

**JANE WILLIAMS  
THE MAGPIE  
PROJECT**

Prioritising play to protect against the  
harms of homelessness in pre-school  
children

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We believe all children have the right to a secure, safe place to play, healthy food, engaged, informed parents, and access to support, no matter what their family circumstances

# WHAT ARE OUR CHILDREN UP AGAINST UP AGAINST?

2,000 homeless under fives in Newham alone

More than 300 families with children in hotel rooms without food facilities....  
(home office and local authority placements).

1 in 12 children homeless in Newham

Every other child is living in poverty....

We welcomed 495 under fives through our doors last year.

All of our mums are subject to the hostile environment when they come to us...



# What are we seeing in our babies and toddlers.....



# BARRIERS OUR FAMILIES FACE IN FINDING HELP



Graduation pathways out of the project:  
For mums through volunteering, job-training, Shelter Traineeships, etc.  
For minis in to school readiness or SEN pathways. . .

**FULFILMENT**  
Move on to new life

**POLICY:** UCL, Newham Council, APPG, FCA, FEANSTA

Capturing data on need and lived experience through case work to take to those who can make change on a larger scale.

As part of wellbeing approach it is important for mums to speak out. Also, stops the project simply "filling gaps" in statutory provision.

**VOICE:** Film, Fashion Show, Arts exhibition.

**CREATIVITY=** Dance, Visual Art, Music. Beautician, Reiki, Crafts,

Expression for growth of children and mums. To repair damaged attachments and allow for childhood. R

We protect and celebrate childhoods while children and mums are in extremis.

**CHILDHOOD:** celebrations, play, outings.

**SPECIALIST SUPPORT** –Early Help, Shelter, Praxis, Project 17, Unity Project, Legal Advice. . .

Specialist advice on DV, Immigration, Housing to move families on and improve individual circumstances.

Plug families back in to universal and specialist services to which they are entitled.

**STATUTORY SERVICES** - Health visitors, GPs, Children's Centres, Family support workers.

Nothing else can happen until basics in place.

**TRUST, BELONGING** - 'family'

Relationships are the necessary basis for change.

**BASIC NEEDS MET**, safety, clothes, nappies, travel money, wipes, emergency housing, emergency grants.



# THINGS WE HAVE LEARNED.....

Keep it simple, both scarcity and abundance can be difficult to cope with..

Outdoor play – cold, unpredictable, worrying

Messy play – stressful and triggering

Play with food (rice, dry pasta, pulses) is a kick in the teeth

The chaos of play is frightening

The fear of judgement foils play

Comparisons can be crippling (charts, age comparisons etc).

The first stage of 'learning to play' is often watching

## **Small steps**

Allowing mums to play first before children... (be the biggest fool in the room...)

Noticing and encouraging (I saw M loved the cars, does he have some at home to play with?)

Valorising, praising, explaining (he is not throwing, he is a little scientist exploring gravity, force, aerodynamics...)

Accepting, reassuring and allowing (don't worry mum, we'll clear up...)



# HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Be curious – read reports on housing and the hostile environment, understand how this is affecting your families.

Be heard – As professionals speak up about how housing and hostile environment are negatively affecting your families.

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Join together – keep making links with charities, local business, social services, civil society, planning, politicians to throw a protective bubble around our precious babies...

# JOIN OUR CAMPAIGN

3 STEPS TO

## No child in a home without a kitchen



1

IMMEDIATE SUPPORT PACKAGE FOR FAMILIES  
INCLUDING COMMUNITY KITCHENS AND FINANCIAL AID

2

NO FAMILIES IN HOTELS WITHOUT KITCHENS FOR MORE  
THAN 6-WEEK LEGAL LIMIT

3

BAN ON USE OF HOTELS WITHOUT KITCHENS FOR  
FAMILIES WITH UNDER FIVES



**CLICK HERE**

# Thank you...

[www.themagpieproject.org](http://www.themagpieproject.org)

[www.themagpieproject.dance](http://www.themagpieproject.dance)

[www.londonrhymes.org](http://www.londonrhymes.org)

<https://bethany-williams.com/blogs/projects/all-our-stories-coal-drops-yard-installation>