

Our Promise to You – The Torbay Pledge to cared for and care experienced children/young people 2021-2022



Report to Cabinet on 23 March 2021

Background

1. The Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board met on 1 March 2021 to consider the 'Our Promise to You – The Torbay Pledge to cared for and care experienced children/young people 2021-2022'.
2. The Board heard from Jenny Hunt, Senior Youth Worker from Torbay Youth Trust who outlined the submitted presentation and the approach taken to develop 'Our Promise to You – The Torbay Pledge to cared for and care experienced children/young people 2021-2022' and the names and logos: Cared For Community – understanding who we are together; The Circle – young people in care Council; and My Voice – open mic for care leavers. She highlighted the role of the Council as 'Corporate Parents' and the critical question that should be asked when adopting an approach to supporting children in care 'is this good enough for my child?'.
3. Charlie Hine spoke on behalf of the care community and advised that the pledge would be a game changer and help the children to feel normal if it is implemented and followed through. She explained that there needed to be more support for transition post 18 and becoming a care leaver as currently many young people were returning home to their parents, which was not always the best place for them but was familiar and easier without the appropriate support. She felt that we needed to treat children in care as individuals and explained the difficulty of doing things because of being labelled a 'child in care' and wanting to feel 'normal'.
4. Members asked questions in respect of the following:
 - a lot of activity has been carried out with young people, how do we hear the voice of the child who is not participating – this was covered below;
 - how many children in care have contributed towards the pledge and how do we demonstrate the voice is being heard – a target was set to reach 20% of children between 8 to 24 years of age, this was challenging due to some children not wanting to come along and children in care being very busy, additional funded has been given to enable more activities so that whilst the children are having fun we can seek their views, youth workers have been meeting with young people and should be able to meet in person at the YMCA soon. Working with partners to find different ways of reaching out to young people, newsletter, website was being worked on so all information was in one place and working with foster carers to encourage their children and young people to come along and engage in the events, working more creatively;

- what happens to under 8s – the Youth Trust officially supports young people aged 11 or above but they do support children from 8 years old, additional funding would be required to support younger children, this could include family days, working with creative play and arts, working with the voluntary sector and organisations such as Play Torbay who could do more extended work, looking at what the children were telling us through their play and using their skills to interpret this. Independent Reviewing Officers were required to record the voice of the child and funding has been provided by DFE which has been used to engage Bright Spots to carry out a survey around care experienced young people, this includes asking what they expect of us as a corporate parent, this will be used to help shape the future for our cared for community; and
- what can councillors do to make a difference – adopt the pledge via the Cabinet on 23 March 2021, help promote the pledge and get involved in activities with young people and communications.

5. The Board resolved unanimously that the Cabinet be recommended:

- (i) to adopt the 'Our Promise to You – The Torbay Pledge to cared for and care experienced children/young people 2021-2022'; and
- (ii) to develop an action plan to demonstrate how the Council will implement the Pledge to have the greatest and most positive impact on our cared for and care experienced children and young people and that the action plan be monitored by the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board.