



## Video: Jenny – Entering Care

**Jenny (J):**

[Pause]

**J:** I think one of the big things for me is the process which led me to go into care. I'd just come home from school one day and the police were there. I didn't even let me get to the front door, they just bundled me into the car and I had no idea where I was going or what was happening.

[Pause}

**J:** There was really no reassurance what so ever – I thought someone had died or something – and we were just whisked off and asked a lot of questions. The questioning had a big impact on me. My dad had actually been arrested, although I didn't know this at the time. They asked me lots of questions about my sexuality, about whether I liked boys or girls. I was eleven or twelve at the time and that pressed upon me that perhaps it wouldn't be okay if I said I liked girls or anything like that and that I was the one who had done something wrong.

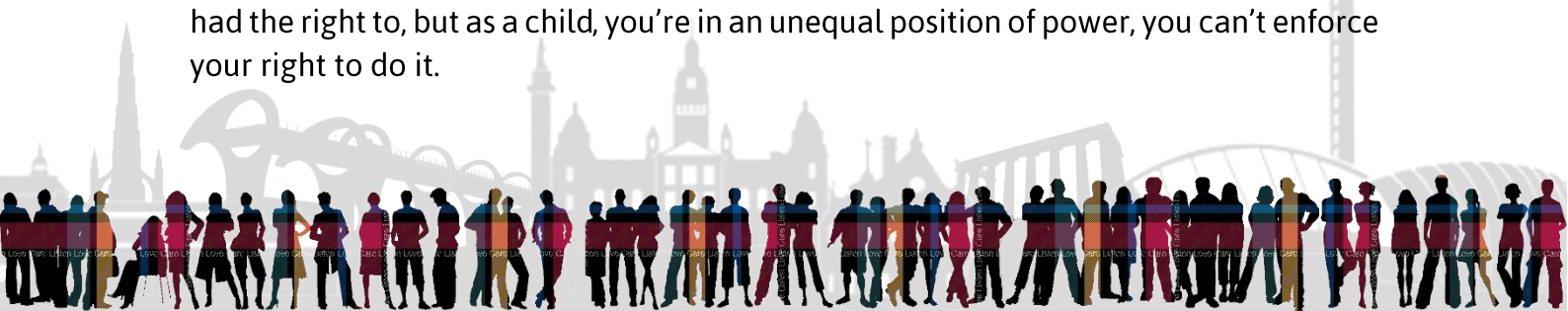
Eventually, we got to go home and when I got there, my room and the whole house was absolutely trashed. My CDs were all out of the cases, strewn all over the floor and scratched. They'd gone through my diary – there wasn't anything in it – and it was like picking up pieces of your life and trying to put it back together.

So, after my dad was arrested I got a social worker and the transition of me moving into care started. She just kinda said to us “you're going to need to go into respite care – it's just going to be a couple of weeks and it'll be fine”. I kinda clung to that – “it's just going to be a couple of weeks”.

After school I was taken to my foster carer's house and I was sitting on the sofa – I was worried and unsure. There's no rulebook for how to interact with people you don't really know or how to negotiate living with a whole bunch of new people. So that was difficult, but I just held onto the idea that it was respite and it wasn't really going to be for very long.

It was quite hard and I maybe didn't make strong bonds because I was thinking that it wasn't permanent. That was what was getting me through. Constantly after weeks and weeks I was thinking “you'll just be here another week, it'll just be another week”.

I didn't have a mobile phone or anything like that at that time, so I couldn't just call my social worker and ask what was going on. I was always doing everything through my foster carer and when I asked to call my social worker, she would say “why would you want to do that?” That gave the really strong impression that I shouldn't. Obviously I had the right to, but as a child, you're in an unequal position of power, you can't enforce your right to do it.





[Pause]

**J:** Eventually, I found out about four to six weeks after I'd gone into care that it was going to be permanent. I was shocked and upset because there was no real explanation – I didn't have a sit down with my social worker to discuss why. It was frustrating.

Going into care had a massive effect on my family life. Going into care I was separated from my brother and sister. From going from a position from seeing them every day and having them there, especially when your mum's out of the picture and your dad's out of the picture, it's important to maintain those bonds. But we were placed in different home and that made it quite difficult. I felt quite lonely and isolated. You do have other people around you but it is quite hard.

Then again, there was some effort by my brother's foster carer to keep us seeing each other on a weekly basis – she used to invite us over for tea. But it is a real shock to the system when you're with these people all the time and they're your family and you have a close bond with them and then they're kind of ripped away.

Although my brother and sister weren't around, my social worker was. Although I probably didn't appreciate everything she was doing, she was really fighting my corner all the time. With hindsight I can really see that she was fighting to give me everything that I really needed and I really appreciate that. She was really good at making sure I could maintain some relationships and that not everything was lost, that I wasn't entirely isolated although I felt like that.

I think she did a really good job and although social workers sometimes get a really bad rep for taking you away from your family, that's not always what they want to do.

[Pause]

**J:** I think overall my experience was that it wasn't really personal to me. I think given the situation that I was just put in a place regardless of whether it might have been the right place for me. It was kind of just a tick-box exercise – “we've found somewhere for her to go and that's where she'll go”, regardless of whether it was the right placement, or the right distance, or whether the people I was living with would be a good match.

