W·M·V·S Children in Care FOUNDATION

CREATiNG CHANCES WMVS Children in Care FOUNDATION

Me and My Education - Who Cares?

The Voice of Our Young People



www.wmvscicfoundation.org.uk

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Summary of the Day

Wednesday 23rd October 2024

In May 2024, WMVS organised for Young People in Care from across the West Midlands to come together to share their voice, supported by their Virtual School teams and Geese Theatre with a view to produce a piece of theatre, showing their stories at the West Midlands Virtual School Regional Conference in the Autumn Term.

Our planning helped our young people share their voice alongside supporting adults, through a combination of drama and discussion around key themes in their lives.

In September 2024, we invited those young people to come back together again, plan their contribution to the conference entitled Me and My Education – Who Cares? – The Voice of our Young People. Our young people were invited to share their voices in whichever manner was best for them, including poetry, artwork, or to attend the conference itself and share their voices on stage.

The conference took place on 23rd October 2024, where social workers and teachers were able to engage with the piece of Theatre created and hear directly from our young people themselves on the main stage.

This scrapbook is a record of our young people's voices, their involvement in the day and seeks to encapsulate much of the learning shared on that day.

Have My Back



Young Persons - 'Quotes of the Day'

"It is crucial that you as Designated teachers, Directors of children's services, social workers, and anyone who supports young people personalise your approach to individuals. Not just ticking boxes, or making referrals to inaccessible services, sometimes something as little as a conversation or a simple text will have a massive impact and make a positive difference to that young person."

"Schools are way too quick to isolate and exclude. It just doesn't make sense. If someone is acting up to try and get out of lessons, and then the response is to take you out of lessons – what does that change?"

"One of the things that is really hard is having to wait so long for simple decisions to be made. If I want to go on a school trip, or have a sleepover at a friend's house, or go on a holiday, then it has to go through a social worker. We were meant to go on a holiday and because of a delay in getting my passport, this had to be rearranged. The system needs to be made simpler."

"Someone who has my back is someone I have time for."

"I remember lots about people who made me feel special."

Have My Back



Audience - Thoughts

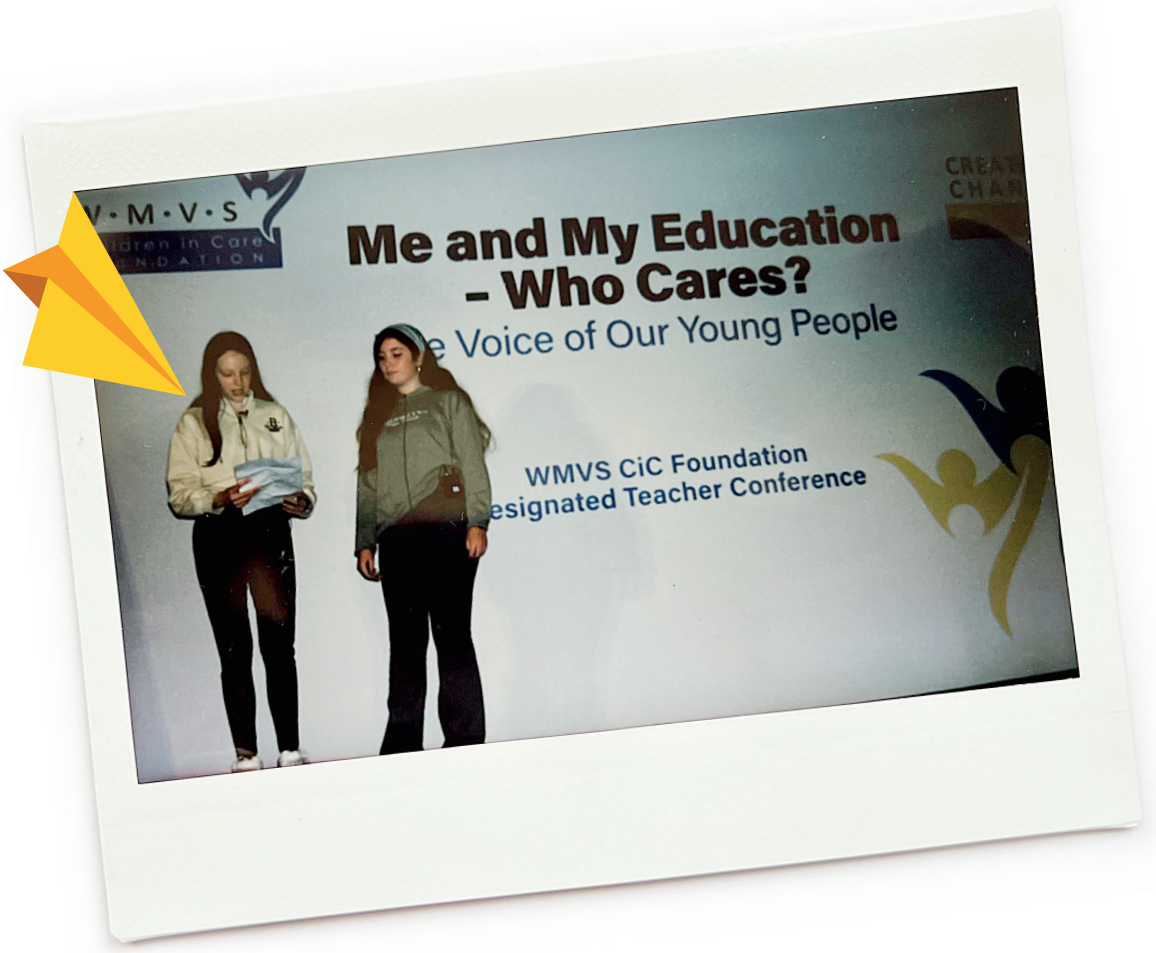
"Inspirational and motivating, more determined to be a true advocate for children and young people."

"Absolutely incredible!
Moving and makes me reflect and think about what I can do better."

"Before trying to fix, speak to validate and connect with the emotions a young person is feeling allow them to feel that my feelings are valid."

"Creating that relationship where our young people can establish a sense of safety is vital."

My Education



Young Persons - 'Quotes of the Day'

"The single biggest thing that's made the difference for me in education is being listened to. Having those people in school I could turn to and I know would advocate for me. I just wish all the professionals could be like that."

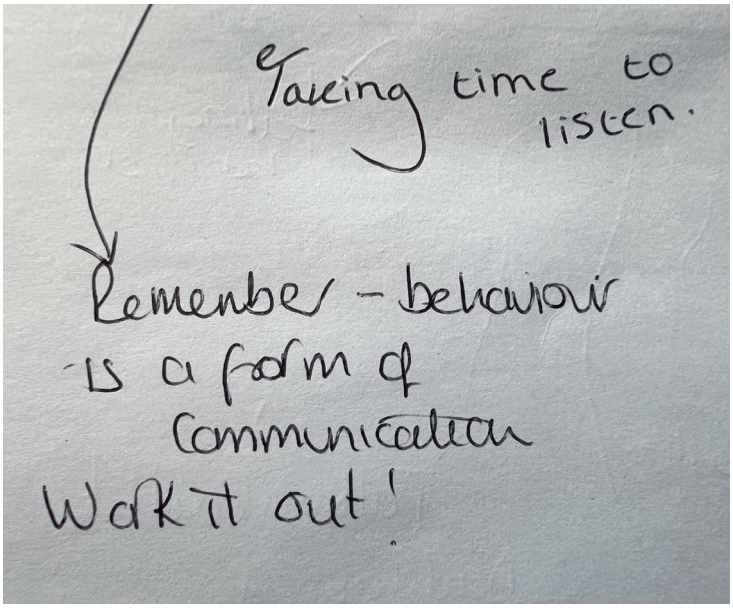
"Having support in school though is crucial, make sure that all staff are mindful that we may have complexities in our lives that others don't. For example, if we turn up late, please ask staff not to call this out in front of the whole class, or issues sanctions, a simple 'welcome' and a discussion in private later solves this easily."

"Please remember that for the majority of us, we don't want to be singled out. Think about how you can provide support to us but still let us be in charge of our own stories. For example, being in class and being asked to leave to attend your PEP or Care Planning meeting, means we are then faced with having to explain to our friends what this is and why, and we may not be ready to or want to at this point."

My Education



"Put yourself in our children's shoes"



Audience - Thoughts

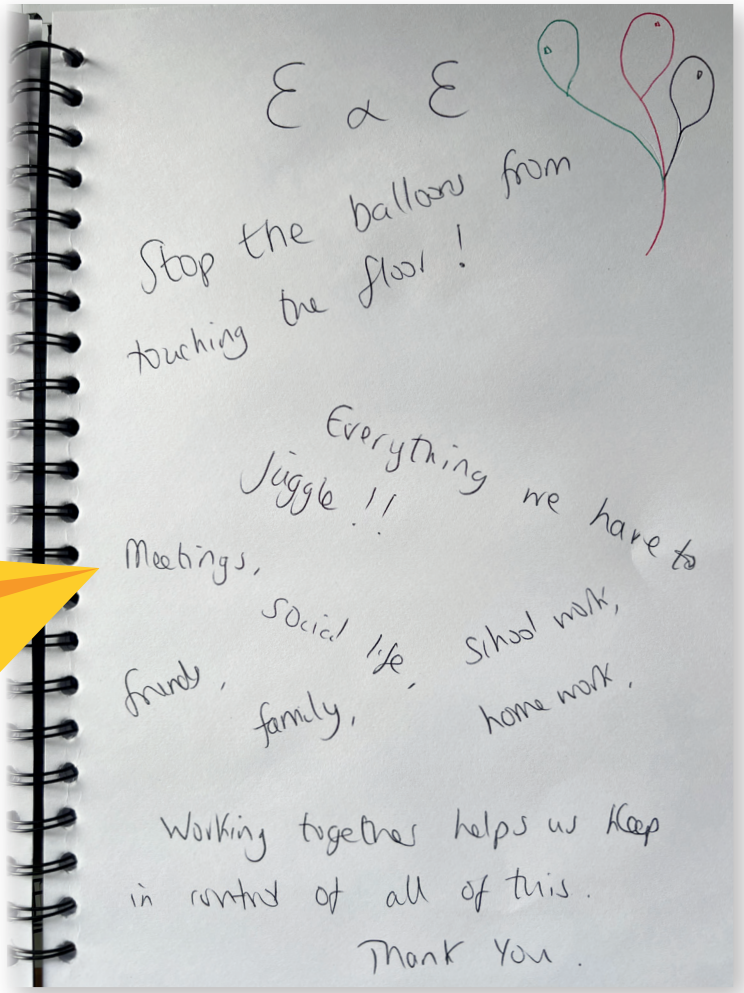
"Inspirational voices that will support my professional reflection to ensure my practices and processes at school are child centred."

"Are we doing all we can to help our young people feel they belong in school or are our approaches still rooted in isolating and removing?"

"Are we putting ourselves into our young peoples shoes and considering how schools for them."

"Outstanding is a good lesson with outstanding relationships."

Juggling Responsibilities



Young Persons - 'Quotes of the Day'

"At the conference we showed the difficulty of juggling responsibilities through our balloon presentation. The challenge was to keep all the balloons in the air and each was marked with a different responsibility we have, from school work to moving placement, to attending peps, family time, social life, moving out from home, finding a job, paying bills, attending club, care planning meetings, moving schools. Pretty soon the room was filled with balloons and the one or two people we had asked to keep them afloat could not. However, when we invite everyone to support, then we can keep the balloons in the air."

"We don't leave care, care leaves us. There are so many responsibilities to juggle that many other young people don't have. More needs to be done to support young people who are leaving care, you can go from a foster carer to then being pretty much independent and it is hard."

Juggling Responsibilities



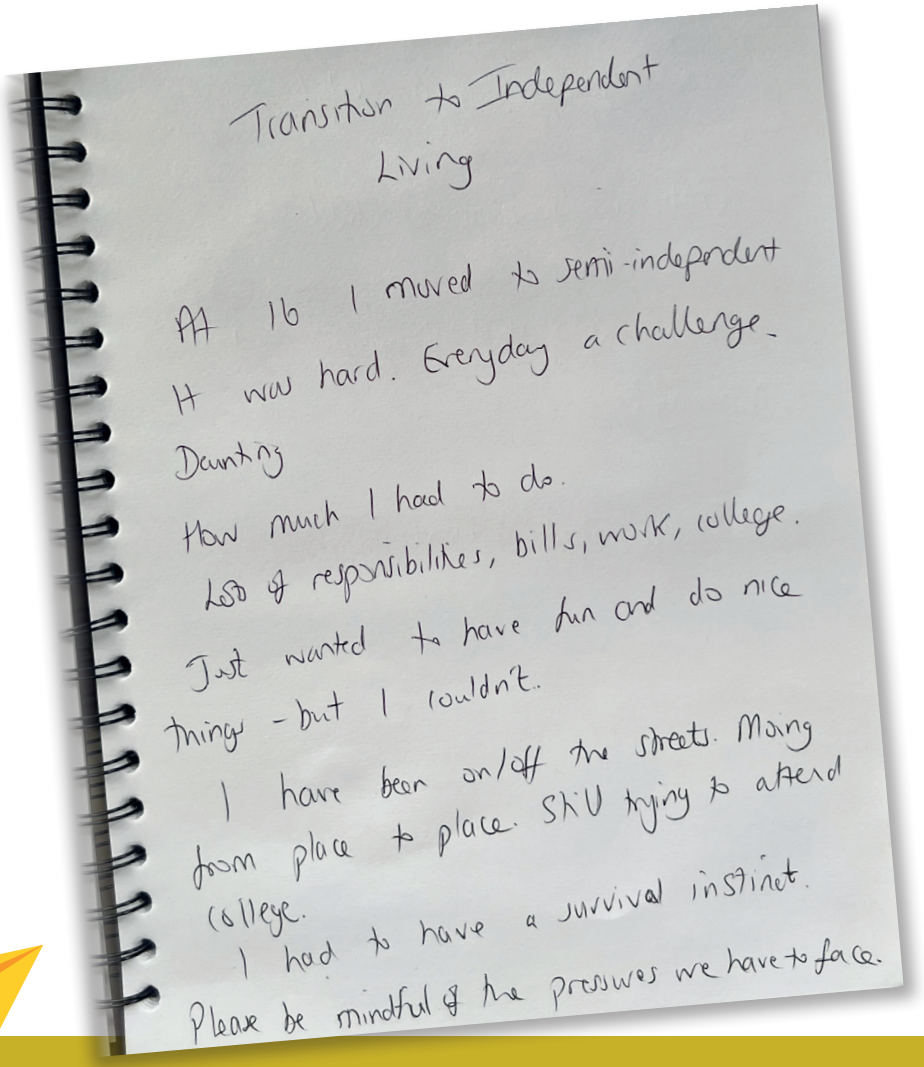
Audience - Thoughts

"Very moving and inspirational. However personally as a social worker it makes me feel sad that we have failed our young people even when we try our best. It's a 'system' we need to change. Very moving. Well done guys!"

"Our young people in care are often faced with an array of complications and additional responsibilities that their peers don't have. That's before we mention the meetings for and about them."

"Are we providing practical support that they need to be able to receive their dreams?"

Life After Care



Young Persons - 'Quotes of the Day'

"I think so much more can be done to support us as young people to develop the life skills we need. The school curriculum is often way too limited. Nowhere in school was I taught how to budget, what tax is, what goes into running a home. Instead, I remember Shakespeare, the industrial revolution, and simultaneous equations."

"We had some practical lessons, such as food technology lessons, but they were very basic and almost seemed like an afterthought. I also couldn't pick all the subjects I wanted to. I think we need to be able to choose what we want to do in school much earlier and not have so much prescribed."

"I don't think the education system prepares us for adulthood at all. So much is just not relevant."

Life After Care



Audience - Thoughts

"Whatever our role is in supporting our young people we can build opportunities for them to learn life skills and prepare for adulthood and not wait until they leave school and find themselves thrown in at the deep end."

"Many of our young people find that they are often faced with taking on responsibilities far sooner than their peers."

"I can't imagine what it would be like to have the pressure of budgeting, keeping a home and so many other adult responsibilities when still trying to do education."

We wanted today to honour our children and share their voice!

Very impactful more so than other presentations

Mind blowing and heartfelt

Brilliant!

You were the most important voice in the room.

Thank you

Inspiring and thought provoking



Very powerful and real

Emotional! Keep being you!

You should all be proud of who you are and keep reaching for what you want to achieve

Luke's Messages

Stop harm
Start healing

We don't leave care – care leaves us.

Care leavers to become care leaders. Tell me how to help.



You story is the most powerful thing you have – but you need to protect it

I've seen generosity & bravery today not vulnerability

Your story & experiences are lessons – and people have listened to your lesson & they have learnt from you

Comments

Very inspiring and brave to put all these personal experiences out there. Makes you think about your own practice with our students!

Powerful - you are strong and braver than most of us in this room. You deserve to be celebrated and I'm grateful that you've been able to share with us today.

Very emotive! You all need to be so proud of yourselves + the powerful/amazing young adults you have become!
You all need to lobby parliament to make changes happen!

Extremly confident and brave, lovely to hear the experiences of you all and will think about that in our practices.

Amazing is the word to me! Seeing the young people on stage, giving their speeches gave me increased motivation to fight for our Children in care. We want the best for them and for them to achieve.

loved it and we need to hear the voice of young people more. - Thank you for sharing your stories. - your all amazing.

Comments

Being young is vital

Embrace your inner child

We are still learning and growing up.

Please be present for us.



Harley Says...

Don't blame the child.

Need to find the root.

Help us integrate into society.

Teach us to believe in ourselves.

No grand gestures – just "how are you?" is enough.



What Happened Next....

Our Young People



T is doing an internship

C is going to university

M is living in supported accommodation

L has her own home

H just finished Y12 exams and applying for university

Solihull are developing a mode of practice and support to promote education and training for our children living in supported accommodation "support with compassion". Pilot starts September.

Worcestershire is reviewing transition to school support. Designated Teacher advocated for a child at risk of perm-ex.

Staffordshire had social workers building great relationships with children they support through a dance project.

Stoke-on-Trent are working with their principal social worker to share messages from the conference as a part of their social worker training.

Telford and Wrekin are continuing their journey of finding the most effective ways for young people to share their voice and co-produce with us. Next year our young people....

Living Out of a Suitcase

Living out of a suitcase, has got to be one of the most gut wrenching feelings
Feeling like you're just a guest in someone's house, and not part of a family.
Being told only my real kids can have a slice of cake, your just a care kid your not special
Never being told goodnight don't let the bedbugs bite, instead go to bed your a nuisance.
Feeling like your out of place or that you don't fit the criteria
Being told you're hard to manage, because of your trauma.
People always say "being in care ain't that bad."
I would never wish this on my worst enemy.

The fear of being told your placement has broken down,
You're getting a good relationship, but they feel you're too much.
The trust issues from your past shining through again,
Spiralling into depression, feeling like you're just a burden, when will this heartbreak end.
When carers make fun of your trauma, saying "no wonder your parents couldn't cope, you're very difficult."
Those words that keep repeating in your head and won't go away.

Never emptying your suitcase, because your always moving,
The feeling you'll never be in a family, because you feel your own parents don't want you.
The side effects from care, should be discussed about more,
The flashbacks that make you feel as though you're back in that moment.
All the mental health problems, like PTSD, anxiety, depression and many others,
Imagining what it would be like if u were in a real family, if your family wasn't as helpless as it is,
Realizing everyone was right about them.

Imagining a fire burning in the living room, all your siblings gathered around it
With your parents beaming at you bc off how proud they are of you
Then you wake up, oh yeah it was all a dream i should've known
Because when you were a home, you were a parent for your siblings
Your mum was clinged to a bottle of smirnoff, while your dad was out taking overdoses
That's what a family feels like for me
So why are these families all gathered around a table eating a meal
Why is there no screaming, no passed out parents and no cold baked beans for tea

Then your meant to just forgive your parents, but its alot harder that they think
All your trauma comes back to you when u try to forget everything
But if u dont forgive them, it will make your life harder, they say
But forgiving them isn't in your future, can't even think of that day
I went years without speaking to my parents bc i was angry
Allow yourself time to heal if needs be
You will have lots of question that might need answering
I went through that too, i just couldn't understand the situation

I used to say i had mixed feelings for my parents
I loved them bc they are my parents
But i absolutely despise them bc of their actions
That was confusing to my 7 year old brain
Why say you love me, then treat a bottle of vodka better that your own flesh
How you gripped on that bottle i hoped you had cuddled me like that just once
How you kept popping those pills into your mouth
I wished i would even get one kiss, even if your beard was scratchy

The love that i feel, i don't know if its real
i've never been loved before, so i don't know the real meaning of i love you
Because the times people have said this to me, then they leave
Its hard being a teenage with no mother to talk to
Relationships aren't worth it, because i don't know how to love just yet
All the fake sayings like love you lots like jelly tots
"I'm never gonna let anything happen to you" is just lies

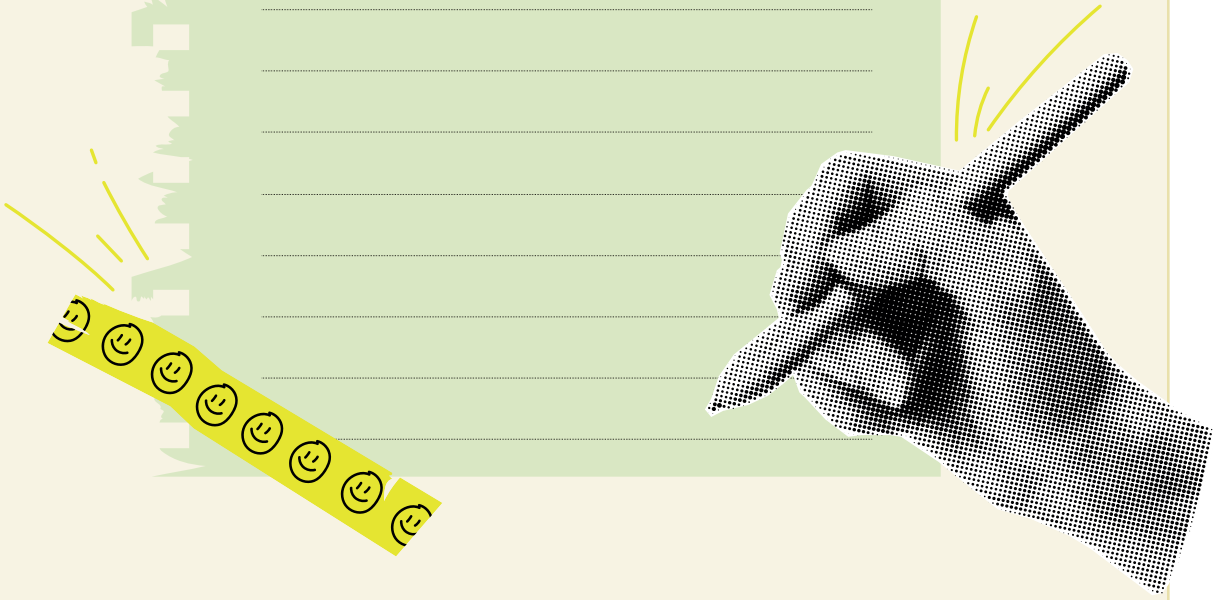
I don't want the presents, instead i want a mum that's present
Not the 30 quid lip glosses, just a heart to heart conversation
That's all i need, and thats all im longing
So please try mum to fix my heart
Even if it's just a plaster to fill in all the cracks
I know at the minute it's hard, bc no one wants me
But just know i did try to keep you all as family



I will always say to you, that i can't remember the day i went into care
But i remember it all, and everything was very complicated
You had ten minutes to explain to us why it was happening
Except you didn't do a great job bc we were so puzzled
If i look at a picture of myself when i was little, it breaks my heart
She deserved tlc, not ptsd, how i wish i could go back
and give her a hug
Oh how i was terrified on the first night,
we were in a strangers home
And a new environment, i will never understand
why you would put us through this

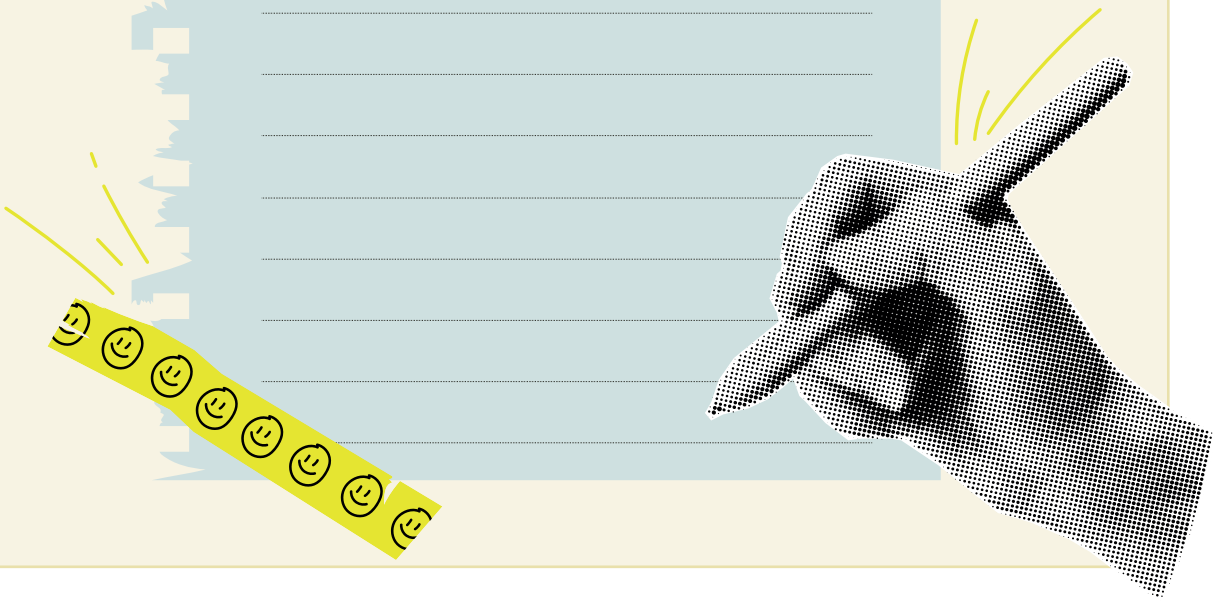
Written by
One of our amazing children in care
(who wishes to remain anonymous)

My Thoughts



Adult Actions

Perhaps we could...



Your Voice Counts

Feel free to join the conversation by emailing your views

Contact us

myvoice@wmvscicfoundation.org.uk

or

Scan this QR code

Thank You

To everyone who has helped and contributed to making this book a success!

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