



Care 
Experienced
History Month

Care Experienced History Month Q&A Spotlight on Care Experienced Staff

Collette's Story

How has your experience of being in care influenced your life?

Experience of being in care has made me fiercely independent, determined and driven to succeed. I wanted to make sure that I had a future where I would be in control of my life, for me this meant making sure that I had a successful career. I knew from a young age that to do this I needed to achieve in education and seek out opportunities to further develop myself and my network. This drive and determination to succeed has got me to where I am today, a place where I have self-determination and can make my own choices in life. It has also allowed me to have a successful and fulfilling career where I am able to make a positive impact on other people's lives. Without my experience of care I may not have been able to achieve what I have today.

How has your experience of being in care influenced your career path?

Having experience of being in care has had a direct influence on my career path. When I was around 13-years-old I instructed my own solicitor to support me at children's hearings. My solicitor was someone who empowered me and allowed me to exercise my legal rights which made me feel more in control of what was happening. I decided to study law as a result of the impact she had on me. I wanted to use the law to help empower other people in the same way that I had felt empowered. This was the reason why I practiced in the early parts of my career in mental health law and later became a Reporter.

Through my work I want to ensure that as far as possible children and young people coming to their hearings are supported to understand and exercise their rights, to give their views and to be active participants in decisions about them.

What advice do you have for other care experienced young people and/or organisations working with/for care experienced young people?

My advice to care experienced people is to not feel embarrassed or worried about being open about your care experience. I have not always felt comfortable speaking about my own experience and the link between that and my career journey. I have, in the past, been worried that if I shared my experience that I would not be thought of as 'professional' and that my objectivity and ability to make decisions would be called into question or that people would think that I was using my experience of care to get an advantage in some way and would question my commitment and integrity. However, I have only ever been met with positivity. As a result I have grown in confidence and started to own my care experience. This has enabled me to help and support others. Your care experience is unique to you, but by sharing your experience you can make a difference to others.

My advice for organisations working with or for care experienced young people would be to follow on from the work of The Promise. The Promise has shown the

power of co-production with people who have lived experience. View care experienced young people as equal partners who bring value to your organisation and work in true partnership to shape your organisation.



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