# Why did you go into care?

* In my family I was not treated very nice

# What is the process of going into care like?

* I remember the police came to my family home and took me to the courthouse. My big sister and a lady social worker were there too and they took me to MacDonald’s and got me a Lamborghini model car. I love this car and would never throw it away. They told me I was going into care for a while and I couldn’t stop crying. They showed me the house and my new room and then said they had to go. I didn’t want my sister to leave.
* My big sister, looked after me, not mum or dad. My first word was my big sisters name!
* When my foster son arrived at our home he just had his toy car and nothing else so I had to go and get him some pyjamas.
* When I first came into care I didn’t want to leave my family and didn’t understand why I was being sent away and could never live with them again. I just wanted to go home. School helped me a lot by giving me time out when I was sad.
* I used to get a taxi to and from school and used to pass my old home- this was really difficult.
* My foster dad was tall and looks strong so I was scared of him
* I felt nervous, upset, difficulty sleeping
* Didn’t talk and stayed in away from people. I was scared about going out
* I stayed away from my foster carers and played on scooter outside but only for a short time as the neighbour looked unfriendly. As a result I avoided going outside for 2 months.
* I thought that my foster carers were weirdo’s as they slept in beds, ate at tables at set times and I realised through talking through CAMHS that these were ‘majority behaviours’- we don’t say normal as everyone is different.
* Contact with birth family-originally every Friday- I found this very stressful and would get angry and anxious before it and sad afterwards. We agreed to only let me know the day I would be seeing them. Now it is 3 times a year.
* I used to worry and wonder what it would be like/what would happen if I bumped into my mum or dad- one time I saw them and looked the other way to avoid facing them.
* My foster carers and CAMHS have helped me understand why I am in care. At first I would deny this and become angry and unsettled. One time I was so upset that I locked myself away in a cupboard.

# How have things changed?

* Sometimes I have flashbacks- such different lives.
* My life used to be ready meals, sweets and games. Now I spend time outdoors with friends or my foster carers or doing exercise. I can cook a roast dinner and bake cakes. I am much healthier- I eat grapes and apples!
* I am now more fit and healthy, for example I cycle to my foster carer’s work or go walking with friends around Worle.
* My strategy for coping with feelings after a visit with my birth family was to kick a ball around, play scrabble or go and see my foster nana.
* I like cars and want to be a mechanic like my foster carer used to be. He has a classic Ford Cortina. One time it broke down in the rain. I stayed in the car and watched how my foster carer was getting soaked but managed to get it working.

# How does the consult service support foster carers?

* When I was training to get approved as a foster carer, I thought that providing a safe caring home was going to be easy and would make the child happy but I found that my foster son was resistant as he was not where he wanted to be.
* I looked at a family tree to look at everybody’s behaviour in the family and how their behaviour influenced my foster son. I felt I could understand him more by being in appointments with him.
* Sleep was a problem, there were nightmares & sleep walking, due to experience of trauma. We did sleep diaries and looked at triggers and strategies to cope.

# How does CAMHS support young people who are in care?

* As a foster carer, CAMHS helped me to deal with what happened at home. I felt confident in creating open lines of communication, to trial things out, to recognise there were no quick fix solutions to our difficulties and to deal with my foster son’s fear of how others would respond if there was an accident.
* When I first went to CAMHS, I didn’t talk much so I found a new way that I could communicate with my foster carers. I would write it down and read it out loud (or they would), then I would scrunch it up and throw it away. Then the horrible thought was out of my mind and I didn’t have to talk about it and my foster carers knew.
* When I went into care, I couldn’t control my anger so I went to CAMHS. They taught me how to cope with stress, for example having a bath or shower or using a stress ball. One time I squeezed it really hard in church and it popped and all the juice and the flowers inside it went all over an old lady!
* They also helped me to talk about what happened and to see both sides of the story. Sometimes we went to CAMHS together and sometimes me or my foster carer would go in by ourselves first. I learnt how important it is to talk with my foster carers when I feel angry so they can help me and so I don’t misbehave. My foster carer will always say “remember what Claire (my psychologist) said!”
* CAMHS and my foster carers have helped me to use common sense and learn how to problem solve to achieve things. I feel proud of my life tools. For example- I have learnt how to fix a plug, change a tire, build a shelf and make a banana rack. I can use you tube to teach me and ask my foster carers for some help too.
* It took me 2 years to be able to tell CAMHS what happened to me. I was worried about getting my parents in trouble. It was a relief being able to tell people I trust and that I felt I was safe to tell them.
* I wrote a letter of questions that I had for my parents and my social worker asked them for me. It was safe as my family were told that they could never discuss these questions again on contact visits. I felt relieved as these questions were no longer stuck in my mind. My foster family thinks this was very brave.
* I would say to other people that care is not all bad and to others who have no idea what being in care is like, you don’t know what it is like until it happens to you so don’t judge!
* Life is better if you have a good relationship with your foster carers and you get to be friends with all their friends and family.
* As a foster carer, I found that working with Claire (Dr Luker) has been brilliant as I can phone/email her for advice and can talk to her separately in sessions. We have a good relationship, particularly knowing she is also a mother and you know she is human!

# The struggles I went through between primary and secondary school.

* I first came into care when I was in year 6-leaving my friends wasn’t easy as I grew up with them and had to start at a new school with no friends. I made a friend and he introduced me to all of his mates. One day things changed and this friend started to bully me- he tried to fight me and one time he pinned me on the floor to impress a girl. We spoke about this in CAMHS and they said to not be friends with him but it was too much hassle so I just walked away and he thinks we are still friends (but we are not).
* I have a new friend. He has been in care for 5 years too so we understand each other. We are like brothers. Sometimes he cries and I say that he can tell me or that I will listen and I will just stay with him so he is not alone. I am good at helping him focus on other things. Sometimes he walks to a corner, hidden out of the way and when he does this I know he is not feeling good.
* Now I am bigger and stronger I feel taller and therefore more equal to adults so I don’t feel overpowered and I don’t feel so vulnerable. I don’t use my strength at all as now I am bigger and I don’t know how strong I could be. Now friends don’t hurt or bully me or my friends and I have the confidence to stick up for people if bullies try and be horrible.

# What achievements have you had during that transition?

* Swam a mile for charity in 2015 and had the courage to knock on neighbours doors (this was a big step as I used to hide away from them) and raised lots of money.
* I also learnt to swim and went to Egypt.
* I met all of my foster carers family; I coped by meeting just one at a time- start off small and work up big. I always say that if someone doesn’t seem nice then walk away.
* Clinton cards- emailed CEO about cards for foster carers- statistics for children in care. Headmaster-speak to visitors. If he trusts them then I can trust them- trust is important so I know I am safe.
* I couldn’t read or write and now I am in top set in maths.
* I went from being unhappy to happy.
* I have written to food companies when I have not been a happy customer. For example, Greggs had no custard in their custard donut.
* I have written a poetry article in Weston mercury.

As his foster carer I would like to say that the transition is incredible and we are very proud of him! Thanks to school, CAMHS, CONSULT, social services, tutors, key workers and other foster carers. It’s not easy but hard work gets results. Foster carers have to be proactive- you get out of it what you put in. We are now in the process of becoming long term foster carers.

# Responses to questions/statements that the public have made.

“If I was in care I would run away”

You wouldn’t you would be too scared or upset

“I bet it is horrible in care”

It isn’t actually that bad, at the start it is difficult but you build a relationship with your foster family

“We know what its like from what we’ve heard”

Everyone is different and has their own experiences

“I couldn’t be a foster carer”

How can you say that if you haven’t had experience? People can be nosy or curious, it depends on their level of understanding and how genuine they are.

“Why don’t you adopt him?”

He has his own identity and family AND he has his foster family. We have a parenting role but we are not his parents.

“Would you go back if you could?”

No. I like it with my foster family. It would be hard to go back. I have good relationships with people at school and my foster family.

“Are they your parents? Why aren’t you living with your parents?”

No they are not my parents, they are my foster carers. I don’t live with my parents . Sometimes I say that I don’t want to talk to you about this or other times, if I trust people will keep it private, I tell them but I know I have to be careful about how I word it, I need to be sensitive.