

STEP OUT

MENTORING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SOUTH LONDON

Impact Report 2024



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Welcome to our 2023/24 impact report

Welcome to our 2024 impact report. We are excited to share with you what Step Out Mentoring has been up to and the journeys we have been on. This report offers a clear snapshot of what we do and the impact we've had. As always our work would not have been possible without the huge number of volunteers, supporters and of course the young people who have journeyed with us.

We believe that young people in our community need the support and encouragement to thrive and feel reconnected with their communities. Our role at Step Out Mentoring is to help make this happen so that young people can thrive.

Phil White- Founder and Director of Step Out Mentoring



I wanted to say thank you so much for the mentoring programme and trips I've been on, its made me the happiest I've been in a while.

14 year old mentee



Foreword

It's my privilege to introduce this impact report to you, and to share the significant impact which Step Out Mentoring has made this year.

Our work, from mentoring to residentials to workshops, is all designed to support young people to navigate their challenges, build confidence and connect meaningfully with their communities. We believe in empowering every young person to thrive, and it's inspiring to see the positive outcomes that our dedicated mentors, staff, volunteers, supporters, families and the young people themselves achieve.

Our Trustee Board provides strategic oversight, ensuring that Step Out's work aligns with its mission and that we remain a responsible, transparent and impactful charity. We are here to support and govern the incredible work of our team and to safeguard the values that guide Step Out's programmes. This year, Step Out has focused on strengthening the opportunities for the young people we serve, growing our partnerships and securing further resources needed to continue this important work.

This report highlights the dedication of all those involved and underscores our commitment to expanding our reach and deepening our impact in the years to come. Thank you for supporting Step Out Mentoring and for believing in the power of community to change lives.

With gratitude,

Lydia Paris, Chair of Trustees



Our Model

Our mentoring programme structure is carefully designed to support young people who find it difficult to engage with larger social settings. Providing smaller family style sessions to support young people to feel safe and heard, and to allow them space to trust each other and their mentors. There are 4 key elements to our programme.



1:1 mentoring

Our mentors are volunteers from the local community, who we train to become youth mentors, and then who spend 2 hours a week with a young person for 12 months. They can meet up to play football, cycle, go for a walk, learn a new skill together or just chat. The sessions are led by the young person and facilitated by the mentor. It is through this relationship that confidence is built to talk about challenging issues that the young person may be facing such as self-esteem, behaviour issues, disengagement with education, and loneliness, to name a few. Continuity of contact is key for our mentors and mentees and is why we work to form positive long-term relationships

Family Celebrations

These are events that are open to the young person's wider family to be part of. A chance to celebrate achievements and for mentors to get to know their families, and families to get to know other families. We love to encourage families to play together and enjoy time together. These take the form of fun gatherings such as meals, sports activities, or trips out. The important thing with these events is to extend the invite to the young people's wider family and support networks. Sometimes even an invite is a small step forward. These have become spaces where the young people can be celebrated.

Group Workshops

Spaces where new skills can be learned, friendships can be made, and a space mentors and mentees can interact together. These range from dance sessions, bike mechanics, cooking, art, and sport. There will be sessions for all who are interested. These are free to access and a real chance for the young people to learn new skills in a fun and friendly environment. Many young people will struggle to apply skills learned in their 1:1 mentoring sessions to real life situations and so will need a supportive group to boost their emotional resilience. This is where these workshops play an important role.

Residential and Trips

A chance for young people and their mentors to go away as a group and enjoy being in a different environment. These are fantastic opportunities to build on relationships formed and a chance to have those conversations around a campfire. Those magic moments where young people 'get something'. Travelling out of your normal environment helps give space to think more reflectively, whilst also being great fun! As well as providing respite and confidence building support, these trips offer a valuable opportunity to assess young people's needs and gain a better understanding of who they are and how they navigate social situations. Enabling the team to follow up with longer term support.



Why we do our work

Step Out Mentoring launched in 2020 to address the epidemic of isolation and loneliness experienced by young people and help the gap in early intervention mental health support for young people in South London

1 in 5 young people aged 8-16 had a probable mental disorder in 2023. Which is an increase from 1 in 7 in 2017 and 1 in 10 in 2004.

Around 50% of mental health problems emerge by the age of 14. Interventions during childhood years are critical in preventing lifelong difficulties.

Schools and mental health services are feeling the pressure of gaps in resources and the increase in mental health issues in young people. This is resulting in some young people having to wait over 2 years for any support, which has a huge impact on their well being.

Whether you are an adult or a child, we believe that everyone has the same innate set of emotional needs. When these needs are met, we are more able to flourish and be emotionally and mentally healthy. By addressing some of these key needs for the young people, through mentoring, we aspire to achieve these outcomes.

improved mental health

more active young people

re connected with their communities

learning new skills



2023/24 in numbers

2400

1:1
mentoring
sessions
delivered

4800

hours of 1:1
mentoring
sessions
delivered

493

kilometres run
and walked to
raise funds in
2024

52

young people
received 1:1
mentoring for
12 months

55

local
volunteers
trained to be
youth
mentors

83

young people
engaged with
in the
community

39

group drop in
sessions for
young people
in 2024

21

bikes given
away to
young people

7

Outdoor
residential trips
attended.



The young people we support

Over the last 3 years we have been extremely concerned by the number of young people that have been referred to our programme with complex mental health challenges. Research from Mind (2024) attributes the increase largely to the cost-of-living crisis and the pandemic, with the number of referrals to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) reaching an all time high, with over half a million children referred in 2023. From our observations and work we have seen:



Young people who have struggled to engage back into schools after the pandemic due to feeling less confident and presenting with social anxiety.

Young people who are so isolated that they no longer go outside to enjoy exercise and fresh air but spend days on end in their houses, often in overcrowded settings.

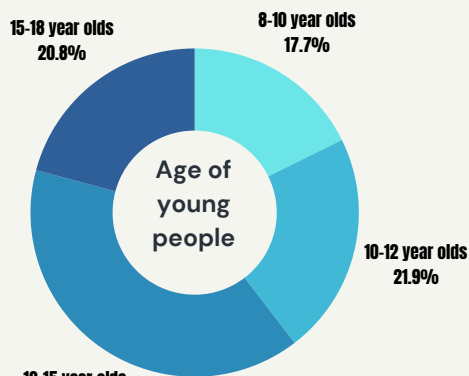
Young people with high levels of anxiety due to worries about how their families will manage to afford basic living costs such as food, rent and heating.

Families not being able to afford extra-curricular activities or going out, resulting in isolation and loneliness.

Education systems failing to have capacity to support these vulnerable young people in their settings, leaving young people feeling like they don't belong or can't cope with school.

Young people with parents/carers who are also struggling with their mental health so cannot be the support that the young person needs at this time.

The Young people we support



67%

are eligible for free school meals.

87%

have faced more than one adverse childhood experience

69%

have been on a CAMHS waiting list for over 1 year to receive support.

71%

do not attend any other form of youth service or extra curriculum activity

63%

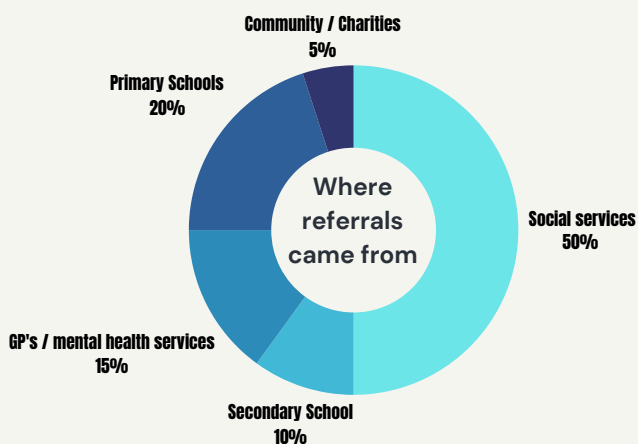
have a Special Educational Need/ Disability

41%
boys

59%
girls

76%

are from a global majority ethnic background



How do the young people we support compare to the national average?

- 23.8% of children are eligible for Free school meals nationally and in London it is 25.8%
- 16% of all pupils are classified as having a special educational need/ disability. In London it is 15.9%
- In London 62% of pupils are from a global majority ethnic background



Through providing 1:1 support to these young people over a longer term period it is our hope that we can encourage these young people to thrive in their communities. By standing with them, for them and being their biggest advocates we can play our part in supporting more connected communities where young people are seen and heard.

Our Impact

Over the last 4 years we have been monitoring the impact of our mentoring programme on young people across the London Borough of Southwark. We have been collecting data from young people, parents/carers and referrers using the Kidscreen Questionnaires which is used to assess the subjective health and psychological, mental and social well-being of children and adolescents between the ages of 8 and 18. The KIDSCREEN Questionnaire measures the following five dimensions: Physical Well-Being, Psychological Well-Being, Autonomy and Parent Relations, Peers and Social Support and School Environment. Our evaluation showed:

95%

showed a positive increase in their general psychological well being after completing their mentoring programme.

87%

became more physically active then when they first started the mentoring programme

82%

say they have a more positive relationship with their school environments.

87%

say that their relationships with their friends and social interactions have been more positive since taking part.

74%

reported that their relationship with their families had been more positive whilst on our programme.

86%

demonstrated an improvement in their emotional health by the end of the programme.

We asked all the young people on our programme how they would rate their experience and **100%** rated it **9/10** or higher, with the main reason for not giving 10/10 was that they would like their mentoring to go on for more than 12 months.



Our achievements and opportunities

Charity of the year 2023

On the 26th of May, Community Southwark welcomed 150 guests to Tate Modern for the annual Southwark Stars Awards, an extraordinary celebration of the community spirit which makes Southwark such a special place to live and work. We were honoured to be awarded Charity of the Year.

Opportunities for mentees

Connecting young people to opportunities and new skills is key to providing a sustainable support package for each young person. Throughout their year of mentoring each young person is given the chance to try some taster sessions to help them find out what they might be passionate about.

This year we partnered with **SnowCamp** - A snowsports youth charity who provided snowboard taster sessions for the young people of which three young people went on to take part in a snow sports residential in Andora and are now training to become qualified instructors. We teamed up with local bike project **Upcycle** to deliver cycle maintenance workshops and provide free bikes to the young people. **Ebony Horse Club** in Brixton delivered therapeutic horse riding sessions for the young people. Whilst **SkateHaven CIC** provided a 10 week skateboarding course teaching everything to do with skateboarding including design, filmmaking and culture. In 2023 we had over 200 people attend our **Live Music Fundraiser** where we celebrated local young artists and musicians raising over £2000.

Outdoor Festival Invite

We had the privilege of being invited by The Kendal Mountain Festival to present at one of their tour dates and then were invited to the Lake District to enjoy their outdoor festival with 4 young people.

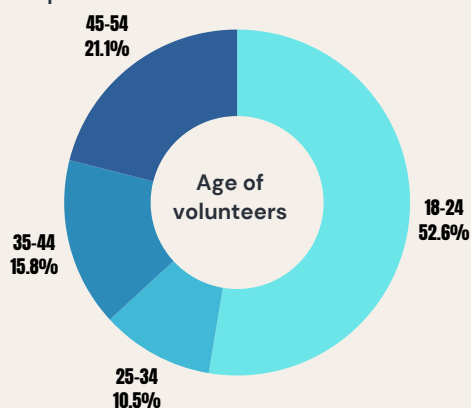
Health Inequalities Project

This year we partnered with the **Association for Young People's Health** and a **multidisciplinary Primary Care Network** in Southwark to highlight the challenges that young people face when accessing health services. This involved training a group of young people to deliver training to over 20 health professionals which we hope to continue into 2025.



Our Volunteer mentors

Step Out Mentoring's volunteers are key to the success of our programme. Local members of the communities we support who are dedicated to supporting young people are key to helping young people thrive.



58%
female

42%
Male

100%

of young people said they felt safe when they were with their mentor.

100%

of pairs who participated in our programme were of the same gender.

27%

of volunteers are from a global majority ethnic background

94%

of volunteers said they would like to mentor again in the future.

96%

of volunteers said they were well matched with their mentee

100%

of young people felt confident to be able to contact their mentor again into the future.

All our volunteers go through our robust training, vetting and induction process to prepare them to become the best youth mentors; In 2024 this included; - **15** evening and weekend training sessions. And **25** mentee matching introduction sessions.



What our Volunteers Say

It is one of the best experiences being a mentor and the mentees are incredible people. If you need help everyone is very helpful if you reach out and the best thing you can do in your sessions is really listen to what your mentee is saying.

Just by being a consistent and a reliable adult in a young person's life can do so much wonders for them. We don't need to know all the answers to their queries but just sitting and listening to them is so important to help build that bond and connection.

I moved to the area during lockdown, and although I knew it a bit and am from nearby, I'd never spent so much time in our wonderful local parks or library. Experiencing our outdoor spaces with a young person is really fun too, going to playgrounds, making dens, feeding squirrels etc!

Residential trips

These are a chance for young people and their mentors to go away as a group and enjoy being in a different environment. As we all know, sometimes being in a different space helps us to have a different perspective on life.

In 2024 we went on 3 trips to the Cotswolds, Kent and camping in Edenbridge. Our residential trips are designed to support particularly vulnerable children, especially those who find it difficult to engage with or manage more traditional interventions, such as talking therapies and group work. The residentials create meaningful opportunities to support young people and create reflective spaces to work on areas of challenge within their thinking about themselves and relationships with others. As well as challenging activities that stretch young people's perceptions of what they can achieve.

Family style group trips



This was my first trip away with Step Out. I was a bit nervous at first but now i am not. I really liked the campfire and the High Ropes course. My legs were shaking at the start but I managed to do it twice!

14 year old mentee

Thank you for being the reason I leave the house

11 year old mentee



A Mentor's Journey

Reflections on my year with mentoring a young person in South London and experience forming outdoor-based relationships.

It was nearing 4pm on a sunny May Thursday when I pulled up to Step Out's youth centre in Camberwell. I was there to meet my prospective mentee, who I'll call Elijah, for the first time. All I knew about him was that he was 12, had challenges that made him become withdrawn, and was over the moon to get a mentor.

Like many kids his age coming out of the pandemic, Elijah was struggling to make friends. Being at an age where isolation can severely stunt a child's development and make them vulnerable in society, a network of carers identified the charity Step Out as an opportunity to spend healthy time with kids his age and receive an extra bit of mentorship to help navigate life.

For my part, I had recently moved to London after spending the past four years in Switzerland and Italy. In that time — throughout COVID and many personal ups and downs — I was bit by the mountain bug, and time in nature became the lens through which I felt most connected to the world. When I got to the Big Smoke, I knew part of what would make life work was to find more relationships rooted in the outdoors, and preferably not the pay-to-play escapist kind pedalled on social media.

So I took it as an obvious sign when attending the Kendal Outdoor Film festival at the Rio Cinema, Step Out's programme director and a soft-spoken programme graduate took the stage. They shared a powerful, personal message about the mental health crisis affecting Britain's youth and their approach of using outdoor-based mentorship to give kids 8–18 the skills and emotional resilience to thrive in life.

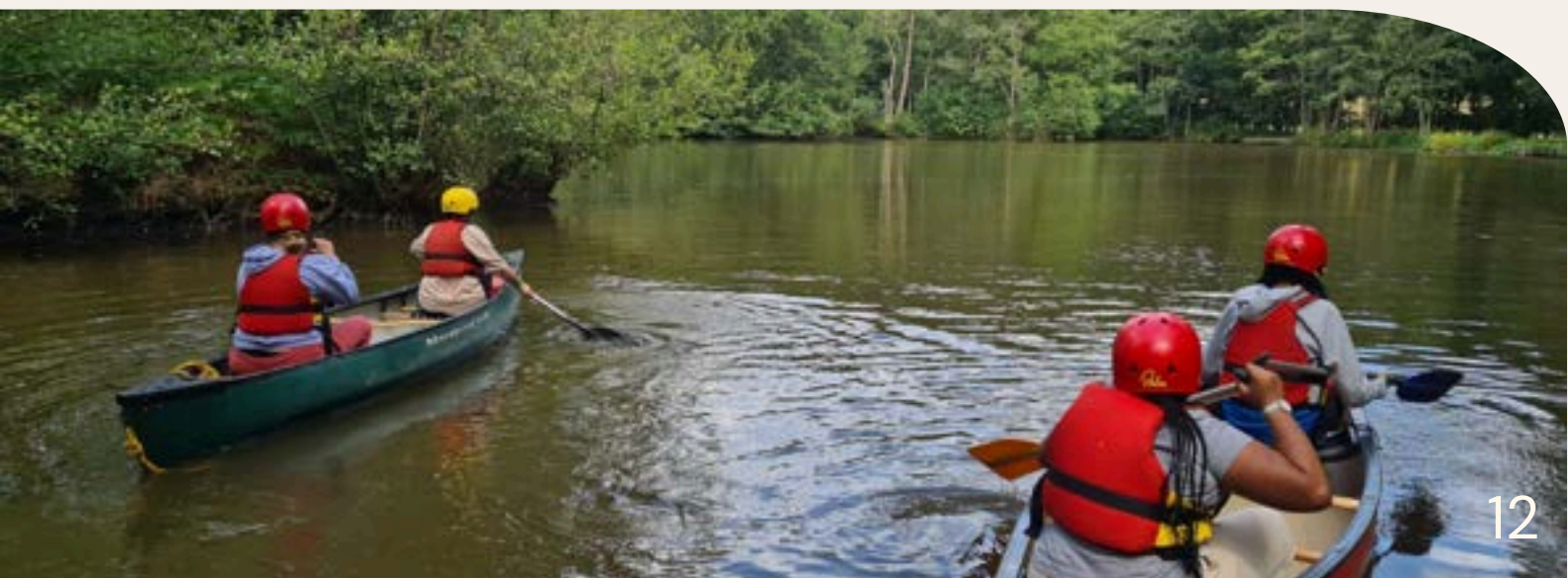
As the mentoring coordinator and I waited for Elijah to arrive, the usual questions flew through my mind. Will he like me? Should I try to be funny? What the hell does a 30-something American recently relocated from Switzerland have anything to offer a soon-to-be teenager from South London? Suddenly my notions of 'giving back to the community' felt embarrassingly selfish.

Elijah was running late and his phone had died, so there was plenty of time to contemplate this self-doubt. But twenty minutes later, an unassuming kid rounded the corner and shuffled in our direction. "Ah, there he is," the programme director affirmed.

We shook our outstretched hands in a moment of awkward formality and flashed each other cautious smiles. "It's so nice to meet you, Elijah." "You too."

Under the mentoring coordinators supervision, we spent the next hour shooting pool and playing a card game that asks about hobbies. I popped the cue ball and asked Elijah, "if you could be reborn as an animal, would it be a dog, whale, or eagle?" "A dog," he decided on before lining up his free shot. "Everyone likes dogs."

Later that week the mentoring coordinator called to say Elijah enjoyed our session and wanted to continue meeting. After a couple of more supervised meetings, we were on our own to organise our weekly two-hour sessions for the next year.



A Mentor's Journey

Mentoring On Two Wheels

Each mentor and mentee develop their own rapport, but for Elijah and me a typical week has looked something like this: I message our WhatsApp group with Elijah, his mom, and Phil to plan the session. On Thursday, I skip work a little early and bike down to pick him up at home before setting out on our activity.

Elijah is ferociously curious, so most weeks involved a completely new activity. Fairly early on however, it became apparent cycling would offer some consistency. Step Out sources bikes for kids in programme, so we based most of our sessions around cycling to different activities in south London.

Elijah's at an age where having the agency to make plans and see them through gives an enormous confidence boost and sense of independence. Whether it's a simple ride to a park in Southwark or a longer trip to try climbing for the first time, giving Elijah the room to decide how we spend our time has directly contributed to him growing some self-confidence.

It has also been this incredible way for him to express his playfulness and curiosity. We've spent sessions deconstructing the bike to spray paint it Man City blue, learning how to repair punctures from local bike shops, and racing down side streets with no hands.

Like any kid his age, Elijah's need for speed became a good excuse to teach some basic road safety. Over time he began asking to lead us home on the bike, signalling me to hold up at intersections and indicate when it was safe to go. I, of course, could not keep my cool about how proud I was.

A year is a long time to spend together, so inevitably there were harder moments to navigate. On days where he didn't seem quite like himself, escaping for a ride offered just that bit of release, sometimes even a bridge to have a conversation about what was going on that revealed some invaluable insight to help support him through a problem.

And when the regrettable day eventually came that his bike was stolen, it became an occasion to instil the value of being honest about what happened and how to articulate what it feels like to have such a prized possession taken away.

A Final Memory

Week after week the bicycle offered a new opportunity to bring us closer and push Elijah out into the world. But perhaps the most gratifying part of getting to spend this time with Elijah was to see how those experiences began to shape his every-day behaviour.

For one of our final sessions, Elijah sent me a TikTok his mom found of paddle boating in Battersea Park and suggested we try it out. We coordinated the time and bus he should take, and met on a sunny afternoon where the 436 stops outside the park. Maybe it was the confidence to take the bus across London, the updates from home about his growing social circle, or just his fresh haircut, but in that moment, I was struck by how much more assured of himself he'd become in just a year's time.

We paddled around dodging tourists and teenage couples on dates during half-term. I knew it for being an atmospheric place for a drink, but there's also a surprising plethora of wildlife. It's still nesting season for several birds, so we saw ducks, Pochards, grebes, and herons with chicks in tow. Elijah spotted some water bottles stuck in branches next to a nest, and asked that I get us close to the shore so he could hop off and collect them. Without realising he was heading into a bed of stinging nettles; he jumped on shore and fished them out. Itchy and sweaty with the sun on our faces, we did a final lap before heading back towards the dock and the ice cream truck just beyond it.

In this moment I felt this wave of gratification for Elijah, his family and Step Out. Spending time with him has made me a more thoughtful, attentive, and caring person. Every Thursday I'd cross London Bridge, shedding off the meetings from the day and think: how am I going to be a positive influence in this kid's life today? That sense of purpose and responsibility has done me a world of good.

It's also opened my eyes to the realities of how hard it is for the thousands of kids like him to navigate life, the beautiful work of people who support them, and the vital importance green spaces play in helping kids to thrive.

Ending our year is bittersweet. We've both fulfilled a big commitment to one another, but it feels like some of the fruit of cultivating such a close relationship has to be left on the tree. Luckily, we still have the option to continue informal mentoring on a more infrequent basis, so there isn't such an abrupt end to our time together. I can't wait to see the person he becomes, with the full support of his family, Step Out, and myself behind him.

A Mentoring Journey Leo+Mark's story

Step Out Mentoring started supporting Leo when he was 16 years old. Leo lived at home with his mother with whom he had a very challenging relationship with. Leo had grown up in a household where he had witnessed domestic violence towards his mother through two generations of male figures in his life. Now it was just him and his mother left at home. Leo tried to always respect his mum but aggression and violence was what he had grown up with so when frustrations boiled over between him and his mum things often escalated. He was stuck in this circular pattern of behaviour that wasn't getting any better.

Leo was referred to the mentoring program through a community youth club he attended. He was matched with a mentor who met him once a week. They loved playing table tennis, trying new foods and exploring parts of London together. The first few months were just about having fun together and building relationship. Once Leo realised his mentor was sticking around, he slowly began to open up about how he finds things at home frustrating. His mentor was able to create a space where Leo could express himself, but also a space where he knew his mentor would ask him those difficult questions such as 'how has it been going with your mum this week?.'

Leo now receives specific counselling through his school which can be quite intense, so meeting up with his mentor each week gives him space to process what he has been through, relax and prepare himself for the week ahead.

Although things are not perfect at home still, Leo is slowly learning the skills to reach out to others for support, he is understanding his emotions more and learning more and more self-control.

After finishing the year of mentoring Leo is still connected to Step Out. He now has a trusted adult in the community he can reach out to if he needs. This was shown when recently a family member visited them and the situation turned aggressive, Leo wasted no time in calling his mentor up to ask if he could meet and talk about things. They met and listened to what was happening, made sure everyone was safe and encouraged Leo to take the best next steps. This is the power of being a more connected community.



Community Feedback



“ I have noticed that my son’s confidence has grown. They provided different outdoor activities for most sessions that provided my son with different experiences. It helped with expanding my son’s knowledge and social interaction.

Parent of mentee

“ Since meeting Step Out in 2020 I have referred a number of students to the mentoring service. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive both from students and from parents about the benefits of mentoring for their children. It has led to increased self-confidence and self-assurance which positively impacts upon children’s academic potential within school.

Assistant Headteacher (St George’s CofE Primary School)

“ Alongside the therapeutic work we can offer at CAMHS, what these young people so often need is an opportunity to build their confidence, feel appreciated for who they are, and to have some fun – and this is exactly what Step-Out offers. What I particularly like about your programme is that the 1:1 mentoring offer is supplemented with the residentials and the group workshops, where the young people can mix with each other and practice their developing social skills and build their confidence in a safe space, as well as of course having some unique and really special experiences, like camping for the first time.

CAMHS Clinical Specialist | Family and Systemic Psychotherapist

“ I have been referring young people I work with to Step Out mentoring since April 2021. I have found Step Out very flexible and approachable to work with and they have been consistently able to accommodate the young people I have referred, including those who can be complicated to work with. I have been very impressed by the service they provide and the positive benefits that mentoring has given the young people.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Practitioner–The Well Centre

We'd like to thank all our donors for their generous support



Our work over the last few years wouldn't have been possible without the kindness and support of this community and the generous support from the large number of trusts and foundations that have helped. There are far too many to list but here are a few that we would like to say a huge thank you too.

Acknowledgements



PREMIUM COCKTAILS, VEGAN FOOD, EXOTIC PLANTS, HI FIDELITY SOUND SYSTEM.



Thank you to all those supporters who ran marathons for us, walked hundreds of kilometres and battled through muddy obstacles. You have all gone the extra mile.



STEP OUT

MENTORING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SOUTH LONDON

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