

Barnardo's NI supports over **12,000** children, young people & families in Northern Ireland

Barnardo's NI has

40+ Services This is a collection of real stories from children, young people and families from across Northern Ireland, describing in their own words and with their own voice, how Barnardo's has supported and believed in them.

This is what we do every day and with your help we will continue to be there for children, for as long as it takes.



Irish Medium Development Programme



Farrah (4) & mum Ciara

Farrah received support from the Barnardo's and Sure Start Developmental Programme in Strabane, which helps two to three year olds with communication skills, and emotional and social development.

"Farrah was born with a shortened femur, which just means her right leg is a lot shorter than her left and to be able to walk she has to wear a prosthetic leg.

"Farrah has always been so independent and just so bubbly, she is so funny. She loves getting out and about and mixing with other people and she loves joining in with everything. Nothing stops her.

"In 2018 Farrah won the Barnardo's Young Achiever Award and we were all really happy with it. It's great to see somebody like Farrah getting recognised, especially because her condition is so rare. She can be a bit shy, so I really didn't know how she would react to getting up on stage, but she took it in her stride and away she went."

"She's an inspiration to me and as she grows, her confidence grows too. I have high hopes for her."



Child Bereavement Service "My sons were aged 4 and 9 when Jon passed away from cancer. We were just a normal family going about our daily life. Jon was an amazing dad, he was so hands on and the boys just adored him, his two sons were the light of his life. He had a very short diagnosis, just 8 weeks, he had been going to work every day and then we found out he had esophageal cancer and it was terminal."

"I fell apart when Jon died. I was left with these two little boys who really needed me, but I couldn't parent them. I was in the eye of my own storm trying to be the best mum I could be. I was a bereaved parent trying to parent bereaved children."

"That is when I called the Barnardo's Child Bereavement Advice Line and Helen answered the phone. Over the next weeks there were lots of times I had to pick up the phone to Helen when I felt I couldn't cope, but having her to talk to, made me feel like a safety net had been set up and it was going to catch me.

"It's not belittling to say to anyone 'it will be OK', because it will, there is just a journey to get there. Everybody needs help, it's not a weakness and in those early days Helen gave me a lifeline to hold on to. I am so proud of my boys and I honestly attribute their success to the support that we all received from Barnardo's, that provided us stability when we needed it most."



$\operatorname{Ali}^{*}(15)$

Independent Guardian Service

(Voice of Independent Guardian)

"Ali* has endured more than any child should. He was forced to leave his home and family. He was beaten, trafficked and enslaved and risked his life crossing the Mediterranean. His friend that had travelled with him was shot in front of him, he was forced to sleep beside his dead friend, in his blood and the following day was forced to take him outside and bury him.

"We've been able to make links with Ali's family, back in his country of origin and hopefully there can be a reunion with his siblings. He still struggles with the trauma and there is ongoing support that will be needed, but he is now in a place where he can receive that care. He is in full time education, he is heavily involved in his local mosque and he thrives on that faith. He has made some amazing links in the communities here in Northern Ireland.

"That is all he is striving for, the same freedoms as you and I have."

*Ali's name has been changed to protect the young person's identity



Young Carers Service

"I am 17 years old and I live in the Antrim Glens with my mum and dad, I am Head Boy at my school, St Killian's College Garron Tower.

"My dad works quite a lot, which is why I have a big responsibility in helping to care for my mum, who has epilepsy. My role as a carer is not to help my mum out of bed or help her around the house, she is fiercely independent and doesn't need help with any of that, it is only when she has a really bad seizure, that's when she needs me. When my mum has a seizure, we know how to deal with that and we can cope with it, my concerns and worries are about my mum having a seizure when nobody is there to help her, when I am at school and my dad is at work.

"I have been part of Barnardo's Young Carers Service for over eight years and with their support I recently addressed a meeting of non executive commissioners at the Northern Trust, to share my story and explain the urgent need for support services for epilepsy. The service has played such a big role in my life, I can remember the very first time I went along and it's been part of my life ever since.

"Being a young carer teaches you a lot about other people, it equips you to handle high stress situations because you deal with them everyday. I am proud that I have got to the same place as my friends and I am doing well, despite everything that I've dealt with. All I want to be able to do is help other young carers to get the support they need."





Aisha (18)

Refugee Support Service



"My family and I are grateful to all the local people who have helped us settle and prosper in Belfast and I am so happy that I will be studying Biochemistry at Queen's University Belfast."

"I will never forget the most important person in my life who prayed for me, made me do my best, work hard, be determined and confident and who supported me after the death of my father: my dear mother. I hope I can make her proud of me and I hope she will see me working as a doctor in the future."

"Aisha and her family left their home in Syria in 2012 and had been living in Beirut, Lebanon before arriving in Northern Ireland in 2015, with her mother and two brothers. Her father had been seriously injured as a result of the war and sadly passed away in Lebanon. Having only begun learning English whilst in Lebanon, Aisha started secondary school in February 2016, where she began an intensive course of study. The teenager took one year to complete the standard twoyear GCSE courses, achieving the highest grades possible."

"Her brilliant academic achievements were awarded with several school prizes and the Barnardo's UK Young Achiever of the Year Award. The award was in recognition, not only of her academic achievements, but for her strength of character and the positive impact she has had on other young girls arriving in NI."

Colin & Sharon

Fostering

Colin and Sharon have been foster carers with Barnardo's for 30 years and over those years have fostered 28 children.

"We thought, there are a lot of children out there who don't have homes and rather than bringing more into the world, let's look after the ones already here.

"We've had children who have had multiple carers before us and have lost their identity along the way. It's important for us to give these young people the security they need, you simply cannot put a price on supporting a child and the difference you get to see in them.

"One particularly special memory was with a young girl who had motor neurone disease and stayed with us from the age of 9, until she passed away aged 19. We were told that she was physically unable to express any emotions, but after a few months of supporting her we experienced her first ever smile. It was the most special moment and we truly felt like we made a difference in her life. It was such a huge step, both for us and for her. It felt like she had got her identity back.

"You can't pretend it's always easy, but Barnardo's matches a child with a family they think is best placed to provide what he or she needs at that time in their life. We love it when a child goes back to their family, if that is possible. It's always our goal to see a young person reconnect with where they have come from, when ready to do so."



ABC PiP Service

Noah* (18months) & Helen* (mum)

"When Noah was two weeks old, I fell and badly broke my leg, needing a steel plate and nails put in, which meant my mobility was really limited and I could barely move my leg. I was receiving pretty intense physiotherapy to teach me how to walk again.

"I was really worried about caring for Noah as I was on heavy medication and sleeping a lot. The lack of movement in my leg meant that even changing his nappy was difficult. His dad was doing everything. I just didn't feel like I could take care of him the way I was supposed to, he was such a daddy's boy.

"My health visitor referred me to the ABC PiP service and that's when I started to receive weekly visits from Gail. It was honestly a lifeline to grab on to, whenever I felt overwhelmed. Gail listened to me, we talked about all the fears I had about not being able to parent Noah and she gave me the reassurance that I was actually doing what he needed.

"Gail taught me a number of techniques which we still use today like Five to Thrive and baby massage, which was brilliant for bonding and very calming for Noah.

"My first two children were very 'mummy led' and that was taken away from me with Noah, which had an impact on my mental health. If I didn't have the support of Gail and the ABC PiP service I don't think I would be as settled in my recovery and my relationship with Noah would not be as good as it is."

*Names of the mother and child have been changed

Leaving Care

Alisha (20)

"I grew up in three different foster homes until I was 18 and then I moved into Barnardo's Leaving Care. The service has helped me with a number of things, the supported accommodation, my budgeting and they've supported me a lot with my mental health when I was struggling. Now that I am 20, they have helped me move out of Leaving Care and into a house and I still get floating support from Angela (key worker), who is awesome. Angela comes to my house and we have wee chats and she helps me out with different things.

"In the future I hope to have my own proper house, have a nice friendship circle and do lots of travelling, that's a big one for me. I am doing a foundation degree in events management at the minute, I'm still not sure what I want to do with it, but I am really enjoying the course."



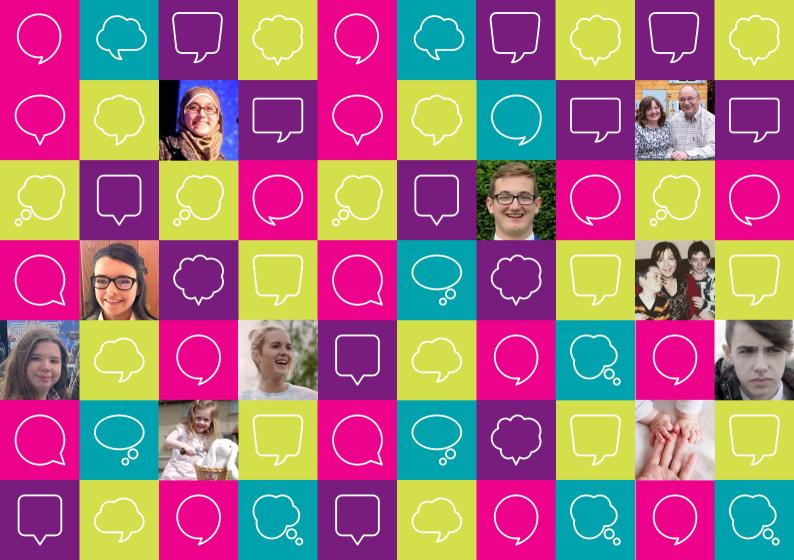


"I was in one foster placement from 13 until I was 18 and then I moved into the Leaving Care service. The key workers help you with lots of things like managing money and making sure you go to appointments and they advise me about my education and future. I've just applied for a job and they helped me with the application.

"With Leaving Care we do a thing called 'Triangles' with three people, where you have a personal mission and a group mission and you work together to achieve these missions; we'll also be doing some peer mentoring. Everyone's personal mission is different, like budgeting to save for a car or to get healthier.

"In the future I want to have a happy, stable life, a good house, good friends and a well paid job. Oh and a wee dog, a St Bernard! So maybe not that wee..."







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