Be The Difference

Fostering Through Partnership

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Norfolk County Council



What's this about?

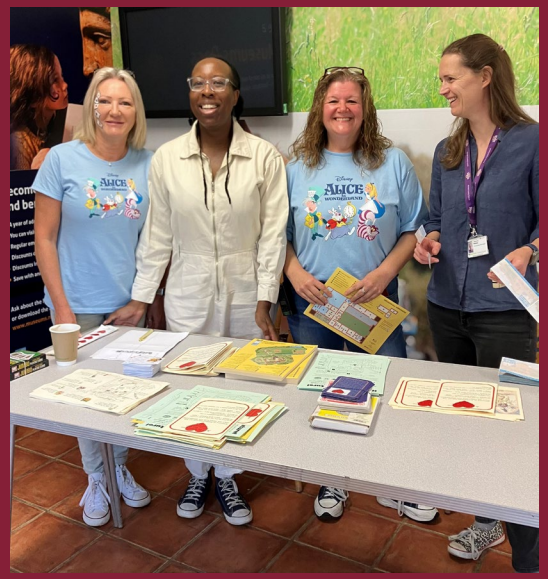
- Supporting our carers and children in care
- Not about adding pressure to demanding roles
- Recognising the work already being done
- Making small changes – positive outcomes
- Inspire others













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The Team
around the child



More influence than we realise

- A child and young person can meet dozens of professionals during their time in care
- Every action shapes their experience
- Foster carers rely on professional support to help children thrive
- Small actions have the biggest impact

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Professionals who have supported us

- How do they make you feel?
- How do you know when it's good – or isn't?









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“They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel”

Carl W. Buehner



“I’ve learned that people will forget what you’ve said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel”

Maya Angelou

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What do our carers say?

- Want to feel respected and treated as part of the team
- Spoken with – not talked at
- Want to be included in decisions
- Want prompt communication
- Recognition for the role they play

Remember: Do we make them feel like we do this?

What do children and young people tell us?

- School practices can directly cause stigma: “Limit social workers coming to school” and “Social isolation from being taken out of class”.
- Bullying is explicit: “Strong source of bullying…Tracey Beaker comments”.
- Young people feel spoken for: “Young people don’t like it when people speak for them, eg at hospital appointments”.
- The emotional impact is clear: “Leaves young people feeling lonely” and “Mental health support needed for young people due to judging”.
- Additional needs are missed: “Most only being diagnosed in care or when they’ve left…The amount of care leavers that leave care undiagnosed and struggle…is shocking.”

(‘Your Life. Your Care’ & ‘Your Life Beyond Care’ Surveys 2026)

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Key messages to carers from young people

It's OK to make mistakes, we like to see you're human too! We like it when you say sorry and reflect on your learning

Don't pity me, there can be a lot of dark and grey from my past but there are also splashes of colour. Focus on the colour.

Don't give up! This will test you but it will be worth it ☺

Don't expect us to be grateful, we didn't ask for this

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‘Beyond the System’ podcast

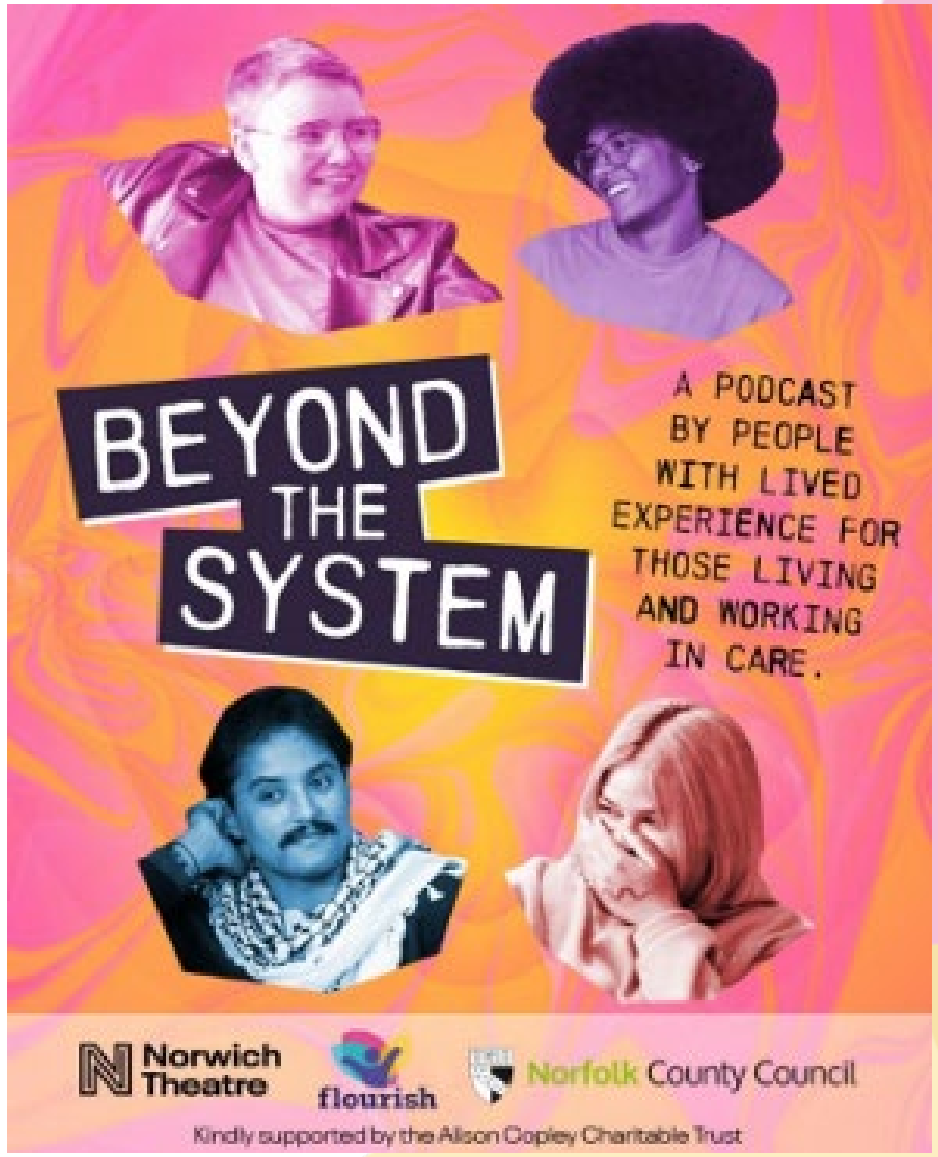
Beyond the System is the powerful podcast created in partnership between Norwich Theatre and Norfolk County Council and co-created by care-experienced young people aged 16–25. The series of four episodes explores themes of identity, belonging, healing, potential, community and creativity, shaped directly by our young people’s own experiences.

Developed through creative workshops led by Royal Shakespeare Company actor Joseph Arkley, each episode has been crafted by the young people themselves using poetry, conversation and storytelling. The result is an honest, moving reflection on what it means to be heard and understood, bringing lived experience to life in a way that statistics alone never could.

Recorded at Norwich Theatre Playhouse, Beyond the System is a powerful reminder of the impact of creativity and the importance of listening to young people’s voices.

The podcast is available on Spotify and YouTube. Please take some time to listen.





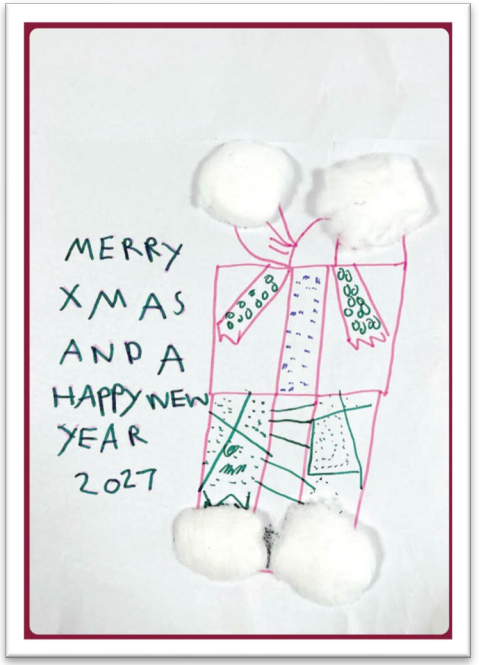
We can good look like?

Communication
- Return phone calls and emails
- Keep carers updated

Inclusion
- Invite carer's into discussions
- Seek children's views

Collaboration
- Share information appropriately
- Work together across teams and agencies

Strength based practice
- Recognise achievement
- Focus on what is working well





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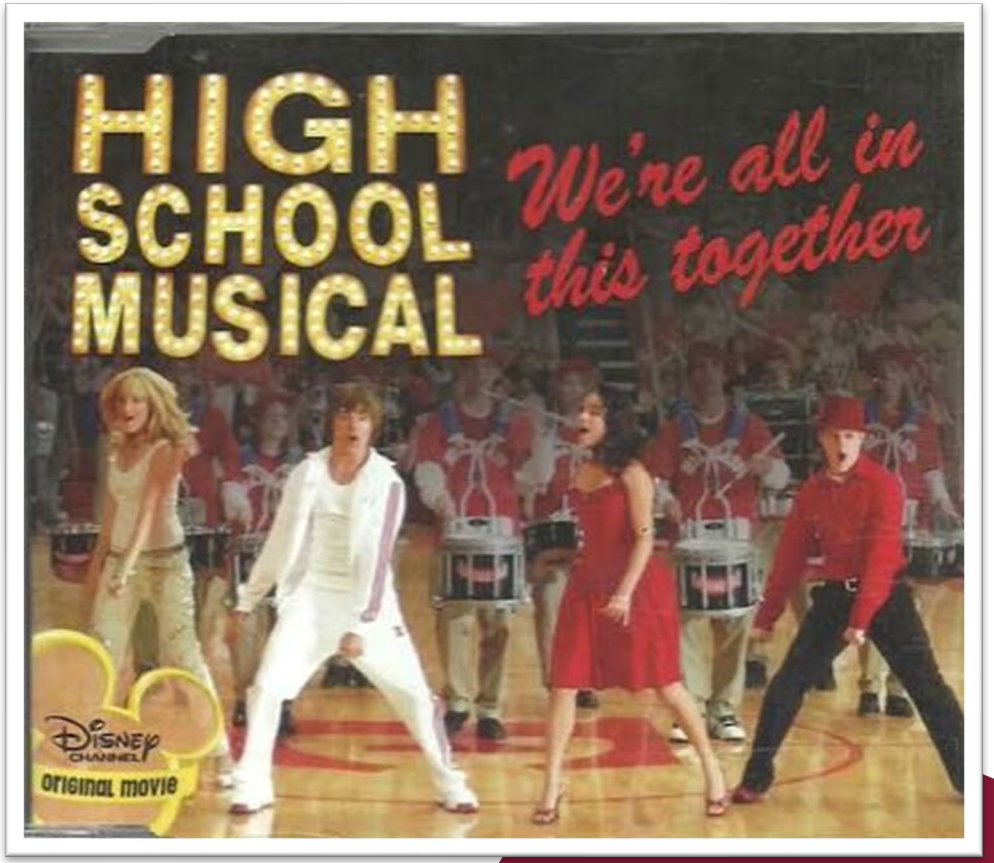
We have a shared responsibility

- It takes a team
- No single professional carries the responsibility alone
- With all of us making small changes, we help make a big difference overall



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The local picture

We have more than **400 social workers** working with families

Over **1000 children** in Norfolk are currently in care.

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No child comes into foster care without us working with their family, **giving support** to help their children stay with them

Around **5 children a week** come into care across the county.

We try to keep a child **within 25 miles** of home and work hard to match a Norfolk child to a Norfolk foster family.

Good Practice = More carers

- Happy and valued carers recommend new carers
- Engaged carers are ambassadors and buddies
- Supported carers stay with the service
- Supported children and young people = supported carers

Have you considered fostering?

- Sleepover/Holiday / Weekend
- Emergency – 6 days maximum
- UASC, school aged children and older teens
- Could you recommend somebody and earn up to £1,000?

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We are a Fostering Friendly Employer

- Research from The Fostering Network indicates that nearly 40% of carers combine fostering with other work. A supportive employee can make all the difference

- NCC became a Fostering Friendly employer in May 2024

- To become Fostering Friendly:
  - Agree to put in place a Fostering Friendly HR policy
  - Offer flexible working and paid time off for training and settling children into their new homes

Finally

- Speak positively about fostering
- Challenge myths
- Share recruitment campaigns
- Fostering is a collected responsibility

Many foster carers say they first considered fostering because someone encouraged them to find out more.

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Thank you

Any questions?

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