What 25 Means to Me
Jake, Youth Ambassador

Tell us a bit about yourself

I am 17 years old and currently studying for my A-Levels at sixth form college, my subjects are history, politics and biology. I chose history and politics as I have always had an interest in both subjects, and they coincide well with each other. I chose biology as it is needed for the university course I hope to complete, paramedic science. Outside of sixth form, I am part of the Army Cadet Force, a youth advocate with the British Youth Council and a keen runner – training for a marathon in June! After finishing my education, I hope to go on to serve in the British Army.

What obstacles have you had to overcome during your adolescence?

My own mental health was a challenge, which was more of a problem in my younger teenage years. There is not enough targeted support for young people, and it is something that is not talked about, and even stigmatised, especially for men. It feels less appropriate to talk about, which it shouldn't.

Another challenge is getting into the workforce, there are less opportunities for young people to get into work and we are unable to gain the experience needed to hold a successful career during adulthood, especially during the pandemic. The jobs that should be available to us are being cut, such as, retail staff and waitering. As a direct result of the pandemic, I have had my work at the local pub cut and changed multiple times.

Who helped you get to where you are now?

Redthread – they helped me find my feet when I presented with trauma and helped me build my own confidence on how I see myself in life. This includes developing my public speaking skills – I was given the opportunity to speak to the Minister for Crime

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and Policing, to critique and advise them on how to better support and engage with young people. Ultimately, Redthread has helped me to believe in myself and what I'm capable of, no matter what life throws at me.

Mental health services that have supported me, for me it was support with relationships and looking after myself by balancing my studying and personal life. The support I received highlighted that although studies are important, so is my personal life. Tips they gave me included: making timetables, physical exercise and just getting out and being active. Running has been a huge help for me in particular. Running has helped so much as it provides a great chance to clear your mind and it also improves your energy and happiness.

Following my encounter with major trauma, Base51 really helped me. Base 51 is a service available to young people, where you can access counselling and support, it really helped me to recover.

What advice do you wish you could have given your younger self?

Not to be ashamed of the problems I am going to face, don't be discouraged if you mess up or get something wrong, it happens. Don't try to hide your mental health, the quicker you accept you are struggling, the quicker you can find the support you need and the less likely you are to reach a crisis point.

And finally, not to worry as much as I did about studies, studying and having a personal life can go side by side – otherwise it's a dark path you can go down, not being able to balance studies and the rest of your life.

How can society better support young people going through the challenging transition from adolescence to adulthood?

Society needs to change by treating young people going through this transition equally, no matter what their gender or sexuality etc. is - we all go through it so we should be helping and

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supporting each other. I also think more support is needed; adolescence needs are often ignored. The government lacks input from young people, so our needs are often overlooked and dampened down. The government should help young people access services, such as mental health teams, as well as educating young people on joining the workforce, and life as an adult, which would help lots of young people through the transition.

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