



## 45 CARE LEAVER FRIENDLY WAYS

The CLA has produced a short guide on how to work with adolescent looked after children and care leavers. This booklet has been created by care leavers who were involved in our health project. It is in their own words wherever possible. They share what would have made a difference to them now and when they were in care as a child. It is also punctuated by statistics on outcomes for care leavers so that you understand how growing up in care can affect an individual for their entire life.





Jackie

**4745**

days in care



## **CARE LEAVERS ARE 7 x MORE LIKELY TO DIE BEFORE THE AGE OF 25 THAN THE GENERAL POPULATION** (BBC News Feb 2017)

1. Your role is to support me not do me more harm.
2. Don't assume I have been in trouble or I am a trouble maker.
3. Open the cover of (my) the book. Take time to get to know me.
4. It may take time to open each chapter so be patient.
5. Some chapters are more emotional than others. I may have experienced some quite awful things.
6. Our history isn't always a straight line.
7. You can ask us questions about our time in care.



## **CARE LEAVERS ARE 25 x MORE LIKELY TO BE HOMELESS** (National Audit Office 2015)

25% of the homeless population have at some point been in care.  
Less than 1% of the child population are looked after.

8. **Do not push us into the deep end and leave us (independent living).**
9. **Relationships can be harder for us. We can take time to trust people.**
10. **We often feel abandoned and isolated - remember this when working with us.**
11. **Use diplomacy.**
12. **Please encourage us to have hobbies.**
13. **Keep at it and don't give up.**
14. **Weekends, nights and holidays can be lonely times for us.**

**2555**

days in care

**Anthony**





Theresa



## CARE LEAVERS ARE 25 x MORE LIKELY TO BE INVOLVED WITH SEX WORK

(Home Office's Paying the Price: A Coordinated Prostitution Strategy)

15. Money doesn't always fix our problems. Often practical support and just knowing someone cares makes a big difference to us.
16. We can switch off. We may disengage. However stick with us or try another approach.
17. We don't always know our own strengths because we have been in flight, fight or freeze mode most of our lives.
18. We can give away our sexuality too early.
19. Sometimes we can be too needy.
20. Triggers. We do not always know what these are and when they will happen.
21. Medicating us isn't always the best option. There are other forms of managing our moods/emotions.

**2920**

days in care



## **CARE LEAVERS UP TO 40 x MORE LIKELY TO BE IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**

(The Mental Health and Well-being of Looked After Children Report of the House of Commons Education Committee April 2016)

22. **Being a loner isn't always a bad thing. We often need some alone time to ourselves.**
23. **Just ask us. That way you may be able to help us more.**
24. **Let's work out the issue/s together.**
25. **We are a colourful tapestry of stories. We have all had different experiences of being in care.**
26. **Ask us what happened to us.**
27. **I would have loved to have had someone to call mum/dad.**
28. **We can't always relate to what family is.**

**5480**

days in care

**Jakeb**





Lauren



**88% OF CARE LEAVERS SURVEYED FELT DEPRESSED, SOME, MOST OR ALL OF THE TIME WHILE THEY WERE IN CARE. THIS DROPPED BY ONLY 1%, TO 87% ONCE THEY LEFT CARE** (CLA Health Report 2017)

- 29. Sometimes we do not know why we act out. So, harsh punishments may not work.
- 30. We'd love more empathy/compassion shown towards us.
- 31. We can be deeply fearful of you/people leaving us.
- 32. We can have trust issues with people in authority.
- 33. When we do well, we can believe we don't deserve it, so please make a point of reminding us we have done well.
- 34. Some of us were told constantly that we wouldn't do well.

**4745**

days in care



## **55% OF CARE LEAVERS SURVEYED ATTRIBUTED THEIR MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES TO THEIR CARE EXPERIENCE**

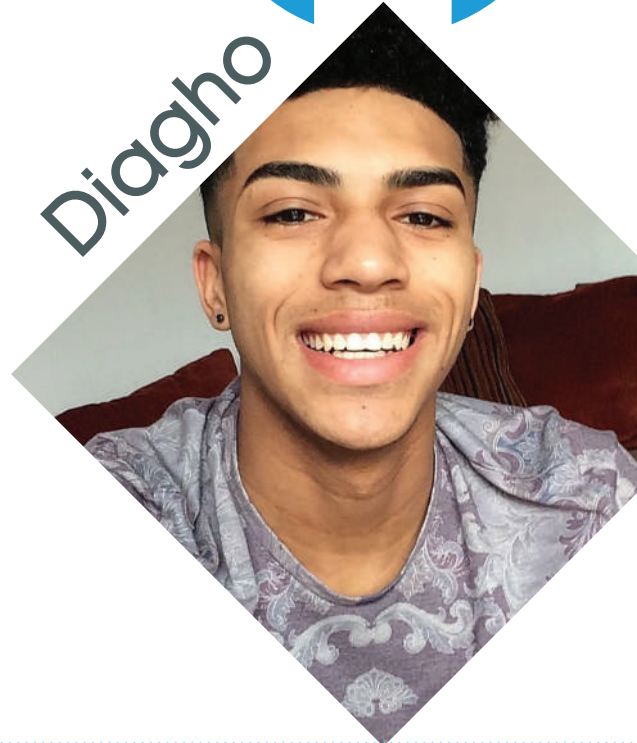
(CLA Health Report 2017)

- 35. We can be hard wired to be streetwise.
- 36. I may be quiet, but I may not be fine. Don't assume because we haven't complained or said something that we are happy with what you're doing for us.
- 37. Being vulnerable can be hard for us.
- 38. There may be layers of trauma which we need your help to work through.
- 39. There are many things from our childhood we can't remember.
- 40. We need to be reminded of how well we have done.

**5665**

days in care

Diagho







Jacqui

**1884**

days in care

- 41. Many of us were excluded from decisions made about us so ensure you keep us in the loop.
- 42. We may need help in making decisions - break it down for us.
- 43. You may not understand our train of thought / how we arrive at an outcome. Help us explain it.
- 44. Find out what works for us to support our Mental Health.
- 45. Our time in the system was our childhood.



**42% OF CARE LEAVERS SURVEYED  
REPORTED BEING DIAGNOSED WITH  
DEPRESSION AND 19% HAVING BEEN  
DIAGNOSED WITH MORE THAN ONE  
MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION**

(CLA Health Report 2017)

**78% OF CARE LEAVERS SURVEYED FELT  
ISOLATED SOME, MOST OR ALL OF THE  
TIME WHILE THEY WERE IN CARE. THIS  
DROPPED BY ONLY 4%, TO 74% ONCE  
THEY HAVE LEFT CARE**

(CLA Health Report 2017)

With thanks to all the care leavers who helped produce  
this resource, especially to Jackie, Jacqui, Michael,  
Barbara and Beverley





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