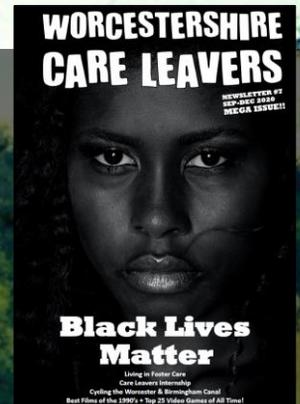
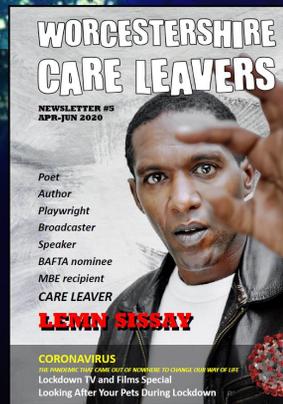


# WORCESTERSHIRE CARE LEAVERS

**ANNUAL  
CARE  
LEAVERS  
REPORT  
October 2020**



*Worcestershire  
Care Leaver  
Mackenzie*



**Featuring the input of our Care Leavers**

The Care Leavers Report for this year includes a number contributions directly from our young people themselves. The following articles appeared in various Care Leavers Newsletters between October 2019 and September 2020. The newsletter is a vehicle to get information across to our young people and also a way for them to communicate with each other, highlighting their interests and achievements.

**OCT-19** Utelka's music career

**OCT-19** Events / Pics

**NOV-19** Mohammed's story

**NOV-19** Jayden's uni article

**DEC-19** Kat's story

**APR-20** Alfie's pets and mental health article

**MAY-20** Luke's COVID photo essay

**AUG-20** Luke's poems

**SEP-20** Jalal's foster care article

**SEP-20** Nicky's foster care article

**SEP-20** Mackenzie's photos



*Also included in this report are a number of further articles and information sheets:*

A Celebration of Achievements

Care Leavers – A Year in Numbers

Care Leavers – What Has Gone Well & What Needs to Happen

Care Leavers and Outreach Teams Structure Chart



The Care Leavers Newsletter is produced in-house by the Care Leavers Team  
And features regular contributions from our cohort of Care Leavers.



# UTELKA JOHNSON

*We have an up and coming star among us who has agreed to do a what will be a World Exclusive Interview for the Care Leavers Newsletter.*

*Mark Burtenshaw, Utelka's Personal Advisor, says: "I can tell you this – she has got the X Factor and when I was lucky enough to see her audition for college and again for the Birmingham Gospel Choir she has a voice that moved me to tears."*

*Utelka is about to embark on a fantastic journey both as an artist as she releases her own music and at University in London.*



## **Introducing Utelka**

I'm 20 years old from Worcestershire but decided to move to Birmingham to embark on my music career. I'm a multi-instrumentalist, I sing mainly, write, play piano and I try to produce. I do try to use the things I learn in my career in my daily life. I feel like my experiences have shaped me to have a quirky and bold personality wise but sometimes so I feel shy and vulnerable too.

## **Challenges I've Overcome:**

A problem I've overcome would be handling rejection and anxiety, being nervous to ask for anything whether that's help or opportunities because I'm scared of rejection. It's crazy really, I definitely have changed my perception, I've come to learn my insecurities are incorrect and I shouldn't let them stop me progressing. For the most part I've learnt that most of the people around you really do want you to do well.

## **How to get your music online:**

I recently released my EP called Asphyxiology on all major streaming platforms. I always thought it was almost impossible to put music out but it's super easy. The way to get your music on Spotify you can sign up to online aggregators which you pay for a yearly fee to have the access to upload your music to all the major streaming platforms, it's super easy and accessible. A couple sites are CDBaby and Distrokid. You can also work collaboratively with another artist and release music through their label.

## **My Inspiration:**

My biggest musical inspiration is definitely Michael Jackson, his musical ability and impact within the music industry was just phenomenal. I constantly strive to replicate his same musical values.



*My love for music really stemmed from my upbringing. I was always trying to imitate other singers, sitting on the stairs singing up to my mum.*

**Where did your love for music start?**

I didn't always know I wanted to do music as a career to be honest. It wasn't until I'd dropped out of college that I realized it was what I wanted to do. My love for music really stemmed from my upbringing. I was always trying to imitate other singers, sitting on the stairs singing up to my mum. She always used to play a variety of different genres which opened my eyes to the many styles I could pursue. Music has been an emotional outlet which has proved more than vital on many occasions. It's helped me to deal with many different situations when I would've struggled otherwise.

**Living independently:**

Living Independently is very scary at first you know when you first moved in to your own place and you're on your own you feel vulnerable you feel lonely you feel like the smallest fish in the biggest pond however when I have my down days I really do look myself , so surprised and think "wow I'm doing well for myself, and I'm just doing this you look at how much progress you've made yourself". It's something to be proud of and makes you grown up more. It's all life but stay positive and keep your head screwed on.

**Where will you be in Five Years**

In 5 years time I will hopefully be performing and doing the same thing as now. I would have graduated and established myself as and artist.

*Finally my advice to other people who've been in my situation would definitely be dont be scared to do something new, break out of that cycle. Learn from your mistakes to save future pain and also take every opportunity to better yourself , grab that with both hands.*

**Asphyxiology can be bought on the following platforms:**

**amazon** **Apple MUSIC** **boomkat**

Listen to the single 'Crazy' on YouTube:

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wL9TuyVE5qk>**



*I've come to learn my insecurities are incorrect and I shouldn't let them stop me progressing. For the most part I've learnt that most of the people around you really do want you to do well.*

## Care Leavers Events 2019

# events

2019 was a busy year for our Care Leavers Events, including our Summer BBQ and Picnic in the Park (see previous newsletters for pics). We rounded off the year with a bunch of new events and raised money to keep them coming in 2020.

### October Cookery Session



In October we held a **Cookery Session** to show some of our young people the basics of cooking. It might sound like a strange thing to organise an event for but it is an essential skill for living independently in the future. A number of Care Leavers came along and at the end of the session they sat down with the PA's to enjoy the fruits of their labour.



### October Bake Sale

Also in October we held a **Bake Sale** to raise money for future activities for our Care Leavers.

A number of staff from across Worcester Children First baked at home and brought their creations in for the rest of us to sample (and lazy but equally generous staff bought cakes and brought them in to sell!).

The event was a success and over £400 was raised, giving the team money to put on more events for our young people in 2020.

**Thanks to all involved!**



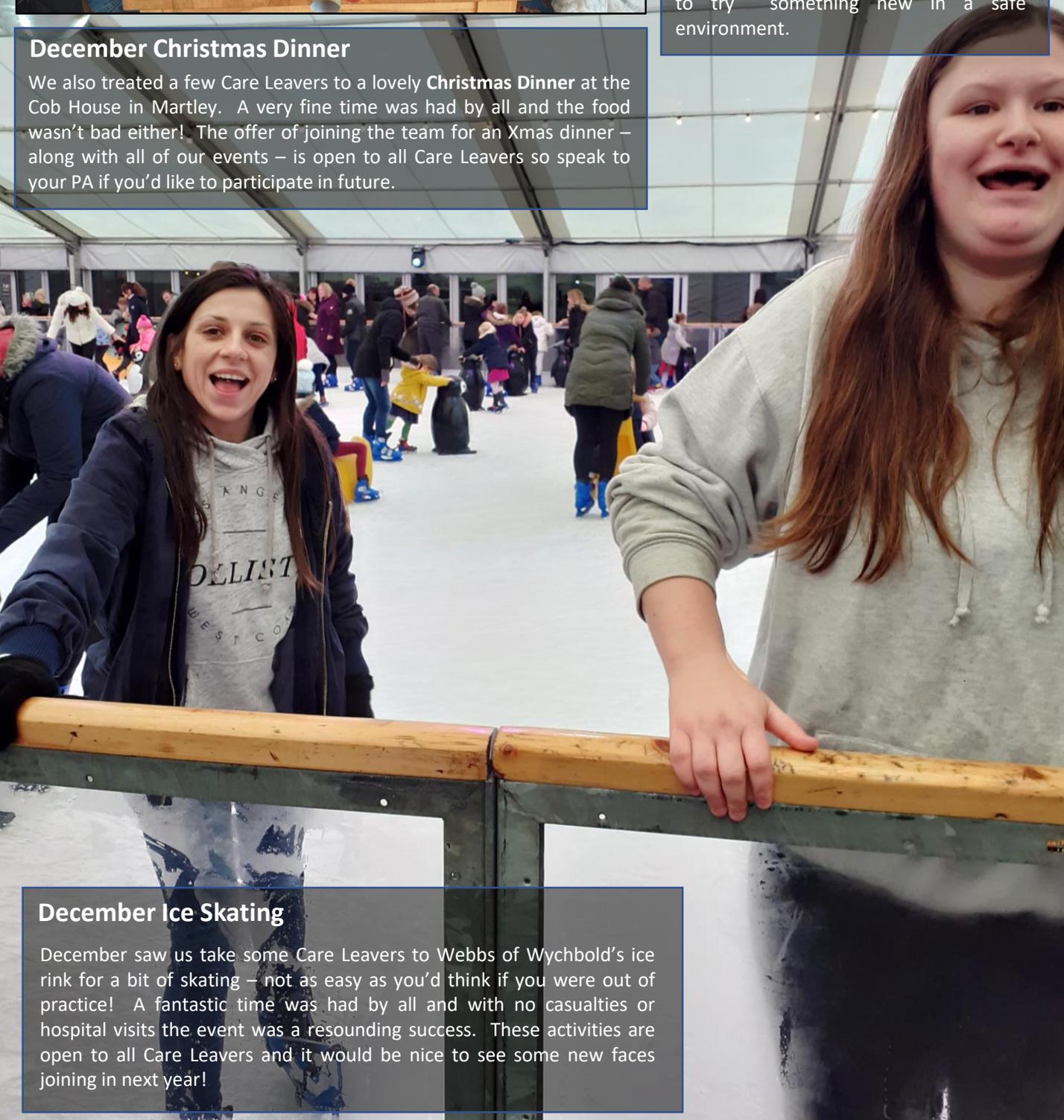


### December Christmas Dinner

We also treated a few Care Leavers to a lovely **Christmas Dinner** at the Cob House in Martley. A very fine time was had by all and the food wasn't bad either! The offer of joining the team for an Xmas dinner – along with all of our events – is open to all Care Leavers so speak to your PA if you'd like to participate in future.



Earlier in the year we also hosted a **Creative Session** and invited some of our young people along to try out their artistic skills in a variety of projects aimed at giving them some space and freedom to try something new in a safe environment.



### December Ice Skating

December saw us take some Care Leavers to Webbs of Wychbold's ice rink for a bit of skating – not as easy as you'd think if you were out of practice! A fantastic time was had by all and with no casualties or hospital visits the event was a resounding success. These activities are open to all Care Leavers and it would be nice to see some new faces joining in next year!

## **UASC – Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children**

### **Perceptions of Britain**

Britain can be a gateway to a better life for the few who make it and avoid exploitation. UASC children have their needs met – basic needs such as shelter and food - and they can access a support network of social workers, foster carers, teachers and healthcare professionals. These things offer a young person the chance to build a normal life, something most of us take for granted.

The numbers of UASC children coming to this country are small and their safety is in danger if they stay in their home countries.

*There were 2,307 asylum applications from UASC in the year ending March 2018, a 25% decrease compared to the previous year, falling after two consecutively high years.*

*Of the 2,218 initial decisions relating to UASC made in the year ending March 2018, 1,245 (56%) were grants of asylum or another form of protection, and an additional 374 (17%) were UASC leave (granted to UASCs refused asylum, but eligible for temporary leave.*

And, to show that our system of checks is working:

*A further 27% of UASC applicants were refused. This will include those from countries where it is safe to return children to their families, as well as applicants who were determined to be over 18 following an age assessment.*

The Care Leavers Team is part of the network structure UASC children can count on whilst they are in the UK and we work hard to ensure they feel safe and comfortable in their new home. In Part 2 of this article, we will look at how we help them and what our service means to them.

### **Mohammed’s Journey as told to PA Mark Burtenshaw**

As a PA I get to meet some incredibly inspirational young people. Mohammed is one such young man and he has agreed to share his story so that he can raise awareness around the issue of UASC children.

A refugee’s story is often complicated, but they are just people getting on with their life when things suddenly change. Born in Sudan into the Zagawa tribe, he lived in troubled times with his family in a place called Alfashir. The Jangaweed Party were the ruling tribe and they had turned upon the Zagawas.

You may recall BBC reporters sending back images of a regime turning on its own people in the Darfur region of Sudan, with clear instances of genocide. Mohammed was very young when the troubles began and life was about avoiding the wrong people, in the wrong places. Mohammed recalled how one day he went to school aged 14 and little did he know that he would never return home, would never see his mum again. Arrested at school and detained without reason, placed in prison cells, tortured for weeks, beaten by men with batons, forced to walk in the scorching heat,

shouted at... the abuse was endlessly repeated.

Mohammed was then suddenly taken and enslaved in an army officer’s home where he was forced to do all the jobs for the household. For dinner he ate the scraps left by the children.

It was here he planned his escape and after several weeks of moving a water container nearer to the back wall without drawing attention to himself he was able to jump over the wall in the middle of the night and run for his life. Mohammed ran most of the 20km to a town called ZamZam where he sought help from a fellow Zagawa tribe member who helped him to escape into Chad. Mohammed’s journey into Libya involved him getting lifts in cars with fellow refugees fleeing the country. He walked with a camel train across the desert. He had to survive in Libya for two years, where fellow Zagawa Tribesman gave him shelter. Mohammed waited for his opportunity, washing cars and helping shopkeepers. It was a very stressful time because he didn’t know what tomorrow would bring.

The Gadaffi regime fell in Libya and the country fell into chaos. Mohammed made his way to Tripoli and this led to him taking a chance on a boat to Italy. By this time he was 16 and had made contacts who advised him after a month hiding in Italy he could get on a train to Nice and then journey through France to the port of Calais.

A further month at the Calais refugee camp ensued, with failed attempts to board lorry after lorry, but eventually he made his way across the Channel nearly 2 ½ years after he went to school that fateful morning.

### **Next Issue:**

*We hear more about Mohammed and how he managed since arriving in the UK in 2009.*



# Settling into University

I've just completed my first semester at university and I'd say I've settled in well. When I first got here, I was exceedingly nervous needing to literally force myself to go say hello to my flat mates. There are a few things that really helped me adapt to this new environment. One of the first things was developing good relationships with my flatmates, for me this gave me some people to go out with and some friendly faces around campus. On top of this as they build their social circle, they can introduce you to others as well. Another thing that helped me was setting up my room properly. By this I mean for the first week or so I lived out of boxes and a suitcase which made it difficult to feel at home in this new place. Although it may seem simple unpacking can really influence how you feel in this new place.

When it comes to meeting new people outside of your flat, I've found success in a few ways. The first one is social events, one of the first I went to was with a flat mate and that was the pool competition. Although my skills in pool are lacking it introduced me to

a large amount of people many of which I still talk to. The next thing that helped me was before a lecture or in a practical talking to those around me a bit. Nothing huge just some small talk but this again allows you to really build the number of friendly faces around you. University is a place where you can really try things out, so do something new. All University's will offer a wide range of facilities for example for me I've met plenty of people while working out or rock climbing. It's worth while showing up and trying these things even if you don't

want to you don't have to go again!

My main piece of advice for settling in would be this – put yourself in a position where you will meet people similar to yourself. For example if you love reading join the book club or if you have a passion for karate join the club for it. I suggest this because once you have a group of people you can talk to you tend to feel more at home.

***Text by Worcestershire  
Care Leaver Jayden***



## My Story by Care Leaver Kat



As I was waiting for my 18th birthday which I didn't want it to come, for most teenagers it meant to be a time to celebrate instead I was worrying about what was going to happen, I was thinking "Where am I going to live", "How am I going to cope on my own", "What about bills and earning an income to support myself", "Am I going to have enough food and electric?".

A week before my 18th birthday I received a letter from housing saying I have a flat I don't know how to quite deal with it I didn't know if I should be happy or if I should be worried, "I need to start packing but I have no boxes....Where can I get boxes from?" As I didn't know I just used black bin bags, placing each item into the bag and just keep the stuff I really need until the end. I didn't really have

anything to show other than 4 black bin bags.

The day finally came where I had to move into my own flat which was very empty and big and let's not forget overwhelming. I met this woman from Fortis who had the contract but as she was going through it I didn't really understand what she was saying. I agreed with her then signed the bottom of a piece of paper then she went. I looked around and just wanted to cry it was so dirty - and the floor, there was no words for that. I was just thinking where am I going to sleep? I had nothing, not even a blanket. I had no privacy, no blinds or nothing. That's when my PA support worker took me to Argos. We bought an air bed, blanket, cover and curtains. Oh yeah, let's not forget I needed a microwave, kettle, bowls and plates etc so I could eat for the next week. We ordered from my Care Leavers Setting Up Home Grant. I had £1500 which sounds like a lot but it really isn't when you are kitting out a whole flat!

After we went shopping we had to ring British Gas to register my electric and gas. I didn't have a clue what to do so I got my PA to talk me through it. Once that was done I had to ring loads more people, apply for housing benefit AND Income Support which was a lot of paperwork! It just became more overwhelming as the day went on. But after everything had been done I was in my flat with the bits we had bought that day. I did start to relax a little my depression and anxiety started to calm down. I asked my next door neighbour for the Wifi password as I had an iPhone so I could watch my soaps with a cup of tea and played music while putting things away. This helped as I

was feeling a little lost and lonely, and very strange, not what how I was expecting I would feel the first night in my new home.

Nobody ever tells you how hard it's going to be when you get your own place at a young age. It seems like a good idea until it actually is happening, then you are juggling trying to deal everything at once. It carries on like that for the first couple of months while your first payments for everything come out of your bank, get used to going to the Job Centre, do even more paperwork and try to find a job on top of that.

The first year flew by, along with this my stress levels had gone down as I was getting used to living on my own. However I felt I was on top of it I was doing ok.... I didn't need the support they were offering me. I was managing my flat, looking for work, what more did I need to do? It still hit me though, when I received a bill or a letter which I didn't understand, when this happened I would just put it in the drawer and act like it was never there. Before I knew it I was in arears with near enough everything; council tax (because I didn't know there was such a thing!!) Gas, Water.

During this time I had to swap from Income Support to Universal Credit which works completely differently, It was difficult to get my head



around but I was getting a lot more money... or so I thought! To my HORROR I found out that Universal Credit had been paying my rent straight to me and I was supposed to pay Fortis myself. (that's why I was getting so much money!!).

I must have been in over £2000 of debt/arrears by this point. What was I going to do?! People around me started to notice I was struggling so I was given a YSS worker and had a change in PA. I realised at this point I needed to start accepting the help I had been offered as the bills in that drawer were growing; the size of the pile, the amount I owed and how much was worrying about them. The first thing my PA did was to contact Council Tax as I was a Care Leaver I didn't need to pay so this was the first weight off my mind. They then asked to see my bills and asked if I sorted this or that and when I said 'no' they helped me make phone calls to arrange repayment plans, made applications to charities to help me with my rent arrears as I was at risk of losing my flat, my home, where I had just begun to feel was my own. It was arranged for my Housing Element to

Be paid direct to my landlord so I didn't need to worry about losing my home any more. I did some budgeting work and started to manage my money much better. YSS also helped me with my confidence and were looking to help me get into a sport or hobby which made me feel good about myself.

Once I had contacted the different companies and set up some repayment plans and thankfully had some help from charities for some of my debts I felt so relieved. It was amazing I didn't have to worry when the next letter was going to be.

Two years later I had to move to a new flat for my safety. I saw this as a fresh start. I was going to do everything properly this time and tackle things 'head on'. Because I knew what I had to do, with my PA I sorted everything out straight away instead of waiting until the last minute. Yes, I had a bed to sleep on. Yes, I had a cooker and microwave and everything else so it was definitely less stressful and less depressing. At my old place I had a walk-in shower the first thing I did when I signed my contract (which I understood this time) and got the keys I went straight into the bathroom and saw a bath! I was more excited about having a bath than anything else... It's always the little things which goes along way. My new flat didn't have any carpets or flooring so

my main worry was about using so much heating to keep it warm.... I had learned how expensive Gas and Electric were from my old flat!! Luckily my PA had an idea and applied to a local charity, explaining my story, and I was awarded funding to get flooring I had my whole flat done in grey lino in hallway and living room and grey carpet in the bedroom. When you get flooring it does just makes your place feel complete and more like a home.

I did still need a little help with my budgeting skills and did now and then have to ask for a little money for gas and electric when I was really struggling but this time round I am actually DOING it for myself! I can say I wouldn't have come all this way without the support I was given. I'm very grateful for the help I received when I was in a rubbish place with bills and my own health.

If you are a Care Leaver speak up and ask for support, whether it be at the beginning or whenever, please do because as you can tell from my story it's not as easy to sort out once you are in a mess. Ask your support worker for help, they will tell you what you can be entitled to and extra support. Now fight it before it's too late!

*I hope you enjoyed my journey as much as I enjoyed sharing it with you!*



# How Pets Help Me With My Mental Health

By Care Leaver Alfie in his own words.

Living the best life possible isn't always easy I'm not going to lie and say that my life is 100% better with animals but it is a lot easier to deal with my mental health problems.



I am currently unable to have an assistant dog so I'm training my cats Gizmo (stripey) and Beetle (black) to come to me when I'm upset. Beetle also sleeps on my back or my chest depending on which way I'm sleeping. I also spend most of my time training him to sit stand on two legs, to spin, high five and jump.

Cats are great animals. They don't need as much maintenance as a dog but they also mean that you don't have to leave the house other than to get their food and litter (I however walk my cats twice a week on leads as this is great for my cats as I don't allow them out unless they're on leads).

My fish were my first animals I got once I lived alone. I have 6 and their names are Comet, Star, Moon, Parana, Lion and Lynx. They are very therapeutic to watch - I could sit there for hours!

The best pets I have are my rats – they are 7 months and 3 months old. My first rats were Rhubarb and Apple and my new rats are Mash and Beans. I love my animals, all of them. My rats keep me company whilst I do my college work or my random stories that I like to write. It's great fun and they are easy to keep as well but can get expensive.

For someone who is unable to leave the house and can't concentrate for very long, my animals have helped me open up - they give me a reason to wake up in the morning and talk. Even though they can't talk back I still talk to them!

If you struggle with mental health (or know someone who does) I'd recommend getting animals, even just fish or a hamster - something that won't judge you when you're upset, something that you can watch, cuddle



or talk about, something that you are going to love and care for not just for now but for their entire life.

I hope to speak again soon. I'm Alfie and this is my report about how my animals help me with my mental health problems.



**Luke Ward**  
**Photo Essay:**  
**Life on**  
**Lockdown**



This series of work is called Life on Lockdown and is focused on documenting the outbreak of Covid-19 during 2020. My aim for this project was to capture how everyday life had changed, and how society had conformed to the new rules that have been set in place by the British Government. To achieve this, I photographed every time I went out for a short exercise or when going out for essential food shopping. This allowed me to document this event from my own perspective, and make sure that I was sticking to the new laws that have been set in place to help protect us.





I documented everything from shops and businesses shutting down, signs and posters informing the public to maintain social distancing or stay indoors to endless empty streets and empty shelves. I wanted to create an archive of work that would stand to show future generations how the United Kingdom came to adapt and overcome this deadly virus. My main inspiration for this series of work was Dorothea Lange and her documentation of The Great Depression in America during the 1930's. I found it really interesting how she was able to capture what life was like at the time, and document the struggle and hardships that families were going through. This translated into my series of work because I wanted to capture how society is dealing with this unprecedented event, and how changes have been bought into place to change our everyday lives, hence the series name 'Life on Lockdown'.



# LUKE WARD

*Luke is one of our many talented Care Leavers – last issue we published a photo essay he'd contributed based on pictures he'd taken during lockdown. Luke also writes poetry and on the following pages are some of the poems he's submitted for our newsletter.*

## The word on everyone's lips



Coronavirus, it's the word on everyone's lips,  
Finding its way onto all forms of  
social media,  
And into all newspapers and print.  
It's on all the radio's and TV sets,  
And it's forever on people's minds.  
People are cautious and prefer to  
stay inside,  
Watching the world go by,  
Behind the safety of their  
window blinds.

Stay inside, protect the NHS,  
That's all we hear nowadays,  
But really all people want,  
Is to go outside and see family and friends.  
The days seem to go so slowly,  
And the long inevitable boredom has set in,  
However it beats being stuck inside a hospital,  
Whilst you're face down on the bed getting help with breathing from a  
machine.

Indeed the disease may be easing, and the lockdown may be over,  
But please remember to stay safe when you go out to see each other.  
Before going out, remember the words Covid-19,  
Because if you don't and you're not careful, it could still come for you or me

## This is me

Growing up life seemed so tough, no confidence, no money, living rough. My life seemed over before it had even started, It left me feeling broken and downhearted. No one to turn to, no one that cared, going through life feeling scared.

Growing up and getting fostered, that is when my life began to blossom. No need to worry, a helping hand, my foster mom who understands. The love and support that was so desperately desired, made me feel happy and for the first time, inspired.

Growing up and attending high school, time to work and fulfil my potential. Working hard and getting the grades, that is how dreams are successfully made. Long nights of homework and revision, so that I could achieve and succeed in my vision.

Growing up and finding photography, that is when life started to make sense to me. Finally, I had found something that I was good at, something to improve on, my destiny. Through that viewfinder I capture the world, in my own unique perspective, capturing the true beauty of life onto a film negative. No longer am I the one who hides from photos, but instead is the one composing them.

Growing up and going to College, for the first time a sense of purpose and independence. Meeting new people, trying new things, having an idea of what my future could bring. I learn so much here about my practice, and myself. Time passes here as quickly as the train I take on my commute, and any hate I have towards the world disappears like the scene outside the carriage window.

Growing up and finding love, someone to reach out to and hug. Someone that inspires, someone funny, someone that makes a rainy day seem sunny. Someone beautiful and someone kind, a person who still remains by my side.

Growing up and achieving my dreams. Making it to university and defying adversity. Realising my true potential and being positively influential. Shaking off the stigma of being a care leaver, forgetting my past and looking to the future. Having hobbies and friends, feeling good, these days I feel understood. I am 19 and it seems, I have a great life filled with opportunities, right ahead of me.

I'm growing up, this is me, I wonder what I am to be?



# Butterfly

My heart flutters as you walk near,  
And the butterflies awaken once again.  
Your eyes meet mine and time stops,  
And then like the passing of the wind,  
You are gone.

The butterflies inside,  
They shrivel up and die,  
And my heartbeat once again,  
Settles back into the rhythm of monotonous life.

# LIVING IN FOSTER CARE

## JALAL'S STORY

My name is Jalalludien. I am 19 years old, am originally from Afghanistan and I am a student with Croydon College studying Health and Social Care .

I live in London but have been involved with Worcestershire care services since 2017. I had such a great connection with my foster carer that when I turned 18 I remained living with her under Staying Put. It was based on trusting each other, understanding, being on time for any meetings or social events. They all made me feel like part of a family.

In the beginning I had some basic problems, for example I found it difficult being with a new family, in a strange new place. I was scared of making any mistakes that might cause problems. The hardest thing was sometimes misunderstanding the English language when communicating – it took me a long time to learn to be more fluent in English.

We had such a great time together in my foster home. They helped me to apply for school and then college, receiving my support money on time, with food and clothing. They helped me during the times I missed my biological family.

The most helpful thing that I received from my foster carer and my social workers was an ability to become independent. They all helped me to stand on my own feet and improve myself. I found new things I really like - music, art and films. I found that I really enjoyed simple things like cooking and going shopping. I now feel like the UK is a home. I'm never bored here!

With all the support I've received, I would like to give back something to a new generation. I would like to become a doctor or a social worker when I finish my time at University.

*That is my great experience of Worcestershire care services. I feel so thankful for them.*



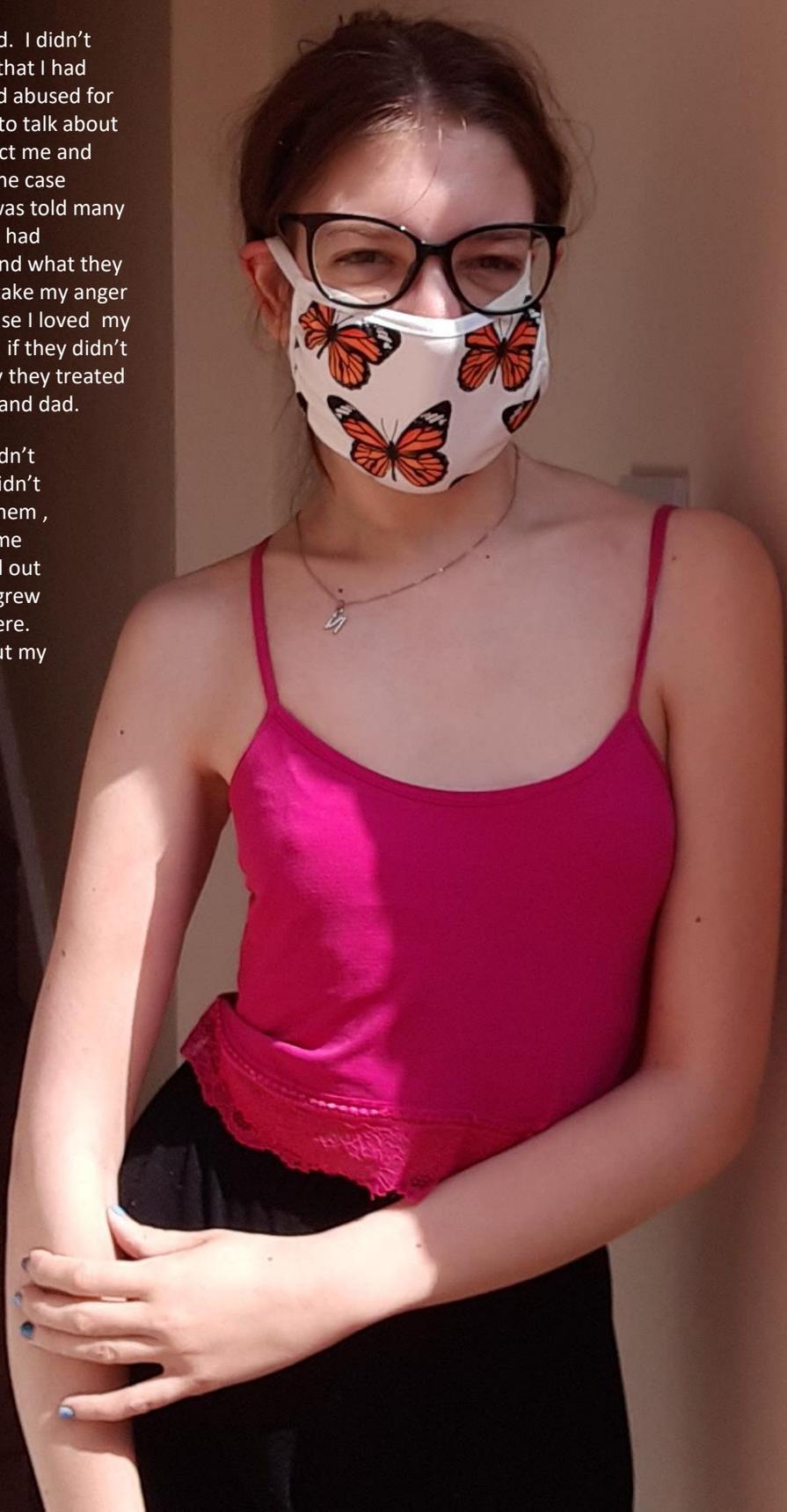
# NICKY'S STORY

*Hi, My name is name is Nicky, I wanted to share my experience of being in foster care ....*

I went into care when I was 15years old. I didn't know why at first, until later I got told that I had been neglected by my own parents and abused for many years of my life. It's hard for me to talk about it. My parents were supposed to protect me and keep me safe, but clearly that wasn't the case because I had to be taken into care. I was told many things when I was younger about what had happened but I didn't always understand what they meant and I was angry for a while. I'd take my anger out on others that cared for me, because I loved my parents and the rest of the family even if they didn't love me and I couldn't understand why they treated me badly, but they were still my mom and dad.

My first foster home was okay, but I didn't get on with them that well because I didn't understand anything; why I was with them , or how long they were going to keep me before they got rid of me, but it turned out they did love me and our relationship grew during the few months of me being there. They were was great foster parents, but my stay with them was only short term.

My second care home was amazing, we lived on a farm where we had horses, cats and lots of dogs that we rescued from Romania. The foster family were amazing and so supportive through my tough time of coping with being away from home and being in a new environment once again. They knew how angry I was and every emotion I showed them they understood and helped get me through . They helped me overcome everything, all my fears and worries and they showed me new things that I didn't know before. I was with them for 2-3 yrs and I was part of their family, but when I had to leave them it was very sad because we all had a connection and we had made many good memories together. I told them I would never forget them and that they were doing a great job and they should never stop, because every child they take in always left happy, like me. I said I would always be in touch with them and visit them every now and



then as they gave me the best few years I could have ever asked for. I'm happy that they always made sure I felt safe and made sure that I was part of their family.

My next foster home was amazing at first and I stayed there after I turned 18. After a while we both started to disagree on certain things. We always made up after every argument we had, but it still was with us, every hurtful word we had said to each other in that moment, but because we loved each other we always forgave each other. We both knew that we weren't good together as when we were home we would often argue and have tensions between us. We both decided that it would be best for me to move out and get myself a flat and be more independent and not have the strain on our relationship, then our relationship would be more stronger and now it is.

I'm 19 now, going to be 20 in a few months and I have never been better. Yes, it was hard for the first month or so getting my flat ready and leaving my memories behind, but I knew I would still be in contact with the person I'd lived with and that we could still meet up whenever we wanted and have a catch up.

Getting all my bills set up and taking in deliveries in, while also being at college was very hard, but it is now worth it, because I have made my new flat my home now and I feel more independent and more like an adult than ever. Yes, I may need help every now and then, but that is normal. I've had a really bad past and I suffered very much when I lived back with my mom and dad as well as having some bad times in care, but the majority of it was very happy and I've learnt many things and still have people who I have met that love me and accept me, but my scars are still here and my past is still with me, but that is okay. It just shows my strength and that I have survived a lot and I know I will get to where I want to get to, because the people who actually care for me will get me there and will support me through all my tough times like they have always done.

Every foster child deserves to be loved and cared for and doesn't deserve to be treated badly at all, or have to live in a home that they don't feel safe in or welcomed. We want a place to feel safe and cared for and where we will be encouraged to be successful and achieve the goals that we want to achieve. Yes, we may not have our real family behind us, supporting us, but we will be accepted into a new home which will make us feel loved and cared for and we will learn from our mistakes and grow stronger and wiser. The new family you live with will support you through your tough times and cry and laugh with you. They may disagree with you and take actions you don't like, but that is because they care and want the best for you. They will teach you right from wrong and will teach you important lessons that you will take with you and will teach your own beautiful children one day.

Being in care isn't all bad, it can be a gift and shows that there are foster parents out there, who want to give a child the world, give them the best childhood that they deserve and they will be proud of you no matter what and will support you through anything, any choices you make they will support those too. They will be proud of you when you go to college; when you get your first little job, also when you get your first little flat and they will be proud of you and you will be proud of yourself for how far you have come and how much you have achieved.

Trust me, being in care can be such a great thing and is a time to cherish. You will make many good memories and build so many good relationships that you will keep forever. Unfortunately, it does have some effect on us knowing that sometimes we can't see our real family or meet new family, but just know you will be okay, you will feel safe again. You will be in a home where you are loved and cared for no matter what and will be happy.

Our social workers who have helped find us a great foster home to live in are so amazing. They work so hard, always want the best for the children in care and will always make sure they have everything and also they make sure that we are happy. They will help us even if we refuse it, they will just wait until we come to them and ask for help. They are amazing and as children and young people we are grateful and I can't thank every single one of them enough for how much they have done and how they have made my life much more happier and achievable.



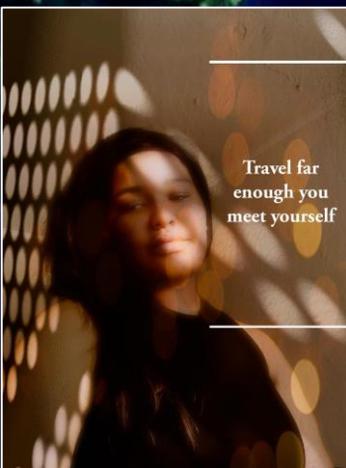
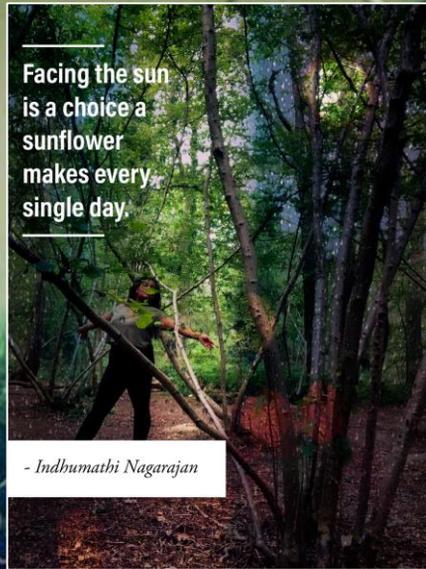
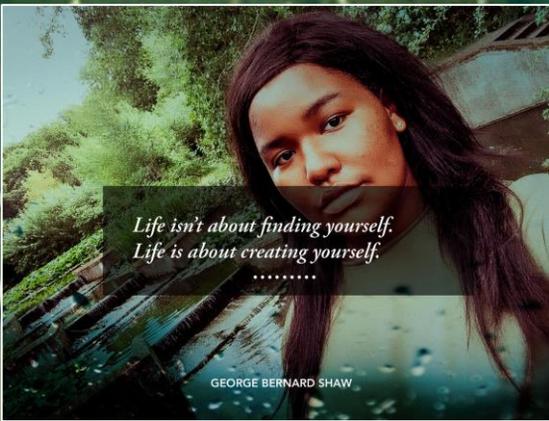
GO WHERE YOU

*FEEL MOST ALIVE*

*Mackenzie is a Worcestershire Care Leaver and enjoys getting out and about with her camera – here are some of the results, with quotes provided by Mackenzie.*



# Mackenzie Buckle Photos



"IF ANYONE IS STRUGGLING WITH ANY ANXIETY OR DEPRESSION, OR NEEDS A LITTLE BIT OF INSPIRATION, OR YOU ARE LIVING BY YOURSELF, I HOPE THESE PICTURES HELP YOU. KEEP GOING AND DON'T GIVE UP."

MACKENZIE BUCKLE

**WORCESTERSHIRE**  
**CARE LEAVERS**

WORCESTERSHIRE  
**CHILDREN FIRST**

A Celebration of Achievements



WORCESTERSHIRE  
**CHILDREN FIRST**

# Education Achievements

*We in the Care Leavers and the Looked After Children Teams are really proud of our young people's achievements, not just this year but every year. This document aims to present some of the feedback from our young people and our staff, and will show that despite the difficulties presented by a highly unusual year everyone has got on with things and great things have been accomplished!*

“ A big well done to one of my young people, Feven, who has today been told that she has been accepted into the University of Wolverhampton on a Public Nursing Degree!!! Feven arrived into the U.K as an unaccompanied asylum seeking child in 2015 from Eritrea, speaking no English and has worked so unbelievably hard to work her way up from a basic entry level ESOL to starting an undergraduate degree next month!

I have been her PA for 4 years now and not only has language been a struggle for her, she has also had to manage on an impossibly low income and huge battles with Birmingham City Council in respect of council tax so it has not always been easy by any means! ”



**Nicky Edge, PA**



### Abi Talbot, PA

One of my young people, Chloe, achieved 3xD\* (distinctions) in her health and social care course and will be going on to study social work at Birmingham University. She blows me away every time I see her with her maturity, resilience and level headedness, she will make an amazing social worker. I can't take any responsibility at all for this as she was already driven and determined when I met her but I'm really happy to be a part of her journey going forwards.

*“More brilliant news. Knocks me back to see what our young people achieve despite the traumas they have experienced and with good support in place, someone alongside to celebrate good times and help through the difficult times.”*  
**Carol Johnson, Team Manager**

### Lee-ann Wilson, LAC Team

Chloe was one of my girls before 18 and such a great talented girl, so I'm proud of her in this instance. I have a young person that I am really proud of – Aimee, who is going to go into sixth form at Trinity high and is destined for University. Aimee is not sure of her option yet as she is also in the Royal Marines (and is already a lance corporal). She did exceptionally well in her mocks, and is hoping to have done as well this year but is worried due to COVID-19 but she is a very determined, educationally minded girl so I have no doubt she will go far.

### Naomi Preston, Social Worker

Kyle gained 6 GCSEs and is now completing health & social care course. Foster carers stated Kyle refused to put pen to paper when he arrived 6 years ago, so we are all very proud of him gaining a massive 6 GCSE's!!

### Sue Muller, PA

Fiyori, one of my young people who is from Eritrea, has been accepted into Bristol University to complete foundation in Biomedical Science. Fiyori has shown such determination and is now looking forward to her move to Bristol. Really inspiring stuff!



## Sarah Stock, Social Worker

Clayton has started Level 1 Sports and Services at HOW College Redditch, and hopes to progress to Level 2 Public Services when he meets the entry requirements for maths and English GCSE, with ambition to be a police officer.

Also, another one of my young people would have achieved higher grades if she had sat her exams - her final grades were marked lower than her previous predicted grades by her school as she was not attending lessons however she'd worked very hard to revise independently. She has started Level 1 hair and beauty at Telford college with GCSE English and Functional Skills entry 3 maths. She is engaged and enthusiastic, relishing the fresh start.



## Cass Fennell, PA

My young person Anthony completed a diploma qualification in Travel & Tourism. The reason why I'm highlighting his achievement is that Anthony was falling behind halfway through his course, he was struggling with low self-esteem which affected his motivation for learning and achievement. Myself, college staff and mom, realised that Anthony was finding it difficult to submit his coursework and he was not on target for passing. With collaborative work, Anthony was put on an Education Support Plan. However, Anthony was still finding it difficult to engage with the plan but with continuous support, he was able to complete and submit all his coursework on time to achieve his diploma. I spoke with Anthony today and he was excited to share his good news with me, he said he was happy I had helped him and had believed in him, Anthony said he was happy he did not quit his course.

*“It's always nice to hear good news and I'm really pleased that our young people have been out there getting some great results from their exams. All the hard work does pay off and their futures are looking really bright!”*

*Kerry Nicholl, Team Manager*



**Rhys Davies,  
Team Manager**

“Our Care Leavers often have additional challenges to contend with whilst going through education, often moving to adulthood quicker than their peers. I think managing that makes their achievements even more worthy of recognition.”

**Naomi Preston, Social Worker**

I had lots of concerns for one of my young people when she came into care, however she is thriving doing her hairdressing apprenticeship and working full time in the salon.

**Laura Perry, PA**

Charlie English Peach has started a BA (hons) in Applied Humanities at uni. He also got a triple pass for completing a recent BTEC L3 Extended Diploma in IT

Also, some positive partnering with Mencap who accepted one of our Care Leavers with additional needs on to their Supported Internship course when no other courses seemed appropriate for her.

**Rachel Davies, PA**

Nicole Prasher who has achieved her year 2 in Law. Last year was a really difficult year for Nicole with her struggling with her mental health and some personal crisis along the way. However, she has gone on to give birth to a baby girl in the summer and has returned to virtual lectures so far year 3 so fingers crossed.

**Rachel Davies, PA**

I have Emily Bell who achieved clear passes for her year 3 Classical History and Archaeology now entering into the year 4 specialist subject may go on to do a doctorate she is capable of it so lets wait and see how this year goes.



**Laura Perry, PA**

Megan Fletcher also passed her Performing Arts course at Sixth Form and has progressed on to college to develop her acting skills further and prepare herself for moving on to Higher Education.



## Rose Jarvis, PA

Three of my young people – Mabast Rasuli, Karso Tofiq and Abdul Malik – are all engaging positively in Level 1 and Level 2 Esol Courses and thoroughly enjoying them! And Zia Mullakhail has recently enrolled on a Level 2 Public Services course having completed his Level 1 with plans of becoming a police officer.

## Claire Amphlett, Social Worker

Chantelle is now attending Kidderminster College and studying hairdressing and she is really enjoying this. She has also been successful at getting her a part time job at a local restaurant and is managing this alongside her college commitments.

## “ Rose Jarvis, PA

A YP who has recently been allocated to me – Harry Williamson – did amazingly well in his English GCSEs!

He got 6 in English – Equivalent to A / High B.

We have referred him to Seek and Reach to explore work experience opportunities outside of mainstream education (his preference at this time) and he is engaging really well with his mentor; he is hoping to enrol on the Kick Start Programme (work experience initiative) in November which may lead to full time employment. ”



# Staff Achievements

## **Carol Johnson, Team Manager**

I successfully completed the NAAS in December (National Assessment and Accreditation System for child and family social workers) as a practice supervisor and well demonstrated or strongly demonstrated in all areas.

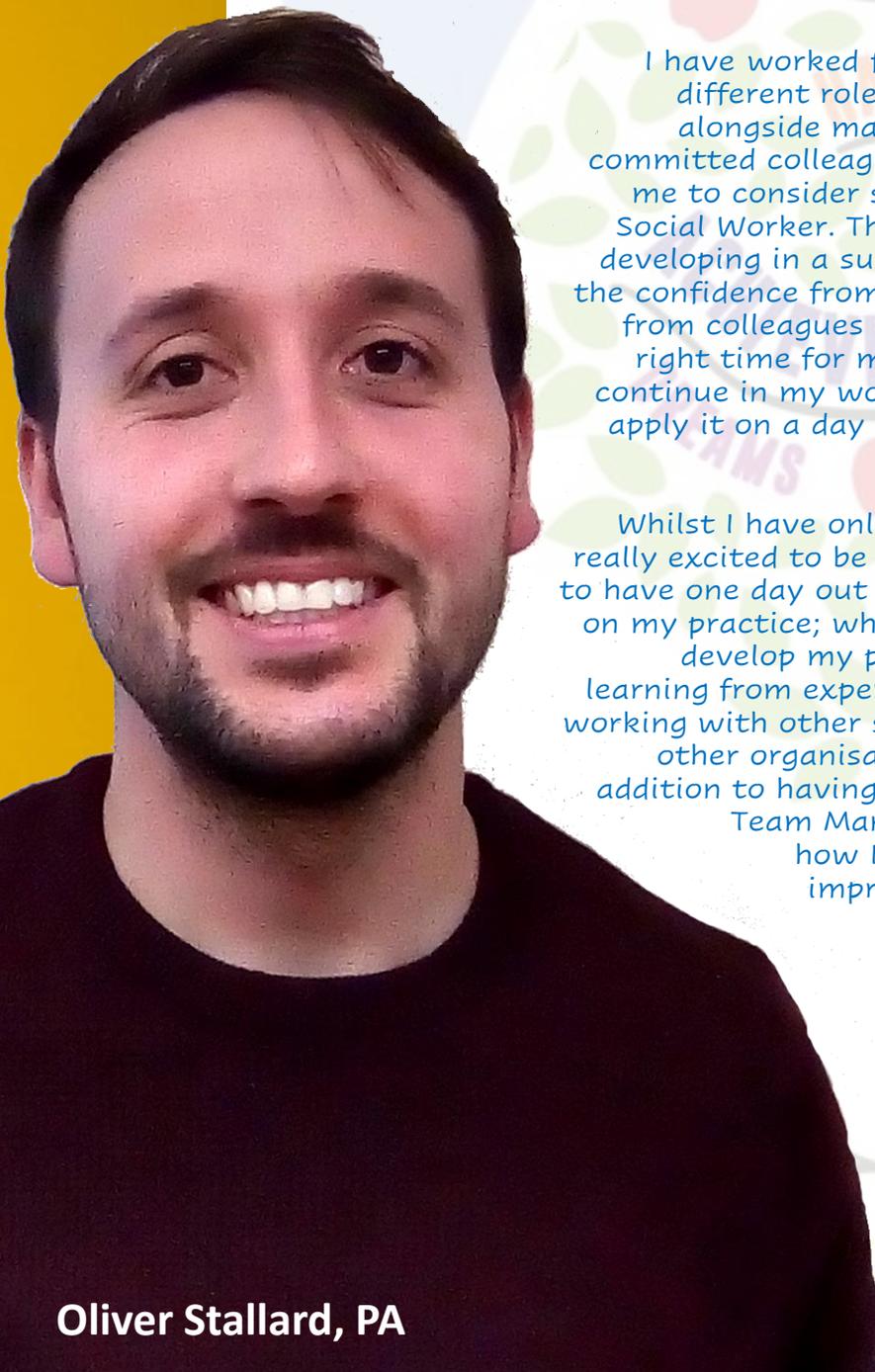
## **Nicky Edge, PA**

I've taken one of my outside work interests a little further and have gone back to college to complete a Level 2 Diploma in Manicure, Pedicure and Gel Nails. Fitting the time in around work was difficult and the level of detail involved in such a simple sounding course was more than I expected – we had to learn about the biology of the hand for instance and the paperwork for the course was sometimes a bit of a drag. This said, I passed and I'm proud of myself for doing it.

I have worked for Children's Services in a few different roles in the past and have worked alongside many inspiring and hard-working committed colleagues who had often encouraged me to consider studying to become a qualified Social Worker. The combination of working and developing in a supportive "unqualified role" and the confidence from encouragement and guidance from colleagues (past and present) made it the right time for me. This alongside being able to continue in my working role whilst studying and apply it on a day to day basis really appealed to me.

Whilst I have only just started the course, I am really excited to be provided with the opportunity to have one day out each week to study, to reflect on my practice; why we do what we do. I hope to develop my practice as a front line worker, learning from experts in their field, in addition to working with other social work apprentices across other organisations and Local Authorities, in addition to having the support of my colleagues, Team Manager and Practice Educator in how I can apply this knowledge and improve my support and service to the Young People and their families I work with.

At the present time I hope to continue in my role as a Personal Advisor for the Care Leavers Team, however 3 years is a long time and I hope the course will give me an insight in to other areas of Social Work for Worcestershire Children First that I may wish to consider in the future.



**Oliver Stallard, PA**

# WORCESTERSHIRE CARE LEAVERS

## 2019-2020

### 12 months in numbers

# 1

New Manager of  
Participation Group

# 5

In-house produced  
newsletters

# 7

% of our Care Leavers  
attending university (the  
national average is 6%)

# 8

New Personal Advisers  
welcomed into the team  
in the last 12 months

# 5597

KIT Calls to check  
our young people  
are safe and well  
during COVID-19



# 26

Personal Advisers  
making up the North  
and South Care  
Leavers Teams

# 1362

Visits to young people

# 128

Young people with  
complex needs helped  
into stable housing by  
our specialist DFE  
Personal Advisers

# 689

Young people that we can  
offer support to on a daily  
basis

# 296

Care Leavers aged 21+ who we  
help when they need additional  
levels of support

# 239

Completed Pathway Plan  
Reviews



# WORCESTERSHIRE CARE LEAVERS

## What has gone well?

- The recent merge with the Outreach Team
- KIT calls to all our young people to keep in touch during COVID-19
- New staff have been recruited, including additional management capacity for the teams with Carol Johnson providing increased cover
- 2 Personal Advisers are completing social work apprenticeships
- Development of A4 Handout sheets for Care Leavers and staff
- Additional newsletters have been created
- We have increased our usage of social media platforms during Covid 19 (to provide events, virtual quizzes etc)
- The start of the Complex Care Leaver Scheme to help prevent homelessness and ensure our most complex young people have access to suitable accommodation

## What needs to happen?

- Develop PAs and Outreach roles to better integrate
- A resource for sharing knowledge (currently being developed on a shared drive)
- Re-vamp local offer by updating the document
- Development of an induction pack for Care Leavers, containing the Local Offer and other documentation they will find useful)
- Build links with adult services to smooth out referral and assessment processes
- Improve training and support to residentials and foster carers to ensure young people are more adequately prepared to leave care, including offering ASDAN to those in foster care



# The Care Leavers Team and Outreach Team Structure Chart

