

View

FROM THE COUCH

Kids Company Clients: London

Founded in 1996 by Camila Batmanghelidjh, Kids Company operates through nine centres and two therapy houses in London, Bristol and Liverpool, giving practical, emotional and educational support to vulnerable inner-city children, young people and families.

All client names below have been changed

Several complementary therapists work across Kids Company as part of a multidisciplinary team, delivering a range of bodywork therapies developed with particular sensitivity and awareness to a wider context of healing trauma.

The Morgan Stanley Heart Yard is a therapeutic sanctuary in South London where Kids Company's most vulnerable children, young people and their carers receive intensive emotional and psychological support. Acupuncture is offered, free of charge, by two resident acupuncturists: Anne-Marie Fouche and Floella Francis. Both have adopted a collaborative approach to treatment that reflects Kids Company's core values of attachment, the power of the therapeutic relationship, and belief in the client's own capacity to change.

'In the acupuncture sessions I could talk first and was listened to. I had a bad back and neck after experiencing some violence in Nigeria. After acupuncture my back was much less painful. I used to have to walk everywhere as I had no money for the bus and acupuncture relieved it. I also had hay fever for the first time ever and after one treatment it never came back! At the moment I don't feel talking will help until I'm more settled but the other treatments help so much.'

Esther, 34

'I was first offered acupuncture a few years ago during a difficult period of life and I was having baby blues, anxiety and loads of stress. Things were really hectic at the time. I'd not heard much about it but was willing to give it a go.

After only a few weeks it gave me a different energy. It was like a slow releasing balloon, like a pressure relief bringing calmness.

I stopped for a while and now I'm doing it again after another life explosion. Again, it's really sorted me out. It releases all my anxiety and I have calm and really positive energy again. It's like a shift in atmosphere, in me, and a shift in the sorts of things that come to me.

Life hadn't changed, it was still hectic, but I had changed. You need to change yourself first. I'm more relaxed, I'm better with my kids and family, more at ease.

I have it alongside psychotherapy which is very important, allows a verbal release.



Anne-Marie Fouche and Floella Francis beside the Heart Yard's Moon Room

The combination of acupuncture and therapy is a perfect balance for me. I find it different to massage, it feels like a physical release rather than rubbing energy around.

I have been able to see the same practitioner, Flo, over the years and I trust her. She really cares and asks questions relevant to you like "what's going on around you?" The verbal communication with your practitioner is really important, it feels like she really identifies exactly what I need. I love Flo, she's amazing. So much has changed since I started acupuncture, I'd recommend it to anyone.'

Michelle, aged 24

'I had an accident and my spine was out of place. My son goes to the Heart Yard for cooking and I was referred by someone for osteopathy but there was a waiting list. Someone suggested I try acupuncture while I wait. Since I've had it, my back's fine. The acupuncture works for about four weeks then it pains again so I get a session every three weeks.

When it's bad I can't even get out of bed and I couldn't bend down or do any shopping. I used to take loads of tablets every day but they made me really drowsy and now I only need to take them once in a blue moon.

When I first started I was really anxious; it takes time to trust and get to know someone. I was worried they would judge me and it's scary sharing personal information. I wouldn't cope with a proper clinic but I know the staff at the Heart Yard and they make me feel relaxed and welcome.'

Kristina, aged 40

'I first tried acupuncture at the Kids Company wellbeing retreat in the taster workshop with Anne-Marie. I then carried on seeing her on and off at the Heart Yard. I tried it for my stress and anxiety and was having trouble sleeping. Acupuncture made me more relaxed and calmed me down. I felt more free and mellow. I was somehow able to balance things out more, take time for

At first I was nervous of the needles but once they are in it's fine. It helped me to relax and I felt much less stressed for a while afterwards

myself and not rush into things. The approach of the person doing it is also really nice. I like her approach. I feel safe, relaxed and can trust them to do the therapy. The environment at the Heart Yard is also lovely!'

Nicole, aged 19

'I had acupuncture with Anne-Marie for a few months because I was really stressed.

The treatments worked very well and I really enjoyed the appointments. It helped to relieve my stress. At first I was nervous of the needles but once they are in it's fine. It helped me to relax and I felt much less stressed for a while afterwards.

It's very chilled out and there's a relaxing atmosphere at the Heart Yard. Anne-Marie is a very calming person. She relaxed me and helped me with my fear of needles. At one appointment Anne-Marie put needles all over my face; I'm glad I was lying down and couldn't look in the mirror! Afterwards I felt totally de-stressed. I would definitely recommend acupuncture.'

Jack, aged 22

'I'd never had it before and first of all went to the centre for osteopathy, and acupuncture for aches and pains. I had a fall and had nerve damage in my neck and joint pain in my shoulder.

Both treatments really helped with the pain and swelling, but I carried on with acupuncture regularly and found it also helped with energy levels. It relaxes you but also gave an energy boost, I don't know how! I learnt so much about my body, it's good to notice how I feel and see where all the points are. I often feel a rush of energy when she finds the point. You hear people talking about blocked energy, it's only when it gets unblocked that you know what they mean! I would recommend it to anyone.'

Pauline, aged 35