

A letter to... The mother I never had

Dear SallyAnn,

When we met in March 2017, I was just a lost 15-year-old.

My upbringing had been tough. The eldest of five, I'd been raising my siblings.

Cooking, cleaning, making sure they got to school – even though I mostly bunked off myself.

We weren't receiving the love at home we needed – and that month, we all ended up in foster care.

For me, that meant moving in with you and your fiancé Ryan, then 22.

I was a nervous wreck, with no idea what to expect.

But I was grateful to be somewhere safe, have some stability at last.

'Let me know if there's anything you need,' you told me, with a kind smile on your face.

Only 22, you were still young yourself.

But as a nanny for several foster families, you'd seen how it benefitted vulnerable children.

At first, I holed up in my room, and you respected my space.

I was grateful – and, given time, came out of my shell.

You made it easy, introducing me to your

family and friends.

'We've heard so much about you,' they'd say.

Made me feel like I belonged.

You knew how important my siblings were, too, driving me to visit them every other weekend.

And you also got me work experience at the nursery where you worked.

Then, that July, I stood next to you and Ryan as one of your bridesmaids

on your wedding day.

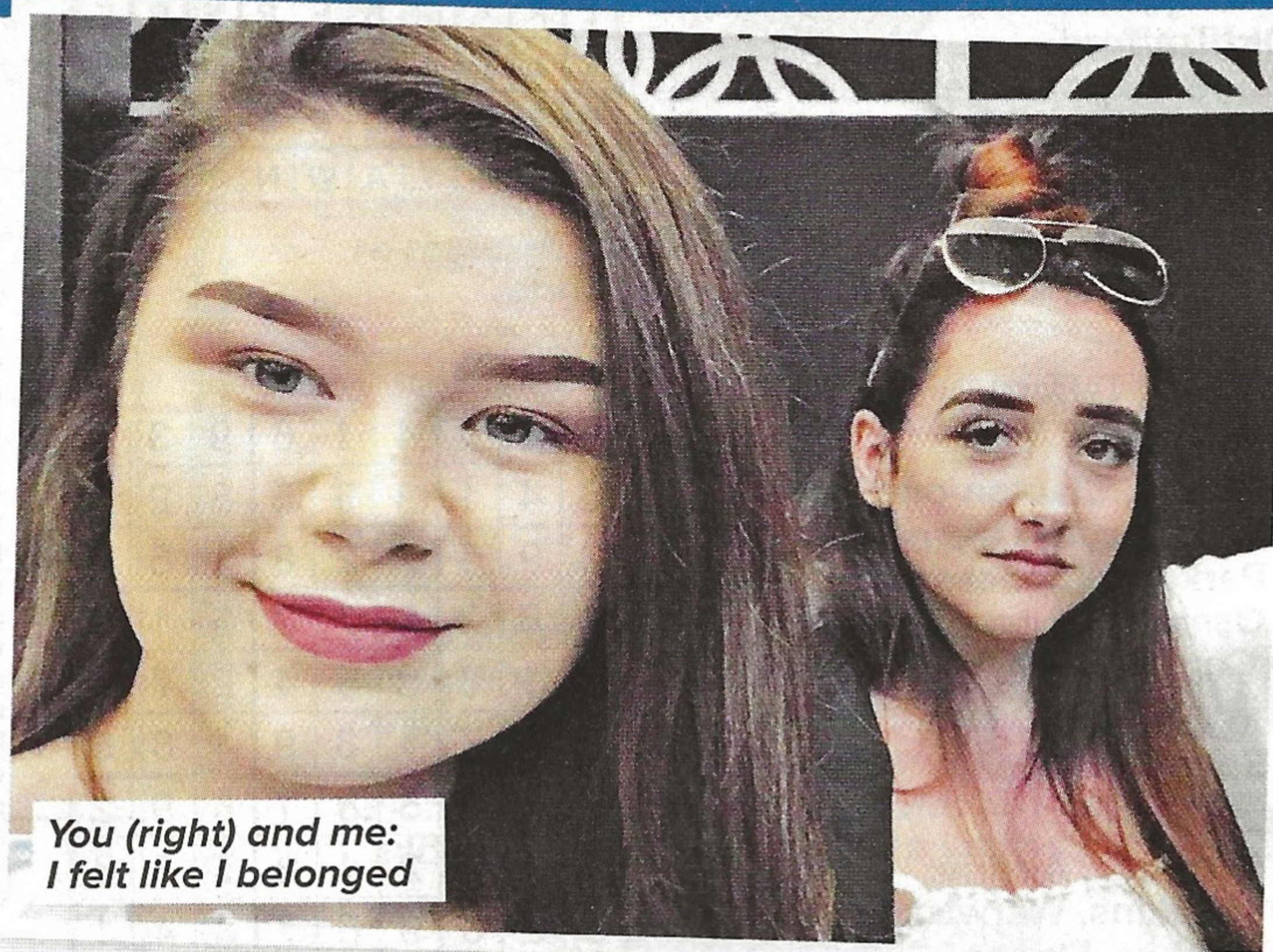
It meant everything to be up there with you.

One of the family.

Then there was that phone call in December 2017.

'I can't get through to Ryan but I need to tell

Without you, I wouldn't be the woman I am today



You (right) and me: I felt like I belonged

someone,' you squealed.

'I'm pregnant!'

Out of everyone, you called me – and I was thrilled for you.

'You'll be an incredible mum,' I gushed.

How could you not be, after all the love and understanding you'd shown me, a troubled teen?

Being with you during your first scan was a wonderful moment.

I cried, seeing your baby on screen.

In April 2018, and almost 17, I moved into my own flat.

You helped me pick out bedsheets and towels, stocking me up with teabags and Pot Noodles.

Like any loving mother would.

Mucking in with nappy changes when your son was born was the least I could do.

Cuddles with him

are my favourite time. I see him as my baby brother.

SallyAnn, you changed my life.

Without you and Ryan, I wouldn't be the focused young woman I am today.

Wouldn't have had the courage or confidence to start a business course.

Plan an ambitious, exciting future.

So, thank you for giving me a chance, for teaching me to believe in myself, for being a mother figure.

Every day, I feel lucky to have you in my life.

Love, Tyler x

Tyler Marriott, 20



Thrilled to be your bridesmaid

For more info about fostering with The Adolescent and Children's Trust, visit tactcare.org.uk