



# INNOVATION PROJECTS 2023

## CASE STUDIES

Dreamland, an amusement park in Margate, UK. Credit: Rhiannon Adam / Save the Children.



# PARTNER CASE STUDY

## THANET COMMUNITY CHURCHES



A portrait of Project Lead Craig Prentice, Margate, UK. Credit: Anna Gordon / Save the Children.

### THE PROJECT

Craig Prentice is Team Leader at [Thanet Community Churches](#). Founded in 2011, the organisation has been involved in various social action projects across Thanet and supporting parents and carers has long been an area of particular interest.

With funding from the [Margate Early Learning Community](#), Thanet Community Churches rent a space at Cliftonville Community Centre where they run a number of weekly 'stay and play' groups designed for families to come together. They've also created a play space at a local allotment where families can gather and receive support from each other as well as from the project team.

Collectively, they've promoted this work as 'Parenting Together Margate', a project that seeks primarily to improve access to safe, outdoor play space and wider support for local families with children aged 0 - 5. Additionally, the organisation provides services to families at crucial times of need around issues such as dependency, domestic abuse, debt and budgeting.

Craig says that a lot of the project staff are parents themselves and so they know the struggles of raising children in Thanet. "[Margate, in particular, has got its own struggles and hurdles for people to navigate](#). And so it [the project] comes from sort of a place of compassion really, for living here in Thanet and trying to help our neighbours to do the best they can for their children," he explains.

A core principle of this work, as Craig sees it, is **parents supporting parents and communities supporting communities**.

"In areas of high deprivation and generational unemployment, and in places where you've got particular families that struggle with all sorts of barriers, I think we as a community need to step up and help our neighbours overcome these challenges."



Freya, one, at a Parenting Together session in Margate, UK. Credit: Anna Gordon / Save the Children.

## THE IMPACT

"The underlying belief is that parents want to be good parents to their children. And so we're doing all we can to help each other to achieve those goals," Craig continues. By offering a free space and resources so families can come together and spend time with their children, this key aim is being met. On top of this, **the target number of families the project hoped to reach has already been exceeded**.

A variety of different people have engaged, too. Session leader and Parenting Support Worker, Hannah Barrs, says: "The groups have just been so well attended. What's really surprised us is the **multi-generational aspect** - we have parents coming but we also have grandparents coming, we have aunts and uncles. It's fabulous."

Craig says having such a large cohort has allowed facilitators to identify people who may benefit from additional support. Recently, the organisation has been able to provide some **1-to-1 and small group sessions to meet specific needs of parents and carers**.

**One of the ongoing challenges for Craig and his colleagues has been to try and make the work that they're doing available to everyone in Margate**. Craig explains that "as is often the case, the friendship groups and networks [of those already attending] engaged really well, whereas other groups that we had hoped would have get involved haven't done so yet. But we want to keep reaching out, especially to communities where English isn't their first language for example."

## WHAT'S NEXT?

A future phase of Thanet Community Churches' work includes accessing additional financial support through a crowd funder which will enable them to continue running groups at both the community centre and the allotment space. Further to this, with help from a separate funder, they'll be continuing to provide some of the additional, targeted support services for at least the next three years.



Parenting Support Worker, Hanna Barrs, in Margate, UK. Credit: Anna Gordon / Save the Children.

## FAMILY CASE STUDIES



Daisy, one at a Parenting Together session in Margate with her dad, Matt. Credit: Anna Gordon / Save the Children.

### MATT & DAISY

Matt, 43, is dad to one-year-old Daisy and for the past six months they've been attending Parenting Together sessions run by Thanet Community Churches. They've also started to attend the weekly sessions at the organisation's allotment project. Matt says that opportunities for both outdoor and indoor play, as well as the chance to meet other families, has been brilliant.

"We haven't got any childcare at the moment so things like this [the stay and play session] are really helpful. We're still with Daisy but it's great to have time to chat to other parents," Matt says. The sessions have provided an **opportunity to build networks and friendships**. "Not long ago, we actually went on holiday with another family that we met here. It's nice because they've got a daughter who's only a little bit older than Daisy. If it wasn't for things like this group we wouldn't have met them."

Matt says that having the opportunity to play with her peers has helped Daisy's **development**. "It's really important she has time around other kids - we've noticed a change in her **confidence** that she gets from being around other kids. It [attending the sessions] is vital, really."

For Matt, one of the best things about the sessions that Thanet Community Churches run is that they're open to families of all backgrounds. "This [Parenting Together] is probably the best one for all of **the community coming together**."



Harry, two, with his mum, Adele, at a Parenting Together session in Margate. Credit: Anna Gordon/ Save the Children.

## ADELE & HARRY

Harry is two and as his mum, Adele, 38, says "he is full of energy". They attend the Parenting Together stay and play sessions every week. Adele says that Harry can be quite shy in larger groups, so it's been great to be able to bring him to a space where he's able to interact with children his own age. "He absolutely loves coming," Adele says. "As soon as we're driving up, he knows where he's going."

Adele says that finding the group has benefited her, too. "Just coming out of lockdown, I didn't find information on where things were and what was happening in the area easy to come across. I wasn't working and didn't know anybody." Adele now attends the session every week and says it's a great opportunity for families to socialise.

Adele highlights the community and [peer support](#) aspects of the project. "Lots of people will be in the same position as me: my husband's out working all day so if you don't come here you're sat at home talking to your toddler by yourself," she explains.

Going forward, Adele looks forward to seeing Harry continue to grow in confidence and develop his [social skills](#). "It's really good for him to learn all of that before he goes into school," she says.

# PARTNER CASE STUDY

## SILVERS SOCIAL CIC



A portrait of Charlotte Silver, Director at Silvers Social CIC, Margate. Credit: Anna Gordon / Save the Children.

### THE PROJECT

Charlotte Silver is a director at [Silvers Social CIC in Margate](#). The organisation recently launched a programme of activities which aims to support local children and families in their wellbeing and mental and physical health. On the morning we spoke to Charlotte, the centre was hosting a 'stay and play' session.

"I think the people of Margate really benefit from projects like this because, unfortunately, there aren't many centres like this in the area. This project has allowed families to come together and [create a happy, safe space for children](#)," Charlotte explains.

Charlotte says that Silvers recognised the need to create something that gives families with young children aged 0 - 5 a place to thrive. "We are a high deprivation area unfortunately, so we have really suffered over the pandemic and that's why it's been really lovely to watch all these lockdown babies come alive [at the sessions] and we've been able to watch them [grow and nurture](#) them."

The programme at Silvers, which spans both indoor and outdoor activities, includes family yoga, baby ballet, soft play, family coffee mornings, education around healthy eating, dance classes and community meals. For it's initial six-month run, which is supported by funding from the Margate Early Learning Community, the programme is [free of charge to anyone who attends](#).



Libby, project coordinator at Silvers, facilitating a session.  
Credit: Anna Gordon / Save the Children.

## THE IMPACT

"As a community, we are lacking family hubs and activity centres for our children to grow, develop and play," Charlotte says. At present, Margate has just one soft play centre and one swimming pool - and the latter has been closed for almost two years. "Doing something like this [the activities programme] has **enabled children to connect and develop with each other.**"

Charlotte says success can be seen in **the strides children have made.** "Like I said, some of those attending are children born during the pandemic. Some of them hadn't played with their peers before; they didn't know how to interact with other children. That gap is something this project is tackling."

Connections have been forged between parents, too. Kirsty, 29, a local mum of three, says raising a family in Margate hasn't always been easy and finding play groups like those established by Silvers has allowed her to build **supportive relationships.** "I find it really helps my mental health to meet other parents and watch our children play together," she explains.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Looking ahead, Charlotte says that Silvers hope to rollout another project, with a local arts centre, where the two organisations can combine their skills and develop sessions which continue to promote **family wellbeing and peer-to-peer support within the community.**

## FAMILY CASE STUDY



Isaiah, 5, with his mum, Emmay, at Silvers in Margate. Credit: Anna Gordon / Save the Children.

### EMMAY & ISAIAH

Emmay is mum to five-year-old Isaiah. "He's not shy! He's a boisterous boy," Emmay says of her son. "My boy is very outgoing and friendly. He'll make friends with anyone. So being in **an environment with lots of other children is something he thrives in.**" They moved to Margate two years ago and recently they've been attending activity sessions at Silvers.

"I moved to Margate when my boy was three. It was challenging to raise a child in a place where I didn't yet have a support network. So places like Silvers, where they have a lot of activities for children are important," Emmay explains. "Moving to a place I'd never been before, especially with a young child, it was challenging. Isolation was an aspect of that – so having a place focused on children, I found that really helpful."

Silvers offers a range of different activities which have allowed Isaiah to **explore new interests.** "He's been to a lot of activities here. It's predominantly a dance school, so he's got into dancing, kickboxing. They're always putting on different things in the community; they do coffee mornings and summer camps, things like that. And it's all targeted at people in the local area with young children," says Emmay. "So it's been nice to find likeminded people in a similar situation. My boy's been able to make lots of friends and I've made a few too."





Portrait of mum, Emmay, and Isaiah, 5, in Margate, UK.  
Credit: Anna Gordon / Save the Children.

Emmay values being able to attend sessions ran by qualified experts while at the same time building a group of local friends. "It takes a bit of pressure off to know there is somewhere you can go where you'll be around a support network and there are like-minded people. It's good for your **mental health** – just knowing there's support and people to relate to."

"We've been coming [to Silvers] for the past few months, especially when there's no school. So it's been great to get him out of the house," Emmay explains. "**They do arts and crafts, painting, soft play, a lot of creative work, which is important for kids.** It's interesting to see the things children come up with! It's important for him to interact with other kids and build relationships."

Emmay believes the work that Silvers is doing is crucial for **early years development**. "Programmes like this are very important for children's social skills, and just life skills. The creative work is really important for kids at that age too, as well as physical stuff which is obviously supporting their health and development."

To learn more about the work of the Margate Early Learning Community click [here](#).

Published September 2023 by Save the Children UK.  
Interviews conducted in July and August 2023.

Save the Children Fund is a charity registered in England & Wales (213890), Scotland (SC039570) and Isle of Man (199).

