

Building to last

It is vital that relationships for care-experienced people are recognised as needing to last. As in birth families, it should not simply be considered a success if a young person is in a stable placement from their entry into care until they become a care leaver at 18 or 21. The social care system should plan for and encourage high quality relationships while in care that continue in some form, whether formal or informal into adulthood, whether this be with professionals, carers, or important figures in care-experienced people's lives. Care-experienced adults need to have trusted adults from their childhood who they can ask for advice, feel held in mind by and share their future achievements with. When we build policies in children's social care, we want them to reflect what our ambitions are for a 30-, 50-, 70- or 90-year-old care-experienced person's future.

This is one finding from the UCL Developing and Maintaining Relationships for Care-Experienced People 2021 Roundtable funded by UCL Public Policy - organised by Eva A Sprecher and chaired by Dr John Simmonds OBE from Coram BAAF.

For the full report contact Eva.sprecher.16@ucl.ac.uk or DM @EASprecher on Twitter

Artist's Note:

I used relief paint to outline the puzzle pieces as much of my life seems to have been fragmented, having to find the pieces to put back together the blocks to build positive relationships; hence the puzzle pieces. I also love Persian

art and when the canvas is held a certain way the pieces become more like the geometric shapes in Islamic art; a reflection of the importance of connectivity, consistency, stability and balance. The people I made using wire a bead cotton and paint and they represent collaboration and co-production -putting love at the centre. They are anchored to trust as without this then connection is difficult and can seem dangerous especially from a care experienced perspective - the red rope that connects them a reminder that we are wired for protection and to see danger first. The writing on the wall I suppose is representative of all the things that would support relationships and connection for me, and also from what the young people say who I work alongside. It is called Writing's On The Wall as this is all stuff that we are aware of in my view and is about changes in perceptions and approaches more than anything else. The figures are both black as this represents the impact of mental health, becoming a shadow of oneself when more of those pieces are missing than found.

Artwork by Saira-Jayne Jones
Twitter @PoisonPinkDaisy and
@Artifac22171753

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