

# Make a difference... to a young person's life

The council is launching a new fostering campaign to inspire local people to make a difference to the lives of children and young people. We met a foster carer who uses his music skills to mentor teenagers, and a young man whose life he has helped to turn around.

**D**aren Carrington, from Uxbridge, has been fostering young people for nine years. Despite his successful career as a music producer under the alias name 'Major', working with the likes of Amy Winehouse, Ciara and Soul II Soul, Daren credits his work as a foster carer as his most important and rewarding achievement.

**Daren** said: "There was a rise in knife crime in the UK at the time, and I felt I had the right skills to mentor young people and guide them in the right direction. I contacted the council to enquire about mentoring but when the social worker visited, she thought I'd make a great foster carer. I was still touring with bands and working in my recording studio, so I wanted to make sure fostering was the right fit for me and my lifestyle."

"When I started fostering it was not what I expected at all! It was an experience and in the first year I'd cared for 40 or so kids from all over the world including Afghanistan, Australia, the US and Iraq. I chose to help children over the age of 10 as this is a key time in their development and I felt I could

have the biggest impact on influencing their choices. It was a big eye-opener, but as a single carer I just did exactly what my mum did for me as she was a single mum, and it's been the most rewarding thing I've ever done.

"After my first year, two brothers came to stay with me on a two-week placement, but they wanted to stay long-term and I just loved them so much. They've now been with me for eight years. They were moved around a lot, so when they came to me they needed stability. I set clear boundaries from day one and they are such good boys. I'm so proud of them both, with one in sixth form and the other studying at college."

Daren's role as music producer has often helped him to connect with the young people he cares for. He said: "Music is so powerful and when the kids walk into my house and see the recording studio they are always fascinated. Music is an amazing



Gildo practising his football skills

mentoring tool as it speaks a universal language, and just making music and jamming helps to calm their mood. When I've fostered kids who don't speak English, they can pick up on the

melody and the mood of music and get involved."

But perhaps Daren has had the biggest impact on Gildo, who

has been living with him long-term. He said: "My eldest is now 22 and he is what I can only describe as the perfect son. He arrived in the UK from Angola, aged 15, having never met his birth parents and was forced to live on the streets. He was exposed to criminal behaviour and could have gone down a very damaging road."

"When he first came to stay, I put on a barbeque to welcome him but he couldn't speak English and went straight up to his room. Within a year he was speaking fluent English, doing well at school and he is now studying for his degree. He's the funniest guy and now we can't shut him up! I helped guide him along the right path and he learnt quickly and now he's turned his life around."

**Gildo** was moved into a children's home at the age of 15 for a few months before he was placed with Daren in foster care. He said: "Living with other children who also didn't speak any English was difficult, and it was hard to communicate with the

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"I had no-one when I moved to the UK, but Daren gave me a family. His mum became my grandma, his sister

became my aunt, the boys are my brothers. I can talk to him about anything and back then he was like a dad to me - but now that I'm older he's more like my best friend."

So, what would Gildo say to anyone who is thinking about fostering a teenager? He said: "If you're thinking about fostering - do it. You might change someone's life."

Daren added: "Do it from the heart and you can't go wrong. It's challenging as these kids have been through so much due to the situations they may have been exposed to, but you'll never be doing it alone. We have a team of foster carers who help and support each other and there are loads of training courses you can do. By fostering a young person - you can really change their life, help them to achieve and show them the right path."

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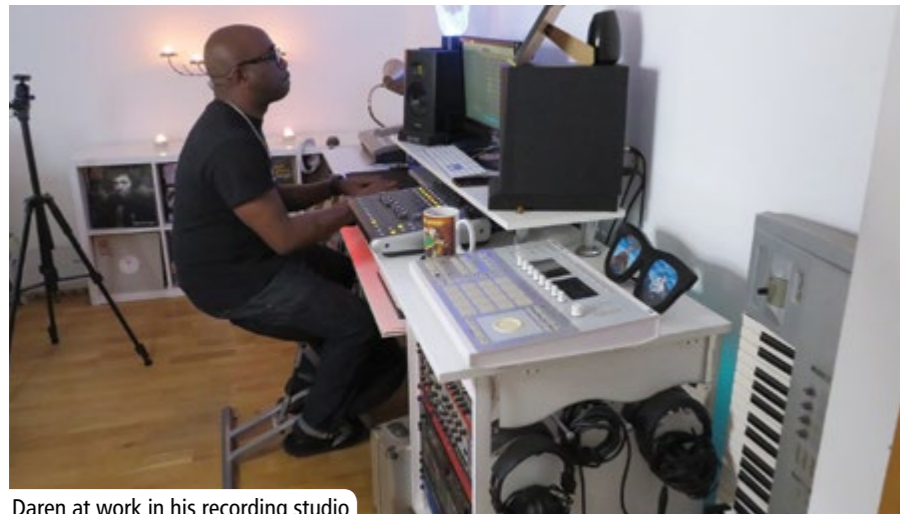
staff as they would change each day. When I met Daren, it made me feel 10 times better having just one person take care of me, and he has great banter with young people.

"Daren helped me to translate and communicate, helping with things like doctor's appointments and speaking to teachers. Living with the other two boys was great, like having two little brothers, and it was much easier to pick up the language in a house full of people speaking English. It was also really cool having a recording studio in the house!"

Seven years on, Gildo is now in his second year at university studying Criminology and Psychology and is a semi-professional footballer for Egham Town. He said: "Daren used to take me to football training at Hillingdon Abbots Football Club where I was scouted by QPR, and I trained there for four years. Daren has helped me every step of the way and I'd love to sign professional once I've got my degree. He helps me when clubs make offers and he still tells me to do my work even though I'm 22!"



Daren and Gildo



Daren at work in his recording studio

**Cllr Jane Palmer, Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care**, said: "Our dedicated foster carers devote their time, love and support to make the most incredible difference to the lives of young people in need."

"Fostering is one of the most rewarding things you can do and is a great way to give back to the community. We're looking for kind-hearted foster carers like Daren to help guide a child or teenager along the right path. If you think you could make a difference to a young person's life, please contact our fostering team today!"



For more information on fostering, visit [www.hillingdon.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/fostering), call 0800 783 1298 or email [fosteringrecruitment@hillingdon.gov.uk](mailto:fosteringrecruitment@hillingdon.gov.uk)