



A Parent Carers Story

Past and Future Journeys

Looking to the future is hard, scary and some days too exhausting to think about! But our children and young people now need us to stay focused and clear-minded more than ever. They deserve a future, even in these uncertain times, and it's our job to help them achieve a fulfilled life. Ellie is nearly 21 and looking back to her post-16 transition it all seemed very challenging: Little information, lack of resources, limited choice, unclear guidance, overwhelming anxiety about making the right decisions for Ellie's future. What's new?

Four years later her supposed career path seems seamless: 3 very happy years at Walford doing animal care and independent living skills, falling "in" and "out" of love. Followed by a fun 6 months at Shrewsbury Colleges doing introduction to catering. Slowly developing her confidence and self-worth by volunteering, thanks to Palmers and Severn Theatre. Striving for that future independence with the help of her support worker, social worker, Positive Steps family and Derwen short breaks. Always "keeping on dancing", going to the movies, riding, keeping fit and trying new things. Then lockdown hit.....

For the young woman with her "post it" notes of dreams on her bedroom wall the world stopped. All that hard work gone, left suspended in time.

Some days it was tough: Withdrawal, separation anxiety, isolation, weight increase, incessant talking to imaginary friends. Her and us! But simple pleasures – Zoom dance sessions with Shropshire Inclusive Dance, quizzes on WhatsApp, Joe Wickes, garden visits and walks with friends have seen us through. We've got to know our neighbours better, celebrated VE day and even been a winner in the Wem scarecrow competition.

Getting the balance right between risk taking and being risk averse is a series of decisions every family has to take for themselves - we've got to live. So, returning to college and starting new activities with Identity dance and Story Makers has helped give Ellie her enthusiasm and a purpose for life back.

New lockdown, more rules and changes – what now?

Ellie's still got her dreams and hopes and so have we for her. Just got to battle on, be flexible, make another plan, adjust, tweak and follow through. We can do this and so can you. Be strong, be safe and don't be afraid to ask for help. Keep talking to each other, look for inspiration and ideas, there's always so much to learn from and pass on to others on the same journey.

