

CORPORATE PARENTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

15th March 2022

Voices From Care Cymru (VFCC): Update report

Reasons for the Report:

1. The report aims to provide the Committee with an update on Voices From Care Cymru's involvement in governmental programmes by supporting care experienced young people to shape policy in Wales.
2. To provide an overview of the work of Voices from Care Cymru over the last 6 months and work planned with Cardiff as a Local Authority.

Background

3. Voices From Care Cymru's journey on corporate parenting has been ongoing for the last 10 years. This includes working with Local Authorities to develop Corporate Parenting pledges and supporting care experienced young people to attend and present to their corporate parenting panels. Alongside young people Voices from Care deliver training to corporate parents and also facilitate participation and social action groups. Voices from care Cymru also deliver a diverse range of engagement activities and events to facilitate a care community for care experienced children and young people on a national basis.
4. Since 2019 Voices From Care Cymru have been working with the Welsh Government on extending the duties of corporate parenting to all public bodies in Wales and for this to be enshrined in legislation.

5. In October 2021 Voices From Care Cymru were asked to join the Welsh Government Operational group to explore the methodology and implementation of the Basic Income Pilot for Care Leavers in Wales.
6. 2020 saw Voices from Care Cymru awarded National Lottery funding to deliver a 3-year programme for care experienced young people. This national service provides a 3-tier approach to wellbeing and includes one to one structured support, referrals to professional counselling services and learning in sets for professionals from the lived experience, co-produced and delivered by young people.
7. Influencing and innovation remains a legacy for Voices from Care Cymru and this work continues to be the golden thread in our delivery. Via social action, events and activities we consult and drive forward the voice of young people to shape the policy agenda in Wales.

Updates:

8. The Corporate Parenting charter is now in draft format and will be shared with stakeholders at a series of national conversation events taking place in the forthcoming months. It is anticipated a new refreshed approach to Corporate Parenting will be in place by end of 2023 and set within statutory guidance. It is expected a series of awareness raising sessions will take place to strengthen and increase knowledge on organisations roles and responsibilities. Voices From Care Cymru will continue to support Welsh Government ensuring the Voice of care experienced young people is central to its progress.
9. Welsh Government have committed to the delivery of a Basic Income Pilot for care leavers turning 18th on or after the 1st of July 2022. It is proposed this will support care leavers in Wales to thrive, be financially independent and overall raise life aspirations. Current work is ongoing within the operational group where wider engagement has now been made to ensure a collaborative holistic approach to the pilot delivery, with Voices from Care Cymru being central in the young people's engagement, its impact and monitoring

10. Over the last 6 months Voices from Care Cymru's national wellbeing and mental health service has supported 172 care experienced young people. This engagement has resulted 352 structured support sessions and 116 group wellbeing sessions. Themes of these sessions include isolation, healthy relationships, emotional wellbeing, self-care, and bereavement. The counselling element of the service is currently being implemented alongside the training modules and these will be delivered to professionals from 2023.

11. influencing work has continued over the last 6 months with young people driving forward the need to remove the stigma related to the care experience community, challenge the language used and call for ministers to listen to 1000 voices of the care experienced community. This call will support and influence the government commitment to radically reform the social care system in Wales within the next term.

12. Our young people have met with ministers to discuss the changes needed, launched our care community "kindred knot" pin badge and are currently working on a time capsule to measure and make accountable Welsh Government in the progress of their promises.

13. All forementioned work has been supported by the delivery of events and activities listed below where Voices from Care continues to build a holistic care community in which care experienced children and young people can thrive, access support and build positive peer relationships.

- Halloween event
- Local groups (commissioned care experienced forums in 4 local authority areas)
- Celebrating the UNCRC
- 12days of Christmas
- Parents peer café
- Launched the peer café model to extend to 5 key areas, LGBTQI+, mental health and wellbeing, students, care leavers and criminal justice.
- Launch "kindred Knot" on a national basis

- International Care day

Strengthening Legislation

14. Welsh Government are looking to use their existing legislative powers to strengthen statutory guidance; clarifying roles and responsibilities and extending duties across the public sector.

This will be achieved by:

- Developing a new 'corporate parenting' chapter within Part 6 Code under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, providing clear statutory guidance to all departments within local authorities about their responsibilities and duties towards care experienced children.
- Updating Part 9 Code under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, providing statutory guidance to Regional Partnership Boards on the issue of corporate parenting and enabling improved partnership working between local authorities and Local Health Boards.
- Seek to embed the concept of corporate parenting beyond that of local authorities. Existing powers are available to Welsh Government under the Children Act 2004 and Education Act 2002 to develop statutory guidance to embed corporate parenting beyond local authorities. It is anticipated by Welsh Government that this element will take up to 2 years.

Partnership Working: Cardiff & Voices From Care Cymru

15. Voices From Care Cymru's Wellbeing, Participation and Influencing project would welcome any referrals from care experienced young people in Cardiff. Opportunities include 'Sing Proud Cymru' our choir, Peer Support Café's, Social Action work and VFCC's Advisory Group. Any care experienced young people are welcome to become a member of Voices From Care Cymru and receive regular updates on events and activities.

16. Voices From Care would find it beneficial to link more robustly with leaving care teams to ensure the voices of care experienced young people are at the centre of the Basic Income Pilot delivery and monitoring.

Financial Implications

17. Voices from Care Cymru is funded by external funding partners, there is no financial costs for services or engagement of the care experience community within Cardiff.

Legal Implications

18. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION

19. The Committee are recommended to note the Voices from Care Cymru update and to make any observations or comments.

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Director of Children's Services
2nd March 2022