

Making Care Experience a Protected Characteristic

The Independent Review of Children's Social Care, published in May 2022, had a recommendation that 'Care Experience' should be made a Protected Characteristic in law, sitting beside other protected characteristics such as age, disability, race, and religion under the Equality Act 2010.

Many care-experienced people face discrimination, stigma, and prejudice daily, often finding it challenging to access further support. Public perceptions of care experience can sometimes centre on the idea that children are "irredeemably damaged, " which can lead to discrimination and assumptions being made.

54 councils (and increasing) in England have already passed a motion to consider care experience as a protected characteristic.

Recognising care experience as a protected characteristic integrates support into established mechanisms. This ensures that supporting care experienced individuals is not an add-on, but a fundamental aspect of policy development and decision-making. The approach guarantees that policies are developed with equity in mind, ensuring that care experienced individuals have the support and opportunities they need to thrive.

In making care experience a protected characteristic we can make sure that we lessen the barriers for them to achieve and work with partners to ensure that their needs are met.

By recognising Care Experience as a protected characteristic as a Council we acknowledge Care-experienced people face significant barriers that impact them throughout their lives. Despite the resilience of many care-experienced people, society too often does not take their needs into account or understand them.

The Council is already committed to supporting all children and young people to ensure they have the best possible start in life. Recognising care experience as a protected characteristic further enhances this and supports a wider opportunity to educate others on what it means to be care experienced.

Background Papers

Care Leaver Local Offer: Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic:
<https://www.careleaveroffer.co.uk/documents/2034-protected-characteristics-briefing-report-14th-june-2023-by-terry-galloway.pdf>

Leicestershire Cares: Should "care experience" be a protected characteristic?:
<https://www.leicestershirecares.co.uk/about-charity/news-events-/should-care-experience-be-protected-characteristic/>

Proposed resolution:

That Council:

- a) Agrees to 'support and treat care experience as if it were a Protected Characteristic in Law' to join the many other Local Authorities who have already done so.
- b) Requests that the leader lobby national Government to have this enshrined in law so that there is an equity for all care experienced people.