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Awards Category: Category 8: The Untold Story

Awards Entry Number: C80005

Name of project, service, individual entering or nomination,
: Norma Lawrie (Manager Forrest Street Children's House)

1. Overview

Please provide a short introduction to the person, project or service. Briefly mention any aims and objectives if you think they are relevant. You must clearly outline how it relates to the [category](#) you are entering. You should answer any questions we have asked in the [introduction](#) for this award category.: Norma Lawrie, Manager of Forrest Street Children's House has worked in residential childcare for over 25 years. She is my idol! She is the most hard-working person I know who puts children at the heart and soul of everything she does. She works tirelessly to achieve the best outcomes possible for "her weans" as she calls us. "Her weans" aren't just the young people she cares for at the time, "her weans" extend to EVERY young person that she has ever looked after. Testament to this is the fact she still has people in their 30's come back to visit her or phone her up to share their news, or get advice. She is so genuine and everything you feel, it's like she feels it with you. You could go to her for advice in a serious pickle with no clue what to do, and leave a conversation with a clear cut plan on how to move forward. You enter a conversation feeling like David, and leave like Goliath! She makes you feel so valued and empowered, nothing is impossible or broken, everything can be achieved or fixed.

2. What did you do?

Please describe the work carried out and explain how it meets the [criteria](#) we have asked for in the 'what we are looking for' section for this award. Highlight any practice which was distinctive, innovative or creative and include details of on-going work still in progress.: Norma has and continues to make every young person feel loved, wanted and capable of everything and anything. If there is anything you need help with, she does her utmost to help. Her Children's House is among the best in Scotland with the Care Inspectorate reports of all 6's three out of four years, and two 6's and two 5's the other year, testament to that. She is a pillar of strength in what can be an extremely chaotic life in the care system. She is hard-working, strong willed, determined and so passionate about creating the best life possible for every young person she comes into contact with. Her job doesn't start 9 and end at 5. She does her utmost to maintain the safety of her staff and "weans" no matter the cost or time of day/night. I suffer from mental health problems that went undiagnosed for years until I entered Norma's care. In my initial acute phase, she sat with me all night, I couldn't find the words to tell her what was wrong or even say anything, "That's okay", she said "Sometimes there are no words, or sometimes it takes a while to figure the right words to say, so just know I'm right next to you, for however long it takes." And she meant that, literally! You see, mental health services in Scotland for young people are almost non-existent and once you diagnose someone, then you are duty bound to provide care for them. So understandably, but not agreeably medical professionals are reluctant to diagnose you. Norma fought tooth and nail for me and a diagnosis, and helped the professionals see through the "I'm fine" mask. She knows me inside out, and knew fine well I wasn't. And when my journey in mental health services began I knew there was no-one else I wanted by my side. She agreed to be my named person, which is a massive undertaking, it's a legal document, and requires attendance at mental health tribunals and CPA's something she didn't have to do, as I was 16 and recently had my supervision order revoked I was in care voluntary so she didn't have to support me, but rather chose to, (and had to justify this to her bosses) and it's a choice she made that I will be forever grateful for as even though I didn't need any confirmation that she genuinely cared, what more could someone do for you? I was then transferred over the border to an adolescent hospital in Middlesbrough England, and Norma undertook the 7 hour

one-way journey to visit me every month, she attended every meeting and in my darkest hours, was on the other end of the phone practically everyday to slowly but surely build me up. On the days where I had no self-worth or confidence, 3 simple words used too sparsely in care "I love you" made me feel the luckiest person in the universe, I was worthy, I was wanted, I was loved.

3. What did you achieve

Please describe and provide evidence of how the work has made a positive impact to the lives of those you have helped to support. Evidence can include research, practice, wisdom, service data or lived experience. Aim to reflect the criteria in the 'what we are looking for' section where possible.:

15 months later, when I was transferred back up to Scotland, Norma was still there, attending meetings, building me up and putting me on the right path at the same time. When I was at my lowest and felt that I had nothing to live for, she always grounded me and helped me see that I had so much to live for. It has never been a case of telling me what I wanted to hear, rather what I needed to hear, On one visit, she told me that this was the last time she would be visiting, "Not because I don't want to see you, but you need to come home, see all the staff, sit on the couch with a cup of tea, not a visiting room, you need to be where you belong." Regardless of that full sentence, there are two of the most important words for a Care-experienced child to hear and that is "Home & Belong" And so I did go home, initially for day visits, but as I travelled further on my journey to recovery, I was eligible for overnight "home passes" When I phoned Norma with my concerns of being well enough for home passes but nowhere to go, I was severely chastised for "not seeing what's right in front of me, Of course you have somewhere to go, there called home passes for a reason, for you to go home, so that is where you will go" In a family home, this is not such a big issue. In a children's home with more children in need than beds this presents a challenge, without factoring in I had also been formally discharged from care and now considered a "Care Leaver" But Norma fought for me because "Of course I fought for you, your one of my 1000+ weans" In today's climate, funding is rearing its ugly head more and more and at the tail end of my journey, there was funding provided to the private clinic in Ayr, My first own tenancy AND Forrest St, I wasn't in any of these placements full time. But not once was it an issue. And just as Norma fought for me to get help 2 years previously, because I needed it, she was now fighting for my discharge, because I was ready. Words cannot and I don't think will ever describe how grateful I am to have been blessed with someone such as Norma in my life, to have a constant in my life who I know is going nowhere because "She'll be there at my graduation, with her hat, Kleenex, sore hands from clapping and sore throat from shouting 'that's my wean'" is honestly the most euphoric feeling I think I could ever experience. I'm not another "Bum on a bed" I am Beth. I am one of the few, very lucky young people who can say they are proud to have come from a children's home, with someone like Norma, wouldn't you?

4. Why should you receive an award?

Please summarise the reasons you feel this person, project or issue deserves an award in no more than 100 words.: Norma should win this award firstly because I couldn't think of anyone more worthy, but secondly because I can't even buy a bunch of flowers without being scolded for "wasting my money on her" But the truth is, no amount of money on the planet could ever be wasted but nor would it ever be enough to show my gratitude. But she doesn't do it for thanks or recognition, she does it because she cares. She is so humble and selfless and the person I aspire to be like everyday, and will do for the rest of my life.