

Motion: Care Leavers Protected Characteristic Motion

Every Councillor, employee of this Council and our partner agencies is a Corporate Parent to the children in our care and our care experienced young people.

We are all responsible for providing the best possible care, safeguarding and educational outcomes for the children and young people who are and have been in the care of the City of Wolverhampton Council.

Our young people in care and our care experienced young people have the right to expect everything from a good corporate parent that would be expected from a responsible and good parent. This includes how families continue their support, care, and ambition for their children long after they leave home and gain independence.

The City of Wolverhampton Council in partnership with the Care Leavers Independent Collective Forum and our partner agencies are proud that together we have been able to achieve,:-

- Wolverhampton Care Leavers being exempt from all Council Tax charges up to the age of 25.
- Wolverhampton Care Leavers up to the age of 25 having free access to leisure facilities at WV Active sites.
- Care Leavers bidding for Wolverhampton Homes properties are entitled to Band 1 Housing allocation.
- Care Leavers living in a Wolverhampton Homes property will never be made intentionally homeless.
- Care Leavers up to 25 years have access to free prescriptions.
- Wolverhampton Care Leavers have access to a variety of apprenticeships within the City of Wolverhampton Council and are able to apply for positions as the two-week internal application stage.
- Care Leavers have dedicated advice and support from an Education, Employment and Training Advisor to help them make their next steps into work or education.

However, as fantastic as these achievements are, we know as a good corporate parent that we can always do more. We are determined that every decision made by this Council and every policy set here considers the impact on our care experienced young people.

This motion proposes including “care experienced” as a protected characteristic in all of our Equality Impact Assessments. This will give these young people formal recognition and make sure that all decisions that are made and policies that are set consider their specific needs and the impact on them.

The Government commissioned independent review into children’s social care highlighted the recommendation that care experience should be made a protected characteristic as part of the Equalities Act 2010. As yet the Government have not progressed this recommendation. Therefore, we propose to take steps here in Wolverhampton to be the best corporate parents we can be and to recognise care experience as a protected characteristic till such a time as it may be introduced by legislation.

The City of Wolverhampton Council, by recognising care experience as a protected characteristic would resolve:

- (a) That when making any decisions in relation to its policies or formulating its council plan that it recognises that care experienced people are an oppressed group who face discrimination.
- (b) That it recognises that the Council has a duty to put the needs of oppressed people at the heart of decision-making through co-production and collaboration.
- (c) That in the delivery of the Public Sector Equality Duty the Council includes care experience in the publication and review of Equality Objectives and the annual publication of information relating to people who share a Protected Characteristic in services and employment in so far as available data allows for meaningful monitoring.
- (d) To formally adopt and call upon all other bodies to treat care experience as a protected characteristic until such time as it may be introduced by legislation.
- (e) To formally call upon all other bodies and partnership agencies working with the City of Wolverhampton Council to adopt the principal that care experience be a protected characteristic until such time as it may be introduced by legislation.
- (f) For the council to continue to proactively seek out and listen to the voices of care experienced people when developing new policies based on their views.
- (g) As a local authority, this would commit us to acknowledging and addressing the challenges faced by those with care experience across everything we do, from breaking down barriers to work, including transport

and digital poverty to ensuring fair access to housing, education, and employment within the City.

We also call on our fantastic City and regional partners to follow the Council's lead in developing their own initiatives to support our care leavers. In particular, because this is so important to care leavers, we all upon WMCA and TFWM to offer free travel to our care leavers and care leavers living across the region.