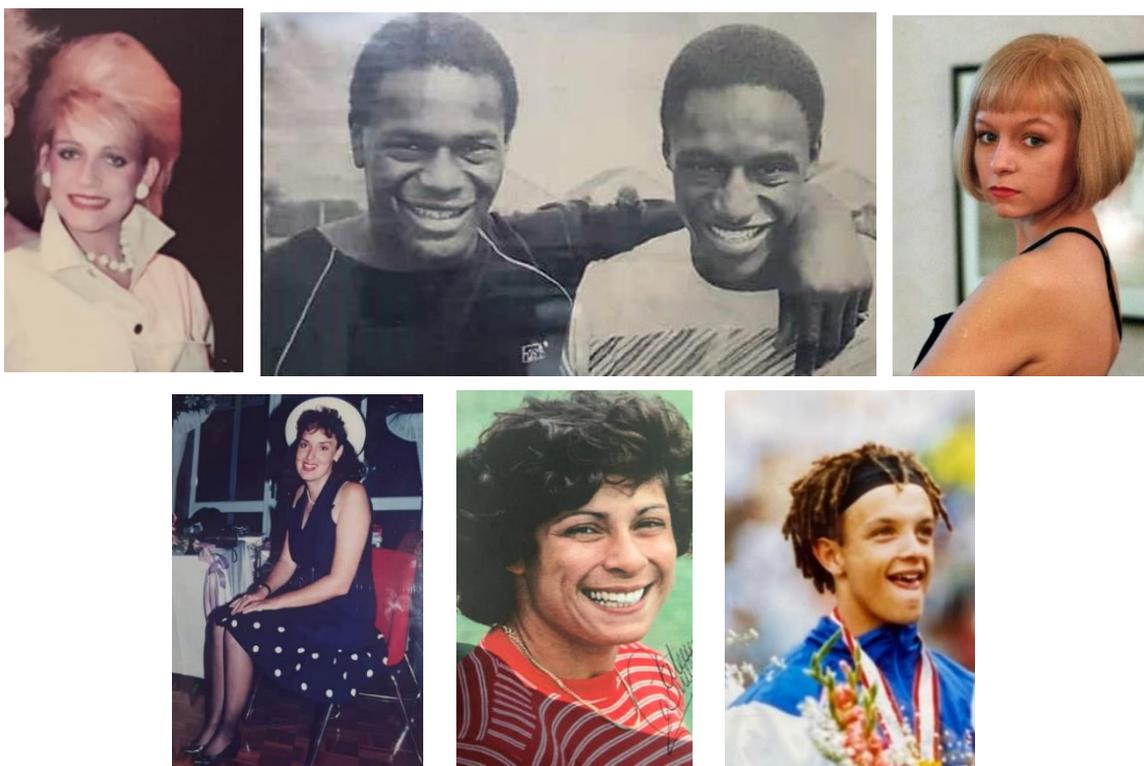


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#WhenIWas18: Celebrities Back Charity Campaign Calling on UK Government to 'End the Care Cliff'

Famous faces, including actresses Michelle Collins and Samantha Morton, author and broadcaster, Baroness Floella Benjamin, DJ Annie Mac, Olympic champions Fatima Whitbread and Jamie Baulch, comedian and podcaster Deborah Frances-White and former footballer John Fashanu share throwback photos and moving memories in support of Become's campaign to raise awareness of issues affecting young care leavers



26th October 2020: [Become](#), the national charity for children in care and care leavers, has launched a new campaign which aims to shine a light on the issues affecting young people leaving the care system.

The campaign – launched during National Care Leavers' Week 2020 - calls on the UK government to '**End The Care Cliff**', which each year sees thousands of 18-year-olds forced to leave the care system overnight.

The famous faces who have shown support for the campaign, include actress **Samantha Morton**, former footballer **John Fashanu** and Olympic medallists **Fatima Whitbread** and **Jamie Baulch** who all have experience of the care and adoption system, as well as comedian **Deborah Frances-White**, who was adopted as a newborn, children's campaigner, **Baroness Floella Benjamin** and **Michelle Collins**, an advocate for disadvantaged children and young people.

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The celebrities have taken to social media to share their personal memories of turning 18, describing what they were doing at that time and how they felt transitioning into adulthood to highlight how vital it is that the 'Care Cliff' is ended.

The 'Care Cliff'

Inspired by Become's mission to improve the lives and futures of care-experienced children and young people, the campaign aims to tackle the ongoing issue known as the 'Care Cliff'.

Upon turning 18, many young people in care are forced to move out of their home, into independent living arrangements or unsuitable accommodation, such as B&Bs - even if they don't feel ready or supported to live independently.

For many, this triggers an abrupt transition into adulthood, falling at a time in a young person's life when they need stability the most. A concerning number of care leavers end up homeless immediately and many who struggle with the lack of support become homeless later on.

Although local authorities can use their discretion about when is the right time for someone to leave care, due to a lack of suitable placements in the care system, too often the default is for individuals to be forced into independence.

During the COVID-19 crisis, the government stepped in to protect young people from this upheaval, pledging that 'no one has to leave care during this period'. This has been a lifeline to many youngsters.

Become. is now calling on the government to provide clarity on how long this pledge will last, and better yet, to permanently remove the 'care cliff' by giving more funding and flexibility to local authorities.

Katharine Sacks-Jones, CEO for Become, said:

“Living independently for the first time should be something young people are excited about, but for too many in the care system it's something they dread – knowing they could be forced into independence before they feel ready or supported.

“Ending the care cliff means that more young people will be able to move into independence when the time is right for them, and the right support is in place. This is especially important after what has been an incredibly difficult year for young people in care, many of whom went into the pandemic having already experienced significant trauma, mental health issues and feelings of isolation.”

Through the 'End the Care Cliff' campaign, Become. is also calling on the Education Secretary to work with charities, local authority leaders, service providers and, most crucially, to listen to the views and experiences of young care experienced people to address the insufficiency of placements within the care system.

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#WhenIWas18

To mark National Care Leavers' Week (26 October – 1 November), a range of celebrities have shown support for the campaign across their social media channels by sharing throwback images to when they were 18 and describing why ending the 'Care Cliff' is important to them:

Actress, Samantha Morton says:

"Leaving care for me was one of the most exciting yet frightening times of my life. Sadly, there wasn't the support available to me that would have helped me deal with the isolation, the fear and the worry that occurs when you are left out in the big wide world to fend for yourself. That's why, for National Care Leavers' Week, I'm supporting @Become1992 campaign to end the #carecliff where for care-leavers, turning 18 often triggers a move out of home, into unfamiliar accommodation with little support."

Olympic Medallist, Fatima Whitbread says:

"This is me at 18, preparing to compete in the European Junior Championships 1979. I grew up in the care system and that's what why I'm supporting Become to end the 'Care Cliff', where for care-leavers, turning eighteen often triggers a move out of home, into unfamiliar accommodation, with little support. I was lucky, because I had the support of my adopted family at the age of 18, but that isn't the case for most young people in the care system."

Actress Michelle Collins says:

"As a long term supporter of children and young people and as a mum to a young woman, I'm backing Become to end the 'Care Cliff' for young people who are forced to leave the care system at 18 with little support in place. We have to do better for our young people in care, especially now when it's such a tough time for young people."

Former professional footballer, Josh Fashanu says:

"This is me, with my brother Justin, having left the care system and started my career at Norwich City. Football gave me a structure and a future when I left the care system, but that's not the case for many young people, where turning 18 can mean leaving care with very little support. We need to help vulnerable youngsters and stop this sudden wrench that can happen when they're forced to leave the care system."

Baroness Floella Benjamin says:

"I'm supporting Become to end the 'care cliff' where for many young people, turning 18 means having to leave the care system with little support. We need to have more consideration and better policies in place for children and young people leaving care."

Comedian Deborah Frances-White says:

"At the age of 18 I was living in a nice warm safe home with my mother and father having been adopted as a newborn. I was never in care. But that's not the case for young people who are not adopted and are instead in the care system. For too many young people, leaving care

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means moving out of home with very few support mechanisms in place, which can be disastrous.”

Olympic Medallist and TV presenter, Jamie Baulch, recalls:

“This is me at 18. I had just won the World Junior Championships in the 4X100 metre relay and was on top of the world. I was fortunate that I had the love and support of my adoptive parents at this age, who helped me achieve my dreams, but for many young people leaving care at 18, the future isn't as bright. That's why I'm supporting Become, to end the care cliff for those leaving the care system at 18.”

Sir Martin James Narey DL, former Ministerial Advisor on Adoption, has also shown support for the campaign. He says:

"This is me at 18, in my first year at the then Sheffield Polytechnic. Living independently but with the safety net of parents still supporting me emotionally and financially. For National Care Leavers' Week, I'm supporting the @Become1992 campaign to end the #Carecliff where turning 18 often triggers the beginning of a life of isolation and too little support. Some progress has been made since my Staying Close recommendations but more needs to be done."

Get Involved

Become is encouraging the public to back the campaign by sharing their own experience of turning 18 and views on what needs to change for young care-experienced people on social media with the hashtag #carecliff and #wheniwas18.

For more information about Become or how to get involved, visit

www.becomecharity.org.uk/improving-the-care-system/national-care-leavers-week

Alternatively, head to @becomecharity on Instagram and Facebook or visit

@Become1992 on Twitter.

ENDS

For further information, interview or case study requests please contact The PHA Group:

become@thephagroup.com / 020 7025 1363

NOTES TO EDITORS:

About Become

Become is the national charity for children in care and care leavers. Since 1992, it's been working to improve the lives and futures of care-experienced children and young people.

Become campaigns to ensure that care-experienced people have the same chances as everyone else to live happy, fulfilled lives and that the care system is the best it can be. It works directly with young care-experienced people to ensure their voices and experiences are listened to, heard, and acted upon by those making decisions about the care system at local and national level.

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For any young care leavers who need support, or someone to talk to, Become's free care advice helpline is open 10.30 – 5pm weekdays on 0800 023 2033 or by email on advice@becomecharity.org.uk

You can also support Become to help more care leavers by texting BECOME to 70085 to donate £18. A donation could help ensure someone is able to answer an urgent call to Become's Care Advice Line from a young person worried about who will be there for them when they turn 18. (Texts cost £18 plus one standard rate message).