



## Emma

‘My older brother has cerebral palsy and attention deficit disorder. Because of his illness, he was often violent and hard to manage. He received so much attention from school, social services and [disability charity] Scope that I rarely got a look in. I couldn’t do any of the things I wanted to do because my brother was a priority. My mother suffered from depression and, when my baby sister arrived, my caring responsibilities increased further. I started going to Action for Children Conwy Young Carers when I was about four, stopped for a couple of years and then started again when I was eight.

‘No one could do the shopping except me and I was always late for school because I had to drop my sister off and had to leave early to pick her up. At one point I was really fed up and my support worker asked me when I could get some time and I said my lunchtime. She picked me up and we went for a walk on the beach and had a bag of chips and that was great. The project workers were often my shoulder to cry on when I was fed up and I could offload onto them. They listened to me when I was sick of looking after my baby sister because my mum was down. They never looked shocked when I told them about my life at home and they never judged, which was something I loved. Everybody else seemed not to care.

‘Conwy Young Carers also gave me the chance to talk to other kids who were going through similar things and who understood where you were coming from. And I liked the sessions which we did, such as learning to cook new things, and arts and crafts that I could take home to do with my baby sister.

‘When I got older and started getting into mischief, they really helped. I could sit down with them and talk about my problems.

‘Just after I turned 16, when my mum and I really weren’t getting on, we had a big row and she kicked me out. I disappeared for about a month and I ended up in a violent relationship, taking drugs and homeless. But the day I was made homeless, my project worker rang me up. She had managed to track me down and she picked me up and got me a bed and breakfast place. She took me to see a homelessness officer and got me into women’s housing. I dread to think what would have happened otherwise.

‘When I was at Action for Children, I loved working with other kids, partly because it got me out of the house for a bit. I was a buddy to a couple of kids with disabilities. When I was 18, I volunteered in a school in Poland for six months, which was great. Now I work as a teaching assistant at a primary school with a lot of children with behavioural problems. I have been married for two years – my project worker came to the wedding – and want to have a family.

‘My project worker encouraged me to get back in touch with my mum and we have quite a good relationship now.

‘I can’t say that Action for Children did all this for me, but they made me want to do it for myself.’

**Action for Children Conwy Young Carers supports young carers in their caring roles**

*as long as it takes*