

Jake Hotchkins statement

Care-experienced young people from Bath and North-East Somerset have noticed how many other councils have adopted care-experience as a protected characteristic. It must create a great feeling for their children in care and care leavers. We want our council - our corporate parent - to do the same.

Recognising care-experience as a protected characteristic can empower care-experienced people to live the life they want to live, without judgement or stigma; to build lasting, meaningful relationships; and create a sense of belonging and inclusivity.

Discrimination against care-experienced people is called 'careism'. This is something felt nationally and locally, and the time to change this is now. We know firsthand how much of society struggle to understand us. Even all the negative statistics about 'poor' outcomes hang over care-experienced young people, and may hold us back, and create a negative image.

We want to feel like our council is moving away from misunderstanding care-experience and fighting against a culture of deficit, and stigma. This would be unacceptable for any other disadvantaged, underrepresented, or vulnerable group.

We think that adopting care-experience as a protected characteristic could create a culture shift and a powerful statement of intent. And a sign of good parenting and good corporate parenting, which challenges oppressive language and jargon for example, which can be alienating. Such othering can mean care-experienced people can be left without a voice. If council agree to adopt care-experience as a protected characteristic, then this could be an important first step towards redressing discrimination.

We think that bringing forward the motion and then agreeing to adopt care-experience like a protected characteristic is an excellent way of demonstrating how seriously you take your corporate parenting responsibilities. Redressing some of the equality imbalances is important because equality is everyone's business.

If care-experience is adopted as a protected characteristic more services in areas we live in could recognise us, hear us, and believe in us. We do

not want to feel alone. We want to feel belonging. We could benefit from more opportunities if this motion is passed.

This motion is all about change – too often we do not see enough change that serves care-experienced people for the better. We could blame others for failings in the system that has led to inequalities – or we can in our own small way take responsibility and do things differently - the BANES way.

Please be better corporate parents for us and consider adopting care-experience like a protected characteristic.

Thank you.