



50 giving stories shared as part of The Marketors' Trust's 50th Anniversary celebrations in 2026

No 41: A spark at the moment it matters most



A still from the film the Trust funded to mark the Spark Foundation's 21st year.

For most young people, turning eighteen is a beginning, not a deadline. There is usually a family behind them: someone to call when money runs short, a spare room to come back to, a hand with a deposit or a first car. For the many thousands who grow up in care, that safety net often simply is not there. There are more than 100,000 children in care in the UK, and most leave the system at eighteen to manage housing, bills, budgeting and the start of adult life largely on their own. Research suggests care leavers are around nine times more likely to face homelessness than their peers.

The Spark Foundation exists to change those odds. Set up in 2003 by the Kent fostering agency ISP and now a charity in its own right, it gives small grants to young people up to the age of 26 who are, or have been, in care across England and Wales. The grants are modest but precisely aimed: the essentials to furnish a first home, the equipment for a course, the things that make training or a first job possible. Given at the right moment, a small amount can change the shape of a life, providing, in the charity's own words, the spark that makes a difference.

Over the past decade the Spark Foundation has helped more than a thousand young care leavers this way, and demand keeps climbing year on year.



Applications keep rising: more than 1,000 young care leavers helped through the charity's grants in a decade.

In 2024, as the charity marked its twenty-first year, The Marketors' Trust funded something a little different: a film. Not a grant to hand out, but a way to show the world what those grants actually do. By following the real stories behind the numbers, it puts faces and futures to a statistic, and makes the case, far more powerfully than any leaflet could, for why this work matters.



Real conversations, real stories: a scene from the Trust-funded film.

For a small charity, that kind of storytelling is gold dust, and usually out of reach. A well-made film can be shown to funders, shared with supporters and used for years, working long after it is made to bring in the donations that become the next round of grants. It turns a single piece of Trust support into something that keeps opening doors.

There is a fitting symmetry in it. The Spark Foundation gives young people a spark at the moment it matters most; The Marketors' Trust, in funding this film, gave the charity one of its own, a small, well-placed investment designed to catch and spread. Twenty-one years of changing quiet lives, and a film to help carry that story into the next twenty-one.



Website: www.sparkfoundation.org.uk

How to give

Every gift, at whatever level, helps secure the Trust's grants, awards and care for the next fifty years.

To give, go to: <https://www.marketors.org/the-marketors-trust/support-ways-to-give>

The Marketors' Trust, Registered charity no. 272339