

# Pioneering Change in Family Assessments



**Aspire  
Community Support  
& Assessment**

Expert social work and family support  
in Southern England, helping protect  
children with legal and local partners.

# Hello.

Welcome, and thank you for taking the time to learn more about our work.

Aspire's Community Support and Assessment Service has been providing robust, home-based assessments within care proceedings for over ten years. Our model is particularly effective in families where neglect or emotional abuse are key safeguarding concerns, offering children and their parents the best possible opportunity to remain together safely.

We provide local authorities, the judiciary and legal professionals with a clear, organised and evidence-informed approach to assessing parenting capacity. Our team brings exceptional skill, professionalism and integrity to every assessment, and I am continually inspired by both their dedication and the resilience shown to the families we support.

At the heart of our work are the values that guide every decision we make: safer children, stronger families and assessments that are both humane and defensible. We want to use this document to provide clear and compelling evidence as to the effectiveness of our service, and the improved outcomes for children, families and the public purse.

Thank you again for taking the time to learn more about Aspire - we look forward to working with you.



**Mark Sloman**

Founder and Director of Aspire



**Enabling realistic  
evolution of parenting  
capacity, risk and change.**





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## **Introduction to our Service**

ASPIRE IS A SPECIALIST,  
EVIDENCE-INFORMED  
SOCIAL WORK SERVICE  
DELIVERING HIGH-QUALITY  
COMMUNITY-BASED FAMILY  
SUPPORT AND ASSESSMENT.

We work at the point where decisions matter most – supporting courts, local authorities and families to reach timely, proportionate, fair and defensible decisions for children.

We provide intensive, 24/7 support and assessment in families' own homes and communities, enabling realistic evaluation of parenting capacity, risk and change.

## What we do

Our Community Support and Assessment Service combines robust supervision, purposeful intervention, support and assessment within public law proceedings, often known as a reverse residential assessment, from day one.

### Our work includes:

- Court-directed and pre-proceedings parenting and risk assessments
- Tailored intervention programmes aligned to assessed need
- Time-critical, rapid wrap-around safeguarding support
- Expert reporting that is clear, evidence-based and analytically sound

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### Key features of our model include:

- Assessment in real-world conditions – families are assessed in their own homes, within their existing support networks and community contexts
- Continuity of professional assessment – avoiding the ‘start again’ effect often seen following residential placements
- Integrated intervention and assessment – change is supported and evaluated simultaneously, reducing drift and duplication
- An allocated Assessment Social Worker and an experienced Team Leader for every family. Together, they coordinate all intervention and support activity, provide consistent safeguarding oversight, and act as the primary point of contact throughout the assessment period.
- Highly skilled practitioners – experienced social workers and specialist practitioners with expertise in safeguarding, court work and complex family dynamics
- 24/7 availability – enabling consistent, proportionate and timely responses to risk and safeguarding concerns



**A safe pair of hands  
for purposeful  
intervention from day one.**

**Aspire's community-based approach works with families in their own settings.**



## Why We Work This Way: Evidence and Impact

National research and policy discussion over the last decade has increasingly questioned the assumption that residential family assessment is always the safest or most appropriate option for families.

Research from the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory (2025) and Department for Education–commissioned national research (2014) highlights recurring themes in respect of the residential family assessment model, including:

- The artificial nature of residential assessment environments when compared with family homes
- Disruption to family networks and local support systems
- Significant variation in quality, purpose and experience
- High financial cost, often alongside the need for further assessment once families return home

The evidence indicates that for many families, residential assessment may not be necessary, proportionate, or the most effective way to understand parenting capacity and risk.

Aspire’s community-based model responds directly to this evidence. By working intensively with families in their own settings from the outset, we are able to assess parenting and safeguarding within real-life conditions and support and test change where it must ultimately be sustained.

This supports courts and local authorities to reach earlier, clearer and more confident decisions, grounded in realistic, evidence-informed analysis, minimising drift and delay for children.



**Specialist work with  
parents with learning  
disabilities.**



## **Our Team and Background**

Aspire Community Support and Assessment Service was established following a clear vision developed by founder and director, Mark Sloman: to create a service that combined professional rigour, clear values and enabled more children to remain safely at home where possible.

Aspire has been operating for over ten years and has built a strong reputation for quality, integrity and values-led practice across the family justice system.

Our team brings decades of combined experience across children's social care, safeguarding, court work, health, mental health and system leadership. Practitioners are carefully recruited for both expertise and values, ensuring families and professionals work with individuals who are credible, consistent and highly skilled.

## **Our Values**

Our values underpin every aspect of our work:

**CHILDREN'S SAFETY AND WELLBEING FIRST**

**PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY AND INDEPENDENCE**

**TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**


**RESPECT FOR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES**

**EVIDENCE-INFORMED PRACTICE**

We place strong emphasis on building relationships, creating environments of trust and psychological safety, and working in ways that enable families to engage openly and honestly. We believe this is fundamental to producing fair, accurate and meaningful assessments.

# Professional integrity and independence.





**71% of our interventions led to children remaining or returning to their family.**

In the period spanning 2020 to 2025 our research shows that in 71% of known family case work the child or children have remained in their parents care for at least a full year following Care Proceedings concluding.

## Our Outcomes and Evidence Base

Aspire is committed to building a strong and transparent longitudinal evidence base for our work.

Over the last 12 months:

- 71% of Community Support and Assessment interventions resulted in children remaining with or returning to their family
- A further 52 families were supported to remain together during periods of acute crisis

Alongside these outcomes, we continue to strengthen our evaluation framework to understand the sustainability of change and longer-term impact for children and families.

## Our Commercial Approach

Aspire is a profit-for-good organisation.

We operate on an open-book accounting model, offering transparency and cost-sharing with local authorities and commissioners. Investment is directed back into:

- Workforce quality and capacity
- Training and professional development
- Service improvement and research

This approach supports sustainability, value for money and continuous improvement.

# Examples of our work.

A close-up photograph of a newborn baby sleeping peacefully in a parent's arms. The baby is wrapped in a white blanket and has its eyes closed. The parent's face is partially visible in the upper right corner, looking down at the baby. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

## Case Study - 1

### **Newborn Intervention - 12 weeks**

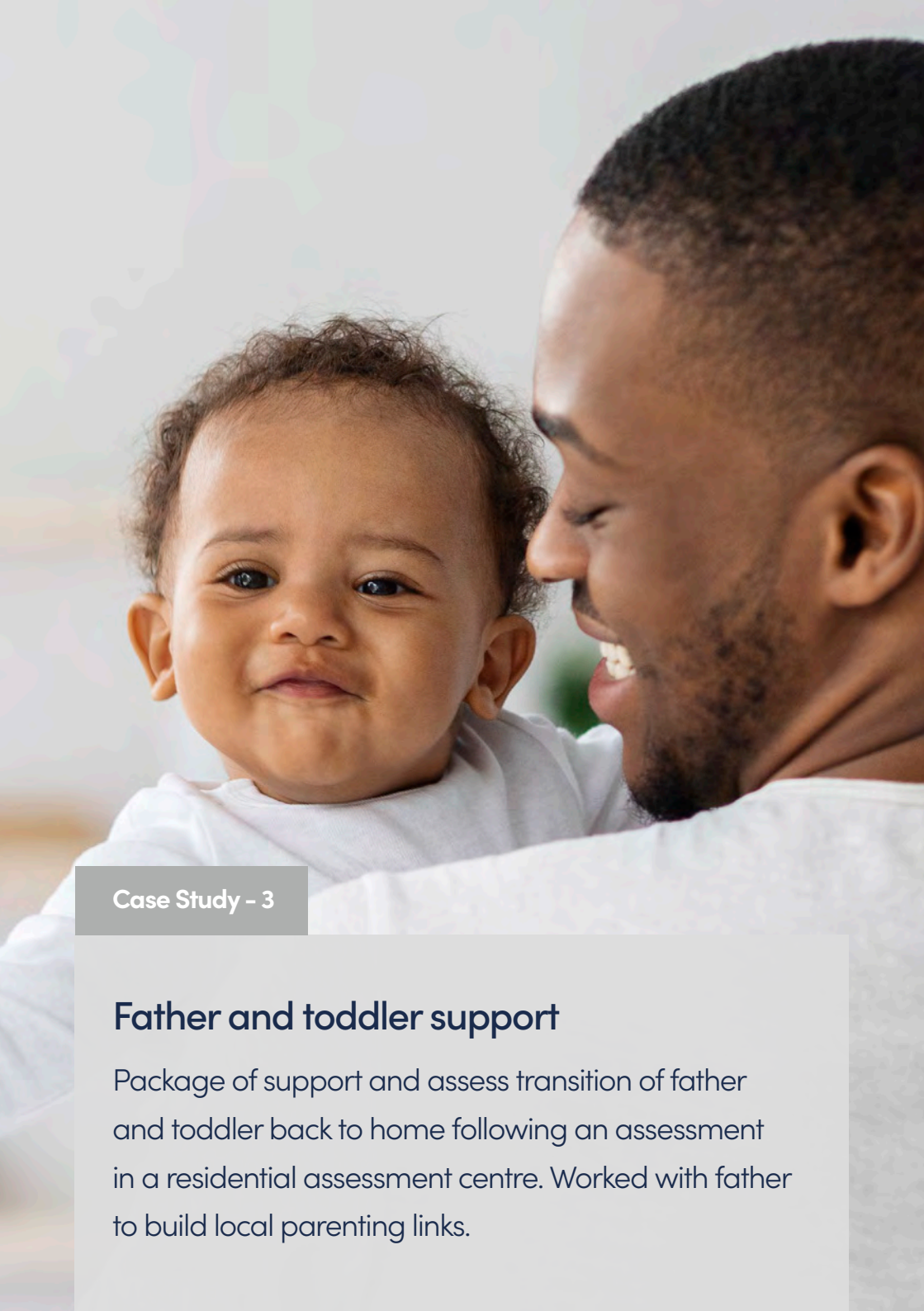
12 week intervention to support and supervise care experienced with newborn. Initially 24 hours a day but decreased gradually. Child remained in parents care under Supervision Order.

## Holding package for three children

Holding package of support and supervision of three children in their parents care prior to a Finding of Fact Hearing.

### Case Study - 2

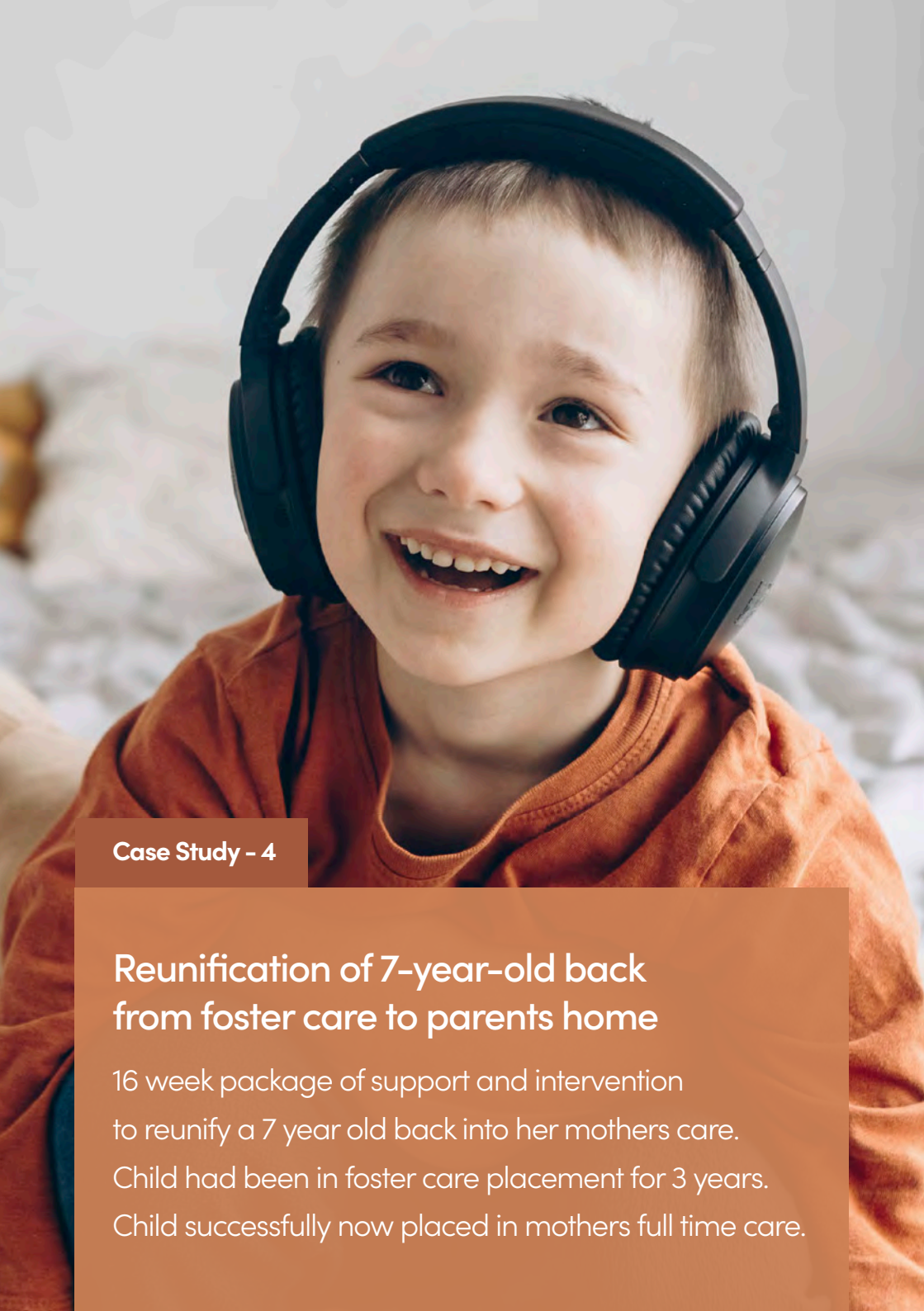




### Case Study - 3

## Father and toddler support

Package of support and assess transition of father and toddler back to home following an assessment in a residential assessment centre. Worked with father to build local parenting links.



#### Case Study - 4

### Reunification of 7-year-old back from foster care to parents home

16 week package of support and intervention to reunify a 7 year old back into her mothers care. Child had been in foster care placement for 3 years. Child successfully now placed in mothers full time care.

**We would love  
to hear from you.**



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