

# youth untroubled

... because change is possible

# ISTAC

INTENSIVE SYSTEMIC THERAPY  
AROUND THE CHILD

The cost-effective, evidence-based approach to keeping children at home,  
thriving.

youth  
untroubled

# THE PROBLEM

An increasing number of children are being placed in out-of-home placements - care, custody and CAMHS inpatient units, unnecessarily.

> **84,000**  
children in care  
predicted to rise to 100,000 by 2030

> **3,500**  
admitted to CAMHS units  
each year

> **450**  
in custody at any one time

# 3 KEY PROBLEMS



1

Huge cost to society:  
Across Social Care,  
Health & Education

2

Poor outcomes for  
children (and  
families)



3

Out-of-home  
placements fail to  
address the underlying  
issues: problems re-  
emerge and children  
return to care/inpatient

# 1. COST TO SOCIETY



Up to

**£318k**

per child per year

**6k** per week for a teenager in care

Spending on children in care could make up **60%** of children's services budgets by 2025

**£800** per day for a child in an inpatient unit

Total cost:

**£23 billion per year**

# 2. POOR

# OUTCOMES

## Care leavers:

- 6 x more likely to go to prison & 4 x more likely to end up with a criminal conviction
- 1 in 3 not in education, employment, or training
- Poorer physical and mental health

## Research has indicated the negative impact of inpatient admission, highlighting:

- Adverse effects within the inpatient environment
- Disruption of relationships, education and sense of self
- Effects on family life
- Difficulty readjusting to 'normal' life after discharge

3. OUT-OF-HOME  
PLACEMENTS  
DON'T ADDRESS  
THE FACTORS  
THAT HAVE LED TO  
A CHILD BEING  
ACCOMMODATED  
OR ADMITTED



IF a child returns home at all, the problems are likely to re-emerge

Nearly 30% of children are readmitted to CAMHS inpatient units following discharge

> 40% return to foster care having returned home unsuccessfully



# IT'S TIME FOR CHANGE

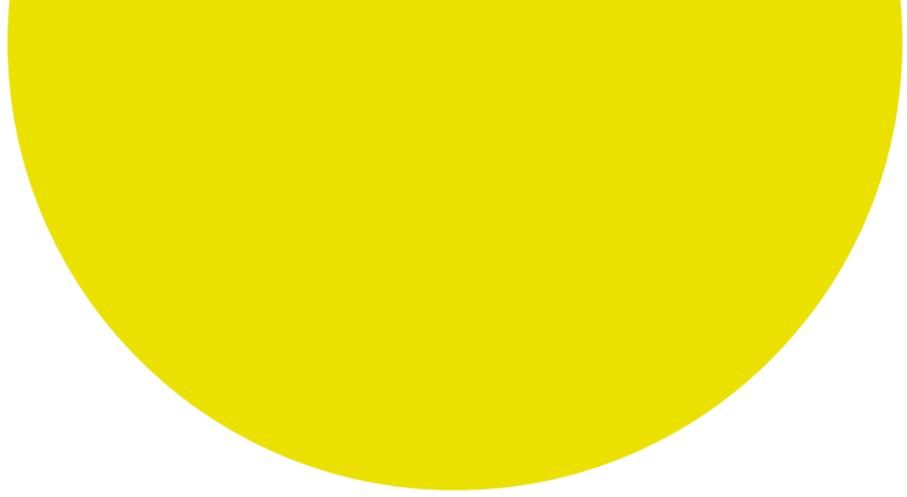
The children's social care reform, May 2023:  
'Stable homes built on love'

Family support and clinical guidance at the right time so that children can thrive at home

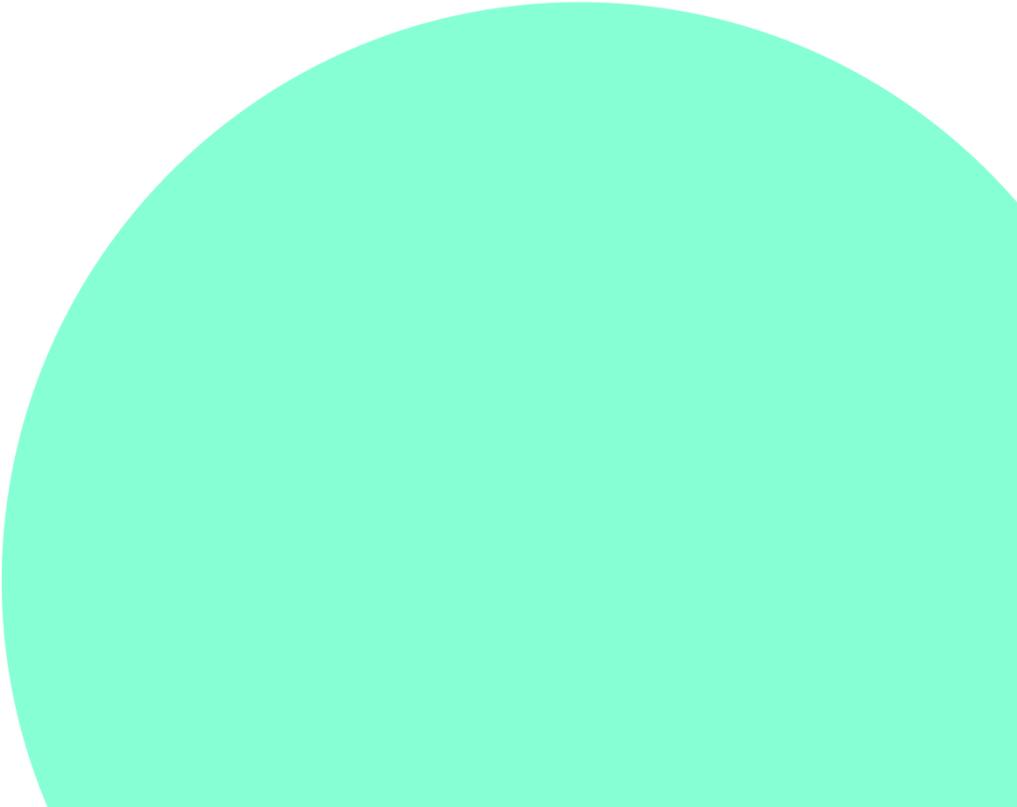
Unlocking the potential of family networks

Supporting parents, protecting children & keeping costs down

*“Our ambition is that every child and family who needs it will have access to high-quality help, no matter where they live. Family Help will provide intensive multidisciplinary support, with social workers and other practitioners working together. It will work with families facing significant challenges that make it harder to provide their children with a loving, stable or safe family life that meets their needs. It will be based within and tailored towards their local communities.”*



**There is a solution,  
and it works ...**





# ISTAC

INTENSIVE SYSTEMIC THERAPY  
AROUND THE CHILD

- Cost-effective, evidence-based alternative to out-of-home placement:  
From < £32k for ISTAC vs. £318k for care/inpatient
- Immediate benefits & positive, sustainable outcomes for children and families
- Addresses the multiple & complex contributing factors to the problems

# WHAT IS ISTAC?

Intensive,  
community-based,  
therapeutic  
intervention,  
creating loving,  
stable, and safe  
families where  
children can thrive.

Devised in 2017 by the Youth Untroubled team, it's an adaptation of MST, developed to better meet the needs of children & families with complex/multiple problems.

The model has been commissioned by local authorities and mental health trusts across London, the South of England and the Midlands.



# ORIGINAL MODEL & ADAPTATIONS

## **ISTAC**

Preventing out-of-home placement for children with severe anti-social behaviour, chronic conduct disorders and complex emotional and behavioural difficulties including harmful sexual behaviour.

## **ISTAC TRANSITIONS**

Supporting children in foster care/residential provisions, secure provisions and CAMHS inpatient units to return to their families, quickly and safely.

## **ISTAC FOR SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES (SAC)**

A 4-month brief adaptation of the ISTAC model for young people with EHCPs where emotional based school avoidance is a primary issue.

# ISTAC

IS THE COST-EFFECTIVE,  
COMMUNITY-BASED  
TREATMENT PROGRAMME  
THAT IS ...



Preventing children and young people  
being placed in care

Reducing inappropriate and unnecessary  
CAMHS inpatient admissions and shortening the  
length of admissions

Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour

Improving educational attainment and reducing  
truancy, preventing permanent school exclusion

Supporting children to return to family homes  
from alternative placements, and remain at  
home, thriving.

# MORE INFO ...

12 - 14 month treatment programme

24/7 flexible support for each family and network

We identify and tackle the issues that have led to children being at risk of out-of-home placement

We directly address ALL parenting difficulties including mental health, substance misuse, domestic violence, and trauma

We unlock the potential of wider family networks and identify and develop family strengths

We work ALONGSIDE other professionals

We provide direct intervention to children where clinically indicated - a child's willingness to engage does not determine treatment suitability

Minimal exclusion criteria - inclusive of neurodivergency



# ISTAC

## OUTCOMES 2020 - 2022\*

- 89% of young people in education by the end of treatment
- 95% of young people had committed no further offences by the end of treatment
- 91% of young people were living at home at the end of treatment

ALL of these outcomes were sustained at 6-month follow-up.

\*Stats from BC-SIT, 2020-2022

*" I have worked alongside Youth Untroubled colleagues for years. The [ISTAC] model is a highly effective way to support those families with children on the edge of care. It often helps divert from unnecessary mental health admissions too. The therapists are highly skilled at empowering parents to offer their children the best of themselves, often when others might have given up on them. Their outcomes speak for themselves. [ISTAC] is the stuff!"*

Consultant Psychiatrist, ELFT

# OUTCOMES CONT.

Youth Endowment Fund study, 2023

*“The [ISTAC] approach is seen as better than any other intervention they had experienced.”*



## PARENTS' FEEDBACK

1. Flexible, intensive support, where and when they needed it.
2. Treatment focused on the key issues - those they actually needed help with.
3. Non-judgemental approach - didn't feel labelled as “bad parents”.
4. Helped them to engage better with other services too.

**100% WOULD RECOMMEND TO OTHERS**

# OTHER SERVICES by **youth untroubled**

## FOR PROFESSIONALS

- Training
- Consultation

“Brilliant, strength-focused advice - I came away from the consultation feeling motivated and clear about the next steps with the family.

And it worked!”

**Social Worker, Hackney**

## FOR PARENTS

- Workshops & short courses
- 1-1 parenting consultations & sessions

"Thank you for such a supportive session and for all the guidance! I have found it really useful as I didn't know anything about behavioural strategies and how to handle tantrums and meltdowns. We are seeing differences in behaviour already!"

**Parent, Surrey**



**ONLINE INFORMATION HUB**

providing advice and information for everyone involved in caring for children

# MISSION STATEMENT

Youth Untroubled was set up to facilitate a National roll-out of the ISTAC model, across Health, Education and Social Care. Our goal is for all children on the edge of care – or placed unnecessarily in out-of-home settings – to access our effective, intensive, community-based therapeutic intervention that actually works.

As well as providing information about ISTAC, ISTAC Transitions and ISTAC SAC, we intend for [istac.co.uk](http://istac.co.uk) to be a hub of expert advice for professionals working with children and families with a range of complex needs. We intend for our sister site, [youthuntroubled.co.uk](http://youthuntroubled.co.uk), to become THE place for parenting advice and support - from early intervention to the most complex of situations.

We believe it's time to give ALL families the skills and opportunity to create loving, stable, and safe environments where children can thrive.

**INNOVATIVE INTERVENTIONS. INSPIRING HOPE. TRANSFORMING LIVES.**

# MEET THE TEAM



**Natasha Gold**  
Founder & Director

Clinical consultant with over 15 years' experience providing therapy, consultation and training across NHS, charity and private sectors. Developed and fully manualised the SIT/ ISTAC model in 2020. Hugely passionate about empowering parents to reach their full potential.



**Una O'Brien**  
Director

Over 15 years' experience as specialist NHS CAMHS clinician, family therapist and service lead at the Brandon Centre. Has worked for four years for the family courts providing expert assessments for children affected by domestic violence and abuse.



**Carly MacDonald**  
Director

With nearly 20 years experience in NHS, public, and private sectors, Carly has worked in secure accommodation, community-based crisis intervention, and systemic family therapy. She led the SIT Service at the Brandon Centre for 5 years and is an expert domestic abuse risk assessor.



**Dr Alex Sales**  
Non-executive  
Director

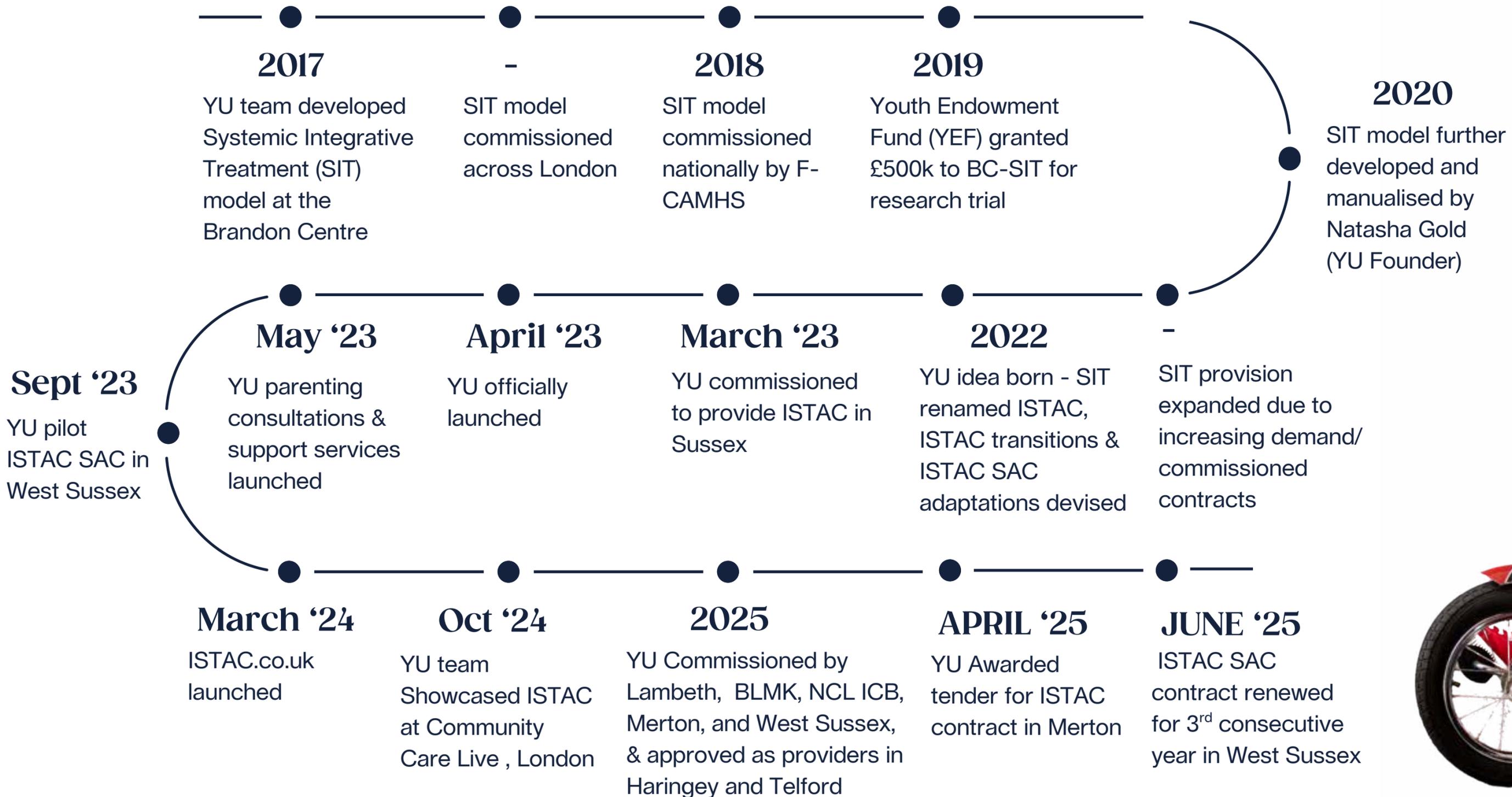
Consultant psychiatrist and associate clinical director with extensive NHS and private practice experience, including having led on several initiatives to successfully minimise hospital admissions for young people.



**Kate Davis**  
Social Enterprise  
Business Mentor

Founder and managing director of The Sand Project: a college creating accessible work and life training in business and enterprise. A passionate advocate for young people. Champion of innovation. Successful entrepreneur.

# THE JOURNEY SO FAR



# WHAT'S NEXT?

Training programme and organisational structure ready for fast-paced growth to meet expected demand

National roll-out of ISTAC + ISTAC Transitions - partnerships across Health, Social Care and Education

Youth Untroubled: Growing online hub/social media presence/parenting podcast - building reputation as THE place for parenting advice and support - from early intervention to ISTAC.

BACP registration,  Care Quality Commission in progress...

ISTAC research - RCT/ qualitative studies

5-year plan: International roll-out of ISTAC + adaptations

# £318,000

per 12 months in care/custody/inpatient

Families torn apart - relationships further damaged.

Little or no support provided to families to address the underlying issues or causes of the children's problems.

30% readmitted to inpatient units/  
40% return to foster care.

1 in 3 care leavers NEET.

6 x more likely to go to prison.

vs.

# £31,808

for 14 months of ISTAC\*

Families remain together, relationships improved, children thriving.

Underlying causes of problems addressed, parents empowered to overcome future problems.

Improved outcomes for siblings too.

Improved relationships with other agencies.

95% no further offences, 91% remain at home, 89% in education.

\*cost per case of ISTAC, when commissioned as part of a 24 case per year contract



# Change is possible...

Year after year, there are thousands of children being placed in residential care homes, inpatient units and other out-of-home placements unnecessarily. The cost of this crisis to children and families is immeasurable; and for every trust and local authority, astronomical.

**... Let's change the future,  
together.**

**youth**  
**untroubled**  
... because change is possible

**istac.co.uk**

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