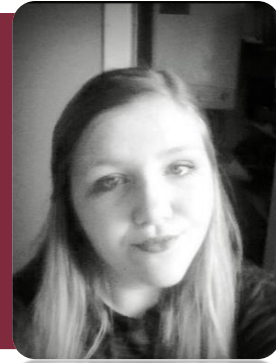


# CHLOE

## THE CARE JOURNEY

### A CASE STUDY



#### BACKGROUND

Chloe is in care. She has moved twice between three different types of placement. She has found her care journey to be **confusing, with a lot of uncertainty** around her placements and her future. Chloe's first placement was in foster care, where she stayed for nine months. After that she was moved to a residential house, where she stayed for four years. Each time she moved placement, **it felt rushed and not up to her.**

“ Even when I get to a placement, I'm thinking – how long am I going to stay there? Is there any point having to pack? Did they even want me there or are they just stuck with me and I'm stuck with them?



The move from foster care to residential felt particularly disruptive. Chloe was taken out of class to meet her social worker, who told her that she was moving placement and had to go home and pack straight away. Although Chloe had been anticipating the change for some time based on conversations with her foster carer, **the move still seemed very sudden.**

“ It was all quite surreal and quite strange because it all did literally happen overnight.

Chloe found the information she was given about her placements **confusing and contradictory** - she was moved into residential care despite it being discussed that this was not necessarily the best environment for her needs. In her residential unit, Chloe found the group living environment **intimidating and challenging**. She was the youngest in a group of eight young people, all with different issues and from different backgrounds. Chloe was uncertain why she was there, or how long she would be there for. **She felt she had to grow up very quickly in order to cope.**

Chloe's brother and sister attended the same school as her and after school would walk home. Chloe's foster placement was further away and so she would get a taxi back separately. She found this difficult, as she felt different and like she didn't have a choice. She didn't tell her school peers that she didn't live with her parents as she didn't want to be treated differently - **she worried about being judged.**



## OUTCOMES

Though Chloe met many people throughout her care journey, there was one person who she felt a real connection with. Chloe built a strong relationship with a member of staff in her residential unit, **who went out of her way** to provide **additional support**. This was important to Chloe when so many other aspects of her life were so uncertain.

“ I think it would have been in some points easier for me if people knew, because then it would make sense for me to say things like “I don’t live with my mum any more”, but I didn’t know what to say and instead I covered it up and said things like “I’m living with my auntie, who stays ages away and she’s not well at the moment so I’m helping to look after her”. But I shouldn’t have had to do that.

Chloe feels her experience could have been made easier if her peers had known she was care experienced. **The promotion of self-declaration and a positive approach to care identity** are hugely important in supporting young people to feel accepted within their communities. Feeling different was another key issue for Chloe. She reflects that although people expect big things in their lives to change whilst they are in care, she really felt the impact of the ‘little things’ like not being able to walk home with her siblings.

## ACTION POINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Make sure that looked after children and young people are truly involved in decisions which affect them – they should be supported to express their views and **these should be listened to and taken seriously**.
- Children and young people should be afforded placements which are **appropriate to their needs**, rather than simply those which happen to be available.
- Ensure that children and young people are only moved when in their best interests and that this transition is **carefully planned, managed and fully explained**.
- Recognise the family members who are important to a child or young person and **support the positive development of these relationships**.

