

# Social Care Institute for Excellence

## Interview Summary Sheet

## Title Page

**Ref no:** C1597/09

**Collection title:** Care Leavers' Stories

**Interviewee's surname:** Baker

**Title:** Mr

**Interviewee's  
forename:** Byron

**Sex:** Male

**Occupation:** Part-time student/  
sales consultant

**Date of birth:** 1982

**Dates of recording:** 20.05.13

**Location of interview:** Social Care Institute for Excellence, 2-4 Cockspur Street, London, SW1Y 5BH

**Name of interviewer:** Khatija Hafesji

**Type of recorder:** Canon XF 305

**Recording format :** .mxf

**Total no. of tracks:** 1

**Mono or stereo:**

Stereo

**Total Duration:**  
3:04:44

**Additional material:**

**Copyright/Clearance:** Full clearance EXCEPT from 2:20:00-2:27:03 which is closed until 24 October 2043

**Interviewer's  
comments:**

## C1597/09 Byron Baker

Track 1 [03:04:42] [Session: 20<sup>th</sup> May 2013] [00:00:00] Byron Baker [BB], 31 years old, lived in Islington and Camden. Currently living in Barnet. Studying to be a social worker, also working full-time. [00:00:52] From a single-parent family, raised by his mother and went in and out of care. Was ten when taken into care permanently. Lived in a foster placement [FP] where BB and his middle brother [MB] were treated liked second-class citizens. Describes this FP. [00:02:10] Ran away from FP. Would go to the West End, steal pound coins from water fountains and visit the Trocadero centre. Were caught by police doing graffiti at King's Cross station and returned to FP who sent BB and MB back to their social worker [SW]. Nicknamed the foster carers Mrs. Grotbags. [00:03:10] Spent time in temporary accommodation, then in a children's home in Highgate called Millfield. BB describes Millfield at length. Millfield was a charity-run home, previously owned by the Spencer family. Describes the layout, staff, and other residents some of whom had learning difficulties. [00:10:12] BB describes relationship with MB. Describes violent residents. [00:14:15] BB was allowed to have a TV in his bedroom when he was 14 and would play on Hampstead Heath. Mentions money, staff rotas. [00:20:00] Describes relationships with staff, key-workers, co-key workers. [00:23:12]

Track 1 [cont. from 00:23:12] BB describes leaving Millfield. Islington council attempted to move BB out at the age of sixteen, the NSPCC intervened to fight his case to stay. BB finished his GCSEs and began a GNVQ business studies course. Describes the preparation he received in leaving Millfield and meeting his focus team. [00:25:35] BB began his A-levels but did not finish them. His mother passed away when he was eighteen. BB dreamed of going to University. Describes the academic expectations of Islington council. [00:30:08] BB describes his ambitions and educational support received from Millfield. BB's school had low expectations of him because he was in care. Illustrates the point in an anecdote about a trip to France. [00:36:28] BB discusses his memories of his mother [M]. Strongest memory of M is her listening to reggae music in the living room. Details the impact of his mother on his life. M was involved in Rastafarian culture. M dabbled in drugs, cannabis. M's drug use increased until she was unable to care for BB and his siblings. BB mentions that M was abused as a child, and she grew up in Dundee, Scotland. Mentions the lack of awareness over the dangers of drugs. [00:45:24] BB describes his Dad's absence from his life. BB's Dad is Jamaican. Dad has another family and three children. BB occasionally contacts them on Facebook. [00:49:45]

Track 1 [cont. from 00:49:45] M was white, but got involved in black music and black culture. M cooked Caribbean food, rice and peas, curried goat, oxtail. M had a close relationship with her mother-in-law. [00:52:36] BB wanted to be a Rastafarian as a child. [00:53:40] BB describes Finsbury Park [FP] as Celtic and Caribbean. Black food and hair shops on Stroud Green road. BB moved to Angel, was a white area. School children did not understand his dreadlocks, BB was bullied. M was able to source drugs easier in King's Cross. [00:56:55] **BB describes a serious incident which led to the move from FP. [01:00:24]** BB describes gang culture in FP. [01:02:03] [ten-minute comfort break] [cont. from 01:02:03] BB describes life with M in Angel after the move. BB took more responsibility at home as M's drug use increased. BB reflects on his attitude to weed. Home in Angel was sparse, BB, M, and MB slept on mattresses. SW more involved in their life. Anecdote about SW buying BB and MB an alarm clock from Argos. [01:06:35] Elaborates on SW involvement with the family. SW Julie was an important figure to BB. [01:10:02] BB

describes SW in detail and SW's manager Gloria. SW bought BB and MB fun Christmas presents. Gloria bought them boring educational presents. SW now gives BB advice on how to become a SW himself. BB mentions guidelines against mixed race foster placements. BB describes Julie as a major influence. BB describes M's relationship with SW. [01:16:06]

Track 1 [cont. from 01:16:06] [Break due to water spillage] [01:17:13] BB describes M's early life and his honest and frank relationship with M. BB describes how he learned about M's past through M's family. [01:24:35] Anecdote about shoplifting from Tesco's when M had run out of money. BB mentions M's provision of food, his own cooking style today. [01:27:00] BB details relationship with his two brothers. Relates a racist incident which occurred at school. [01:30:32] BB discusses his relationship with his brothers at length. BB's youngest brother was fostered and eventually adopted. [01:32:00] BB describes his relationship with his mother's family in Scotland. BB is close to one of his aunts from Scotland. M instilled strong family ethos. [01:35:00] BB describes the downward spiral that led to care. M left BB alone at home, the police were called, BB and brother entered foster care. M and children reunited and placed in a family centre. M had to follow lots of rules but was unable to keep curfew. Then BB and MB taken into another FP – Mrs. Grotbags – and they were aware this was the final straw. BB recalls going into Millfield for the first time, his relationship with staff and other residents, and details how he was treated at Millfield. [01:42:15] BB discusses contact with M whilst at Millfield. Contact was intermittent. At times at Millfield, other times at the family centre. M was occasionally in prison. BB generally looked forward to seeing M. BB recalls M missing visits. [01:49:35]

Track 1 [cont. from 01:49:35] BB describes FP with Mrs. Grotbags. BB believes FP were racist because BB and MB were mixed-race, although FP were a black family. [01:55:40] BB considers impact of FP on relationship with MB. Christmas routine and Birthday traditions at Millfield. [01:59:56] Describes M's physical changes, ageing, and increasing gaps between visits. BB describes finding out M had died. [02:00:01] BB describes how the police broke the news to him. BB was not wholly shocked. BB touches on his attitude toward religion and God. Narrates an anecdote from M's funeral. [02:05:35] BB elaborates on M's funeral and BB's relationship with his grandfather. BB was asked to choose the music for the funeral, but was not allowed to sit at the front row. BB chose Bob Marley, Craig David. BB elaborates on relationship with M's family since her death. [02:11:41] [ten minute comfort break] [cont. from 02:11:41] BB explains the financial support when leaving care. BB did not fully understand payments. BB had difficulty budgeting his community care grant. Focus, National Children's Home Charity acted as leaving care service. BB encountered financial difficulties and debt due to misinformation. [02:15:00] BB mentions his girlfriend is helping him face up to his debts today. Discusses the possibility of affording to buy a house. BB has his own furniture business. BB mentions working for Islington local authority, and with the children in care council. [02:18:24]

Track 1 [cont. from 02:18:24] Support networks and friendships after leaving Millfield. BB's aunt was important, but he fell into a bad crowd. BB elaborates on the gang mentality of his friends. Describes several violent incidents as a result of this association. [02:25:00] BB moved away to leave this group behind. [02:27:03] BB describes how his life changed after these incidents. BB describes his working life in an independent furniture company. Was promoted to a managerial position. BB left the shop and went to Thailand for a month with friends. [02:30:09] BB discusses the potential of travel. Relates an anecdote of bumping into an old acquaintance. CRB check came in clear. BB discusses recreational drug taking. BB worked in a bar, then got a job fitting granite kitchen surfaces. Describes shopping in Brent

Cross, Hugo Boss, HMV. [02:36:00] Narrates anecdotes of racial prejudice in rural areas where BB worked. BB began work selling mobile phones in a phone shop. Describes management structure at the phone shop. BB was offered a management position elsewhere. [02:44:00] BB returned to work for furniture companies for 4-5 years. BB discusses retail work. [02:46:00] BB met his girlfriend who helped him decide to be a social worker. BB elaborates on motivations to be a social worker. [02:49:27] BB discusses his relationship with girls and his girlfriend in particular. [02:53:20] BB discusses accessing his care records in the future. [02:55:12] BB discusses the process of being interviewed, suggests it is therapeutic. [02:56:34]

Track 1 [cont. from 02:56:34] BB discusses his political views. Discusses Tory/Conservative policies of Michael Gove MP towards children's home, adoption, the National Curriculum. BB stresses importance of participation and asking questions of young people. BB mentions the adoption of his brother. [03:00:17] BB ponders whether young people in care have enough of a voice. BB discusses participation work in Islington council, the in care council, meeting ministers and Edward Timpson MP. Stresses the lack of money for provision of services and stability for young people. [03:03:42] BB mentions the lack of counselling available for care leavers on the NHS. [03:04:44][End of interview]