**CELCIS Education Forum – Wednesday 15 September 2021**

**Discussion group notes**

**Group A**

* Use of language in policies as well is an issue – often see LAC being used and when challenged you are met with ‘why is that an issue?’. Lack of caring / understanding.
* How HT’s reframe of the language of care with all staff and the community can support a change in the culture of the school.
* Using framing techniques in meetings with schools who are trying to not have a child in school will be helpful.
* Think you need buy in from the top, otherwise you can find that you are a lone voice.
* Supporting the training opportunities to develop a greater understanding. Using The Promise as a base to develop conversations with peers and colleagues to challenge the mindset of language.
* Challenges – awareness of young people who experience care and sharing information which is confidential, versus the need to understand the young person’s circumstances and support them.

**Group B**

Challenges

* When you think that professionals have the same opinions, but they don’t. Challenge without conveying the importance of framing.
* In the media. Unhelpful / derogatory language towards people with lived experience and blame.
* Understanding of staff to understand developmental trauma.
* Overwhelmed staff.
* Make sure this isn’t tokenistic. Needs to be real change.
* Reality of the situation – this is people’s lives.
* Different viewpoints – some new to the area of work. How can you encourage people to join but also bring them on the journey and the history?
* Working with large numbers of volunteers.
* Professionals not understanding that adopted children come under the umbrella of care experience.
* People may get worried they will do it wrong. Everyone will have their own interpretation.
* Common language and consistency.

Practice reflection

* Modelling – coming up with a script. Seeing it in practice.
* As leaders – leading by example but also seeing it in practice to replicate.
* Support to find out what language young people want us to use.
* Training is crucial. Examples of how it could be used, and impact in real life.
* Each and Every Child to be known across all of the Local Authorities. Needs to be wide culture change.

**Group C**

* Lots of changes are happening at a practice level and people are making a real effort to use more natural language e.g. talking about children’s houses and homes rather than units or brothers and sisters rather than siblings but it can be difficult to make sure this is happening everywhere. Quite often other agencies are still using over professionalised language and it can make young people really sad
* There are still a lot of system and process barriers to using less stigmatising language. Even though practitioners are speaking and writing in a more accessible way, the more ‘formal’ reports or forms still use outdated or over professionalised language
* There are still not enough positive stories discussed between colleagues or in the wider community or media. Negative or sensational stories seem to be picked up and then the assumption is that these portrayals are the way all young people experience things when the reality is that they’re often the exception rather than the norm.
* Sometimes there’s a risk of unconscious bias or inadvertently trying to do the right thing but actually it’s not what a young person wants. Eg not setting homework for children because people are trying to be kind as they know they have a lot going on in their lives but the children actually want to be the same and do the homework, but what they need and want is just extra support to do it
* Some people are really worried that they’re using the wrong language and it makes it hard to have conversations about what we should be doing instead. There’s an assumption that we should always get it right or know the answer but we’re learning too.

**Group D**

* The challenge of creating a sea change in thinking. In research almost all articles begin by highlighting problems and underachievement. There must be a different way.
* Underscoring the impact of language. How we talk about groups shapes who they are. What is the impact of twenty years plus of problematizing care experienced people as vulnerable
* How care experienced young people have been and are being ‘othered’
* The importance of seeing the journey from birth to adulthood. Empathy diminishes with age: babies are seen as victims whereas teenagers and adults as often seen as responsible
* Newspapers want/like a negative hook, how can we combat this or focus on positive hooks that don’t grab attention
* Positing the care system as something that is positive and works. Linked to the point above the thousands of positive outcomes / interactions that don’t make headlines or get into people’s psyche
* The need for training/awareness raising for other partners particularly foster carers who can get caught up in a negative lens or loop
* Professional groups can get locked into their own bubbles or group think that can reinforce a negative lens