



Transcript:

13% of children in care left school with five or more GCSEs grade A* - C, compared to 62% of all other children in the UK.

34% of care leavers reported being homeless at some time in the first year after leaving care.

Unemployment figures for school leavers in care are three times the average across the UK.

Narrator: Colin Ragget is 19 years old and lives in temporary accommodation for homeless young people in Manchester. Currently he is unemployed, but volunteers for a national voice, a charity, run for and by young people who are or have been in care.

Colin Ragget: When I went into care when I was 14, I had basically no control over where I went. I started in Manchester twice. The first one was a childrens' home, and then it was foster carers. Then those two didn't work out, so they moved me to Coventry. It was really, really difficult in Coventry because of contacts, there was actually maybe like once a month or something like that that I would actually see my parents, and I couldn't call them because I had no mobile. Some of the time I was violent because school kids would pick on me for actually being in care, being away from my family, so that would spark up fights. I didn't fit in. Until I went to Yorkshire, and I was in one of the childrens' homes there, Broadwood Home.

Narrator: Today, Colin is returning to Broadwood, in Halifax, which is a childrens' home that had such a positive impact on his life. Being only a short car journey away from his family in Manchester, enabled Colin to remain in contact with his parents and siblings, and was a contributing factor to his successful stay at the home, along with the excellent relationship he built with his key worker, Glenda.

Colin Ragget: Glenda was like a second mum to me. If I had a few problems, I'd go to her. She helped me with everything.

Colin: *That's the sofa.*

Glenda: *Oh I know, it's nice to sit down. So what have you been up to Colin?*

Colin: *Training, all sorts of stuff. I'm doing a work placement tomorrow.*

Glenda: *Oh right, and what's that going to be doing?*

Colin: *Reception work, erm, maintenance ...*

Glenda: *Are you worried about it?*

Colin: *No.*

Glenda: *Aren't you?*

Colin: *No, I'm enthusiastic [laughs].*

Glenda: *Well you're good on telephone anyway, aren't you?*

Colin: *If you say so [laughs].*

Glenda: *Come on, stop pretending you're shy; you know how good you are. Will you be having your office voice on?*

Colin: *I never had an office voice?*

Glenda: *Yeah. Are you wearing a suit? Do you have to wear a suit?*

Colin: *No. No. I don't have to. I'll be wearing clobber like this.*

Glenda: *Dress down ...*

Narrator: Glenda is the Senior Residential Care worker for the Keys Group which took over from Broadwood two years ago. After being a carer for her father, Glenda decided she wanted to pursue a career in care, and after years of working with the elderly and adults with learning difficulties, is now using her experience to work with young people in care.

Glenda: Working with children – it's very challenging; there's no doubt about that. Sometimes you feel that you're being targeted by that young person, but it's not a personal thing at all, it's to do with all the issues that's happened in their life, and sometimes they don't know how to express their feelings, apart from being negative, because that's what they've used to being doing.

When I first met Colin, he were a really, really mixed up young man; really confused, he had lots and lots of issues that he blamed himself for, he had low self-esteem, he didn't really want to interact with anybody and there were loads of problems surrounding him going home and things like that.

Colin: Basically Glenda got me in contact with my parents, she would organise for someone to take me there, drop me off and pick me up again.

Glenda: When I contacted mum and dad, I think it were really important for them to know that we were only at the other end of the phone, so if there were any issues or any problems, all they had to do was ring us, and we were there to support them.

Colin: To do all that, it means they care, it meant that they care about me, they care that I want to see my parents, my family, and I want to keep contact.

Glenda: Young people don't think they're listened to because they're in care, and they don't live with their parents for whatever reason that might be, and they feel that they're not going to have the chances that maybe a young person has that lives at home, but we try and encourage that and get rid of that stigma by working really hard with them, encouraging them, trying to build their confidence, but they do find it extremely difficult to trust, and they probably think, well what's the point, because everybody else has let me down in my life, why are you going to be any different, and that's where you've got to be different, by not letting them down, and keep working with them no matter how difficult it gets.

Colin: There are particular memories that I love of Glenda and Sean Bingley who was my other key worker. They decided to take me to the Yorkshire

Dales to go camping which was a really, really good experience for me, and with all of that and all the help that they've given me, it's helped me turn my life around after leaving care, because if there were any more occurrences where I'm hitting people or causing damage to vehicles, I would see myself in prison if I didn't get all that help that I got from Broadwood.

Glenda: Look after yourself, won't you.

Colin: I will do, all right, see you later.

Narrator: Colin is now on his way back to Manchester where he has made plans to visit his sister. Family is extremely important to Colin, and since leaving care full time, Colin has continued to build on the relationship that he worked so hard to keep whilst being in care.

Colin: Put some stickers on here; shall we do some stickering. Right. Let's find out where they go first. Where's the big star gone? Have you got a big star on there? Look. Put one of those stars on here? Yeah. Put it down there.

Sister: Can you stick it on there? Yeah ...

Colin: Good girl.

Colin: I've got a really good relationship with my family and I see my sister, Elise, a lot. It means the world to me to have contact still with my sister, and to have the support, because she has helped me as well. She's worked with Bernardo's over the phone, in getting me this place, and really the support that she's been giving me is tremendous.

Narrator: Although Colin's experience in care was mostly positive, there were negative aspects that he's now trying to help address for future generations of children going into care.

Colin: When I left Broadwood and I went to the Crescent Gate Hotel which Social Services paid for, I was there for about seven months, and then on my eighteenth birthday, they told me that there would be no more funding for that bed, or for that room, for the following night. So which then meant I

had to pack up, go down to the Bernardo's office and wait for about four, five or six hours on my birthday until I got a place in Manchester, SafeStop. It actually made me quite angry at them for saying that they're not going to care for me, even on my eighteenth birthday. What they could have done is just cared for me for one more night over my birthday so I could have a good birthday, and that's one of the reasons why I'm with ANV, a national voice.

Lady (ANV): A national voice is a young person led charity. Our board of trustees are all young people under the age of 25 who have had some form of care experience, so by that very nature they're best placed to inform and improve policy and practice. So the very young people that are coming along and getting involved and coming to meetings, giving their views, participating in exercises that will inform what we do and we'll take the things that they see as priority directly to the government, to policy makers, i.e. MPs.

Colin is somebody who has been through the care system, therefore he knows the positives and the negatives, so from that point of view, he is really, really best placed to guide policy makers on how they're doing well, and how they're not. And especially front line workers on how the little things can really affect young people, because he's told me how committed and caring a particular key worker was, that really just made him sit up and think, and actually then take up control of his own life.

Colin: With being in the organisation of 'a national voice' I'm hoping to be able to achieve a goal of getting the care system better for the users than it was for me in the past. Not me being at Broadwood but the whole lot of the care system where I didn't have a say. I think young people should have a say. And once you've got that, you'll probably enjoy yourself in care and then you'll go out and you'll enjoy your life after care as well, which I have, eventually.

[End of recording]