

St George's Children's Home

Life Campus Program

2025-26

Annual Impact Report



A Project of



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1. Introduction

This report provides an overview of the St George's Life Campus programme and the impact it continues to make in the lives of vulnerable young people in our care.

It covers the following:

- ❖ Executive summary **(No. 2)**
- ❖ Key Pillars of the Program **(No. 3)**
 - First pillar: Residential Care for children with Learning Impairments
 - Second pillar: ABET Education for children with learning impairments
 - Third Pillar: Life Skills Program, Therapy, and Social Work
 - Fourth Pillar: Vocational training & job market preparation
- ❖ Program delivery and Outcomes **(No. 4)**
- ❖ *A narrative of activities that were implemented is captured under each pillar*
- ❖ Future Plans – Including challenges and ways to deal with them **(No. 5)**
- ❖ Impact Stories and pictures **(No. 6)**

2. Executive Summary

This **Life Campus program** was launched in 1985, within the St. George's Children's Home, which came into existence in 1915. It is dedicated to young people (between the ages of 14 and 18) from underserved communities.

The generous grant we received from GDMT in 2025 enabled us to take care of 15 young people who lived full-time at the home. These youngsters, together with 6 others who are day students, had access to meals, quality ABET education, vocational training courses, Life skills & therapy sessions throughout the year. All these beneficiaries have learning disabilities.

Beyond the numbers, the impact of your grant is truly reflected in Thembi*'s journey. At 14 years old, she was placed at St George's Home after being identified as a child in need of care and protection. Upon admission, Thembi could not read nor write.

Through consistent therapy with the psychologist and additional support from the ABET teacher, she has made remarkable progress. Today, Thembi can confidently express who she is, what she enjoys, and where she comes from—in English. Her self-esteem has grown, and she has become literate, opening new doors for her future. (*Not her real name)

3. Key Pillars of the Program

3.1 First pillar: Residential Care for children with Learning Impairments

3.2 Second pillar: ABET Education for children with learning impairments

3.3 Third Pillar: Life Skills Program, Therapy, and Social Work

3.4 Fourth Pillar: Vocational training & job market preparation

4. Program delivery and Outcomes

4.1 First pillar: Residential Care for children with Learning Impairments

Despite advancements in educational policy and practice, children with learning disabilities continue to face significant barriers to accessing quality education that addresses their unique needs. Limited awareness among parents and educators often results in these children being enrolled in mainstream schools that are not equipped to provide the specialized support they require.

As a result, many experience prolonged periods of low academic performance and struggle to meet societal benchmarks on schedule. This often leads to negative labeling, diminished self-esteem, and fewer opportunities for meaningful social interaction, ultimately hindering their overall development and successful integration into society.

To address this gap, St George's runs the **Life Campus**—a specialized school program designed to provide holistic support for children with learning disabilities such as dyslexia, ADHD, autism spectrum disorders, and other cognitive challenges.

The program offers tailored therapy, psycho-social support, an ABET-style curriculum, and practical skills development, ensuring each child receives education suited to their individual needs.

All residential students at Life Campus are referred through court orders. Additionally, the program accommodates a small number of day scholars—usually around half a dozen—who live at home but attend the school, as the residential facility can accommodate a maximum of 15 students at a time.

4.2 Second pillar: Life Skills Program and Social Work

4.2.1 Life Skills Programme

The Life Skills Programme is designed to empower young people to make informed decisions and take actions that positively influence their own lives and the lives of those around them. Its primary goal is to enhance both psychological and physical well-being, while also challenging harmful cultural norms and fostering social change for future generations.

Child and Youth Care Workers (CYCWs) facilitated structured life skills activities aimed at equipping young people with the knowledge and skills necessary to make responsible choices, with a particular focus on reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS awareness and contraceptive use.

Number of Activities Conducted: 150

During this period, Child and Youth Care Workers (CYCWs) facilitated sessions covering a broad range of topics, including

- ✓ **Self-awareness:** emotional regulation, self-image, peer pressure
- ✓ **Values** such as respect, accountability, serving others, and generosity
- ✓ **Personal empowerment topics:** Time management, setting boundaries, independence, peer pressure, problem-solving skills, communication skills,
- ✓ **General and mental Health education:** personal hygiene, teenage pregnancy, sex education, mental health awareness, anxiety and depression,

- ✓ **Conflict and problem management:** Healthy and unhealthy ways of dealing with differences and conflicts
- ✓ **Gender education:** women's role models, gender-based violence,
- ✓ **Political, security, and social issues:** and reconciliation programmes. stigma and discrimination, personal safety

Outcomes:

- **Emotional Regulation:** Young people were introduced to emotional regulation strategies, including identifying triggers, understanding emotional stages, and applying practical techniques to manage their responses effectively.
- **Teenage Pregnancy Awareness:** Prevention strategies were discussed in depth, with strong engagement and participation from young people.
- **Child Protection and Mental Health Awareness:** In commemoration of Child Protection Month, young people were educated on various mental health disorders, coping mechanisms, and the benefits of appropriate treatment and medication. The programme included a stakeholder engagement event hosted at the centre.
- **Worker's Day Discussions:** Sessions highlighted the role of labour unions and workers' rights, promoting civic awareness.
- **Communication Skills:** Emphasis was placed on constructive communication to reduce unnecessary conflicts within the home environment.
- **Boundaries and Accountability:** Young people were guided on respecting boundaries, taking responsibility for their behaviour, and learning from mistakes through practical, reflective exercises.

4.2.2 Social Work Programme

During the reporting period, the Residential Social Worker conducted a total of 53 individual therapeutic sessions. Despite consistent counselling and interventions, interpersonal conflicts among residents persisted, which is common when working with adolescents from diverse and complex backgrounds, as varying emotional needs and behavioural patterns often intersect.

Further assessment revealed that a significant proportion of these conflicts involved one particular resident who struggled to maintain positive relationships with both peers and staff.

Targeted therapeutic interventions were implemented to help the resident develop insight into his personality traits and behavioural patterns, with a focus on understanding the emotional impact of his actions on others.

Despite these efforts, the resident demonstrated ongoing resistance to acknowledging his challenges and showed limited willingness to engage in meaningful behavioural change. He consistently expressed a desire to leave the programme, largely due to restrictions on inappropriate peer relationships and prohibited behaviours, including smoking within the facility.

Following due process and careful consideration, the decision was made to discharge the resident from the programme.

Outcomes:

During the reporting period, a total of 53 individual therapeutic sessions were conducted, addressing key areas such as identity development, abandonment issues, low self-esteem, anger management, and suicidal ideation.

One young person, Gift (pseudonym), who has struggled with anger management, has demonstrated notable commitment to the therapeutic process. Through consistent participation in individual sessions, he is developing healthier coping mechanisms and more effective emotional regulation strategies. His active engagement reflects positive progress and increasing self-awareness.

4.3 Third Pillar: ABET Education for children with learning impairments

- The Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) Programme offers Foundation Phase and Levels 1–4 classes daily from 08:00 to 13:30.
- The programme currently offers eight learning areas:
 - Mathematics
 - English
 - Human and Social Sciences
 - Economic and Management Sciences
 - Natural Sciences
 - Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMME)
 - Life Orientation

Programme Structure

All learners undergo an initial assessment upon admission to determine appropriate placement.

Learners complete self-assessment tasks before progressing to new modules.

NQF Level 1 (ABET Level 4) learners compile portfolios for submission to the IEB for evaluation and Umalusi for accreditation.

Examinations are written twice per year, enabling motivated learners to complete two levels annually.

Learners over 18 who struggle with the mainstream ABET curriculum are placed in the Foundation Phase class, focusing on basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Academic Achievements

- **June 2025 Examination Cycle:** Five learners sat for Level 4 (equivalent to Grade 9). Four learners successfully passed, reflecting a strong pass rate and consistent academic support.
- **November 2025 Examination Cycle:** Three learners passed all Level 4 subjects. Notably, one learner achieved higher credits across subjects, demonstrating exceptional dedication and performance.

Additionally, three learners who were unable to read and write at enrolment have shown measurable progress through visual learning methodologies and individualised academic support. These learners are now demonstrating improved literacy and comprehension skills. These outcomes demonstrate the programme's commitment to academic recovery, inclusive teaching strategies, and individualised learner progression.

4.4 Fourth Pillar: Vocational training & job market preparation

During the reporting period, two young people were referred for vocational training opportunities.

One young person successfully secured a learnership in hygiene and cleaning and was subsequently referred for a baking learnership. She progressed through the programme and secured formal employment with **The House Group**, demonstrating a clear pathway from skills development to sustainable employment and active economic participation.

In the woodwork component, two young people designed and constructed cupboards, which were sold for profit. This accomplishment highlights the development of technical skills, initiative, and entrepreneurial thinking.

Additionally, three young people independently initiated a paving project, using available bricks to construct a pathway outside the yard. The project required planning, measurement, coordination, and execution, showcasing their practical problem-solving abilities.

Notably, two of the boys involved are currently experiencing academic challenges within the ABET programme. Despite this, their practical aptitude was evident, as they demonstrated strong visualization skills, structured planning, accurate measurement, appropriate material selection, and effective teamwork.

Their commitment and collaboration serve as a powerful reminder that young people possess diverse strengths. When provided with supportive, skills-based opportunities, they can thrive and realize remarkable potential.

5. Future Plans – Including challenges and ways to deal with them

During the period under review, our staff actively explored practical ways to equip beneficiaries with the skills and tools needed to enhance their employability in an increasingly competitive job market.

As a result, programme facilitators have recommended to Management that additional resources be secured to fund driver's licences for all beneficiaries and to incorporate structured job exposure into the training programme.

Looking ahead, the programme will also focus on raising public awareness about the importance of supporting individuals with learning disabilities. The institution plans to implement targeted PR campaigns, engaging influential individuals to serve as ambassadors and advocate for the programme in various capacities.

6. Impact Stories (2025–26)

❖ Skills Programme

A highlight of this reporting period has been witnessing the growth of **Thulani Simelani**, a young man previously illiterate, who is now employed as part of the maintenance staff at St. George's. Through mentorship and skills development, Thulani has mastered landscaping and continues to flourish within the organization. His transformation exemplifies the positive futures we aim to create for all children in our care.

Additionally, we are excited to announce that **two of our young people** have been selected to participate in an accredited **NQF Level 2 Basic Kitchen Appliances course** in Turfontein, organized by **Believers Care Society**. This program is scheduled from **April to June 2026**, providing further opportunities for skills development and sustainable employment pathways.

❖ Social Work Programme

John* was admitted to St. George's Home on **10 August 2023**, following proper admission procedures facilitated by the case manager from **Childline Gauteng**. The placement decision was prompted by concerns raised by his foster parent regarding his behavioural challenges, including returning home late and under the influence of alcohol.

During his court proceedings, a substance test conducted by **SANCA** confirmed drug use, which led the magistrate to recommend that John* be placed in a facility offering close supervision, specifically a **Child and Youth Care Centre (CYCC)**.

After thorough assessments and application procedures, John* met the requirements and was successfully admitted to St. George's. Since his admission, John* has been attending school at St. George's Life Campus and has shown remarkable academic progress. With consistent **psychosocial support and therapy** from both the social worker and psychologist, he has overcome significant challenges. We are proud to share that John* is completing his final subject this year and has been confirmed as an **A+ student** by the ABET teacher. If he passes, he will achieve **Level 4**, enabling him to register for his ABET Matric in 2027.

Program pictures:

