

Greater Manchester Youth Network
& Cottongrass Homes present

INDEPENDENCE DAYS

LIFE IN A SUPPORTED HOME



TRAFFORD
COUNCIL

GMCA
GREATER
MANCHESTER
COMBINED
AUTHORITY

A SUPPORTED HOUSE,
SOMEWHERE IN THE
NORTH WEST...

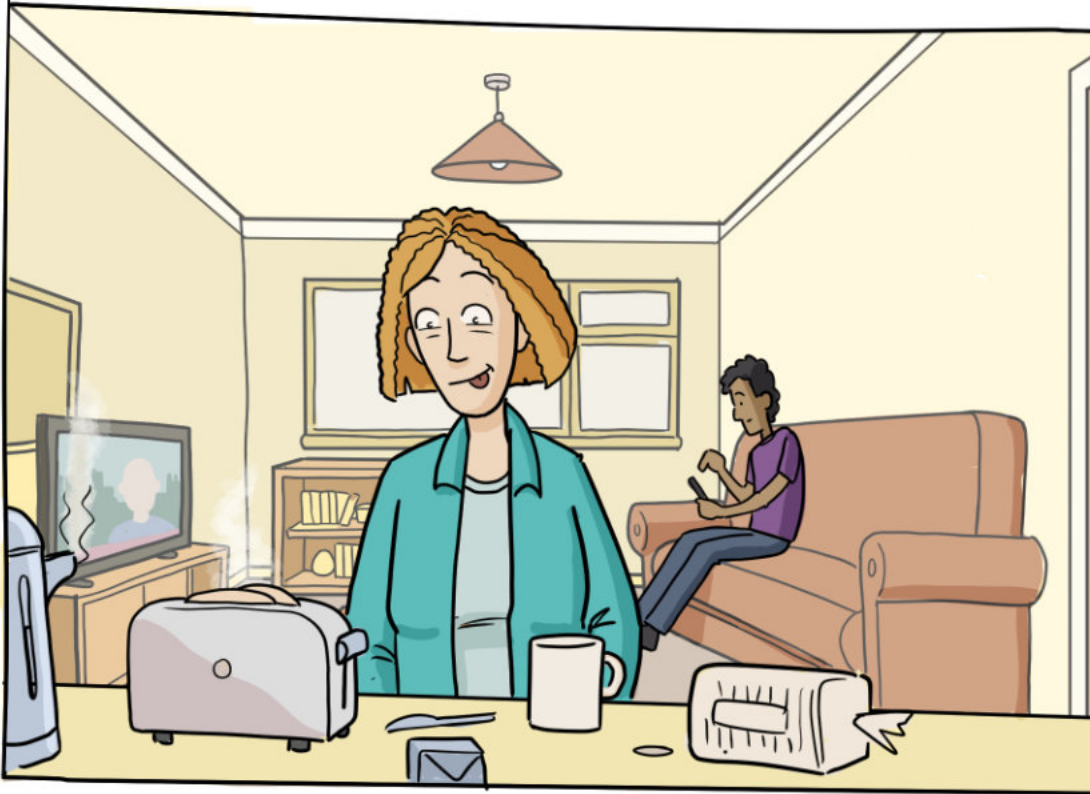
GEMMA'S BEEN IN THE SUPPORTED HOUSE
FOR 3 MONTHS. SHE RELOCATED FROM
LONDON AND IS SLOWLY EXPLORING
SALFORD AND NEARBY MANCHESTER.

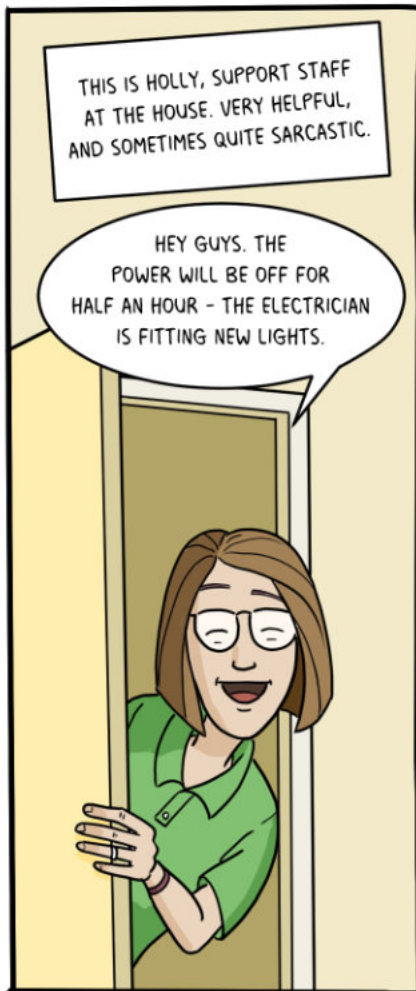
FINALLY, THE
LOUNGE TO MYSELF FOR
AN HOUR, EVERYONE'S
OUT!

WOAH!

NASIR HAS BEEN HERE A FEW WEEKS.
HE'S STILL GETTING HIS BEARINGS OF
SUPPORTED LIVING AND LIFE IN THE UK.
HE'S RELOCATED FROM ANOTHER COUNTRY.

OH, SORRY.







MANCHESTER UNITED

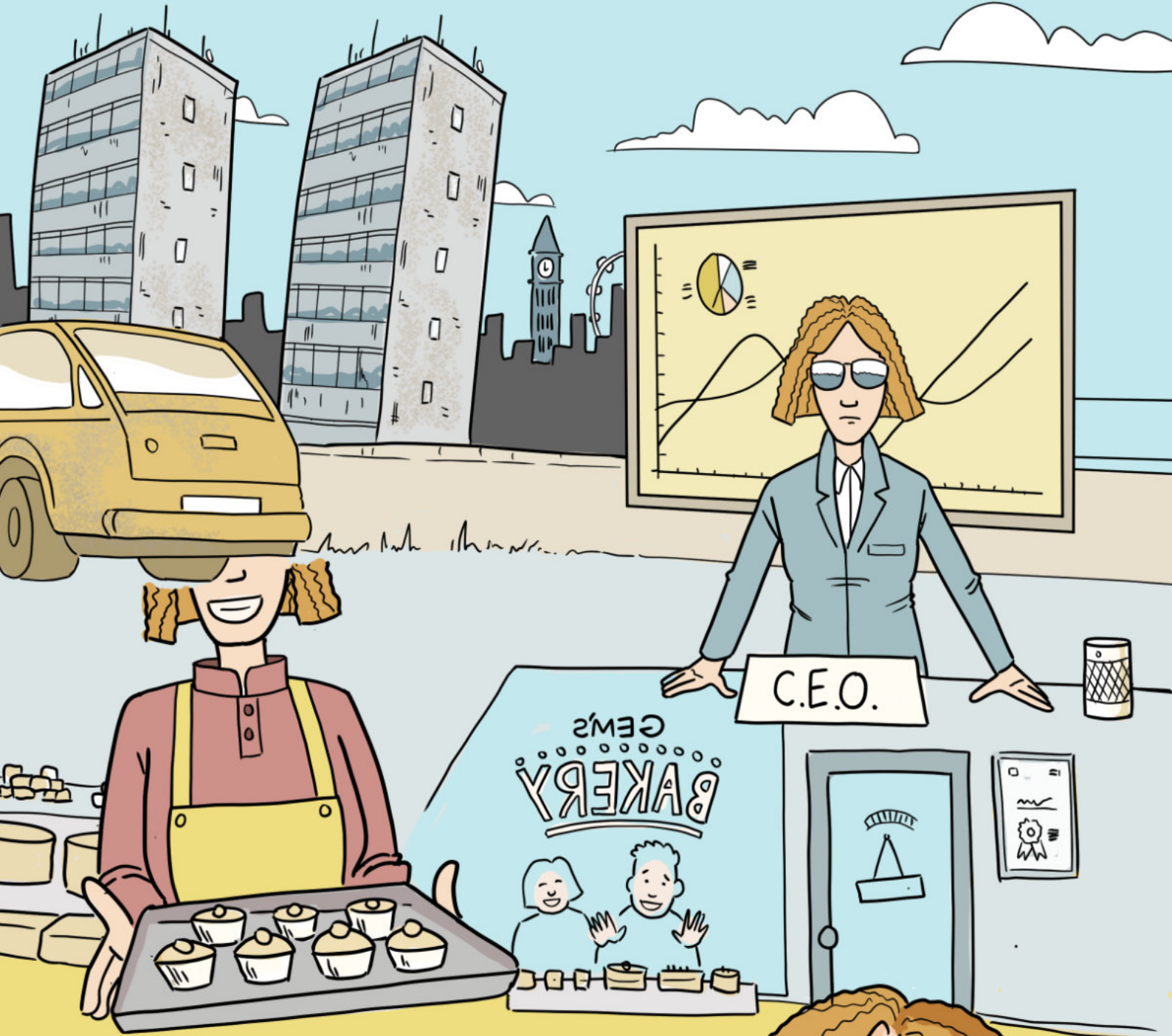
BACK HOME
IT WAS VERY TOUGH.
I WANTED TO COME TO
MANCHESTER - FOR
MANCHESTER UNITED!

I WANT TO BE A
FOOTBALL PLAYER, PLAYING
AT OLD TRAFFORD!
THAT IS MY DREAM.

IF I DO NOT GET TO
BE A FOOTBALLER, I WANT
TO BE A MECHANIC.
I LIKE TO FIX THINGS.

ALSO, ONE DAY...MY
OWN FAMILY TOO.

WHAT ABOUT YOU
GEMMA?

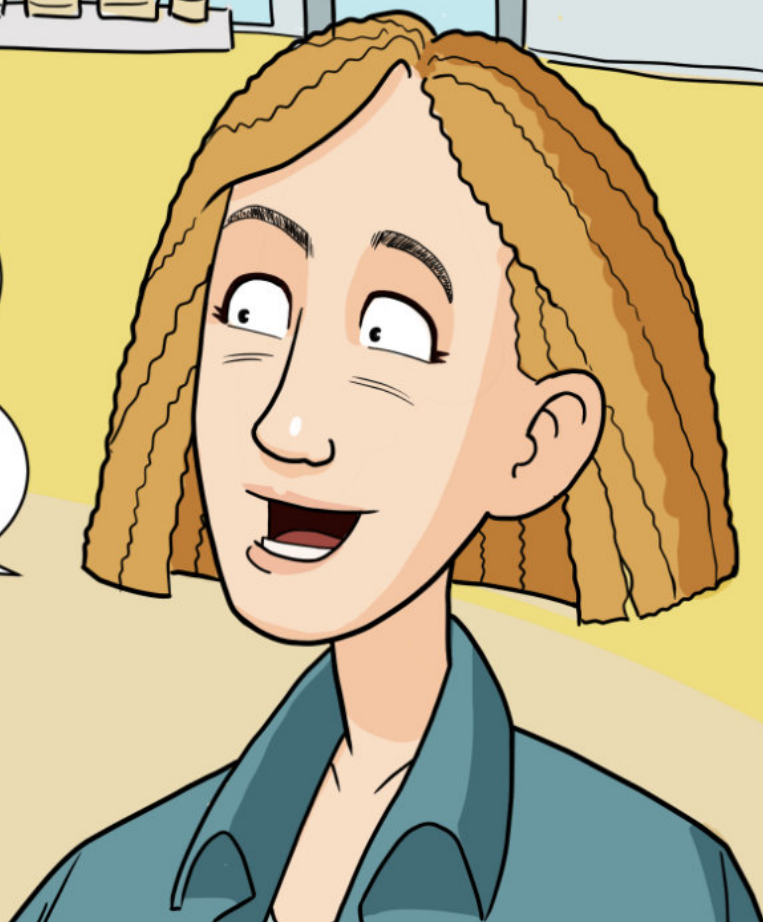


I MOVED UP
HERE FROM LONDON.
CRAP FAMILY STUFF.

I WANT A CAREER,
NOT JUST A JOB, SOMETHING
WHERE THE MONEY GETS BETTER
AND I CAN MOVE UP.

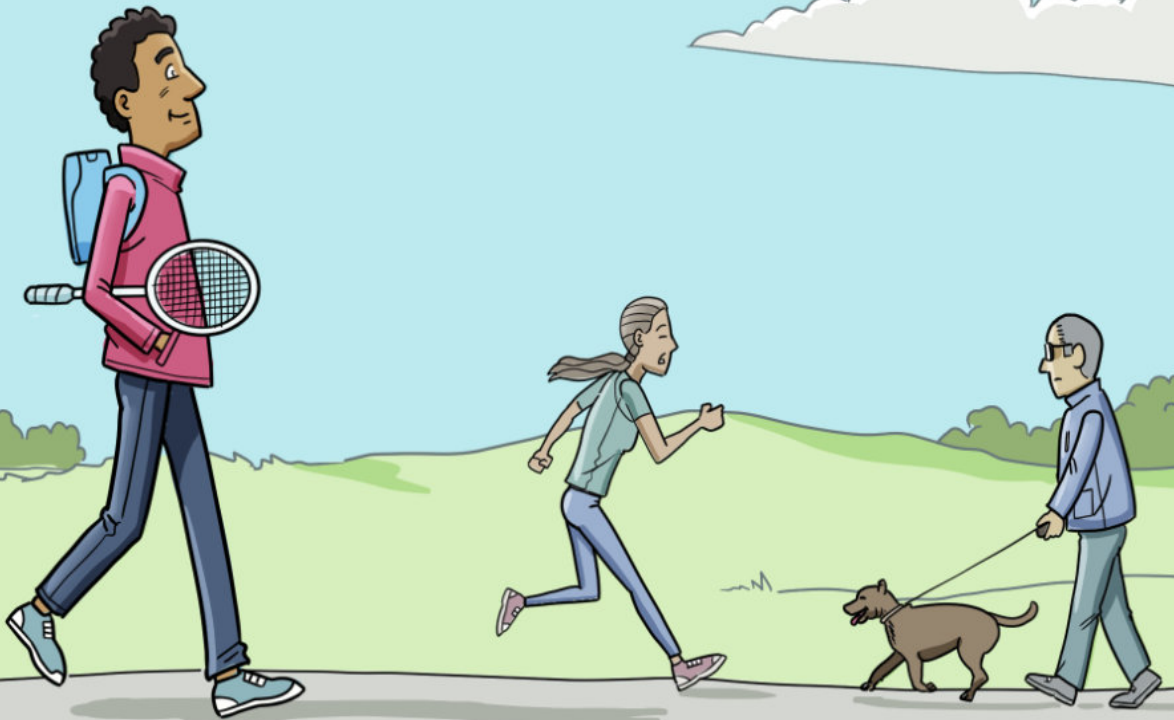
OR MAYBE
MY OWN BAKERY!
I'M GOOD BAKING,
DONE THAT SINCE I
WAS LITTLE.

I'D PROBABLY
EVEN STAY HERE,
SALFORD ISN'T
TOO BAD.



WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT LIVING HERE, NASIR?

I FEEL SAFE, THAT IS IMPORTANT TO ME.
THE CARE WORKER I HAVE IS GOOD. THEY
HELPED ME WITH SOME INTERVIEWS,
AND FOUND A SPORTS CLUB FOR ME.



I MEAN THAT'S THEIR JOB, RIGHT?

I USED TO THINK PEOPLE WERE ONLY BEING NICE TO ME
BECAUSE THEY WANTED SOMETHING. IT'S BEEN GREAT
TO HAVE SUPPORT WITH MY MENTAL HEALTH STUFF.



YOUNG PEOPLE IN NORTH MANCHESTER
WERE ASKED ABOUT THEIR LIFE
IN SUPPORTED ACCOMODATION.

THEY WERE ALSO ASKED ABOUT THE CHALLENGES
THEY FACED, AND WHAT THEY THOUGHT COULD
BE IMPROVED. THIS IS WHAT THEY SAID...

"MY CARE WORKER
IS REALLY SUPPORTIVE"

"BETTER JOB
OPPORTUNITIES"

"SALFORD IS A
GOOD PLACE
TO LIVE"

"MY EMOTIONS
ARE LIKE THE
WEATHER!"

TO BE SEEN BY
EMPLOYERS

I GET HELP FINDING
ACTIVITIES
I WANT TO DO

SOME MORE
TRANSPORT
OPTIONS WOULD
BE NICE

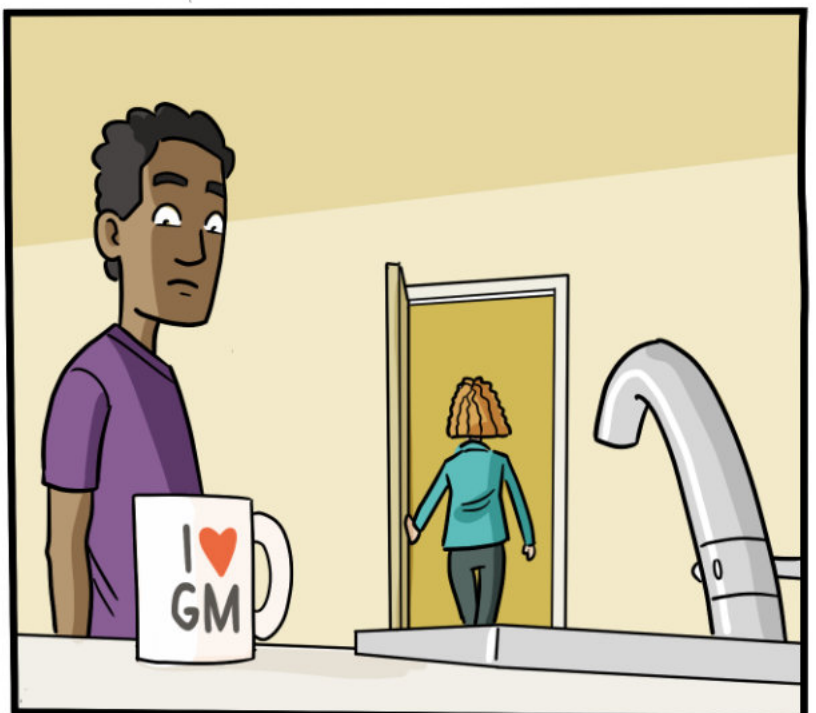
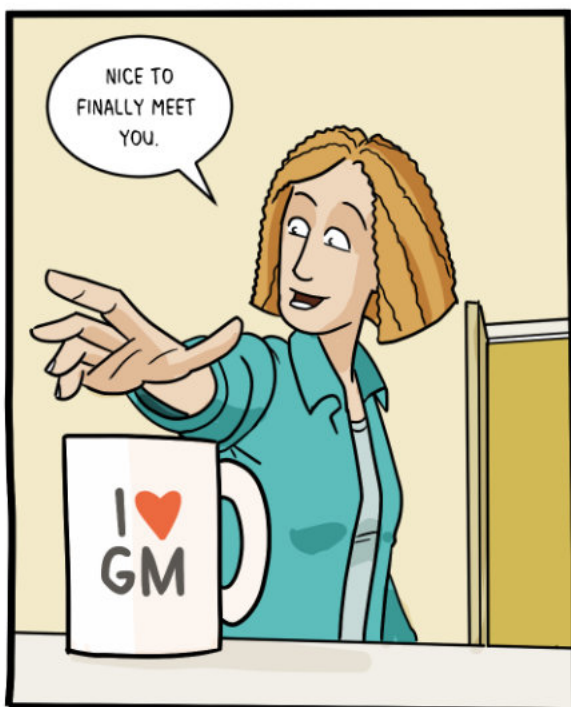
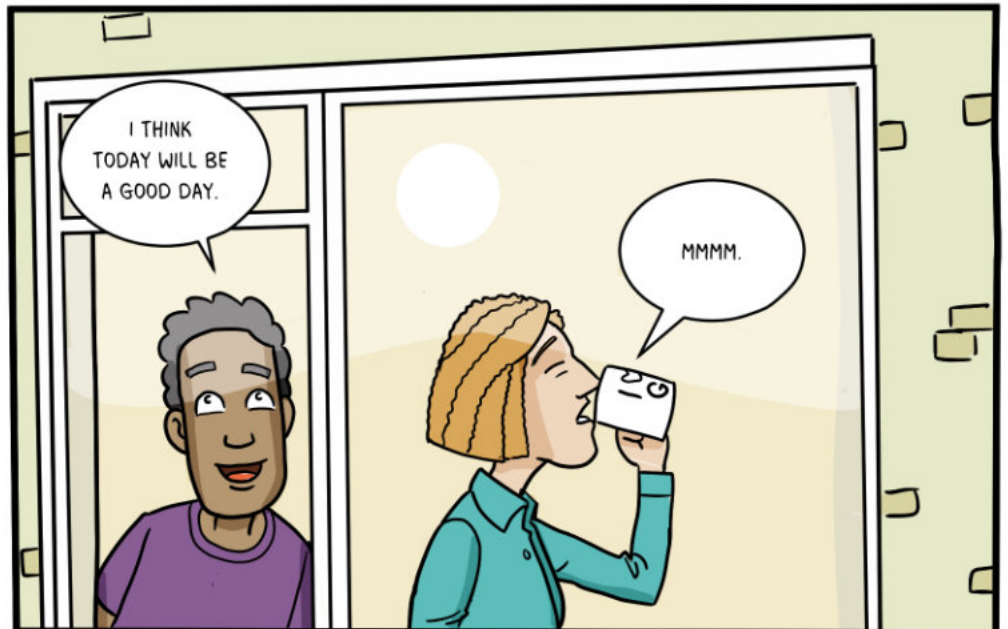
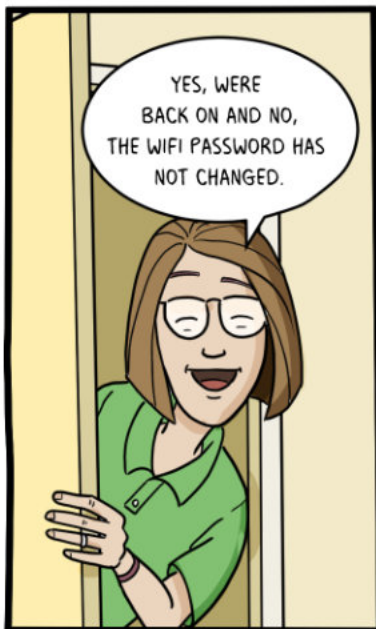
"I JUST WANT TO BE
ABLE TO PAY MY WAY"

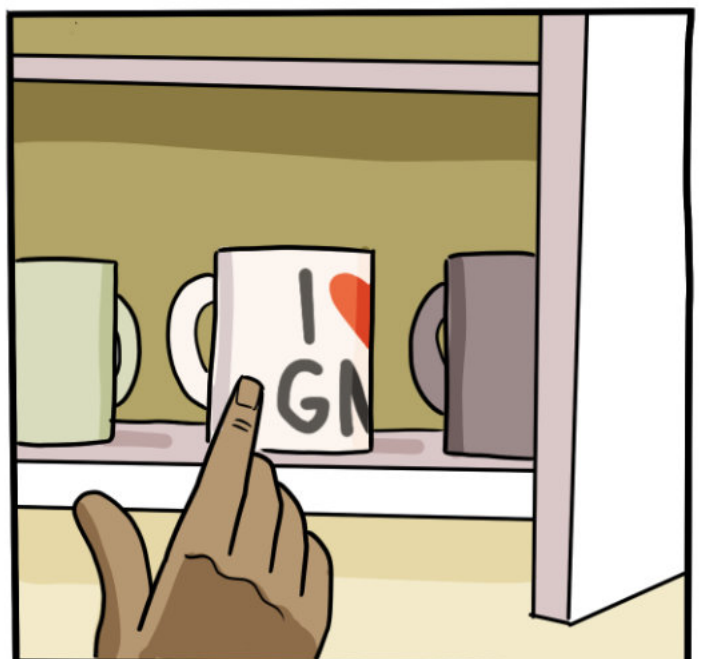
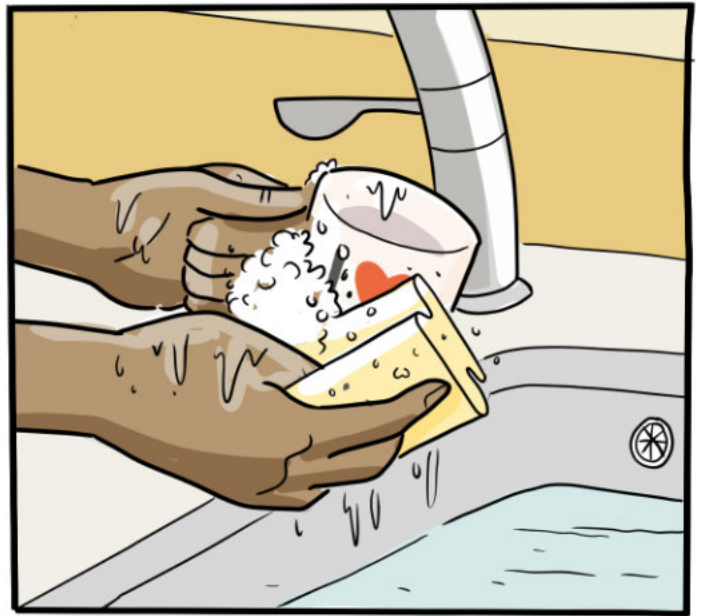
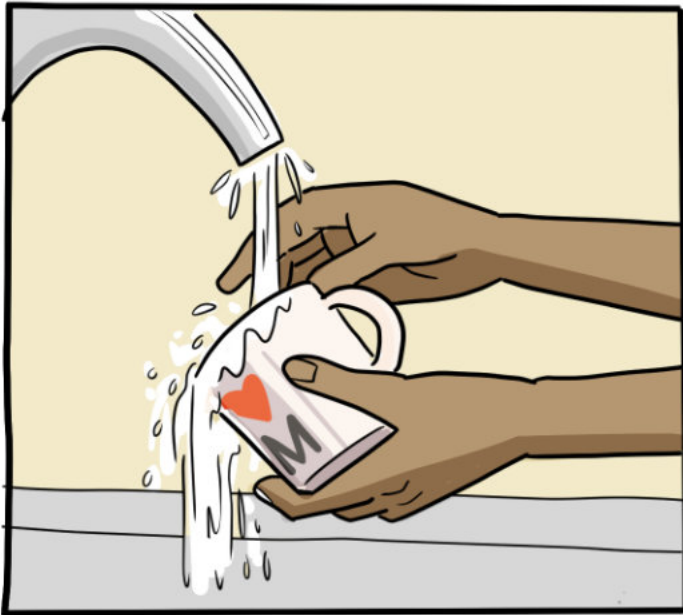
"I FEEL SAFE HERE"

"THE PHONE CALLS
AND INTERVIEWS
ARE ENDLESS"

"I DON'T LIKE
BEING ASKED
AWKWARD
QUESTIONS"







Key learning from

THE SNAKES AND LADDERS PROJECT:

YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES OF SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION IN COTTONGRASS HOMES

What Young People Valued

Young people highlighted several aspects of supported accommodation that contributed positively to their experiences including:

- Strong, supportive relationships with staff and support workers.
- Opportunities to make new friends and develop social connections.
- Feeling safe within their accommodation and wider environment.
- Receiving effective support when moving into supported accommodation. One young person described feeling "10/10 supported" since their move, highlighting the positive impact of a well-supported transition.

Supporting Independence Example

A positive example of practice highlighted by young people was the provision of travel training, particularly for Separated Young People (formally known as Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People or UASC). Many young people in this cohort may be unfamiliar with their local area and transport systems when they first arrive, making support to travel independently especially valuable. One Separated young person described how travel training enabled them to access shops, college, and other opportunities independently. This demonstrates how practical life-skills support from supported accommodations can build confidence, promote independence, and help young people develop stronger connections within their local community.

Key Learning and Opportunities for Development

Alongside the positive experiences shared, young people identified ways supported accommodation could further strengthen support including:

- Increased opportunities for social activities, particularly outdoor activities that can help young people build friendships and reduce isolation.
- Greater support with employment, including help finding jobs, developing employability skills, and creating opportunities to connect directly with employers.
- More preparation and practical advice for young people transitioning into both supported accommodation and onward to independent living.

Specific Learning for Separated Young People

Separated young people highlighted additional challenges that may benefit from targeted support including:

- Learning English and accessing language support, including translation and interpretation services where needed.
- Having consistent guidance from trusted adults who can help them understand and navigate complex processes and services.
- Building confidence, developing social connections, and establishing local support networks, particularly as many young people arrive without existing family or friendship networks.

Feedback highlighted the important role supported accommodation providers can play in helping separated young people build relationships and establish local support networks through shared activities, community engagement, and informal opportunities for connection, such as cooking and sharing meals together.

Cottongrass Homes already supports this through opportunities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award, weekly communal meals, film nights, a reading club, and football sessions. Young people's feedback suggests that continuing to build on and promote opportunities such as these could further support friendship building and reduce feelings of isolation.

Wider Challenges Identified

Some young people reflected on the impact of their experiences within the wider care system on their wellbeing and mental health. This highlights the importance of trauma-informed and emotionally supportive approaches that promote stability, belonging, and wellbeing.

Shaped entirely through youth voice, this publication places the experiences, perspectives, and reflections of residents at its heart. We are especially grateful to the young people who generously shared their stories and insights; their openness and honesty made this resource possible. We would like to thank the staff team at Cottongrass Homes for creating the space and support needed for young people's voices to be heard and valued, and John Cooper (www.rocketsteps.co.uk) our visual artist, for helping to bring their experiences and ideas to life through creative and engaging artwork. We hope this publication offers guidance, reassurance, and encouragement to young people beginning their journey into supported accommodation.

Finally, we would like to thank the Regional Care Cooperative and Trafford Council for their valued support and investment. While their funding enabled this project, it is the voices and experiences of the young people that have given it its purpose and impact.

