

Thank you for your enquiry on how Mosac first started. My name is Linda and I am one of the four founder members. In 1991 we were brought together by Greenwich Social Services in a new type of work called the Marlborough group. They provided a group for mothers, which ran alongside a group for our children. It was facilitated by two social workers, following a therapeutic programme. It also gave us an invaluable space to share with other mothers the experience that had happened to us all.

The groups ran for ten weeks and most of us attended three blocks of ten. Towards the end of the session, we started to discuss how beneficial being able to have a private space and being accepted by non judgemental attitudes had helped us come to terms with what had happened, and how this had enabled us to help our children recover with a more positive outlook.

After talking to the social workers and realising they were behind us and encouraging us, we thought about the ways in which we could reach out and give support to other women who were or had been in our situation. We spent a year doing research in to what support was available, visited other projects, and began to fundraise.

We identified that via a Helpline we could offer support to many women, and locally a befriending service could enable mothers to receive support personally. With money raised from all sorts of activities and small donations, we purchased a filing cabinet, stationery equipment, and had leaflets printed. One thing we realised quite quickly was that we were going to have to prove ourselves to the authorities before they would take us seriously and fund us.

The Mosac Helpline was launched on the 10th September 1992, covered by four women, five days a week. I should say at this point that this was only possible due to one of the four allowing the Helpline to be in her home.

After the Helpline had been operational for a year we applied to Greenwich council for a grant, we had to satisfy their criteria, namely to form a Management Committee, adopt a Constitution, and supply proof that the work we were doing was ethical and reaching the clients needs. Social Services were extremely helpful, providing us with free supervision, which is essential. We sent monitoring forms to all Helpline callers to provide feedback on the service, ethnic background, and ways to improve. The first year we were awarded a start up grant of £500. We were evaluated by the council each year. In 1993 Mosac gained charitable status.

Over time and due to family commitments we lost two members of the team, this meant that there were huge demands being made on our remaining members. We recruited new members from the Marlborough group. Whilst we were delighted to welcome them, it highlighted the need for separate accommodation for the Helpline.

Once again valuable contacts who believed in Mosac arranged for us to be housed rent free in a Social Services building, we moved in January 1994. Throughout the time we were there Mosac continued to grow, and with increased funding we employed a part time Co-ordinator. Volunteer levels did fluctuate however; we recognised the restrictions in only recruiting volunteers who had experience of parenting a sexually abused child.

In 1997 Denise Hubble came to work for Mosac as Co-ordinator, at that time there was one volunteer and things were looking a bit shaky. I think it's fair to say that her expertise and skills have guided Mosac through those times and on to much firmer ground. We have expanded the criteria for volunteering at Mosac, which has enabled us to recruit and train more volunteers.

We are now housed in Greenwich West Community and Arts Centre, we have a central office, Helpline room, counselling and meeting room. Most recent is the dedicated room for play therapy. We continue to be funded by Greenwich Council; a Big Lottery grant enabled us to increase our staff to three. We now offer Counselling, Advocacy, Support groups, Play therapy, as well as Befriending and Helpline. We continue to receive grants to run our well recognised 12 week training programme, which we hope, will soon become accredited.

We have worked hard to raise Mosac's profile in the borough and beyond. In 2006 Mosac won the Guardian Charity award, for demonstrating innovative, pioneering work and making an outstanding contribution to social welfare. We continue to receive a large amount of referrals, working with our clients, and external agencies to continually improve our service. At present we have four part time members of staff and over forty volunteers and with recent funding success we are to extend our play therapy service to five London boroughs. Our outreach Advocacy service is to expand to reach service users that were previously unable to access the helpline, and a new drop in service.