

**CORPORATE PARENTING
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

22 January 2023

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR, CHILDRENS SERVICES

VOICES FROM CARE CYMRU UPDATE

Reasons for the report

1. This report has been prepared to provide the Committee with an update in relation to Voices From Care Cymru and the work they are doing to support care experienced young people in Cardiff. The report is accompanied by The Radical Reform Summit Declaration, signed by The Welsh Government and Young Ambassadors.

Background

2. Voices From Care Cymru (VFCC) is an independent Welsh voluntary organisation that has been supporting care experienced children and young people for thirty-five years.
3. VFCC support individual care experienced children and young people through their wellbeing services, helping them develop resilience, and independent living skills and enabling them to support each other through both formal and informal peer support.
4. The service offer care experienced children and young people the opportunity to take part in wellbeing activities and influencing work, as well as the chance to relax and have fun with others who share their experiences.

Issues

Wellbeing Services

5. VFCC offer individual wellbeing support to young people, enabling them to address barriers they face to living independently. Each programme is tailored to

the individual young person's needs and may include learning practical skills, e.g. budgeting, personal strategy skills, such as understanding how past trauma may be affecting their lives now and developing strategies to help address this. This service has recently been expanded to include professional counselling.

6. Peer support cafes enable care experienced young people to come together to support each other and learn through their shared experiences. VFCC currently offer the Care Experienced Parents Support Café, the Care Experienced Student Support Café and the LGBT Care Experienced Support Café.
7. There is a new Sky's the Limit project, which is a project that aims to overcome barriers to taking part in sports and art activities. It is offered to care experienced children between the ages of 8-14.
8. The Bibliotherapy Project enables care experienced young people to use supported journaling to help them manage their feelings, address negative thoughts and strengthen positivity. The key tool for this work is a journal designed by young people themselves.
9. VFCC also offer fun activities and experiences which include theatre trips, meals out, bowling, and outdoor activities. All activities are chosen by the children and young people, who's voices are at the heart of everything they do. VFCC has a care experienced choir that rehearses weekly, and is open to children and young people, foster carers and other professionals.

Influencing

10. The other main area of work for VFCC is their campaigning to improve the lives and futures of care experienced children and young people.
11. Before the 2021 Senedd Election, young people worked together to develop a manifesto setting out some key goals that they asked political parties to commit to. After the election, the new Programme of Government set out some specific commitments to the care experienced community, and VFCC have been enabling young people to work with Welsh Government in delivering on these.
12. VFCC facilitated a group of young people to work with Welsh Government to develop the Basic Income Pilot and have convened practitioner forums to identify issues through the roll out. The service is now supporting young people's involvement in the evaluation of the scheme.

13. VFCC have supported young people to participate in the development of the new Corporate Parenting Charter. Whereby young people sit with professionals on the national Board overseeing the role out, and young people will be involved in monitoring delivery in those public bodies that sign up.
14. The Programme for Government also committed to “explore radical reform of services for children looked after and care leavers”. This was discussed with Welsh Government, which then led to the First Minister and the Deputy Minister for Social Services commissioning VFCC to organise a ‘Summit Meeting’ between Welsh Ministers and care experienced children and young people.
15. A team of 40 Young Ambassadors from the care experienced community across Wales attended the Summit at the National Museum in Cardiff. The Young Ambassadors created a series of asks that formed a draft Declaration to be discussed with Welsh Ministers at the Summit.
16. Ministers and Young Ambassadors then fed back to the wider group and to the First Minister in a Plenary session, and the draft Declaration, with amendments, was agreed.
17. The Declaration (copy attached) was signed by the First Minister and representatives of Young Ambassadors at a ceremony in May.
18. The Declaration sets out what radically reformed services will look and feel like to children and young people and their families. It builds on what young people have told Ministers works well and addresses those things they have said need to change.
19. A national follow up Summit is planned for March next year, where Young Ambassadors will meet with Ministers to assess progress.

Financial Implications

20. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications

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

RECOMMENDATION

22. The Committee is recommended to note the Voices From Care Cymru Update and consider their involvement in future summits held with Welsh Government and Young Ambassadors.

DEBORAH DRIFFIELD
Director, Childrens Services
19 December 2023

Appendix A– Voices From Care Cymru Update