



## LET'S CONNECT CASE STUDY

One of the most important reasons Rees was set up for, was to bring together care experienced people together.

**"Since I've discovered the Rees Foundation, I have felt less ashamed of my experiences and troubled upbringing"**

Kate\* is a care leaver who is estranged from her family. She had negative experiences whilst in foster care and guardianship and has felt neglected throughout the care system.

Despite the problems she has faced, Kate has tried to overcome her past. However, over the past couple of years she has suffered from ill health and is bedbound a lot of the time. This has taken a toll on her mental health.

It was during this time in her life, that Kate found the Rees Foundation. She said: "I stumbled across the website and remembered seeing a stall at an event I'd attended, so I decided to sign up to their emails, not really expecting anything.

"I've been let down by so many organisations, including the care system and social services so I didn't expect anything to come from it."



### WHAT IS LET'S CONNECT?

We run a series of free online sessions which are exclusively open to care experienced people of any age.

There is a wide range of sessions available, from support in accessing care records, informal chats with other care experienced people and specialist courses on anxiety and trauma.

By signing up to the newsletter, Kate was given information on projects run by the Rees Foundation, including online Let's Connect sessions designed for care leavers to meet other people with a similar background.

**"I have attended courses that I can't believe are free of charge! They are fantastic and full of information like self-help techniques, life skills and caring for your own mental health."**

Let's Connect sessions cover a variety of subjects and are often facilitated by those that have direct care experienced or have worked considerably with care experienced people.

*\*Please note, Kate's name has been changed to protect her privacy.*



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One of our groups, 'Circle of Support', is a group created for casual conversation around life as a care leaver. Another is 'Access to Records Support Group', which is a group that aims to help those accessing their care records. It can be a long process and is often difficult to navigate alone.

Enquiring with Rees can be a big step for some, and Kate was no exception. She said: "I was so nervous when I emailed to join my first course, but it was the best thing I ever did. To have an organization that offers so many courses and so much advice and support to care leavers at any age, is admirable.

**"Dr Rachel, who leads one of the online courses, is so understanding and lovely. I don't feel judged in any of her sessions and her guidance on certain topics is so useful."**

Attendees are invited to contribute as much or as little as they'd like and there is no requirement to keep cameras on or use real names. The sessions provide a safe space for care experienced people, free of judgment.

When asked how the Rees Foundation had helped Kate, she was quick to point out that she wished she had found it earlier and implores other care leavers to access the projects offered by the Foundation. Kate added;



### THE IMPORTANCE OF BELONGING

The government's 2022 review, 'Ready or not: care leavers' views of preparing to leave care', revealed:

- Many care leavers felt 'alone' or 'isolated' when they left care and did not know where to get help with their mental health or emotional well-being.
- Many care leavers had no one they could talk to about how they were feeling or who would look out for them.
- A third of care leavers said they did not know where to get help and support.
- For many, no plans had been made to support their mental health or emotional well-being when they left care.

**"Since I've discovered the Rees Foundation, I have felt less ashamed of my experiences and troubled upbringing. I have spoken to others who can relate to my circumstances and offer advice and care."**

"I can't believe it took me so long to discover Rees. The staff are lovely and I just want to say a big thank you. Thank you for not letting us be forgotten or uncared for. Thank you for being the family that we've always wished for."

*\*Please note, Kate's name has been changed to protect her privacy.*

