

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

25 February 2025

**Announcement from Cabinet and Committees
Update from Corporate Parenting Panel**

On 17 October 2023, Full Council committed to the Corporate Parenting Panel exploring care experience as a protected characteristic. Corporate Parenting Panel were delegated to explore the matter to ensure it was something that young people would want, and that there would be no unintended consequences.

A paper exploring the above was presented at Corporate Parenting Panel on 28 January 2025. As a local authority whose Children's social services are rated 'Outstanding' by OFSTED, who recognised that "Care leavers are supported exceptionally well by caring and compassionate personal advisors who are determined in their efforts to provide the right support to help them achieve their ambitions", the Council seeks to continually deliver the highest quality services to its care experienced young people. This is reflected in the strong existing Local Offer for all our care experienced young people, supported by consistent Corporate Parenting support and our One Council approach.

Young people themselves have told us that they do not want to be identified and worry that being characterised as care experienced may not let them forget and move on and some have raised concerns that organisations may automatically 'flag' care experienced people to help identify safeguarding concerns without the knowledge of those young people.

The paper evidenced that the tangible impact of recommending this in Wiltshire is not clear given the strong offer currently in place for our care experienced young people due to our existing and ambitious commitment which is further reflected in our strategic priorities 2023-26. Furthermore, following consultation, the views of our young people raised their concerns about being 'labelled' and the unintended consequence of adopting this could potentially lead to further stigma.

For the reasons outlined above it is not recommended that Wiltshire adopt progressing making care experienced a tenth protected characteristic at this time. Following discussion during the panel meeting, the Panel endorsed this recommendation.

Cllr Peter Hutton - Chairman, Corporate Parenting Panel

Update author: Kat McJannet (Head of Children in Care and Young People)

10 February 2025