

# VOYPIC

voice of young people in care

**A MAGAZINE FOR CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**SPECIAL CHRISTMAS 2012 E-ISSUE EDITION**

# WELCOME!

Welcome to our special Christmas edition newsletter. After the excesses of Christmas, many people like to get healthy in the New Year. Featured in this edition are articles on taking time to relax, keeping safe in winter and eating healthily. Check out our articles on the real Mario Balotelli and how to deal with life's ups and downs. VOYPIC has lots of events planned over the next few months so keep an eye on our website [www.voypic.org](http://www.voypic.org), like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.

Eat well, sleep well, live well!

The VOYPIC team



## **IT'S A GOAL !! CELEBRATING YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACHIEVEMENTS**



David Biggerstaff has finished his Mentoring Year and is seen here with his goal setting plan. He successfully completed it with his mentor Caitlin Burns. David achieved a staggering 27 goals during his year! He joined a library to research information about volunteering and then he and Caitlin volunteered to dog walk at the Assisi Centre.

David achieved goals on education, personal growth and his social life. It might sound like hard work but David summed up his year as fun but the best thing was beating my mentor at pool!

# PUT HEALTHY FOOD ON THE PLATE IF YOU WANT TO FEEL GREAT!

Making sure to eat a balance of the right foods is key to a healthy diet. Here are some top tips to make sure you're having a good mix of foods:



- Eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day.
- Base your meals on starchy foods like potatoes, brown rice and wholemeal bread.
- If you usually eat meat every day of the week, try mixing it up with oily fish, go for low-fat cheese, milk and yoghurt.
- Try and cut down on high fat or high sugar snacks and drinks.

You should keep an eye on how much salt you're eating. Most Of the salt we eat comes from foods that are made in a factory, so make sure you read the label. It's also a good idea to drop the habit of adding salt to food when you're cooking or at the table. Do you really notice a difference if it's missing?



## GETTING RID OF BAD HABITS

- Grabbing a bag of crisps or a chocolate bar on the way home may give you a short-term energy boost but these snacks are usually ones filled with bad types of fat and sugar.
- Try to stop snacking in between meals altogether. If you are finding it hard, carry a couple of pieces of fruit or a bag of nuts with you.
- It's a bad habit to miss breakfast. You might prefer to spend another 15 minutes in bed but skipping breakfast means you're likely to be reaching for the chocolate by mid-morning.

### Vegetarianism

Being a young vegetarian needn't be a problem, providing your diet is well balanced and provides suitable alternatives to meat, such as pulses and soya products like tofu. Meat provides protein, iron, essential B vitamins and zinc - all necessary for the growing teenager.

# JUST CHILL

Winter is a fun time of year but while you are out having fun you need to know how to be safe. When it is cold outside and you're not prepared you can feel uncomfortable or downright rotten. Lucky for you, learning how to stay safe is a breeze even when the puddles start to freeze...

## PREPARE

Take time to think about what you are doing and where you are going before you set off. Before you go out, think about how you are going to get home - Can you travel home with a friend? What time does the last bus or train leave? What will you do if the weather is bad and you can't get home?

## BUDDY SYSTEM

It sounds obvious, but just letting someone know what time you are expected home can be crucial to your safety. This means if you are late and friends or family know where you are, they can raise the alarm. Ring or text a friend or partner to let them know if you are running late and what time to expect you home.

## BE BRIGHT, MORNING OR NIGHT

Road accidents are most likely to happen in the mornings and afternoons on winter week days. As a walker or cyclist you may see the driver but they might not see you. So as the nights draw in and the mornings get darker, we want to remind everyone to be safe and be seen.

- Make sure you're **visible** to other road users and pedestrians. Wear **bright** clothing in poor light.
- Keep away from the kerb.
- Always **use your lights** when cycling after dark, in the rain or if the weather is overcast. It is illegal to ride a bike on the road with no lights after dark.

## STAY WARM

If you are prepared for the hazards of winter, you will be more likely to stay safe and healthy when temps start to fall. Stay dry and dress warmly in several layers of loose fitting, tightly woven clothing.



**DO YOU GET EASILY FRUSTRATED?**

**CAN YOU FEEL YOURSELF GETTING AGITATED?**

**DO YOU BLOW A FUSE EASILY?**

**TAKE TIME TO RELAX**

Relaxation is so important in our lives as it helps to keep our stress levels down, and so improves our health. Many people find it difficult to relax. Whether it's not having the time, or finding your mind wanders when trying to relax, it can be difficult. Here are a few suggestions to help you.



**"IT'S GOOD TO TALK"**

Simply sharing what's on your mind or spending time with a close friend or someone you trust can ease any frustration, anger or stress.

**EXERCISE**

Many people find physical activity helps burn up some stress. It can be fun too.

**YOGA**

Yoga involves a series of moving and stationary poses, combined with deep breathing. As well as reducing anxiety and stress, yoga can improve flexibility, strength, balance, and stamina. It's best to learn at a class or by following a DVD.

**RELAX WITH SOME MUSIC**

Music is a great way to relax, relieve stress and anxiety. It also helps you function mentally and physically, which is why music is great therapy. It's regularly used for meditation and Tai Chi, and as an aid for sleep disorders.



**INDULGE IN A HOT BATH**

Warm water loosens up muscles, so it's a great way to feel pampered without really doing a lot. It will also deepen breathing and take any tension from your body, pushing those stresses and strains straight down the plughole! Just a 30 minute soak in a warm bubble bath will help you feel relaxed and lighten your mind.

## DEALING WITH LIFE'S UPS AND DOWNS...

Do you know... VOYPIC can support you if you are having issues with your mental health?



### Do you know....1 in 10 young people have a mental health diagnosis?

It's quite normal to feel worried, anxious or upset sometimes, especially when things don't go as you hoped. Everyone faces pressure in their lives at certain times:

- doing exams
- finding work or a job
- growing up and becoming more independent from your family
- making up (and breaking up) with friends.

Sometimes when we're upset we can forget the simple things that help...

- A well balanced diet – eat well, feel better
- Help other people – doing good, feels good
- Believe in yourself – boost your self esteem
- Get a good night's sleep
- Talk to your friends and family
- Take regular exercise
- Do the things you enjoy- watching TV, going to the cinema, listening to music
- Do something fun with friends



Talk to someone you can trust, do something that relaxes you, write down how you are feeling, go for a run, or just do what works for you to calm you down.

If you're in crisis or despair - or you're worried that someone you know is - help is available. You're not alone; talk to someone you trust. Sharing a problem is often the first step to recovery.



## VOYPIC TIPS TO BOOST SELF-ESTEEM...

1. In order to boost your self esteem, you have to understand your negative feelings. Think about what your weaknesses are, when you started to feel like this. Can you identify something that has happened that might have caused you to feel like this?



2. Once you have identified the negative feelings, gather evidence to challenge them. Make a list of evidence for when you are feeling down. For example, if you feel you are unattractive, note down when you receive a compliment from someone who says you look pretty or they like your new haircut.



3. Positive thinking exercises – write down the things you like about yourself. Think about your best feature and write it down – I like my eyes! Think about things you have achieved and add them to the list. Think about nice things you have done for other people, skills you have, talents that you or others have noticed and write all these positive things down. This is good to look back on when you are having a bad day or when you are nervous about something such as an exam.

4. Friends and family – look at the people you have around you on a regular basis and think about how they make you feel. If you are spending a lot of time with someone who makes you feel rubbish about yourself, then spend a bit less time with them and spend more time with someone who makes you feel good about yourself.

5. Take up an enjoyable hobby.

6. Set yourself an aim – maybe a sponsored walk for charity which will make you feel good about yourself.



# DO YOU KNOW WHAT CASH YOU'RE ENTITLED TO?



## STILL AT SCHOOL?

If you are 16 to 19 years old and attend school or a further education college you may be entitled to [Educational Maintenance Allowance \(EMA\)](#) at £60.00 per fortnight. To apply, complete an application form from school or college or drop into your local Jobs & Benefits Office. You can also get more information and download a form from [www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk)

## HOUSING BENEFIT

18+ years old – You **CAN** receive housing benefit.

Usually people under 35 years of age receive a lower rate of Housing Benefit based on a room in shared accommodation...BUT care leavers (until their 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday) receive the higher rate.

The rate varies depending on where you want to live in Northern Ireland from £62.15 - £84.03 per week. ([www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk) for more info). To apply call 03448 920 902 and ask for an application form.

## JOB SEEKERS ALLOWANCE

18+ year olds can apply for this benefit if they have not been able to find a job (but are actively looking for one) or if they work less than 16 hours per week. The rate is £56.25 for young people under 25 years of age.

## EMPLOYMENT AND SUPPORT ALLOWANCE

You may receive this benefit if you have an illness or disability that affects your ability to work. The current rate is between £99.15 and £105.05. There are different rules depending on your circumstances but you can phone 0800 085 6318 and an advisor will complete the form over the telephone with you.

Do you know you can phone VOYPIC's advocacy service for help?

Just call the duty line on 08450 742 942.





VOYPIC is recruiting Young Reps. Young Reps is the name of our young volunteer scheme. We have great opportunities for you to meet new people, be the voice for young people in care, get involved in different projects, attend residential and receive training. If you are interested in Young Reps or want to know more, please contact us on 028 9024 4888.

## HELLO ALL 12 TO 18 YEAR OLDS!!!

Would you like someone to meet you, **just you**, every week for a year?

Someone to take you out and about in your area?  
Someone to chat to?

Someone to help you achieve goals to improve your life at home or in school or work?

Well..... **a VOYPIC mentor** will do this....and have **FUN!!**

If you'd like to have a volunteer mentor, or want to know more, you can phone any VOYPIC office. If you don't want to phone why not ask your carer or social worker to? Just ask for someone who can tell you about mentoring and will do the rest. Take a look at our website if you want to know more

[www.voypic.org](http://www.voypic.org)



# THE REAL SUPER MARIO...

**Mario Balotelli is the Etihad enigma, a match winning genius, or an arrogant young man. He's well known for both his achievements on the pitch and, equally, his antics off the pitch.**

## GROWING UP

Mario Balotelli was born Mario Barwuah in Palermo, Sicily and lived in a third floor council flat above a row of shops. As a baby, Mario was in and out of hospital with life threatening intestinal complications. Needing help, Mario's family approached social services who suggested Mario could be fostered. Mario then lived with a white Italian family who could offer him a lifestyle and opportunities that he may have otherwise missed out on.



## BEING BALOTELLI

Mario grew up in the racially charged cauldron of northern Italy, where he was regarded as an outsider. As his foster mother said "he was born and raised in Italy but had to suffer the humiliation and hardships of being considered a foreigner". Mario was one of the first black kids to emerge from the Italian youth soccer system and a former coach commented "his ability and colour of skin provoked a certain amount of jealousy...Mario went through a period growing up, isolated because he was black". Racism has followed Mario throughout his career, Roma fans threw bananas and recently an Italian newspaper depicted him as King Kong.

## DID YOU KNOW..?

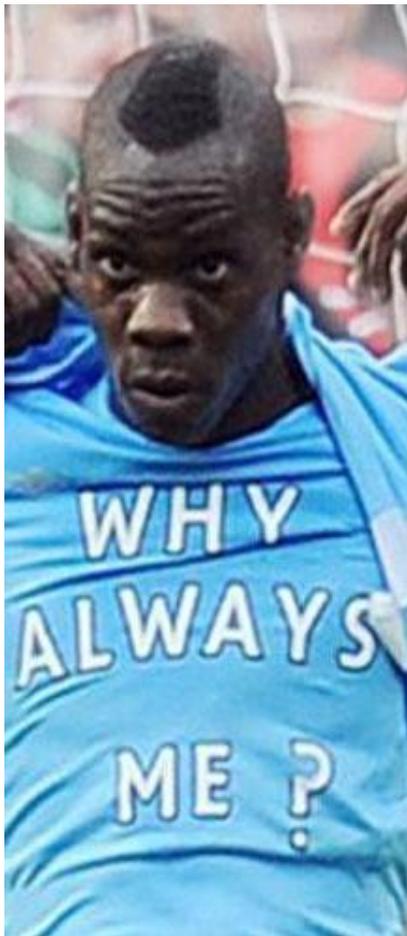
Mario has donated appearance fees to the Cuey Machar Secondary School Foundation. This will make it possible to complete the construction of a secondary school for Sudanese children.

In Brazil, Mario supports the 'Un Ponte per il Futuro' (A Bridge for the Future) project, which offers help to several local associations committed to providing an education for children.

# THE REAL SUPER MARIO...

## WHAT HAS MARIO ACHIEVED

Mario has won the Italian Serie A three times between 2007-08 and 2009-10 and the UEFA Champions League in 2009-10, scoring 28 goals in the process. Since joining Manchester City in 2010-11, he has won the Premier League and F.A. Cup with them and has scored 30 goals for them.



### What Mario has to say...

#### **Mario, on the 'Why always me?' t-shirt:**

"It was all the people who are always talking bad about me and say stuff that's not nice about me and they don't know me...I was just asking, 'Why always me?'"

#### **Mario, on privacy:**

"When people talk about my business, my life, I'm really private. Maybe someone thinks I'm arrogant or something, but it's just me"

#### **Mario, on maturing:**

I'm 21, so I'm still young. I think already, from last year, I'm maturing in my head. If you look at me from the outside and don't know me, you think I'm an idiot.

## WHAT NEXT FOR SUPER MARIO?

Mario continues to deal with racists and critics who want to put him down, but he has survived many challenges and intends to stand strong and be positive about his future!



# RANDOM ACTS...

Okay, sometimes you have loads to do and sometimes you're bored. Too many duvet days, nothing going on and no money to do it anyway... Right? Let's see if we can prove you wrong with a few random things you can get up to for free or nearly free.

Interested in going to a show, gig or a play?

Test Drive the Arts NI is a great website which gives out free tickets to loads of different events across Northern Ireland. You might find something you like the sound of or maybe you are game for a laugh to try something new. Go to [www.testdrivetheartsni.org](http://www.testdrivetheartsni.org) and see what's happening near you.



Want to be in the audience of a TV show? Join the ITV or BBC mailing lists to get updates on what shows are filming – you could be on there giving Nolan a bit of a grilling or making sure you laugh the loudest at a comedy show.

Aged 10 to 16 and a bit of a computer buff?

How about learning about coding, computer game and app design? Free classes on Saturday mornings at Belfast Metropolitan College, Titanic Quarter campus.

Go to <http://zen.coderdojo.com/dojo/110>



The gym not for you? How about urban sports? You know, skateboarding, BMX, parkour, breakdance... Well, you can do these and learn from some pretty talented people at T13. It's basically a massive airplane hangar type place that's been converted into a venue for all things urban, including graffiti art and music events for teenagers. Go to [www.t13.tv](http://www.t13.tv) for more information.



Ok, so we're not saying you should run away with the circus, but did you ever wonder about those acrobatic groups and fire jugglers you see on TV? Those people on Britain's Got Talent are learning these things somewhere and even our wee country has just the place. Check out [www.belfastcircus.org](http://www.belfastcircus.org) for details.



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