he'd given [Guide] the big BS but [Guide] could see through that and made him feel safe to drop all that.'* (Bob Marley, family member)

We also see the power of working with everyone important in a child's world, especially parents, reflected in work with Lucy and Aiden. A key moment of change for Lucy came from her Guide investing in her family by taking them away for a family holiday to Blackpool, creating a space for fun, connection, and bonding. Lucy's Guide also worked closely with her Mum so that she could support Lucy when she was a victim of crime. Meanwhile, key in Aiden's journey with SHiFT was the work his Guide did with his parents about their parenting styles, especially when they faced difficult circumstances, and their strengths as a family. On the strength of this work, Children's Social Care stepped down their support from a Child Protection to Child in Need Plan.

*"[Guide] is not just there for [child / young person], [they are] there for all of us, all the family. [Guide] talks to me like he talks to [child / young person] – he doesn't talk over you, he talks to you, and he cares.'* (Bob Marley, family member)

# CHRIS'S STORY

Doing the right thing by the child by showing up and not giving up.

Chris was **attacked**, and **hurt by a machete**.

Chris **didn't want to work with Youth Justice** and didn't show to his appointment at the office.

Chris had a **fight** with his Nan.

Chris received a **Youth Caution**.

Chris was smoking cannabis, and Youth Justice recorded Chris as at a **high risk of being criminally exploited**.

Chris's **Mum went to prison**.

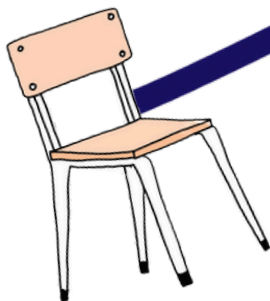
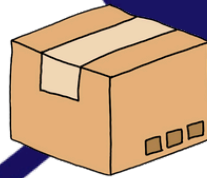


Chris was **permanently excluded** from school.

Chris and his siblings **went to live with their Nan** because his Mum was finding it hard to look after them.

Chris' **Dad and big brother were sent to prison** whilst he was at primary school.

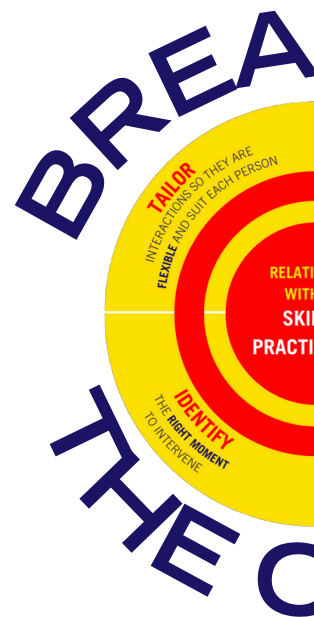
**CAMHS was worried** about Chris' mental health.



His **primary school** said that he was behaving badly, and that he had thrown a chair and was swearing at staff.

Chris grew up in a house where **he saw lots of fighting**.

**428**  
DAYS ON A CHILD PROTECTION PLAN



## SINCE 2020





Chris was invited to work with SHiFT because professionals were concerned about his risk of being criminally exploited and his safety.



Chris was also referred to the Princes' Trust but didn't turn up to the appointment.

Chris's Guide tried to visit Chris at home but Chris was **very mistrustful of professionals** as he thought that they all spoke to the police. His Guide began **building a relationship with Chris's Nan.**

His Guide continued to visit the family home and tried to see Chris, finally Chris agreed to see him. Soon after, **his Guide attended court and spoke on Chris' behalf, Chris avoided remand and was allowed to go back home.** Chris agreed to work with SHiFT.

Chris began to **reduce his use of cannabis** and spent more time with his Guide. **Together, they made a referral to CAMHS** to support him through his trauma.

His Guide spent time with him, **building up trust**, and helping Chris **identify his interests**. They got him a gym pass, they went together to the National War Museum, and his Guide took him and his friends to a water park.

Chris went to the SHiFT Participation Event despite feeling nervous and said it was **beneficial to meet with young people** who have learned from past experiences.

Chris **received a YJS Referral Order** after attending court for offences committed in 2022 (possession with intent to supply). His Guide advocated for him and a community order.

His Guide **worked with his family members and girlfriend to build on positive relationships**. Together they went to football games. Chris started attending all his YJS appointments and strict ISS bail conditions. **Chris was experiencing a lot of anxiety**, and began sharing that with his Guide.

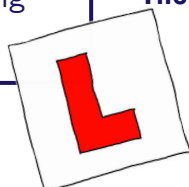
Chris **built good relationships with other YJS staff.**

Chris **attended the London Screen Academy** with SHiFT to learn about film and television.

Chris is **learning how to drive, living safely with his family**, and he is committed and motivated to working hard, and finding the right job for himself.

Chris was **very motivated to learn how to drive** and so his Guide used SHiFT's **Child & Young Person's Resource** to get him a **provisional license.**

**The Referral Order ended.**



**Key finding 2: Accessing meaningful learning as part of a supportive school community can create a virtuous upwards cycle of things changing for the better for children and families. SHiFT Guides were able to intervene in timely, thoughtful and tailored ways to safeguard the most vulnerable children from school exclusion, and advocate for their return.**

Negative experiences of education emerged as a strong theme throughout, with all the children and family members we interviewed reflecting, in one way or another, on the damaging impacts they considered exclusions from school to have had in ways that contributed to, or exacerbated, vulnerability to exploitation and / or offending. Many shared feeling let down by schools, reporting 'zero tolerance' approaches and moments of crisis where they felt unable to hold effective working relationship with school leaders and where they felt schools had made things worse for their children.

*'We were seeing nothing but normal kid issues at home. But at school, teachers were saying they were scared of him, and that he was aggressive. They threatened to ring the police because of an altercation at school with football – they were going to do him for hate crime. We didn't agree with what he had done but it was like school pushed everything to the extreme. They forced us to accept a week's suspension for that otherwise they said they'd call the police and report a hate crime. I was in school every week. I wanted to work with them, but it didn't seem to matter what we did, everything [child] did got blown out of context. For years, they threatened he'd be sent to a PRU. School said that 96% of kids that go to a PRU go to prison. I was so frightened by that I just wanted to do anything I could to keep him out of there.'* (Rebecca, family member)

We see these themes emerging in Lucy's and Aiden's stories as both decisions to permanently exclude them from their mainstream schools came shortly after significant events or trauma in their lives. Lucy was permanently excluded only months after her father's death. Aiden was excluded when he was increasingly missing from home and his vulnerability to exploitation in the community was increasing. In both of these situations there was a need for professional systems not only to share information that might help to explain and contextualise the child's escalating behaviour but also to advocate for this behaviour to be seen as logical in their contexts and a result of their experiencing trauma.

Lucy and Aiden were both able to return to educational settings of their choosing with the help from their SHiFT Guide but navigating the barriers in place was difficult even for the Guides supporting them. SHiFT Tameside hosted an event and invited key local education figures for a workshop and a seminar, thinking about Breaking Cycles in education and supporting female children who are criminally exploited. Whilst well attended, the change in strategic education leadership within Tameside Council made creating systems-level change around these issues difficult, and much further work is needed to put schools and education at the heart of how we work with, and improve outcomes alongside, the most vulnerable children and young people.

**Key finding 3: SHiFT Guides believed in children and young people until they believed in themselves. Strengthened self-esteem catalysed changing patterns of behaviour and, with that, a growing sense of power and purpose; a will and a way to stay safe and avoid conflict with the law.**

Working intensively with small numbers of children with aspiration at the heart of their practice, Guides had the time they needed to go beyond ‘presenting issues’ and dig deep with children, young people, and families to get to the roots of their hopes, fears, and challenges. A strong theme across Guides’ work was changing narratives, helping to reframe experiences, and strengthening self-esteem.

*‘[Guide] has made [child / young person] realise that he has got a future – that he’s not bad. It’s got him out of the cycle of being branded naughty so being naughty. With [Guide] it’s been about accepting you can make mistakes but it’s what you do about it going forward.’*  
(Becky, family member)

*‘[Guide] has changed what people are saying about [child / young person] and, in fairness, what [child / young person] is saying about himself – who he is, what he’s good at and capable of, what other people think about them.’* (Molly, family member)

We see this also reflected in Chris’s, Lucy’s and Aiden’s stories.

Chris and his Guide did a wide range of new activities together, investing in their relationship and helping Chris to think again about limiting ideas about what he might achieve. Chris opened up about his anxiety and his Guide was able to work with him to understand it, and develop strategies to manage it. With his Guide’s support, Chris started to feel able to push himself, travelling to London, and taking driving lessons, things that previously felt out of reach.

When Lucy felt thwarted in her efforts to return to mainstream school, her Guide recognised the impact it was having on her self-esteem and how some of her previous life experiences may have impacted on her beliefs about who she is and what she could achieve. Lucy and her Guide invested in Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) and exercise together as a way into growing her self-esteem. It wasn’t long before she found herself receiving certificates of achievement at school.

Early in their work together, Aiden’s Guide advocated for him in court, staying in the complexity of Aiden both having caused harm but also having experienced significant harm which was a relevant context to the harm he had caused.

# LUCY'S STORY

Going for gold to get back into school.

Lucy and her family were **evicted** and had to sofa surf and live in **emergency housing**.

Lucy was **arrested** for assaulting another young person. She received an **Out of Court Disposal**.



Lucy was **excluded** from school for getting into **fights** and started going to an **alternative provision**.



Lucy's **Dad died** suddenly and unexpectedly.



Lucy and her siblings **moved** to her Grandparents.

Lucy's **parents split up** and she went to live with her Dad and siblings. Police were sometimes involved.



When Lucy was little, CAF/CASS reported that she had seen **arguing** at home.

*"she was excluded in year 7. She was getting into a lot of fights... Just send her home, Yeah, no counselling for her..just like they didn't care...Eventually, she was excluded and we've never got any further."*  
- Lucy's Mum

## SINCE 2018

28

PROFESSIONALS

8

REFERRALS

Lucy was invited to work with SHiFT. Professionals were worried about her difficulties at school, her relationship with her Mum and that she could continue to get in trouble with the police.



Lucy's Guide recognised the importance in **safe and stable accommodation** and the opportunity in fixing this quickly for building trusted relationships.

Lucy's Guide arranged for **a family holiday** in Blackpool, which the family found really helpful to connect together and get away from things.

By listening to Lucy, her Guide understood her challenges at school and her goals. Together they make a plan for her to **return to school** after the summer break. Her Guide advocates for her to have an increased timetable and for the school to support her.

In the Autumn term, Lucy started *"feeling hopeless about achieving her goal of returning to mainstream."* Her Guide recognised that Lucy had **very low self esteem** and they **worked together to build her confidence**. Lucy tried MMA and exercise.

Lucy received **certificates of achievement** at school.

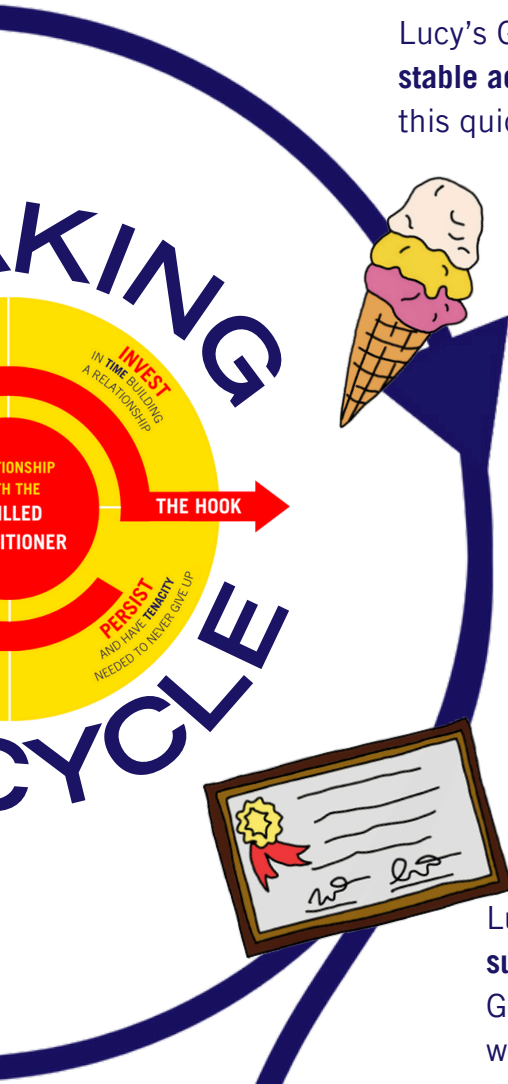
Lucy was the **victim of a crime**, and her **Mum supported her** through it with the support of her Guide. Social Care reported being impressed with Lucy's Mum's response.

**Lucy returned to mainstream education.**

Lucy is living safely with her Mum and family, **she is back in mainstream school** and hasn't been in trouble with the police. **She feels more confident and proud** of her growing achievements at school.

*"Well, when I first met her, I was a bit shy, but we just started talking. And just like we've loads in common and yeah, we just built a bond."*

*I wouldn't have got to where I am."  
- Lucy*



# AIDEN'S STORY

Staying in the complexity and recognising exploitation.

Referrals were made about Aiden to the **Edge of Care** team and **Family Group Conference**.

Aiden **went missing three times in two months.**

**Social Care ended their support** and then **reopened** the case seven days later. Youth Justice service ended as Aiden completed **Community Resolution**.

Aiden **went missing again.**

His **parents said they were overwhelmed** and at their wits end.



Aiden was referred to the **Youth Justice Service substance misuse.**

His **parents were very worried** about him having older friends.

A **Complex Safeguarding** Social Worker became involved with Aiden but in the same month the case was closed.

Aiden **went missing again.**

Aiden was referred to the **drug and alcohol service.** Aiden's parents reported him **missing three times in three months.**



Aiden **went missing again.**

When Aiden was 12 years old he **went missing** for three days. His parents were very worried and reported that he had started to smoke cannabis and use other drugs.

When Aiden was younger there were **no concerns** about him, his friendships, his family or his environment.



## SINCE 2020

22

PROFESSIONALS

4

REFERRALS

Aiden was invited to work with SHiFT because his missing episodes were getting worse and there were concerns that risk was escalating for him.



At the start of the work, Aiden is **arrested for stealing his parent's car** and the **Guide shows up to the police station** and bail hearing. This ends in no further action.



Aiden's Guide **submitted an NRM** referral after being worried that Aiden was being criminally exploited.

At court, **Aiden's Guide challenged the narrative** of 'Aiden is a criminal' and presented that the risk to Aiden was coming from others in the community.

Aiden was put on a **Child Protection Plan**.

The Youth Justice Service said that Aiden was **overwhelmed by the number of agencies** involved in his life, but that it was clear that he now wanted to make positive changes.

The Youth Justice Service and Guide did **successful joint visits**.

Aiden's Guide worked with him to think about different friendship groups and who was important to him. Aiden was clear that his parents were important and positive friendships with people who he went to the gym with.

Aiden's **Guide worked with his parents** around different parenting styles under tricky circumstances, and their **strengths as a family**. This helped Aiden's parents reflect and work together as a team to support their son.

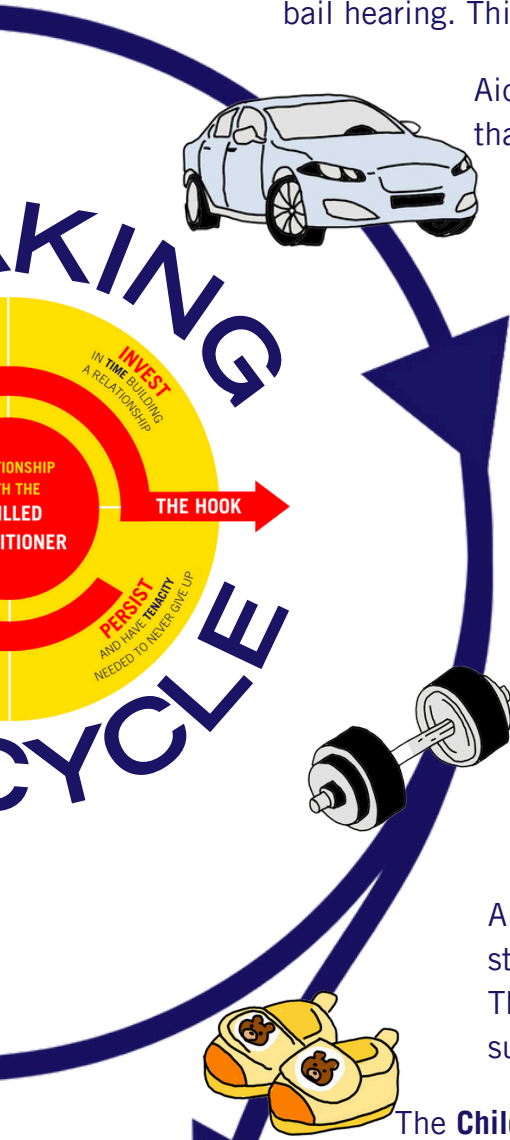
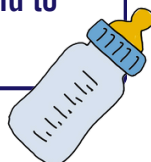
The **Child Protection Plan stepped down** to become a Child in Need Plan.

Aiden found out that **his girlfriend was pregnant**. His Guide supported him through this period. Children's Social Care were involved with his girlfriend and her pregnancy.

Aiden began **regularly attending college**, supported by his Guide.

Just before his child was born, **Aiden's Child in Need Plan ended**, and soon after his child was born, the **Child in Need Plan for the baby ended too**.

Aiden now speaks very maturely and positively about the future. **He is not going missing anymore**. He is trying his best with education because he **wants his child to have a safe and happy future**.



# FIVE TAKEAWAYS

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SHiFT Tameside made significant evidenced differences alongside children and families who were in the greatest need of support to break cycles of crime and related harm, particularly exploitation. The Practice identified learning and areas where we wanted to persist to influence work with a second Programme of children and young people. Despite partnership planning to the contrary, SHiFT was abruptly informed that Tameside Council would no longer be continuing with SHiFT. This was not a financially led decision but appears to have been taken by senior leaders who, in the wake of a further inadequate Ofsted Inspection of Tameside's Children's Services, redirected their focus and resources towards getting the basics of Children's Social Care right. Most of these leaders have subsequently left or were asked to leave Tameside Council.

## **1. Consistency and persistence make the difference to children and families**

Feedback from children and families who have worked with SHiFT Tameside has been that the consistency and persistence of Guides made them feel valued and made the difference. For children like Chris, relationships were not able to strengthen until after six months of 'showing up'. Current timescales and bureaucratic pressures within statutory systems rarely give practitioners the option of persisting until the child or young person's 'hook' can be found. However, in order to support consistency and persistence, environments need to be created that nurture staff, safeguard against burn-out and allow staff to stick it out in their role. We had some turnover of staff in the Tameside Practice. Feedback from Guides was that when Child and Family Practice Discussions were held weekly as intended, with clinical input from a Systemic Practitioner, this made them feel more supported and connected as a team which, in turn, enabled and challenged them to do their best work.

## **2. A shift in approaches to school exclusion is needed**

Experiences of school exclusion predominated among the children we worked with in Tameside, as did experiences of schools not always taking into account contexts of harm that might explain children's and young people's behaviours. Schools are either not given the information from agencies to make fully informed decisions or their processes are not sufficiently flexible to consider context around a child's presentation when assessing their behaviour. A theme that also emerged was a slowing down in advocacy when a child has been excluded or is in a Pupil Referral Unit and conversely a steep uphill battle to support children to return to mainstream education. Feedback from children and families shows there appears to remain a somewhat punitive culture throughout the education settings despite the ongoing and important efforts of local leaders, including Anthony Benedict, leading the way in seeking to make practice in schools more trauma informed.



### **3. Trust takes time**

It takes time to build trust, both with the organisations that host SHiFT Practices and with children and families so that real change can happen. For SHiFT, we have learnt that we need to commit to longer periods of time in Practices to get ‘under the skin’ of the Local Authority and truly understand how we can create sustainable change. If we returned to Tameside we would require greater upfront commitment to shared investment of at least three years (two cycles of 18 months) to ensure we had the foundations required to make a difference in the organisation in addition to the work with children and families.

### **4. Embracing uncertainty**

There were significant contextual challenges in Tameside during SHiFT’s first Programme. Changing senior leadership meant changing priorities and a sense that SHiFT had to keep going back to the drawing board in building relationships and ensuring understanding of the practice model. It highlighted the vulnerability of an innovation project being championed by one particular person or leader, as opposed to across services. When systems are under duress, and receiving criticism from Ofsted, it can often lead to a sense of low morale, and sometimes defensiveness which can create a resistance to change and does not allow for flexibility or aspiration. SHiFT was not able to get alongside senior leaders to position itself as helpful within this distressed system, and opportunities for collaborative work to improve outcomes together were not taken up, perhaps because the focus of Children’s Social Care was on core statutory processes and also because SHiFT may have been perceived as an outsider in the system and therefore treated with suspicion.

### **5. Working beyond borders**

During SHiFT Tameside a second SHiFT Practice in Greater Manchester was launched in the neighbouring borough: SHiFT Manchester. Some collaborative activities, such as joint Child and Family Practice Discussions and joint training days, were already underway. On the closure of SHiFT Tameside, one child was able to transfer across to a SHiFT Manchester Guide so that he could continue to receive the support he needed. This highlighted an emergent opportunity for building SHiFT’s community of practice regionally, across Local Authority boundaries. Children and young people cross Local Authority boundaries all the time, in their commutes to the schools they attend, to see friends and family members, and in the harm that they may experience outside of the home. Building on learning from Tameside, this is being taken forward across other SHiFT Practices, for example in South Tees. If SHiFT Tameside were to have continued we would have wanted more creative exploration of how Practices within Greater Manchester work together to generate regional impact.

**SHIFT**

DOING  
WHATEVER IT  
TAKES