

CELCIS transcript

The Scotland – Jersey Participation Project

Simone Smith shares her experience.

So I have recently just come back from a trip to Jersey. I went to Jersey with young people (young adults, I would say) with care experience backgrounds from various sets of care experience backgrounds - some have been in residential, some have been in secure, some have been in foster care like myself. So what we went to Jersey for was a peer mentoring project. So we wanted to work alongside the Jersey lot - the young people with care experience who live in Jersey, just to get a bit of background of how, what their care experience was like - just to get to know them to build relationships. And what we wanted to achieve was to talk about participation and how participation can work and how we can get professionals and young people to work together. Which led us on to corporate parenting. In Scotland everyone, hopefully, should know that what corporate parenting is – Part 9 of the Children and Young people Act 2014 - that corporate parents have a duty, a duty of care for their looked after and accommodated children in the care system. So when we were talking to individuals from Jersey, we kind of realised that they don't understand what corporate parenting is, they don't get corporate parenting – it isn't a thing in Jersey. So, what we wanted was to figure out how we can make it a thing in Jersey because somebody needs to be liable for the young people in the care system and Jersey. So, what we did was we hosted numerous events to explain what corporate parenting is and what it has achieved in Scotland, how it has had a massive impact on loads of young people in care in Scotland and in terms free care experienced bursary helping people to go to university, and the Care Review has played a massive part in that. So, what we wanted was to kind of just to learn from each other and to share our experiences and just make friends, like, have a good relationship with each other. We can go visit them they can go visit us to see what's changed.

One of the things I think I took away from the trip was that one of the girls from Jersey, Leonie, she spoke to maybe 50 professionals and oh my god, she was amazing. She said that was like one of her very first times public speaking and you would not think it because she absolutely aced it. She pulled at their heartstrings and told them about her life, which I was really proud of her for, and I think for me, I'm always worried that when people open up and talk about their past that that makes them vulnerable. And I feel like sometimes people will take advantage, but I think when speaking to Leonie, she was like, No, I am ready to tell my story. But I know if I'm not comfortable telling my story I won't tell my story, which I was really pleased to hear because I'm always worried in case organisations exploit young people just for their own agenda, because sometimes I do believe organisations have their own agenda - to achieve whatever they want to achieve. That is absolutely fine, but do not bring young people into it.

And I think speaking to some of the professionals on the Monday night dinner, because we hosted a dinner and there were ministers from the government there, that some of them get corporate parenting. They understand that. Some of the ministers I spoke to basically were saying to me that they've lived, they've lived in the scheme. They don't live in these big fancy houses. They've had a rough childhood, they understand, they can empathise with young people in care. Fair enough, they weren't away from their family, but they had challenges so they understand the struggles that care experienced young people have and I feel like those professionals will get it, they understand they need corporate parenting. Some of them didn't like the words corporate parenting, which is fair enough because people in Scotland don't like it either, because does corporate and parenting really go together?

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