



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

Sophie's Story

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

I think that my experience of being in foster care has increased my confidence a lot as it can be quite intense and you need to find your voice to speak out sometimes. I think I have a lot more believe in myself and what I can do with my life because I had to be strong when I was younger. Being in foster care has made me want to do better and not be seen as a 'care experienced young person' as if that's all that I am. It's part of who I am but it's not all of me. It might seem strange but I think being in care has steered me in the right direction as I know what a good life can look like. It has given me the motivation to do well, for me and my daughter, and part of that is about doing well at work.

I was recruited for SCRA's Modern Apprenticeship programme because of my care background and I am really lucky as I've always been fully supported by everyone and encouraged to develop since I've worked with SCRA. I think that's been really important in growing my professional confidence and helping me to see what a career can help you achieve in life, how important it is to work hard and keep learning and the great opportunities that are out there if you do that. I also want to show other young people in care what they can do with their life if they work hard.

In future I see myself as still be working in this area using my experiences to help make care and/or Children's Hearings better for families.

My experience of foster care, one of my personal goals in life is to be a foster carer and give another child the best possible life and opportunity to do as well as I have been able to. I don't think I'd ever have thought of being a foster carer if I hadn't been in care myself.

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

I joined SCRA as a Modern Apprentice when I was 17-years-old and I think this is when I became aware that being in care was a useful and valuable experience around which I could build a career. My experiences have definitely influenced my work as I know what care is really like for young people and the impact it has on your life. I just really want to help make it a better experience for other children and families as it is a difficult time for everyone.

I first worked as a Modern Apprentice and then worked in the Information & Research Team and then the Central Locality Team before moving to my current job with 'Our Hearings, Our Voice'. Being with SCRA has given me a lot of opportunity to get involved with improving things for other young people going through what I went through. I'm pretty sure that if I hadn't been in care I wouldn't have gone down this path – I don't even know if I'd have even been aware that this type of work existed or that I could make a difference.

Throughout my time of being in care I have grabbed every opportunity that has come my way. If I hadn't been in care I wouldn't have had the chance to become a Young Champion at the Fostering Network, I wouldn't have been able to apply to become a Modern Apprentice and I wouldn't have the job I have right now as Project Assistant for 'Our Hearings, Our Voice' young people's board for Children's Hearings. So being in care has had a massive influence on where I am right now and how I would like to use my experiences in wherever my career takes me.

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

If you work in the 'system', employing people with experience of it is really important. Because I have been in care myself I have a way of looking at things that other professionals that I work with might not see. I think that's a useful thing because people who've been there can relate to what we're told by children and young people in a way that others can't. It is really important that organisations working in the 'system' give people who are care experienced a way to be heard and having care experienced staff members is a really important part of that.

For young people who are in care, I can only really relate to my experience. I would say that your experiences are really important, but you have to work hard and grab the chances you are given. I am only where I am because I used my experience to apply to become a Modern Apprentice with SCRA. Take the opportunities and work hard and you can really make a difference, in your own life but also for other people too.



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