

## Cared For and Care Experience Engagement

### July - December 2025

**Middlesbrough Children's Services fosters open, safe, and inclusive environments that provide opportunities for individuals to gather and engage. We empower them to communicate their priorities to key decision makers and to collaborate in enhancing the support they and their peers receive.**

#### **Volunteer Voice and Change Ambassadors**

- One care experienced young adult is co opted onto the 'You Matter to Us' Corporate Parenting Board - Sean Calvert. We have another young adult who has applied and should be joining us shortly.
- In addition to this position, they have opportunities to volunteer during our engagement events with cared for and care experienced young people and if they wish support the wider engagement work - working with students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, and Parent/Carer engagement as part of the Family Hubs.
- Caitlin O'Connor is also back volunteering with us.
- We continue to advertise volunteering positions and hope to have several more in 2026.
- We will be working with these volunteers and other older care experienced young adults to regularly come together to plan lots of wonderful activities in 2026

#### **'We Matter' (Middlesbrough's Children in Care Council)**

- Cared for and care experienced young people aged secondary school age and above are invited to come together to have fun and be engaged

# Engagement Activities

| EVENT   | OUTCOME   | IMPACT   |
|---|---|--|
| <p><b>1st July</b> - Two of our care experienced adults were invited to attend Teesside University - 'Raising Aspirations for Young People in Care' conference. They were also asked to be part of a Q&amp;A session at the end of the event.</p> | <p>They enjoyed listening to the key note speakers and attending a workshop. They enjoyed being part of the Q&amp;A session and delegates said they thought their answers were thought provoking.</p>   | <p>We worked with the university to offer a session during care experienced month to show our young people what the university could offer them. They will work with the university in 2026 to develop their next conference. We got in touch with one of the workshop providers 'Blue Cabin' who ran a session with the 'We Matter' group. We are exploring possible areas of work they can undertake with our young people and their families.</p> |
| <p><b>2nd July</b> - Our two Voice and Change Ambassadors worked with residential managers to develop the Children's Homes Awards and choose the winners.</p>   | <p>The event was a huge success with all homes represented. 20 of their young people came along. Several young people gave out the awards along with the Ambassadors.</p>   | <p>Residential services thought the event was a great way to celebrate their staff and involving their young people. They plan to hold the event every year.</p>   |
| <p><b>3rd July</b> - Following on from a survey with older care experienced young people where many said they wanted to be involved with music. Pathways invited their young adults to meet to discuss forming a music group.</p>                 | <p>Six care experience adults talked about what they wanted and sessions ran every week until the end of October 2025. They did their own version of 'Dreams' song by the Cranberries. They filmed making the song and told us what their dreams are.</p> | <p>The film was shown at the beginning of Care Experienced month in November at Roxy Movies. 35 people came to watch the film including some of the young adults involved, their families, friends, support workers. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor, the Chief Executive, Lead member Luke Henman, the Children's Director and many other managers and colleagues enjoyed the showing.</p>   |
| <p><b>10th July</b> - Two care experienced adults and a member of the Youth council wrote questions and interviewed candidates for the Executive Director of Children's Services position</p>   | <p>One member of the young person's panel was invited to sit with the professional panel to give their feedback. Annabel Bates was appointed and is really keen to develop our cared for and care experienced engagement.</p>                             | <p>The young adults enjoyed being in the position of interviewing the candidates and believed their feedback was heard and taken into account. We have a interview procedure in place, meaning young people should always be involved in recruitment processes.</p>  |

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|---|--|---|
| <b>25th July</b> - Cared for and care experienced young people were invited to the Annual Football event supported by Middlesbrough Football Foundation.                                  | 20 young people had a great time doing art activities and playing football games. Two Pathways Personal Advisors supported the event.  | Our cared for and care experienced young people know that this event happens every year and look forward to being part of it. The volunteer Voice and Change Ambassador asked Pathways to create a football activity for their young adults. This started in October and will run monthly for 6 months. |
| <b>5th August</b> - Annual Picnic.  | Six carers and eight cared for young people came along. Everyone enjoyed spending time together, having fun and food.  | Our cared for and care experienced young people know that this event happens every year and look forward to being part of it.   |
| <b>8th August</b> - Pathways invited their young adults for a free trip to Flamingo land.   | Six older care experienced young adults joined three Personal Advisors and an Assistant Manager. The young adults said they enjoyed spending time together and having fun with staff.                            | We will work with our young adults early 2026 for them to look at what fun activities they would like to have fun and come together.  |
| <b>13th August</b> - Pathways invited their young adults for a trip to Redcar Beach.  | Five care experienced young adults (one came with her daughter), two Personal Advisors and the Voice and Influence Manager all met to have lunch and spend time together in the sun having lunch and ice creams. | Pathways young people told us they wanted to do activities like this. We listened and they had a great time.  |
| <b>28th August</b> - The Fostering service invited all carers to enjoy free entry to Light Water Valley. The event was supported by two fostering staff, the Voice and Influence Manager. | 29 young people came with 14 adults (either foster families or connected carers). Feedback from a couple of carers ....  | These events offer carers an opportunity to come together, to be supportive of one another and for young people to mix with other children in similar care arrangements.  |
| <i>Just a quick message to let you know that the kids had a brilliant day yesterday. Thank you so much for organising it, much appreciated</i>  |  | <p><i>Today was great thanks Kathy! Kloe, her friend Lila and I had such a good time. The weather was predominantly kind, queues were minimal and the families in our group all seemed lovely. Well done and thank you for organising a great day out.</i></p>  |

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| <b>25th September</b> - You Matter to Us - Corporate Parents met with their cared for and care experienced young people/adults.   | 10 cared for and care experienced young adults joined 12 Corporate Parents (including one foster carer) to work together to plan for Care Experienced month - November 2026. They worked in groups to work on particular boards. All their ideas were captured and a plan of activities created. | Our cared for and care experienced young people were actively engaged, listened to and they helped design a plan for activities.   |
| <b>13th October</b> - A weekly art group started, led by Andy Boddy (Personal Advisor), supported by Hannah Patterson (Personal Advisor), Karen Turner (Assistant Manager) and Kathy Peacock (Voice and Influence Manager). | In total seven care experienced young people enjoyed being involved in the project.<br><br>They were supported to display their art work at Middlesbrough Central library.   | 15 adults popped in to look at their work - including several members of the public. They all congratulated the young adults on their work. Deputy Mayor - Phillipa Storey suggested their art work could be displayed at the town hall along the carriageway. This will be explored early 2026. |
| <b>28th October</b> - Pathways invited their young adults for to enjoy free access to Scream Factory.   | 14 young adults were supported by four Pathways staff to have a fantastic spooky time.   | Young adults asked after their trip to Scream Factory in 2024 to go again. They were listened to and Pathways supported more to come to the event.   |
| <b>29th October</b> - An invite was sent out to all our foster families and connected families to enjoy the free Annual Halloween Party.  | 45 Cared for, care experienced young people and those living with connected carers came with their carers to enjoy spooky games, music, activities and food.   | This is an annual event and many of the same foster families and connected carers come each year.  |

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| <b>Care Experienced Month -</b><br><b>5th November</b> - Roxy Movies   | See information given in the 3rd July  | See information given in the 3rd July  |
| <b>Care Experienced Month</b><br><b>7th November</b> - Councillor Luke Henman arranged for some of our care experienced young adults to meet the MP Andy McDonald. They were joined by Luke and the Mayor Chris Cooke.                                 | Four care experienced young adults had an opportunity to hear their priorities and to ask them some questions.   | The meeting proved to be a positive experience for everyone. MP Andy McDonald said he would help them arrange a trip to the Houses of Parliament in 2026.  |
| <b>Care Experienced Month</b><br><b>10th November</b> - Geoff Field - Director of Environment and Community Services, invited cared for and care experienced young people to hear about what his service does and the opportunities available to them. | Five young adults took up the opportunity.<br><br>They listened to Geoff, had a tour around Cargo Fleet lane and chatted to people in the various teams.   | One young adult applied for one of the refuge collector posts and successfully got the job.<br><br>A proposal on how to get more care experienced young people to work in Geoff's service area will be presented to DMT in 2026. |
| <b>Care Experienced Month</b><br><b>11th November</b> - Free access to experience Level X for free.  | Nine cared for and care experienced young adults all enjoyed free access to Bowling, Go Carts and Mini Golf. They had lots of free goes on the game machines with two of the cared for young people winning soft toys. | We all had a great time and they enjoyed going on as many things as they could. The Future For Families staff and young people loved the chance to be there and meet other young people.   |
| <b>Care Experienced Month</b><br><b>18th November</b> - the police ran a drop in session for our cared for and care experienced young people/adults at the live well centre.   | Four young adults came to hear what the Police do and asked them some questions.   | We will be working with the Police to create more opportunities for our cared for and care experienced young people to be involved in 2026.  |
| <b>Care Experienced Month</b><br><b>19th November</b> - The Police invited Professionals to have a tour around their young person's custody suite.   | 13 people attended including four Councillors.   | They fed back that they found the tour very interesting and understood what support we give to our young people. We are working with the Police to create more opportunities for young people and Professionals.                 |

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| <p><b>Care Experienced Month</b><br/> <b>21st November</b> - Our Volunteer Ambassador, Sean delivered a talk to police trainee new recruits.</p>  | <p>Sean talked about his experiences with the Police both positive and negative. He then answered their questions.</p>  | <p>Sean although nervous, stood in front of the new recruits and senior members of the Police to tell them his story. He was very articulate and answered all their questions. He thoroughly enjoyed the experience and the feedback from the recruits was very complimentary.</p>   |
| <p><b>Care Experienced Month</b><br/> <b>20th November</b> - Pathways held a Mindfulness and wellbeing day. Free food, hair cuts/styling, Tai Chi, Indian Head massage. Vitamin stall - giving matcha, cacao hot chocolate, chai seeds (helps with ADHD).</p>   | <p>12 care experienced young adults popped into the event. We had some of the Looked after nurses ask them some questions about a website they are developing.</p>  | <p>Most took advantage of having their hair styled and enjoyed the food and other free items. Several helped the looked after nurses develop the website, with one young adult offering to work with them further. Everyone said how much they liked the event.</p>  |
| <p><b>Care Experienced Month</b><br/> <b>26th November</b> - Members of the music project were invited to show their film to Councillors before the Full Council meeting.<br/> We then all joined the meeting and Sean our volunteer Ambassador asked a question which was answered by the Mayor.</p> | <p>Five members of the project joined all the Councillors to watch their film. Afterwards all the Councillors took part in holding up cards saying they are 'Proud to be a Corporate Parents'<br/> The Mayor answered Sean's question '<i>How can you all as Corporate Parents increase your understanding of Middlesbrough cared for and care experienced young people?</i>'</p> | <p>The Councillors fed back that they thought the film was really good and enjoyed watching it.<br/> They all took part in holding up the card and photographs were taken for the Communications team to write a piece on being a Corporate Parent.<br/> The Mayor said he will work with care experienced young people to develop the work they do.</p> |
| <p><b>Care Experienced Month</b><br/> <b>27th November</b> - Free 'Celebration' Party for older care experienced young people.</p>  | <p>30 young adults enjoyed the Western themed party. They had a go on the</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bucking Bronco</li> <li>• Captured memories at the photobooth</li> <li>• Line danced</li> <li>• Did karaoke</li> <li>• Had western styled food</li> <li>• And got a certificate telling them how Awesome they are!!</li> </ul>                             | <p>This event was asked for by our older care experienced young people as they wanted their own party.</p>   |

# Engagement Activities

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| <p><b>We Matter - 10th December</b> - Annual Christmas party. This year it was held at Teesside University Student Union</p>    | <p>85 young people and 25 carers came to the free event. Social workers, support staff and Independent reviewing officers engaged with the young people.</p>   | <p>The annual Christmas party is well known by Middlesbrough carers and they look forward to attending the event. They fed back that they enjoyed the new carnival activities and liked seeing social workers/Independent Reviewing officers and other staff there.</p> |
| <p><b>Care Experienced Month - Art Exhibition</b> - was due to be held during November but was rescheduled to 16th December</p> | <p>Five members of the Art group showed their art work at the Middlesbrough Library. They chatted to a Councillor, the Deputy Mayor, Children's services staff and members of the public about their work.</p> | <p>The care experienced artists reported they really enjoyed doing their art work and felt privileged to be able to show their work and hear all the positives they received.</p>   |

## Other amazing opportunities created for our young people

- 'We Matter' went out for a Christmas meal
- We took Caitlin out for tea to thank her for all her hard work
- The Pathways football group got free tickets to see a Middlesbrough football match
- Pathways holds weekly drop in sessions at the Live well centre
- Weekly 'Walk and Talk' with Pathways

## Overall impact

We are thrilled to share that we had 345 attendances across all our activities and events! This includes some of our young friends who came back to join us again.

We have made sure that the voices of cared for and care experienced young people are heard and valued by giving them meaningful chances to engage, celebrate, and make decisions. Through our annual events, creative projects, and the celebration of care experience month in November, we created new opportunities, thanks to partnerships in particular with the Police, Health, Teesside University, Fostering, Pathways, and Residential services. Young people have actively helped shape the services, recruitment processes, and activities they care about. These initiatives have built confidence, connection, and aspirations - leading to wonderful outcomes like employment opportunities, exciting new activity programs, and fresh collaborations for future events. Our work has also strengthened relationships between carers, professionals, and young people, nurturing a culture of listening and inclusion that will carry on into 2026 and beyond.