

CASE STUDY

Supporting Parents In and Leaving Care; #MessagesToCorporateParents

CASCADE researchers, Voices from Care Cymru, NYAS Cymru and TGP Cymru have worked in partnership with care experienced young people to develop a suite of resources, including a Good Practice Charter, to help Corporate Parents strengthen how they support care-experienced parents.

This work is a fantastic example of how the principles of empowerment, participation and accountability have been applied to improve how local authorities and connected public bodies (such as Heath) support care experienced young people on their journey to and through parenthood.

More on this work can be found here;

<https://www.exchangewales.org/supporting-parents-in-and-leaving-care-messagestocorporateparents/>

Equality and Non-discrimination:

The creation of the Charter has followed on from the extensive work of Dr Louise Roberts whose research identified the stigma, discrimination, poor outcomes and inequality care experienced young people encountered upon reaching parenthood.

Funded by Health and Care Research Wales, the pan-Wales project included:

- interviews with care-experienced parents
- interviews with statutory and third sector professionals
- survey data from local authorities
- secondary analysis of existing national data sets

This film briefly summarises the research findings from care-experienced parents and highlights the need for improved corporate parenting support.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzrpMtVcaI4&feature=emb_imp_woyt

Through this work, issues of discrimination and inequality are being actively addressed.

Empowerment and participation

The Good Practice Charter was co-produced with care-experienced parents, in partnership with Voices from Care Cymru, NYAS Cymru and TGP Cymru. Working with those who had taken part in Dr Roberts' study, and those involved in projects with the above organisations, the group set about developing the Charter as a way of strengthening and improving how corporate parents support parents in and leaving care.

It was important to identify from parents what had worked for them when they received support and what support they wished had been available. The parents approached this

by thinking about their parenting journeys, reflecting on their needs before and during parenthood. This helped to develop the Charter sections and set out the commitments they wanted to see from professionals and services. Language was refined to be accessible and clear for young people and professionals.

Throughout the process, parents recognised that young people have different needs and circumstances. As a result, they wished to create a Charter that is flexible and inclusive to reflect a range of needs and scenarios, including situations where parents need a little bit of support, to those who may need much more involvement from services.

Since the development of the Charter, work has continued to improve policy and practice. Most recently, parents have worked with CASCADE and a local artist to develop a series of memorable and impactful images to highlight key messages from the Charter.

There are strong messages in the Charter for those working with parents to uphold their rights. These include;

- Adults should work in the best interests of children (Article 3)
- Children have the right to live with their parents if that is what is best for them (Article 9)
- Children and young people have the right to say what they think and be listened to (Article 12)
- Children and young people have a right to access information in a way that they can understand (Article 17)

Accountability

The Charter requires commitment from signatories to keep working with parents and charities to review progress and maintain efforts to ensure parents in and leaving care are supported and treated fairly. The Charter similarly makes clear that corporate parents should be challenged when they fail in their obligations.

CASCADE intends to conduct further research to examine the implementation and impact of the charter. Care-experienced parents will be central to this work.

Impact: the spread of the Charter across Wales – and the world!

The Charter has been well-received in Wales. Each of the 22 local authorities have approved it via their corporate parenting boards or are in the process of doing so. Feedback from professionals suggests that the Charter provides a helpful framework for ensuring consistency and positive practice in supporting parents in and leaving care.

The Charter has also received interest from outside of Wales and a number of local governments, third sector organisations and universities are working on adapting the Charter to their local or national settings. CASCADE is currently working with parents, academics, statutory and third sector organisations in Australia, England, Northern

Ireland, The Republic of Ireland, Italy and Scotland. The Charter has been translated into Italian.

What difference has it made? A case example from the Vale of Glamorgan

The Vale of Glamorgan was the first local authority to sign up to the Good Practice Charter.

The Charter generated immediate interest from professionals at the Vale of Glamorgan as it fitted with a broader commitment to strengths-based and rights-promoting approaches across the authority.

The Charter was considered and endorsed by the Corporate Parenting Panel in January 2022. The Charter was subsequently disseminated through senior management meetings and cascaded down to individual teams. This included signposts to the supporting resources.

The Charter is considered to provide a helpful framework for professionals supporting care-experienced young parents. The work has proved particularly helpful to the 14+ team, as a tool to advocate for young people and ensure that their needs are considered holistically.

In line with the commitments of the Charter:

- Referrals to Children's Services in the Vale of Glamorgan are not accepted on the basis of care status or history. Emphasis is placed on support needs and the individual circumstances of the young person.
- Local mother and baby provision has increased within the local authority. This has strengthened housing options for young people who need additional support. Local options for support avoid previous scenarios where young people were having to move out-of-county and away from their key relationships and supports.
- Foster carers in the Vale of Glamorgan are providing support in the community to care-experienced parents. This involves informal visits to young people, and offering help and advice if needed. This approach maintains relationships and aims to replicate the types of support that would ordinarily be expected from birth families.

The current Corporate Strategy within the Vale of Glamorgan prioritises engagement with children and young people in need of care and support. This involves regular and meaningful communication with children and young people in the local area, including care-experienced young people, and asking their advice on service delivery and improvement. Senior managers, including the Head of Children's Services are at the forefront of this engagement. In this way, there is confidence that the commitments of the Charter will be routinely reviewed.