

Somerset Council

Full Council

- 24 May 2023



Motions on Notice

Executive Member: All

Division and Local Member: All

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A. Somerset Council To Treat Care Experience as if it were a Protected Characteristic Motion

The following motion will be proposed by Cllr Leigh Redman and seconded by Cllr Frances Nicholson:

Somerset Council recognises:

Every elected member and employee of this Council is a corporate parent to the children and care leavers in our care.

We are all responsible for providing the best possible care, safeguarding and outcomes for the children who are looked after by us.

That Councils have a duty to put the needs of vulnerable people at the heart of decision-making through co-production and collaboration.

Somerset Council notes:

A [UCL study](#) which showed 70% of care experienced people die early. Over 50% of people who are in custody up to the age of 21 have been in care ([Become Charity](#)) and a quarter of the homeless population is care experienced (The Independent Review of Children’s Social Care).

The Government commissioned an [independent national review of children’s social care, chaired by Josh MacAlister](#), and one recommendation was to look at [making care experience an additional protected characteristic](#); another was that all public bodies become corporate parents.

That the Government has not responded to the independent review.

Somerset Council believes:

- Our children looked after and those who have left our care have the right to expect everything from a corporate parent that would be expected from a good and responsible parent. This includes how families continue their support, care, and ambition for their children after they leave home and gain independence including through employment opportunities.
- This council has already taken important steps to support our care experienced children and care leavers better, such as our work on the Care Leavers' Covenant & our drive to harmonise a policy to exempt care leavers from Council tax, but we can always do more.
- That we cannot wait until the government decides which recommendations to implement and therefore, here in Somerset, we should act to be the best corporate parents we can be.
- That when making any decisions in relation to our policies or formulating our Corporate Plan that we should recognise care experienced people as a vulnerable group who face discrimination.
- That whilst we cannot change national legislation we can use our powers to ensure that the Council consider care experienced people as part of its decision making in order to seek to prevent discrimination and improve life chances, in doing this.
- This will mean that we treat people with care experience the same as those with a protected characteristic.

Somerset Council therefore resolves:

- 1) That the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer ensure that all council making decision documentation has in it appropriate sections to allow for the impact upon 'care experienced people' to be considered in decision making, where relevant and that:
- 2) Officers consider how information might be captured and reported to council.
- 3) Any publication of information relating to people who share a Protected Characteristic also includes 'care experienced people'
- 4) To proactively seek out and listen to the voices of care experienced people of all ages when developing new Council policies and plans and, where possible, those where the Council produces them in partnership with others.
- 5) To request that the Chief Executive, as Head of Paid Service, explore with the Director of HR how the Council could seek to guarantee all care experienced persons an interview where they meet the essential criteria of the post applied for.
- 6) That the Executive Member for Children and Families writes to all public bodies represented in the Council area to make them aware of this motion and, where possible and within available resources, offer training on corporate parenting and issues facing care experienced people and to work with our

partners and our care experienced population to understand what corporate parenting means for them.

- 7) And further the Executive member should write to Somerset MPs making them aware of this motion and asking them to press government to amend the law to include Care Experienced persons as a Protected Characteristic and for the extension of Corporate Parenting to all public bodies, following the recommendations of the MacAlister Report.
- 8) That the Chief Executive, senior Directors, & Monitoring Officer attend a Corporate

Parenting board meeting early in the next council year to report on the actions taken as a result of this motion on notice.

The report has been archived but sections can be accessed [here](#)

B. Commit to working with bus operators across Somerset to establish a Somerset-wide discounted bus pass for 16-25 year olds

The following motion will be proposed by Cllr Diogo Rodrigues and seconded by Cllr John Hunt:

Somerset Council Notes:

There are at least 10 different bus operators across Somerset all offering varying fares targeted at young people. Most notably, Buses of Somerset, Hatch Green Coaches, First West of England, South West Coaches, Libra Travel, Bakers Dolphin Coaches, Isle Valley, FromeBus, Dartline & Somerset Accessible Transport.

7 of the named operators only offer youth fares during term-time and on college days only.

When young people were surveyed as part of the development of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), 38% of 16-25 year olds said cost was the reason for not using local buses more in Somerset & 44% of young people surveyed did not use local buses at all in Somerset.

During that same survey stage, cheaper and simplified bus fares scored highly in both the formal stakeholder and public survey feedback, with particularly strong support for the introduction of a 'Youth' fare for those aged 16 to a maximum of 25 years old.

Somerset Council Believes:

Young people should have access to affordable bus travel all year round, not only during term-time.

Combining several current youth/student fare options into one single discounted young person's product, available across all services in Somerset,

will simplify bus travel & make it more accessible & affordable for young people.

That bus transport is a greener form of travel compared to car usage, and creating the accessibility that young people need to use busses helps this Council in its ambition to decarbonise the County.

That making bus transport accessible and affordable to young people not only opens up various opportunities across the County, but helps to tackle the challenges around social isolation that is prevalent especially among young people living in rural communities.

Somerset Council Resolution:

This Council commits to working with bus operators across Somerset to establish a Somerset-wide discounted bus pass for 16 to 25-year-olds