

18 Young Carers, Children in Care and Care Leavers

Following on from the Youth Voice Steering group, here are the key messages we have received from young people who attend our Young Carers Support Group, Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum, to feed into the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment:

Young Carers

- “Teachers and schools to recognise and acknowledge that we are young carers, we don’t ask for much, just understanding”
- “Extra support at school to help us keep up with our work”
- “Fun, respite sessions to help us with our mental health needs, a small pocket of time to just be kids again”
- “Help with scheduling and time management at home”
- “Transport support as many of our parents don’t drive”
- “Support with our emotions and mental health, and understanding why we feel the way we do sometimes”
- “What happens when I become 18 and no longer a young carer?”

Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum

- **Honesty:** Children and young people want workers to be open, honest and transparent with them. They would like to know what is happening in their life, why they are in the situation they are in and the reasons for decisions made to better understand their life.
- **Autonomy:** Children and young people would like more involvement and power in making decisions about them and their life. If they can’t have what they want, they want to openly be told, to be told why and to understand the reasons. Care leavers in particular have shared that they would like more autonomy in how their funds are spent (eg. Care leaver grant).
- **Communication:** Children and young people would like their workers to be timelier in their responses. If a worker is knowingly going to be on leave, children and young people would like to be informed.
- **Relationships:** Children and young people shared that they would like workers to get to know them and to build a relationship with them first rather than rushing to complete their ‘to do’ list with them.
- **Stigma:** Children and young people shared that they do not feel ‘normal’ compared to their peers. A key issue for them is having to have their friends’ families DBS checked before they are able to visit. This makes them feel embarrassed, different and can prevent them from making friends.

- **Processes:** Children and young people have shared that the processes they have to go through for approval can cause them to miss out, for example missing school trips, vaccinations (or have had extreme delays in accessing vaccinations). They would like foster carers to be allowed to sign/give consent to stop the delays and prevent them from missing out.
- **Mental Health:** Children and young people have shared that they would like more support in schools around mental health (ie a mental health support worker in every school). They would also like foster carers to have more training and understanding in dealing with children and young people with mental health struggles.
- **Health:** Children and young people have shared that they do not always know who their dentist/doctor is and at times struggle to get appointments.
- **Accommodation:** Care leavers have shared that they would like the housing to be in safer communities so they are not provided with accommodation in streets/areas that they do not feel safe (drugs, violence, crime etc).