

# THE BISHOP OF SOUTHWARK'S LENT CALL 2025



*Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me,  
and do not stop them; for it is to such as these  
that the kingdom of heaven belongs.'*

*Matthew 19:14*

## Week 5: Welcare



*The Welcare CapeAbility Schools programme.*

**Welcare is a family support charity working with children up to the age of 13 in South London and East Surrey. The focus of its work is to provide practical and emotional support and advice through one-to-one and group work programmes. It works alongside parents and carers helping them use their strengths and skills to nurture secure and confident children.**

Welcare was founded in 1894 as the Diocesan Association for Friendless Girls, when the Diocese of Southwark was part of the Diocese of Rochester. Welcare now serves the whole of the Diocese of Southwark and the parts of the London Borough of Bromley which are in the Diocese of Rochester. It also provides services in the Hampton Deanery in the Diocese of London.

Welcare recognised that the Covid-19 pandemic had a profound effect on children and families. Children's

social skills, health, wellbeing and resilience suffered as a result of not being able to go to school. Welcare therefore decided to offer schools a programme to address the root causes of children's trauma and anxiety. This is called the CapeAbility Schools Programme.

The CapeAbility Schools programme works with children who are in school years 3–5 (aged between 7 and 10). It recognises the profound effect that the Covid-19 lockdown has had and uses Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) techniques, arts and crafts, group work and role play to help children improve their emotional health and wellbeing.

The aim of the programme is to support children to gain or enhance their self-awareness, self-expression, social awareness and empathy and help them control their impulses. A facilitator works with between eight and ten children per session. Each session lasts for an hour and each group works for ten sessions. Children who have been part of the groups say they have learned

**Raising money to support projects that help children and young people recover from trauma and which encourage their mental wellbeing.**

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*Creative activity as part of the Welcare CapeAbility Schools programme.*

something about how to resolve conflict, they have learned to walk away from it. They also learned that it helps to talk to a trusted adult about concerns. They say that they have learned things about themselves, including how to say sorry, share their feelings and how to let their feelings go. They have come to understand that they are unique and valuable. In addition, they have been able to discover more about other people, which helps them work with others to find solutions to conflict and accepting that everyone is different.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) can be harmful for children and their ability to grow and develop. The groups run by Welcare help children to explore their experiences and feelings with their peers. They find out that others have similar experiences which helps them to feel less isolated and alone.

Isabel (9) and her sister Grace (8) were referred to CapeAbility by the pastoral team at their school. There was a history of parental conflict and domestic abuse in their family and the sisters had been traumatised by this. Isabel had seen her father's violence towards her mother and the sisters were struggling to recover from the trauma they had experienced. Isabel needed space to make sense of what she had witnessed. Grace did not witness the violence directly, but struggled to come to terms with the loss of

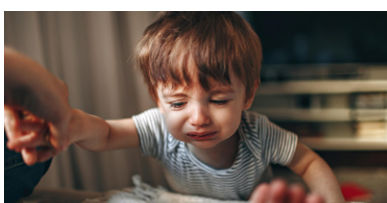
her father who, since moving out of the family home, had not had contact with his daughters.

The school helped to arrange some counselling for their mother to help her to deal with the trauma she had experienced. Their mum worked in partnership with Welcare to support Isabel and Grace to heal.

Through the CapeAbility programme Welcare was able to support Isabel with the anger and fear she felt after seeing her father's abuse. More than that, it helped her to gain a better understanding of what healthy relationships look like. It also enabled her to see that she was not to blame for her father's behaviour. Welcare supported Grace as she dealt with feeling sad and the loss of her father. The team also helped her to rebuild her confidence and self-esteem, and express her overwhelming feelings.

When the group ended, Grace gave it 10/10 for how well she felt listened to, and 9/10 for how helpful she found the sessions. It was clear that she had grown in confidence when she said, "In my group, I learnt how to show what I feel inside and share it".

**Please consider how you can support Welcare in prayer and with a gift through the Lent Call, so it can be there for more children like Grace and Isabel.**



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