



Video: Brooke - Health

Brooke (B): Hi my name is Brooke, and I'm 23 and I was in care for a year.

Brooke lived in a residential unit before moving into a supported care placement. Her experience of entering care was difficult and confusing.

B: I was 15-years-old when I went into care because I was a riot and nobody could control me. I just done my own thing and people thought I was about to be dead so I got put into care.

Brooke felt as though the circumstances around her entering the care system were not properly explained, and that decisions were made for her by professionals.

B: I was taken from my boyfriend's house through the middle of the night, dragged out from two policemen really aggressively, slammed into the back of a van and taken to a safe house while the professionals decided about what they were going to do with me. They didn't explain to me and that's when I went to the Elms one night and slept on the couch before being put into another residential, dragged out the next day and that was traumatising for a 15-year-old.

Brooke found the transition from residential unit to supported care challenging. She felt vulnerable and unsupported in her new placement

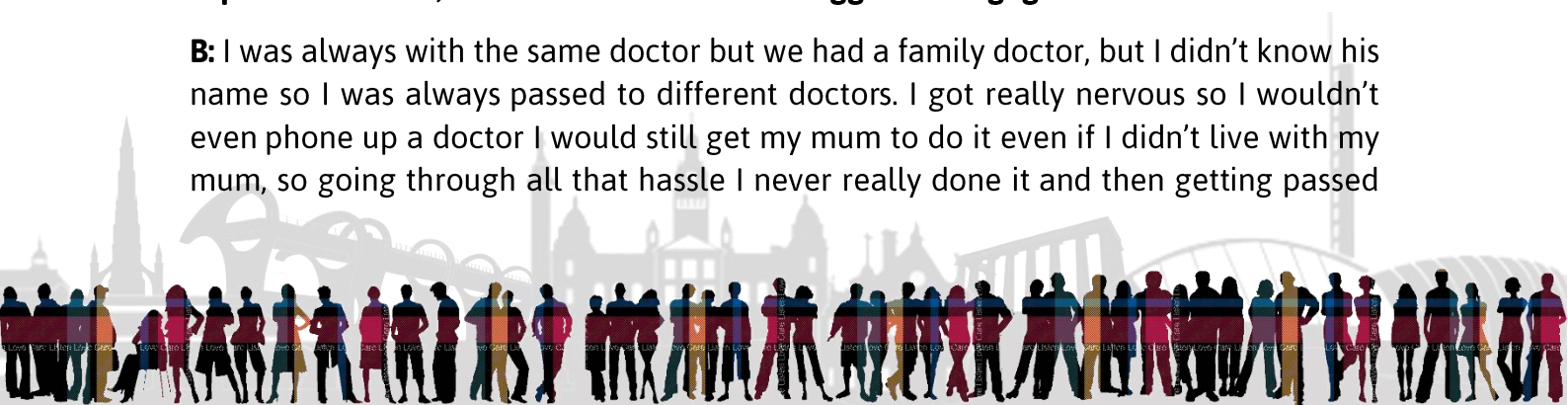
B: When I was in supported accommodation, one of my friends who lived with me, who wasn't allowed to live with me, her boyfriend broke in and trashed the whole flat. Ripped the sofas, broke things off the wall and set acetone on fire and stuff – quite serious and that was supposed to be supported accommodation building, which was far from supported. In that time I was really scared, vulnerable and didn't have anyone to turn to. I'm not one for really telling my feelings so I kind of like kept them all to myself. It was really traumatising and quite damaging for a 16-year-old to go through.

It wasn't until Brooke left care and took out her own tenancy that she felt her life had become more stable

B: My mission was to get out of care so that I "played the care system" because I was always older in the head than they thought. It was good, that freedom, but obviously too much freedom for a 16-year-old is quite messed up. There was a lot of rough patches but I was quite screwed on so there was a lot of good patches but when I moved into my actual own flat that's when I settled down and met my daughter's dad.

Though living independently, Brooke did not feel adequately prepared to manage aspects of her life, such as her health. She struggled to engage in local services.

B: I was always with the same doctor but we had a family doctor, but I didn't know his name so I was always passed to different doctors. I got really nervous so I wouldn't even phone up a doctor I would still get my mum to do it even if I didn't live with my mum, so going through all that hassle I never really done it and then getting passed





over to like every different doctor. You don't want to speak about the same things, like especially if you've got a guy doctor and you want to speak about contraception or something, you just don't do it, so I didn't do it and that's when I fell pregnant at 17.

Though Brooke's pregnancy was unplanned, her four-year-old daughter Freya is now the most important person in her life.

B: My wee girl is Freya Ava Skene, she's 4 years old and she is a total diva! She has attitude but she's great. She's totally made me who I am today.

Brooke felt that the postnatal care she received was sporadic and unreliable. Her concerns grew when Freya missed her first set of inoculations.

B: When I had Freya you're supposed to have a health visitor. I had one for a while, I was 18 years old when I had Freya and I was clueless like the next person so that extra support needed to be there but the health visitor I first had was great, she came around a lot, was giving me worksheets, she was the one that told me what to do like most of them. She was amazing but she moved onto another job and since that I haven't heard from a health visitor since. I've had one come to my door saying, I'm just giving you an appointment day, and they've never showed up. I even tried to phone up when she (Freya) never had her first needles because I was worried cause she had missed her first needles, and the health visitor never phoned us back. So, it's just been quite a crappy time but luckily, I had family around me but most people don't have that, and need that support and when your let down, you're not going to go back you lose that trust.

It made me feel let down but I've never had really strong faith in the NHS anyway. It was quite daunting knowing that the person who was supposed to be there to support me through having a child was actually not giving a nonsense anymore. Luckily for me, yeah, I was only 17 when I fell pregnant but I was older in the head. Some people aren't, other young people are younger in the head or they act their age, I thought I was about 25 at the age of 17 but for me, I'm lucky I was strong enough to go on even with little support but it's not going to happen that way for other young people and it would be great to see that there is going to be more support around for other young people going through this big step because it's not easy its really difficult but it is something you want and you need that support there. Even if it's just somebody to rant to about how stinking the bum is, anything, something that's stupid every person needs that support especially a young person who has had a hard life.

I feel they need to support more young people to be involved in more of the parenting groups or young mum's groups so they could see what it is that other young mums are going through because you feel like you're on your own, you feel like you're going through this when a lot of people are going through this as well. You just need to be guided and the right support and I feel that whoever is around you, health visitor,





doctor, etc., They should just listen to what you have to say and then be able to advise you on this stuff. Its not hard to learn.

Brooke also struggled to find appropriate support when she had concerns about her mental health, both before and after the birth of her daughter.

B: Going to the doctors when I started feeling low, they didn't give me much support. It was just really passing you a packet of anti-depressants telling you go away and take these. I don't feel that is good enough for me being that age getting passed over anti-depressants, telling me oh its just baby blues. Even before that I didn't want to be a person that's on tablets, never mind at that age, I think doctors need to look into it more. Sit down with you and use that full 10 minutes to actually talk to you instead of just throwing you out the room with some prescription. At the time, it would probably make me feel a lot worse because they're not taking the chance to listen to me, they're just giving me tablets and telling me to get on with it and it's not the way anybody should be treated but especially a young person who doesn't know much about life yet. I would just say I think all you need to do is listen and think about what that young person has to say. Not about what you're having for your tea that night. Just take that little couple of minutes to open your ears, even if you can't solve it, just being able to have someone listen to you is such a good thing.

Brooke's positive relationship with her first health visitor is exemplary of how powerful good corporate parenting can be.

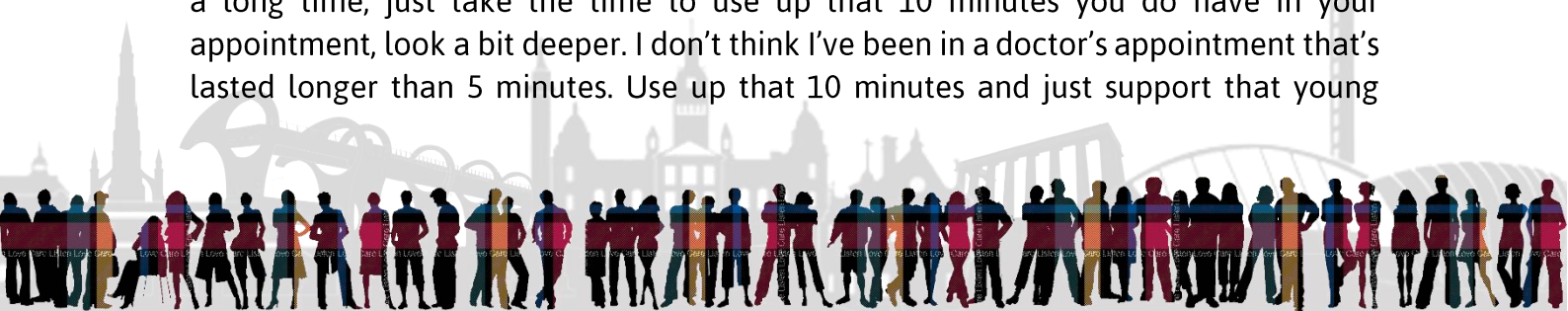
B: So, my first health visitor, she was really lovely. She wasn't like, I'd heard many stories that their there to tell you how to raise your child and stuff but she wasn't like that. She was there for me to rant with and have a listen. She always understood deeper than what other people would. She built that relationship and that trust with me so I was able to go up to her with a lot of stuff.

Brooke has some reflections on the importance of corporate parenting to care experienced young people.

B: I feel corporate parenting is very important because every young person deserves to have that parent and guide there whether you are blood or not. At the end of the day we should all be supporting our young people, who don't have the luxuries like you, do to succeed in life and be the best that they can.

She also has reflections to share on how the NHS can make the most of the opportunity provided by corporate parenting.

B: I feel the corporate parents and the NHS should really take the time, even if it's not a long time, just take the time to use up that 10 minutes you do have in your appointment, look a bit deeper. I don't think I've been in a doctor's appointment that's lasted longer than 5 minutes. Use up that 10 minutes and just support that young





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person they really need you to just listen to them. That's it – they're not asking for much apart from your ear.

