

WHO CARES? SCOTLAND

Police Scotland: Care Experienced Officers Group

Corporate Parenting in practice: a case study



EQUALITY | RESPECT | LOVE



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Introduction

This is a promising practice case study which captures an example of what Corporate Parenting looks like in practice.

In this study, we met with Police Scotland, and particularly their recently established Care Experienced Officers group.

This group generously agreed to answer some questions about the group and its significance as well as their advice to Care Experienced people who may want to join the police in future.

Our thanks go to the group for taking the time to speak to us.



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A Note From Police Scotland

In November 2020, Police Scotland began carrying out engagement work ahead of creating our new Corporate Parenting Plan for 2021-2024. As part of this engagement, we recognised there was an opportunity to seek the views of our own colleagues who are Care Experienced and can provide a unique insight.

In an unprecedented piece of work, the Children and Young People Team from Police Scotland made an internal video appeal, supported by Who Cares? Scotland, to all colleagues, inviting them to come forward if they had Care Experience and offer them the chance to get involved with helping shape our new Corporate Parenting Plan. We wanted to make sure our Care Experienced officers were empowered to use their unique life experience to come forward and help make decisions that directly affect young people that are in the same situations as they were growing up and their experiences as police officers and staff.

The response to the appeal was overwhelmingly positive, with officers and staff with lived experience coming forward, as well as various colleagues with experience of providing care. Some Care Experienced officers said they had always wanted some way to offer their personal experience to help Care Experienced young people in the police, but didn't know how until they saw the appeal, which proved what a worthwhile idea it was. Along with Who Cares? Scotland, online engagement sessions were held to speak with lived experience officers.

Who Cares? Scotland is helping us provide the support and care to our staff as they help us to form our new Corporate Parenting Plan. The new group is at an early stage and we hope to keep it going to include these and other Care Experienced colleagues.



'The Care Experienced engagement with our colleagues underpins our commitment to being a good Corporate Parent in Scotland. By looking after our own Care Experienced colleagues, we are recognising how we value them in our workforce and we are delighted with how they have helped us design our new plan.

We look forward to helping the group evolve to grow and feedback in to further Corporate Parenting events. We aim to continue work like this as we learn how to make Scotland a safe place for Care Experienced young people to flourish and achieve their full potential'

- Chief Inspector Colin Convery, Children and Young Persons, Police Scotland.

How did you come to be involved in this group?



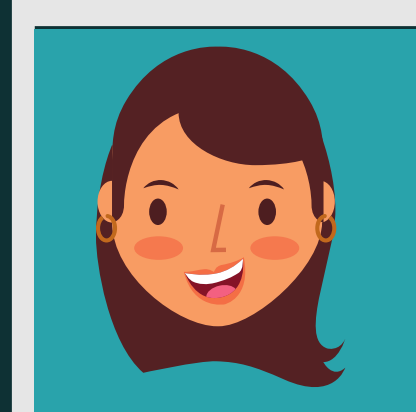
Chris

Having seen an advertisement on the Police Intranet page looking for Care Experienced officers to get in touch, I decided to make myself known. A lot of this was down to curiosity as it was not something I had ever observed previously.



Karen

Our National Safer Communities Team asked for volunteers to take part which I was happy to do. I had previously sought assistance from Who Cares? Scotland to deliver inputs to Community Police Teams, therefore was aware of the excellent work they do.



Michelle

There was an advert posted on the Police Scotland Intranet asking for Care Experienced officers to get in touch to assist with the Corporate Parenting plan.

What was it like for you to come forward and say that you are Care Experienced in a work setting?



Chris

Being Care Experienced is not something I tend to hide from my colleagues. Although I do not advertise it, I am always happy to talk about my experience if the topic comes up.

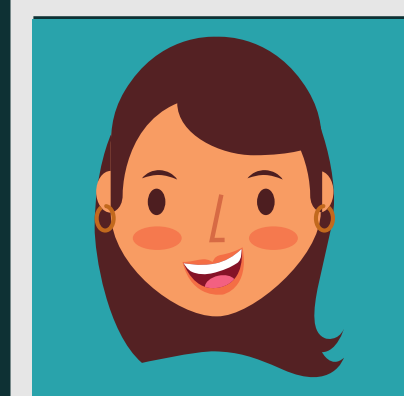
I honestly feel that my time within care helps me immensely with my day-to-day role in policing and provides me with a unique perspective that not everyone has. Especially now within my current role within a child protection setting,

I frequently make decisions with regards to a child's welfare, many of whom are currently within a care setting or have experience of this.



Karen

In this group I felt comfortable as there were other officers in the same position.



Michelle

It was very daunting to type the email asking to be part of the group.....BUT at the same time it was like a huge weight had been lifted. I had wanted to use my experience so many times during my career but could never find the right way of explaining how I knew how to deal with people, or how I had natural empathy with the situations I was faced with, and a knowledge of the right way to make it better for all involved.

I felt like I could let the real me explain without fear of judgement or reprisal!

Why is the Care Experienced officer group important to you?



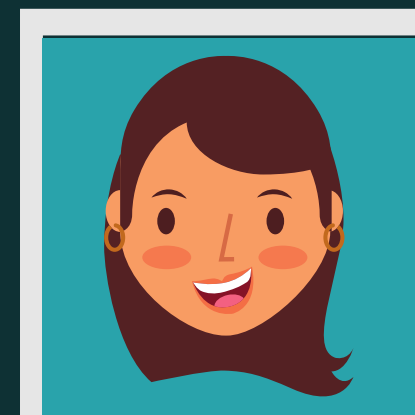
Chris

I think it's important to try and break down stigma associated with those who have been in care, whilst also providing a platform for those who are Care Experienced for their voices to be heard, in the hope that it will make a difference to those currently going through similar circumstances.



Karen

The group ensures that our organisation are taking into account the opinions of their colleagues with first hand experience of the care system when deciding on the content of any future policies, procedures and action plans.



Michelle

It's important because it gives Police Scotland the ability to engage positively in a natural way (not forced or because of policy decisions) with the Care Experienced community.

How does it feel to have Care Experience recognised in this way by Police Scotland?



Chris

I feel that the organisation has really shown that they value those with diverse backgrounds and are actively tapping into this experience to better inform future decision making.



Karen

It is a positive step forward that will provide Officers with a better understanding of the many different elements of being Care Experienced.



Michelle

It has made me feel empowered to make a difference. It has given me courage to disclose my experience and has made me proud to be part of an organisation that has taken this step.

What advice would you give to other organisations considering setting up a group like this one?



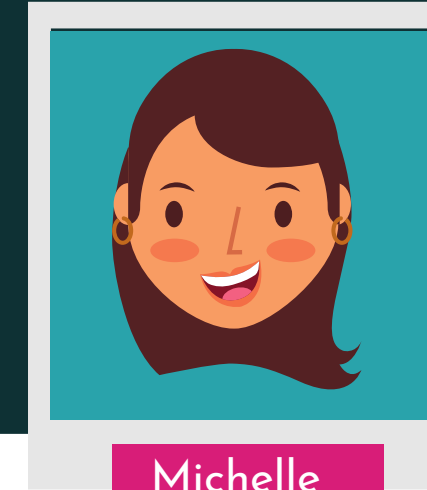
Chris

Embrace diversity within your organisation as you never know what this might bring to the table.



Karen

I would advise any organisation to take into account how difficult it may be for their staff to discuss an area of their lives that is not only very personal but may be traumatic and to ensure that they provide a safe and comfortable environment to facilitate it.



Michelle

By implementing such a group you will empower your staff and create positive working environments which will enhance your business.

KEY LEARNINGS



GET THE WORD OUT

Many of the officers became involved through a post on the police intranet, or through word of mouth. Think creatively about how you might reach Care Experienced colleagues in a way that is far-reaching but which protects their right to choose whether or not to self-declare as Care Experienced.



BE MINDFUL

Some colleagues may find it daunting to come forward and say that they are Care Experienced. However, officers reported it feeling reassuring and empowering to be in a group with shared experiences. Prioritise the comfort and safety of colleagues.



RECOGNISE THE BENEFITS

Officers said that this sort of group is important because it tackles stigma, involves those with lived experience in policy and decision making, drives better engagement with the Care Experienced community and encourages community among officers. What could a group like this do for your organisation? How can you learn from their experience and insight?

We are always happy to hear from Corporate Parents about what they're doing to ensure the best outcomes for Care Experienced people.

Does your organisation have a project or policy relating to Corporate Parenting that you'd like to shout about?

Please get in touch to tell us all about it and we can include you in our next Promising Practice round-up to share with the Corporate Parenting community.

If you have an example you would like to share with us on this, please email: corporateparenting@whocaresscotland.org.