



Project Background

The purpose of the project is to develop a network of young people who are looked after by Gloucestershire social services. They may live with residential or foster carers, or elsewhere. The network will offer young people the chance to meet, share ideas and support each other.

Background

1. Some young people being looked after are in either residential or foster placements with other young people. Many other young people being looked after have no other opportunity to meet with each other.
2. In August 1994 a survey was sent to all young people aged 10 and over who were looked after by Gloucestershire. One of the questions was: "*Would you like to meet with other young people in care/looked after?*" About half of the responses said "Yes"
3. In December 1994 the Social Services Inspectorate brought together 'one-off' groups of young people looked after in family placements - as part of their inspection of fostering services in Gloucestershire. Most young people in these groups thought ongoing groups for young people being looked after would be a good idea.
4. From January to March 1995 a youth and community work student was placed in the children's rights service. One of her main projects was to investigate ways of setting up groups for young people in family placements in Gloucestershire.
5. A local children's rights newsletter was started in June 1995 to circulate with the three monthly '*Who Cares?*' magazines to young people aged 10 and over.
6. Discussions with 'Voices From Care' took place during summer / autumn 1995. Also members of the training section involved a group of young people who had been looked after in the 'Looking After

Children' training. In April 1996 four young people being looked after also helped the children's rights officer with training for staff and carers.

7. On 11 April 1996 the first YPLAN Consultative Group meeting took place. The newsletter group summed it up:

"The Big Day

We met on Thursday 11th April 1996. We had a discussion about a newsletter, conference, social activities, policy reference group and training. We had loads of ideas but no-one who was going to organise it. We also picked people who were going to join in with the newsletter. We need people to help out. If you are interested in poetry or stories or any hobbies please write us a short piece of writing. Or if you have any feelings about being in care."

8. On 29 May 1996 the second Consultative group met. The Newsletter group described the outcome as:

" Social Groups: Seen as a priority by young people, but neither youth service or social services have got people to help set it up.

Newsletter: The first newsletter has been successfully produced and distributed with the 'Who Cares?' magazine.

Conference: If there is a conference the aim of it will be to draw together people who could encourage local initiatives.

Policy Consultation And Involvement in Training Activity:

This should happen when necessary. Support and payment considered as part of planning."

9. The Newsletter group continued, and the group were involved in selecting the first YPLAN Development Worker.

The project appointed a development worker, for one year from 1 April 1997, with responsibility for:

1. Developing supportive networks of young people looked after,
2. Encouraging consultation and involvement of young people in development of services,
3. Identifying and recommending the way forward for the project after the initial year.

Rahila has been with the YPLAN project for 20 months. Her summary of that time is also attached.

Terry Barry, December 1998