

Appendix One: Child Stories

Meet Luke

Luke is a 17-year-old White British teenager, one of seven siblings, with a strong passion for motorbikes and close friendships. Children's Services became involved due to concerns about his care, which led to him moving in with his grandad in 2023 after being unable to stay with his parents. Unfortunately, that arrangement broke down, and Luke is now living with his girlfriend and her mother while fostering options are being explored.

There have been ongoing concerns about Luke's emotional well-being, challenges in family relationships, and worries about the influence of negative peers in Luke's community. Since starting work with SHiFT, Luke is no longer being discussed as part of the Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing and Trafficked (VEMT) Group, but concerns remain about his cannabis use and vulnerability to negative influences. Luke was recently arrested for motor vehicle theft and, despite efforts from Children's Services and the Virtual School, he hasn't been in education, training, or employment since leaving school.

Luke met his SHiFT Guide in July 2024, and they've built a strong relationship. Following his recent arrest, Luke reached out to his Guide from police custody. During their conversation, his Guide encouraged Luke to reflect on his actions and consider his future, reminding him that he's nearing adulthood. Luke expressed frustration with his current lifestyle, saying, "I'm sick of living like this, please find me a job or something to sort my life out", signalling his readiness for change.

Since then, Luke's Guide has helped him to set realistic goals, reach out to learning providers, and has arranged an interview at an education and training centre. The centre offers an employment pathway and includes functional skills in Maths and English. Luke enjoyed the interview, attended an induction day, and is now attending the course.

Luke has also agreed to seek help for his cannabis use, marking a powerful step toward taking control of his future. With his Guide's continued support, Luke is gaining the tools and confidence to make positive choices, build essential skills, and navigate challenges with purpose. By helping him access education and tackle personal issues, his SHiFT Guide is empowering Luke to advocate for himself, ensuring his voice is heard as he works toward a brighter, more purposeful future.

Meet Adam

Adam is a 16-year-old White British boy and one of two brothers who live in Middlesbrough. Children's Services have known Adam from an early age due to concerns about his parent's ability to care for him, which resulted in him going to live with a relative on a Special Guardianship Order. Earlier this year the relative experienced significant health issues that meant Adam had to go and live with other family members. Sadly, this did not work out, but Adam's girlfriend's mother agreed that he could go and live with them, something that Children's Services supported. Adam had just gone to live with them when he started to work with his SHiFT Guide, who recognised how important it was for Adam to feel safe and establish a sense of belonging in his new living arrangements.

Not long after he moved, Adam was arrested and his girlfriend's mother was extremely supportive of him, attending the police station and acting as Appropriate Adult. Unfortunately, due to the allegations made about Adam, the housing provider threatened

to seek an injunction preventing him from accessing the estate. This caused immense stress for Adam, his girlfriend and her mother, who was told that her tenancy would be at risk if Adam continued to stay there. The SHiFT Guide provided additional support during this time and, alongside Children's Services, successfully advocated for Adam to remain in the home, highlighting how important it was for him to have stability and feel safe and cared for.

Recently, Adam's girlfriend and her mother went away on holiday. Despite the efforts of both his SHiFT Guide and Children's Services to have him join, unfortunately Adam could not go. A temporary arrangement was made for him while they were away, and, to help him stay connected with them, his SHiFT Guide provided him with a phone.

A breakthrough came during this period when Adam called his SHiFT Guide after learning that the police were looking for him in relation to a robbery. Adam asked his SHiFT Guide to accompany him to the police station for a voluntary interview and act as his Appropriate Adult. The outcome for Adam was No Further Action, but this has proved to be a turning point for him.

Afterwards, Adam spoke with his SHiFT Guide about his parents, growing up, his girlfriend, friends, and his hopes for the future - to have a home with his girlfriend. Adam has not talked openly to professionals in this way before, an indication that he has started to trust and believe in his SHiFT Guide. With the support of his Guide Adam recognised that if he wanted to have a home with his girlfriend, he would need to work and have an income. His increased feelings of safety and stability mean that he now feels able to take up the offer from his SHiFT Guide to support him to secure an apprenticeship.