



19 February

#caredayni

About VOYPIC – Voice of Young People in Care

We are VOYPIC and our mission is to improve the lives of children and young people cared for away from home. VOYPIC was set up in 1993 by young people in care, care leavers, social workers and academics. We are a charity working across Northern Ireland.

We promote the rights and improve the lives of children in care. They may be living at home in care; with non-relative or kinship foster carers; in children's homes; in secure settings; or in supported accommodation. We also work with young people preparing to leave care and care leavers.

*Our Life in Care*¹ and VOYPIC's manifesto² draw on the views and experiences of children and young people and set out what they and we want to see happen for their benefit. One thing we all want action on is image.

Positive images and messages

Children in care are vulnerable. They are likely to have had traumatic experiences before coming into care. But they grow into young people with ambitions and dreams and their energy and hopefulness match those of their peers. They know too about the stigma and stereotypes that can burden them because they grew up in care. They want negative attitudes challenged and replaced by accurate and positive images and stories.

We believe that we can do this by having a shared day dedicated to children in care and care leavers.

¹ VOYPIC (2014) *Our Life in Care - Third CASI survey of the views and experiences of children and young people in care*

² VOYPIC (2013) *Do You Care? Let's change the story for children in care*

5 Nations, 1 Voice launch Care Day

In 2012, we started working with Who Cares? Scotland, Who Cares? Trust (England), Voices from Care (Wales) and EPIC Empowering People in Care (Ireland) to build a partnership called *Five Nations, One Voice (5N1V)*.

Together we promote the voice of children and young people in care and care leavers.

One of our shared goals is to mark one day each year in all five nations to promote care and celebrate children and young people in care and so we launched Care Day. This year, Care Day will be **Friday 19 February**.

Our objectives for Care Day NI are:

- ✓ To raise the profile and celebrate children in care and care leavers
- ✓ To promote a shared sense of identity and positive, strong connections between young people with care experience

Be part of Care Day NI 2016

We want individuals and key organisations from the statutory, voluntary, community and private sectors to be part of Care Day NI to showcase best practice with children and young people. We want to celebrate stories of success for children and young people in care and care leavers.

We want:

- **Government departments and agencies** with corporate parenting duties for children in care and care leavers to support this event
- **Voluntary and community organisations** to share their news of safeguarding children and supporting young people towards independence
- **Local and national media** to increase public awareness and understanding of the reasons why children and young people come into care and publish good news stories.

Young people and the media

Research by Include Youth and QUB³ found that children in care and care leavers feature in very few positive stories. Bad news stories may mention that an individual has also been in care thereby making a link between anti-social behaviour and care.

Contributing positively to community and society

ARK's research noted that when society discusses young people, the focus is often on social and personal issues, such as anti-social behaviour, underage drinking and poor mental health⁴. By comparison, less time is spent on the valuable roles young people play in their communities.

VOYPIC's survey of children in care⁵ asked about community life and found that nearly half (47%) of participants had joined a local youth or community group, 52% had helped a charity and nearly half had volunteered.

What does this mean?

Making a positive contribution to community and society is one of the high levels outcomes in Northern Ireland's strategy for children and young people⁶. For children in care, being and feeling part of a community and society can be challenging. They may have been moved to a care placement away from their family, friends and neighbourhood and have to try to settle into a new home as well as a new community.

Care Day NI will help to promote community engagement. It will showcase the positives about children in care and care leavers and bring the focus on the contribution they make to society. On Care Day we will challenge negative attitudes and dispel them with accurate images and positive stories.

³ Gordon, F. et al (April 2015)- *Behind the Headlines' Media representation of Children and Young People in Northern Ireland – The voices and experiences of children and young people*

⁴ ARK (2010) ARK Research Update 69- *Youth Volunteering: Making a Difference to Community Relations*

⁵ VOYPIC (2014) *Our Life in Care - Third CASI survey of the views and experiences of children and young people in care*

⁶ OFMDFM (2006) *Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge: a ten year strategy for children and young people in Northern Ireland 2006 – 2016*

Care identity

There is a strong connection between young people who have a care experience and some talk with pride about their experience of growing up in care and their care identity. We believe in the benefits of children, young people and adults being able to embrace their care identity. There is value in being part of a wider group with a shared experience.

Care Day NI will promote a positive, shared care identity. This will help educate the public and media on issues about children and young people in care and care leavers. The day will focus on celebrating the experiences and achievements of children in care and care leavers.

What will you do for Care Day NI?

If you're part of Northern Ireland's corporate parents – a government department, agency or organisation delivering a service to children in care – mark Care Day with a local activity or event. If you're a voluntary or community group supporting children in care or care leavers then, promote what you do on Care Day! If you're a foster carer or kinship foster carer, celebrate the young people you care for on Care Day.

Make your Pledge for Care Day NI!

We want to have a full day of activities for Care Day NI. Everything from breakfast to suppertime - we want people finding out about the true and positive story of care and children in care. Tell us about your best practice – how you support young people to become independent, able to run their own homes, enjoy family and friendship, thrive in the world of education, leisure and work.

What should you do next?

Be part of changing the story for children and young people in care and care leavers - contact VOYPIC about how you can be involved! Here are just a few ideas – you'll have so many more of your own...

On Care Day

- ✓ Hold a seminar or round table discussion about care
- ✓ Run a training event on issues for children in care and care leavers
- ✓ Party! in your children's home or foster care placement
- ✓ Come to **The Care Factor** as we rock Belfast City Hall
- ✓ Decorate your workplace or home with our balloons and bunting, take a pic and send it to us for #caredayni gallery

Get in touch and stay in touch

- ✓ Follow on Facebook page www.facebook.com/VoypicCareDay
- ✓ Follow **#caredayni** on Twitter
- ✓ Email claire.killen@voypic.org
- ✓ Phone us 028 9024 4888



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