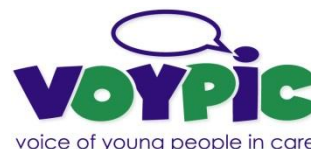


PRESS RELEASE



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Embargo 00.01 Friday 17 February 2017

Minister O'Neill ready to #LookActCare for VOYPIC's Care Day

You might think you know the full story about children in care, but VOYPIC (Voice of Young People in Care) wants you to LOOK, ACT, CARE again on Care Day, Friday 17 February. Health Minister, Michelle O'Neill, MLA joined Vivian McConvey and young people from VOYPIC at Parliament Buildings to pledge support for the Care Day campaign. Everyone is urged to take a fresh look and act to change the story for children and young people in care.

Minister O'Neill welcomed guests to 'Seven Views of Me', a special event to mark Care Day. Amongst the guests were chief executives and chairpersons of health and social care trusts who heard about attitudes to young people in care and how they impact on them. Young people shared experiences of their lives in care and how they both embrace and struggle with their own care identity. Guests heard how tough growing up in care can be as well as how resilient young people are. Young people told both sides of the story with comments such as:

"The care system causes young people to build walls around themselves."

and

"I do not care what people think of me – if I am happy, that's what's important."

Best of all, guests and young people worked together on ideas and ways to make things better when needed.

Vivian McConvey explained the campaign

“We had the first ever Care Day last year and I'm delighted to say that this year is shaping up to be even bigger and better. Northern Ireland has again risen to the challenge to LOOK, ACT, CARE with over 60 events on this theme taking place during the campaign. We're asking people to think about care, look at it in a different way and take action by making a pledge for care and the children who live in it.

From dawn to dusk, there's an activity or event going on where people will be talking about care. Everything from fundraisers to football matches, cake sales to conferences will feature on Care Day to change the story for children and young people in care.”

Ends

Notes to editors

1. VOYPIC has joined forces with like-minded organisations in England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland to set up *Five Nations, One Voice (#5N1V)*. All five will celebrate #CareDay in their own regions. There is a dedicated Facebook page which lists all the activities and events <https://www.facebook.com/5N1VCareDay/>
2. This year there's a fundraising element to the #CareDay campaign with Text to Donate CDAY17. Text your donation of £1, £2, £5 or £10 to 70070. Your text for example: CDAY17£10 to 70070.
3. **Voice of Young People in Care** (VOYPIC) is an independent, Northern Ireland charity that aims to improve the life chances of children in care and care leavers.
4. **Numbers** of children and young people in care in Northern Ireland by placement type at 31 March 2016
 - 2,890 children in care
 - 77% in foster care
 - 13.5% placed 'at home with parents'
 - 5.8% in children's homes or residential care

[Source: Delegated Statutory Functions Annual Corporate Parenting Statistical Report, 1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016]