

PRESS RELEASE



Contact: Eithne Gilligan
Ph: 028 9024 4888 (office hours)
Mobile: 078 0877 7970
Email: eithne.gilligan@voypic.org
EMBARGO: 00.01 19 February 2016

5 Nations, 1 Voice: alliance connecting care-experienced young people launches with #CareDay!

Five charities representing children in care and care leavers are joining together to connect and support these young people to influence policy and effect change across the UK and Ireland. As part of the 5 Nations, 1 Voice alliance launch, Friday 19 February 2016 has been named #CareDay, with activities planned across the nations including here in Northern Ireland.

Supported by a £499,745 grant from the Big Lottery Fund, 5 Nations, 1 Voice brings together VOYPIC (Northern Ireland), Who Cares? Scotland, The Who Cares? Trust (England), Voices from Care (Wales) and EPIC (Ireland). Each organisation is uniquely positioned in its own nation and they share a common purpose - to promote the voices of care-experienced young people to improve their experiences and outcomes.

In Northern Ireland #CareDay is led by VOYPIC (Voice of Young People in Care) and will be a very busy day with over 40 events taking place. From dawn to dusk – and later still – there's an activity or event where people will be talking about care. The day will finish with over 350 young people, foster carers, mentors and care professionals coming together in Belfast City Hall to rock the night away at The Care Factor.

Vivian McConvey, VOYPIC's CEO said:

"This is our first ever Care Day and I'm delighted that so many organisations have come on board to mark it.

We need to change attitudes towards children in care and care leavers. It's already been tough enough for them and they should have the same life chances as their peers who have not been in care. I'm convinced that if we work at this together we can have the best system to care for vulnerable children and young people.

The alliance is launching with #CareDay on Friday 19 February, a day to celebrate the achievements of children in care and care leavers and share dreams for a world in which their life chances are equal to those of their peers.

#CareDay activities in Northern Ireland include a young person shadowing the Commissioner for Children and Young People - Koulla Yiasouma - for the day. In Derry City and Strabane District Council, Mayor Elisha McCallion will host a breakfast meeting with young people while Belfast's Deputy Lord Mayor, Alderman Guy Spence will host a similar breakfast event in Belfast City Hall. There's online safety training for foster carers and children's home staff on the day as well as coffee mornings and celebratory lunches.

Vivian continued *"Too often, it's distressing and negative stories that make the headlines. There is another – equally important - side to children's lives. The key thing we're asking people to do today is to think about care, look at it in a different way and tell us what your wish is for the care system and the children who live in it."*

5 Nations, 1 Voice will build connections among care-experienced young people across the UK and Ireland. These young people experience similar challenges whether they grow up in Aberdeen or Aberystwyth, Belfast or Bath, County Cork or the Cairngorms.

The alliance will create opportunities for young people in care and care leavers to build supportive networks with their peers, both face to face and online. The alliance hopes to build confidence and resilience among young care-experienced people, particularly about their identity.

5 Nations, 1 Voice will advocate for increased protection for care-experienced people in law and ensure that they are integral to shaping policy that affects them. This could include measures that introduce more stability and security into their lives. Each organisation has experience of effecting change in its own nation; through this project, they will work collaboratively on nationwide awareness raising activity.

Ends



Notes to editors

- 1) The 5 Nations 1 Voice project has been generously supported by The Big Lottery Fund. The grant will support UK elements of the partnership and cannot be used to fund direct activities in the Republic of Ireland. The involvement of EPIC in the partnership will help contribute knowledge and experience, and bring learning from the UK nations back to Ireland.
- 2) The Big Lottery Fund supports the aspirations of people who want to make life better for their communities across the UK. The Fund is responsible for giving out 40% of the money raised by the National Lottery and invests over £650 million a year in projects big and small in health, education, environment and charitable purposes. Since June 2004 The Big Lottery Fund has awarded over £8 billion to projects that change the lives of millions of people.
www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/
- 3) VOYPIC (Northern Ireland) is an independent, Northern Ireland charity that aims to improve the life chances of children in care and care leavers.
<http://www.voypic.org/>
Also, see Facebook page for more on VOYPIC's activities on 19 February:
<https://www.facebook.com/VoypicCareDay>
- 4) Who Cares? Scotland works with care-experienced young people across Scotland and seeks to ensure they are engaged with their care journey; are supported to connect with wider networks of care-experienced young people locally and nationally; and are empowered to speak up on behalf of themselves and the wider population of care-experienced young people across Scotland.
www.whocarescotland.org/
- 5) The Who Cares? Trust is a voice and champion for children and young people living in care in England. By listening to their views, The Who Cares? Trust lobbies for effective policy, provides relevant and supportive direct services and publishes books and magazines to meet their needs.
www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk
- 6) Voices from Care is Wales' national independent organisation dedicated to upholding the rights and welfare of children and young people who are or have been looked after.
www.voicesfromcarecymru.org.uk/
- 7) EPIC advocates with and for children in care and care-experienced young people throughout the Republic of Ireland. The aims of EPIC are to: facilitate and empower young people to have their voices heard, promote the rights and participation of young people in care and to provide young people with information, support and advice.
For more information on EPIC, visit www.epiconline.ie, like them on Facebook www.facebook.com/epicireland or follow them on Twitter @epicireland