

HERE I STAND

*A collection of poems and
reflections from young people with
experience of the care system*

Here I Stand

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Foreword

by Murrion Dempster

This book has been written by people with care experience and I'm proud to have been involved in curating it.

The Life Changes Trust recognises that creative pursuits can be a great way for young people with care experience to maintain or improve their wellbeing. I was delighted when the Trust launched a specific creative writing project that also gave people the opportunity to get their work published. I believe that creative writing can be a productive way to express what you think and feel. I have done a lot of it myself and it helps me cope – there is something so cool about seeing your thoughts down on paper.

The Trust's Get Writing! project encouraged anyone with experience of care to write about something that mattered to them. It was really open for people and you didn't need to have any previous experience of writing projects. Figuring out how to write something down isn't easy for everyone. It can be difficult and frustrating. So, I liked that Get Writing! gave people the freedom to send in a piece of writing about any subject and in any format – poems, songs, short stories, and more.

Young people with care experience are so important in this world, and sometimes their voices are not heard.

I know from my own experiences, and through the work that I do with young people, that creative writing can help you emotionally and mentally to get through life's highs and lows. Writing is a way to escape and a lot of the time that is something that we care-experienced young folk can struggle with.

This publication is powerful. I was really impressed with all of the creative writing that people shared. The book covers so many physical and emotional experiences that the care-experienced community can relate to, and it's important to flag that there are words in here that people may find difficult to read. Some of the pieces really hit home for me and made me thankful for where I am now in my life.

To all the people who contributed, I hope that you are proud of what you have created, and that you keep on writing and making change happen.

To all the professionals reading this, I hope that you read these pieces from a loving perspective more than a work perspective. I want you to understand that this book reflects the real lives of young people with care experience. It talks about strength and hope, as well as real struggles and challenges that you can help to fix. When presented with these issues, we need you to start from the position of "what would I do for my own child here?"

Finally, to everyone who is about to turn this page, I really hope that change comes from the words you're about to read.

Here I Stand

Vision

Here I stand,
gazing upon
the moon glowing in the night sky...
With a backwash of matte obsidian.
Darkness fills the emptiness
of the void.
Meanwhile...
The stars pop,
like a thousand staring wide eyes,
focusing through the chaos of universe.
Seamlessly seeing to infinity and beyond.
If only we could comprehend true vision...
If only we could see,
what was right
in front of us.

Bird Watching

Whilst I did not experience
unconditional love first-hand,
I believe I have been a witness.
A bystander afraid to breathe
for fear the finch might fly away
and prove my theory wrong.

And yet this finch still feeds its young,
returns to nest when night glides in.
The birds tell me this love exists!
That I was an anomaly
unworthy of this love myself
but allowed to watch through branches.

My obsession with acts of love
migrated like the birds in spring.
Now I'm not watching other hearts
but tapping gently on my own.
First little bristled feathers grow...
I'll wait until they let me soar.

Love

I'd hummed and haa'd about it for ages.

I genuinely don't believe that I felt love until I had my son. In terms of lifelong, unconditional, real – it's not “you've been placed in this placement and they're going to love you” – do you know what I mean?

Of the ten people that's in the 'Love' Group' only one person isn't a parent. Only one of them. It kind of said it. It spoke quite loudly.

The minute he was born it was very real, very different. Anger, happiness was just INTENSE almost in like a more selfish way, because this baby was mine now.

My purpose, all this kind of stuff. Why wasn't *I* good enough for that kind of love?

It did bring it all back. Having had Aydon. It's been the making of me. Your body changes a lot after having a baby. He was emergency section, so there's a scar. Love is – yeh – ma belly. (Stretchmarks)

Alex

Alex is sitting writing a poem
But is that even her name?
She doesn't know.
Older she is becoming
Look at the clock
Waiting for time to pass.
Utterly pointless.
Two more months to wait
Exciting but terrifying
Living at home
Young immature brain is gone
Now it's time to get on
With this life
The life she is going to
Live to the fullest.
Her heart is longing to live
In her hometown again
Now just 5 weeks to wait
Great times are ahead and getting closer

I'm a Better Me

My name was Ellie May and I used to run away
I got myself in trouble, I was angry all the time.
I took it out on people, back then I couldn't rhyme.
But now I'm learning new skills and I'm doing just fine.

Sometimes I feel like I'm not getting anywhere.
And I feel like life's not fair.
But now I see more clearly and I know I'm getting there.
I learned to dance in the rain and I understand what was
causing all the pain.

I used to think that people just wanted me to fail.
But now I see that people want to see my shine.
Although that has taken a really long time.
Now my name is R – I'm a better me....can't you see?

A Long Journey through the Care System

The Bute social work team was introduced to me when I was 12. I was going through a lot of difficulties. As things went on, I came to realise social workers were the good guys. That led to different meetings. Not long after that, Richard became my social worker.

For me it took a long time to be heard, but when I was, I felt safer. I knew that when I was hurt they are there for me. When I went to the psychiatric hospital, Richard, annoyingly eager, insisted, “This is for the better of you”. Richard was persistent on keeping me safe, so I am alive.

I know some people are less fortunate to have social workers that don't listen. I was back to being who I was; I could have normal conversations. When it came to being in a secure unit, they didn't just sit back, they did what was the best for me. You can't say that about every social worker.

At one point I was very unpredictable. Richard gave me the option to work with him. I think that's the best when people want to work with you, not just seeing you as a case file, but seeing you as a person in the actual life. Richard is always at the end of the phone for me; he talks me out of things.

I see them as part of my life because we have that sort of relationship now that bonds us. It's like having someone who is advocating for you all the time. It makes a massive difference when people are interested in what is the best for you.

My Mind is Clear

I've had my heart broken so many times
I don't need anyone
I like to do everything on my own.
I'm my own mum and dad and proud of myself that I
don't self-harm or try to commit suicide.

I did self-harm here once.
How do I make a life in the future?
I think differently here, my mind is clear, I know.

I want to move to the countryside.
I want a camper van and to be able to drive by age 20.
I need to do driving lessons.
I can't do anything about it.

I want to travel the world and
be a make-up artist in 2-3 years.
All I can do now is say what I have been through.

Accept it

Yo,
Maybe this is my life
I just need to accept it
I just need to focus on my future
And forget about the past
I just need time
To rhyme
I just need to accept it
What a life I had
Up and down
But that part of care
Trying to be strong better person
Than last year
I was on a mission
Now I find
What I was looking for
I just need to accept it

Past

You Birthed me, broke me, Destroyed me.
You brought me screaming,
Crying and flailing into your morbid games.
Your games...conflicted, scorned with the rules.
You told me to play.
So, I played.
You told me it was draughts,
But they all wanted chess.

In a world built on rules,
You stood me up tall,
Tall from all counts,
But attached without roots.

How could I try and how could I win?
When the queen of my realm was twisted within.

I love you; I swear on my groans, our relationship will
forever be one of a kind.

But why, when you see how ill fitted, we were.
Why did you see fit to pull my brothers from the sand?

Perhaps on some score,
I deserved your ill fates...I ruined your life?
It Took your freedom to have me?
Perhaps indeed,
But my brothers were pure,
They deserved nothing more.

My Experience in Care

The first words that came to my mind is food and help and sleep.

It's just food. We get whatever food we want.

Hot dogs.

We go shopping for this with staff.

We go to Asda Tesco or Morrisons. That's it.

What would make it easier for other young people who come into care.

Sleep it out.

I don't know what would have helped me more.

I don't remember what happened

I've only been in for 5 months maybe.

I just remember coming in a social workers car it seemed like they said,

'Here's your new house, get out'.

I got moved from Kilmarnock to Glasgow.

This house is better – everything about it.

The last manager there didn't know what they were doing.

I would describe the manager here as nice and kind.

She is actually nice.

If we go shopping, she will buy us ice cream out of house money not our money.

We get McDonalds if we want to.

A New Starter

It's been one month and one day since I arrived in Scotland. The city that I arrived in is called Edinburgh. When I arrived in this country everything was different. I mean it is different, but it has more differences with someone who is new, especially the culture and the weather of course.

The rumour says that people will eat outside or drink coffee in the garden when sunshine comes out. Well everything is like the movies and I feel like I'm an actor. I have so many goals that I want to achieve and the most important goal that I have is to be a neurosurgeon.

Untitled

In the past, I was unsure, I did not want to go to the new football club. My foster carer told me I was going.

I thoroughly enjoyed my first night of football practice at Do Soccer academy.

I felt very welcomed and it was good to meet new friends. The coaches were very professional and had everything under control. They were so positive even if I did something wrong. I can't wait to go again. It was definitely worth going through the anxiety.

Dear Me, Myself and I

Dear past...

Times are tough,
and devilish demons dance
to the music of your nightmares.

Open your eyes!

Grasp the essence

Of life...

And live it!

You can make it.

Dear present...

Keep dreaming of
green grass, blue skies and
rainbows.

You can reach the pinnacle!

Release your anchors, set sail...

and sore.

Your life will roll like an old school
movie real.

Dear future...
Reminisce in the memories
you've made. Never forget,
the ghosts of your past...
The companions, the colleges and
of course the lovers.
The sound of your heart strings
sweetens the air.
You are kind.
You are caring.
You are yourself!

Your sincerely,
Aiden

Scars

My scars remind me, of what I once was
I was hurt and needed your love
Your approval is all I want.
Your neglect, your abusive ways
Showed me that I couldn't be loved.
I wasn't good enough for you mum.
Isolation caused me to feel safe
Disassociate to numb all the pain
Not caring about my own self,
caused me to make mistakes that I ain't proud of
Trust isn't something that comes easy.
I picked men that were no good.
The abuse continued, vulnerable was what I was.

I couldn't take it anymore
Therapy was what I sought
Reminded of the dark patches of my childhood
That is the root cause of most of my problems
The cycle of abusive men and toxic relationships
Not being able to connect with many people because good
isn't something I was ever aware of.

To break the cycle, I must change the way I think,
To remind myself that my childhood was never my fault.
I was just a child. Who had no awareness.
I was just a child Who needed cared for.
I was just a child Who needed someone to listen
I was just a child Who needed someone to take me away.
I was just a child Who needed to be loved.
To be accepted for her. With no obligation.
To have a great success in adulthood
I must now teach myself the ways that are healthy.
Teach myself boundaries, teach myself self-love.
They call it depression and anxiety,
I call it a lack of knowledge.

I call it a lack of positive relationships in childhood
A misunderstanding of why a child may be acting out.
The brain can't form in a toxic environment
So the brain doesn't form in the way it should.
A great understanding
A trusted person to rely on.

To not judge but to see beneath the outburst
Can make a huge difference in a child's development....
Stronger I will get - the more I love myself
The easier it becomes to trust.

The more I surround myself with positive caring people.
The more I heal the broken parts of me the more I see there
is good in the world.
I will get through this.

I am deserving of love, I am deserving of a great future.
I am no longer a victim, I am a survivor.

Untitled

A child moving on from our foster family is heart-breaking, it is like a bereavement, but one where you know when they're leaving and where they're going.

But it's similar in the way that you won't get to see them grow up, you won't get to make memories with them, you will miss them, in some cases you may not ever see them again either, and even if you do it won't be everyday like you're used to, most likely once or twice a year.

I've realised you can't prepare yourself for this. You can accept it's happening but you won't be ready.

But even after all the heartbreak that this transition has caused me (before it has even happened), I would not change the time I've had with this child for anything in the world. I am so glad that I have had this time to see him grow, to laugh with him, to comfort him, to make memories with him.

Nothing will ever make me regret that. If I could go back and do it all again, even with the same amount of heartbreak that has come with it, I would do it all again in a heartbeat, one hundred percent.

Untitled

I know how it feels
To be all alone
No one to talk to
No one to phone

The feelings never passed
I'm not the first
I'm not the last.
To feel this pain.

And be a victim.
How would they feel
If it happened to them?

Untitled

I've struggled with body positivity since I was really young. I was a chunkier kid, which kids bullied me about. So I started hating how I looked pretty early, and "fat" became a word that would always hurt me.

I eventually overcame that and lost a lot of weight, and I was of a healthy weight for my (tiny) height but I still wasn't happy, I still saw myself as "obese". It didn't seem to matter what I looked like or what the scales said, I always saw myself as fat.

I'm trying to think with a more positive attitude. Like, your body does so much for you. Think of it as a person. If someone cared for you 24/7 but they maybe didn't look the way you want them to, would you hate them based on that?

Everyone has imperfections, you are certainly not alone. But regardless, what is most important is what's inside, as opposed to how you look on the outside.

Corporate Parenting

Caring about what happens for all care experienced young people

Offering options for life

Responsibility to support all care experienced young people

Promoting health and wellbeing

Opinions needing to be listened to

Respecting all care experienced young people

Available to offer support and guidance

Taking action when required

Expressing kindness

Paying attention to all care experienced young people's needs

Attending to all care experienced young people's needs

Recognising and celebrating all achievements

Encouraging young people to talk; showing empathy and encouragement

Nurturing and offering new experiences

Thinking what you can do, treating young people as if they were your own

Interacting and being inclusive

Noticing young people with additional needs

Getting to know our care experienced young people

My name is Festa

I like Scotland but it's cold. My friends live in Glasgow and asked me "why don't I come live here?" I said no because I don't understand the accent – it is also very fast, very noisy and busy.

I like Perth, it's a small city. I am very happy. I am able to practice my English with the people I was introduced to.

Untitled

We all remember a time where we felt that warm loving hug from one of our family members, however unfortunately this may not be the case for everyone! This is where Love Inc steps into place, our main aim is to research love within care settings, gather the young people's views and promote healthy and loving relationships. From the moment I was welcomed into the Aberlour family I instantly felt cared for, supported and made to feel very welcome. As I had spent a lot of time away from home being looked after in hospital I know how great it can be to feel loved by others who are not family members or step in when family can't be there. I am very lucky Aberlour live and breathe this ethos, from the managers, admin staff to my own line manager I have been constantly supported and encouraged to reach my full potential. Since joining the Love Inc project I am no longer the shy girl when first meeting people, I am able to highlight when young people are not getting the correct care and have been able to present an informative powerpoint to an audience of adults.

All of those tasks I previously mentioned were never within my comfort zone before joining Love Inc. When my manager was giving me feedback and mentioned someone had described me as confident I was so shocked but felt happy at the same time, this is something the Love Inc project has supported me to do. My induction training included tailored informative topics relating to supporting young people, I have learnt about being trauma informed and how to relate this into my everyday practice. Without doing these training courses and the support from Liz alongside my family I would not be referred to as a confident worker. Aberlour really has given me experiences and training opportunities that I did not realise were possible. I am so grateful to be a part of the Love Inc project and feel very well supported, this enables me to do my job to my full potential. Thank you Aberlour and Liz for encouraging me and supporting me to be the best version of myself.

We All Need Love!

Untitled

I think I'm here to give my mum a break
and she doesn't need to worry about me.

I ran away, hiding behind a tree. I'm in the countryside.

I'm going to be a cowboy by the time I leave.

I decided to run away, my legs just carried me.

I ran down the track.

I wasn't scared. I just wanted to go home.

There are no lights.

I got to the bottom of the path and walked about 3 miles.

At least it wasn't raining.

That was the only night it didn't rain;
it has rained every night since.

Maybe that's my good luck.

There were about 12 police vans chasing me.

I wasn't scared. I don't get scared.

I don't know what made me stay.

I just kind of shut down. I was glued to the seat.

I'd give up with life and not do anything anymore.

I need peace and quiet from everybody.

I don't get peace and quiet here.

Everybody checks on me – it's their job.

People care about me here. They tell me every day

I believe them. I don't need anything.

I'm happy when I'm asleep.

I don't need to think about stuff then.

Teddy

Stuffed
with cotton wool,
and stitched closed.
Mass produced to
suit the needs of the consumer.
A simple teddy bear.

But...
you are one of a kind.
Embroidered into a story,
Sown into a labyrinth
of human affection.
A gift of love and compassion.

Who knows what you'll see,
or what you'll hear.
Or even who may turn to you,

In a moment of grief.
Yet I know that you're fierce.
Perfect enough to survive
a factory,
Strong enough to travel around the world,
Loving enough that you may touch a person's heart
with your warm embrace...
and powerful enough to take someone
back to brighter days.

You're more than just a teddy.

FYI Experiences

Expression

eXpensive

Possibility

Extravagant

Rights

Inspired

Elephant changes (big changes!)

No regrets

Caring

Ensuring happiness

Stepping up

IRENE

Head shaved like the older boys he followed
In the hope of acceptance

A small silver hoop in each pierced ear
Just like his Dad

Self-harm crisscrossed each arm
a boiling rage poured forth on demand

He fought daily with both adults and children
Thought it best to be on a war footing

Wasn't everyone going to hurt you
Cut to the quick of your very being

If you were stupid enough to let them
He'd been stupid on more than one occasion

Except Irene

She came to his room when on late shift,
Four nights every month

If she wasn't ill, or on holiday with family
Then the time between feeling that way was longer

She'd sit by his bed, tenderly stroke his arm
Wrist to elbow in gentle rhythm

Looking at him with eyes of a mother to an ill son
Knew he was a little boy needing love

He fought sleep to prolong that feeling
Could never keep awake, such was the soporific effect

In those moments, he felt as a child should
Secure, full of warmth, a recipient of true care

He vowed never to forget,
one day, in the future, I'll write a poem about Irene.

Untitled

When I first went into care I was 7 years old. I went to a foster home after living with my mum and sister. My first foster home was nice and there were other children who welcomed me. This was my first experience of being in care. It was a very scary time for me because all I wanted was to be at home with my mum and sister.

After living in a few foster placements I then moved into my first residential care home. My first residential placement was not positive for me at all. This setting was scary for me because some young people were violent towards me. This placement didn't help me with my situation.

My second placement was better, however things didn't work out.

Where I stay now is brilliant. I have built relationships with staff and feel they are very experienced at what they do. Where I am now I don't agree with some things but I know it's helping me. I'm better now than before.

In my future I would like to use my experience to help other young people like me. My dream job would be a foster carer.

Tear Stained Face

Her face use to glow
But now as she breaks her teeth
on wine bottles
And as she drinks her troubles away
I watch as the life leaves her eyes little by
little each day
I can see that she's broken
I can see that she aches
But what breaks me more is she still has a
tear stained face

I'm sorry that he hurt you
I'm sorry that you stayed
I'm sorry that he left bruises that won't
ever go away
Even if you cover them
Even if you pray
The memory of his hands will forever
be engraved

Although you still struggle
Some days you give in
But don't let him win Mama
Be strong and continue to live
Because one day your tear stained face will glow once again
As your smile will be real and your mask will be gone
The pain you endured will forever be
Gone

A Girl

A girl who was me
She crawled through forests
thick with trees
She climbed over branches
brimming with leaves

She fought through storms
and torrential rain
She side-stepped lightning
again and again

She ran through deserts
void of life
She jumped over cacti
sharp as a knife

She swam through rivers
against currents so strong
and that's when she realised
maybe she was wrong

Maybe
she wasn't the monster
her mind said she was
And actually, worth,
isn't determined by flaws

She took a look back
at all she had done
and could finally see
all the battles she'd won

So she decided to stop
and look all around,
at the birds in the sky
and the grass on the ground

It was there that she found
a world full of light,
where the sun and the moon
shared the days and the night

Where the love that existed
between 'family' and friend,
could never be extinguished
or ever reach an end

Then she got to her feet
and brushed off her past,
and broke through the chains
that had held her so fast

She found love for herself
and that set her free
She rebuilt her life
amongst all the debris

This is the story, of a girl who replaced all the anger
and hurt with the hope she'd misplaced

A girl who was me but could also be you
So always remember, you can make it through too.

Space Story

I woke up in a single point in space, it was cold & quiet, there wasn't much going on.

Right in front of me there was a massive spinning black hole - it was on the brink of collapse. "I have to stay here and wait for this to end, ugghhhh" I thought.

As I was watching the black hole spin, I noticed a broken space ship encircling the black hole. I went closer to have a proper look, as this was a very oddly shaped spaceship. It had black jagged edges & blue pulsating sigils all over it and it looked like a tech marvel. The second I touched the ship it vanished (poof, gone out of existence).

I lowered my vision so that I could see non-existing & weird particles and I saw it had teleported into a parallel universe. I switched my vision back to normal, just as the black hole collapsed into a tiny small point the size of a marble, “what a spectacular event” I thought. The black hole was now a small dot with infinite mass, which I then put in my pocket for later use.

I teleported myself through the parallel universe to the spaceship and I found that it had now changed into a brand-new working ship. The new spaceship had multicoloured pulsating sigils all over it and the black jagged edges had completely disappeared.

When I went closer to the ship the back opened up and a burning red sigil pointed for me to go in the spaceship. I walked in!

Present

Still broken, layered and wrapped in guilt.
I make friends upon friends in a nation of shit,
My friends say they're friends and I love
to have be known,
D'You remember the days when I never held hands?
They say they're my friends and they smile to my face...
so why can't I trust,
A singular word that is said?
Why do I cry on my knees in the night?

I love and I love and I wax and I wane,
I love till I bleed or I cry or I scream,
I love with my eyes and my words and my soul,
nevertheless I ache in my heart
And my head and my bones.

My heart is in bandages...
made from singular threads,
Its fibres all torn and bleeding,
the bandages stained from historical pain.
With each passing beat, my heart slowly grows
The people in sight, they smile. It grows.
They speak. It grows.
They hug me. They touch me. They love me. It grows.
They ask of you; it damn well implodes...
These days it mends faster than it bleeds,
And it smiles much, much, oh so much more,
than it ever sheds tears.

I'm trying to love you like I love those around,
but for the moment I can't..

Future aint sold yet, let's see where it goes.

The Care Review

Time to talk

Helping young people

Educating others

Caring

Are you listening to the young people?

Reaching out to others

Everyone needs to stop and think

Raising awareness

Each person is different

Very caring

Included in everything

Everyone should be heard

Waiting on results

Care Experience

Compassion

Actions

Rights

Engagement

Encouragement

Xenodochial

Power

Everybody has each other's back

Range of personalities

Imagination

Everyone has a laugh

Nothing but support

Countless talents

Esteem, support

Sylvester in Cat Care

One day there was this little kitten named Sylvester.

He is 1 years old, is very small and black and white soft fur. His mum Lucy is a large black and white cat and is really pretty. And his step dad Angus who is black white and has stripy black and white and grey all around him.

One evening Sylvester was playing with this bright pink neon ball and while he was playing he heard a lot of shouting in the kitchen, so Sylvester goes to check it out. When he walks into the kitchen, he notices that his mum and step dad got into a big argument about Sylvester and how horrible he is.

Angus turns around and sees Sylvester behind him and goes to hit him – Sylvester wails really loudly as Angus shouts “GET TO YOUR ROOM!”

Sylvester runs up to his room real fast and he jumps on his bed and thinks about what he must have done to make Angus and Lucy so mad at him, but he doesn't know why.

Angus shouts “social work is putting him in care tomorrow.” Sylvester heard that and got so confused, but he was worried too.

So, Sylvester goes to sleep and cries all night about it.

Lilli in care

Her name is Lilli, she is 16 now.

She was taken into care when she was 2 years old.

Her dad was a drunken fool who would beat her and her sister and brother.

She went from one place to the next.

She just wants a family that loves her.

She's been to many different schools, so she had to adapt to new places.

She's staying in Perth now and she is happy.

She has an amazing carer called Jessica, she's doing good in school and has a great group of friends and an amazing boyfriend.

Lilli plans on going on going to college to do photography and the moving on course.

She also plans on travelling when she is working full time and taking loads of photos.

F.Y.I. Rap

This is a rap about FYI
This group is going sky high
Please listen to young people in care
Show respect and that will be fair

We are all about fun and being young
We are really busy, we are not done
We make new friends and meet the staff
We are made to feel welcome and have a laugh

FYI the fun young individuals
FYI the fun young individuals

Corporate parents they help us
They help with issues and don't cause a fuss
The police, the fire service they treat us with respect
Thinking about care experience, that's what we reflect

What's in our future we don't know
But until then we'll go with the flow
We want more people to come along
I'm Ryan, I'm Cameron and we're done with this song.

FYI the fun young individuals
FYI the fun young individuals

Is there light at the end?

My mind can be dark like a black hole.
My mind races like a tornado.
Life is like a roller-coaster, so many
Ups and down, twist and turns,
Due to the up and downs and
Twists and turns and let's not forget
The dark tunnels.

I now keep my barriers up high, why?
Less disappointments, less pain and less
Fear of abandonment.
Through my struggles I like to keep
Smiling even on my darkest days.
A smile can make someone's day, even
A strangers.

Let's talk about family
For many us family isn't all it seems.
Everyone getting along,
Having dinner around the table.
Partners being together and siblings
Having their usual bicker and still
Knowing no matter what happens
They will always have each other
Through thick or thin. For many
Of us this just isn't the case.

Manifesto

- learn to see the colour in life.
- grow from your traumatic past.
- find your personal happiness.
- understand life isn't a smooth road.
- be the person you needed when you were younger.
- nobody comes out alive from life,
so appreciate and love everyone around you.
- share and learn from experiences.

Don't Leave Me

Leave me alone

I don't want to get to know you

I don't want to get used to you

I don't want to rely on you

I don't want to trust you

So you don't hurt me

So you don't leave me

What more can I be scared of?

I lost the one thing I ever had

Now I'm by myself

Don't hurt me

Don't leave me

Don't let me get used to you

I'm hiding my sadness

I have to keep myself closed

It's the only way of stopping

my heart from being broken

Resilient

I am resilient like a fishing boat full of fish
I am resilient like the crew who work aboard her
who know how to work her
who know how to keep her clean and shipshape.
who know where to fish.
who must leave home for weeks at a time.

Like me they sail in ferocious seas
Steady yourself for the sail ahead
As the huge waves crash
Take a deep breath, steer straight ahead, steady as we go.

Like me the boats are strong.
There is a rock in the middle of the harbour,
Marking shallow water
that the boats must turn really hard to avoid.
Care is like shallow water, you are lucky to get through
it.
Sometimes you want to give up.
And drift. Where will it take you? Stranded on a beach,
smashed on the rocks or out to open water?

My lighthouses look out for me
I am strong like the boat.

Hiding the Hurt

Hiding the hurt
Hiding the pain
Hiding the tears that fall like rain.
Saying I'm fine when really I'm not,
Having that feeling right in my gut.
The smile on my face is an ongoing sin.
Why can't I just be happy or finally fit in.

You say you care you say its ok,
But you'll never really know until it is my last day.
People don't know
How far I will go,
Sitting at home all alone,
No-one to speak to nowhere to go.
Trying to keep busy,
But I can barely get out of bed,
Honestly I don't know what's in my head.

People laugh people cry
Now I sit and wonder why?
No-one ever asked me how I feel inside.
Guess that's a good thing as going down,
just like the tide.

Away I drift from the shore.
I couldn't of done anymore.
Now I can finally be free from this pain,
Shame in the end everyone treated me as a game.

18 years old and in this much pain,
I have really lost my way and gone insane.
My hands a shaking, my eyes welling up,
Lump in my throat, and sickness in my gut.

People saw the scars on my wrists,
But never seen the sadness beneath the slits.
Freak, idiot, weirdo they shout, I can't win this
battle it's a losing fight.
2 sets of parents, care homes, and jail.
Why can't I ever get this life of freedom and bail?

Adopted and birth family it does get confusing,
Wondering who it is I've to believe in.
A mum and dad who don't know me,
They say they love me when they don't even see.
See that I'm like this today cos of them.
Taking drugs, stabbing people,
I thought you are meant to love your child
and be there for them.
I love you Chloe they say on the phone,
But how can you love someone
you couldn't even give them a home.
Why? Is all I have to ask.
Couldn't you see beneath my mask?

My New Beginning

I am from Pakistan. I came to Scotland from Greece. I have been here for 5 days. When I came here, I was very curious about everything. When I came off the plane it was too cold. It feels very different.

The people are different, the culture is different. I understand English but the Scottish accent is very difficult. I want to become a doctor. I like this country, it's lovely. I am enjoying being here.

Him

The way he acts the way he thinks,
Makes me wonder if he'll ever change.
The things he's done the things he's said,
I try to forget them but they're stuck in my head.
He only has time for me when he's bored or sober.
I wonder what happened to make him come this far.
He 46 years old,
But the things he has done will give you
shivers and feel cold.
You'd think he would of learnt his lesson,
After 6 years in prison.
Yet he still drinks and takes drugs,
He's one of those people you class as thugs.
Even tho this is him,
I was blinded by love even tho he sinned.
I thought we could of been happy,
But all I really know is how you went skatty.

When I think, I mean really think.
I start to realise I really don't know him.
Yet I was blinded by love cos of him.

I see happy families walking around,
I know life is perfect but we couldn't even make a bond.
I didn't want him to sacrifice anything,
I just wanted him to hold me
and whisper the lullaby he singed.
We've now met 11 times and I still wonder,
Wonder what I would be like if I stayed with you
through the thunder.
Him having a drink is fine,
But when he drinks he can't stop and ends up
getting in trouble.
Maybe his head is a bit of a muddle?
But why can't he see all I ever wanted was a cuddle?
He takes drugs, I don't care about cannabis or hash,
It's the stronger stuff that makes him smashed.
I've heard him on the phone on drugs,
And he says things that makes me feel like a mug.

A mug for trusting him and believing he would change.
I know this is hard after all these years
not knowing where I was.

But it's not only you that finds this strange.
He gives me money every month,
Yeah I'm grateful but it's not money I wanted
it was a card or drawing.
When he is in prison he promises me the world,
He draws me pictures,
He writes to me all the time,
But all I ever wanted him to call me was "mine"
He says he loves me and cares,
But if you loved me and cared
why am I here today writing this,
Cos now my life is a hit and miss.
I need to start to distance myself,
Cos if I don't it will impact on my mental health.
You don't know me either,
You don't know what my head is like or my thoughts,

You don't know I'm on medication for the rest of my life,
You don't know I've seen the front end of a knife.
You don't know I cry most nights
Before I turn off the lights.

My cousins warned me about you never changing.
But I ignored them and chose to trust you.
You do so well for 1 month or 2,
Then you slowly start to slip back, it's true.
This isn't my friend, uncle, or cousin.
The person I am talking about is sadly my father.
I wish things could of been different.

I Got There In The End

I got there in the end,
Didn't think I'd make it around that bend.
Drink and drugs, Fighting and running away
Is now just a memory of back in the day.
Thinking things will never be better
Feeling like your stuck in the gutter.
Not knowing what to do or say,
Thinking of starting to pray.

Self-harm and trying to take my life
Using that blade on the end of the knife.
Feeling like you have no-one around
Not making a peep not making a sound.

Addicted to legal highs for nearly a year,
Taking seizures and risking my life for the next high.
Those drugs nearly took my life,

Making me depressed making me attempt suicide.
I don't want anyone to have to go through
what I went through,
Am only 19 but I know how you all feel too.

Things take time to get better
It doesn't happen overnight
But it will get better.
Over 7 years I was in care.
Being moved from unit to unit
Secure units and foster care.
I fought against the system for years and years
But in reality that just caused more tears.

I got there.
I got there in the end.
Guess I really did get around that bend.

Starting a job to help people on drugs,
Is what I've always wanted to do.

A 2 bedroom flat of my own,
I've finally got a place to call my home.
Things get better as long as you try,
Don't stop and wonder what if.. get out there and try.
Dream big and take every chance you get
To make the life you want
Instead of being in that constant feeling
of being haunted by your past.
Everyone can do it no matter what people say.
Some people have lost hope and just can't get through it,
But there is always a light at the end of the tunnel,
It just seems so far away that light your chasing,
But make the life you want instead of chasing.

Life is a journey not a destination.
Nothing is set in stone
You make your own life stone by stone.
Making a pathway to the life you deserve.
You'll get through this just a few more bumps on the
road to swerve.
Never let anyone label you as "the kid in care"

People like us are stronger than they think.
Brighter than they know,
And smarter than they thought.
So keep fighting for your future
Show them you're better and more mature.
Everybody can make it through the darkness
Just take the help and become the best.
You can do it.

Just grab life with 2 hands and be you
You're strong enough to do it -
I believe in each and every one of you.

Care is a Good Thing (a song)

Care is a good thing
Care is not a bad thing

We've had our ups and downs
This is what I have found
Care is my safe place
This where I stay
Where I feel positive
Where I feel ok

You can feel good if you want to be good
You can feel good if you want to be good
You can feel good if you want to be good

Give respect to people in care
We are humans too don't forget

Care is a good thing
Care is not a bad thing

You can feel good if you want to be good
You can feel good if you want to be good
You can feel good if you want to be good

Finding Home

There are places in life where you just 'fit'.

A place, a person or a group you just slip into.

A safe place. The place the mask falls off.

You feel nervous to trust and to accept that change that has come. But we all want to belong.

We take a leap in good faith that the comfort of others will catch us.

And when we are caught we are gently cradled and rocked.

We metamorphosise.

The people and the places we belong become home. A me becomes a we, and we start to believe, and that belief becomes a seed to be the change we need.

Poetry and the written word, rhythm and rhyme take us to a place where we can express some of our deepest experiences and emotions. The words you read in this book give voice to young people with care experience. Their words will challenge and cut to the heart; they will inspire and increase understanding.

The Life Changes Trust considers it a privilege to have supported this book of creative writing.

Anna Buchanan,
CEO, Life Changes Trust

