

Council – 20th October 2022

Notice of Motion – Protected Characteristics for Care Experience

The Independent Review of Children’s Social Care published a final report in May 2022 and recommendations included: “Government should make care experience a protected characteristic” **and** “New legislation should be passed which broadens corporate parenting responsibilities across a wider set of public bodies and organisations.”

On Protected Characteristics for Care Experience – (Care Review May 2022)

“Many care experienced people face discrimination, stigma, and prejudice in their day to day lives. Public perceptions of care experience centre on the idea that children are irredeemably damaged and that can lead to discrimination and assumptions being made.”

This stigma and discrimination can be explicit, and often comes with assumptions of characteristics of children which is evidenced in the way care experience is discussed in schools, workplaces, and the media.

At its worst this can lead to care experienced people being refused employment, failing to succeed in education or facing unfair judgements about their ability to parent when they have children and families of their own.”

Hearing testimony from care experienced people sharing the discrimination they have experienced, it is clear that such discrimination can be similar in nature to other groups that have a legally protected characteristic under the Equality Act (2010). So, while there may be ways that society can help reduce stigma and discrimination, including creating greater public consciousness on these issues, just as with other areas of equality, there is a case to go further.

What should the council be doing?

Care experienced people face significant barriers that impact them throughout their lives;

- As corporate parents, councillors have a collective responsibility for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after by us as an authority;
- All corporate parents should commit to acting as mentors, hearing the voices of looked after children and young people and to consider their needs in any aspect of council work;
- Councillors should be champions of our looked after children and challenge the negative attitudes and prejudice that exists in all aspects of society;

- The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies, such as councils, to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation of people with protected characteristics;

Why are we doing this?

By recognising these barriers and adapting policies and actions to help care experienced children and adults, Southend City Council would be going some way to alleviate the barriers which these children and adults face through no fault of their own.

This Council therefore resolves:-

- That it recognises that care experienced people are an oppressed group who face discrimination;
- That it recognises that Councils have a duty to put the needs of oppressed people at the heart of decision-making through co-production and collaboration;
- That future decision, services and policies made and adopted by the Council should be assessed through Equality Impact Assessments to determine the impact of changes on people with care experience, alongside those who formally share a Protected Characteristic.
- 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.
- That it will treat Care Experience as if it were a Protected Characteristic by this council.
- To formally call upon all other bodies to treat care experience as a protected characteristic until such time as it may be introduced by legislation.
- For the council to proactively seek out and listen to the voices of care experienced people when developing new policies based on their views.

Proposer: Councillor Paul Collins

Seconders: Councillors Margaret Borton; Daniel Cowan; Kay Mitchell; Carole Mulroney