

100 days of care

Diary entries of children and young people in care, in residential education or receiving social care

Reported by the Children's Rights Director for England



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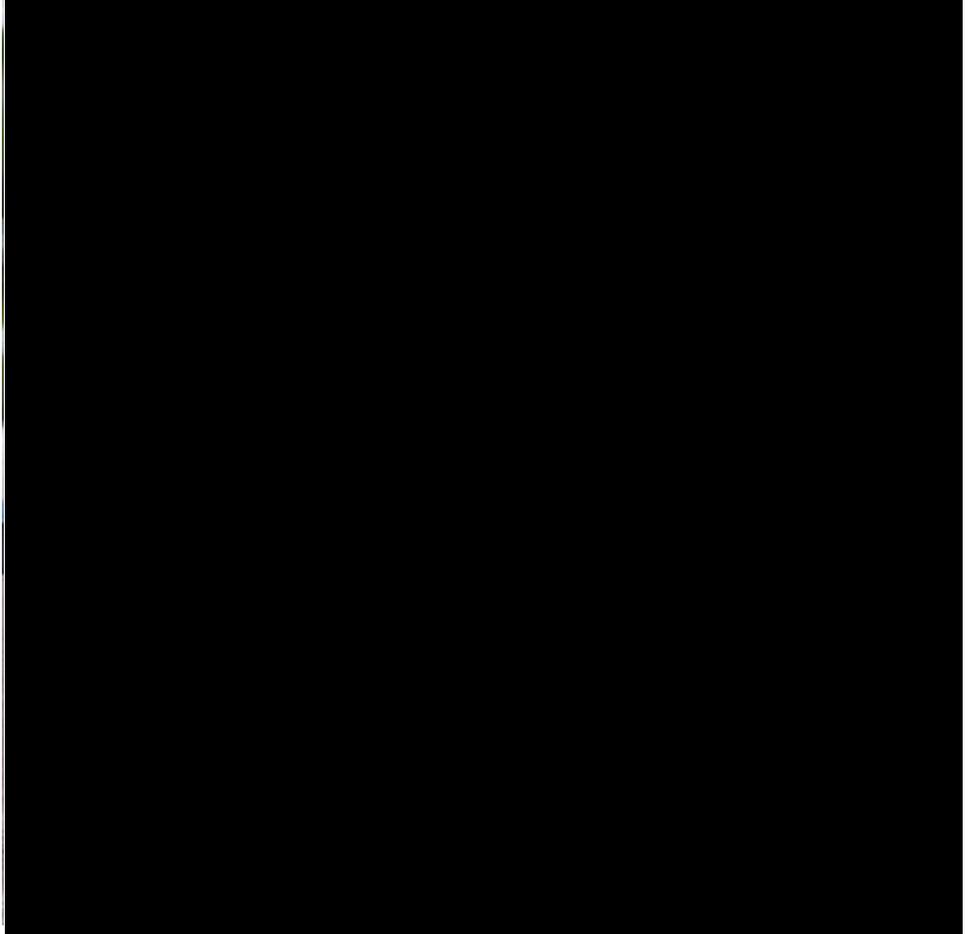
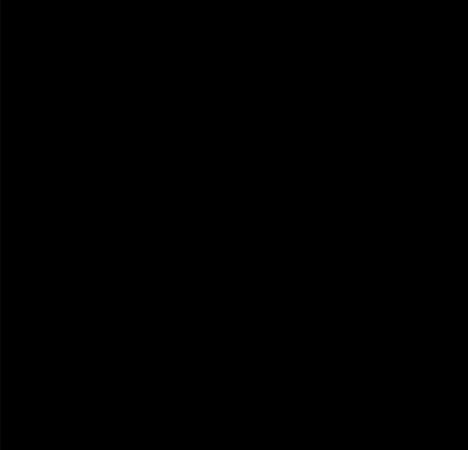


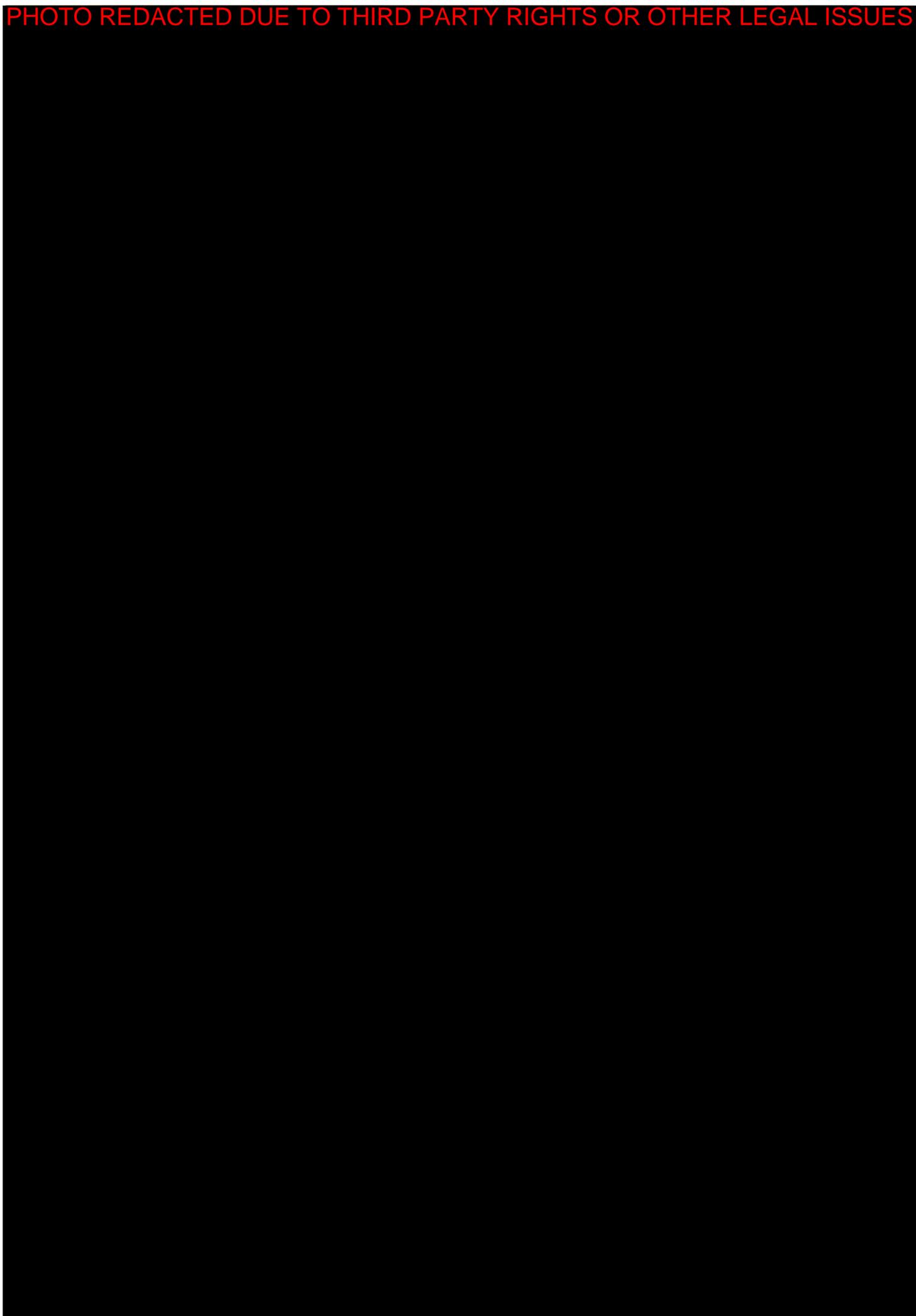
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Introduction

Roger Morgan, Children's Rights Director for England



As Children's Rights Director for England, the law gives me the duty to ask children and young people in care for their views about their rights, their welfare, and how they are looked after in England. The law also gives me the duty to ask children getting any sort of help from council social care services, as well as care leavers and children and young people living away from home in any type of boarding school, residential special school or further education college.

As well as asking children and young people for their views and publishing what they tell us, with my team I also give advice on children's and young people's views and on children's rights and welfare to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector at Ofsted, and to the government. I have a duty to raise any issues I think are important about the rights and welfare of children or young people in care, getting children's social care support or living away from home. With my team, I do this both for individual young people and for whole groups of young people.

All my reports so far have given children and young people's views about different issues, from surveys, conferences, discussions and consultation events. The reports are full of key points and statistics. You can download any of my other reports from our children's website www.rights4me.org. This report is different. It simply contains 100 diary entries by children and young people, describing things happening in their own lives, in their own words.

Early in 2011 we asked for volunteer children and young people to fill in a diary for a week for this report. Twenty-three children and young people agreed to do this, and this is their report on their own lives, told through 100 of the diary entries they sent us.

Some of the authors of the diary entries in this report were care leavers, some were living at home with social care support, some were disabled, some were living in children's homes, some were in secure units, some were in foster care, some lived in residential special schools, and others were boarders in boarding schools. I and my team are grateful to each of them for sharing their diaries with us.

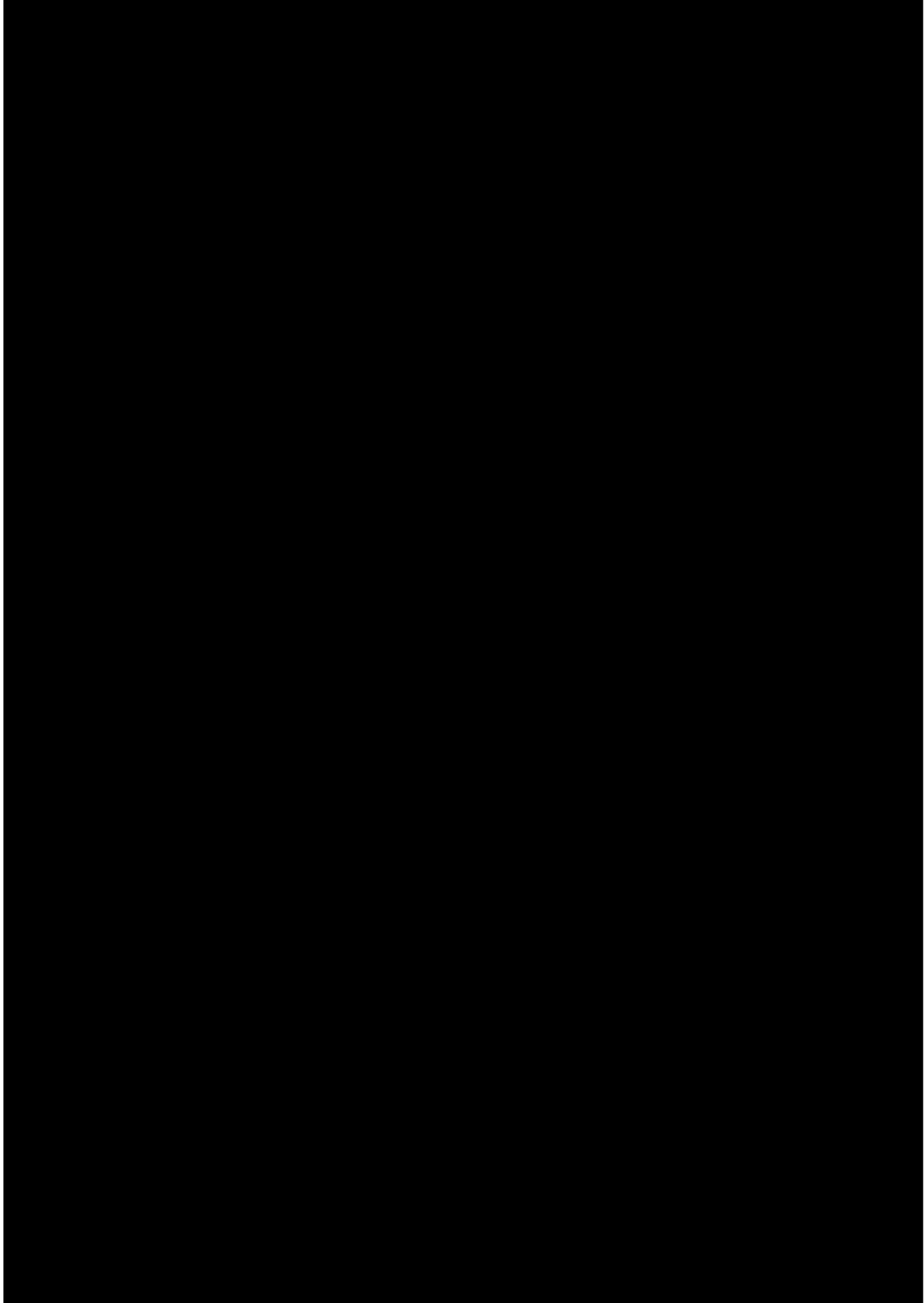
In the diaries there are some accounts of the same events by different children living at the same place. Some entries describe hobbies, school, special things like learning how to care by looking after a 'responsibility dog', friendships and quarrels, and descriptions and thoughts about the world of work. Many include children and young people's thoughts and hopes about their lives and their situation, as well as what happened that day.

To keep things confidential, we have not given anyone's name, and we have disguised names and places. We have chosen the final 100 entries for the report to try to give a good cross section of the entries that were sent in to us. Some entries are everything that was written about a particular day by that child or young person. Some others we have edited down by leaving some bits out to make them shorter. We have not added anything to any entries, and we have not made any comments of our own on what the children and young people themselves wrote for us.

The children speak for themselves.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roger Morgan'.

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Days in children's homes

Children and young people in children's homes wrote about what it is like living with a group of other people. Their diaries covered friendships and arguments, new children arriving, being helped by staff, talks by visitors to the home, being excluded from school, planning for the future, working to help others, and visits home to parents. A lot was written about food and cooking together.

Living away from home is hard. When you live in a children's home like me then you will realise what you had at home. There's always arguing where I live.

I am expelled from school, so I haven't been today. I got up and bathed and got dressed. Then I started to bake biscuits then I decided to make tuna mayo, sweetcorn pasta bake. By the time this was cooked it was 12.45pm and the new kid arrived and he unpacked. He has come from Afghanistan, he is 16. He has a good personality and I get on really well with him. We had tea then me and Chris baked cakes and we really enjoyed ourselves. We spent 30 minutes preparing time, 30 minutes cooking time, 15 minutes cooling time and 30 minutes decorating time.

Then I tidied up and went to bed at 10. I forgot one thing a yp scrubbed Chris with the leftover icing.

14-year-old

'Living away from home is hard. When you live in a children's home like me then you will realise what you had at home'

Just about to go on mobility to do some mentoring in a local children's home.

Just come to my room not much happened today bit boring, I've just been in the fitness gym.

Mentoring went well I'm looking forward to doing it again soon. I'm just about to go to bed and watch some TV.

17-year-old

I got up again today at 7.45am. Same old same old not much happened except a couple of people messed around and got restrained. One lad got restrained for fighting with another lad. Another boy got restrained for threatening staff, he got took to his room. I've not done much just school, had some good lessons like PE and ICT.

We had some people from the Blue Cross charity, they brought in two dogs, and they talked to us about animal welfare and how to stay safe around dogs. I found this very interesting and think I know more now.

Tonight I have just done the same stuff. Art, gym and group work. I really like doing group work with James, I find it very helpful. Today we talked about gangs.

Other than the same stuff I have had my hair cut and now I've just come to my room. I'm feeling very tired so I'm going to watch TV and go to sleep.

17-year-old

NOTHING REALLY HAPPENS WHERE I LIVE AND I DON'T DO NOTHING MUCH OR INTERESTING. FINISHED.

14-year-old

Had another good day today. Got a bit angry earlier though, fell out and have been arguing with a staff member because they have started to piss me off big time but I'm ok. Not got long left so I'm going to stay calm and stay out of trouble.

Another lad got restrained today for messing about and threatening staff. He's stupid most of the time so he'll end up in more trouble.

Had group work again which is good. I think Steve is doing an excellent job.

There's some one coming in to talk to us about rehab and drugs in tomorrow's group work so I think that will be good and very helpful.

I have also been down the gym and done a 1 to 1. In my 1 to 1 I did about my future prospects and I started to put my CV together.

I'm sat in my room now its half past 9 I'm bored and watching TV.

17-year-old

Dear diary, I got up and dressed then I went to the centre. I carried on knitting my blanket, I also did some work in the office answering the phones and doing paperwork. I came home and went to my YS appointment and then went to my mam's then come home had tea and watched TV and went to bed at 9pm.

I don't do anything on a Thursday. I don't normally do anything much any other day either.

14-year-old

I've been a bit anxious and nervous today, from thinking about when I get out. I only have 6 weeks left and a lot has changed in the last two years I have been locked up.

Had school today I did c.d.t. one of my favourite lessons, I helped Mr Smart put a bird box together which was fun.

Groupwork was good. Had a woman from a rehab centre come in. I found it really helpful, we talked about drugs and alcohol. It was a great idea from our staff member to bring her in, but he's good at his job with things like that.

17-year-old

I've had an ok day today. Been a bit tired though not much to do as always. But I only have 47 days left so not long to go.

Just had school again done c.d.t. again. I've just been researching about the Royal Marines because I'm thinking about joining. Not much else has happened. 2 lads been messing around – that's the only thing that's happened today.

17-year-old

Dear Diary, I got up this morning and I got dressed ready for Terry to pick me up from my mam's to bring me home. They came for me at 11am. When we got back I sat and watched TV and ate lots of food then I went to town to buy some wool and chocolate. I came back and started to knit then a YP came back from being out. Then there was a load of arguments over what was for tea 'coz we normally have a takeaway but they wouldn't let us have one for the budget cuts. So we had gammon steaks and chips. Then I watched TV for a while then went to bed.

14-year-old

I did my chores today as well. I had to Hoover the corridor and the conference room. It didn't take long so for the rest of the time I just had to sit in my room.

I have also watched a documentary on the royal marines and navy as I am thinking of joining them.

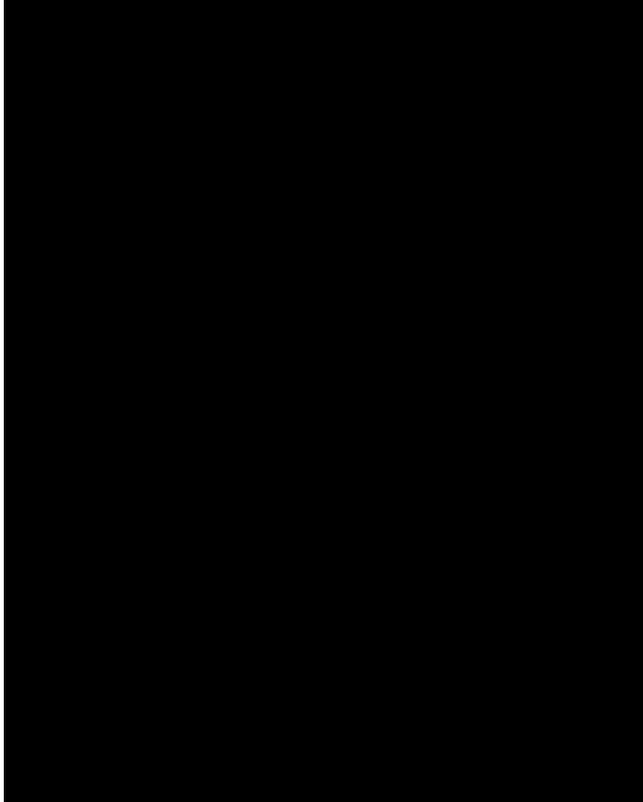
All I have done tonight is played table tennis but got cut short because Paul was messing around and he broke the ball. So I'm just about to read a book as there is nothing on TV.

17-year-old

I went in the bath and when I got out I made popcorn. We all had popcorn and I flung mine over the two lads 'coz they were winding me up calling me names, so I went to bed and calmed down.

14-year-old

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Some children in children's homes wrote about visiting parents or being visited by parents.

I had a visit from my mum brother and nana but dad normally comes around but he's gone to Scotland to watch football. My visit was good. Had a lot of laughs and I got a new dvd The Social Network which I'll watch later. Visits are good but its horrible that we only get 2 hours.

17-year-old

Dear Diary,

I went horse riding this morning then I went to my mam's as the staff wouldn't allow me to go to town to attend the investing in children meeting that I attend. So I spent some time with my mam and she give me some money to go to my meeting. I went and we talked about the new hubs that towns are getting and holding our own conference in October. Then I went back to my mam's after going to Subway then catching the train. Ben picked me up at 20.30pm and brought me home. We then sat and watched TV for a bit before I went to bed to catch TV and read.

14-year-old

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Days in foster care

Some children in foster care started their diaries by telling us about themselves and what they thought about fostering.

Hi I am a 16-year-old boy. I live in a big house with other people and at college doing uniformed public services and hoping to join the army or police force. I start at 9 and finish at 5 with normal work hours. I have to get up at 6 o'clock and go to bed at 10 o'clock. I have dinner at 6pm.

Life is good and I love it. I get to meet new people and have fun. I am like any other person and have fun that is the main point. I get to go on a holiday every year and I find it is probably better because you get to have fun and meet new people and new friends. And that is it for today.

16-year-old

Can I just say where I live is cool and we are all treated the same and I get everything their children get. And say if my carer bought my foster sister a top or something then she wouldn't buy me one the same day but she would buy me one maybe next time she goes out.

11-year-old

Did you know where I live was supposed to be respite for me but I didn't even know and I said that I wanted to stay with her long time as she was so nice to me. She is kind and caring and trusts me. People I knew who lived there they have always said to me make sure you respect her as she is a really good foster carer. She has a good laugh with you and you can tell she loves kids.

11-year-old

Alison wakes me up in the morning and then today I went to school and did what every other child does.

Then I went to this youth club which was from 7:30 to 9:30 and then I came home and then I watched Eastenders.

Who I live with is really nice and she doesn't have many rules. All the rules she has is

- Go to bed at right time
- and behave.

In my home I have a foster sister and she is 15 and I have another foster sister who is 2 years and she is going for adoption so I have been spending time with her. Also I have a big foster sister who is called May. You might have to realize that you need to follow rules that your carers make as you will maybe cause an argument and you won't make them happy.

11-year-old

'Life is good
and I love it'

Some entries gave us more thoughts and advice for other children about things that happen in foster care.

You unfortunately have to ask to maybe dye your hair but don't go in a strop as they will never let you get it done. You don't need to ask about getting your hair cut so don't worry about that. If you don't have a passport bring it up at your review and see if you can get one so you can go abroad with your foster carer.

Today me and my foster sister did this thing called 'Boxercise' which is £3.50 and is on for an hour. Normally foster carers say 'Have you got any money?' and my foster carer said that to me and her and she said here is some money and she paid for it. And other activities that I do or want to do she gives me money for it which is nice but her choice. So if your carers don't, then don't think that they're mean as they aren't – so think about that. I also did play therapy. I walked there and back.

11-year-old

Where I live is great, just the same as normal (home) but you don't live with your parents. Also you do have your up and downs and fall outs but that is life. What you need to know is that you can't go somewhere and then you don't like it and demand to move.

You need to make the placement work. You're allowed to make phone calls to your social worker if needs be but only if it is urgent not about your foster carer not letting you buy sweets or something like that.

Well when I first came into care I was scared and upset but after a few weeks I got to like it and forgot about being in care as I got treated the same and I actually thought I was their daughter.

For my opinion being in foster care isn't as bad as people say it is because I always thought I would die if I came into care but I loved it. Some days weren't good but others were the best days of my life.

The sad thing about being in care is when it comes up to 'mothers day' or 'fathers day' but if you see them then that isn't as bad but even if you don't you can get your foster carers something as they are like your mum and dad.

You may realize when you move to somewhere where they have a young daughter or son they might not like you because they are jealous of you getting more attention or that you have entered their house. Don't think that you are unwelcome or that they hate you.

11-year-old

'You might have to realize that you need to follow rules that your carers make as you will maybe cause an argument and you won't make them happy'

Some of our diary entries gave us real-life examples of very ordinary days in the life of a child or young person – but sometimes with special events like meeting up with birth parents and family, or having a care review. Some talked about their carers.

I went to school. I came home, went to change because we had a review here. Then I went to laser quest and we played games. I won.

12-year-old

Good morning. I am at college today and have a study day and have to do some work. I have had my breakfast and I think we are going to the park today with the baby and her mother.

I have been to the park and had McDonald's for lunch and had dinner. I am now sat doing this. I have had an exciting day and have done different things and now to finish my last bit of work and then go to bed. Bye.

16-year-old

I went to school. After school I got a really nice dress and I went to see my mum and family. After I came home at 7 then went upstairs got pjs on and read to my carer and watched a little bit of TV and went to bed.

12-year-old

6.51am, Beep Beep!!! Alarm goes off. I stay in bed for another minute due to my tiredness. I turn my quilt over and walk at a slow pace to the shower I get washed and dressed.

7.15am I have some toast with Nutella. I eat enjoyably, finding it hard to believe that it's good for you. I'll call for my carer to come downstairs.

12-year-old

On my daily routine I:

- Get up
- Have breakfast – brush teeth/wash
- Get changed for school
- Go and get my bus
- At school till 3:20
- Get home
- Just relax
- Have tea
- Got to bed at 9:30.

And that is for the week and then on a weekend I can do what I like. I do things like

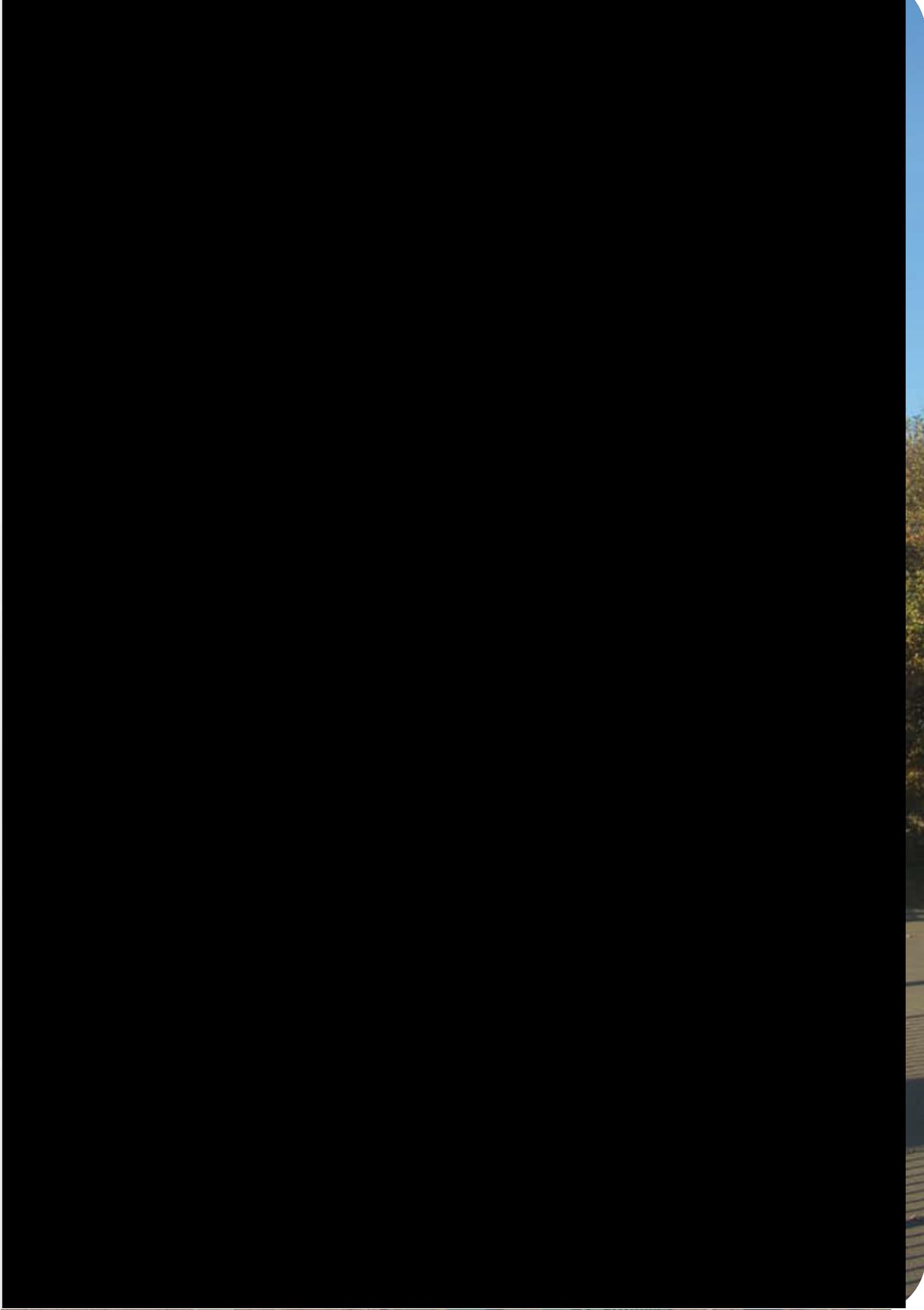
- Go shopping
- Go skating
- Go out with friends
- Hang round in the house.

I was on my ipod looking at pictures of happy faces and if you think while looking at them you will become happy.

11-year-old

'You do have your ups and downs and fall outs but that is life'

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6.50am wake up tired and a runny nose. Great way to start a day (Not. I turn my cover off and go into the shower. 7.10am fresh and clean, I pop my school uniform on and grease myself and make myself look presentable. I stagger downstairs and check my appearance in the mirror. I think to myself handsome boy!!!

I quickly put some weetabix in my bowl and start munching vigorously and quickly run back upstairs to call my carer. I run back downstairs and wait for her to come down and open the door, finally she comes down questioning me about a recent argument. I scurry to the bus stop and I see my friend, I talk about general things that happen in life and make jokes.

I went home, my carer left me in the house for 20 minutes. Saturday was chores day. It was not in my agenda for the day but I totally forgot about it and I watched telly instead. I knew when she came in I would get a rollocking; to be honest I was used to it. Bang goes the door she's back. She walks into the living room and shouts at me for not doing my room. I hesitated but I stood up and closed my room.

I came home still excited about the game and to my amazement, my carer offers to buy a chinese for winning the cup and the league. I quickly answer 'YES' and I sat and chilled. 6.00 I watched a movie with my carer and we kicked back munching on the chinese.

12-year-old

I went out with friends today we went swimming and had fun then went and had fish and chips then went home with friends and played pool, went on the xbox and the gym then went in the sauna and went home. I went to the office and did some college work and did hard work too then have dinner and watched tv and then went to bed at 11pm.

16-year-old

We heard about preparing for the future.

I have had a great day and been to the army base and done some work there. I met new people and they told me how I can get in the army and what it is like and had to do some assault courses and fill in some forms. My day was good and I came home at 6 and had dinner then saw some films they gave me on what it is like in the army and what they do and what it is like and that. They have lots of things. And then I went to bed at 10pm.

16-year-old

Some entries mentioned foster brothers or sisters.

I woke up this morning I got ready and we went to Sheffield to pick up my carer's first foster child and we went out for a meal. After that we went to play pod and we lost. My carer's first foster child won it.

12-year-old

Today, I went to town to do some shopping. We saw this shoe shop and we had a look and we spotted these lush trainers so I tried them on so then we bought them. So we went to the next shop and we saw some tops for my foster carer and then we bought them. After that we went to this hand bag shop and we spot these lovely hand bags and so we got them. So we went in the car and went to Asda to buy the paper and a birthday present for my foster carer's first foster child. Then we went home.

12-year-old

Days in residential special school

Many diary entries told us about journeys between home and school at the beginning and end of the school week, about friends and life in a group at school, and about different activities that took place at school. Again, we read a lot about food.

Monday morning the start of my day is getting on the bus that will bring me to school. I have had a good journey to school. I went in to class and had a good day. After school I went down to the girls' area. I had a drink, I then unpacked my bag getting my clothes out and my wash bag, then I went to music club. I like it. After club I had my tea I had chicken and vegetables and pudding was apple pie and ice cream.

After tea we had a bit of a break. Then we went to Club. I don't like Club that much, but I enjoy most activities that we do in Club. Like moving around on odd and even numbers. Then after Club I came to girls' area. Then had supper and a hot drink which was a cup of tea, then I got ready for bed. Then I came back out of my bedroom to speak to Sara about her trip to London, when Sara got back to school. Then we waited until night staff asked us if we wanted to go to bed and we say yes, and I and Sara went to bed at 9.45pm, but we did not go to sleep straight away. We talk a bit, and listen to music, and then me and Sara said night to each other, then we went to sleep. And I enjoyed talking to Sara before we both went to sleep. So we could have a chat about each other's day because we did not see each other all day.

18-year-old

I left home at 8.46am and I walked to school from home. I had good day at school. Unpacked my bags after school, made the bed. At music club it is songs and playing drums. I had chicken and mushroom in tomato sauce with carrot and potatoes and for pudding ice cream and apple strudel. I went on a computer before club. At club, Snow White and the 7 dwarfs on a computer and then have crisps and watch TV. Before half past 9 start getting ready for bed at 9.30.

18-year-old

When I got to school, I got ready to go out to the Park to look at ideas for a sensory garden. We took photos of 'interesting' things that could possibly be suitable for a sensory garden. After we took the photos we went to the café for a break. I had a hot chocolate. We were listening for noises we could hear, I heard a pigeon. We then made tracks back to school, when we got back I went on the computer and wrote up my mornings work in DofE.

16-year-old

Got up at 7 O'CLOCK and I had a shower and got dressed, made bed, tidy up, went to breakfast. I had corn flakes and bread roll with raspberry jam and I had a drink of water and I had to clean my teeth and went to school at 8.50am.

It was a good day. I went swimming after school then I went on a computer before tea (roast beef Yorkshire pudding with carrots and broccoli and for pudding I had pancake with golden syrup and chocolate spread). At youth club I had pancake. Trying tossing pancakes. I had lemon and sugar and I went out on to star gazing and I looked through telescopes and I had one talk when I got back to school. I had crisps and watched TV a bit before bed.

18-year-old

I will go to my lesson which is cooking you like, I enjoy it because I have learn how to do meals when I live on my own...Then after dinner I will have next independent living all afternoon. Then I will go into school and get ready to go home. And I enjoy my travelling going home. Then I will go to work with my mum.

18-year-old

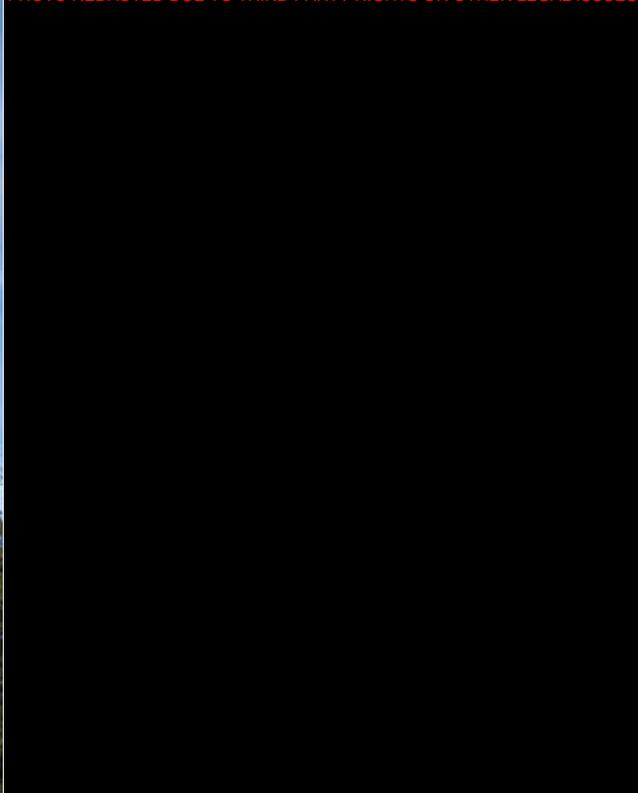
I got up and I had a bath and had breakfast and cleaned my teeth. And I went off to school.

I came back at the wing, did art, had tea and we had dance club. We had dance club and went back to post 16.

After that we came back here, enjoyed dancing to the music and I didn't like my mushroom pancake. That night I went off happily to sleep.

18-year-old

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In one diary we read thoughts on a school visit to the Houses of Parliament.

I came to school with my Dad which I don't normally do, but I went on a school trip to London. I set off from school at 7am that's why my dad brought me in. I travelled all the way to London by bus there and back. It was a very long journey but I'm used to travelling a lot because I usually come to school by bus with my friends.

When I board 2 nights a week I don't have to travel as much. Going to London is definitely the longest journey I've ever been on apart from when I go on holiday... When I got to London we made our way to The Houses of Parliament. I had to be security checked through the scanner and had to have my photo round my neck before I was showed in. I learnt a lot from going to The Houses of Parliament because it is the first time I'd ever been. We had our own tour guide show us round the House of Lords and House of Commons. It was very posh but especially The House of Lords. I got to see places that the others didn't see because of wheelchair access, I was very privileged! The Tour Guider gave us an overload of information. I found it very difficult to take it all in but learnt something new from my day out.

16-year-old

'I got to see places that the others didn't see because of wheelchair access'

Some children and young people wrote about their days as people with a disability in a special school.

Tuesday morning I got up at 7am. Liz got me up and got me ready. I got my top on myself. I listened to music while I got ready. After I got ready I brushed my own hair before breakfast. I had toast and orange juice for breakfast. I sat next to Erin and we talked. After I ate my breakfast I wiped my bit of the table, then I came down to the wing and brush my teeth before school.

When it was time for school Erin took me down to our class, I said the usual good morning to everyone then I just waited for my morning lesson in dependent wing... I had school lunch which I don't normally because I'm not keen but I have to have them 2 days a week because I board but it's well worth it because I love boarding!...

After lunch I did my exercises in my chair in my class until it was time for lesson again! I worked on helping design a poster for a bench as an advertisement to sell a bench for the workshop. I also took the photos of the bench, I took several ones and we decided as a group which one would be the best photo to use to sell. I did that all afternoon. It was boring!

After school I come down to the wing and had a cup of tea then I went to Post 16 and wrote my diary... We made pancakes in club. Lots of fun. I tossed a cardboard pancake but Erin helped me just in case I hit myself with the pan.

16-year-old

I got up at 7 this morning and listened to music while I got ready. When I was ready it was time for breakfast. I had yoghurt and banana. After breakfast brushed my teeth ready to go at 9 o'clock.

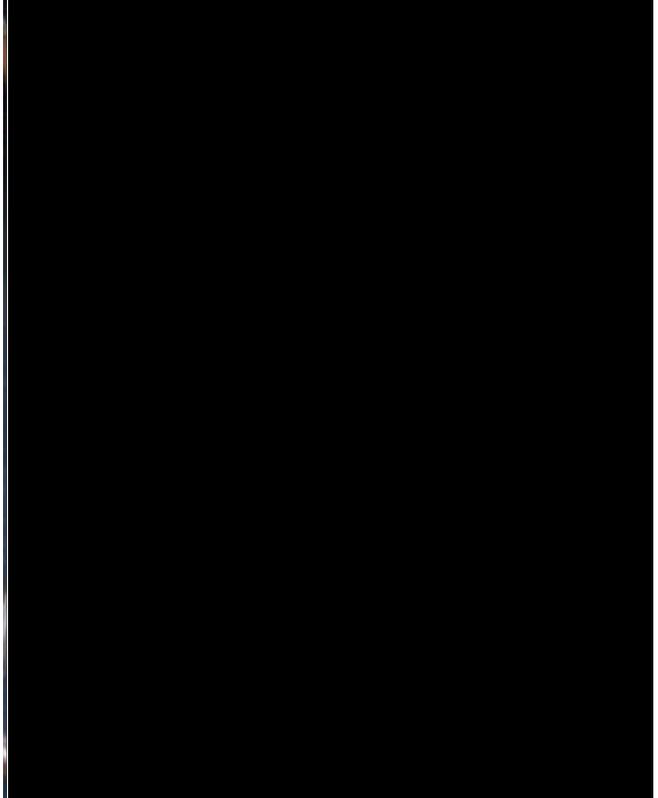
After school I got my powerchair then I came down to the food DT room to do my independent cooking, I had hot dogs, wedges and coleslaw and ice cream for pudding. When we finished I wiped the table.

At 6 o'clock it was club we watched the Simpsons. I had popcorn. After the film I came down from the wing to start today's diary and watched the soaps and have supper before my shower.

Then I will get ready for bed and sit on the settee and watch more TV before I go to bed. The night staff will put me to bed then me and Janice will talk and listen to music until we fall asleep.

16-year-old

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Cliff the Responsibility Dog was a character in a lot of diary entries from one school – including on a couple of birthdays that happened during our diary weeks.

Today is... MY BIRTHDAY! I AM 14 TODAY WHOOP WHOOP!

Today, I left at 6:50 because I'm the first to be picked up. Which at that time I was very tired! Then as I got on the bus put my iPod then I said goodbye to Mum, Sister and my 2 brothers. As I headed for school, I was grinning from ear to ear looking forward to boarding with my best mate. After picking somebody up from the first town we headed to the next town to pick someone else up then onwards to the last one for the final pick up. Then I arrived at school for 9am by which time I had finished having a heated debate with my driver and escort who are very friendly.

After having a long journey into school, it turned out to be an awesome day but tiring. When I went down to the residential area my first job was to unpack my bag and put my clothes away. After we unpack we have to take our responsibility dog Cliff out, so he can do his business, which teaches us to remember to do things but if we don't remember we lose points. Today we earned Cliff's new collar which looks cool. After sorting that out we went for tea, which was vegetable lasagne and then for pudding it was apple pie and ice cream YUM! Then after tea we had drama club, where we had to act out a circus scene and I was a clown. After that we played games like wink murder. Then we went down to the wing got ready for bed and watched Meet the Parents and we had our supper in bed, then went to sleep at 10pm.

14-year-old

Today, I got on the bus at 7.15am. I said goodbye to my mum and 2 brothers. I was tired when I got on the bus but I soon woke up and started chatting to the driver and the escort. We listened to the radio on the bus.

We arrived at school at 8.45am. I had a good day at school but a tiring day but I was looking forward to boarding with my mate because I didn't see him last week because it was half term.

My first job is to unpack my bag and put my clothes away. Then we take our responsibility dog outside for the toilet. Our dog is called Cliff. We have to remember things for him or we will lose points. For tea we had vegetable lasagne and apple pie and ice cream. After tea we did drama club and we played games then we acted out a circus. I was the lion tamer. After that we went to the wing and I had a shower then I watched a film with my mate in our bedroom. We watched Meet the Parents with some crisps and a hot chocolate. The film was very funny. We settled down at 10pm and went to sleep.

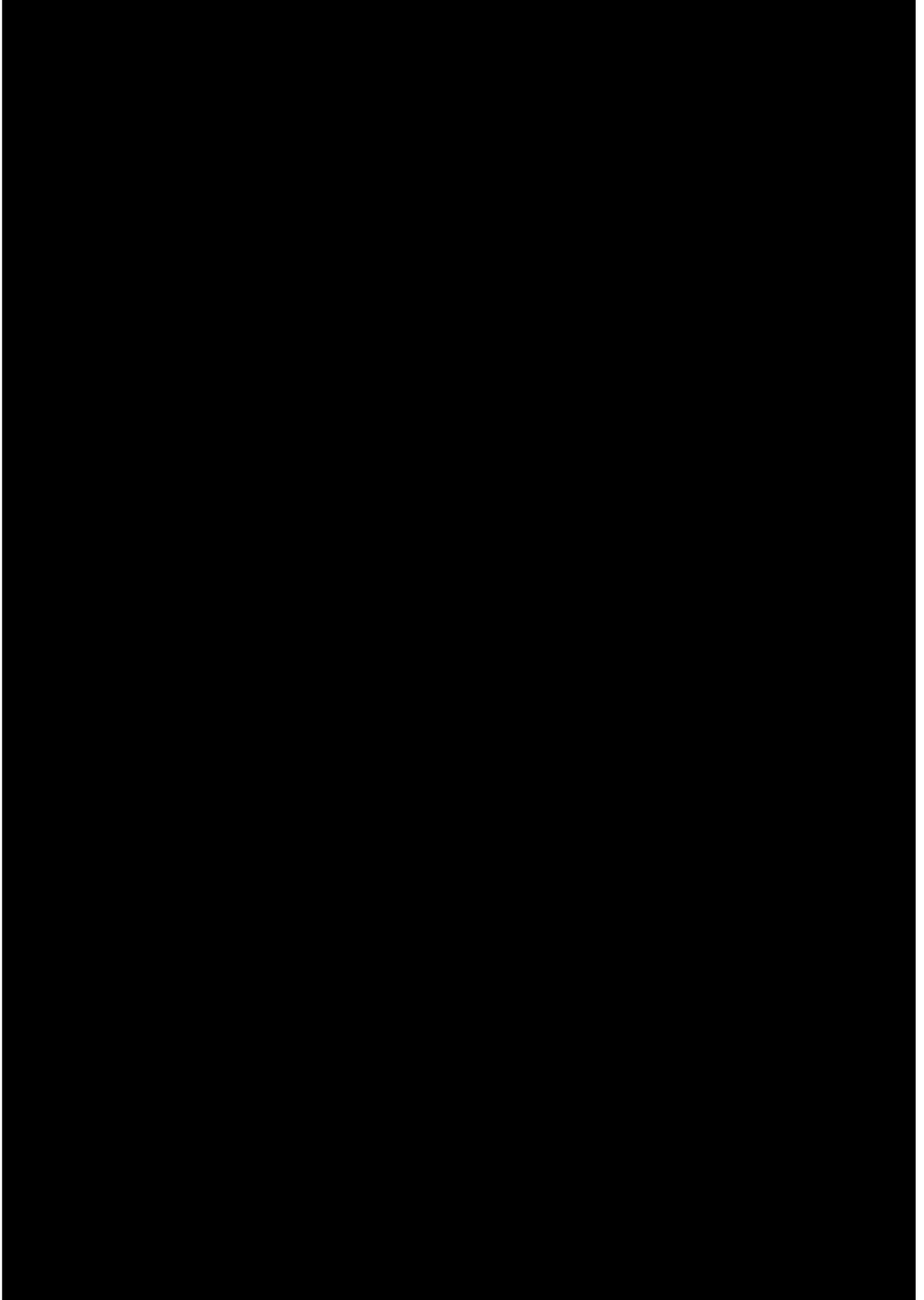
14-year-old

Today I had a good day at school. I was looking forward to boarding with my friends. I came to the residential wing at 3.30 to be welcomed by the staff. Then we went in our room to unpack our bag. Then we took Cliff out for the toilet. We went over to Post 16. I made a coaster for my best mate because it's his birthday tomorrow. Then we had Mexican fajitas for tea and lemon mousse with ginger fingers for pudding. It was scrumptious.

Tonight we had drama club where we were doing roles for the production. I was chosen to be a monkey for the circus. Then we went down to the wing to get ready for bed so we could watch Back to the Future. We settled down at 10pm.

14-year-old

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Today, I got up at 7am and got washed and dressed. I watched a bit of early morning TV. Then we went for breakfast. I had shreddie and a bread roll. After breakfast we brushed our teeth till our hearts content. Then we took our responsibility dog outside for the toilet. We put him back in his bed and waited to go to school.

I had a boring day at school. After school we took Cliff out for the toilet. We then put him back in his bed. Then we had to go to Post 16 to do a bit of our diary. Then I had physio in the classroom. For tea we had chicken and mushroom pancakes with potato wedges. It was YUM! For pudding we had rice pudding with shortbread. We had dance club. It was fun and energetic.

We went over to Post 16 and did more of my diary. We then went over to the wing and got ready for bed. We watched TV until lights out at 10pm.

14-year-old

Today I got woken up to the songs of happy birthday from residential staff, then I discovered that my best mate had made me a present which I was chuffed to bits with x10. Then as 7:15 came around I received a lovely call from my parents which made me smile even more! After that I went for a shower and as I came out I saw happy birthday banners plastered everywhere. All that excitement made me feel peckish so I went and got myself a lovely round of toast YUM YUM.

Then after a lovely breakfast I had to go and sort out Cliff which almost made me regurgitate me toast. Then 8:50 strikes and off I go to school, the school day is over and back down to residential area after an extremely good day then came to Post 16 to do my diary.

After that I went to dance club and they all sang happy birthday to me, then we rehearsed the Kylie Minogue dance. After practising the dance 3 times we then played Ice Sculptors to calm us down then I came to Post 16 to finish off my diary and finally went down to the wing to get ready for bed so that we could watch TV. Lights out at 10pm.

14-year-old

Now it's Friday and we got up at 7am to get washed and dressed. I watched some TV then we had breakfast then came back to brush our teeth. We took Cliff out for the toilet and asked someone to look after him for the weekend. We then packed our bag to go home. We then took our bags down then we went off to school. We went home at 3.30pm with 3 other people. Then I got home at 5pm to my mum and 2 brothers.

14-year-old

It's finally Friday, we got up at 7am and got washed and dressed. We watched TV. For breakfast I had a bread roll and shreddie. We came back down to the wing to brush our teeth. We took Cliff to the toilet and sorted out who was looking after him for the weekend. We packed our bag ready to go home then we went to school at 8.50 and I left for home at 3.30 for the weekend.

14-year-old

'Today I got woken up to the songs of happy birthday from residential staff'

Days in a secure unit

We had many diary entries about life in secure children's homes, covering normal everyday things for any young person: group life, conflicts, staff support, new young people arriving and others leaving, school work, activities, 'mobility visits' outside the secure unit, being visited by professionals, physical restraint and calming down. As in other settings, food got lots of mentions – and a visit by dogs got mentioned in some diaries.

I was woken at 7.45am by staff. And then they came around at 8am. I find it frustrating having to be woken up so early. I was let out of my bedroom at 8.30am and went straight into breakfast. Then after breakfast I went into school. (I think school is boring.) At break time I went out side and had an incident with Tim – he kicked a football at me first so I threw a tennis ball back at him as always I am the one who gets in trouble. I had dinner in the dining room. Again I don't know what I did but I had to have tea on third sit. I was waiting to go back into school when I was told I was going on mobility. I went bowling and to McDonalds it was good. I came third. After tea I joined in with board games, sport and art and had a good evening. I really enjoy having activities with AP as she accepts me for who I am. I went to my room at 21.00 hrs and then started to write this diary.

13-year-old

I got up at 9am then I went and sat in the small lounge and had breakfast. Then I had a shower then I dusted in the main lounge before I went down the gym to play heads and volleys. Then I had a cheese savoury sandwich for dinner then I played five all. The first game I lost 2–1 the second game I won 5–4, 3rd game I lost 4–1 then I played a game of logo before I got feedback on how I am doing in the unit. I gained 22/25 pts. Then at 3.30 the teams changed. We went in the gym to play heads and volleys before we went for tea. I had cottage pie then I had lemon drizzle cake. I went in the yard to play heads and volleys then I played rounders with a member of staff. Got hurt by accident then I played 'guitar hero for xbox 360' then I had a session with my staff member. then I went down the gym. Played football, tennis till 9.30pm then I watched telly till 9.50. Then I went to bed to listen to my MP3 Player whilst writing out the diary. Today I got a total of 44/50 pts for how I am doing.

15-year-old

I am still on holiday from school, so lay in for a while I then played rounders and spent time with staff. In the evening I went to the gym and played football and went on the x-box and had some 1 to 1 time with staff.

13-year-old

'Today was a good example of happiness, depression, anxiety'

Today I got up at 9.40am. I went and did my routines then I went down the gym to play heads and volleys then I came back up to the unit for dinner then we went down the gym and played football, tennis, then I got washed and then played five all. In the first game I won 4–3 the second game I won 2–1 then at 3.30 the teams changed then I went in for tea then after tea I went in the yard and played heads and volley. Then we played a full pitch game in which I went in for a tackle with another YP and got the ball but he fell and when he got up he went to punch me but I backed away but tripped over and he stood on my arms which I had up protecting my face and when he was restrained he said next time I will break your nose. Then we were alternated 30 minutes bedsit 30 with group up till bedtime. Then I listened to my MP3 whilst writing my diary till my stuff comes out of my room at 10.30.

15-year-old

My morning started same as yesterday. I went to school at 9.15am. At 11.30 I was in a lesson with the sports teacher and this member of staff called out so I went out and I thought about it I went out for about 15 mins and went back in class and I got sent out.

After school I went to my room as always for 15 mins then I had tea then I went down the gym. Then I had masters we had some dribbling skills then we had a game then I was badly tackled by Tom. He hurt me on my leg. I went to room B watched a football match – Barcelona vs Arsenal. It finished Arsenal 2–1 Barcelona.

13-year-old

My morning started same as yesterday. I don't like getting up in a morning at 8.00am. It is way to early. I had my breakfast in the dining room. At school I had maths but I got told that I had to work in the 1 to 1 room with Martin so I refused to do it. So I went and sat on the windowsill near the room then Liz came to see me and to calm me down. So then I got told that I was going into the room with Philip so we can do our maths. After tea I did a 1 to 1 session with Liz.

We are doing a book about my time at the secure unit with photos and things.

13-year-old

Today I was awake and out the secure unit for 8.30 to go to court. I was in and out of the video conference by 11.25. 9 month conditional discharge! Great outcome.

Beef burgers for lunch today were beautiful. Straight after lunch we were straight back to education for PE – my group and the 2 teachers played so did our care staff, great game. My team were great Jon decided not to play and be ref. The end score 15 all! Scored 9 out of 15. Amazing!

Me and my friends were in group work and they organised a woman who works in a rehab centre to come in. Her sister was a recovering crack addict, but took a hit & suddenly died leaving her 7 year old daughter to live with her nan.

15-year-old

My morning started same as yesterday. I went to school this afternoon and I did play football with the others. So it was half time and Thomas had an incident. He said that I kicked him in the male privates. Nick separated us. Nick saw me. I never kicked him or if I did it would have been an accident.

13-year-old

My morning started same as yesterday. I had my breakfast in the dining room. After that I went and watched TV and after I went in the fitness gym and I did 30 mins with Ben – I did 3 miles on the treadmill. This afternoon I played table tennis with Sam I beat him and Cal 2–1. I went in the gym with Wes and I went in the goal, and practiced some saving & diving. Then to finish it off I watched TV on my corridor with Alan.

13-year-old

Lock down! We didn't have enough members of staff to deal with all 11 of us – so breakfast in bed for us... Annie left today – she's been in secure for 18 months – I gave her a hug and she broke down in tears, I'm going to miss her.

15-year-old

Today I got up had breakfast then did my routines then I said goodbye to Tel and wished him good luck then he left.

15-year-old

Today I got up had breakfast went to the gym to play heads & volleys then had lunch and played xbox till tea time then had tea played a little more x-box then cooked tuna pasta bake then played rounders in the gym before I settled down to start watching transporter 3 before bed.

15-year-old

I woke up in a great mood today. I went into breakfast & had a kiwi – fun!

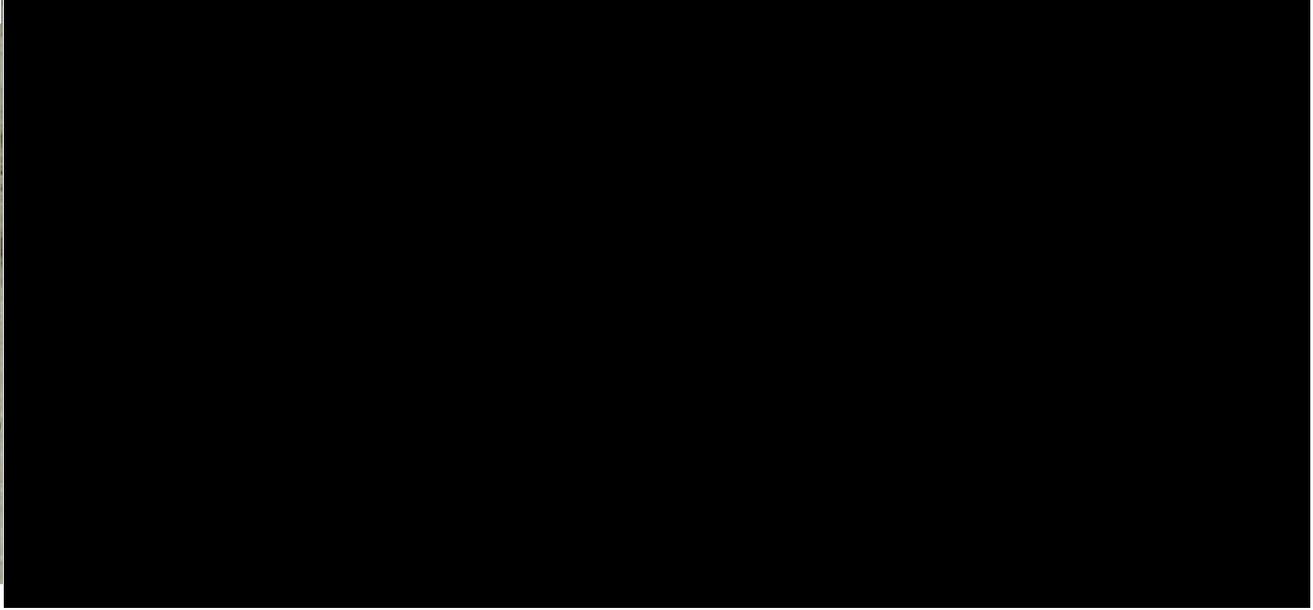
All I have done today is dance, TV, dance oh and more dance. Me and Lo have been learning a new dance from Street dance 3d. I thought Diversity was hard – diversity is kinda easy compared to this!

The food was horrible today – chilli & a type of bakewell tart with custard! Tea was worse 'chickwich burgers' a horrible piece of breaded chicken in a roll – disgusting – and strawberry angel delight!

I did Art/dance in the evening but I got bored & went to the unit and watched TV with the others. That's all for today! Night.

15-year-old

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Some wrote about their feelings and emotions in security.

Woke up this morning, I felt slightly anxious, as I was meeting my new youth offending team worker. Education was good today, my double art was great I finally finished my ballet picture, it took me so long to complete.

Seeing my YOT worker was a breath of fresh air. I don't get many visits, her name is Maureen, she's Scottish, she bought me crisps and chocolate. It's nice to get away from the group sometimes – it's depressing being in a secure unit every day.

Stuart really annoyed me today, he's continuously rude – don't he understand how it makes people feel? I had a 1 to 1 session with 1 of my link workers, it was great. I struggle to talk to people and being with him helps me. I can talk to him about everything.

I had a great evening me and Liz did the diversity dance workout. It's really hard but it's amazing. We've been doing it for a week now and we seem to be doing great. It's great to have the sense of achievement. We went into art after and were working on posters for 'secure units got talent'. It was a laugh although I was really happy. When you think your family can't see what you're doing, it's always the one thing that I think of. I always feel a mixture of emotions throughout the day – the build up of emotions leaves me depressed – I used to self harm but stopped after I found staff members I could talk to. Today was a good example of happiness, depression, anxiety; having my YOT worker to talk to and trust is a lot to me in this secure unit or I'd have no one, but he and my other key worker help me to feel happy. Night.

15-year-old

Again my morning started same as yesterday except this time instead of going out on mobility we had John & Peter in with 2 dogs called Mac & Bonny. Mac was a Rottweiler/bull mastiff – he was very gentle and Bonny was a staffie/bull terrier. She was always wanting her stomach to be tickled. After education I was called into the tv room with my friend Jan to say sorry for making wolf noises in her company. After tea we did sport/art and TV. I also had my haircut by Tina the hairdresser. I have had a really good day apart from Lee shouting at bedtime.

Why do I have to be HERE – I'm on welfare and done nothing wrong and others have broken the law.

13-year-old

Woke up and got told I was moving rooms – a platinum room bigger than the others and nicer. It took me a hour to move everything! Long. Today's been so boring there's nothing to write about... During bedroom cleaning I had to put everything away! It took so long but its worth it just to see my brand new room!

I lost my platinum privileges today for having a go at Stuart – he's just so annoying. I feel ill so I'm going to go. 'Night.

15-year-old

My morning started the same as yesterday. I got up at 8.30am then I came out and had breakfast. Then at 9.30am I did an activity. I was sent to my corridor 5 times and I had a chat with staff about how other people feel when I take the ass out of them.

13-year-old

Court hearings – and their outcomes – could have a major impact for some in security

I woke up in a great mood this morning. Mike arranged for the Blue Cross to come visit, they bought two beautiful dogs in, a bull mastiff cross rottweiler and a staffordshire, they were called Mac & Bonny. I was having a great day until 4pm and my solicitor rang. Tanya explained that my upcoming court date could result to me having an extra 4 months added on to my 18mth sentence with no early. I was devastated; I felt empty, angry, worried. I didn't know what to do. It was unbelievable, I hadn't even done what I was being accused of; it felt like my heart was breaking; I felt extremely depressed and like I was on my own, I was angry at everyone, even though they had nothing to do with it.

Later that evening I was in group work with Mac (not the dog the human). We were focusing on gang culture and prevention of re offending.

Lunch was nicer than normal, a warm jacket potato with cheese and beans. Even though we have it every Tuesday it seemed nicer then last week!

Seeing the dogs make me think about what it would be like just being home with my family, my dogs. I got to walk the dogs around the playground – a major difference to normal!

Today been challenging but I know every day will be the same, but I know all I have to do is breathe and calm down, but it ain't always easy. Jed yet again annoyed me, I wanted to hit him. I was in the situation of; hit him and get restrained, or calm and stay out of trouble. Sometimes I wonder if hitting him would be worth it, but it ain't. Bin it! Night. Time 4 a shower.

15-year-old

Bored, lonely and sad is how I felt this morning. I didn't have breakfast this morning – I simply couldn't be bothered.

Education was boring today, I had maths, English, geography, PE theory, science until lunch then I had D&T – I'm making a dolls house. I'm doing my gcse's in all of these subjects.

At lunch time my solicitor rang – great news no further action on discharge, but if I get arrested after my release from jail I'm back inside. It's a good come out.

Later that evening I was in group work as I do it three times a week. Today – current affairs, we were talking about the news and why we think it happened. Today we were discussing the fight between AC Milan and Tottenham & violence in sport...

We got two new boys today, both in the space of 3 hours. They seem nice, it's exciting getting new people.

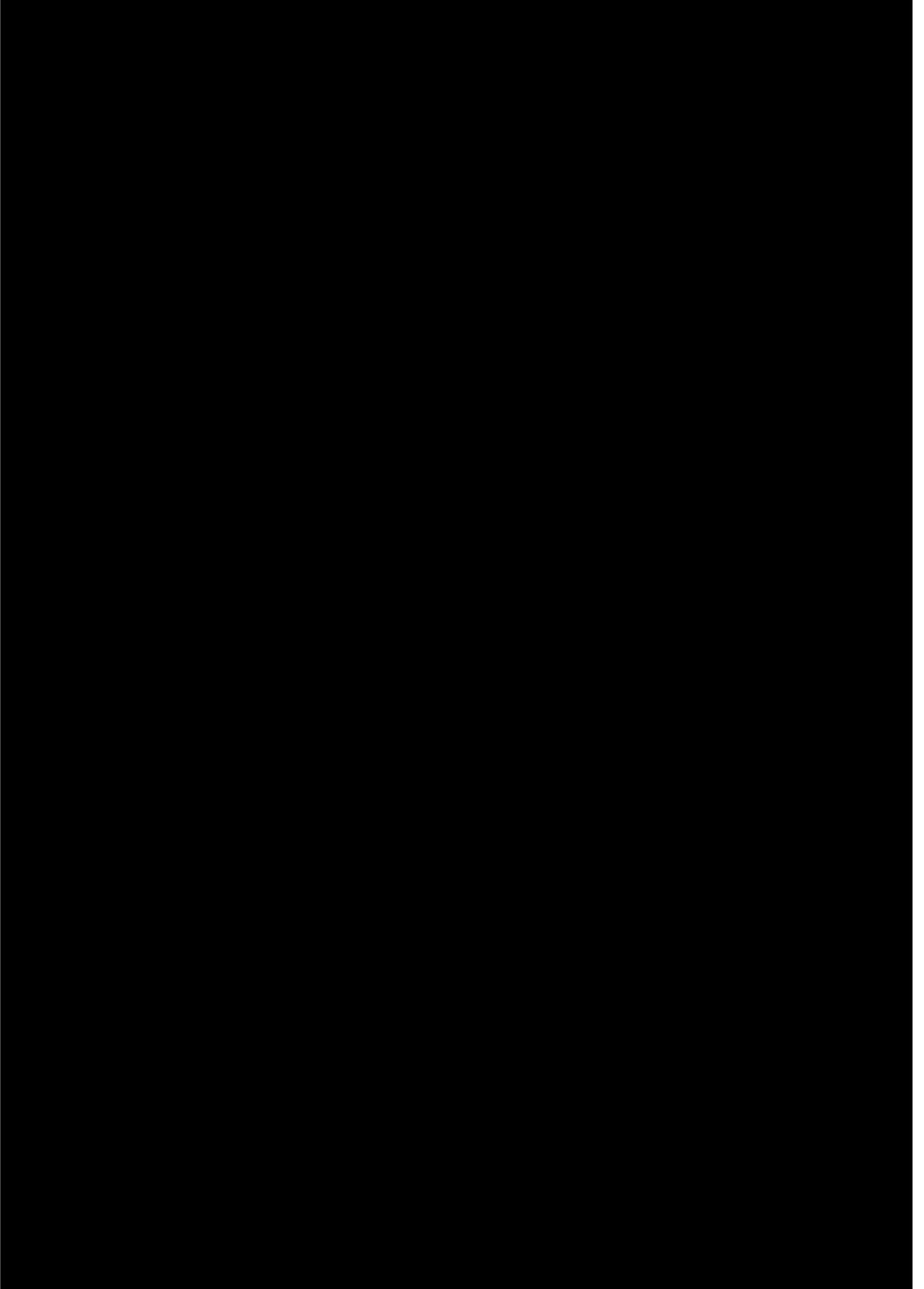
It seems no matter what happens Tommy always gets on my nerves but my 2nd key worker Liz calmed me down in minutes & Tommy's fine next. He's a hyperactive immature boy!

If it weren't for Liz I would have got so mad I would have been putting myself in danger; she's great. I've got tomorrow, so 'night!

15-year-old

'I was having a great day until 4pm and my solicitor rang'

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Days in boarding school

Some weekly boarders told us about coming back to school from home at the start of the week, and going back home at the end of the week.

I had to get up at 6 o'clock this morning so that I got ready and got to school on time. I like Monday mornings because my mum makes really good bacon sandwiches.

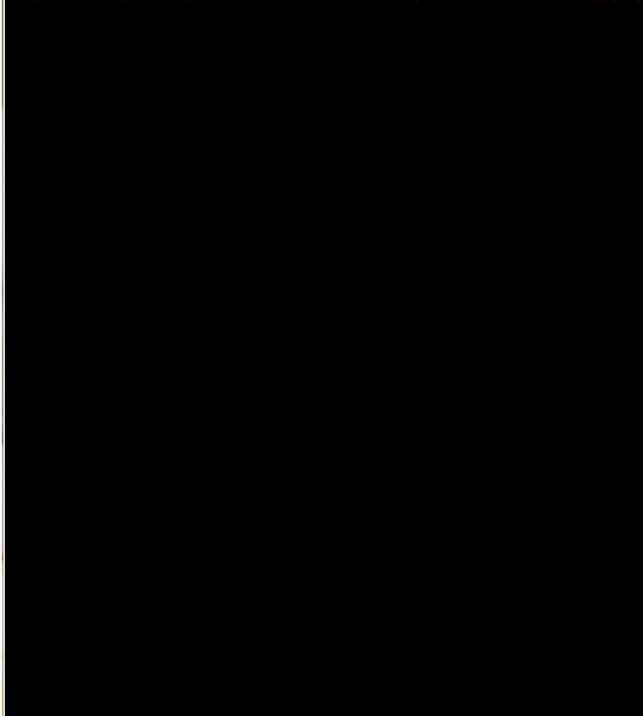
I left my house at about 7 o'clock. On the way to school we picked one of my brother's friends up to take him to school. It took about 50 minutes to get to school this morning which is about average.

When I got to school at about 8 o'clock, the first thing I did was to unpack all of my clothes that I need for this week. I then talked to my friends before getting my books ready and finally went into registration.

The lessons today were average; it was just the same as any Monday.

14-year-old

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This morning we had to be down at breakfast by 7.45 because some people in my dorm were talking after lights out. I don't like it how we all get punished for something that somebody else has done.

I had a usual breakfast; today we had hash browns which were really nice. After that I got ready and went to school.

Nothing exciting happens on a Thursday, it is one of the dullest days. But today was slightly better because we got to watch an episode of the World at War which was really interesting. I prefer to watch a film and have a class discussion, we learn far more this way than we do just doing work out of a text book.

After school I didn't really have anything to do so I went to my friend's house which is just near school. We played on the Xbox and watched TV until about 5.45 when I had to go back to the Boarding house for my tea.

After tea, I didn't really have much homework to do so I read a book instead. Then we went swimming in the school's pool. That was really fun. I then packed my bag ready to go home, I love packing my bag because I can't wait to go home!

14-year-old

This morning when I woke up, all I could think about was going home. Fridays always seem to go really fast and before I knew it I was at home.

14-year-old

Many diary entries described daily routines – including food! – in boarding schools. Boarders wrote about both official and some unofficial activities.

The day starts at 8.30 with a walk across to the dining room for breakfast. Monday is pancake and maple syrup day which always puts us in a good mood to start the week. After breakfast I went back to bed in my dorm until 10.20 as I have a free period in which I can do what I want. At 10.20 I met up with K and do my English prep on Robert Burns – a radio 4 ‘in the life of...’ type presentation we prepared. Had a late lunch at about 12.30 when I finished this which was nice – sausages, mash potato + carrots! I then had lessons for the rest of the day; history of art, French and English. All lessons ran smoothly enough. Although I was very agitated through them as I have given up smoking after being internally suspended for 2 days last week. I then had supper, watched ‘Gossip Girl’, had a chat with a friend and did some yoga in my room as my lesson was cancelled. Then bed time! Average day at school – no drama or problems.

17-year-old

Today we got up really early by my really annoying house mistress. My assistant house mistress is so nice but the other one Pauline, she drives me crazy. We had breakfast and then went to the lockers and hanged out and did random stuff. We did lessons – so boring and passed notes and stuff. In break we played outside and packed our bags and ate food. Did lessons again and all the older girls were in assembly and they are all so intimidating because there is a whole cocky thing. We came back to the dining room and did our house game and it was really funny everyone was shouting. After that we came back to house and we hanged out. Then we went out the window to the path and ran in the dark and ran there took a pic and ran back it was really really fun.

My dorm-mate isn’t here tonight so I am sleeping in the other dorm and its really fun.

13-year-old

I didn’t really have any homework to finish so in prep (the hour that we have to do our homework). I watched a film on my ipod.

After prep we all played dodge ball in the gym, this is the time when we can run off some steam. It was really fun.

After this we all got ready for bed and had a wash. It’s really annoying because there are only 2 showers that are warm. I am going to sleep now, we only go to bed at 10 o’clock at school which is really late for a school night.

14-year-old

‘Average day at school – no drama or problems’

I got up at about 7.45 today, it's the first morning that I have had in the boarding house this week. I got dressed quickly because we had to be at breakfast by 8 or else we have to clear away tables. Thankfully I got there just in time.

For breakfast I had orange juice, coffee, Weetabix and a cooked breakfast, this gave me a good start to the day. After breakfast (8.30) I packed my books and went into the school at 8.45.

Wednesday is my favourite day in school. Today was no exception. On a Wednesday we have Maths and Design and Technology. These are my favourite subjects. At break I had an apple and orange juice. Every day I get £4 allowance on my account for break and lunch. At lunch I had a sandwich and yogurt.

After school was finished I got a snack of a cake and juice from the kitchen. Then I got quickly changed and went into town with my friends. In town we went to Home Bargains to get some chocolate and drinks. Me and my friends bought some chips to share. After my friends went home I went to tea. It was steak pie but I don't really like it. I would prefer it if we got another option but as we don't, I ate it.

I had quite a lot of homework tonight so I cracked on and managed to get it all done in the library. After that we went to the girls' Boarding House to do a quiz. My team didn't do very well, we came last. Then I watched TV, had a wash and I'm sat in bed now.

14-year-old

'it looks like I'm getting away with it'

Woke up for breakfast, was very overtired so I went back to bed instead of going to chapel. This is meant to be compulsory but no-one has spoken to me about it yet so it looks like I'm getting away with it.

Only had an extra 20 mins as had English at 9.00. This lesson was fine although I was half asleep, as I always am at that time: I must prefer afternoon lessons.

Had free time from 10.20-2.20, I didn't really get much work done but I tidied my room and did some washing. Then watched 'Kick Ass' after lunch whilst doing some French sheets.

Then had lessons til the end of the day. My concentration is seriously affected by not smoking so prep is very hard to do at the moment. Did some shopping on ebay, but bought nothing. I attempted to do some work but it did not go too well. I got really stressed out and couldn't finish it so I went and did some yoga. Being at school there is nothing really relaxing to do but I find doing yoga helps a bit. Watched 'Skins' after that and then went to bed.

17-year-old

Today I woke up in a really bad mood. Had breakfast as usual at 8.00 and then slept till my French oral lesson at 9.40.

Lessons were now finished. I sorted out my room, washed all my sheets and tidied up. I did some prep that I had to do before the end of the week and handed it in. Then I chilled out and watched films, ate food and generally cheered myself up. Then I got an early night ready for the weekend.

17-year-old

In some diaries we heard about how boarders got on with each other living in a group at school.

Today we got up and I was so tired. My house mistress still has my bag and we had a massive rebellion and I got it back but I didn't get my tuck back. Going to try and steal it. Me and my dorm are obsessed with this song called count on me, its so nice. I went to the tuck shop and lots of older girls were in there and then my sister came in and shouted a really embarrassing name at me and all the older girls looked at me. So embarrassing!

13-year-old

Woke up very tired and confused after such a late night, went to the wrong lesson in the morning! Had games after break where I played squash – very tiring. This is the only compulsory games lesson per week. It was a good lesson as I was playing amongst good squash players so I was running round a lot.

In history of art I had no concentration so did not have a very interesting lesson work wise, spent a long time chatting to friends.

It's a half day on Wednesday, well that's what the school calls it, in fact we finish at 4.20 instead of 6.00. But still its something! Went into the local town, went shopping for food in Tesco and to the pub for a drink to relax for a bit. Came back to school, had house meeting at 9.30 but I had a really bad headache. Was planning to get an early night until two of my good friends had a big argument which I had to sort out because it was getting nasty. There are always lots of arguments here as everyone is so contained and claustrophobic in boarding school. After 7 years I've learnt that if you break it up they both realise it was a stupid argument the next morning, so that's what I did. Too stressed out to go to sleep now so I watched 'Sun, Sex & Suspicious Parents' on iplayer for an hour then went to bed.

17-year-old

Ofsted inspectors arrived at one boarding school while our diaries were being filled in.

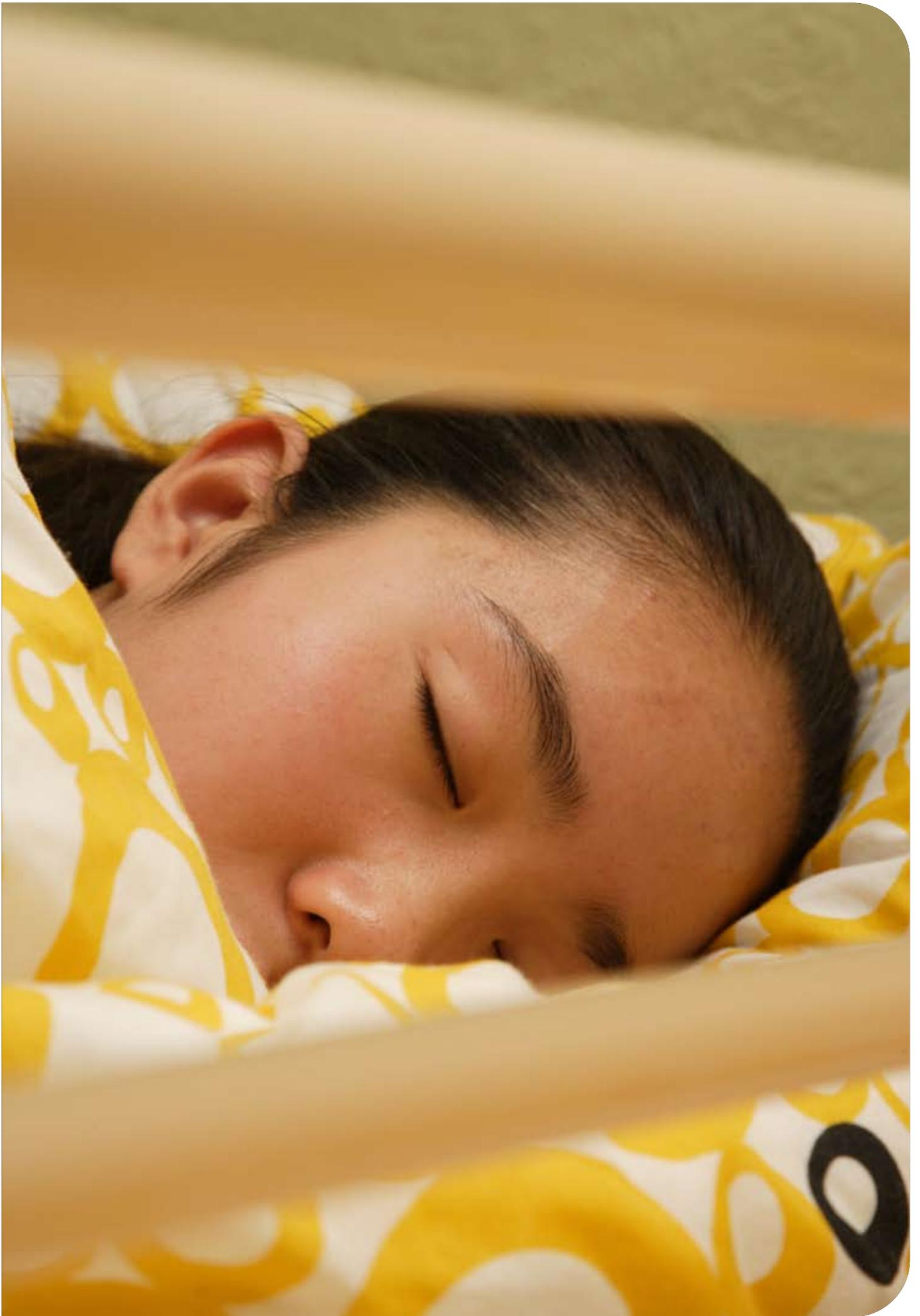
Getting bored and restless at school. Looking forward to the weekend to get out of here. Lessons going fine. There is an inspection at the moment so all the teachers are planning their lessons and are stricter. Now they know what it's like to be a student and being constantly judged by your results and work ethic.

Had to get up early today as I had a lesson first thing. Tuesdays are always the busiest days of the week as I have the least free time. Drunk loads of coffee to get through it all.

Pilates in the evening which really helped calm me down and tire me out. Went to the san (medical centre) to sort out some things, they were very helpful. Afterwards I spent a long time on the phone to my friend then went to bed, but couldn't get to sleep till about 3.30am.

17-year-old

'There is an inspection at the moment... now they know what it's like to be a student and being constantly judged by your results and work ethic'



Today was fun. There were inspectors and all the teachers told us to be good and stuff. They are ok but you have to be good in lessons.

My dorm-mate came back today which is really good. We had coco pops which are nice for breakfast. Later we hanged out. Everyone in my class had left and I was working on my own in lessons so embarrassing to the older girls. In English we watched a film and it was really good it was so good it was Japanese and then we played squash.

13-year-old

Some boarders only stayed at school during the week and wrote about going home for the weekend and then coming back to school. Others stayed at school over the weekend and told us about their weekends there.

We got up and we were all really excited – it was the social so we were all really excited!! We had lessons till 12.00 then we had lunch. After lunch we ran back. Then me and two friends went to the post office but someone had taken £20. Then we got back and got ready for the social. We all had our make up done by the older girls. When we got there we all danced to music. Then we all came back and went to bed.

13-year-old

School ends at 12.00 on Saturday for most people but because of my timetable I have no lessons. I therefore had a lie in on Saturday, packed for a weekend in London and left in a taxi at 12.15. Do not come back to school until Sunday at 9.30.

17-year-old

Today was very similar to yesterday. I'm really tired now and not looking forward to school tomorrow. I hate Sunday nights knowing that it is my last night at home. Oh well I'm going to sleep and I suppose that I've had a really good weekend. It will soon be next weekend.

14-year-old

NOT IN SCHOOL. Evening: house meeting at 9.30 where we find out what is planned for the next week. Got an early night for school tomorrow.

17-year-old

'We were all really excited – it was the social'

Days living at home

Some children and young people were living at home with support from social care services. We heard about family worries and some worries about being back at home.

Got up 6am today because I was worried about my cat because they might put her down but instead she had inflamed bowels and could only eat boring things like chicken, fish and rice otherwise she could die anytime.

After I went to school where I learned about gangs, how to fix bikes and played football and pool then came home and went on the wii plus but was really tired and went to bed. So was a really boring day overall.

16-year-old

College 9–4 today, Double IT and Double Enterprise. I like Fridays at college. IT is good for me, it is what I want to do when (if) I can get a job.

18-year-old

I got up early today 6:30 and got ready for school but by the time I got to school I was really stressed because I was waiting for my taxi for 3 hours. When I eventually got to school I did actually enjoy because it was an activity day at the farm. We did this thing where you have to climb up a soft pole and then jump off. I managed to get all the way up the pole and it was really high and I even jumped off – now that was scary... We went shopping at Asda. When we had finished mum tried calling my dad but he never answers unless he wants to. When we got back home I put the shopping away then walked to the shop to get a drink for my pack up. Then when we got home mum went upstairs at 6pm to play on her game so I never get to spend time with her.

16-year-old

Today I saw my dad at contact we went to Sainsbury café and got a drink and talk after we went for a walk. When I got back I tried on my new clothes and shoes then had to tidy my room because it was really messy When I had finished my sister came up to cause more trouble and try to get me and mum into trouble with social services...

My puppy was getting really mad 'cause she was chewing everything and mum went upstairs to play on world of warcraft and I know that game is more important than me and to be honest she wouldn't miss me... I went to bed but couldn't sleep because I actually wished I was back in CARE.

16-year-old

'I went to school where I learned about gangs, how to fix bikes, and played football and pool'

One set of diary entries told us about being disabled and living with a wheelchair, sports, and likes and dislikes about social care support.

No college today, but we have to stay in because my wheelchair needs to be serviced (playstation day LOL). My transitions person has phoned mom about my direct payments (don't like this part of life). My nan goes to hospital today to see if her cancer has gone (fingers crossed).

My chair has got to go in next week for some repairs. Nan got all clear (yeah!). Football training tonight. Why can't our city have a wheelchair football team?

18-year-old

College today 9-4. My lessons include Maths, IT, English and Tutorial. There is a nice girl at college who I would like to ask out but don't know if she would go out with someone who is in a wheelchair.

The transport that picks me up and drops me off from college to home didn't come and pick me up from college till 5.25 when they should have picked me up at 4. Mom and Dad not happy with that.

Went to town to go to pictures with my cousin. Mom paid for us to go in then she left us so she could go round shops. I had to phone Mom, the lift in the pictures wasn't working so we couldn't go.

18-year-old

'There is a nice girl at college who I would like to ask out but don't know if she would go out with someone who is in a wheelchair'

Football training was good, we were doing lots of free kicks and penalty (harder than you think in a wheelchair). We don't get back from training till 10pm so when I got in, I had some supper and then went to bed.

18-year-old

Mom is going to my old respite unit tonight to do somebody's hair. I miss going into respite, miss my friends, even though I have got some friends at college, my friends at respite were like me (in a wheelchair).

Adult services isn't as good as child services and I think it should be better. I feel sorry for my mom & dad, they used to go out for a meal while I was in respite. Mom is looking for a holiday for us all to go for my big brother's 21st birthday. We want to go back to Tenerife.

18-year-old

My mom and dad have to take me everywhere I want to go. I love them so much.

18-year-old

Saturdays are boring days for me. Dad is at work till 12 then mom goes shopping. I have been standing in my frame, gives my legs a good stretch. Watch sports on tv.

18-year-old

Today me and my team mates are playing wheelchair football in Birmingham for the regional league. Mom not feeling very well so dad taking me. We have got 3 games. I love playing powerchair football, I feel free and normal.

My parents have helped me fill this out because I can't use a pen. Thanks mom and dad.

18-year-old

Days after leaving care

We heard of some days as a 16-year-old care leaver.

Didn't do much today because I felt ill so didn't get up till late then played football with some friends then had tea then had to go to bed because I was sick like.

16-year-old

Got up today. Yet again mum was pretending to be ill so she could stay on her stupid game so I just went out all day, played footy then trekked into town to get some new eyebrow bars and a charger for my mp3 player and a bandana. But most of the shops were closed so I went to Argos got some bars then went to Greggs and then got bus home and just chilled with friends and got stoned. Just like a regular day chilled, walked the dogs, fed cats watched some TV had tea then went out and chilled. Trekked to the shop got a drink and went to the park for a bit then came home had a cup of tea and went to bed cause I was shattered.

16-year-old

'My negative mind is always busy in work mode'

One care leaver's diary shared thoughts about being a care leaver in the world of work, meeting a former carer and a support worker, neighbours and local teenagers.

Work day! Yay! I enjoy work very much. I always walk or bike to destinations; I never use public transport as it costs too much money. I'm too old now for a youth discount.

My current place of work is a well known coffee house based in the city centre. It's a fast environment which is one of the main reasons why I enjoy working there so much; the time flies by and my negative mind is always busy in work mode. This stops me from doubting my abilities and myself in general.

The people I work with are a lively bunch, there is 10 of us altogether in the team. I try not to socialise with work colleagues outside of work as my interests and social abilities are not the same as theirs and this often causes issues with my work relationships and makes my differences stand out like a sore thumb. I have a rather low opinion of myself, mostly because I have very low confidence derived from my childhood where I was severely bullied both at home and at school. This all makes me feel like I don't belong anywhere apart from a work environment, this is because I feel everyone is on a level playing field and we've all got the same goals and standards to work by. This is why I try to keep everyone I work alongside at a distance.

Outside of work I don't party like the average social teen does, it's something which I've come to accept and I'm now proud of. However, most of my former work colleagues would always put me under pressure to go out and socialise with them – I always regretted doing so, and I never really enjoyed it. But because I didn't have any friendships with people near to my age who were similar to me in social abilities, I felt very singled out. I'm starting to come to accept that in my crowd and the people who I'm surrounded by, I'm what you call the black sheep or the ugly duckling. It's not so bad being different. I've since stuck to rule of no socialising with work colleagues.

Like at school or college, there is a sort of peer pressure in work places that young people have to deal with like they would get in any learning environment. Those situations sometimes can make me feel highly uncomfortable and it would be the defining factor for me to either leave my job or look for a new one.

20-year-old

I had an interesting conversation with a work colleague today, she is same age as myself (20). She told me that she's never met someone who lived in care of social services before, she then continued to say that she expected young people in those circumstances to be out binge drinking and wearing track suits all day. I guess stereotyping is something everyone cannot escape from.

I walked around the town centre after work. I don't usually do that as I think it's a waste of valuable time unless I know what it is I am wanting to buy. It doesn't help that I dislike shopping of course! Large crowds moving at slow speeds make me anxious – I don't really know why. I suppose it's the thought of people judging me and knowing I'm a social kid just by the way I look. It's quite a scary thought.

20-year-old

Another day at work. I'm mostly on the coffee machine to build up my speed on making the drinks. I don't really do much else at the moment. I literally smell like a giant coffee bean! I'm practically a walking advertisement for coffee. Anyone who dares sit near me long enough will probably stay awake an extra hour due to the fumes I'm giving off. The only bonus I've found with this awkward predicament is that people tend to take a step or two back away from me when standing beside me in a queue; I can imagine that it would be the same on public transport. I dread the day when I come across a coffee aficionado. Anyway, for me, work is the same day in, day out. Today I worked 11am–7pm.

This afternoon there is a training session at the local theatre I volunteer at, but, unfortunately, I couldn't make last week or tonight due to overlapping work hours. I like volunteering at the theatre as it's another way to make myself feel like I belong somewhere – somewhere that I feel needed and useful. Work hours are scattered all over my weeks so my usual commitments have been put on hold. This is a downside to hospitality employment: work hours are never set in stone. This makes me feel a little insecure sometimes.

On the way back home, I bumped into my former foster carer who also had just finished work. We both decided to go for a meal together. I see my former foster carer more as a friend than someone who is a parental or guardian figure. I would say she agrees with that. We've kept in touch since I moved into my own place 2–3 years ago; I prefer to keep in touch with, like a friend, than I do my pathway worker.

My pathway worker only really has time to meet at the Social Services HQ, hence the catch ups always end up being somewhat formal. I personally don't mind this most of the time. There have been a few times though when I would have rather met somewhere locally for a more upbeat, friendly catch up, like in the local town centre or a stroll to the café or local park round the corner from the SS-HQ. I do understand and appreciate the little time my pathway worker has to spare, therefore any time I do have a chance to catch up with her. I'm extremely grateful for knowing that there is someone who is familiar with me and my background, who doesn't judge, who I can always talk to for some advice or guidance during weekday working hours, gives me a sense of assurance that I'm not alone.

20-year-old

Okay, so... today was meant to be a day off, however, my boss asked me if I would do her a big favour. This came to a shock to me as she hasn't really known me that long! It's nice to know that I'm seen as a reliable worker and someone she could ask for help.

Later that afternoon, there was a group of lads all smoking weed just outside the flats' front doors. On the opposite side of the road there is a golf course, and I live in the end flats that's only two storeys high with a block of four flats in each building, so this makes our section a hot spot for small groups of children and teens to gather. My neighbour called me inside her flat to ask if I was able to smell the weed and asked if she should call the police. I thought that they weren't really causing any trouble and felt that it would be better if I went and asked them kindly to move instead. I did get a little verbal abuse but they did shift to another location. A win-win for me and my neighbours and the lads especially for not getting in trouble with the police. It's very rare we get many gatherings, it's only maybe one or two times a month it happens. This, to my knowledge, was the first with weed smoking involved. Since I've lived in a young people's home in this city, I've witnessed ways in which young people choose to cope with their problems. I respect that everyone deals with things differently – not everything teens do is to purposely cause trouble, a lot of people confuse this because of their image and the tough demeanour the young people show as a front.

20-year-old

Yikes! Stressful day at work. Terrible even. I'm so glad I'm home behind closed doors in my own quiet and silent environment.

The good thing is my neighbour is normally around on the weekend. Often she stays out late. When she is back, I can hear her loud and clear. She's a woman in her early 30's, who lives alone, and is a fan of talking on her house phone really loud. I can hear most of what she watches on TV as well! Not surprisingly, she tells me she can't hear me at all. That's probably because she is

loud enough for the both of us! It's strange to say but although she is a rather noisy neighbour, I do welcome the sound – it makes me feel like I'm not totally alone on a night. Noise is good!

20-year-old

I had work this afternoon: 12pm–7pm. Sundays at work are slow and laid back, a breeze compared to Saturdays! The coffee machine can be vicious – I've burnt myself many times just by steaming the milk. Makes me question if I'm in the right job for the next year or so. Work was work – again. Nothing new to share.

As I like to read a lot, I joined on a few on-line book swapping sites. This gives me access to loads of reading material that I wouldn't normally get a chance to due to high book prices and the fact that I'm unable to get to the library during the opening times. On one site I can trade a book for a book, the only cost is the postage to send the book; on the other book site I get a point for every book I send, and with that point I can request a book from another book swapper on the site. Only costs are the postage stamps to send. All free. I try to let others know just because I think it's something which should be encouraged.

I read a lot when I'm stressed and worrying too much, it makes me feel calm and helps block out my surroundings for a short while. Sundays are the days I spend browsing for new books to swap.

Lately I've been reading up on emotional intelligence and behaviourism and phenomenology. These subjects interest me, I read them only for enjoyment though. I also like to carry a small book of any type with me to most places I go, it gives me a small boost of confidence.

Other than the task above, I tend to assign Sundays to be my cleaning day. I got this routine by living in the young people's home. I took it with me when I left. Having routine gives me a sense of control. That's something which I feel should be encouraged in young people's lives.

20-year-old

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