

PRESS RELEASE

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“To feel cared for and loved”– a simple wish from a child in care

It's simple – to feel cared for and loved are vital for children and young people growing up in care. That's the key message from VOYPIC (Voice of Young People in Care) at the launch today of their report from Our Life in Care 2013. Newly appointed Health Minister Jim Wells launched the third report of the survey, which captures the views of 8 to 18 year olds living in care.

Speaking at the launch, the Minister echoed the aims of the survey:

“I will look closely at all the recommendations contained in the report and will ensure that the needs, feelings and wishes of children and young people in care remain a central consideration when we make decisions affecting their lives. I hope that children and young people in care understand that I am listening and that my Department and the Trusts are acting on suggestions where we can.”

Vivian McConvey, Chief Executive of VOYPIC addressed the audience of childcare practitioners and policy makers at the event in NICVA:

“Feeling at home and part of a family can increase a sense of stability and permanence for children in care. If the place where they're living feels like a home rather than a placement or residential unit, a child is more likely to feel settled. Part of this is having quality and sustained relationships - it's vital that the care system supports this.”



In the 2013 survey 105 children and young people shared their views and experiences of growing up in care in Northern Ireland. Many of them reported enjoying adult support with 88% having an adult they can trust and 79% feeling settled where they live.

As well as encouraging news, however, Our Life in Care indicates what needs to be improved and where that focus should be. Supporting young people to leave care and to prepare for independence is a priority. This is an issue echoed throughout the United Kingdom and VOYPIC has paid particular attention to the Scottish Parliament's recent legislation on extending support for its care leavers.

Vivian concluded saying: ***"We know relationships are at the heart of supporting children in care. What we need to add is robust care and pathway planning, a commitment to education and support for the long-term."***

- Ends -

NOTES TO THE EDITOR



1. VOYPIC ran this online survey in 2011, 2012 and 2013 as part of a three year pilot project. 333 young people aged 8 – 18 have completed the survey.
2. As well as giving children and young people a chance to share their views, the survey helps to inform policy and practice and raises public awareness of the needs of children living in care and care leavers.
3. The survey was funded by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and The Atlantic Philanthropies.
4. VOYPIC is a charity working across Northern Ireland promoting the rights and improving the lives of children and young people cared for away from home. They may be living at home in care; with foster or kinship carers; in children's homes; in secure settings; or in supported accommodation. They may be preparing to leave care or be care leavers.
5. We support children and young people through a wraparound model of practice. This means that we respond to local, individual and changing needs to bring meaningful benefits.
6. At 30 September 2013, there were 2892 looked after children in Northern Ireland:-

• In foster care	2172 (75%)
• Placed at home with parents	343 (12%)
• Residential care (children's homes)	213 (7%)
• Other care (hospital, secure, intensive support)	164 (6%)

(Delegated Statutory Functions, including Corporate Parenting Report, Statistical Report 30 September 2013, Health & Social Care Board)