

Improving Futures Podcast – 26 January 2012

Fleur:

I was basically a victim of domestic violence for a number of years. The problems that started were that I was becoming very withdrawn and my children started to act up. It had been quite an arduous experience with years of therapists and different people, and it made me retreat into a place where I didn't want to expose the issues. I became quite withdrawn and insular.

Then I met Elfrida Rathbone. I was referred from a place called a place called Tavistock. They just empowered me to feel positive again. It has given me self-confidence and has made me feel like we are working together in a way that is not looking down on you, but focusing on the strengths and trying to empower you. The effect it has had on my children has been absolutely overwhelming. My children didn't want to go to school – they were at risk of expulsion because they were acting up because they didn't know what was going on. Now they are in school every day and it is because I have become a firmer and better parent and because I am not feeling so down.

I have also been referred to Citizen's Advice Bureau because I had debts. That was something I had completely ignored, the letters were piling up and piling up and before I had seen Elfrida Rathbone I just didn't want to acknowledge it as I thought I had to focus on my family.

It seems like a fairytale but it really has had an amazing effect on me. It will have major benefits for families that get involved, because some families can fall between the cracks of a lot of organisations where they don't quite fit the remit. But these will take on anyone – they are going to help you and they definitely don't judge you. I have felt supported, it really is the best place. I will be an advocate for it forever, it's amazing.

Alexis Keir:

Elfrida Rathbone has been involved in delivering family support and parenting services for a long time, working with the London Borough of Camden. We have done that through group work, one-to-one work, going out to families and directly engaging both with children and parents about parenting skills and the need for added community resources.

For Improving Futures, we have joined our skills with those of some other organisations within the borough so we have a really strong partnership. We are making it easy for families who will have several very significant problems and who won't have anyone helping them. We are giving them quick and easy access, not just to one service, but once they are in the doors of Camden Futures, whether it be for family support or debt and benefit advice, we can quickly refer them across to other parts of the partnership.