



My Respond Journey:

Jenieve

"I joined the Respond parents' support group back in 2013, in Southwark.

London Borough of Southwark commissioned Respond to work with families that had loved ones placed out of borough. This was post Winterbourne View. The idea was for us to work alongside Respond to look at options for bringing our loved ones back into borough.

My son, at the time, was living in Earlswood, just outside Redhill, Surrey. Life as a carer has been a tough, lonely journey but meeting other people that could truly relate to my trauma was refreshing.

The early meetings were difficult. We didn't know each other. I felt vulnerable, exposed... and sharing my story was difficult. I was full of emotion, guilt and frustration at having to constantly muster up the courage and energy to fight the system. A system that was not designed to work for us. Knowing that I was not alone in my struggle was what I needed. I was not the only one full of emotion and at breaking point. In the early days there were lots of tears!

We talked for the first few sessions about our personal journey and gave a narrative introduction of our loved one, their diagnosis and how they came to be out of borough. There were so many similarities in our stories but what I felt most was the pain, from each person and the common thread of feeling let down by the authorities. We became a tight knit group and Respond facilitated our need for guest speakers:

Social Care Experts... Housing Law... Legal Experts... Care Providers... Mental Capacity... Care Act... Self Care... Introduction to Counselling...

You name it, Respond provided someone with relevant expertise to talk to us.

As time passed, we found our voice. Our knowledge capital increased, and we began to ask questions and challenge the authorities. Respond would attend Social Services meetings with me or review meetings at my son's home. It seemed the people in power were not used to being challenged and didn't take too kindly to our new-found strength. However, this did not deter me, in fact it fuelled me, as I was determined to get the result I wanted for my son.

It took around 5 years of hard work and numerous meetings before I finally managed to move my son back to Southwark. Hand on heart, I could not have done this without the specialist support from Respond but also the emotional support from the other group members. I have since attended various events and meetings, one at the House of Lords, to talk about my journey and hope that my story will give hope to others. It's not been all doom and gloom!

The group always have a lovely end of year gathering. Usually a meal and a few drinks. Whatever we do we always have fun and I've made some good friends over the years.

Thanks to Respond I have grown in confidence and knowledge but, ultimately, they have enabled me to find my voice. I look back and see how far I have come and am proud of myself."