

National Care Leavers' Week 2011

– 26 October–2 November 2011 –

In my shoes



National Care Leavers' Week provides a chance to reflect on how policy and practice impacts on the lives of young people leaving care

Welcome to National Care Leavers' Week 2011 – A Day in My Shoes. Nearly 18 months into a new government and with few signs of economic upturn, we invite policymakers and practitioners to reflect on the impact that the decisions they make have on the lived experiences of care leavers.

While it is now considered correct to speak about “transitions to adulthood” rather than “leaving care”, many care leavers continue to identify themselves as part of this unique group well into adulthood.

Care leavers are often described in terms of their vulnerability and disadvantage. It remains true that the particular life circumstances which bring children into the care system, the instability that many experience during care, and the journey towards adulthood without the solid foundation and reliable support of a family unit is a set of circumstances that is identifiably different.

Many care leavers achieve remarkable things in spite of such obstacles. The care leavers whose

stories are told in these pages share a belief that their negative experiences have made them even stronger and more determined.

For every one of us, our identity is shaped by the many groups and affiliations we develop through our life. Being a care leaver remains a lifelong part of that identity which individuals may regard as a greater or lesser part of themselves, as positive or



negative, or as something they are proud of or prefer to keep largely private as adults.

Emerging themes from the week's activities include the nature and impact of the collective voice as well as the daily lives and aspirations of individual care leavers.

While positive stories of

individual achievement are very much to the fore this year, there remains a feeling that some problems just seem intransigent to change. Perhaps the cynicism we can all feel simply reflects the number of years we have lived, and the number of times we have seen the wheel turn.

Mike Stein observed that after six years of campaigning on the issue of bin bags, 10 per cent of authorities still don't appreciate the indignity of having possessions moved around as if they were rubbish.

Nevertheless, 22-year-old Jess reflected on the new perspective she gained on a visit to Prague as part of her role with the National Care Advisory Service: “We were working on getting agreement about whether all care leavers should be entitled to a laptop, when I met this amazing woman from Albania who was campaigning to get running water in her children's homes.” Which shows that we all have something to learn by pausing and reflecting on what it might be like to spend a day in someone else's shoes.

ISTOCK

Programme

Local events and activities are taking place across the country. Full details of all events can be found at:

www.nationalcareleaversweek.org

Events

Wednesday 26 October

All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked-after Children and Care Leavers, Westminster, London
Chaired by Edward Simpson MP

Thursday 27 October

Stretching the Budget, Islington, London
Activity day for care leavers at Jamie Oliver's Fifteen Foundation

Friday 28 October

Humanities Day incorporating the National Care Leavers' week annual lecture at Cambridge University, given by Professor Mike Stein: “Care Less Lives”

Tuesday 1 November

National Care Leavers' Week Conference – A Day in My Shoes, Central London with satellite event in Wigan (live streaming). Keynote address by children's minister Tim Loughton

Launches

Throughout the week: **Balloon Launches** organised by the Care Leavers' National Benchmarking Forum.

Care Less Lives by Mike Stein

The story of the rights movement of young people in care.

Know Your Care Leaver A-Z List

100 high-achieving care leavers.
Launched by Mike Lindsay

What's inside

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Sport has taken care leavers to great places

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Cambridge grad in finals

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In association with

Children & Young People Now

The Care Leavers' Foundation
help when you need it

Sport can give young people a route into a range of exciting opportunities. Care leavers Antony, Diane and Leon have all followed their sporting dreams and share their experiences of travel, university life and hard work

A sporting chance



Diane: sports nutrition is a focus



Leon: a scholarship to the US has broadened his horizons



Antony: coaching youngsters in New Jersey

Diane from Plymouth considers herself lucky, at 22 years of age, to have had one stable foster placement throughout her time in care. She views her former foster placement as home and her carers as “family”.

“I don’t think as a care leaver I am so different from anyone else who has left home for university as I have excellent support from my foster carers and I know I am always welcome”.

Diane first found her love of sport through football. Initially, it was something through which she used to find release from darker thoughts. But she was spotted by a PE teacher who steered her towards athletics.

She has competed at university, city and national level but is modest about her achievements. “I don’t see myself as an outstanding sportsperson. I just do the best that I am capable of. I don’t really complete to win all the time. My aim is to be the best that I can be.”

Diane has already completed a degree in Sport and Exercise and has recently embarked on a year of postgraduate study where she will participate in applied research and learn more about the physiological aspects of the body in sport. She

hopes eventually to become a sports nutritionist or professional development coach.

Overseas opportunities

Leon is two years into a degree course in communications and public relations. He won a four-year athletics scholarship to study in the US and sees his future in business or political PR.

“Being a care leaver, getting the funds together to come over here, and sometimes wondering where the next meal is coming from, that’s hard,” he says. “But I know that it will be worthwhile as I will come out with a good degree and two career options.”

Leon has been struck by the cultural differences he has experienced. “Everyone has a car. Even the college kids. And no one seems to leave home before 24 or 25, there aren’t really young people living independently like we do leaving care. I haven’t come across any other students from a care background. You get to know what different countries stand for and how other people live their lives. It’s given me more perspective on life.”

For Leon, his sport is a form of expression. He plays for the university to earn his scholarship. “Soccer is a big deal at colleges out

here and British football is still seen as among the best in the world, so they like to have us over here playing and coaching.”

“I think the UK is the greatest democracy in the world. I love being in America and everything I have achieved here, but I wouldn’t knock anything about home”.

And his message to other care leavers? “If you have vision and drive you will find a way to follow your goals; and if you can’t find a way you create a way. There are a lot of people that come from nowhere and they manage to reach high positions in society.”

Coaching others

Antony, age 23, is just two months away from returning from a coaching contract in New Jersey, and not looking forward to a British winter.

“I have loved every minute of being here. I have watched the greatest basketball players in the world, shopped on Fifth Avenue, New York, experienced a hurricane, a tornado and an earthquake, and been to the top of the Empire State Building. If you think about Norwich Cathedral, and the Empire State, there isn’t much comparison.”

Post-16, Antony had no idea of what he was going to do. “My GCSEs were a disaster – Es and Fs. A lot of

my school years were unsettled and you can’t focus on your education when you are moving all the time.

“I don’t think schools take account of the amount of disruption children in care are going through. Whenever I am coaching I try to find out a bit about the kids and take into account if they are having a difficult time in their home situation. I don’t single them out, I just give them a bit more support.”

Coaching in America has been an eye opener for Antony. “Petit Soccer is the two- and three-year-olds. They are absolutely exhausting. I have coached kids with ADHD and autism and I have coached the most talented kids playing college soccer. It is a real variety.”

“The experience has been amazing. Even down to learning to budget, your nearest source of support is 6,000 miles away, not just a bus ride. It teaches self-discipline.”

“A lot of people go on about how many doors are closed to kids in care. I think you have to be determined to make it happen. In care you have been thrown down on the floor and have to pick yourself back up. That makes you stronger.”

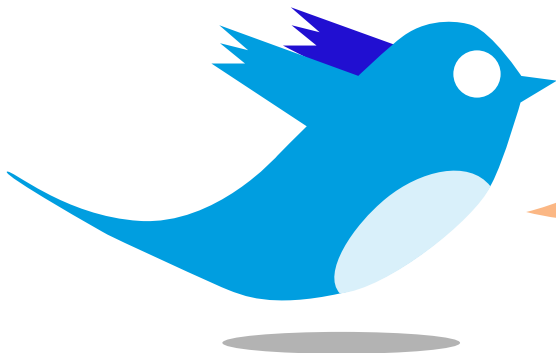
Antony’s long-term goal is to be a top-flight professional coach. With his attitude he would appear to stand a decent chance of getting there.

Wlk a Dy in my Shoz

What care leavers really think about life

National Care Leavers' Week invited responses through texting, Twitter and Facebook to get a glimpse of life as a care leaver. Do policymakers and professionals ever really stop and think what it might be like to be in the shoes of the people whose lives are affected by their decisions?

We asked young care leavers to give us an insight into the hazards, and the heartaches of the journey towards leaving care, as well as the successes and the sources of support that make a difference along the way.



Sooo annoying...

-  PA got my payments wrong again, why can't they just get it right for one week, please

 -  Finding it hard to find work placements in my field there are no work placements and I need more training even though I have just left uni

 -  Yesterday found out my leaving care worker has gone on maternity leave without letting me know, thanks for that :)

 -  Just got keys to my flat. How am I going to live on £42 a week?


 -  Moved into new flat today. New washing machine, cooker and fridge freezer and no money to buy a bed..... I'll just go and see if I can curl up in the washing machine.....
-  Still have no PA. Left message for duty for the twelfth time. No permanent Social Workers left on after care team, they are all doing child protection.


 -  Week 6 in the bedsit from hell. Mould in the bathroom and concrete floors. My leaving care worker still hasn't seen it.


 -  Trying to get info about uni from my Pathway worker. She wants me to go to hairdressing college. Loser.

 -  Review yesterday decided I should move out. Love my foster carer to bits and could have stayed longer but I will have to move out sooner or later so I might as well go now. Cried all night.

On a brighter note...

-  Spent today painting flat with social worker. Can't believe he gave up weekend to do this for me.

-  Got my uni timetable, can't wait to start, it doesn't seem as scary as I thought ;-)

-  Really enjoying college. I got better grades than I was expecting and it was all last minute. New friends. New opportunities. Social Worker said I couldn't go to college because it wasn't on my Pathway Plan!

What's New?

Jez Barnshaw from Plymouth tweeted to tell us about his film *Careless Whispers*, which you can see at <http://itvfixers.com> – search Jez Barnshaw. This short, powerful film is well worth a watch. Jez posted on our Facebook Wall: “My view on being a care leaver is that if you

are in education you get supported till 24, if not you are dropped at 21 and not really prepared for it; it just happens. I've made a short film with ITV to make people aware of the demising levels of support from 16 to 21 as a care leaver. I'd like to ask David Cameron if that was his own children, would he say to them

‘you're 21 now, don't contact or see us again.’”

@cla_ypp “Our Leaving Care Guide is coming together nicely. First E-zine out in time for Care Leavers' Week!” Look out for the launch of this new guide from the Care Leavers Association – by care leavers for care leavers.

One year since children's minister Tim Loughton first met with a group of care leavers, what has been achieved by the coalition government?

Promises, promises

One year after National Care Leavers' Week and *Children & Young People Now* filmed a round-table discussion with the children's minister Tim Loughton, the group met up to question him about the promises he had made.

Since that first meeting, arranged by *CYP Now*, Loughton has continued to hold quarterly meetings with groups of care leavers.

Twelve months ago, the critical issues raised with the minister centred on the quality of social work and the lack of aspiration that adults have for children in care.

Other issues included problems with welfare benefits and the lack of joined-up policy, which often acts as a disincentive to employment or education, as well as the inequalities across local authorities, which meant that care leavers continue to face very different treatment depending on where they live.

The latest meeting began with the minister reporting progress on plans to reform social work. Loughton said that the government had acted quickly on the recommendations of the Munro Review.

For example, plans are already in place to recruit new entrants through the "step up to social work" scheme. The idea of this is to attract energetic people who will bring passion and skills from other areas into the profession. Social work training is to be improved

significantly, including a higher bar for entry to courses and higher pass marks.

Newly qualified social workers will no longer be given unrealistic caseloads or left to manage complex and high-risk cases without support.

Regulation and bureaucracy have been reduced, freeing up social workers to do more work on the front line and spend more time with children and families.

Loughton told the group that he believed care leavers should already be seeing the benefits of these changes feeding through.

The group as a whole was sceptical about the speed of change and no one was able to report any discernible difference from their personal experience, although it was acknowledged that there may be future benefits.

Tackling regional inequalities

A great deal of discussion took place around the issue of inequalities across the country and the group did not feel there had been any change in the past 12 months.

Loughton said that, while he shared the group's frustration with underperforming authorities, it was not for governments to be prescriptive and that local authorities had to be accountable for their own local policy decisions. He drew attention to the work now going on to bring Children in Care Councils (CiCs) together on a regional basis

and felt that more children should be using their CiCs and the office of the children's rights director to challenge unfair treatment.

Members of the group remained concerned about the patchy performance of local authorities and explained to the minister that many children in care still have a very poor understanding of their rights, feel that they will not be listened to, and are very reluctant to make complaints or call on advocacy services. Many more still do not know the mechanisms for doing so.

In particular, members of the group felt it should not be the responsibility of care leavers to find out for themselves what they were entitled to and demand this. Support should be offered freely and generously, regardless of whether it is discretionary or statutory.

One specific change since the introduction of the new Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010 on 1 April was the possibility of care leavers to opt back into higher education after the age of 21 and to be eligible to support from a leaving care team until the age of 25 as long as they remain in education.

Group member Jess felt grateful these new entitlements had come into place: "If it had been a year earlier I would not have been able to go to university". However, another group member felt that his leaving care team had done everything possible to discourage

him from taking the higher education route, reminding him that he had failed in the past and was likely to do so again.

Recognising vulnerability

The minister gave assurances that, as a general principle across government, the minister and other departments were slowly coming round to the idea that care leavers were a uniquely vulnerable group compared to other groups needing support from government and society.

Loughton said that the Welfare Reform Bill, which he promised would iron out some of the anomalies that sometimes keep care leavers out of education, work and full participation in society, was close to completing its journey through parliament. Extra funding from central government, such as the pupil premium, would in future be an automatic entitlement for care leavers, not a matter for local discretion. He added that this principle – which went beyond priority and created entitlement – would be applied to other policy areas in relation to care leavers.

On the issue of the systemic low- or no-aspiration culture that persists in adults working with children in care, the minister said it was now a priority not just for his department but for government at the highest level to challenge this. The Prime Minister himself has stated that



Children's minister Tim Loughton holds quarterly meetings with groups of care leavers who hold him to account on policy

it is no longer acceptable for us to hold lower expectations for children brought up in public care than we would for our own children.

Members of the group who held participation roles within their home authorities expressed frustration about the impact of cuts, in particular a lack of resources and reduced opportunities to travel and share experiences with similar groups in other areas.

Loughton outlined work currently being undertaken for the Department for Education by National Children's Bureau and A National Voice, in which officials were going out to the regions to meet with CiCs. CiC chairs were also coming together on a regular basis to share their views and experiences and make recommendations to government.

Loughton was confronted by scepticism about the value of collecting the views of children in care when so many issues remained unresolved and seemed to come

What membership of the advisory group has meant to one care leaver

Group member Nattylyn Jeffers recently gained an MA in Youth & Community Development. She says her 12 years in a transracial foster home were "not at all conducive to my education or development as an individual".

As a single mum, Nattylyn is rightly proud of her

postgraduate degree: "For someone from care, that is a remarkable achievement," she says.

She has also been involved in advocacy for care leavers and brings a broad range of experience to the minister's care leavers' group: "Being a member of the group has given me a

more reflective perspective."

Nattlyn believes that Loughton's vision for a "new social work" will challenge existing services and practice and in time create a more effective system that will bring benefits to children and families, and to those who have left care.

"I am optimistic that

the minister aims to keep his promises and be held accountable for creating positive change. I am a positive role model to others and to my young son and I know that as part of this advisory group I can make a real difference, even if change is sometimes frustratingly slow to come."

round again and again. But he said that his now regular meetings with this care leavers' group had already made a big difference to him.

In particular, he said that input over the year on issues including second chance education and mental health had been invaluable in helping him to make the case for care leavers when he was dealing with colleagues inside

his own department and in other departments.

Joe Sutton, who also spent some of his summer holidays on work experience, said: "I believe it is vital for different local authorities' children in care councils to work out the common flaws to improve the service for everyone."

However, Scott King was more sceptical: "My frustration is that

some local authorities continue to get away with things that the minister agrees should not be happening. If he can't sort them out as a minister what chance have children in care councils got?

"I do think these meetings have been worthwhile though and he has rapidly addressed some very specific local issues that we have brought to him."

PHIL WYNOTT/UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE



Does Cambridge graduate Ashley John-Baptiste have The X Factor?

Ashley John-Baptiste

Ashley John-Baptiste is not a typical care leaver. After graduating from Cambridge he decided that he wanted to follow his real passion for creating and making music. By the time this magazine appears, he will have been watched on ITV's *The X Factor* by 11 million viewers, having made it through to the final live televised stage – one of just 16 acts from the thousands who auditioned.

As a kid in care from a tough inner-city area, Ashley was overlooked at school and shocked all of his teachers by producing five As at GCSE. Ashley himself was not so surprised. "I knew I could do the work; it was them that expected me to fail because I was not a 'good' student. I nearly got kicked out of school. I got suspended eight times and was on a final warning by the time I was 15," he says.

Ashley attributes his disruptive behaviour – getting into fights and bring rude to teachers – mostly to his need for attention.

Now, 22-year-old Ashley is keen to inspire other children from disadvantaged backgrounds to aim high and believe in themselves. Ashley was awarded a special class medal for his contribution to student life at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, where he studied history. He organised a number of activities to encourage greater

they don't know enough about this area themselves, so how can they ignite the aspiration for the children they are responsible for?"

Ashley became interested in studying at one of the world's most prestigious universities after attending a summer school. Once a rebellious schoolboy, Ashley has become a young man with a strong

at the time. It was an inherent need that I asked God for. I didn't have a dad, and I didn't have anyone else I could ask!"

That was the beginning of a faith that has helped Ashley grow stronger and more confident in himself.

"Confidence isn't something you feel. It's something you choose.

I came to the realisation that you are most powerful when you are being yourself, and that most people conform and so miss out on the essence of who they are and what they can give the world. I have a faith in God which helps me see this. I have never felt yourself comes from other people. You

are not determined by what people around you think."

“Ashley is living proof that you can turn disadvantage into great success. His character, charisma and determination have seen him win though, at school, university and now in the big wide world. Of course it is harder if you don't have all the built-in advantages, but it needn't be impossible, and Ashley is a fantastic role model”

Rt Hon Simon Hughes MP

access to Cambridge, including the B Inspired conference and visits by children from state schools to the college.

Ashley's own local authority was not keen for him to take up his offer of a place at Cambridge because of the extra costs involved. He believes passionately that a step change in attitudes is needed: "Social workers need a lot more training because

sense of who he is and believes others can follow his example.

At school he came to realise that it was possible to get the attention he craved through strong friendships and positive relationships. He also found faith in God: "At the age of about 13 or 14 I remember asking God to be my dad – that was one of my first prayers. It wasn't a religious thing

More information about Cambridge access and information events for children in care at www.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/care/events.html

Follow Ashley in his band The Risk on *The X-Factor* www.xfactor.itv.com

The sky's the limit

Nine years on from the first National Care Leavers' Day, young people in care continue to have high hopes

In 2002 the first National Care Leavers' Day was launched in London and Cardiff. The main event, attended by a handful of keen supporters was a balloon launch outside the Houses of Parliament. Actor, rapper and musician Goldie, who is himself a care leaver and at that time fresh from his successes in *James Bond*, *Eastenders* and *Big Brother*, launched 1,000 balloons symbolising the 10,000 children leaving care in England each year.

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 had been in force for just 12 months and already people were questioning whether it had been the greatest missed opportunity ever.

Each balloon carried a small gift from a care leaver – a miniature packet of wild golden



Goldie, journalist Dawn Howley and author Paulo Hewitt outside parliament in 2002

poppy seeds with a message of hope.

Nine years on, the annual activities, which both celebrate care leavers' achievements and raise awareness of their continuing needs, have become part of the autumn calendar. We now look forward each year not to a National Care Leavers' Day but a National Care Leavers' Week.

The week comprises local, regional and national events across

the four countries of the UK. This year, young people from 11 local authorities will each release 150 balloons bearing a positive message about children and young people in care. Releases will take place throughout the week.

Event organisers are all from the Young People's Benchmarking Forum supported by the National Care Advisory Service and well-wishers on the day will include

local MPs and councillors. The young people have chosen this activity because they want everyone to know that children and young people in care have ambitions just like all young people, and can achieve great things.

NCAS advises government on policy issues relating to leaving care as well as undertaking a range of activities promoting the sharing of good practice between leaving care teams. Recent briefings include information for professionals working with care leavers on "Get Britain Working", a range of measures introduced by the Department for Work and Pensions to support people into work. Young people can now undertake up to eight weeks of work experience through this scheme without losing benefits.

NCAS also operates a quality mark under its From Care2Work scheme, recognising local authorities and employers who operate successful employability schemes.

For more information visit www.leavingcare.org

A history of collective resilience



Care Less Lives is the story of the rights movement of young people in care. Author Mike Stein began his career as a probation officer before moving to a children's services team in 1967

Back in 1973, when I was still a rookie practitioner, I ran a group for young people in care. The first thing they asked was: "What will it be like when we leave care? Where will we live? What do we do?" I had to admit I didn't really know so I said: "Why don't we ask some people who have left care to come and talk to us?" I also tried to find some background information and quickly realised

there were no studies – virtually nothing written about leaving care.

We set up the meeting and this little grouping was the start of the Who Cares? project, bringing together children in care and care leavers to share their experiences. All sorts of things came out that hadn't been talked about before; the variable quality of care; physical and sexual abuse. A report was published which was national news for a day.

After two years the project was wound up when funding stopped, but a core of young people had developed skills and a sense of the importance of speaking out on behalf of all the silent children in care, and they weren't about to just give up that voice. NAYPIC was formed – the National Association of Young People in Care; they were soon speaking to government and giving evidence to select committees.

It was left to the most vulnerable to speak out for themselves, to raise the issues that affected them.

The early 1990s saw the demise of NAYPIC, but their evidence had left a big impression on former chief inspector of social services William Utting. *The Utting Report* drew attention to widespread abuse in children's homes and this, in turn, led to the setting up of A National Voice, as Utting said that never again must

vulnerable children be left without opportunities to put their views to the centre of government.

Some of the same big issues continue to trouble young people decades on; too much instability in the care system, leaving care too young; and adults and systems that ride roughshod over their dignity.

In 1974 it was singling them out as "welfare children" in the school dinner queue; today it is the use of bin bags to move their possessions. The children's rights movement for children in care has come a long way, but it still has a long way to go.

Mike Stein is Research Professor at the Social Policy Research Unit, University of York.

Care Less Lives is published by Catch22 on 1 November and is available from NCAS at www.leavingcare.org

Corridors of power

Members of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked-After Children and Care Leavers speak out

Ever wondered how a care leaver can get their voice heard in parliament? It can feel impossible with hundreds of MPs, Lords and lobbyists all shouting to be heard. The APPG for Looked-After Children and Care Leavers has been giving everyone involved in the care system a chance to talk about what it's really like in care.

The next meeting, on 26 October, falls during National Care Leavers' Week, and provides an opportunity for care leavers to air their concerns – finding somewhere to live and staying there, looking after yourself, getting to work or college, paying the bills and making ends meet.

Aicha is 24 and believes this



Edward Timpson MP (left) with care leavers in the All Party Parliamentary Group

is a real opportunity to confront politicians with some home truths.

“The APPG is a place where MPs, social workers and young people can come together to talk about issues related to the care system. I go to learn about other young people's experiences and see how I can relate to them and also to meet MPs and see what they are doing about the things that matter to me.

“It's good because you get to be with different groups of people from different areas who you wouldn't

normally meet. It also really helps to realise that there are other people going through the same thing as you. It's an opportunity to express yourself, tell your story and see what can happen.

“You hear politicians saying ‘we're going to do this or that’ all the time. This is a chance to look them in the eye and make a difference.”

MP Edward Timpson, who chairs the group, thinks government has more work to do to improve the lives of care leavers.

“Some significant strides have been made in improving educational outcomes for looked-after children in recent years but there is still a long way to go. A greater focus on basic needs such as home and school stability, suitable accommodation and emotional and psychological health and wellbeing is also necessary; these are the foundations for everything else.

“We still need a debate about the age at which the state should fully divest itself of responsibility towards care leavers. We can't look after them forever but at the moment care leavers are still making this major life transition at a very young age and those who struggle to stay in education or training get limited and often patchy advice and support.

“The voices of young people in and leaving care have much to teach us about how the state as parent should behave and what more needs to be done to raise aspiration and achievement for all our care leavers.”

Empowerment for young care leavers

Henrietta Bond writes about care leaver Yanik Beya's Imhotep Foundation and his hopes for empowering disillusioned teenagers

Yanik Beya is a young man on a mission. The 25-year-old is passionate about helping young people recognise that they can take control of their lives by making carefully thought-through decisions. Yanik has set up the Imhotep Foundation to help them do just that.

Yanik's Awareness and



Yanik wants to help turn lives around

Empowerment programme teaches participants the difference between “reaction and action” and the importance of thinking and planning; they learn how to break cycles of negative behaviour. “Inclusive world history” helps them challenge stereotypes and the links between mind, body and emotions are explored.

“Take a situation like the recent riots,” Yanik explains. “When young people feel powerless they do crazy things, and they let themselves be misled by peers and older people. Young people are taking the rap for the riots but then you find that it was people in their mid-30s committing acts like burning shops.”

Yanik knows his own life could have turned out very differently. Born in the Democratic Republic of Congo and abandoned with relatives in England at an early age, he endured years of abuse and neglect before going into foster care. Left to fend for himself, he learned to steal at a very early age – and so criminal activity was his natural fall-back position after he left care.

“Like many boys, I'd pictured

myself making lots of money selling drugs. I was getting younger, vulnerable kids to do the selling while I sat back and enjoyed the good life. Then a friend's 14-year-old brother got stabbed and I realised I didn't want the guilt of showing my own younger brother such a negative way of life,” he explains.

Yanik credits his foster mother with helping him develop the self-awareness, curiosity and resilience to turn his life around. Now he is keen to share that awareness with teenagers in care, especially boys from BME communities.

“I want to help the most difficult to reach, the ones who are stubborn like I was. I want to help them use that stubbornness to fuel positive change,” says Yanik.