



THE TRUST TIMES

18+ Care Leavers' Newsletter

November 2023

STAY WARM AND STAY INFORMED

Hi everyone,

We firstly want to thank everyone who either helped out or attended our most recent conference (see **page 2** for some of the feedback).

We are fast approaching Christmas time, and we appreciate that for some of you this is not the best time, but we do have some exciting events coming up, so make sure you check your email for December announcements.

Talking of emails, we would like to get you all to sign up to a new way of receiving information, but we need your consent - see **page 9** for more info.

In this issue we have some great advice about the best way to apply for jobs (**page 12**), and we are introducing a new section 'A week in the life of a...' featuring a different member of Trust staff (**page 14**). There are plenty of opportunities to look into, and there is even a chance to win £500 by entering a selfie competition, run by the Care Leaver Covenant.

Remember stay warm and stay safe.



We love your good news

If you have anything you would like to be considered for next month's edition please email it to Juliette Walton.

Juliette.Walton@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk

Always remember, **you are never alone**, you are a part of the biggest family in Birmingham, and we are here for you!

If you can't get hold of your PA, please call:
0121 464 1229.

*****NEED HELP ? CALL OUR DUTY LINE ON 0121 464 1229*****

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POSITIVE CONFERENCE FEEDBACK AND THANKS

On 31 October 2023 the Care Leaver's Service ran another successful conference.

The conference offered young people a chance to get in touch with organisations who can support them into independence in a variety of ways, offering health advice, employment and training opportunities and more.

Young people really enjoy the event and the opportunities it gives them.

We appreciate the comments we have received from young people who attended the event.

- "I enjoy coming to every single one of these and want to say Thank you to all the staff who put this together."
- "My favourite thing about the day was meeting different organisations."
- "I enjoyed learning about all the things I can access in Birmingham."
- "My favourite part was talking to and meeting new people."

Thank you so much to everyone who came to support and encouraged their young people to attend. Our next conference will be in **February 2024**, keep your eyes peeled for the details!

OUR NEW OFFICE BASE FOR THE 18+ DUTY SERVICE

Below is some important information for young people about access to our 18+ duty service for care-experienced young people. We are here to help, either by phone or in person.

To contact the 18+ duty service, please continue to call our duty line, 0121 464 1229. There is always a Personal Adviser and 18+ Manager available to give advice or help.

New office base

We are open:

- Monday – Thursday 8.45 to 5.15
- Friday – 8.45 to 4.15

You can call in at our new office, **One Avenue Road, Aston, Birmingham, B6 4DU** between these hours.

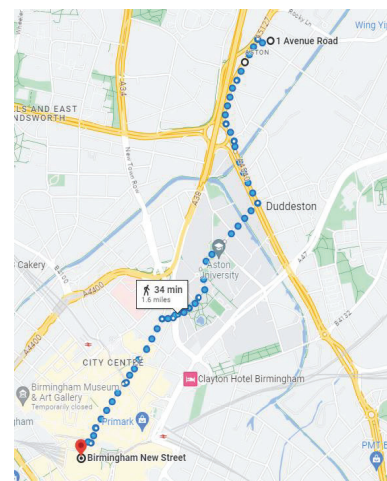
Ask the friendly reception staff as you go in, to let the 18+ duty team know you would like to see a Personal Adviser. Reception will call us and a team member will come to reception to see you. We have access to a quiet space where you can speak in confidence.

Buses to use: The main bus route is the Number 65 and 67, both go from the city centre. These buses will drop you right outside One Avenue Road, and the Number 8 route crosses nearby. The 65 and 67 buses go from outside the large B&M store in the city centre.



Walking here

From Birmingham New Street Station there are a number of pedestrian routes you can take from New Street Station to get to 1 Avenue Road. This is the most direct route that follows a designated pedestrian path from the station, all the way through to the office and is well lit.



USEFUL APPS AND WEBSITES

Each month we will feature four apps or websites that you may find useful.



Strut Safe

- Strut Safe is a free UK-wide phone line. If you're walking alone, our volunteers will be a friendly voice to keep you company and help you feel safe until you are through the door.

Fri and Sat: 7.00pm - 3.00am

Sun: 7.00pm - 1.00am

<https://strutsafe.org/#home>



Money House course

- The Money House course, run by the charity **MyBnk**, offers fully funded financial education to any young person aged between 16 – 25. If you are interested, please contact the team by email:

TMHmidlands@mybnk.org

STUK.CO

Student Money Saver

- If you are a student then you need to check out Student Money Saver. There's lots of freebies and offers like 2 for 1 cinema tickets, and money off holidays.

www.studentmoneysaver.co.uk

VoucherCodes

VoucherCodes

- VoucherCodes is a website that can give you discounts on restaurants, days out and shopping. All you need to do is find the discount you want, click on 'get code and open site' and you will be given the code to input when you finish shopping.

www.vouchercodes.co.uk





PureGym – 50% discount, and no joining fee!

Care Leaver Covenant signatory PureGym is offering a **50% discount** on their gym memberships to provide crucial support for young people with care experience.

To take up this fantastic opportunity scan the QR code below and complete the 'Connects' online application form.



This is your gateway to unlocking exclusive access to the PureGym offer. During the Connects sign-up process, you will have the option to express your interest in the PureGym offer.

Once you've registered your interest, the Care Leaver Covenant team will reach out and guide you through the PureGym sign-up process.

All applications for the PureGym offer will undergo a short verification process. This is in place to guarantee that this opportunity remains exclusively accessible to care-experienced young people.

The Trust and Bfriends become Care Leaver Covenant partners



It was a Halloween 'treat' for all involved as Birmingham Children's Trust and its official charity, Bfriends, signed up to an official partnership with the Care Leaver Covenant.

It was also fitting that the signing took place at the Lighthouse Young People's Centre, in the middle of the the latest conference organised by the Trust for care-experienced young people, their families, their carers and workers.



Abba Loughran, co-chair of Bfriends, said: "As the official charity of Birmingham Children's Trust we are proud to be united with the Trust in our partnership with the Care Leaver Covenant. Providing the best support and opportunities to our care leavers and young adults is at the heart of all we do at Bfriends."

Signing the giant pledge (l-r) in picture above, were:

Jake Shaw - Birmingham Children's Trust - Head of Rights and Participation and Corporate Parenting
Alex Hillman, Birmingham Children's Trust - Corporate Parenting and Partnerships Coordinator
Abba Loughran - Co-chair of Bfriends, Friends of Birmingham Children's Trust Charity
Gareth Evans - Spectra - Director of Operations (on behalf of the Care Leaver Covenant)
Nicholas Turner - GMI - Responsible Business Partner (on behalf of Claire Preston, GMI Head of Responsible Business and Bfriends board trustee)

YOUR GOOD NEWS NOV '23

We are continuing to celebrate your good news in this newsletter.

Congratulations to every one of you on your achievements in November 2023.

- **Finn** has just moved into his new build flat and is really happy.
- **Ryan** has started with Aspire training at Dudley college. He has made lots of new friends and is enjoying his work placement at Saltwells Nature reserve.



- **One of our young men** has said that he has taken the advice from both his 18+ PA and 18+ EET Manager Juliette, as he has enrolled onto Functional Skills Level 1 English in HMP Oakwood. He is enrolled to do classes on Monday -Thursday (all day) and Friday (half day).



- **LM** has completed a 3 week course alongside functional skills tests around becoming a Healthcare Assistant (HCA). After completing this she was given an interview opportunity through the course which was successful, and she has got a full time job as a HCA!



CLEANSING OUR DATABASE

We are cleansing the newsletter mail-out group. Young people who are 26 or older will be taken off the group unless you tell us you want to stay on it. If you are aged 26 or older and would like to stay on the email group, please let us know by emailing:

garry.james@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk



OUR OFFER TO YOU

This is our support offer to you, so you know what to expect as you leave our care and beyond. Our website contains information you need about our support offer to you. Scan the QR code below to go to the offer page.



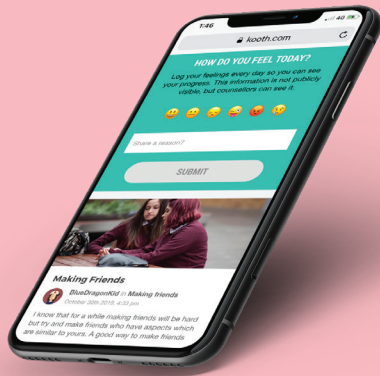
Care Leavers' opportunities

The Trust care leavers' opportunities page contains opportunities for you to get your hands on!

It is regularly updated, so be sure to favourite the page to keep an eye out for updated opportunities.

<https://www.birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk/opportunitiesCL>

Give Kooth a try



Kooth offers free, safe and anonymous online counselling and support, with many different features and sections to offer you support such as:

- **Magazine** - helpful articles, personal experiences and tips from young people and our Kooth team.
- **Discussion Boards** - start or join a conversation with our friendly Kooth community. Lots of topics to choose from!
- **Chat with the team** - chat to our helpful team about anything that's on your mind. Message us or have a live chat.
- **Daily Journal** - write in your own daily journal to track your feelings or emotions and reflect on how you're doing.

Visit the **Kooth** website to see the features listed above and much more!

www.kooth.com

THE TRUST TIMES

Back issues of the 18+ newsletter

You can find the last two years worth of 18+ newsletters on the Birmingham Children's Trust website. Many of the feature articles, including those providing information and guidance are still valid.

Visit: <https://bit.ly/3yliug3>

REES FOUNDATION November 2023 UPDATE

Rees Foundation run a number of groups called '**Let's Connect**', which allow you to connect with other members of the care experienced community. Rees find that these networks can lead to lifelong and empowering friendships.

Website: **www.reesfoundation.org**

The groups are facilitated using a team whose members may be care experienced or individuals who are experienced by profession, with the ultimate aim of creating a safe place where care experienced people like you can meet to discuss matters of personal interest.

Courses in Nov and Dec 2023

Careers drop-in with Lucy

Date: 30 November

Time: 2.00pm - 3.00pm

Join Lucy our Careers Mentor as she hosts a session to give careers support to care experienced people looking for a new job, training or to get into higher education.

Winter Survival Toolkit with Dr Rachel

Dates: 1, 5, 12 and
19 December

Time: 1.00pm - 2.00pm
(all sessions)



Surviving winter is for anyone who really struggles with the darkness, weather, forced celebrations and emotional exhaustion. Join us for effective strategies, methods and insights on how to make winter work for you.

To sign up to any of the groups, please complete the form in the link below:
<https://form.jotform.com/203141499622353>

FAITH CONTACTS



Muslim Youth Helpline

A useful resource if you need confidential advice and guidance.

The service is open 7 days a week from 4.00pm to 10.00pm - 0808 808 200

Website: <https://myh.org.uk/>



Sikh Helpline

The Sikh Helpline is a free professional and confidential telephone counselling and email inquiry service, available 24 hour a day, 7 days a week.

03000 3000 63 and 07999 004 363

info@sikhhelpline.com

Website: <https://www.sikhhelpline.com>

Premier Lifeline Christian Helpline

Premier Lifeline is a confidential Christian helpline providing a listening ear and emotional and spiritual support.

0300 111 0101, available 9.00am – Midnight.

The Buddhist Society

The Buddhist Society was founded in 1924, with the objective to publish and make known the principles of Buddhism and to encourage the study and practice of those principles.

Website: <https://www.thebuddhistsociety.org/>

Jewish Community Helpline

Confidential and anonymous helpline supporting individuals from the Jewish Community.

info@thehelpline.org.uk

0330 127 3333

Website: <http://thehelpline.org.uk>

Suicide and self-harm prevention

If you, or anyone you know, is feeling suicidal, or wanting to harm themselves, there is always help available.

However bad you are feeling right now, there is help that you can get.

Lots of people have felt like this and - with help - managed to get through it.

Here are some numbers and links to supportive professionals and organisations who offer help to those feeling suicidal.

These links will be included in all future newsletters so they will always be here for you to access



- Papyrus has a lot of useful advice and also a suicide prevention helpline.

Website: <https://papyrus-uk.org/>

- Samaritans helpline **116 123**
- SANE helpline **0300 304 7000**



- Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) (for men) **0800 58 58 58**

- Help Guide suicide prevention

Website: www.helpguide.org/home-pages/suicide-prevention.htm

Also please see the **TESS offer** on **page 13**.

ADVOCACY SERVICE

The aim of **Rights and Participation (RAP) Advocacy** service is to ensure that Birmingham children in care, care leavers and children on child protection plans (wherever they may live), are provided an advocacy service. You are entitled to have the support of an advocate and access to children's rights.

RAP Advocacy is the representation of your wishes and feelings, your views, and your voice, to professionals and services. This could be at meetings, through the complaints process, or wherever you wish us to do so.

RAP Advocacy is **ALWAYS** led by you the young person - our **BOSS**. Your advocate will work on your instructions alone.

RAP Advocacy is issue based, so it is provided for a particular purpose, and is there until there is an outcome for the complaint, or concern.

Advocacy referrals are normally allocated to an advocate within three working days of receipt. The advocate will then contact you and support you with your issue/s.

You can make a referral for yourself or anyone else can make a referral on your behalf.

To make a referral or if you have any questions about RAP Advocacy service please email advocacy@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk

Testimonials about the RAP Advocacy service

"Thanks so much my advocate - everything went the way I wanted."

"Thank you for helping me learn and grow as a young mum you stood up for me and believed in me. It's all paid off, you're truly amazing and I hope we can always stay in contact."

"My advocate helped me to have housing officials listen to my housing needs. Without her they would not have listened to me and fobbed me off."

Care Leavers' Forum

We are a group of care leavers who work together to use our experiences to make things better for other children in care and care leavers.

We feel that the group:

- Stops us feeling alone and isolated
- Makes us feel like we are making a difference
- Builds up our confidence
- Builds up skills, such as speaking in front of other people

What we do:

- Interview new Trust staff
- Use our experience in producing and delivering training
- Discuss issues – what works and what needs to change, and make changes happen

We tell people what we need and get people to work in a different way. We don't share anything that is painful or private and have lots of support for you. Some of this work is paid (in vouchers). We also organise days out – like a trip to Drayton Manor.

How we do this:

- We meet every month, sometimes face-to-face and sometimes online
- When we meet face to face we have food together
- We get help with transport to the meetings if we need it

Over the next few months we are particularly going to look at **HOUSING** (including the state of housing, repairs and semi-supported) and **HEALTH** (including mental health, in-patients, autism and neurodiversity). We have work to do for the city council and NHS on these topics, so if you have experience please get in touch.

Contact us today

Try **Julia Balston**, Children's Rights Officer
Julia.balston@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk
or **Emily Blythe** by text or call **07704 539 011**
Emily.Blythe@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk

Emily is our Transformation & Improvement Apprentice!

Child Trust Funds



If you were born in the UK and turned 18 after 1 September 2020 and don't have details of your Child Trust Fund (CTF), please use the online form below to find your details and take control of your CTF (usually worth £250 or more): <https://findctf.sharefound.org>

Junior Individual Savings Accounts

If you turned 18 before 1 September 2020 (born since 3rd January 1994) you may have a Junior Individual Savings Account (JISA) set up with £200. To be eligible you must have been in care in the UK, continuously for 12 months or more, since 2 January 2012. Please use the online form below to find your details so you can take control of your JISA:

<https://myjisa.sharefound.org>

If you need to contact the Share Foundation regarding the online forms please email:

info@sharefound.org

Or call

01296 310400

For further enquiries please contact:
Tracey.Britton@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk

SIGN UP TO OUR NEWSLETTER ONLINE

We are looking to provide future newsletters in a different way for care-experienced young people like yourselves.

The plan is to move to using an emailer platform called Mailjet to send you updates direct to your inbox.

To do this we will need your permission to send direct emails from this platform, so we kindly need you to complete a short online form on our website. **Scan the QR code below** to go to the form. There are just eight quick questions.



Once you click 'Sign up' at the bottom of the form you will be sent an email to verify that you wish to sign up to future newsletters. Please make sure you accept this invite, and your name and email will then be added to our database.

You can of course opt out of receiving these newsletters at any time, using the 'unsubscribe' link, but we hope you will stay with us for future newsletters and bulletins.



Sign up for our care-experienced news and information

Please add your details below.

First name

Last name

Email address



COMPETITION TIME!

Keeping the National Care Leavers Week energy high - with Pandora Christie - the Care Leavers Covenant are launching the Wanted Selfie Challenge, and the prize is **£500** cash

Care leavers, it's time to get creative and strike a pose with the 'CARE LEAVERS WANTED' Billboards and Screens for your chance to win £500.

Here's how to enter:

Find our Care Leavers Wanted screens and billboards. Birmingham locations are listed below:

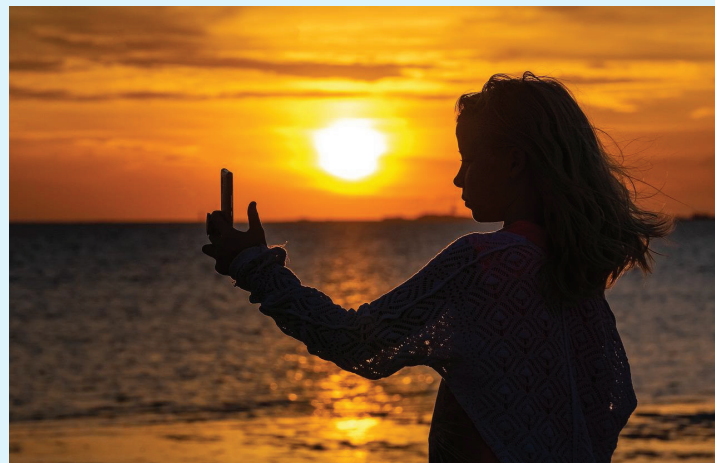
- 135 New Street, Ladywood
- 39 Great Charles Street
- 193 Broad Street
- Snowhill Queensway @ Lloyd House

Take your most creative selfie and be careful. Do not put yourself at risk while taking the picture.

Upload the selfie to Instagram, Follow us and tag us **@careleavercovenant**
Use the hashtag **#CareLeaversWanted**

That's it! The person with the most creative and distinctive selfie will receive £500 and 50x runners up will receive a pair of tickets to theme parks and attractions. The winner will be announced on Monday December 4, 2023.
To see the locations of all the billboards use this link - **<https://bit.ly/3R5suJr>**

Eligibility: To enter this competition, you must be a care experienced person aged 16 to 25 and signed up to Connect (**see page 4**). Good Luck!



NHS
Birmingham and Solihull



Care Leavers Prescription Form

NHS Birmingham and Solihull have published a form for you to apply for free prescriptions.

This is for you if you are a Care Leaver, aged 16-25, entitled to support from Birmingham or Solihull local authorities, and not otherwise eligible for free prescriptions.

Simply scan the QR code below, complete the form, save it and send it to:

nhsbsolicb.childrenincare@nhs.net



You can get a copy of this form from your Personal Advisor or by sending an email to:

nhsbsolicb.childrenincare@nhs.net

BECOME.

THE CHARITY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE
AND YOUNG CARE LEAVERS

There are lots of different ways **Become** can help you.

From ongoing coaching, helping you in stressful situations, to providing a friendly space to meet other care-experienced young people. It's up to you.

Care Advice Line

We know the care system can be complicated, and it can be hard to know exactly what you are entitled to.

If you are feeling confused, concerned, or need some support, we're here for you.

Our friendly Care Advice Line team are care system experts.

Open Monday to Friday 10.00am-5.00pm

Call us: 0800 023 2033

WhatsApp: 0786 003 4982

Email: advice@becomecharity.org.uk

Coaching

Every young person in the care system deserves the opportunity to achieve their goals in life. We want to help you get there.

Our coaching programme helps you to unlock your potential for positive change, giving you the tools to move forward positively in your life. We can help you identify your strengths, plan for the future, and grow in confidence.

Find out more: <https://bit.ly/3GausSz>

Amazing Apprenticeships

Amazing Apprenticeship guide for care-experienced young people

You can download a fantastic guide to the world of apprenticeships by scanning the QR code below.



Key facts about apprenticeships:

- You are paid a salary.
- You will have a contract of employment, paid holiday and sick leave – just like any other member of staff.
- You learn from industry experts.
- The equivalent of 6 hours per week of your paid time is spent undertaking off-the-job learning.
- You do not pay for your training.
- A £3,000 bursary is available for care leavers aged 16-24 when they start their apprenticeship. This amount came into effect from 1 August 2023.

Find out more by visiting the Amazing Apprenticeships website:

<https://amazingapprenticeships.com>

Successful job applications !



I always write about whatever is going on at work and this week I've been helping young people to write Expressions of Interest for jobs in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) ring-fenced for care leavers, meaning only care leavers can apply.

You should have been sent details by email earlier this month.

Employers looking at applications go straight to the **Expression of Interest**, **Personal Statement** or **Supporting Information** – they are all the same thing. They shortlist people for interview based on these.

In this section of the job application the employer can see if you have read and understood the job description and have the relevant experience to do the job.

Follow **these steps** to do it right and get shortlisted for interview:

- Read the job description at least twice.
- Check anything you are not sure about - look up words, google things or even phone the employer.
- If there is a Person Specification or Essential Criteria document – read that as well - at least twice.
- List the things in the job description and person specification that you will be required to do in the job.
- Think of examples from your life, education and work experience that show you have that experience.
- Write those examples in order in paragraphs – not bullet points.
- Spell and grammar check thoroughly before you submit it.
- If you don't have experience of something, say that you understand the importance of it and are keen to learn.

If you want help with an EOI (Expression of interest), Supporting Information or Personal Statement, ask your PA – they all had to write these to get their jobs.

Or ask your work coach, your careers adviser at college or university or contact Julette Walton at the Trust.

I'm always happy to help:

Juliette.walton@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk
07825 117 381.

Therapeutic Emotional Support Service (TESS)

Come along and join the Trust's monthly TESS afternoon drop-in sessions for Birmingham's 18+ care-experienced young people, aimed at enhancing your emotional wellbeing.

Where will sessions take place:

TESS
67 Bournbrook Road
Selly Oak
B29 7BX

Phone to book: 0121 675 1781

Dates: These will take place on the first Wednesday of every month.

The next session will be on

6 December 2023.

Time: 12.00pm – 4.00pm.

What can I expect:

- A relaxing and welcoming environment with an outside garden and indoor area.
- Connection with the TESS 18+ team, which will give you the opportunity to talk and engage in activities and learn coping skills and strategies, that will help you to improve your emotional wellbeing.

Staff available on the day:

- Davinia Burrell
- Paul Campbell
- Vibha Jivan
- Sally Burgess
- Emily Kigonya
- Rachel Quinn

Understanding Anxiety

Anxiety is what we feel when we're worried, nervous, or feel a general sense of unease – particularly about things that are about to happen, or which we think could happen in the future.

When we face new challenges or begin a new chapter in our lives such as moving home, starting a college course or going to university, it is normal to experience some worry and anxiety. Anxiety is manageable, and there are plenty of ways you can manage it such as:

Practice breathing exercises: Breathe in and out for the count of three. Repeat. There are some videos and websites to help you with guided breathing exercises to calm your body and feelings of anxiety. <https://bit.ly/3Z9efG8>

Taking care of your sleep: Sleep is important and can help you reduce any feelings of anxiety you may be experiencing. For further information on how to improve sleep please visit The Sleep Charity website: <https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/>

Staying active: Exercise is good for our mental health and helps control feelings of anxiety. For information and advice on this please visit this website: <https://bit.ly/3slfwrs>

Talk about it: Talking to other people about your anxiety is really important. Sharing your feelings can help them understand what you're going through and how to support you. This could be with a friend. Alternatively, if you are at college or university you can access support from pastoral support or student wellbeing services. Many young people experience anxiety and worry and student wellbeing services are there to support the unique needs of university students.

When anxiety and worry is having a significant impact on you and your ability to do everyday tasks and meet your responsibilities it is important to seek professional help for instance by speaking to your GP.

The NHS website provides helpful information and advice on this as does the Mind website: <https://www.mind.org.uk>



A week in the life of.....

To bring you a bit closer to the work of Birmingham Children's Trust, this month we are starting a 'Week in the life of..' series. Our first writer is **Adam Birchall**, our Principal Social Worker (PSW).....

If I'm going to be effective, it's really important that I learn about what's going well and what we need to focus on, so a typical part of my week will be spent undertaking audits.

This means looking at feedback that children, young people, families and carers have provided, reading their files and making some judgements about the work undertaken on behalf of the child (we would call this 'practice', which makes the worker 'a practitioner), and if it's helped them to be safer and happier.

"I'm really lucky that I have seen some brilliant examples of practice and some lovely feedback from children and families so far, but there's still lots of work to do to help every child get a really good experience of children's social care."

I also try to showcase great examples of practice for people to learn from, as well as areas of development from audits.

I am responsible for holding monthly practice forums which I use to talk about learning, and provide practitioners with a platform to talk about things that have an impact on their work.



The audits I do take place in different areas of the Trust and sometimes have a theme, so I get to work with lots of people, both in the Trust and from other professions, to understand where we can work together more effectively to help children.

Although I sometimes undertake audits where things haven't gone well for child or young person, the best bits of my week are hearing great feedback from a child/young person, or seeing a bit of work that makes me go 'Wow!'

Last week I read some feedback that said: ***"My social worker helps me a lot. She is really quick with responses to emails and messages, she is always up to date with our meetings and she understands me very well. I love having her as my social worker."***

I'm definitely going to use this to highlight the work undertaken on behalf of this young person – I really want other workers to emulate this. Being a PSW is a challenging role but it's a challenge I'm grateful for. I became a social worker because I wanted to make a real difference to children and young people and as the Trust's PSW, I have the privilege to do that on wider scale.