



My book, my journey

Leanne Clark

To mark International Women's Day 2017 we're sharing the story of Leanne Clark, a young woman with learning disabilities who lives in Lochgelly, Fife. Leanne is a budding author who wants to use her writing as a way to share her experiences. As a recently awarded Fellow of RSA Scotland, Leanne hopes to use her platform to show other young women with learning disabilities what can be possible.

Every child who journeys through the care system has their own unique life experiences. The media is quick to tell us about the negative aspects of being in care but the fact that I am writing this blog today is proof, if proof were needed, that sometimes that journey can be a positive and life changing thing.

I like words. I like writing words, I like reading words and I think that words are powerful. I won the RSA Fellowship because people thought my story would be really good for people to read. All of the people in our group of RSA Fellows are award winners for one reason or another and the thing that connects us is that we all have a learning disability.

My book is about some of the experiences I had earlier in life. These were not very nice. I was bullied at school and at home, told by my family that I was worthless. I felt like I had no voice and that nobody was listening to me, or even interested in me. Looking back on this now I know it was the people around me that made me feel like that.

Things began to change for me when I moved in with my Shared Lives Fife carers, Dot and Rab. Finally I felt safe and happy because I knew things were changing for the better.

Once upon a time I felt as though I was in the dark, scared, lacked confidence, had low self-esteem, had no support and was treated like an outsider.

With Dot and Rab I knew I was supported and valued. The thing they gave me was their belief in me, in my abilities and my determination – that was all it took. Dot and Rab had asked themselves ‘What if we could make a difference to Leeanne’s life?’

When someone believes in you and asks ‘What if?’, you start to believe in yourself and you’re not so scared any more. That’s six little letters which make two powerful words. When you are lost and don’t know where to turn all it takes is one person to ask that question. One wee light that you can follow. One wee light that shows you how it can be.

I have started writing the book ‘My journey through life: the real me’. I want to write more books in the future maybe on the theme of education and independent living. I would like give talks on my journey to social workers and professionals in towns and cities, churches, schools and more. My lecturer May who is one of my supporters has really been a great help and is encouraging me with my writing.

We’ve got loads of ideas for my project of writing my book and my presentations of my journey. Linda from SCLD and Jamie from the RSA have met with May and myself and we have the plan to make my book happen.

I've been in the newspaper a lot recently and I've also featured on the Fife College website. One article was about my book and what is it about. Another one was about promoting Shared Lives Fife. It was amazing to be in so many papers. So many people were talking about all articles I wrote. Some people would come up to me saying 'I seen you in the paper!' but the thing was, I didn't know who they were!

Also, someone from Fife College emailed me saying I had a letter and would need come to collect it. I thought to myself and said 'Really?', but I went and got the letter. It was from Roger Mullin, the MP for Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath in Fife. Roger was delighted to find out that I was writing my own book and congratulated me on my RSA Fellowship award. I was overwhelmed that he sent me a letter.

Now, the words I use to describe my feelings are much more positive. Courageous. Independent. Inspirational. Happy. Curious. Keen. Healthy. Talented.

My book will be published soon. I'm on Chapter 4 and when you read it, I hope it will change your views of people who learn differently. For me, the next leg of the journey is filled with hope and ambition for a bright and successful life.

Thank you for reading my blog! I will let you know how I am getting on with my book.



Find out more about Leeanne and watch a video about her work by visiting www.sclد.org.uk/rsafellowship