

Summer 2023

Spurgeons 

# Together



Thank you for helping  
children and families to thrive!

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# Welcome!



**Over 400,000 children in England are in need, yet local authorities spending on early intervention children's services has halved since 2011, with their priority being children requiring urgent care.**

But this means that children with less critical needs are not getting adequate support, and the availability of that support is patchy across the country. At best, those children will be held back in life; at worst, they may go on to need urgent care themselves.

We believe that children and young people deserve a better start in life.

Our vision is to partner with both councils and churches and launch Family Hubs as a 'one-stop shop' where families can readily access the support they need. Spurgeons will deliver counselling, early years and family support directly; for families needing other kinds of support (such as housing and debt), we will connect them to other experts.

In addition to the 21 Children Centres and Family Hubs we are delivering in partnership with Local Authorities, we have also already established three church-based Family Hubs (see page 3), and one in a prison (read more on page 6).

The need is desperate, and we'll set up more Family Hubs as rapidly as our resources allow.

Will you help us? We know it will be a mountain to climb, but we have faith that together we can transform this nation, one child at a time, by ensuring every family has the support they need to flourish.

**Ian Soars** – Chief Executive, Spurgeons Children's Charity

**"We believe that children and young people deserve a better start in life."**



**Your gift will help more children and families!**

Donate using the form at the back of this magazine, online at [spurgeons.org](https://spurgeons.org) or by phone on **01933 417059** (Monday-Friday 9am-4pm).

**Thank you for your kindness!**

# Family Hubs help churches love their neighbours

**Craig Prentice is Team Leader at Thanet Community Churches, which operates Ramsgate Family Hub in partnership with Spurgeons. He explains how Family Hubs can help churches to shine the ethos of Gospel into their neighbourhoods.**

'Ramsgate, where our mission centre 'The Corner' is based, is a wonderful place to live and work, but like many other seaside towns, its reliance on tourism meant the town has struggled since people started holidaying abroad. But despite unemployment and deprivation, Ramsgate's sense of community and hope is strong.

'As Christians, Jesus calls us to love our neighbours. That means being meaningfully connected with them, valuing them and building true relationships with them. Breaking down the church walls, so to speak.

'So, while The Corner is where the church congregation gathers to worship, it's also the Family Hub for the wider community.

'It's the place where local people can all come to make friends and socialise. We've got a coffee shop and play area, Buttons preschool, a youth club, line dancing, parent and toddler groups, singing groups, football and so on.

'So do many churches.

'But the key difference, the essence of a Family Hub, is that alongside all these 'universal services' we offer specialist, targeted accessible help for when life gets tough, as it does for us all. There's 1-1 parenting support and counselling, support for survivors of domestic abuse, help with debt, securing benefits, and conquering addictions. These services are accessible, and they're delivered by the staff

and volunteers that families already know and trust from using the Hub for their more general needs. That relationship is the gold that's so often missing in usual statutory support.

'We want all who come to Ramsgate Family Hub to be able to experience God's love and taste how good his Kingdom is. And surely that taste is sweetest when we're at our weakest and lifted up in grace and mercy by those who truly care for us?'



**Are you interested in hosting a Family Hub?**

**Then please do contact Don Esson, our Director of Partnerships and Development**  
[desson@spurgeons.org](mailto:desson@spurgeons.org)



# A day (or two!) in the life of: Counsellor Maggie Phillips

**Maggie, one of our team of professional counsellors who help troubled children and young people, gives us an insight into her work.**

'I spend Mondays at a primary school, counselling children age seven to eleven. I arrive early, grab a drink and get any updates on children from my school contact. Today the school has made a new referral, so I read the notes on what they think is troubling the child. But sometimes, as I work with the child, the issue turns out to be something quite different!

**"We are just beginning to see the tip of the iceberg related to lockdown and the social isolation."**

'During the fifty-minute session, the child and I use some creative play to help them relax and open up about what's bothering them. They know they can tell me things in confidence but that I have to tell the school if I'm concerned they might be harmed. Thankfully, that's rare.

'Each child has their individual issues, but there are also some common concerns, such as moving to secondary school; are they going to get lost, will they like it, will they miss

their primary school friends who end up going somewhere else?

'I see six children a day between 8.45am–3pm so it's intense! I head for home and write up my case notes while they're fresh in my mind.

'I spend Tuesdays at a Spurgeons church hub in Eastbourne. The pace is more relaxed, the children older (eleven to seventeen) and referred by their parents. I see both parent and child at the first session to get some background and observe the dynamics between them. Thereafter, parents go for a coffee at the church café while I talk with the child. I might use a game to break the ice and help them relax.

'We are just beginning to see the tip of the iceberg related to lockdown and the social isolation. Children really missed human contact, hugs from grandparents and so on. It changed their relationships and it's taken them this long to process that. It's a privilege to give them the support they need to be able to find some positive ways forward.'



## **Make a monthly gift of love!**

**You can help even more families get the support that they so desperately need in these challenging times by making a monthly gift to Spurgeons! You can make your gift:**

- Online at [spurgeons.org/donate](https://spurgeons.org/donate)
- By post using the form at the back of this magazine
- By phone on **01933 417059** (Monday–Friday 9am–4pm)

**Thank you for your kindness!**



**“They have all this emotion inside, and using creative work really helps them to express it.”**

## Using creative work in therapy

by Maggie Phillips



**Sometimes children cannot verbalise what is troubling them, or find it hard to share their concerns with an adult that they don't know, or they might feel that talking directly about their situation is a betrayal of a parent. They have all this emotion inside, and using creative work really helps them to express it. Here are some examples:**

### **Drawing characters from a fairy story**

By asking them about the character, soon we are talking about the child's own life. They will often draw what's going on at home, and you can get a lot just out of one drawing.

### **Sand tray**

The child might set up several little family units, but place one figure on their own, and that's them and they don't feel they belong to any of the groups.

### **Games**

“I can, I am, I have” is good for older children; we write down what they can do, their skills; who they are, how they feel; and who is in their lives. We come back to it and add to it. We might also play a card game; it helps them to relax and open up about their problems.

### **Modelling clay**

One teenager I counsel loves to use it as a distraction – almost like a fidget spinner – and while she does that, she talks quite freely.

### **Mood cards**

Children pick five cards that reflect their mood, and we chat about what they are feeling and why that might be.



# Anatomy of a Family Hub



**Family Hubs are a Government-led initiative to create 'one-stop shops' for families needing help. Through your support, Spurgeons is already pioneering three Family Hubs including one at HMP Winchester. Vicky Baird, Prison Family Service Manager, tells us more.**

'Family Hubs aim to make it much easier and less stressful for families to access help. They only have to explain their situation once, and the Family Hub will look to meet their various needs, working collaboratively with other agencies to provide holistic support.

'Spurgeons operates the Family Hub here at HMP Winchester. Families of prisoners first encounter us at prison Visitor Centre. It's a bright, welcoming place where our staff and volunteers offer them information and guidance about their visit and outline the help available to them and their families.

'There's still huge stigma around having a family member in prison – families of prisoners, for fear of judgement or abandonment, tend to keep it very much to themselves. But this also means they don't always get the help that they need, which in turn impacts their children and family life. So it can be a great relief for them, being

in the safe and supportive environment of our Visitor Centre, and to have a listening ear and practical support with their issues.

'We might provide direct help – such as advising a parent how to get financial support with the cost of visiting the prison – or we may liaise with external professionals. For example, if a parent reports their child is struggling emotionally with having a parent inside, we can enable the school to support the child through resources, training and advice on best practice.

'Meantime, inside the prison walls, we're supporting the dads through parenting courses and workshops. Where appropriate, we also ensure dads are part of discussions with external agencies about their family's support needs (for example, with Children's Services), enabling them to attend external meetings virtually. Sometimes it's the dad who tells us about the family's struggles and involvement of multiple agencies, and we then link with the family to support them where needed.

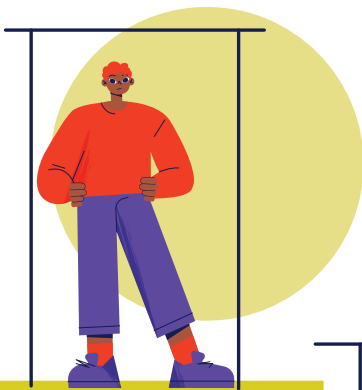
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# 65%

**of boys with a father in prison are likely to become offenders themselves.**

'However, once a loved one has been released from custody, their families have told us how challenging it can be to maintain all that positive progress. Our new pilot project, "Behind the Walls, Beyond the Gates", aims to make that transition much smoother. It starts before release; we bring together the family and professionals in Family Resettlement meetings, so they can openly share their concerns about what family issues might lie ahead. After release, we will continue to support the family through home visits, meeting for a cuppa or at the local Children's Centre. The aim is to help families build a network of supportive relationships within their community. Once that's in place, we'll pull back and let them get on with their lives.

'All of this helps keep the family together and, as research suggests, motivates the dad to make positive choices and avoid further criminal involvement. And that's so, so important for the welfare of the children and success as a family unit.'



**BEHIND THE WALLS**  
for the men



**BEHIND THE WALLS**  
for the families

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## Prisoners

**who receive visits from a family member are 39% less likely to reoffend.**



**BEYOND THE GATES**  
resettlement and family support



# On cloud nine!

**We are so thankful for the many wonderful people who volunteer for us! Alicia is one of them – she shares what led her to support the families of prisoners at HMP Winchester.**

Alicia's partner Jamie used to be a prisoner at Winchester. She would bring Ralph, his little boy, to visit him and got to know Spurgeons staff and volunteers at the Visitor Centre and on Family Days. Alicia says, 'The routine and structure that Spurgeons brought to Jamie while he was inside helped him be the best version of himself. It was safe for him, he was in a community, and it took away some of the things he had struggled with on the outside. Spurgeons were an absolute godsend – when Jamie was released, I wrote them a letter to thank them.'

'Working with Spurgeons really made Jamie think about the impact his situation was having on Ralph. He would send us cards, poems, pictures. Spurgeons recorded him reading a story, and I would play it to Ralph before bedtime so he could hear Jamie's voice.'

Tragically, Jamie later passed away but as Alicia says, 'Ralph can still hear his voice on that recording. If it wasn't for Spurgeons, he wouldn't have that to remember his dad by.'

Alicia loves volunteering. 'I always wanted to do something to give back to Spurgeons because they helped us so much as a family. The families of prisoners serve a silent sentence on the outside. I've been in their shoes and I understand. I remember on my first prison visit I was really anxious and didn't know what to expect, so I really go into the detail with new families arriving at the Visitor Centre. I try to make things as normal as possible.'

'When I leave here, I am on cloud nine! Vicky and the Spurgeons team are making a difference to people's lives on a daily basis – they're all so passionate about what they're doing. I love being a part of the team, and I'll do it for as long as I can.'



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## Could you volunteer like Alicia?

**Our volunteers truly are special people – and we're looking for more special people! If you could give a little of your precious time in support of families, please contact the relevant member of staff:**

**Winchester Prison Family Hub**  
Deb Wood  
01962 723260  
iwvolunteers@spurgeons.org

**Elmbridge Family Centres, Surrey**  
Katie Vinnicombe  
01932 229103  
kvinnicombe@spurgeons.org

**Wolverhampton Young Carers**  
Angie Jones  
07814 143804  
ajones@spurgeons.org

**Birmingham Young Carers**  
Jo Martin  
07970 677827  
jmartin@spurgeons.org

**Parent Support team, Kent and Sussex**  
Sarah Wallis  
01892 538288  
swallis@spurgeons.org

# Navigating fatherhood

**Being a dad isn't always plain sailing. Rob's daughter is awaiting an autism diagnosis. He tells us about the challenges and how, through your support, Spurgeons' services has helped him and his family to chart a way through to calmer waters.**

'My daughter Tabitha would sometimes leave friends and play with strangers. Later she had sensory issues and would get upset with things quite quickly.' When Rob and his partner Karen took Tabitha for extra lessons, the teacher thought it likely that she had autism.

Rob says, 'Karen came to terms with it quite quickly. It took me longer to get my head around it.'

'Getting an autism diagnosis is a long, hard process – we've got a wait of over two years which coincides with Tabs going to senior school.' Meantime, the family went for one-to-one parenting support with Jane Cekic from Spurgeons. Jane says, 'Rob and Karen were a joy to work with – they grasped hold of everything we said and were ready to try new things.'

Rob says, 'It really helped me and Karen to get our heads around how to interact with Tabs and not escalate situations – if she had a flare up, we learned how to use distraction techniques or to step away to let her calm down before helping her deal with things in a different way.'

'It was also a massive boost when Jane told us we're doing a good job and not doing anything wrong. Now I'm much more confident in dealing with the challenges of parenting.'

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**Parenting Support  
now available online!**

**We can offer one-to-one support to parents online. To find out more go to [spurgeons.org/parentsupport](https://spurgeons.org/parentsupport) or to self refer for sessions visit [spurgeons.org/fegans-referral](https://spurgeons.org/fegans-referral)**



# Thank you

for all you do to help families!



**We're so grateful to you for your support – the donations and gifts you make, the funds you raise, the time you give, all to help children and families who need a helping hand.**

## The Entertainer

A huge thank you to toy store chain The Entertainer who once again donated gift cards of £1000 to Spurgeons! £250 went to Wolverhampton Young Carers to buy these amazing gifts for young carers, and the rest helped to buy toys and games to go in our Children's Centres in Birmingham.



### Could you fundraise for Spurgeons?

If you, your church, company, or social group would like to fundraise and help families and children to thrive, please contact our Fundraising team at [supportercare@spurgeons.org](mailto:supportercare@spurgeons.org)



## Kier Group

Kier Group staff from across the UK kindly donated funds to help Spurgeons and local staff bought 158 chocolate Easter eggs. These went into Easter baskets being organised by Suzanne Robinson, Pastoral Lead at Newton Road Primary School in Rushden, to be distributed to the children. Thanks too to Spurgeons chaplain Peter Eyre for putting us in touch with Suzanne!



**Above:** Cloedagh Blake, Contract Administrator from Kier (centre) and Suzanne Robinson, Pastoral Lead at Newton Road Primary School (right) with Karen Logan from Spurgeons in front of the mountain of Easter Eggs



**Above:** Karen Logan from Spurgeons (left) with Mark Weekley, co-founder and Managing Director of Simpson & Weekley (right).

## Simpson & Weekley

Thank you, Simpson & Weekley, for raising £260 for Spurgeons! Every year the Rushden and Wellingborough estate agency select 5 local charities to support (which in 2022 included Spurgeons) by donating a percentage of their sales fees. Customers can select one of the charities and it is then featured on their sale board.

## Johan and Joke Kieviet

Johan and Joke Kieviet from Sommelsdijk in the Netherlands are long standing fans of Charles Spurgeon and Spurgeons Children's Charity, having visited us in 2003. In April, they presented the life and work of Charles Spurgeon at the Hersteld Hervormde Kerk in Boven-Hardinxveld near Rotterdam and their audience kindly donated 160 Euros to our work.



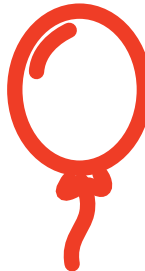
# Coronation Celebrations Old and New

The crowning of a new monarch brings communities together to celebrate! We look back at how children connected to Spurgeons commemorated the coronation of King Charles III in May, and how children at Spurgeons and Fegans homes of yesteryear celebrated previous enthronements.

## Queen Elizabeth I, 1953: Memories from a Spurgeon's Old Scholar and Fegans Old Boy

Martin Farley (formerly Harris) arrived at the Spurgeon's Children's Home in Reigate in 1946 and later transferred to Birchington. He recalls, 'At Birchington Primary school, our teacher Mr Ray helped us to make trumpets, flags and paper crowns which were then displayed all around the classroom. The school laid on a coronation party where we wore our crowns and had a celebration tea. I remember representatives from the American Air force stationed at Manston Airport coming to Spurgeons and giving each child a coronation shilling. I think mine was probably spent on sweets!'

Dr David Ward was sent to Fegan's Children's Home at Yardley Gobion in 1951. He recalls, 'I was there for about one year. I couldn't understand why I had been sent there (how could I at age 4?) and even now I still don't. I returned "home" which was by then in Yeovil (near to Houndstone Army Camp) and moved to Germany in 1954 after my father, Corporal E Ward, Army number 3651632, had been posted to BAOR, Münster, Westphalia. I was certainly in Yeovil at the time of the Coronation in 1953. I do remember listening to it on the radio (and also the conquest of Everest by Hillary and Tenzing a few days earlier).'



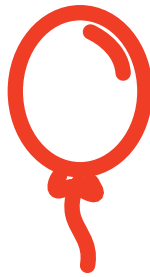
Above: Martin Farley then and now.



## George VI, 1937: Celebrations at Fegans Homes

King Charles III was not alone in having rain on his special day. Fegans 'Quarterly Report', sent to supporters of the Homes, reported, 'Short public services were held in the Orphanage and Training Farm Chapels on Coronation Day, after which the boys listened to the broadcast from Westminster Abbey. Sports and evening celebrations helped to mark the day in spite of rather inclement weather.'

At Fegan's Boys home, Stony Stratford, the boys decorated the main gates with flags and the letters G. R. to commemorate the Coronation of King George VI in 1937.



## Our Heritage: Spurgeons and Fegans Homes

In earlier generations, there was scant protection from or support available for families living in poverty or for those who were vulnerable.

Preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon and teacher James Fegan were both motivated by their Christian faith to provide shelter, education and hope for children of such families. Spurgeon founded his first orphanage in Stockwell in 1867 and the first Fegan's Home opened six miles away in Deptford in 1870. Initially both took only boys, but later some girls were accepted too.

Today, care for children is mainly community based, but we value our heritage – Spurgeons alumni (Old Scholars) and Fegans archivist David Waller have carefully preserved some of the history of those years – including some memories of previous coronations!





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## King Charles III, 2023: Fun and games at Buttons Preschool

Jane Williams, manager at Buttons, says, 'We had a lovely day of celebrations, first with the parent and toddler group and then the pre-school. Parents generously donated sandwiches, cakes, crisps and fruit for the children to enjoy. Both staff and children wore red, white and blue. The children made flags and crowns and played party games such as "pin the crown on the King", "pass the parcel" and "musical thrones"!'



# Top tips:

## Helping your child get through a panic attack

**Panic attacks are a sudden and intense feeling of fear and anxiety. Teens are more prone to them than young children.**

Symptoms include feeling faint, shaky and tearful; experiencing nausea, stomach pain, breathlessness, a racing heart; feeling hot or cold, having numbness or tingling.

Although scary, panic attacks are not usually dangerous. They can be brought on by a range of triggers – a difficult situation at home, a frightening experience like abuse or neglect, feeling worried about exams or relationships. The trigger might not be immediately obvious.

### How to support a young person having a panic attack:

- Stay with them, talk to them and reassure them.
- Get them to breathe in and out slowly – perhaps for a count of three to start with, then as they become calmer, get them to increase the duration of each breath up to 5–7 seconds.
- Find a calm, safe space for them to be. If that's not possible, get them to visualise somewhere calm and safe, like a forest or beach.
- To help ground them, get them to focus on up to five things they can see, hear, touch, smell or taste. If they are happy for you to do so, you could hold their hand to help them feel connected – but respect their boundaries.
- Once they are feeling less breathless, you could talk to them about how they are feeling – or something they enjoy such as a hobby or favourite TV programme.
- Get them a drink of water.
- Ask them how they are feeling. If a young person you know is suffering from panic attacks, it's important that they are seen by their GP to rule out any physical causes and to get extra support if necessary.

### Further help...

Download our free booklet, *Panic Attacks; a handbook for Parents and Adolescents* on our website at <https://familytoolkit.spurgeons.org/anxiety>



# Prayer changes lives!

**Don Esson, Spurgeons Director of Partnerships and Development, highlights the importance of prayer in supporting children and families to have life in all its fulness as God intended.**

'Many years ago I was asked "If all your prayers were answered would it change THE world, or just change YOUR world?"



'Those words had such a profound impact on me. We know that poverty and suffering exist, beyond our church walls and community. But knowing about them and taking action are two very different things.

'We may have the best of intentions, but perhaps we simply don't know what the right thing to do or say is – or indeed what difference we can practically make.

'One thing we can always do though is to pray for those who are struggling – those who like us are "fearfully and wonderfully made" but are currently in circumstances that are not allowing them to achieve their God-given potential.

'And our prayers work!  
"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and

effective" (James 5:16) – we have the ability to change circumstances in partnership with our Lord, Saviour and friend.

'So I would love for you to join with us to pray regularly for the families and children we work with! More on that below.

'Meanwhile, here's a short prayer for us to pray together:

*'Lord, help me to see others as you do. Lift my heart to newfound levels of compassion for those around me. Give me practical ways in which I can love my neighbour whilst seeing the value I have as a child of Christ.*

*'Thank you, Lord for the work of Spurgeons and their ongoing mission to be together with families though all circumstances.*

*'Thank you, Lord. Amen'*

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**Join with us in regular prayer  
for children and families in  
need!**

**To sign up for our prayer news and  
other relevant information, please  
email [prayernews@spurgeons.org](mailto:prayernews@spurgeons.org).**

