

VOYPIC VOICE OF
YOUNG PEOPLE
IN CARE



SHOW US YOU CARE

A CALL TO ACTION FROM CARE
EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE OCT 2025

SHOW US YOU CARE – OUR CALL TO ACTION

It has been over 10 years since the last VOYPIC manifesto (Do You Care?) was written. Some things have changed, but lots of the same challenges are still here. So we decided it was time to speak up again.

Working with staff at VOYPIC, we started by looking at the old manifesto to see what still matters. Then we helped design a survey for other young people in and leaving care. Hundreds of us shared our views. After that, we held focus groups: real conversations about what life is like for us. The VOYPIC Young Reps took all the results, picked out the most important things, and helped create this new call to action - Show Us You Care.

Many of us also advised the Independent Review of Children's Social Care Services, published in 2023. We shared our stories, our ideas, and helped shape the recommendations. We were proud to be part of it, but we're disappointed that not much has changed since the report was published. We need action, not just talk.

This call to action isn't just for one government department or service. It's for everyone: politicians, social workers, policy makers, teachers, carers, youth workers, the media, and the public. Everyone. We all need to work together to make things better for care experienced young people.

We've had enough of being left out or let down. We know things can change, because we've seen it happen. But we need people to step up.

Read this. Hear us. And **Show Us You Care!**

~ The VOYPIC Young Reps



FORWARD

FOREWORD FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE



For over 30 years VOYPIC has worked hard to promote and amplify the voices of children and young people living in and leaving care. Their voices must be at the heart of how we shape and improve the care, protection, and services they receive.

This manifesto - Show Us You Care - is their call to action. It sets out clearly what they think needs to change to make life better for children and young people in and leaving care.

The Independent Review of Children's Social Care Services in 2022 was an important moment. Young people, along with other stakeholders, played a key role in shaping that review, advising Professor Ray Jones and the panel throughout. Many of the recommendations reflect their views, experiences, and ideas for change – and we fully support them. But more than a year on from the publication of the review report, progress has been slow. That is disappointing. Change is needed now.

We are proud of the young people who helped develop this call to action, from those who completed surveys and took part in focus groups to those who helped prioritise and write the final version. I also want to thank the staff who supported them every step of the way.

This is a powerful and practical call to action. It highlights the changes needed across education, housing, health, family time, participation and more. These are not asks for the future – they are needs now.

We know that when children get high quality care, when they feel safe, valued and loved, it changes lives. And when young people leave care with dignity and respect, they thrive. Yes, the system is under pressure. More children are in care in Northern Ireland than ever before. But that makes it even more important that we step up together and deliver the support every child needs.

Let's listen. Let's act. Let's show them we care.

~ Alicia Toal, Chief Executive

OUR CALLS



WHAT WE
WANT
WHY WE
WANT IT
WHAT WE
WANT TO SEE

1: TIME FOR A SINGLE AGENCY FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Establish a single, region wide children and families agency. Create one Northern Ireland wide agency to oversee all children's social care services, ensuring consistent delivery, better oversight, and no differences in the quality of support to children and young people in care and care leavers. Why we want it

The report of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care Services was published in June 2023 and it sets out a bold vision for reform. The review is thorough and comprehensive. Its findings and recommendations set out the way to address the challenges that have been facing children's social care services in Northern Ireland for many years.¹

We believe that a key observation made by Professor Jones and his advisory panel is the one that recognises "Northern Ireland is not that big". We fully support this and put it at the start of Show Us You Care.

It reflects what care-experienced young people, professionals, and advocates have long called for: a system that delivers consistent care no matter where a young person lives.

For too long, young people have faced fragmented services, unstable placements, and a lack of clarity about who is responsible for their care. What is needed now is the political commitment and urgency to turn these recommendations into reality.

What we want to happen

- **TALK TO US:** We think everyone in care and leaving care should get the same standard of support, no matter where they live. Listen to our experiences, and use them to shape a new agency.
- **CHALLENGE THE MYTHS:** No one said setting up a new agency would be easy. Sometimes projects like this face challenges, and don't work as well as we want them to. That doesn't mean we shouldn't try, or that it won't be worth it. This is not about restructuring. It's about redesigning a system that works better for children and young people, and their families.²
- **FIND THE RIGHT MODEL:** There are lots of different ways a new agency could be structured. That's not important to us. We just want one organisation, working across Northern Ireland, for all children's social care services.
- **MAKE CHANGE:** We all agree that change is needed. But, the best way for meaningful change to happen consistently across the region is for it to happen under one umbrella. Not some time in the future. Now.



¹ Department of Health (2023). Consultation on Recommendations of Independent Review of Children's Social Care Services in Northern Ireland | Department of Health. [online] Health. Available at: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-recommendations-independent-review-childrens-social-care-services-northern-ireland>.

2: FAMILY TIME REALLY MATTERS

WHAT WE WANT

We want family time that works for us. That means being listened to about who we see, when, how often, and where. We want to feel safe and supported and we want decisions about family time to be based on what's best for us - not what's easiest for adults.

WHY WE WANT IT

Seeing our family is really important to us. In surveys and workshops, we said it was the most important thing. All too often, we don't get a say in what actually happens. Sometimes we want to see our family more. Sometimes we don't. That all needs to be respected.

Too many things can get in the way of family time: no transport, not enough staff, poor planning, taking decisions without asking us. Sometimes foster carers or professionals decide what's best without including us. Sometimes we're not told the truth. Or anything at all.

We don't want complicated rules or unreasonable delays. We do want to feel heard, supported, and treated like we matter. That's what family time should be about.

What we want to happen

- **ASK US FIRST:** Plan our family time with us - who we see, when, where, and how often. If we don't want contact with family, that should be respected too.
- **RESPECT AND SUPPORT OUR FAMILY TIME:** If it's safe and we want to, we should be supported to see our family. This should be a given. We need trained, trusted workers who can help plan and support our family time.
- **STOP MAKING DECISIONS BASED ON ADULTS' SCHEDULES:** Don't base our family time on other people's behaviour or what's convenient for staff.
- **MAKE SURE WE CAN ACTUALLY GET THERE:** Arrange transport that works. Don't cancel family time because there's no one to get us there. You can be honest with us, so if something changes, tell us the truth. Don't avoid conversations or leave us guessing.
- **KEEP SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS STRONG:** Where possible, we should be able to live with our brothers and sisters. If not, we need to see them regularly, so we can keep our family bond strong. Even if one or more of us has left care, and our siblings are still in care, we still need to see them.
- **CHECK IT'S WORKING:** Ask us if our family time is helping, and use what we say to make things better for others too.

3: A SAFE PLACE TO CALL HOME

WHAT WE WANT

We want safe, stable homes - places where we feel cared for, respected, and comfortable. Whether we're in care or leaving care, we need real options, not just a roof over our heads. Where we live really matters. It should help us feel safe, settled, supported and ready to grow.

WHY WE WANT THIS

When we feel safe, we can thrive. Too often, where we live doesn't feel like home. We get moved around too much. Sometimes we don't feel cared about. Some of us live in bigger children's homes that don't feel personal. Some of us leave care and end up in hostels or with no real support. In our survey, "safety and stability" was one of the most important things we wanted. We also talked about the need to feel loved, secure, and settled. We don't want to be moved around - we want to build a life in one place.

We need foster care and children's homes that put care, not profit, first. People who look after us should be trained, supported, and part of teams that want the best for us.

We look forward to minimum standards for fostering agencies being introduced and fully implemented in Northern Ireland to help improve the quality of foster care.

What we want to happen

- **SAFE, STABLE HOMES:** Every young person in care should have the right to and live somewhere they feel safe and settled. Help us stay in one place long enough to build relationships, go to school, feel respected and at home. Like we belong.
- **GROW THE RIGHT OPTIONS:** We need more foster carers, smaller children's homes, and chances to live with extended family or friends when it's safe and wanted.
- **END PROFIT IN CARE:** Make sure all children's homes and fostering agencies are run for care, and not for profit. Public money should be for supporting us, not for shareholders.
- **MAKE FOSTERING WORK FOR US:** The new Minimum Standards for Fostering Agencies, if properly implemented, will help make sure we are better cared for with foster families.
- **NO HOSTELS FOR CARE LEAVERS:** Young people leaving care should never live in hostels, even for short periods. We need more housing choices when leaving care - supported accommodation, shared living options, and priority through the NI Housing Executive.³
- **LET US HELP DESIGN AND USE OUR SPACES:** A children's home, a shared flat, or supported housing - we should be involved in shaping what our places and spaces are like. Let us make it our home, not just where we live.



³ Housing Executive (2024). Ending Homelessness Together. [online] Available at: <https://www.nihe.gov.uk/getattachment/05fb0d2e-603f-4067-a381-04b2919b0ccd/Youth-Homelessness-Action-Plan-Accessible.pdf>.

4: A RIGHT TO INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY

WHAT WE WANT

We want to be listened to, believed, and supported to have our say in decisions about our lives. And we want someone in our corner, who is on our side, and who will make sure our voice is heard. That's why every child and young person in and leaving care should have the right to support from an independent advocate.

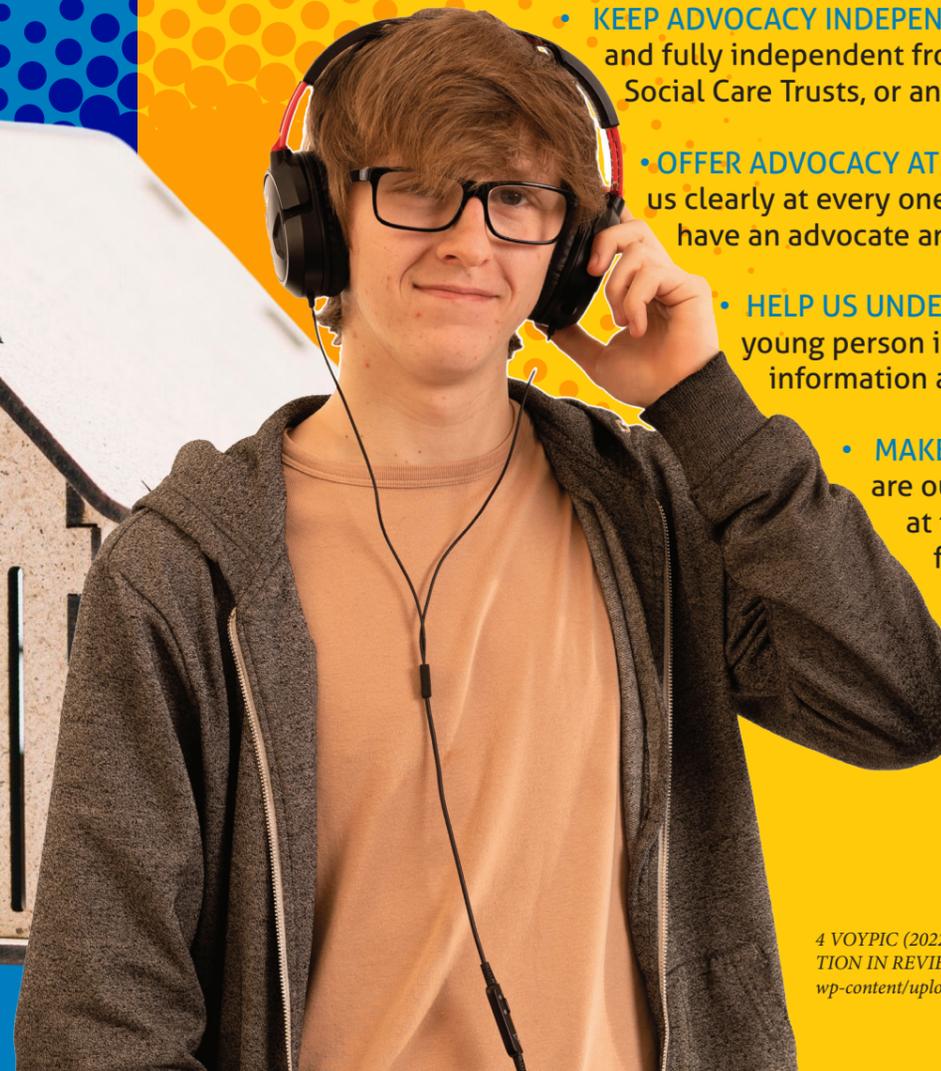
WHY WE WANT IT

Too many of us still don't always feel listened to. We're talked about, not with. Sometimes adults make decisions without us, or they don't explain things properly. And even when we do speak up, we're not always taken seriously.

We want everyone to have the right to independent advocacy support. An independent advocate is someone we can trust - someone who will stand beside us, explain our rights, and speak up, with or for us, as we need. That person should be completely independent - not part of the Trust, not working for the Department, and not delivering services to children in care.

WHAT WE WANT TO HAPPEN

- **GIVE EVERYONE ACCESS TO INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY:** Make sure independent advocacy is available for all children and young people in care, and for care leavers.
- **GIVE US AN ADVOCATE WHEN WE COME INTO CARE:** Every child and young person should be given an advocate when they first come into care, to help explain what's happening and ensure they feel supported. If they don't want that help, that's ok too.
- **KEEP ADVOCACY INDEPENDENT:** Advocates must be properly trained and fully independent from the Department of Health, Health and Social Care Trusts, or any service provider.
- **OFFER ADVOCACY AT EVERY YOUNG PERSON'S MEETING:** Remind us clearly at every one of our young person's meetings that we can have an advocate and how to access them.
- **HELP US UNDERSTAND OUR RIGHTS:** Every child and young person in care should be given easy-to-understand information about their rights, entitlements, and options.
- **MAKE MEETINGS YOUNG PERSON-CENTRED:** These are our meetings, about us, so we should feel right at the heart of them. The VOYPIC Standards for Participation in Young People's Meetings should be the minimum.⁴



⁴ VOYPIC (2022). MY MEETING: YOUNG PEOPLE'S STANDARDS FOR PARTICIPATION IN REVIEW MEETINGS. [online] VOYPIC website. Available at: <https://voypic.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/YP-Meetings-Standards.pdf>.

5: PEOPLE WE CAN COUNT ON FOR SUPPORT

WHAT WE WANT

We want to build trusting, stable relationships with the people who are there to support us. That means having enough social workers and knowing who they are. We want to be able to reach someone we trust when we need them and not just during office hours.

WHY WE WANT IT

Too often, we're passed around from one social worker to the next. Sometimes we don't even know who our social worker is. More and more, we don't have a named social worker to help us. Other times, we may see them once a month, or not at all. This makes it really hard to feel safe, supported, or listened to.

We understand that social workers are under pressure. But when we don't have one, or when they change all the time, we feel like we don't matter. We want good social workers - who listen, who turn up, who are honest with us, and who actually get things done. We want them to be there for us outside of 9 to 5 because life doesn't stop when offices close.

WHAT WE WANT TO HAPPEN

- **RECRUIT MORE SOCIAL WORKERS:** Make it a priority to hire more trained and enthusiastic social workers so we're not left waiting or unsupported. Make sure everyone has a named social worker that we know who it is.
- **KEEP SOCIAL WORKERS FOR LONGER:** Make social work jobs better, with more training and support, so people stay. We want to build real, enduring relationships and not have to start over every few months.
- **A TEAM AROUND ME:** My care shouldn't be the responsibility of just one social worker. How we are cared for needs lots of different skills, so having a team involved in the life of every child and young person will help make things better. And, we need at least one of them to be available at any time when we need the help, not matter what time it is.
- **SUPPORT AROUND THE CLOCK:** Give us someone we can reach 24/7. It could be our social worker or PA or someone who's trained to help. We want an out-of-hours service that is about more than emergencies. Our lives aren't just 9-5, Monday to Friday.
- **SPEND MORE TIME WITH US AND COMMUNICATE:** Visit us more often and not just the minimum required. Spend time getting to know us, so we feel comfortable and speak up when things aren't okay. Tell us what's happening. Don't make big decisions like moving us without talking to us first. We need to feel part of what's going on.
- **FIND OUR TRUSTED PERSON:** We want to be able to name someone we trust who can speak for us when we aren't able to. Different from an independent advocate, this is just someone we know and who knows us. Not a professional, just someone we trust.

SUPPORT

CARE AND COMMUNITY

6: CONNECTIONS IN CARE AND COMMUNITY

WHAT WE WANT

We want to feel connected - to each other, to our communities, and to who we are. That means creating more ways for care-experienced young people to meet, share, and support each other and to feel part of the wider community too.

WHY WE WANT IT

Being care-experienced is part of who we are but we don't always get the space to explore that. When we connect with other young people who've been through similar things, we can feel seen and understood and supported. When we're in groups with VOYPIC, we don't have to explain - we just belong.

These peer relationships help us feel confident, safe, and proud of our story. Some of us want to use our experiences and voices to help others. Some of us just want the chance to talk, share, or sit in a room with people who get it and get us.

We want to feel like part of the wider community too. Having the confidence to go to new places, take part in activities, and feel included really matters to us.

WHAT WE WANT TO HAPPEN

- **SUPPORT PEER CONNECTION:** Make sure every young person in care can meet other care-experienced young people through groups, events, and safe online spaces.
- **MAKE CARE IDENTITY SOMETHING WE CAN EXPLORE:** Make spaces for us to talk about what being in care means to us without shame, stigma, or pressure to explain ourselves.
- **REMOVE BARRIERS TO GETTING INVOLVED:** Sort out the practical stuff like transport, permissions, and costs that stop us joining in activities or events with other young people.
- **HELP US FEEL PART OF THE WIDER COMMUNITY:** Make sure we can join local clubs and groups, including those that aren't care-specific. We want to feel included in the world around us.
- **CELEBRATE CARE-EXPERIENCED PEOPLE PUBLICLY:** Promote campaigns like Care Day ⁵ more widely. Show that being care-experienced is something to be proud of, not to hide.
- **RECOGNISE OUR ROLE MODELS:** We need to see more care experienced people who have done well, and see that anything is possible, no matter who you are.

⁵ VOYPIC (n.d.). Care Day. [online] VOYPIC website . Available at: <https://www.voypic.org/careday/>.



7: LEARNING, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

WHAT WE WANT

We all want to do well, have real choices about our education, and feel confident about our future. That means getting the right support, from the right people, at the right time- at home, in school, college or university, and when we're getting ready to work.

WHY WE WANT IT

We care about our education, and we want to learn. Even if we don't always show it. Sometimes we feel like we're doing it on our own or not sure if there's someone to help us. We don't always know who we can go to in school, and we don't always get the support we need to catch up or stay on track.

When it comes to work and growing up, it feels like we're expected to figure things out on our own - how to apply for jobs, fill in forms, or do interviews and there's no one to show us how. We want to feel prepared, not just pushed. Some of us might need extra support - ESOL classes, transport, or funding for school activities, tutoring, or driving lessons. These aren't extras - they can help us feel included, confident, and get ready.

There's a duty to support and encourage our learning. We need that support, not just to survive, but to thrive.

WHAT WE WANT TO HAPPEN

- **SUPPORT US TO GO TO SCHOOL / COLLEGE:** No young person wants to go to school every day. That's why we need the adults who look after us to encourage us to get up, to go to school, and to learn.
- **MAKE SURE SUPPORT IS THERE:** People working in our schools and colleges should be there for us. Teachers should be trained in trauma-informed approaches, so they understand how to support care-experienced students. VOYPIC's See Me⁶ resources will help.
- **OFFER THE HELP WE NEED:** Support us with tutors, smaller class options, and help with homework or revision especially during transitions or if we fall behind. Help unaccompanied, asylum-seeking young people to thrive with easier access to ESOL, essential skills, and employment-based training.
- **GIVE US CHOICE:** We should have a say about what school we go to and what we want to study, including practical subjects and learning at our own pace. Cover additional learning costs so we're able to go on school trips, take part in sports and activities, just like everyone else. Help us with driving lessons and theory test costs so we can access jobs, education, and our community.
- **SUPPORT US TO GO TO UNI, AND BEYOND:** give us the money and support to allow us to go to uni, housing, resources, travel, etc. Set up to succeed. Fund Masters and other post-grad opportunities. And be there for us at the big moments- help us to move into our student accommodation, whether here or elsewhere.
- **HELP US GET READY FOR WORK:** offer practical support for job applications, CV writing, interview preparation and career planning including work experience opportunities and support into apprenticeships.

8: LEAVING CARE TO FULL INDEPENDENCE

WHAT WE WANT

We want to leave care when the time is right for us, not just when we reach a certain age. That means flexible support that follows us into adulthood, no matter what path we take.

WHY WE WANT IT

Right now, too many of us feel like we're dropped. We turn 18 and we're treated differently, even when we don't feel ready. It's not just scary, it's unfair. Nobody becomes fully independent overnight. Some of us are still in school, some of us aren't. Some of us are working, others aren't. No matter our situation, we all need support.

Leaving care should be and feel like a planned and safe transition and not a sudden break. We want to leave care safely, with a home, a plan, real support, and someone to call.

WHAT WE WANT TO HAPPEN

- **LEAVE CARE WHEN WE'RE READY:** We should leave care when we're ready, not when we turn a certain age. Make support flexible and based on our needs, not on our birthday.
- **PLAN AHEAD, WITH US:** Make sure we are involved in planning our future, and that we know in advance what's happening when, and who will be there to help. But be flexible- sometimes we need those plans to change.
- **GIVE EVERYONE THE SAME CHANCES:** Make sure all care leavers get support and not just those in education. Don't base help on our grades, but on what we need. If we move to a new area, we should still get support. Don't leave us behind just because we move.
- **SAFE, SECURE HOUSING FOR EVERY CARE LEAVER:** No more hostels. Make sure every care leaver has a safe, stable home with real tenancy options. We know that housing is under strain, but too many young people are leaving care with nowhere safe to live. We know how many young people will leave care over the next few years. Start planning now to make sure no one has to live in a hostel.
- **CLARITY ON WHO AND WHAT WE'RE ENTITLED TO:** Create and share a simple, honest guide so we know who we can go to for support even after we leave care and what support and financial help we can get for driving lessons, ID and more.
- **HELP US DEVELOP LIFE SKILLS:** Help us learn how to cook, clean, budget and pay bills, to help us live independently. Help us with starter kits to set up on our own - bedding, pots, cutlery, cleaning supplies, and other basics we can't afford alone.



9: OUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

WHAT WE WANT

We want to feel well, both mentally and physically. That means getting real support for our mental health, getting help without a long wait, and being cared for by people who understand what we've been through. Therapeutic care should be part of our everyday care and not something we have to fight for.

WHY WE WANT IT

Our mental health really matters to us and we said that again and again in our workshops and survey. For many of us, coming into care is traumatic. We deal with a lot, and we need support that helps us understand that, talk about it, and move forward.

It's great that we have a Mental Health Strategy⁷, but it has to be more than words. We need the promises in the strategy to be kept.

Tell us about the Northern Ireland Framework for Integrated Therapeutic Care (NIFITC)⁸, how it can help us, and how it is going to be available to all of us.

WHAT WE WANT TO HAPPEN

- **FUND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES PROPERLY:** Put sufficient funding behind the mental health strategy with treat care experienced young people as a priority group.
- **TELL US ABOUT FITC:** Help us understand how the Framework for Integrated Therapeutic Care works, and how it will help us. If it's working, make it available to all of us. But remember, one size does not fit all. Put the services we need where we are.
- **SUPPORT US WHEN WE NEED IT:** No one should have to wait months for support. Make access to counselling and therapy fast, fair, and available when we ask for it. And don't wait until we're in crisis- prevention is just as important as treatment.
- **TRAIN EVERYONE WHO WORKS WITH US:** Make trauma and care experience part of training for all health workers, carers, teachers, and social workers so everyone can understand what we're carrying and how to support us.
- **PROMOTE PHYSICAL HEALTH:** Help us take care of our bodies too. Promote good sleep, exercise, nutrition, and regular check-ups. Good mental and physical health go together.
- **GOOD RELATIONSHIP AND SEXUALITIES EDUCATION:** As we get grow up, it's so important that young people get good quality RSE. It's even more important for children with experience of care. We want evidence-based, age-appropriate, inclusive RSE for everyone.

⁷ Department of Health (2021b). Mental Health Strategy 2021-2031. [online] Available at: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/doh-mhs-strategy-2021-2031.pdf>.

⁸ Department of Health (2021a). An Overview of the Northern Ireland Framework for Integrated Therapeutic Care for Care Experienced Children and Young People Connecting Care Acknowledgement. [online] Available at: https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/doh-nifitc-overview-doc_1.pdf.

10: TAKING PART - HOBBIES, INTERESTS, TRAVEL AND THE REST!

WHAT WE WANT

We want to enjoy hobbies and interests, try new things, and feel part of our communities. That means having the resources and encouragement needed to get involved.

WHY WE WANT IT

Hobbies and activities help us grow. They build our confidence, teach us new skills, improve our mental health, and help us meet and make friends. All too often, we're left out because we can't afford it or don't know what's available.

Transport is one of the biggest barriers. We need bus fares, lifts, or support to get to clubs, sports, or youth groups. We also need money to take part in things like sports, art, drama, gym sessions, or even driving lessons. These things aren't extras - they're how we're able to build lives we enjoy and futures we're proud of.

We want social workers and personal advisers to understand what's available and help us access it. And to fight our corner for the essentials that aren't covered.

WHAT WE WANT TO HAPPEN

- **ACTIVITIES FREE AND EASY TO JOIN:** Every young person in care should be able to join clubs, try hobbies, and take part in groups. Cost shouldn't be a barrier.
- **GIVE US FREE PUBLIC TRANSPORT:** All young people in care and care leavers up to 25 should have free public transport to get to school, work, see friends, and take part in our communities.
- **RESPECT OUR IDENTITY:** Our identity beyond our care experience is important to us. Whether it's our religion, our culture, or anything else that makes up our identity, it's important we're support to understand and celebrate who we are.
- **TELL US WHAT WE'RE ENTITLED TO:** Create a clear guide to tell us what support we can get for clothes, holidays, hobbies, driving lessons, and more.
- **TRAIN STAFF TO HELP US ACCESS MONEY:** PAs should know about Universal Credit, EMA, and other financial schemes and help us apply.
- **SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM:** For unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people, cover essential costs like clothing, gym access, internet, and home energy - just like other young people.



11: PROUD OF US

WHAT WE WANT

We want to feel proud of who we are. We want to challenge the stereotypes and promote positive images and stories about young people in and leaving care. We want the public to understand that care doesn't define us and that we deserve the same chances as anyone else.

WHY WE WANT IT

Too often, we feel judged or treated differently because we've been in care. People often don't understand what being in care means. That's not our fault - it's a lack of awareness. We don't want to hide our care experience, but neither do we want to be treated like a problem or risk, or given a label.

We want everyone to understand more about care. The media needs to change how we are portrayed. The Care Day campaign is amazing and now it needs to spread wider and reach further beyond the care community.

WHAT WE WANT TO HAPPEN

- **PROMOTE POSITIVE IMAGES OF CARE:** Challenge negative stereotypes and celebrate the strengths, resilience, and achievements of care experienced young people.
- **BRING CARE DAY TO THE PUBLIC:** Invest in Care Day as a major public celebration of young people with a care identity.
- **TACKLE DISCRIMINATION:** End practices that make us feel different from our peers, or that allow others to treat us differently because of our care experience.
- **RAISE AWARENESS OF CARE:** Train staff across all services of the Corporate Family about care experience and how to support us without making us feel different.
- **MAKE MEDIA MORE MINDFUL:** Work with broadcasters, journalists, and online platforms to improve how care is portrayed. Show real stories and not just headlines about problems.
- **PLATFORM YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES:** Support care experienced young people to share their own stories through art, music, writing, and media. Let us speak for ourselves. We should be part of research and campaigns to reflect our experiences in studies, media stories, and campaigns, and ensure that these reach the general public.



12: SHOW US YOU CARE

WHAT WE WANT

We want to know what's being done to make life better for children and young people in and leaving care. That means regular, clear updates, honest answers, and solid evidence that change is happening...and making things better.

WHY WE WANT IT

We've done our bit - we've taken part in research, done the surveys, engaged in consultations, sat on panels, and shared our stories time and time again. But too often, there's no change.

Now, it's time for accountability. Not just to us, but to all the young people who are in care now, and those who will come into care in the future. We want those in power to show us how they're keeping their promises.

We want to know what's happening with the Independent Review of Children's Social Care Services.⁹ We want to see whether and how A Life Deserved¹⁰ is making life in care better. We want to hear how the Adoption and Children (NI) Act 2022¹¹ is changing practice. We want to understand how unaccompanied young people who've come to Northern Ireland to seek refuge are being welcomed into our society.

We want the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to be part of our law, and those in power to uphold our rights. We want the care experienced community to be recognised and celebrated in its diversity, with all young people fully included.

This isn't just a list of asks. It's a challenge – a challenge to you to SHOW US YOU CARE. Don't let us down.

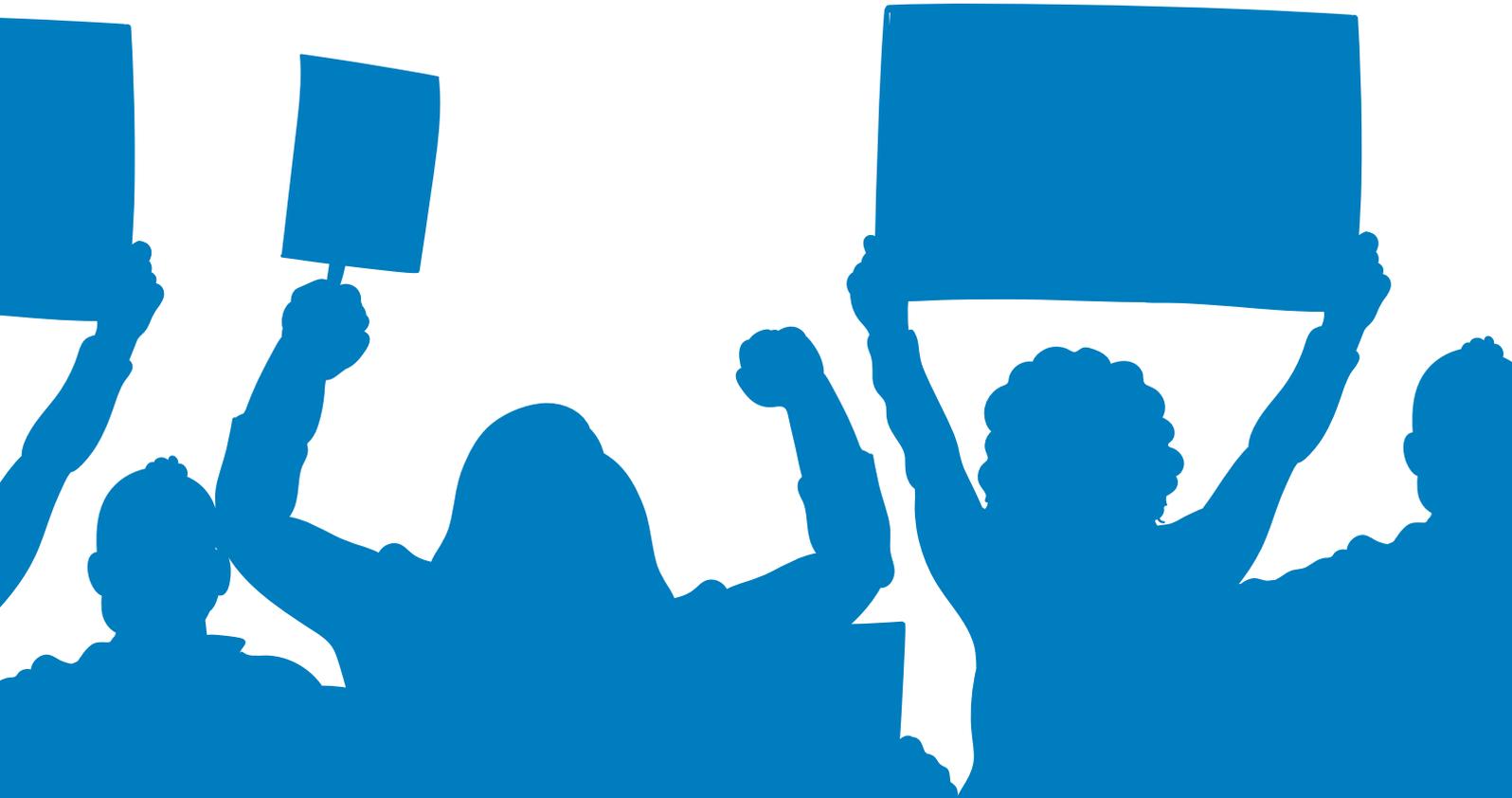
WHAT WE WANT TO HAPPEN

- **REPORT BACK TO US:** Tell us how the Independent Review of Children's Social Care Services is being implemented and what difference it's making.
- **SHOW US THE IMPACT OF THE STRATEGIES:** Report on how A Life Deserved and the Adoption and Children (NI) Act 2022 are changing real-life experiences for young people.
- **RECOGNISE ALL YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE:** Make sure all young people, including those who have recently come here, are fully included, supported, and celebrated as part of the care experienced community.
- **UPHOLD OUR RIGHTS:** Tell us how you're protecting our rights and upholding the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- **PUT OUTCOMES BEFORE OPTICS:** Involve us meaningfully in shaping, delivering, and evaluating care. Then show us that what we said made a difference.
- **LEAD WITH SHOW US YOU CARE:** Use it as a blueprint for change. Develop an action plan. Track progress. Tell the care experienced community and the public what's changing, and what still needs to change.

⁹ Jones, R. (2023). Report of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care Services in Northern Ireland. [online] CSCS NI Review. Available at: <https://www.cscsreviewni.net/files/cscsreviewni/2023-06/The%20NI%20Review%20of%20Children%27s%20Social%20Care%20Services.pdf>.
¹⁰ Department of Health (2022). Department Of Health and Department of Education a Life Deserved: 'CARING' FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND". [online] Available at: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/doh-lac-strategy.pdf>.
¹¹ Legislation Government UK (2022). Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022. [online] Legislation.gov.uk. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/niu/2022/18/introduction/enacted> [Accessed 7 Aug. 2025].

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