

YOUNG PEOPLE'S STORIES FROM WORTHING

An ethnographic study by local leaders in Worthing
and a call to action to make Worthing a place for young people to thrive.



LOCAL VISION

SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP PHASE TWO YOUNG PEOPLE AND MENTAL HEALTH

WORDS **TINA FAVIER, STRATEGIC LEAD FOR PREVENTION, NHS COASTAL WEST SUSSEX CCG**

INTRODUCTION

This piece of work is the second systems leadership programme to take place in Worthing, with the National Leadership Centre, building on our first programme (Mental Health and Homelessness).

This second phase uses and extends our systems leadership learning and approach and adds in a new dimension of design thinking and framing on a new “wicked issue” (i.e. complex and system wide) around young people and good mental health.

OUR AMBITION

Leaders from phase one (with a few additional people) came together for this work to:

1. Further develop their systems leadership thinking and capabilities, for this group and others; and
2. Transform our collective thinking, using a design centred approach, around young people and mental health; moving from a mind-set of what is missing, to what young people need and have that helps them to Thrive.

This paper and illustration describes and illuminates the learning and outputs for others in our system. Our hope is that this work is used by others – commissioners, providers, elected officials and anyone else interested – to help them think differently (and more imaginatively) in terms of what we might fund, how we

commission and our shaping of work around young people and the wider community in order to cultivate the very elements that will help all young people to thrive in our communities.

OUR LEARNING AND TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY

Our work on systems leadership has been truly transformative. Taking the time out of just doing and focusing on the how has helped to gain, challenge and grow our mind-sets, behaviours and actions across three areas:

Our cognitive style - enabling us to think more systemically (not just about our organisation or issue); the way we can handle complexity; making judgements during ambiguity;

Our personal approach - our self-management and resilience (when the going gets tough); our ability to be reflective and learn; our self-awareness of behaviour patterns;

Interpersonal abilities and skills - taking multiple perspectives (seeing it as others might); our ability to empathise; the flexibility of our style.

This has led us to hold different types of conversations about how we might think about our actions and behaviours across three areas of systems leadership that are conducive to more positive and collective practice:

1. Convening conversations for change - how we can build alliances and networks, be creative together and have effective dialogue.

2. Handling immunity to change - shift often “stuck” thinking about issues, handle anxiety, deal with power differentials and our own biases, assumptions and fixed views.

3. Outside-in design thinking - centre our design of projects, creatively, around the individual, their behaviours and with them.

OUR APPROACH

Our desire was to continue to build on the way we think and act on and around complex issues and continue to grow together our system leadership capabilities in and beyond a core group of local leaders. In developing the framework for this approach we wanted to build on our previous learning and find new design principles and frameworks to fit with this new way of thinking; to shift up a gear our thinking and embed these capabilities across our core business.

This has been sponsored and supported by the National Leadership Centre, who have a wealth of experience in systems leadership. This provided a Systems Leadership Enabler to support and challenge those involved.

LOCAL SPONSORS

Adur and Worthing Councils (AWCs), Coastal West Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), West Sussex County Council (WSCC), all part-funded this work. AWCs also provided a Designer to work with the team throughout this work.

LEADERS INVOLVED

Adur and Worthing Councils - Head of Wellbeing, Communities and Wellbeing Manager

Coastal Clinical Commissioning Group – GP Clinical Lead for Prevention

Mental Health, Public Health, Head of Communities and Partnerships, Head of Social Care

MIND - Chief Executive

Northbrook College – Principal

Sussex Police, District Commander

West Sussex County Council - Head of Social Care, Commissioning lead for Young People

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to say a special thank you, in particular, to those young people that took part in this piece of work, who shared their stories and were so open about their lives. We would also like to thank Ajo Clua – our Project Designer – who is enormously creative and challenging – and Matt Gott, our Leadership Centre Enabler, along with all of those leaders that contributed their time and energy to this work.

WHY STORIES MATTER?

Between 2015 and 2017, as part of the Systems Leadership Local Vision work, a group of Local Partners embarked on an exciting project following a user-centred methodology to understand and identify opportunities to help young people to thrive, and to respond to them in a creative way.

When exploring a complex challenge, it is important to have a real understanding of the people you are trying to help. We all have assumptions, most of us have been young, but only the youth of today know what it is like to grow up in Worthing.

WHERE DID WE START?

We started planning a discovery phase collaboratively. Local partners defined the enquiry themes and who we wanted to meet. They became researchers for a day to find out more about our big question.

WHO DID WE MEET?

We decided to meet young people aged 16 to 19 who live in Worthing to understand what matters to them and what helps them to thrive. We wanted to focus on young people who are experiencing or have experienced: mental health issues, offending, not being in employment, education or training (NEET) and living in unstable accommodation (e.g. homeless).

WHAT DID WE WANT TO FIND OUT?

Our enquiry themes were based on the five ways to wellbeing, which were adapted as described below:

HAVING A SENSE OF SELF

Being a 16-19 year old is a key developmental phase where young people are defining who they are; there is a conflict between their level of independence and dependence. We want to

explore their identity, what makes them feel valued and how they approach transitions and new routines.

BEING CONNECTED AND SUPPORTED

There is an assumption that young people have a support network available to them; with family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in the local community. We want to explore their relationships, who helps them and who they help, both formally and informally, and how giving is perceived.

HAVING A PURPOSE & ENJOYING LIFE

There is an assumption that young people have a sense of purpose for the present, want to feel good about themselves and want a good life. We want to explore what their aspirations are, what being active means to them, the experiences they are after, what they want to learn, where they belong and how they face change.

LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

There is an assumption that young people have clear aspirations for the future. We want to explore how they think about the future, what they would love to do in the future and how they will get there.

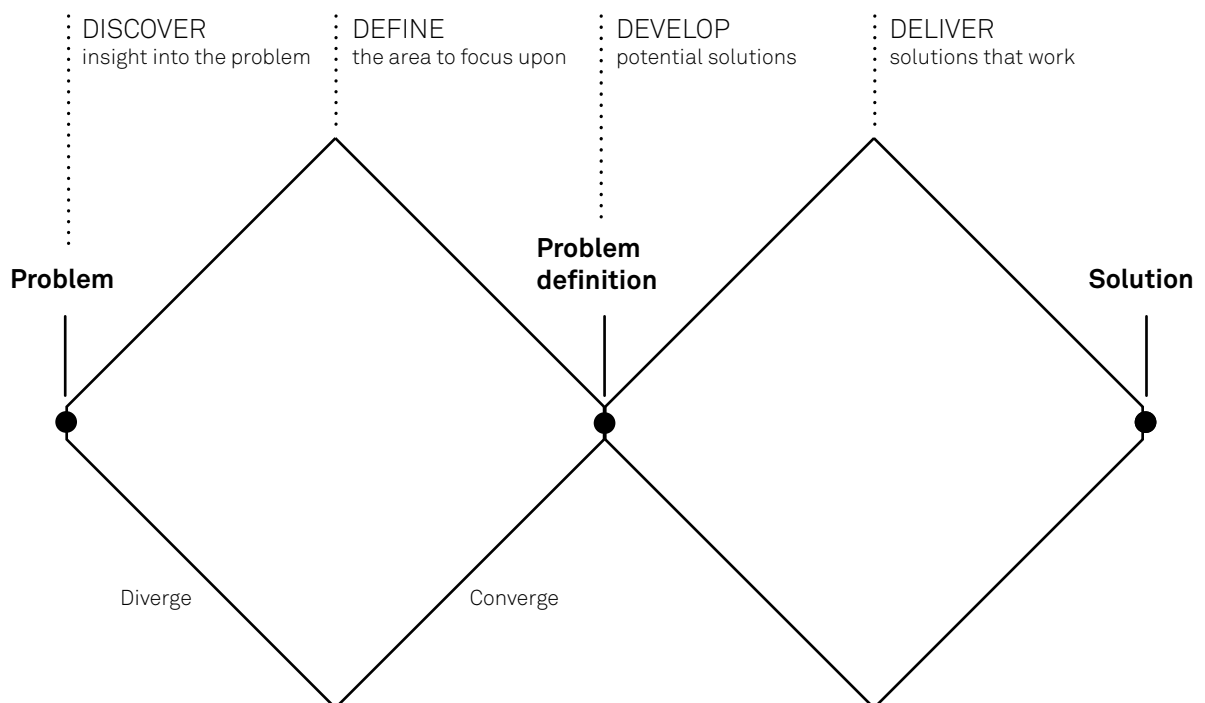
LEARNING FROM STORIES

Researchers spent time with 12 young people in a place of their choice and immersed themselves in their lives for a few hours. The following pages contain the learning from the stories of the young people we met and their thoughts around our enquiry themes.

We want to thank the inspiring young people we met, who kindly shared their experiences with us, and to who we are immensely grateful, as it has shined a light on our understanding of what helps young people to thrive. Names of participants have been changed to protect their anonymity.

The Design Council's 'Double Diamond' design process model is used as the framework for the current design process of the Local Vision project.

A Service Design approach can help to achieve a real understanding of people, working with partners in a collaborative and creative way and learning through testing.



The Double Diamond, Design Council, UK

WHAT DO YOUNG PEOPLE NEED TO THRIVE?

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The ingredients of what young people need to thrive have emerged from the ethnographic research carried out by Local Vision partners.

OPPORTUNITIES TO
FIND WHAT YOU
LOVE!

FEELING LIKE
YOU BELONG; GOOD
RELATIONSHIPS

SEEING ME AS A
WHOLE PERSON

TAKE TIME FOR
YOURSELF

BEING READY FOR
THE FUTURE &
INDEPENDENT

OPPORTUNITIES TO FIND WHAT YOU LOVE!

“My life needs to have a sense of purpose to justify living”

Exposing young people to multiple experiences to challenge preconceptions and open up new horizons. What makes people hook into their passion?

FEELING LIKE YOU BELONG; GOOD RELATIONSHIPS

“There’s someone there for me!”

Having stable predictable relationships, the ones that you can trust will be there next week. Faith and grandparents help young people to feel like they belong. Some intimate relationships can also be problematic. Having a network formed by strong and weak ties provides access to multiple experiences, support and informal information (for example jobs, college, parties). Young people build a network in college.

SEEING ME AS A WHOLE PERSON

Professionals understanding the person holistically, seeing people as individuals. Professionals who take time and see the person behind the label. Professionals being prepared to go the extra mile. Strong long-term support. Personalisation and having options is key (such as with housing, a personal budget).

People react differently to labels like dyslexia. Labels can be good if they help people understand what makes them who they are, but they can be bad if people get stuck with them and they become a barrier to moving forward. Or, they can be ugly; other people’s assumptions and judgements make the label become a barrier (stigma).

TAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

Having time to learn about themselves, banking good stuff and reflecting on the past. Understanding your personal story and how it manifests in you. Developing a sense of yourself in the world. What helps people understand their personal story?

Accepting things will go wrong and learn how to cope when they do. To grow; having boundaries is as important as allowing young people to make mistakes.

BEING READY FOR THE FUTURE & INDEPENDENT

Knowing what support is out there and who to ask for help. Help that is appropriate and appealing so young people are interested in asking. Consistency of relationships and financial capacity help people be ready for the future.

Being self aware that when moments of change happen, it’s ok to feel anxious and there are ways around it. Consistency of professionals, people knowing what to offer and being aware helps.

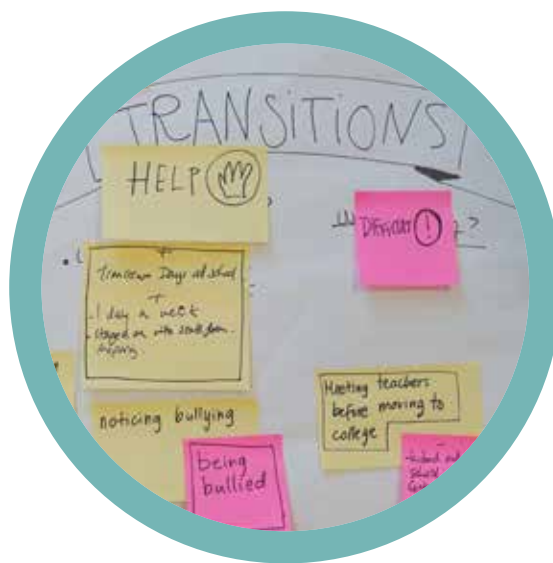
WE NEED YOUR HELP

IF YOU COMMISSION,
PROVIDE SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
OR WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE,
YOU CAN HELP BRING CHANGE.



>> Discuss the design principles with young people and your team.

What does it mean to them?
What does it mean to the work you do?
Can you do anything differently?



>> Co-design interventions with young people and your team.

What ideas would make a difference?
Consider what pieces of work could be co-designed with young people?



>> Develop a strengths-based approach to your work with young people.

A strengths-based approach is a collaborative process between the person supported by services and those supporting them, allowing them to work together to determine an outcome that draws on the person's strengths and assets.

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?

Since this work has been carried out, Coastal Care leaders have been developing new Local Community Networks (LCNs) to transform the way local leaders can improve health and wellbeing outcomes for people through place-based networks. This work will be used to support the delivery of one of the core priorities of the Adur and Worthing LCNs – Improving mental health for Young People in Adur and Worthing.

We've also been working with local schools around the principle 'Feeling Like You Belong; Good Relationships' through the development of OneGoodFriend. There has been appetite from other schools to get involved and further consideration needs to be taken on what should happen next.

CONTACT DETAILS

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JADE

“I WANT TO BE A BETTER PERSON,
MORE CONFIDENT, HAPPY AND SUCCESSFUL”

WORDS **SUE DARE, NORTHBROOK COLLEGE**

Jade is a socially isolated young woman who has recently (7 months ago) moved from the place she grew up in Adur to live with her mum and their family dog in a small flat in Worthing.

When we met she had brought along her boyfriend for moral support and she was friendly and talkative. Jade looked relaxed and interested but not particularly cheerful. She engaged with me directly and thoughtfully, but was different with her mum, who made us both a cup of tea, more challenging and somewhat sulky at times.

Jade describes herself as having a ‘borderline personality disorder’, as ‘depressed’, ‘narcissistic’ and having ‘lost trust’ in those around her. She feels ‘different’ from others and has felt that for many years, but she has also stopped being shy and a victim and changed to ‘someone who wouldn’t take any crap’.

HOME

Mum has given Jade and her boyfriend her bedroom and sleeps in the small living room, which is linked to the bathroom and kitchen. The room is homely but cramped and Jade says that on her good days she helps to keep the flat clean but on her bad days she won’t and this is a cause of friction between her and her mum.

HISTORY

She locates the reasons for this as the life experiences she has had, which include very intense and unsustained friendships as a child, and being bullied at school. In addition, she had a violent and abusive father in the family home who also has mental health problems, of whom she was scared and who she saw being sectioned.

The break-up of her parents’ marriage was difficult as a result of his behaviour,

with a particular episode leading to police involvement and her mother leaving to live in Worthing with her remaining with her father in the family home so she could complete her schooling. She describes him as a drug addict who used marijuana regularly, and who attempted to overdose on methadone while she was living with him.

She then describes moving out of this home to live with a friend, sharing a room with other girls when one of their friends sexually assaulted her. Her friend's father banned the man from his house, but due to feeling unsafe, she chose to move out of the area and into Worthing. She met her boyfriend when living near her childhood home and he visits her regularly in Worthing, spending time in the flat, although when she is feeling good she will travel over to see him too.

She recounts these traumatic incidents without much emotion, although with a sense that they have affected her and says she has had to 'tell her story over and over again' to many professionals such as GPs and counsellors. Nonetheless, she was happy to go over this again with me and it was clear she has spent a lot of time trying to make sense of her life and why she is as she is. There was puzzlement about a split in her days – some good, some bad. She is very familiar with the language of mental health diagnosis and treatment, reeling off a list of different anti-depressant medication with which she had been treated over the years. When asked whether medication helped, she felt it could make her calmer when she was 'hyper' but that she didn't like taking it and often didn't.

Jade attempted suicide at a particularly low point before she moved in with her mum and at that point was assessed by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) but she didn't feel it led anywhere. At another point in our conversation she describes having some CBT sessions but again didn't feel these led anywhere.

DAILY ROUTINE

Jade describes having gone for interviews for jobs and being offered these jobs as she comes across as confident and articulate, and then choosing not to do the job. She is currently not in employment, education or training ('NEET') but is being put under pressure to find paid work as a condition of her benefit.

BEING TOLD 'YOU ARE NOT GOOD ENOUGH'

When we discuss what skills she has, she talks about being good at Science and Health at secondary school and hoping to become a forensic scientist but although she went into the sixth form, she felt she was being told she was not good enough so left school after a few months. She also had a three month trial in a local shop near her childhood home and thought she was doing well but was told she would not be kept on after this which further dented her self-esteem. She describes herself as never being good enough.

TIPS FOR MANAGING HER CONDITION

Jade is currently with a new GP who she hopes will be better than her previous one. Through her, she has accessed support from the charity MIND and sees someone weekly or fortnightly. She is critical of the counselling she had prior to this arrangement as she found the counsellors, while they would listen, were not giving her tips for managing her condition, as well as the lack of continuity in who she got to see. She felt that the counselling she was having now was much better but insufficient in changing her from where she is – although she reiterated that she was unsure where she wanted to be. She expressed anxiety about change and a lack of control in her life and also thought that hormones were exacerbating her emotional state. She describes herself as a shy caring child who was now a 'gobby teenager.'

INDEPENDENT-MINDED

When asked where she sees herself in terms of independence/ dependence, Jade felt she was quite independent-minded, but dependent financially and domestically on her mother.

ASPIRATIONS

She has been accepted to be an Avon representative and is due to go on their training in the next few weeks. She would ideally like a job where she worked from home, as she doesn't consider herself as a person who works well in a team. She hated sport and other team activities at school.

She doesn't do any physical activities but she goes out for walks with the dog, her mum or her boyfriend. She and her mum had tried active walking and doing some squats with the TV, but this had not been maintained.

INFORMAL SUPPORT

It seemed that her mum had read up about the kind of things that might help Jade's condition and that she was prepared to give them a go but found them difficult to sustain, especially on her 'bad days'.

THE FUTURE: BE A BETTER PERSON

When exploring what other futures she described being 'a better person – more confident, happy and successful'. She would like to have a good job with good money able to afford a nice place to live, a car, and to be able to take a holiday. Having never been abroad she would love to visit New York and also expressed a desire to live in America as she doesn't like Britain.

RELATIONSHIPS

When asked who she was closest to, she named her boyfriend and mum and the dog. She has a half-sister who has an 18 month

old daughter, Jade's niece, who she sees quite regularly and likes taking to the park, playing with and feeding and caring for. She and her mum have fallen out with this sister over Jade's mental health condition which can make this difficult. She also mentions seeing her Nan occasionally but has little contact with her Dad although he is quite poorly at present.

REFLECTIONS

The impact of moving out of the known, albeit, risky environment into a new area has intensified her isolation and made Jade more dependent on her key familial relationships.

The importance of continuity of relationships with professionals came out in her frustration with the variability and short term nature of those encounters she had had to date.

The influence of, and resistance to, her mum, in a very confined area. This was originally her mother's space but Jade was fully occupying it while also being resentful of what she saw as interference from her mother. She was not expected to empathise with her mother because she had been diagnosed as not able to do so.

Medicalisation and therapeutic language has framed and directed her self-image which is a barrier to trying to change as she seems 'fixed' in her personality state. This doesn't really fit with her wish to be different.

The gap between reality and aspirations. Could Jade's aspirations be better mobilised to help her?



MIKE

“I WANT TO LEARN ABOUT PEOPLE
AND HOW THE WORLD WORKS”

WORDS **HOWARD HODGES, SUSSEX POLICE**

Mike is a young man aged 17 born outside the UK. He has moved between USA and UK, settling in the UK in 2007. He has a reputation of being funny with no fear.

HISTORY

Mike had disrupted schooling and friendships and challenging parental circumstances, both being alcoholics.

Mike has never met his father and he sees her mother once a fortnight.

HOME

Mike lived with his grandparents and his sister in Broadwater for many years in a semi-detached house in a residential area. His family ties with grandparents are very strong.

Mike's great grandfather was a professional footballer.

EDUCATION

Mike had challenging early school experiences, and was moved between schools. He felt misunderstood by teachers.

At his last school Mike had individual tutoring, which made a difference. He performed poorly in GCSEs, having a D in English and E in Maths.

Mike is currently studying mechanics and re-taking his GCSEs.

SPORT: A POSITIVE FOCUS

Sports have been a consistent interest and positive focus for Mike. He likes to keep fit and play football, and wanted to be a professional as a child. Mike used to race BMX bikes.



SMOKING AT AN EARLY AGE

Mike started smoking when he was 13, and smoked seriously when he was 15 (20 per day and only regulated by available money).

He wants to give up smoking and get fitter.

DIFFICULT BREAK UP

Mike had a difficult split from his girlfriend last year which has caused him depression. He has attended his GP but has not discussed it with family or friends.

HAVING A SENSE OF SELF

His role models are his grandfather and Robin Williams. He has watched him make inspirational speeches.

Mike rates himself as 7 out of 10 in terms of happiness. He likes his energy and sociable nature and dislikes his occasional poor behaviour.

BEING CONNECTED AND SUPPORTED

Mike has a good family and good friends around him; a wide, casual group of friends. Mike's closest relationship is grandfather, who he can rely on fully.

Mike likes to be with similar people to him and socialises every night until 10pm when returns home to eat. He hardly ever eats with family and or friends.

GIVING

The last presents he gave were for his grandfather's birthday. He gave him cashew nuts and raisins.

Mike likes to help others. He recalls rolling up their fags and fitting a new exhaust for his grandfather's car. He gives advice to friends; recently he gave advice to an assault victim.

NOT GIVING UP ON HIM

Mike has some difficulties with teachers at college but they don't give up on him as others have done.

TRUST

He trusts doctors and dentists; he sees them as respected people.

HAVING A PURPOSE & ENJOYING LIFE

Mike previously worked in retail (retailer of car maintenance and cycling), where he learned new skills and welcomed responsibility.

Mike wants to be appreciated and be a good person. He wants to learn about people and how the world works.

His passion is doing up classic cars and bikes. He wants to be a mechanic. He also wants to race 'ridiculous' cars like Camaro Z28.

On a typical day, Mike is up at 7 am. For him, being active is important and finds laziness annoying.

He enjoys going to the cinema, fresh air at the beach and going to Brighton. He likes to play pool, football and go bowling.

Mike prefers the winter time but summer makes him happier.

He enjoys the company of older people.

"I miss the innocence of youth."

Mike thinks violence ('beefs') are common place and that Worthing town centre is seen as unsafe; "fights are never reported to police as it would make it worse".

LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

Mike wants to achieve and do well in College. He wants to get an apprenticeship and is keen to develop car projects and renovations.

Longer term, Mike aspires to own his own business, a garage, and to be happy.

His priorities are family, friends and to have good people in his life.

He is confident that he can achieve, provided he both concentrates and is not distracted by others things.



SAMANTHA

“I AM A LEARNER, I MAKE MISTAKES AND LEARN FROM THEM, BUT THIS DECISION IS SCARY”

WORDS **DEBRA BALFOUR, WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL**

Samantha is a 17 year old young woman who has been in the care system since she was 4 years old. She lives in Worthing with her aunt and uncle and maintains contact with her birth mother, older sister and two older brothers.

DAILY ROUTINE

Samantha goes to college four days a week, although she only counts three as Mondays is for Maths and English (to get to a GCSE grade) so that is not the same.

The three main days are spent doing drama and singing, when Samantha feels most able to express herself. On Wednesday's she goes to work in a local shop which she enjoys.

Samantha rarely gets time for breakfast in the morning but does take a snack to eat when hungry before lunch, which is important because she doesn't like to eat


in front of others, unless she knows them well and is comfortable, so she may not eat lunch if in a group in college at lunch time.

Samantha has a family meal each evening, most often cooked by her uncle, and spends most of her Sundays off with family - catching up with her birth siblings or mother, who all live locally - unless she is too tired, when she will stay home and sleep for the day.

HAVING A SENSE OF SELF

Feeling independent is important. Samantha says she knows she is a sensitive person who does not like to feel judged. She tries to have an “I don't really care, I have better things to do” attitude but ends up “almost like worrying about everything”.

“I think I am fine physically but mentally not great because of feeling depressed because of everything that's happened in my life... I



**“You forget all your problems
and situations, you feel
different, it refreshes you”.**

look back too much... it keeps going around in my head... people judging me”.

But,

“I am me, if no-one likes it then go,... I have a bit of wanting to change everything and also change nothing. What happened in life and where you ended up is where you belong, who you are”.

Samantha is involved with CAMHS, “I am not keen on CAMHS to be honest, I am very angry about the fact there is not a lot of mental health organisations... having a six month waiting list... CAMHS asking the counsellor how I am... why ask the counsellor? I live in my own body and can say how I feel, but they never ask me. I am waiting to hear what comes next (at the end of the agreed counselling sessions). I know I am not right, my auntie can see it, my doctor has written, but the counsellor says they don’t think I am depressed, I don’t want

them to make out like I am making it all up.”

Samantha’s frustration with services is very clear. She articulates in many ways that she does not feel included in decisions made about her and for her.

BEING CONNECTED AND SUPPORTED

Samantha spends a lot of time alone but states that she feels very safe and supported by her family, who she chooses to spend most free time with.

“I have a lot of family who care about me, even though friends are not understanding, I have lots of family who care”.

“I do struggle with friends, best thing is knowing they are there for you and are understanding. I hang around with a few people and I had this friend but we are on a rocky road at the moment”.

“Sometimes I don’t like the idea of being alone so I sit with others to listen to their conversation or I go to the library and I work or read”.

“I do like to be on my own... I can decide what I want to do... but I did get to the point it was a bit much and I need to socialise with some people”.

Samantha is closest to family, then the shop’s regular customers, her GP and counsellor. After that she places teachers and friends.

HAVING A PURPOSE AND ENJOYING LIFE

Samantha enjoys her course (apart from the English and Maths) and her job in the shop chatting to the customers. She loves to sing and be a performer and wants to try to go further with this “you forget all your problems and situations, you feel different, it refreshes you.” Her favourite place is the beach and also likes to bake, either alone or with her auntie, “trying a tricky recipe together”.

Samantha wants to carry on with college next year but needs to pass English and Maths. She has mentioned that she has already written these off as she “can’t do them”. When asked what she would do if not able to carry on with her course next year if she doesn’t pass English and Maths she says she hasn’t thought about it or put both those pieces together, that she needs to find out if she can continue without those grades.

LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

Samantha has some big decisions to make. Not only is she unsure what will happen regarding her course next year but her aunt and uncle are moving to another part of the country. She has to decide whether to move with her aunt and uncle and leave her other family behind or stay in Worthing,

in loggings, in order to stick with what she knows and be able to see other family members when she wants to.

“I’m a learner, I make mistakes and learn from them – but this decision is scary. I’m afraid to move away – to people and things I don’t know – what will the negative effects be? Worthing is a safe place for me but I feel safe with my auntie and uncle... At times I feel lost but they want me to feel safe... but I love my sister and other family... I look up to my older sister and brothers, they are all happy in their lives now... what will others think about my decision?”

Ultimately Samantha would like to be a musician or fundraise for charities, not just for one but for different types as people have lots of different needs. She wouldn’t mind marriage or children but would like to foster because that is what happened to her and she would like to give something back:

“I would like to give back. I understand being in care, so could understand how they feel... I would like to be successful like my siblings and be understanding, and overcome the things I have experienced”.

In all discussions, including using other language for ‘finance’, Samantha did not discuss money and being able to pay bills or be financially self-sufficient apart from saving money from her job because she didn’t know where she would be living; but this line of discussion then quickly moved to saving money for electrical devices for college.

When asked what services would be useful to her, and others like her, she said she would like an organisation or group in Worthing who would do activities and nice things for young people in care or leaving care where they could understand each other.



RUTH

“HAVING STRUCTURE AND BEING INVOLVED
IN ACTIVITIES THAT GIVE ME CONFIDENCE IS IMPORTANT”

WORDS **AMANDA RADLEY, WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL**

Ruth is 17 years old and a Jehovah's Witness. She was born in Cornwall and doesn't recall any contact with her father. She has an older sister and a younger brother. When Ruth was 6 years old they came to live nearer her grandparents in the Worthing area. At 12 her grandmother died and she recalls this having a big impact on her and her family.

Ruth's faith is very important to her and her family are Jehovah's witnesses, although her mother doesn't practice this so actively.

At 15, Ruth disclosed to those at her church, and subsequently what life was like at home to a pastoral lead at school.

As a result, children's social care became involved and ultimately it was agreed that her and her brother would move in with a family from church with whom they were friendly and were willing to support them. This has recently become a permanent foster care placement.

DAILY ROUTINE

Ruth attends college and is studying accounting; this involves attending college 3 days a week.

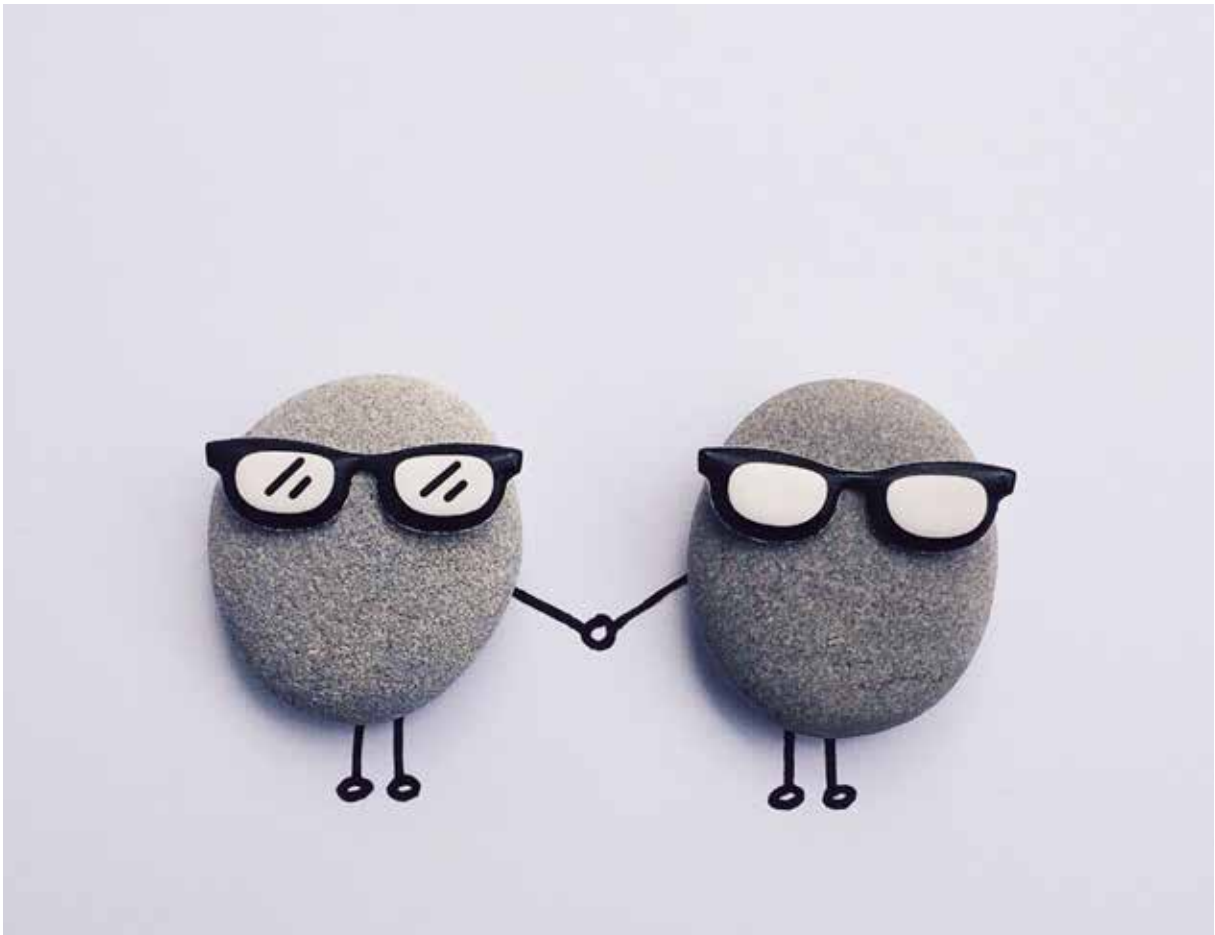
She is currently undertaking work experience as part of her course and she received support to do this through the County Council.

Ruth spends her other time studying and helping in the house.

She is involved in volunteering activities through her faith, for example distributing leaflets.

Ruth loves the South Downs and walking. She enjoys shopping and goes to the cinema with another family most weeks.

At present she is not having any contact with her mum or older sister, who chose to stay with her mum.



HAVING A SENSE OF SELF

Faith is central to Ruth's identity and this has developed as she has got older. She describes being baptized recently and says this has given her confidence.

Some things that were tried with her family did not work but she was able to say this.

Small gestures and things being done can make a big difference.

For Ruth, having structure is important, and being involved in activities that give her confidence, for example drama show.

BEING CONNECTED AND SUPPORTED

Ruth knew the people she could turn to to get help through school and her faith.

It isn't just the role but the person in it, e.g. the pastoral lead in school has to be open and show they care.

She uses the Scripture for guidance.

Ruth thinks it is important that services are well advertised so people know where to go for help.

She really appreciates the support given to get work experience through the care leavers' service; she felt a bit lost with how to do this.

School is really important; "I enjoyed learning".

HAVING A PURPOSE AND ENJOYING LIFE

Ruth would like to do art and more sporting activities but doesn't have much money. She would like more opportunities for support for younger people to participate.

She would like to seek work to get some money to save for a car and would like to learn to drive.

Singing lessons in school were really helpful; helped her breathe.

Ruth may study other things, for example childcare.

LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

Ruth would like to be married. She is worried that she wants to have a good relationship and meet the right person.

She would like to be working at home. Ruth has studied accountancy so she can have this flexibility.

Ruth wants to be involved in her faith, volunteer work, building work from 18 years. She would like to travel through her faith.

She would like to be in contact with her brother.

She understands its not always going to go right so needs to know where you can get support.



SUE

“I ENJOY DISCUSSING ENVIRONMENTAL
AND POLITICAL ISSUES WITH FRIENDS”

WORDS **AMANDA RADLEY, WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL**

Sue is 18 years old and has recently moved out of her foster carers, with whom she lived for six years. She is living in a one bed room in her grandmother's garden. Sue describes how she was very happy at her foster carers but made the decision to move into her new accommodation to be closer to her family as they were finding it difficult. There are other family members living with her grandmother, some permanently and some as transitional arrangements.

Sue witnessed domestic abuse and her mother's substance misuse; she describes quite a chaotic home life and periods of homelessness.

She was in the care of her grandmother for periods of time and has also had a number of foster placements, her last was very positive.

Most significantly, when she was eight and her brother six, they were kidnapped by an unknown man (who they later found was doing this for her dad). This was a significant traumatic event that she describes the impact of which she describes as feeling fearful of walking alone in the dark.

Sue describes how she was 'labelled' with a number of conditions at school – eg autism, ADHD and Tourette's syndrome - her view now is that maybe she was just angry!

Sue describes herself as very political - she is a member of the green party and on the youth cabinet of a parish council. She enjoys discussing environmental and political issues with friends and researching to inform herself and others.

Sue wants to go to university but is unsure as to what work she wants to do other than be involved in working with people and making a difference.

DAILY ROUTINE

Sue attends Sixth Form every day. She has a car and drives to college.

She works part time and her financial independence is important to her.



HAVING A SENSE OF SELF

Not one size fits all – treating each person as an individual.

For social workers working with children specifically remember; “my life is your job”.

Don’t rush to label people.

“I don’t want to feel part of a system; I want to feel like an individual.”

Don’t forget to check what has been written down before – just because it is in black and white doesn’t make it true.

BEING CONNECTED AND SUPPORTED

Positive relationships happen when the person you are working with is honest and supportive, when they are clear about the expectations you can have from them and theirs of you.

Don’t be too rule bound - do what is the best thing to do for that individual.

Connections in the community are important and being involved in developing things. Sue was given a park to develop, and had to challenge attitudes of older people towards young people.

“School was my only safe place, the bell was always going to ring at the same time and English was always the same time, when home was broken that was so important.”

Her PA, friends and boyfriend provide support, college for education.

Sue wants to feel supported and that can trust those professionals around her; “I don’t want to hear about their problems or budget cuts.”

HAVING A PURPOSE AND ENJOYING LIFE

Political involvement and being aware of issues is important for Sue.

Sense of purpose to justify your point in living.

Discussing political and environmental issues with friends.

Researching issues to be more informed.

LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

Sue wants to travel and work in developing communities. She has a potential opportunity to do some work during holidays next year through the college.

For Sue, success depends on doing well in exams.

She will live independently at University, in semi-independent accommodation.

Relationships are important but she is not sure what the future holds.



BELLA

“I MAY GO TO UNIVERSITY BUT I DON’T KNOW
WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO STUDY”

WORDS **JACQUI COOKE, ADUR AND WORTHING COUNCILS**

Bella is a well presented 16 year-old who has lived in Shoreham for the last 12 years. She was adopted when she was four, having previously lived with her foster family in Littlehampton. Bella and her Mum are still in touch with her foster Mum and visits regularly.

Bella lives with her mum and dad and ‘sister’, who was adopted at the same time as her into this family from her foster family. Also in the family home are two foster children (18 months and 2 years old) who Bella speaks of in a very caring way. They have two dogs that Bella helps walk regularly.

Bella is generally in good health apart from her fracturing her ankle when she recently went ice skating.

DAILY ROUTINE

Bella attends college and is studying for three A Levels. Her daily routine is to get up every weekday morning at 6.30am and get the train to college which takes 40 mins. On Mondays and Wednesdays she has a full day at college (nine

to four), on Tuesdays and Thursdays she has two hour lectures and Fridays are free. When she is not in college Bella helps her mum with the little ones as her mum has just started fostering. Bella loves helping with the children and ‘her mum prefers her to help than her sister as she knows what she’s doing’. Bella feels she’s good at helping with the young children.

She is not sure what she would like to do in the next few years - maybe go to university but she doesn’t know what she would like to study. She spoke of being a teacher or a social worker but she had been advised against both. When looking forward, Bella’s ‘want’ for the next 10 years is to get a ‘proper job’.

In between lectures at college Bella ‘hangs out with her friends in the canteen’. Bella recognises that she has different groups of friends - from college and from school. Bella spends most of her social time in Worthing with her friends and her boyfriend, who she has been with for two years. If not at their houses, they tend to go to Costa or along the seafront in the summer. When she is in need of emotional support she goes to



her boyfriend or her three friends. For practical support Bella goes to her mum and her sister. When asked who she trusts the most it's her mum.

Bella enjoys Musical Theatre and is part of a youth group. Bella enjoys performing and she felt proud that she managed to take part in a production at the same time as doing her GCSEs and getting good grades. Bella and her family regularly attend Church and Bella enjoys helping at Messy Church and toddler activities.

Bella has recently started working at a supermarket on Saturdays and is proud of the fact that she doesn't need to rely completely on her parents for funds when she wants to go out. She commented that she pays for her own train fair to Chichester and doesn't see why her parents should pay that as she chose to go to Chichester College rather than Worthing College.

In her current situation Bella's only area that she finds challenging is relating to feeling in control. She admits that she relies heavily on her mum

and that her mum makes most of her decisions. She is worried that she might not be able to decide what to do next when she needs to look at her university choices.

Bella only spoke of one instance when things were not so good. Last summer there was a big family row and she ran away from Shoreham to Worthing. Her parents had called her boyfriend who met her at the station. Bella said she couldn't remember what they had rowed about but that she had bought presents for everyone to apologise.

Bella seems happy with her life and she feels very supported by her family and friends. She speaks caringly about all her family and talks fondly of her 'family Sundays'.

Her parents have spoken about moving to Cornwall and she wouldn't like that.

Bella admitted that she didn't have many life skills and that she would like to be a bit more independent - to be able to cook for herself - her boyfriend has said he would teach her.

ROXANNE

“LEARN TO LIVE WITH WHAT YOU’VE GOT AND LIVE WITH IT”

WORDS **TINA FAVIER, NHS COASTAL WEST SUSSEX CCG**

Roxanne is 18 years old and lives in Worthing with her foster mum, Nicky and Nicky’s son who is 15. She has a boyfriend who is 22. She describes her foster placement as ‘happy’ and ‘stable’.

FAMILY

Roxanne has seven brothers and sisters, six of which are half brothers and sisters, to either mum or dad, one is a full sister. Her mum “walked out” when she was two, and she then lived with her father.

Dad had issues with drugs (dealer and addict). He died when she was 11 and her mum died this year when Roxanne had just turned 18 years.

She lived with her step-mum following her father’s death until the age of 14 years. Their relationship deteriorated and Roxanne was “thrown out on the 2nd May 2012”.

Roxanne was fostered at the age of 14 and will be there until she is 21.

EDUCATION

Roxanne told me about several schools that she had attended, when she moved to Worthing including primary and secondary schools. She outlines a pattern of exclusions and being “kicked out”, talking about two incidents where she threw a chair at a teacher and kicked a teacher down the stairs.

She did not achieve her GCSEs (receiving a D, F, Es) first time round due to issues with drugs. She was reportedly “off her head” during exams.

Roxanne was expelled a number of times and attended a few Pupil Referral Units (PRUs).

COLLEGE AND ASPIRATIONS

Now at college, Roxanne started with an Art and Design course.

After a session getting her nails done, she was inspired to moved across to Beauty Therapy. She loved how it made her feel and talked of a desire to make other people feel good.



She moved into Level 2 Beauty Therapy (because she was too advanced for the first stage in terms of her qualifications). She really enjoys it.

Roxanne has had to re-sit her English and Maths GCSEs. She reported finally passing her English but failing her Maths. However she is on course to do Maths again and is confident she will pass. (Her exams coincide with her Mum's death and therefore she struggled).

Roxanne has started earning money through providing beauty therapy for private clients. She has also recently started a job at a supermarket.

PERSONALITY AND ATTITUDE TO LIFE

Friends would describe her as "gobby, happy, strong, enthusiastic, funny, the mother of friends, wise, generous, cold hearted".

Roxanne described herself as confident. "I am generous and kind and caring".

HEALTH

Roxanne described herself as being overweight for her height, but that's because she gave up drugs recently. "I am really quite healthy but obviously I smoke. Sometimes I binge on chocolate and crisps but I don't eat a lot. I walk and go on a treadmill... that's pretty much it".

- Roxanne painted a long picture of alcohol and drug abuse from an early age.
- She has been a smoker since the age of 11.
- Alcohol poisoning at 12.
- Smoked weed since the age of 13.
- Weed led to other drugs. She tried various drugs and got "off her face" a lot.

Drugs were funded through tick from dealers and Roxanne ended up spending most of her time with dealers in "safe" houses (she recognises the irony of this), coming home only when on a come down, which last three to four days.

HISTORY

Roxanne was born out of area with her mum, dad, sisters and brothers and she moved to Worthing when she was seven or eight years old.

Mum left when she was two. Dad got a new girlfriend when Roxanne was three. Dad died when Roxanne was 11, after which Roxanne lived with her step-mum.

The relationship with her step-mum deteriorated leading to Roxanne being “kicked out” at the age of 14.

For a short period, Roxanne was staying with a sister and auntie, until she was kicked out. She then did sofa surfing for several weeks, culminating in a visit by the Police as a ‘missing young person’.

Following one failed attempt, Roxanne’s foster mum was found and Roxanne felt she struck luck and has lived there since she was 14.

Roxanne describes a long personal history with drug abuse and has only recently reduced this dramatically.

At the age of 16, through a chance connection, Roxanne met her aunt (her mum’s sister). Shortly after this, she died. She had at the same time reconnected with her mum but she passed away earlier this year (after two years of getting to know her).

Her first meeting with mum was striking - her mum was nervous and had been drinking to calm her nerves. Mum’s struggles with her own mental health were apparent and Roxanne believes this was caused by her grandmother, who used to beat the children. She does not describe the first encounter. She was struck by her mum’s vulnerability.

Roxanne’s mum’s death has been very difficult for Roxanne, who now realises she is an “orphan” but also is still in shock at why her mum died, after she was doing so well in terms of her health.

NORMALITY

Life with foster mum is good. She describes it as doing “normal things”. Her foster mum takes Roxanne away and to concerts and has been there for her throughout.

“My foster mum is a real normal person. I’ve never experienced that”.

KEEPING BUSY

“I just enjoy being busy. I don’t like to waste my day”.

TYPICAL DAY

Getting up, seeing paying clients, spending time with her boyfriend, going to college and at the weekend working at a supermarket.

LIKES

She likes watching Vampire Diaries - the originals - and supernaturals, spending time with her boyfriend (and describes him as “grumpy, boring, short-fuse, temperamental,... but funny”. She met him two years ago and met through a friend) dancing (and going to illegal raves), socialising, working and beauty.

Drinking on the beach in the sun.

DISLIKES

Roxanne dislikes bitchiness, disrespect, phones at the dinner table.

She doesn’t like people and clarified this as having a radar and quick sense of people.

She dislikes needy people and considers herself quite a private person.

DESIRE TO BELONG

Roxanne described her desire to feel part of something. When she spent time with her mum’s sister in recent years she said it “felt nice” and that she “had something back”, like the “hole had got smaller... it was filled in a bit”.

Roxanne said that she has a great sense of belonging (self-score of five) mainly due to her



foster mum. She had strong views about those that foster needing to have the right motives (she gave lots of examples of others where this was not the case).

LOSS AND ABANDONMENT

There is a great sense of loss and feelings of being abandoned.

“My dad died when I was 11. My mum left when I was two. My step-mum ran away when I was 14 - she dumped her stuff on social services and left. I lived with my step-sister for 6 weeks (we’ve never been able to live together) and she kicked me out. Then I went to live with my auntie and then she kicked me out. There was no where I could go. I had no one that would have me”.

Her relationship with her step-mum deteriorated following the death of her father.

“She’d leave us at home on our own. She wouldn’t even feed us or leave us any money. She became very selfish”.

Roxanne described how her step-mum got a new boyfriend and spent less time with her. There was an incident with a boyfriend brought back to the house (a convicted paedophile - resulting in a court case). Roxanne got angry and was violent towards her.

Roxanne suggested they get support from Social Services and her step-mum got angry and packed Roxanne’s things, asking her to leave. A neighbour intervened and Roxanne stayed. Two days later, when Roxanne was at school, the pastoral leader came to tell Roxanne her step-mum had left and booked herself into a mental hospital”.

Roxanne asked her step-mum’s parents for help but they declined:

“They didn’t think that she was in the wrong. I felt like when they switched me off I had nothing. I got very angry... I thought, shit, what do I do? All my life people have left me. My dad died - I took that as abandonment - and then she’s gone and I felt like I wasn’t supposed to have anyone”.

Her auntie, just after being reconciled, died following years of alcohol issues.

Roxanne's mum died earlier this year, which was a great shock for Roxanne.

Her mum was doing really well and she struggles to understand how she can at 49 years have died from "natural causes".

Roxanne described the experience as not knowing how to feel. At the same time she realised that she is an orphan and said "I've got no one now". "I was completely beside myself for days... I didn't know how to feel. I felt like I just said hello to someone then I had to say goodbye... I was like, shit I am an orphan now..."

STRENGTH AND DETERMINATION

There were strong views and a sense of Roxanne's desire and need to be and appear strong, confident and determined.

She expressed a desire to be in control with money and not be in debt or owe anything.

"To look at me now. I think wow. I am doing something with my life... I think I am a good example of someone that has been through a lot and can still pick myself up".

"I am sort of like the mother of my friends".

She discussed a feeling of safety because "I have learned through my experiences through life. I have done it all and have got life skills".

WORKING HARD

Her work ethic and need to be busy was very strong. She has her own clients that she provides beauty therapy for. In addition she has also secured a weekend job at Sainsbury's which she really likes.

"I was due to start my new job two days after my mum died and I went in anyway".

ADVERSITY

I actually stayed at my mum's house for the first time in my life. It was more like being her carer than her daughter. She was so mentally

unstable. It was just like looking after her. At her mum's funeral she met a few of her aunties. She described how her grandma used to beat them all and cause them to be very unstable. "Mum had mental health issues because of this and now I understand why she had to leave. She didn't want to give us the life she had... but we ended up with one anyway [laughs]".

PUSHING PEOPLE AWAY

"... I was so astray I guess. I was pushing everyone away, so I just pushed and pushed until no one would have me anymore".

"I began to hate her [step-mum]. I began not to care".

"No one wanted me, so I came to live out that thought. I pushed everyone away. That's how I ended up in foster care. I was so horrible".

When she was taking drugs, she was getting thinner and angrier, only going home when she was on a come down which created real tensions with her foster mum.

A WAKE UP CALL

Roxanne talked about a few wake up calls... one being a major argument with her foster mum following an incident where her step brother wanted her to leave, the other following a "dodgy batch" which led to an episode where she hallucinated badly (describing in detail quite dark experiences). Both times she was asked to leave and both times her foster mum brought her back.

Both times her foster mum spoke to Roxanne and talked about her choices. The first conversation was at 16. "I didn't want to lose Nicky... I was still doing the drugs but I was weaning myself off them slowly." It was this that led her to reducing her drug intake to the point where she isn't really using that much. These events brought Roxanne a sense of and need to be in control of coming off drugs.

She talked about an incident following a dodgy batch of drugs and a conversation with her foster mum... Roxanne really apologised and Nicky responded with "you have to stop doing this to yourself".

EMOTIONAL HOLE

"If I had to give it a colour it would be black and if I was to give it a shape it would be pointy. It was just like I had this big hole getting bigger and bigger. I didn't know what to do so I lashed out".

NUMBING THE PAIN

Drugs for Roxanne was "escaping everyday life" "numbing" her feelings.

Roxanne described the first time she took cocaine. It was disgusting but she stated: "I loved the feeling. I felt quite drunk in a way... I just wanted to escape my life".

She talked about being "off her face" for many days at a time. On one occasion she was awake for 15 days. She described herself as being addicted and not wanting to come off it.

CONTROL

Some things make Roxanne have little sense of control - lack of support and money to get the things she needs (a car).

"I woke up one morning and thought I am not letting her do this anymore... I felt more and more like I can do this. One saying [my counsellor] Jerry taught me was 'I deeply and completely love and accept myself...' That was how I gained back control of my life. I wasn't letting anyone ruin my life anymore".

BEING CONNECTED AND SUPPORTED

Roxanne has a large family and described many relationships at different ends of the spectrum. Some have been extremely negative - her step-mum (and her boyfriend) and a few have been very positive and really helped her through (notably her foster mum and counsellor).

STICKING TOGETHER - CARING FOR

Roxanne said she wanted to push her away at first and talked about a few incidents where she had to stay away for a few nights due to her behaviour and drugs. However her foster mum stuck with her and she finally made her stable.

She describes her as being "fun", the "best mum", "outgoing" and "perfect" - always being there for her.

She has some very supportive connections in her life. Two of those people that stand out include her foster mum who she describes with great warmth, and her Counsellor, who really gets her.

FEELING THE SAME - SENSE OF BELONGING

Her elder sister (32 now) is a significant person for Roxanne. She looked after Roxanne and her sisters for most of her teenage life when her dad was unable to (due to problems with drugs). She describes her as similar to Roxanne - fiery, outgoing, fun, very good at making friends... This makes Roxanne feel like she is not alone.

Feeling similar - "like I am not the only one".

She has three good friends - few but quality relationships. She has a best friend who she describes as "fabulous" and a boyfriend.

Spending time with her auntie again at the age of 16 and meet her mum. "When I went to meet my auntie and my mum it felt like the hole got smaller... I had something... and then it got taken away from me".

She has a best friend who shares an experience of also losing her dad young and describes her as "fabulous". "Me and her could relate to each other. She lost her dad too".

SENSE OF HOME/FAMILY

Home for Roxanne means "Stability, family and being happy".

Her foster mum was by all accounts a stroke of luck, according to Roxanne.

"I finally realised what family was all about... We would actually do stuff. [My foster mum] made me feel what a family should be like... My foster mum's son is 15 and he thinks of me as my big sister".

"My foster mum made me feel like i didn't have to push everyone away... When she finally made me feel as though I was finally stable i didn't want to believe it".

Roxanne had views about the motives behind foster caring and what they will be spending their money on. She also feels there should be a trial period. Roxanne has met “loads” of young people who are not benefiting from their foster carer, Roxanne has been lucky.

NORMALITY

Roxanne describes her foster mum as a “normal person” who takes Roxanne away to concerts and on holidays.

“My foster mum is probably the best foster mum you could ever ask for. She put up with me and my problems. It is home. After the life I have had before I lived with her i now know what home and stability mean”.

LIFE-SKILLS

Roxanne feels that she has good life skills and can look after her own home when ready.

FEELING SUPPORTED

Roxanne was categorical when asked how supported she felt. “No... I have Nicky and my boyfriends mum. I am supported by myself more than anyone. Even then I struggle to support myself sometimes. The fact that they have stopped funding Jerry... the other thing is my Leaving Care Grant. I think that maybe that should be to help us... with things that set us up for life... it's too restrictive”.

SUPPORT WORKERS FAILING TO “CLICK”

Roxanne speaks of a range of formal “support” over her years, including social workers, CAMHS, counsellors, youth service personal advisors.

Some of her social workers, Roxanne did not like. She did not have a social worker for a few months. She had one that didn't turn up to meetings.

She spoke of some social workers that she liked, particularly one.

“Throughout the years I met all sorts of therapists and none of them worked”.

Her experience of CAMHS was very poor. They are not as great as they are made out to be. “I didn't feel like they helped me much”.

TOO MUCH CHANGE IN SUPPORT

She has struggled with the large amount of change in her formal support. When she develops a relationship, the person has been changed for a new one.

She really likes her PA and has a good relationship, but she has just told her she is changing and is worried about this.

“I don't cope well with change... the change of people in my life. I was a bit wobbly. When [my social worker] was put onto me I said if you leave me I will come and hunt you down. Now she has told me she is being replaced... I hope he is as nice as made out to be because I am very particular”.

FINDING THE RIGHT THERAPIST - “CLICKING”

One social worker however, managed to secure a counsellor “off book” and he has been great (Jerry). He has worked in a very different way with her and treats her in accordance with what she needs. Through him she has managed to make some really good progress. “He was the one who helped me to give my feelings a colour and a shape”. She explained that he knows how to bring out her happy side and describes him as “not a normal therapist”.

However, funding for this ended when she turned 18 but she continues to fund him herself now.

“I rate him to the stars and back... he is perfect... Money should pay for someone like him and not CAMHS... he is perfect for every young person... He's very good at bringing out the happy side in people”.

Roxanne had views about the need for therapists that are matched to the needs of young people.

BEING THERE FOR EACH OTHER

On her best friend: “She's fabulous... she's really funny and special and has always been there. We have always stood by each other and she would always be there”.



“Friend who is a good laugh... she and I like raving... whenever we have a problem we are on the phone... most of our conversations revolve around beauty”.

TURNING FOR HELP

Roxanne said this would always be Nicky, and if not she has Jerry to turn to.

FINANCES

In terms of finances Roxanne talked about the difficulties of living on £115 every two weeks. Her foster mum would help her out passing on bits of money to Roxanne, but she knows many others would not do this.

CONTRADICTIONS

“I am happy, bubbly and fun... but then there is the bad side. I can be suicidal and depressed”.

SENSE OF PURPOSE

Roxanne has a strong sense of her purpose and

making a difference to others (scoring herself a five) which she realised through her beauty treatments. This gives her great pleasure.

INNER-STRENGTH

Her resilience is striking. Indeed she reported strong feelings about feeling safe (again scoring herself a five) due to her life skills. She's been through it all and has her foster mum and therapist who help her enormously.

She says she has learned to love herself and feel good. She loves beauty therapy and talked about wanting to “brighten someone's day” and make them feel confident.

In terms of her sense of control, Roxanne talked about the financial issues for her. Although she will live with her foster mum till she is 21, she doesn't have any parental support to buy things that other young people have. She finds the restrictions on the Leaving Care Grant too much and considers more flexibility is needed so she can perhaps finance a car for her job.

LEARNING TO LOVE HERSELF

When I asked Roxanne how happy she is, she scored herself a three, saying “I’ve still got a lot of the past that drains me.” She talked about using a local bereavement charity - Winston’s Wish - and was struck by how many children have lost their parents. She doesn’t like other children who take their parents for granted saying that it “grinds her”. It’s a luxury to have parents.

“I am one that loves my sense. I don’t know why but I do, probably too much sometimes?”

HAPPINESS

Roxanne scored herself around a three. “I still have a lot of the past... that grinds on me. I see my boyfriends brother talk to his mum like shit and that grinds on me a lot... they should appreciate having a parent. That’s a luxury... Some people from a very young age don’t have that.”

“Learn to live with what you’ve got and live with it”.

A CLEAR PATH TO THE FUTURE

“I hope to have my own salon and hope to be a very successful Beauty Therapist”.

Roxanne has a clear path to the future... She will run/own a salon and be a “very successful” beauty therapist. She will have done lots of things and have holidays and will enjoy life.

She does not like or want children and does not want to get married.

WHAT’S NEEDED FOR THE FUTURE PATH

She described a number of prerequisites to getting there: “happiness, determination, confidence” and some very practical things such as money and a car.

More knowledge - to get more knowledge from courses.

ANXIETIES ABOUT MONEY AND FINANCES

Roxanne is good with budgeting but is in some debt due to a holiday for her boyfriend.

Income Support is not a lot “£115 to last two weeks with no other income is ridiculous”.

Social Services will not help me out anymore... when I turned 18 they wouldn’t help me out anymore”.

Roxanne does not want to loan money and has anxieties about being bankrupt.

WORRIES ABOUT THE FUTURE

When asked about her worries for the future it largely centred around being able to cope with everyday life... money problems.

“When I am 21 I am going into my own sort of accommodation... I feel prepared in terms of housing keeping but the money side of things... I don’t feel ready. I need help with how much things are going to cost me”.

REFLECTIONS

What was most striking about Roxanne is her:

- Strength and bubbiness.
- Her honesty and openness.
- She has clearly been through therapy... using words and phrases that demonstrate she has worked through lots of this stuff in the past.



LAURA

“THEY’VE GOT TO ACCEPT ME FOR WHO I AM,
ALL OF MY DIFFERENCES AND QUIRKINESS”

WORDS **AJO CLUA, SERVICE DESIGNER**

Laura is 16 and lives in Worthing, where she has lived since she was 12 years old. She lives with her parents and her siblings.

Laura is chatty and friendly, quiet at times with someone she doesn’t know but warm with the people she knows, trusts and cares about. Laura describes herself as anti-social but she explains that people who know her think she is friendly and kind. “Everybody always says I am kind and friendly but I always have a different perspective to everyone else. I would say I am anti-social a lot of the time”.

Laura went into care when she was six years old. When Laura was 12 she moved in with the family who she lives now, and was adopted by them when she was 14 years old. Laura describes her family as loving and supportive. “It was only two years ago that I got adopted by them. It’s the first time I’ve found someone who actually likes me. It’s very family friendly in there, they always have people coming and going who are really nice, and we’ve had lots of different neighbours who are also foster carers but a bit like big happy family, they are like aunts and uncles”.

Laura gets on quite well with her siblings, particularly the old ones. “The younger ones are always snapping at each other so I try to stay out of their way”.

COLLEGE

Laura is in her first year at college. A typical day for her: “I wake up with my alarm, turn it off, go back to sleep, wake up late, get breakfast, say goodbye to my parents and then come to college by walking, and then get here half an hour early. I walk really fast when I am worried about being late”.

Laura is attending college to do Pathway 2, Work Skills. “At college, each day is different, Monday is a full day on the course, Tuesday is English and then my course, Wednesday is work experience, so it’s not college on Wednesdays, Thursday is a whole day of Maths, and Friday is half day of my course and then half day of tutorial”.

WORK EXPERIENCE

As part of her college course, Laura works at a shoe shop, to gain work experience.



FREE TIME

After college, if Laura has some money, she might go into town and do a bit of shopping. If not, she goes home.

BEING THOROUGH

Laura knows what she wants and she puts effort into what she does to do it well. "I like art but if I do something I want to do it right, I don't want to do it ok. People will say that's really good and I am like, no, I want to do it again, to get it better".

BEING SELF AWARE

Laura has had to make hard decisions at an early age, like stopping to see her birth family. She is aware that she had to grow quickly "I've always been older than my age".

CHOOSING HER FAMILY

Laura chose to live with her current family when she was 12. She describes her transition moving to her new home in a positive way because it

was her choice. "Well I chose to move, so I was obviously ready. I hoped that it would work out".

"I went to school [secondary school] with my big sister and my mum had me for respite, then I chose to go and live with them".

BECOMING PART OF THE FAMILY

Laura's mum and dad got married the month that Laura got adopted. "After they got married, 20 days after my 14th birthday, the adoption went through. It took two years for the adoption to go through. When I found out I was actually really really happy, I didn't think anyone would actually ever want to have me in their family, so it was really good for me". When Laura was adopted, she didn't feel a change in their relationship, she felt her relationship with her family was the closest that it could be, and it didn't affect how she behaved towards them.

CLOSE FAMILY BONDS WITH HER MUM AND HER OLDER SISTER

Laura feels very close to her mum and her bigger

sister. “I am closer to my mum and bigger sister because I met them first”.

FEAR OF NOT HAVING FRIENDS

“When I came to college I thought, I won’t have any friends, I won’t be able to get along with anyone, and I am friends with basically the whole class. Plus they are all older than me rather than younger than me, like at my last school”.

FRIENDS SUPPORT

If Laura is feeling a bit upset, she would talk to her friends before talking to her family. Laura’s friends are from the college, she doesn’t have any friends who are outside the college.

CHOOSING NOT TO SEE HER BIRTH FAMILY

Laura chose to stop seeing her birth family when she was 9 years old and hasn’t seen them since. Laura decided to stop seeing them because...“I had been diagnosed with anger management disorder which was incorrect and I didn’t know that until I was 12 years old, when I went to mum and dad. They straight away knew I was autistic. I thought my birth family were the cause of that”.

SUPPORTING MY DECISIONS

“People supporting me is always helpful. When it’s a choice, like stop seeing my birth family because I thought it changed how I was reacting to the things, it was good that they supported me then. And then it was good that social services and my birth family chose to support me when I said that I wanted to be adopted. Both times.”

PEOPLE NOT BULLYING PEOPLE

Laura used to be bullied at school and has been bullied throughout her life. She thinks that what would help is to do something to stop people who are bullying. “Telling people who are bullying that if they do it again they’ll get kicked out. For people in my class that are very autistic, it probably affects them a lot more than anyone else”.

“All my life I’ve been bullied. Something that isn’t very fun for anyone”.

“Professionals know about it, but it’s not like they can actually stop the people who actually

do it from doing it. They do it whether or not they get told off”.

“It’s actually more difficult than anyone really realises when you get bullied, nobody really knows how to own up to the fact that they’ve been bullied”.

“I just ignore it but I know that ignoring won’t help other people. I am resilient, my mum uses that word a lot when she describes me.”; “I’ve been in care for nine years, when I first went into care I got bullied and I’ve been bullied a lot of my life so I am kind of used to everything that’s happened to me”. “I am not sure that being resilient is always a good thing. I am used to it and it’s not a good thing that I am used to stuff like that”. “I know when someone is a bully but I don’t know how to get out of it”.

TRANSITION TO COLLEGE - HAVING FRIENDS MAKES IT FUN

“It was easier than I thought it would be. I found college really fun. Having friends makes it fun”.

HAVING GOOD FRIENDS

“They’ve got to accept me for who I am, all of my differences and quirkiness, because I am autistic, and sometimes that means I can be a bit weird. And a lot of my friends are actually quite like me, in different ways”.

GETTING HIGHER GRADES TO ACCESS FURTHER EDUCATION

At college, Laura is hoping to learn English and Maths, to get higher grades. She got a D in English and a G in Maths, and she is hoping to get a C in English and a higher grade in Maths. Getting higher grades would enable Laura to get into one of the courses that she would really like to do, either beauty or hair dressing, or art and design.

ART

“I like art a lot and a lot of people who have seen my artwork say that I am quite talented but it’s actually a hobby”.

STAYING AT HOME WATCHING FILMS

Laura enjoys staying at home and she likes to spend time in her room watching films, TV series and playing games, she particularly likes watching Lucifer. "I like hiding in my room watching films or playing games".

HELPING PEOPLE

During her course, Laura has done some volunteering, and even if she doesn't volunteer regularly she did enjoy it. "I like helping people".

LIBRARY

Laura likes to go to the Library to pick books. She enjoys reading.

CLARITY ON WHAT SHE WANTS OF THE FUTURE

Laura is clear with what she wants her future to be like. She wants to carry on with her education, live in her own flat and have a job.

HAVING MY OWN FLAT

Laura is looking forward to living in her own flat in Worthing when she is 18. She wants to live in an area that is familiar to her, somewhere between where she lives now and college. "I know my way into college and town". Laura likes Worthing and wants to stay close to her family. Most of her friends live in Lancing. She was a bit worried that her mum would want Laura to stay at home but her mum has been supportive and proactive about it and Laura is already on the list to be a supported lodger.

FURTHER EDUCATION

Laura wants to carry on with her education and has three options in mind: studying Art and Design, Beauty or Pathway 3. Her preferred option is doing Art and Design, and she will need to get good grades in the course she is doing to allow her to do this. She sees her further education course as a way for her to learn, but she doesn't see the course in connection to her job. She is clear that art will always be a hobby and she will work in retail. "Art will always be a hobby".

HAVING A JOB IN RETAIL

Laura is very clear with the fact that she wants to have a job in retail. She already has a CV and is doing some work experience in a shoe shop to fulfil her goal.

LUKE

“MUSIC MAKES ME FEEL CALM,
BECAUSE I DO GET ANGRY SOMETIMES”

WORDS **AJO CLUA, SERVICE DESIGNER**

Luke is 19 years old and lives in Worthing in supported accommodation. Luke speaks fondly of where he lives now, having his own room and being independent. “I am much happier here. It’s an independent home. You get a carer to be around 24 hours, and there are about seven or eight carers. I do get disturbed sometimes, when I look out of my window, there are people looking at my window because I do weird things sometimes”.

Luke is a calm and quiet young man, a bit shy to start with but he lightens up and becomes animated when talking about some of his passions: football, hip hop music and wrestling.

CHILDHOOD

Luke’s dad died when Luke was little, of alcohol abuse, and his mum became ill and died two years ago. “My dad passed away of alcohol poison when I was about four and my mum passed away two years ago”. Luke doesn’t have brothers and sisters. “I wished I had siblings”.

Luke has been in care since he was a child. He

lived with a foster family in Worthing for seven years, until he had to move out; “I stayed at my former carer for seven years. I was quite happy there. I had to move from the home because of the voices and the way I am unhappy. Sarah, my foster carer, couldn’t handle it, she had other things going on too. I was very unhappy because of what happened last year... I don’t really want to talk about it”. Luke was moved on emergency, where he stayed for four months. “I stayed there for four months to find another placement for me, but the problem with [adult placement programme] Shared Lives is there are not many placements, with fostering you get lots of placements”.

INTERESTS

Luke loves playing and watching football, watching wrestling and listening to music. He enjoys spending time with his family and with his friends.



HEALTH

Luke had asthma since a young age, autism and learning difficulties. He hears voices and takes medication to calm down. Luke has support from his social worker, who he met him when he was 17 and became his social worker when Luke was 18. He finds it useful to talk with him.

DAILY ROUTINE

When asked how does a typical day look like, Luke responds "I am always tired. I am a tired person. I like staying up late but I haven't done that for quite a while because of hearing voices." He realises that having a good night sleep helps him to be calmer and to not hear voices. He used to stay up late and play with his Nintendo DS. "I do talk to myself too much".

COLLEGE

Luke goes to college, where he is doing Pathway 3 - Skills and Independence for Employment. He goes to college from 9.30 to 4.30 most days. He is studying English and Maths, but he dropped

Maths because it was too hard.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Since October 2013, Luke has worked at a care home in Shoreham one day a week. He goes there every Friday and does a few hours of work. He makes teas, washing up, drying up. "It's good to get paid", "I do remember most of their names, it would take me a bit to remember the new ones".

"I do it for work experience". When asked how he decided to work, he says "my cousin gave me the job, I work for my cousin".

LACK OF TIME TO RELAX

"I don't really get time to chill that much".

OTHER RESIDENTS IN HIS HOME ARE ALRIGHT

When asked about how he gets on with the other people who live in the same place as him, he is quite neutral about it "yeah they are alright".

CLOSE BONDS WITH FAMILY

Luke is very close to his uncle (his mum's brother) and his cousins, who live in Worthing, and sees them regularly. "I am very close with my cousin; I am quite close with my family as well. I love my cousins to bits".

Luke feels like he can speak about anything with his uncle and his uncle is very protective over Luke's money. Luke's uncle lives with his second wife. "My uncle has offered me to live with him but I was like no, no, because he won't let me buy things online but I want to buy things online, like Brighton and Albion staff (football team) and all that".

FORMER CARER

Luke was upset when he had to move out from his former carer's home but he still has a good relationship with her and relies on her to talk about anything. He trusts her and he would call her if he has either a problem or good news to share.

FRIENDS FROM COLLEGE AND SCHOOL

Luke is close to his college and school friends. He enjoys hanging out with them and playing football with them. "All my friends have learning difficulties".

SHARING MY PROBLEMS WITH CARERS AT MY NEW PLACEMENT

Luke finds it useful to share his problems with carers at his new home.

SOCIAL WORKER CONSISTENCY

Luke had the same social worker since he was four, who retired last year.

FRIENDS YOU CAN'T TRUST

There's a friend of Luke who he used to hang out with that he can't trust anymore. "He does silly things sometimes".

FOOTBALL

Luke is passionate about football. His tone of voice totally changes when talking about it and he becomes more animated and enthusiastic

"Neymar and Ronaldo are my favorite players. I got a Neymar hat as well". He supports Brighton and Hove Albion and Man United. "Mainly Brighton because I was born in Brighton". He likes both watching and playing football. "I play for Worthing Seagulls, in left wing position". He started playing football when he was eight years old and plays in the disability league.

BEING WORRIED ABOUT MOVING HOME AND TRANSITION TO COLLEGE

"I didn't train because I was so unhappy. Since I moved in I was worried about what was going to happen, how I was going to feel about college. Because the buses are so bad sometimes".

RECOGNITION FOR BEING GOOD AT FOOTBALL

Luke describes a very positive moment in his life winning player of the year. "I was quite surprised winning player of the year. I was really happy".

MUSIC AS THERAPY

Luke likes Hip Hop music, it calms him down. "My favourite american rapper is Eminem, the one who did 'The Real Slim Shady', and my favorite British rapper has got to be Devlin and Professor Green". "I like the lyrics, the swearing as well, I know it's not good but I think most people like rap these days". When asked about what music his friends like, Luke says: "Rob is obsessed with [rapper] KSI, Jo likes very calm music, nice music, happy music, Sam likes a bit of both". "I wish I was a good rapper but I am so crap at it, I am better at football". "Music makes me feel calm, because I do get angry sometimes, with things".

STRATEGIES TO LIVE WITH HEARING VOICES

Luke hears voices and he is seeing a psychologist to support him with it. "I've got to keep myself busy. My mum had voices in the past. I used to talk to myself a lot, now I have grown but the voices affect how I behave."

UNCLEAR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Luke is unsure about what he wants to do in the future. His dream is to be a professional footballer, but doesn't seem to have a clear plan for what he wants to do in the future. Luke hopes that he will pass his qualifications.



KRISTY

“I DON’T REALLY RELY ON ANYONE,
I JUST LOOK AFTER MYSELF”

WORDS **AJO CLUA, SERVICE DESIGNER**

Kristy is 16, almost 17, and lives in a friendly neighbourhood in Worthing. She has been in foster care from a young age, living with different foster carers. About a year ago she moved to a home where she feels welcomed, where she lives with her foster parents, and their cat.

Kristy has five birth siblings, who she doesn’t see very often.

Kristy is cheery and friendly. She is clear about what she wants and who she wants to be “I want to be who I want to be”.

HEALTH

Kristy has a ‘can do’ attitude towards many things, including her health. She has rhinitis in her nose, and she has learnt to live with it. “I live with it, it doesn’t bother me”.

When asked about emotional health, Kristy explains that she needs a strategy to live with it; “I don’t have a strategy for social and emotional health”. She is seeing a therapist, has learning

support at the college, and a social worker, who supports her with her emotional health.

SWIMMING AND TRAMPOLINING

Kristy is learning to swim and goes swimming every Wednesday for half an hour. She also does trampolining every week.

INTERESTS

Kristy likes reading, hanging out with friends, cycling, baking, eating chocolate, sleeping and theatre. “I’ve always liked theatre”.

COLLEGE

Kristy goes to college to study theatre every day except on Wednesdays. On a typical day, she cycles to college, goes back home, does some work, and then goes to bed. Kristy tends to have lunch in college and dinner with her foster carers. When asked what the highlight of her day is, Kristy replies “going to bed”.



VOLUNTEERING

Kristy volunteers every Saturday near Eastbourne. Pat, her foster carer's sister, takes her there.

POSITIVE ATTITUDE AND BLOCKING BAD THINGS AWAY

Kristy is a very positive person. She doesn't recall many bad things happening in her life apart from moving placement ten times "I don't have many bad things, I tend to chuck bad things away".

FEELING VALUED AND RECOGNISING WHAT I BRING

Kristy is very proud of an award she received recently for helping children to have fun at the weekends. "I like being around children, they are very sweet".

Kristy feels valued by her foster carers. She feels they respect her and ask for her opinion. She shared an example where she felt valued. There

was a plan on 30th December to go to Devon to see her foster parents' mum and dad. Kristy was planning to see her auntie on the same day and said this to her foster carers, who decided to change their original plan to make sure Kristy could see her auntie. "That makes you feel loved".

FEELING LIKE I CONTRIBUTE AT HOME

Kristy feels like she can contribute at home and that they trust her to have a certain degree of independence. "They let me stay at home alone, they let me have friends over, they make me do my own washing and I cook for them".

DECIDING TO BE VEGETARIAN

About a year ago, Kristy decided to be vegetarian because it is healthier and she doesn't like the idea of animals being killed. "I do miss chicken nuggets but I am not killing chicken".

TALKING ABOUT WHAT WORRIES ME

Kristy is very positive about the learning support she receives at the college. She values being able to talk about anything that worries her with both her learning support assistant and her theatre course leader. She feels like she can trust them because, “they won’t go and tell somebody if you are talking about something”.

SHARING GOOD NEWS WITH FOSTER CARERS

When Kristy has good news, she will share it with her foster carers and their friends. She will also share it with her own friends.

NOT RELYING ON ANYONE WHEN FEELING UNWELL OR DOWN

When asked about who she relies on for emotional support, when feeling sad, Kristy answers that she doesn’t rely on anyone. She tries to find a way to look after herself without relying on people. “I don’t really rely on anyone, I just look after myself. I just get on with it”.

SOMETIMES I FEEL UNSUPPORTED

Kristy wishes there were more people around to support her when she feels down. “I would like someone holding my hand - a friend, my foster carer”.

SOCIAL WORKER IS THERE TO LISTEN ANY TIME AND GIVES ME ADVICE ON MY FUTURE

Kristy trusts her social worker, who she sees every six weeks. Kristy values her social worker support, particularly “that they are there to listen any time”. Her social worker has been giving Kirsty advice on her future.

MOVING IS HARD

Kristy found hard to have to move 10 times to live with different foster carers. “Moving is easy now, it was hard at first”. She is not in contact with any of her previous foster carers “I don’t really remember some of them”.

CYCLING TO COLLEGE IS THERAPEUTICAL

Kristy cycles to college from Worthing, which takes her about 20 minutes, and she finds the cycling a good way to travel. “Cycling is good, it is

therapeutic”.

READING SPACES

Kristy enjoys reading and she likes to be in spaces where she can take a book and read. She goes to Starbucks, book shops and to the Library. “I read anything; I just pick up a book and read it”.

SENSE OF BELONGING - CHURCH AND COLLEGE

Kristy goes to a christian church on Sundays, where she feels part of. She also feels a strong sense of belonging in college, “I know it well and I have a major group of friends”.

NOT DOING MUCH STUFF TO MYSELF

Kristy feels like her weeks are packed with activities and she doesn’t have time for herself. She understands that her foster parents want her to make the most of her life but feels like she doesn’t get enough time just for her. “I am not doing much stuff to myself. I don’t have one day off. I could get rid of some stuff but my foster carers won’t let me, they want me to get the most of my life”.

NOT FEELING SAFE OUT IN WORTHING AT NIGHT

Kirsty feels safe at home but she doesn’t feel safe to go out in Worthing at night, after 5.30pm. “Out in Worthing I don’t feel safe at night. I am too scared, I have seen people drunk. I would feel safer if there were more places that under-18s can go to”.

MOVING SECONDARY SCHOOLS TO MOVE AWAY FROM THE BULLIES

Kristy felt happy when moving from a secondary school in Portslade to one in Worthing. She could move away from the bullies and from not being treated like an adult, and it was a good opportunity for her to make new friends.

MOVING TO FOSTER CARERS WHO WELCOME ME AS PART OF THE FAMILY

Last year, Kristy moved to live with her foster carers. “They like to be sociable, they like to do things, go out and about. They are so funny, they make me laugh, they know how to work it out



with me". Kristy feels welcomed and part of the family "they treat me like their own".

Kristy moved in with Jane and Adam as emergency respite because she had an argument with her previous foster carers.

HAVING A CLEAR HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Kristy has a clear idea about what she wants for her future. She wants to be a teacher, teaching Drama or English, she wants to live in Worthing, close to her foster carers, but not too near, and she is hoping to learn to drive. She finds she is lucky that she knows what she wants to do, and she thinks half of her friends don't know what they want to do. Her advice for them is "think about what you want to do when you are older, write a few options and see where you are next year".

DRIVING

Kristy is looking forward to driving and she has

started to do steps towards it. She has started budgeting and saving for it. "I give Jane my card so I don't spend money".

LIVING BY MYSELF

Kristy is looking forward to living by herself and being able to make her own choices; "I look forward to no adult telling me what to do". She is preparing for it and has identified that knowing what to buy will be important (food, cleaning supplies, things to avoid buying). "My foster carers will help and they already have a bottom drawer where they keep some basic supplies for when I move out".

GOING TO UNIVERSITY

Kristy is planning to go to University at the same college she is going now and she finds positive the fact that she already knows the building. She needs to get good results and finds exams intimidating.

She is aware of the support she will be receiving because her social worker started talking about

it with her when she was 16, almost a year ago. “I still get support until I am 25. They give me money weekly and they pay for my university fees”. Knowing that she has the support makes her feel excited and not anxious about it. She wants to have a good future for herself.

I'D LIKE TO FOSTER A CHILD

Kristy has very clear ideas about the family she wants in the future. She doesn't want to have her own children because she feels there are too many children already who don't have a loving family. “I'd like to foster a child, and I would adopt, I don't want my own children”.

Kristy feels that you should be able to adopt children over the age of five. She would have liked to be adopted and have a family. One of her sisters, who is now 14, was adopted, and she has just recently found out that she has a sister. Her sister is not allowed to see Kristy and she has written her a letter. Kristy says she is not bothered about not knowing her sister because she hasn't built a bond with her.



ALEX

“SCHOOLS SPORTS IS DOMINATED BY FOOTBALL, I WOULD LIKE TO SEE MORE OF A RANGE TAUGHT AND SUPPORTED”

WORDS **PAUL BREWER, ADUR AND WORTHING COUNCILS**

Alex is 17 and lives in Worthing with his family: Mum, Dad, a younger sister and an older sister, with another sister living nearby. They are close and have extended family living nearby, including grandparents and uncles. They have lived in Worthing since Alex was very young.

Alex plays golf to a very high standard, practising every weekend and entering tournaments regularly. A couple of years ago, Alex won a County Championship. He often plays with his dad, and has a clear aspiration to be a professional golfer.

He is in his second year at College, studying bricklaying on an apprenticeship with a small local building firm, working four days a week, with one day at college.

Alex describes himself as happy, and enjoys his friendships at work and the golf club, whether they be with younger players or older workmates. Alex has only kept in touch with one friend from High School however, someone who also has dyslexia. On leaving school, he planned to study Sport at Worthing College, but when he realised

the academic work would be continuing, he found himself dreading the start of the course and did not attend. His mum spoke to him about what he planned to do, and asked whether he would consider labouring for a friend's building firm. He was keen and is now very happy, earning money and working to get through the driving theory test, which he has failed three times so far and is a sticking point. I asked Alex whether he had declared his dyslexia, but he said he wanted to do it without any support.

Alex described how hard he had found it at primary school before his dyslexia was spotted, and in conversation said to me he 'wasn't smart enough'. He described the moment when he suddenly started getting homework he could actually do and it made a big difference. He also described the moment he started High School when there were suddenly more people like him, rather than being 'the only one' at primary school.

Alex enjoys being at home and spending time with his family. He took his parents and younger sister out for breakfast recently, and his older



sister is now protesting how she missed out and wants him to take her!

Asked how he thought people around him might describe him, Alex said his dad would say 'gobby', his workmates 'loud and funny' and his fellow golfers 'quiet'.

DAILY ROUTINE

Alex works as a labourer four days a week, with one day at college learning bricklaying. At the weekend, Alex will play golf at least on one day, but sometimes two. He likes playing video games at home ('Black Ops' is a favourite) and will go out for a drink with workmates on occasion. Alex did not say much about any relationships, but mentioned he saw a girl sometimes.

Alex is enjoying labouring and bricklaying and plans to extend his skills and experience. But he also has a passion for becoming a professional golfer. He's a little afraid it won't happen, like his dad's experience. He doesn't want to have regrets.

HAVING A SENSE OF SELF

Alex is confident in his abilities with golf and indeed other sports. He is much less confident about his academic abilities, and he seems to try and 'work around' his dyslexia rather than working with it and always securing the right support for himself. He appears very secure and well-supported in his family.

Being dyslexic was difficult for Alex at primary, before it was spotted (he felt a failure), and after (he was isolated). Being with others with similar issues was a huge relief for Alex when he started High School, but he still felt he 'wasn't very smart' and this feeling continues.

BEING CONNECTED AND SUPPORTED

Alex has good family support and seems to be well liked and valued at work and at the golf club. It is less clear what friendships Alex has with people of his own age, having only kept in touch with one friend from High School. Alex reported that a lot of his contemporaries were into drinking and drugs and he did join a group

in a park once, which resulted in everyone except him being arrested for possession of drugs. Alex talked about his dad a lot and they clearly have a lot in common around golf, playing in tournaments together, and sometimes Alex getting a little frustrated with his dad's "advice"!

HAVING A PURPOSE AND ENJOYING LIFE

Alex is very focussed on golf and has a strong purpose around improving his handicap (beating his dad) and putting even more time into it to become professional. When we talked about how this might happen, Alex had given less thought to a practical plan which would involve, he thought, devoting a year to intense practice and the necessary assessments. But Alex is looking at this possibility from a position of having a job and being in training, and he also sees a future for himself as a builder.

Alex is frustrated that schools sports is so dominated by football and he would like to see more of a range taught and supported.

LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

Alex is not currently saving very much of the money he earns and seems focused mainly on the near future - weekend golf, the next tournaments, buying new golf clubs. He looks ahead to when he can take on more skilled tasks at work. He understands what steps he would need to take to become a professional golfer, but does not have a concrete plan to achieve this. He does not appear to be thinking about a steady relationship, or moving out of home. He is doing well, and is happy and supported.

Finding ways to talk with young people about the future seems important, to give them a framework to think about what they want and how they might get themselves there.



TIM

“LIVE LIFE TO THE FULL AND TAKE EVERY OPPORTUNITY.
IF YOU WANT SOMETHING GRAB IT WITH BOTH HANDS”

WORDS RANI DHILLON, NHS COASTAL WEST SUSSEX CCG

Tim is an 18 year old boy who attends Northbrook College and lives in Lancing. For as far back as he can remember he has always lived in the Worthing area, although he does not know exactly where he was born, and he knows he has moved around quite a bit within the Worthing area. In fact he is due to move house again in the next two weeks.

Tim loves his family life and feels most secure when with his family. He lives with his nan, who he calls mum. He does know that when he was younger his biological mother was unable to raise him. For the purposes of this paper we will refer to Tim's nan as mum and his mum as his biological mother. This was the terminology Tim preferred to use. All his memories are with his nan raising him and his aunt, he calls sister, who also lives with them in the family home. His youngest biological sister lives with his biological mum.

He feels extremely close to his sister, his mum and his current girlfriend. His mum offers him emotional support that he can rely on, practical support, advice and guidance. The person he

trusts the most is his mum. After this core group for support he would turn to friends and people in his martial arts club for fun and support. He would not class teachers, neighbours, service professionals as people he would think to turn to in times of need, although after some discussion regarding his future ambitions he could see the merit in having a mentor. Tim was diagnosed with dyspraxia and dyslexia at school and found Maths and English boring and difficult at school.

In particular Tim looks up to his uncle. When Tim was younger he remembers his uncle studying hard for exams and achieving A grades in exams that led to an honours degree from University. This has been an inspiration for Tim.

It seems that friends come and go for Tim and he partly relates that to the fact his family have moved around quite a bit so keeping in contact with neighbourhood friends has been difficult.

Recently he left school and has kept this friendship circle from school. Social media in particular has helped him continue these friendships. He currently has three friends on



his catering course at Northbrook, as well as his current girlfriend who he feels close to. He says his best friend is in fact someone who he has never met in his life. This is a boy in Scotland who has played on line X-Box games with for three years. He hopes one day he will meet this other boy.

Tim likes to spend as much time as he can at home with his family, next to that he will enjoy being out and about gaming in the community; for example meeting friends to play computer games with such as going into the countryside and playing Pokemon. His only fixed outing every week is his martial arts club. He will only occasionally go to cafes in Worthing, but is more likely to use the local cinema, bowling alley and countryside for walks. His routine day to day tends to be the same. During the week he will get up, catch a bus into college and tends to go back to the family home after college. At the weekends, he will pursue his hobbies as described above.

Tim likes to think he is in good health and he does not tend to think about it too much.

Recently he has realised he should drink less sugary fizzy drinks and has made a concerted effort to cut back. He eats breakfast and lunch at the college everyday, including a full fried breakfast. Money can be a bit tight for both meals as he is given five pounds a day to spend on food and drink. He exercises once a week at his martial arts club and he rates this activity as being very important.

"If I didn't do martial arts I would be a different person". It has taught him discipline and respect. He hopes to take part in a tournament soon. He hopes also the skills he has from martial arts will help him protect his mum and sister from any violence if he needed to protect them. The only negative aspect of being a member of the club is the cost, and he is grateful that his mum saves money to pay for this activity. At home he has a punchbag which he can keep fit with. Otherwise he will occasionally run in the local countryside or go for walks with friends. He says he will never smoke and he has no real ambition to drink alcohol.

Tim is overall quite content with his life. He

feels healthy apart from some concerns over his dental health. He feels in control of his life and that if he wants to do something new he is supported to do that. In particular his mum supports him with this. Also he “feels the power of being 18”. He feels a good sense of belonging to his family, to Worthing. However, when he was at school and sometimes in his current college he can sometimes feel he doesn’t fit in, but this doesn’t bother him too much. He feels financially secure even though money can be tight in the family home. “We all just help each other out with money at home”. He feels happy especially when with his family for example their forthcoming Butlin’s holiday over Christmas. However his friends also make him feel happy especially when they play video games. He says he doesn’t tend to worry about things, although possibly at times money might worry him. Tim describes himself as cheerful and friendly always trying to make new friends.

Tim describes more good times than bad times in his life. He says he doesn’t remember bad things really although recently his dog had to be put down and that made him sad. Sometimes there will be arguments between his mum and his biological mum, “but that’s just family, I’m thick skinned”. When bad things happen although he is aware of them happening he doesn’t get too upset. He will use games to preoccupy his mind.

He has had good times recently, for example achieving the first stage towards a Karate black belt was his proudest moment. Although recently he has passed exams at college he doesn’t look at this as something to be proud of, instead he looks at it as a stepping stone that he needs to do. Having met his recent girlfriend for a year has also led to many good times. Being fit makes him feel happy, and his course does as well. He enjoys food, so learning to make food will make him happy.

Tim finds it difficult to imagine the future; he is not sure what kind of work he might do after his catering course at college. He knows he must pass Maths and English as basic qualifications. Next year he will be sitting Level 2 catering qualifications. Ideally he would like to be a full time You Tuber posting successful gaming video clips, he has tried this recently but with not that many You Tube hits. He realises whatever he

does he will have to work hard. He says he never worries about the future “I go wherever I go”, and he is not anxious about any particular direction in life. He does feel there is a lack of student support from his peers and sometimes from the college.

Overall Tim seems fulfilled with his current life but agreed that probably he needs some mentorship and direction with deciding next steps in life.

“Live life to the full and take every opportunity... if you want something grab it with both hands”.



To find out more about the research
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