



BECOME.

THE CHARITY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE
AND YOUNG CARE LEAVERS

Impact Report 2019/2020

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Registered charity no:
1010518

A close-up portrait of a young woman with vibrant blue hair, smiling and looking upwards and to the right. She is wearing a red and white geometric patterned sweater. The background is a light-colored brick wall.

Welcome to our 2019/2020 Impact Report



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Letter from the Chair and Chief Executive

The last twelve months have seen us evolve our charity's direction. We have appointed Katharine as CEO, hired a larger team to reflect our growing ambitions and increased our service offer to support more young people.

For children in care and young care leavers the global pandemic has had a devastating impact. Young care-experienced people are facing increased isolation, mental health problems, hardship and homelessness. Not only are they struggling now but they are particularly at risk as the UK faces economic uncertainty in the future.

Throughout the turmoil and before it, we have been proud to support over five hundred young people with our services including calls to our Care Advice Service – staffed by the knowledgeable and empathetic Become team who listen to, advocate for and sometimes just be there for young people. We've helped even more young people with one-to-one and group coaching sessions and our fantastic Young People's Advisory group has continued to operate despite the pandemic to meaningfully feed into organisational decisions, plans and strategies so that young people's voices and experiences are at our heart.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the individuals, trusts and foundations who give so generously to Become. In 2019/20 we were honoured to receive £507,768 from trusts and foundations including Mark Leonard Trust, Esmée Fairburn Foundation, Lloyds Bank Foundation, and Clothworkers' Foundation. Our brilliant cycling

Welcome

**Throughout the turmoil
and before it, we have
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fundraisers once more took to the roads for the annual Biking for Children in Care event, raising a staggering £63,000. Our thanks to everyone who committed to donating every month, gave to our Christmas Appeal and – more recently – stepped up to help support care-experienced young people get through the lockdown with our Coronavirus Emergency Appeal.

This year has also seen increased political interest in the issues that young people tell us affect their childhoods and their futures. Questions have been raised about whether the care system is fit for purpose, what support there is for those leaving care and at what age a young person really can be expected to become independent. There is also a renewed focus on what support is in place to ensure that children and young people in the care of the state experience the love, stability and security that their peers do. Our job now is to use our profile, platform and insight to ensure that all of this generates positive and meaningful action.

In order to achieve more, we will further embrace digital innovations to support more young people in the coming year, including the most disadvantaged among them. We must ensure their voices are heard by those making decisions and we will work to empower and inspire young care-experienced people to be campaigners.

Our support, expertise and advocacy has never been more necessary – and the voices and experiences of children in care and care leavers will continue to be at the heart of everything we do.

We owe a huge thank you to everyone who has supported us on our journey so far and made this possible. We're looking forward to continuing to work together to deliver a better care system and transform the lives of children in care and care-experienced young people.



Hugh Thornbery
Chair of Trustees



Katharine Sacks-Jones
Chief Executive

Introduction from the Young People's Advisory Group

Welcome to the Advisory Group

We are the Become Advisory Group – a team of young adults whose expertise comes from our lived experiences. We are the adults who remember feeling isolated at school and worried about telling our friends we were in care. So we are pleased to provide our insight to help Become and other organisations in the care sector.

This year we have put our insight into planning a school assembly pack for teachers to use to help their pupils understand what being in care means. This can be so helpful to reducing the stigma that children in care face or fear facing at school – both from their classmates and from their teachers.

The assembly pack was a great project that challenged our own thinking across the group which has diverse experiences too. That ensures we are actively thinking on behalf of others as well as ourselves and that is what we hope to inspire in

everyone. It has taken a lot of dedication and hard work, listening to everyone's feedback and using this to improve the pack as we went along. It has been a really empowering project which at times has required quite a lot of emotional investment, and we have been proud to be part of it.

Being a member of the Advisory Group isn't without its challenges – sometimes it's difficult to keep up-to-date with so much going on and we have to juggle our responsibilities with work and study too. As with anyone who isn't a full-time staff member, we can't always be as involved as we want to be through each process but it is vital that across the group we keep pushing our boundaries.

As a group, we feel we're having a structural impact within Become – which is listening to our feedback, changing the way people make decisions and just keeping everything grounded in who the charity is focused on. We've recently moved to working more frequently online through WhatsApp and Zoom – everyone has adapted so well and being able to stick together and keep in touch has been





a real positive for all of us. Through the Advisory Group, we've been able to look outside ourselves and learn about how different and individual each person's care experience is – and why it's important to recognise this and hear from as many care-experienced people as possible. We've all made some amazing friends and have been able to share ideas and plan meet-ups outside of the formal group structure too.

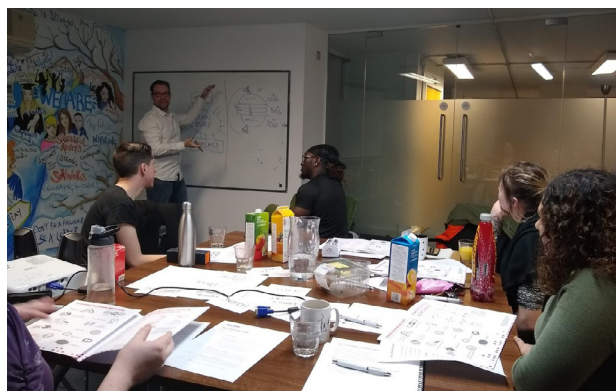
2019-20 has also been a really exciting year for us and our work with Become as we have stepped up our engagement in new ways that include:

- Developing ideas for better training for Personal Advisors
- Interviewing for new staff and Trustees at Become, including the Chief Executive
- Advising Ofsted on how they can improve their inspections
- Working with Mind on their mental health support for care-experienced young people
- Supporting media opportunities which help to change public perceptions of children in care



Working together with Become for the past two years has been a great experience. Allowing young people with lived experience to advise on the care of looked-after children and care leavers is the way to go!

George, Advisory Group member



For the future, we're really excited about welcoming new Advisory Group members and passing the torch to other young people who can contribute their own experiences and knowledge. We're excited to mould and adapt our role to something new. It will also be great to help work on extending Become's size and reach – because more people need to know about Become across the entire country, to help create affinity and build a community of care-experienced young people.

About Become

Become is here to make a difference to individual lives right now, and the care system as a whole, for future generations. Since 1992 we've been working to improve the everyday lives and future life chances of children in care and young care leavers.



The level of support I have received from Become in all senses, particularly emotionally, has had a real impact in the way I have grown in the last three years.

Elena, 19



A partial view of a person's head and shoulder on the left side of the page. The person has dark skin and is wearing a grey garment. Their hair is styled in long, thin braids that are black with orange or brown highlights. Some braids have small, light-colored beads or rings at the ends.

Our Vision

Our vision is that care-experienced people have the same chances as everyone else to live happy, fulfilled lives.

Our Mission

Our mission is to help children in care and young care leavers to believe in themselves and to heal, grow and unleash their potential. We work alongside them to make the care system the best it can be.

Our Values

Our values underpin every decision and action we take. We are committed to living these five everyday values:

- Honesty
- Empowerment
- Kindness
- Respect
- Optimism

Our year and impact

While we may feel deep down that we are making a difference, we know that it is the people we aim to help who can tell us whether we are doing things right or wrong.

Our universal impact question – introduced in August 2019 – is directed to all children and young adults we work with. At the end of any and all sessions, our practitioners ask a simple question:

“How do you feel as a result of our work today?”

We are proud that even dealing with people facing some of the greatest challenges life can throw at them, 87% came away from interaction with us feeling positive. That is a great achievement and we hope to help even more in future too.



(Impact info from August 2019 - March 2020)

“

With Become it doesn't feel scary. Become always listens and that doesn't always happen in the care system.

342



Professionals accessed training or support from Become

on subjects like the rights and entitlements for children in care and care leavers, and empowering young people in care.



“This is the first time I have met other care leavers and I'm 25.”

“Thank you for listening to me, I have never felt able to talk to people about this. I feel the bravest I've ever felt in my life. Thank you for listening, it means a lot.”



“I want to say thank you... You have helped me out so much, I've never really felt supported until now. I appreciate all the advice you've given. Thank you.”

From a Care Leaver who attended a workshop on rights and entitlements delivered at their supported housing accommodation.

"I don't normally come to groups but I'm glad I came to this one, it was helpful."



"I left last session feeling really empowered, now I really reflect and am aware of the things that hold me back. I am able to make a change to how to approach things."



We helped a young person to access his setting up home allowance after being released from prison. "I appreciate how quickly you got it done, you've helped me a lot."



557

Children and young people helped through Become's direct service

including our Care Advice Service, tailored 1:1 support and coaching, group workshops and drop-in sessions.

475

Enquiries to our Care Advice Line

Our free helpline for care-experienced children, young people and professionals provided advice, advocacy and support to 475 callers this year, offering vital information and help around rights and entitlements, housing and education.

Following a 1:1 session with a Care Leaver in which we discussed their housing situation and disappointment at the local authority's lack of support. "I feel like a weight has been lifted. That's the first time I've said all that and it feels good."



Care Leaver who we helped by getting her holiday time accommodation paid by the local authority after a long delay. "Thank you so much. Without your help, I don't think they would have released the payments. I think it shook them up a bit."



Our services

Helping more young people

Become set out on a path this year to expand the vital services it provides for young people in and leaving care. Our services including our Care Advice Service, tailored 1:1 support and coaching, group workshops and drop-in sessions, have been a vital lifeline, reaching 557 young people this year.

We launched a regular Link-Up group bringing young people together to meet one another, build a community, learn from and support each other. This included themed Link-Ups such as a Christmas dinner and Valentine's celebration. We intend to continue these events which create an inclusive space for young people to come together, share experiences and make friends.

We also launched a series of new workshops for young people on topics including 'managing emotions', 'setting meaningful goals', 'relationships and communication' and 'rights and entitlements'. These workshops have been delivered in a range of community settings, including children's homes and children in care councils.



While our Link-Up sessions, coaching and group work have had to move online during the crisis, that has not stopped us developing and delivering for young people.

Of course it isn't only young people in and leaving care that our services reach. We are pleased that this year 342 professionals accessed our training or support on subjects like 'rights and entitlements for children in care and care leavers' and 'empowering young people in care'. We also delivered bespoke training to Kent County Council on preventing homelessness, and to the charity, Pause, on working with care-experienced young women who have had children removed from their care.





We believe that
everyone has
the potential and
resources within
them to thrive

We are developing a training programme to improve the practice of Personal Advisors, working in partnership with young people, Personal Advisors, researchers and sector professionals to gain insight into how practice can be improved.

In future years we will expand our training and consultancy work (including delivering our new Personal Advisors training programme) to reach increasing numbers of professionals and ultimately to improve the support available to young people.

We also plan to develop our impact measurement tools to capture better data to continue to drive improvements in our services. And we will continue to develop our current service offer to include more digital delivery with the aim of reaching a wider and more diverse audience of young people in and leaving care.

Young people's participation

Quotes on highlights of the year

"Deciding on the values for the strategy was a nice group piece of work" – Leanne

"I really enjoyed speaking at the conference with Katharine" – Zahra

"The assembly plan was when we worked the best. We really got into it and challenged each other's thinking" – Leanne

"I liked getting involved in the media stuff – being a part of articles and telling your story" – Luke

"The Care-Experienced Conference was amazing – it was such a good day" – Zahra

"We had really good involvement and a sense of unity in a lot of our tasks" – Leanne



It was such a great session and we really value their expertise – so many helpful and thoughtful ideas and suggestions!

University of Sussex

Young people's voices

We work with, not just for, care-experienced young people to deliver real changes to policy and practice in the care system.

The Advisory Group plays a vital role in this work. As a small group of care-experienced young adults, they bring their valuable knowledge and expertise to support Become and other organisations. In addition, at the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers, we surveyed and heard from over 30 care leavers in person about their experiences with Personal Advisors and how they want to see the leaving care service improved. From this initial exploratory meeting, a number of care-experienced young people contributed from the very beginning of our ongoing project to design and deliver a new training model for Personal Advisors.

The Advisory Group helped to develop our draft strategy for 2020-25, offering critical feedback on our organisational values and description so that it could be better understood and recognised by young people. It then set out important asks to include within our manifesto which was sent to the



Please extend our thanks to Trey who was excellent and provided some thought provoking content that made a big impact on our managers.

Action for Children

leading parties in the run up to the 2019 general election, and challenged our language on things like supporting young parents, understanding identity, keeping in touch with brothers and sisters and support for pursuing different types of education and employment after age 18.

The Advisory Group has now advised Ofsted on its research work to support better matching in foster care and use of suitable accommodation for young people leaving care. As a result of this work, Ofsted are now investing further to learn how to listen to young people effectively and we are continuing to support with this.

Making sure young people are heard is also about making sure professionals and other adults use the right language which reflects the realities of young people's lives. So the Advisory Group provided input on the Family Rights Group's Lifelong Links project to support the involvement of trusted family and friends in supporting children. They raised questions about the use of the word 'love' within their questionnaires for young people and suggested new language choices instead. These were then implemented by the Family Rights Group in their recommendations.

“

I felt like I had an important role and Katharine wanted me to be included in delivering the conference because of my lived experience as a care leaver and that is something I appreciate lots.

Zahra, Advisory Group member

Members of the Advisory Group and other young people who access Become's services have joined interview panels and assessments for staff and Trustee positions. This has been vitally important in making sure appointments are made in the best interests of those we're supporting. It has also encouraged the sharing of power and control over decisions, something which isn't always comfortable but is essential and has worked well.



Young people's skills

Participation work focusses on bringing care-experienced young people together to meet others in safe and comfortable ways, building social relationships through shared understanding and experience, and supporting participants to develop new skills and knowledge that will be of use beyond their involvement with Become.

To this aim, we have provided skills training around policy and campaigning and the process of interviewing. We have involved young people in research work and given them the experience of advising academic groups and Ofsted.

A particular highlight was introducing the Speakers Trust to an Advisory Group meeting to deliver communication skills and public speaking training. While some members of the group were already comfortable with the skills and activities involved, others were far less confident and unsure of their ability to communicate in front of an audience. It was remarkable how enthusiastic and willing the group were to step outside of their comfort zones during this session and we felt humbled that they felt safe enough and supported to be vulnerable in front of us and their peers.



Skills demonstrated and developed during our participation work:

- ✓ Emotional intelligence, active listening and interpersonal skills to help establish consensus and work with other care-experienced young people
- ✓ Spoken and written communication skills to articulate viewpoints clearly as part of a group and with unfamiliar audiences
- ✓ Persuasion and conflict resolution skills to constructively challenge viewpoints some don't agree with and reach agreement
- ✓ Analysis, critical thinking and problem-solving skills to analyse new information quickly, synthesise key points and make recommendations
- ✓ Teamwork and negotiation skills to work together with others when producing creative outputs
- ✓ Time management and handling a long-term commitment – juggling the demands of the Advisory Group with other work and study commitments
- ✓ A deep knowledge of young people's issues, using individual lived experiences to inform contributions



I've learned that my care experience is very different to others. I've developed my skills in recognising the variety of care experiences and looking outside of myself, and remembering this in my role on the Advisory Group.

Alice, Advisory Group member



Ultimately, we want the experiences and knowledge of young people to be put at the heart of the care system. The insights of the young people we work with will continue to inform our policy development as we seek concrete, demonstrable change in the treatment of young people in and leaving care.

The meeting with the Speakers Trust set a positive tone for future meetings and gave everyone something to be proud of, which carried through into other plans and discussions. Many members have taken the new skills developed through this session into other opportunities elsewhere in their work or studies.

This process will benefit the young people involved too, as they build up their experience of working with an organisation like ours and recognise for themselves the value they bring. As more young people learn to use their experiences and insight, they can develop new transferable skills and knowledge as part of a supportive community of care-experienced young people.

Coaching & tailored 1:1 support now covers:



Goal setting



Building confidence
& self-esteem



Decision-making



Organisation and
time management



Budgeting and
managing finances



Support to get back
into education



Managing personal
relationships



Building support
networks

Policy, public affairs and communications

Representing young people

In November 2019 we published *A system that cares*, our manifesto setting out what we and the young people we work with think must change across the care system. This was sent to ministers and personnel in charge of writing party manifestos for the General Election and we are pleased to report that both the Conservatives and Labour Party committed in their manifestos to a review of the care system, one of the main things we were calling for.

We are now working to make this a reality and to ensure the right changes result from it. So in February we led the submission of an open letter from 27 organisations to the Secretary of State for Education calling for this commitment to be acted on with urgency, and outlining what a meaningful review of the care system should look like.

Become has also applied pressure to government over the use of unregulated accommodation for young people in care. This accommodation can leave significant gaps in support for young people. In May 2019 this was brought into sharp focus by a Newsnight investigation and our calls for an extensive review have since been heeded.

In February 2020, the Department for Education launched a consultation on the use of unregulated semi-independent and independent settings for 16 and 17-year-olds. These settings are not registered children's homes and therefore do not provide care. Become took this opportunity to support the #KeepCaringTo18 campaign, which seeks to guarantee care for **every child** in care and we continue to push for this change. We then produced a young person's version of the consultation and following our requests, the DfE subsequently extended the deadline to accommodate more evidence.

Of course, while our work to secure long-term change continues, this has also been a highly unusual year. Our *advice for care-experienced young people on the COVID-19 pandemic* has received excellent feedback, along with our tips for young people to stay calm and connected through the pandemic – which were informed by our Advisory Group.



The project... has really shown our young people that their voices can be, and should always be listened to, and has empowered them to create real changes that affect not just them but all young people in foster care.

Affinity Fostering



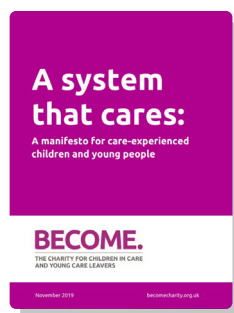


At the end of March we also started working with four other organisations to understand what challenges students without family support face at university through the crisis, to inform Government and universities' response to those in need.

In achieving much of what we have, we must thank the young people who work with us. Their voices are both insightful and powerful and we have sought to ensure their views reach more people. So when submitting evidence to the Education Committee's inquiry into the children's social care workforce, we focused our evidence on the experiences we had heard from young people themselves.

In a similar vein, as we have sought to ensure that issues such as unregulated accommodation or

moving people miles from their local area due to accommodation shortages get the media attention they deserve, we have featured the experiences of our Advisory Group members in a range of national, local and sector media pieces.



Conservative Party Manifesto Pledge to:

"review the care system to make sure that all care placements and settings are providing children and young adults with the support they need".

82,422 Unique Views of our Website

Most Accessed Content:



- 1 Care Factsheets
- 2 Facts about the Care System
- 3 Being a Care Leaver



Fundraising

Being in our corner

Everything we do at Become is thanks to the wonderful people and organisations who support us. The young people we help are facing unprecedented challenges right now and we couldn't be more grateful to have you in our corner.

Our famous 'Biking for Children in Care' challenge brought together more than 50 riders this year, led by Gill Timmis and Aileen Hampson. They cycled a remarkable 200 miles from Caen to Versailles and raised a record-breaking £63,000. That wasn't the only feat of physical endurance by supporters this year. Five runners took on the Vitality Big Half marathon for Become, raising nearly £2,500. We are keenly aware that such events have been halted during the pandemic but rest assured we aim to have even bigger teams when events like the Vitality Big Half Marathon and Great North Run return.

Become is also very fortunate to have some wonderful institutions supporting us. This year the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation pledged three years of unrestricted core funding in support of our work to change the care system for the better. We have also benefitted from the Clothworkers' Foundation providing support to pilot a five year training programme for Personal Advisors. We are pleased to have secured funding from Lloyds Bank Foundation to invest in an impact database and help develop an impact culture. Nurturing new and long-standing relationships with grant-making institutions is a key part of our fundraising strategy and it's thanks to the long-standing support of funders like the Mark Leonard Trust that we can develop ambitious plans for the future.

With the pandemic still underway the risks associated with it are never far from the team's minds as we diversify our income. We now have more than one hundred people signed up to donate a regular gift of up to £100 and we are investing in our online fundraising capacity and exploring new fundraising streams to ensure we have the diverse backing that this year's global crisis makes clear is so vital.





“Another great ride.
Great organisation, great company,
thoroughly enjoyable!”

“

I was doing my mental health block in medical school and I was shocked by the statistics regarding mental health in Looked After Children. My little brother is currently in care and these results really impacted me. These children were dealt bad hands in life through no fault of their own and yet they could suffer so much – things that may affect them way into the rest of their lives. I wanted to support Become in what they are doing to ensure a brighter, safer, more secure and loving future for this vulnerable group of children. I have faith that they would grow up to be amazing humans but that needs the help of many people along the way.

Joanna Cac, fundraising runner



Thanks

We wouldn't be able to do what we do without you

Thanks to every individual who raised funds for Become, who supported our policy influencing work and calls for a comprehensive review of the care system, and who gave time or expertise so generously to us. Thanks also to the trusts and grant-making organisations who have enabled us to expand our ambitions and do more to help young care-experienced people over the last year. It is only with your generosity, interest and support that we're able to make the difference that we do.

We are particularly grateful to our excellent Young People's Advisory Group and all of the young people that Become works with who in sharing their experiences, expertise and aspirations help us to demand a system which works better for young people.

We also pay tribute to our brilliant staff team, who work tirelessly to improve the lives of care-experienced young people, and our Board of Trustees, whose determination and focus on how best to challenge the system and make sure the voices of care-experienced young people are heard ensure Become is constantly asking itself 'could we do more'?

Our deep thanks go to Gavin Pearson and Kayleigh Foster for their pro-bono support in producing this Impact Report.



Thank you for being so kind. I think coming along to Become that day for the first time was one of the best things I ever did.

Young care leaver

What's next?

Our strategy

Our new five-year strategy was launched in 2019, informed by decades of listening to children in care and to adults who were in care.

We listen and learn in many ways: through talking to the children and young people we work with and the care-experienced people who advise us; through our Care Advice Line and our services; through our research; and through running the APPG for Children in Care and Care Leavers.

We have a deep understanding of what it means to experience serious adversity in childhood, to be in care and to live your life after it – and of how care needs to change to give children the best chance of leading happy, successful lives.

Our four aims

Aim 1: Supporting Children

We will help young people believe in themselves and to shape the future that they want.

Aim 2: Supporting Practice

We will help develop the practice of people who support care-experienced young people so that they are able to offer their best care.

Aim 3: Challenging the System

We'll ensure that care-experienced young people are heard and their rights upheld.
We'll hold people and organisations in the care system to account.

Aim 4: Changing Attitudes

We will improve society's understanding and empathy with care-experienced people.

