

## SUBMISSION FROM BARNARDO'S SCOTLAND

### **Case Study- Lothian Supported Carers**

Sophie\* was a care leaver aged 19 at point of referral to Barnardo's care leaver's service, "*Lothian Supported Carers/Lodgers*," funded the Big Lottery Fund.

### **Background**

Sophie was taken into care at the age of six months because her parents were unable to cope. Both parents were substance misusers and were unable to provide the basic parenting skills to maintain a stable and nurturing environment for their large family. Sophie and her siblings were split up and accommodated in separate placements by social work. Sophie was placed with a foster family where she remained through her childhood years until the age of 16. She then moved to a second placement. Sophie did not leave care officially until she was 17. She was waiting to be placed in Local Authority housing.

Sophie was eager to begin her transition into independent living and with the help of her Through Care and Aftercare support worker she secured a Local Authority tenancy. She received some support through the usual Aftercare support services during her tenancy. However, Sophie struggled to cope in this environment. She lacked some of the basic knowledge necessary for living independently, including cooking, budgeting and domestic management skills. Consequently, Sophie suffered from a lack of confidence and could not cope, adequately care or support herself. After 6 months the tenancy failed and was required to leave her tenancy.

The Local Authority found emergency temporary accommodation at a Bed and Breakfast. This was to be her home for a further 8 months. Not only was this an expensive option for the Local Authority but it was an inappropriate placement for a number of reasons. Sophie was unable to cook her meals. She quickly lost the basic living skills that she had begun to develop. She lived on unhealthy take away food and suffered from financial difficulties as a result, because her small budget could not cope with the expense of eating out and often she went hungry. The lack of nutrition began to affect her health and it became necessary for her to visit her GP for nutritional related medical issues. Unable to stay in the B and B in the day she remained outdoors rather than living in a safe home environment where she had space and a network of support to help Sophie find suitable employment. She was not able to establish a daily routine. Sophie felt that she had taken one step forward and two steps back.

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\* The name has been changed to protect our service user's identity

## **Referral to Lothian Supported Carers**

Sophie recognised that she was unable to continue in such unsuitable and unstable accommodation and showed initiative by asking to be moved into supported accommodation. This option is expensive and was in high demand if supplied by the Local Authorities, so the through care support team referred Sophie to Barnardo's Lothian Supported Carers Scheme. This service helps care leavers transition from the care system by matching the young person with a family that would provide lodgings and support for the young person in developing key life skills. In short this accommodation solution provides a stepping stone towards independence.

The referral process was really straightforward. Sophie met her supported carer case worker for a general chat. The focus was letting Sophie make an informed choice on whether this service was suitable for her. She consented and was formally referred. She met with her case worker for a formal induction session. The discussion focused on her needs and wishes for lodging accommodation, such as ties with a geographical area, interests, family background, education requirements and support networks. Her case worker matched her with appropriate carers and they were invited to share their profile with Sophie. She then went to meet them at their house with her case worker. The service offers flexibility as to how many meetings with the new carers a young person feels they need before they are comfortable to move in to their new supported accommodation. Overnight and weekend stays are encouraged. After only 6 meetings within 3 weeks Sophie felt she had a good rapport with her carers and the accommodation was in a location that allowed her access to her employment support service. Sophie was content that this was the right decision for her and was eager to move in.

### **Good life choices**

Sophie is happy lodging with her carers who allow her independence but in a supported, encouraging and stable environment. She has completed several college certificates and is now looking to move into permanent employment. Sophie has learning needs, so her carers help her with job applications, paperwork and encourage her to continue working with youth employment training services to find appropriate work experience. Her case worker visits on a weekly basis and is pleased with Sophie's progress:

*"She recognises that this is a great opportunity to help her develop the necessary skills which will enable her to make good life choices, maintain employment and live independently. It is early days but all signs indicate that this is successful placement with our service."*

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