

# FINAL REPORT: CARE EXPERIENCE AS A PROTECTED CHARACTERISTIC IN PLYMOUTH

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It has been 15 months since Plymouth City Council unanimously supported the motion to treat care experience as if it were a protected characteristic on 27 March 2023. There are now over 80 Local Authorities across the UK who have adopted this position.

Over the past 15 months the six resolutions set out in the motion have been progressed and completed or incorporated into the relevant area of business within Plymouth City Council.

This report details how each resolution within the motion has been progressed and sets out how this has been incorporated into service delivery across the council.

## REVIEW OF RESOLUTIONS

In passing the motion to treat care experience as a protected characteristic, Plymouth City Council committed to the following six resolutions. These resolutions have been progressed and reviewed through the Corporate Management Team alongside the considerations, impact and the corporate support required to ensure that we are compliant with the motion passed by Council.

**Resolution 1: That the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer ensure that all council making decision documentation has in it appropriate sections to allow for the impact upon ‘care experienced people’ to be considered in decision making, where relevant and that:**

- a. Officers consider how information might be captured and reported upon in a similar way to that of the Public Sector Equality Duty Annual report.**
- b. Any publication of information relating to people who share a Protected Characteristic also includes ‘care experienced people’.**

### Completed Actions:

- The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) template has been updated to include care experience.
- EIA guidance has been updated to include care experience.
- Equality objective agreed for 2024: *“Objective 2: Plymouth City Council will give specific consideration to care experienced people in its decision-making to raise aspirations, increase opportunities and seek to improve their life outcomes, including access to training, employment and housing, and will encourage other organisations to do the same”.*
- A presentation has been delivered to the Senior Leadership Team (Team Plymouth) to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities as Corporate Parents and their need to comply with the motion to treat care experience as a protected characteristic. Senior leaders have been provided with the presentation to cascade their learning throughout their service areas.
- The Policy and Intelligence Team has developed an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan for delivering against the care experience equality objective in conjunction with the Service Lead and Councillors Penberthy, Laing and Penrose (Welcoming City Champion).
- Senior leaders continue to cascade their learning from Team Plymouth throughout their service areas.

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- The Policy and Intelligence Team has reviewed publications and demographic monitoring forms where equality and diversity data is recorded to include care experience. A definition has been added to the demographic monitoring form as a result of the learning from the Council's budget engagement where individuals may not have understood the correct meaning of the question being asked.

**Resolution 2: To proactively seek out and listen to the voices of care experienced people of all ages when developing new Council policies and plans and, where possible, those where the Council produces them in partnership with others.**

### Completed Actions:

- The Policy and Intelligence Team is the central point of contact for staff completing EIAs and who may need further support to understand whether or not they need to specifically consult or co-design with care experienced people when developing policies, plans and services. The Service Lead will be the subject matter expert and will work closely with the Practice Manager (Participation) to advise as required. Senior leaders were informed of this at the Team Plymouth presentation on 14 March 2024.
- There is a commitment that EIAs will not be agreed if the matter of care experience is not adequately addressed.
- The members of the PAUSE community of women with care experience have agreed to support the Council through consultation and co-design where it is identified as necessary through an EIA. This has been included in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.

### Actions In Progress:

- The Participation Service are working with young people to develop a post 25 participation group. This will grow from the existing Care Experienced Council as set out in the 2024/2025 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.

**Resolution 3: To request that the Chief Executive, as Head of Paid Service, explore with the Director of HR how the Council could seek to guarantee all care experienced persons an interview where they meet the essential criteria of the post applied for.**

### Completed Actions:

- The wording of guaranteed interviews to those with care experienced rather than those who have been in Plymouth City Council Care has been changed.
- The Youth Work Apprentice (with care experience) post within the Care Leavers Team has been created and appointed to.
- The 2024 Work Experience program has been updated to ensure that children in care and care experienced young people are eligible and prioritised.
- Following the presentation at Team Plymouth on 14 March 2024, 37 people have made pledges in respect of what they will do differently, or in addition, to support people with care experience.
- The pledges made through Team Plymouth have been collated into a central tracker and progress will be reported quarterly to the Children's Services Quality Assurance Performance Improvement Board (QAPPIB).
- Team Plymouth pledge holders will progress their individual pledges with support from the relevant subject experts.
- The Council's job application process has been amended, along with the supporting guidance, to allow individuals to identify care experience alongside the nine protected characteristics defined in

law. This will allow for care experience to be included in future equality and diversity data monitoring.

**Resolution 4: That the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills, Children and Young People writes to all public bodies represented in the City, the Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses in Plymouth to make them aware of this motion and, where possible and within available resources, offer training on corporate parenting and issues facing care experienced people and to work with our partners and our care experienced population to understand what corporate parenting means for them.**

Completed Actions:

- The letter has been drafted and an inbox established for responses. This letter will be sent out to business leaders across the city.
- Post 16 & Skills Team has developed a free pastoral leadership programme for managers and employers that employ care experienced young people. The flexible programme includes short courses on safeguarding, trauma informed practice and mental health awareness. These programmes can be personalised for the team or business with flexible delivery options.
- The 'Your Future Employability' program has now been established and there are dates for future delivery in place. Care experienced individuals are able to attend whether or not they have identified Special Educational Needs.
- Livewell has worked with the Care Leavers Team, Post 16 & Skills and the Department for Work and Pensions to establish an Employment Pathway for care leavers. Young people were consulted and involved in co-designing the pilot for this employment pathway. This launched in May 2024.

**Resolution 5: That the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Homes and Communities writes to Plymouth's MPs making them aware of this motion and asking them to press government to amend the law to include Care Experienced persons as a Protected Characteristic and for the extension of Corporate Parenting to all public bodies, following the recommendations of the MacAlister Report.**

Completed Actions:

- This letter has been completed and sent.
- The agreement that intentionality can only be agreed with joint agreement at a director level has been updated in the Local Offer for care leavers.
- Devon Home Choice have now agreed a six-month pilot of automatic B & B for care leavers who are assessed as tenancy ready. A briefing is being produced for the Corporate Parenting Operational Managers Group to build this into the Local Offer.
- Elected Members who sit on the Corporate Parenting Group have engaged with local Housing Associations to invite them to consider ring fencing an allocation of housing stock for care experienced young people.

**Resolution 6: That the Chief Executive, Assistant Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer attend the first Corporate Parenting Committee meeting in the next municipal year to report on the actions taken as a result of this motion on notice.**

Completed Actions:

- The Chief Executive, Assistant Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer attended the Corporate Parenting Group on 14 July 2023.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The ongoing work to ensure that these changes are embedded in practice will sit within each service area, led by the respective senior leadership teams.

37 members of Team Plymouth have so far made pledges to do things differently or increase opportunities for care experienced individuals in Plymouth. These pledges have been collated into a tracker and will be progressed within the relevant service area. Where these pledges relate to work experience, training or employment opportunities, the pledge owner will be provided with the same centralised mailbox as our local business leaders to ensure that opportunities reach care experienced young people in a timely manner and they can be supported to access them.