**Support for teachers needed to tackle the stigma faced by children in care**

Become, the leading charity for children in care and young care leavers, is calling for teachers to receive training so that they have a greater awareness of the issues children in care face, after revealing today that only 24 per cent of young people believe that teachers understand what being in care is like for them.

170 children and young people in care, and care leavers, across England and Wales participated in Perceptions of Care, a new report from Become and Welsh charity Voices from Care, as part of the 5 Nations, 1 Voice project – funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

The report also looked at how children in care and care leavers perceive what social workers think about them, with 35 per cent of children and young people saying that they think that social workers think children in care are not as clever as other children.

Chloë Cockett, Policy and Research Manager at Become, said: “Teachers tirelessly serve children, and they should be provided with the tools to help all of the children in their care no matter what their family background is.

“Many children in care have a bad start in life and have already experienced huge disruptions and trauma by the time they get to school. They have had experiences that are unique to children who are brought into the care system, and they risk being stigmatised within their classroom, and beyond, if they aren’t supported in the right way.

“The stigma young people in care may already feel can have a hugely detrimental impact on their childhoods. Some have gone to great lengths to hide the fact that they are in care, telling us that they didn’t visit friends’ houses or go to after school clubs so they didn’t have to have their friend’s families criminal record checked, and other children stopping being friends with them after finding out that they are in care.

“If we don’t ensure that teachers understand how to best support children in care, then we are depriving those children of the chance to flourish in childhood in the same way that their peers can.”

Perceptions of Care also looked at how children in care perceive what social workers think about them, showing that only 31 percent of children in care and care leavers thought that social workers understood what it is like to be in care. It also revealed that 50 per cent of children in care, and 51 per cent of care leavers, agreed that people think that it is the fault of the child that they are in care.

Chris Dunn, Programmes Manager at Voices from Care: “This research echoes the messages we receive from children looked after and care leavers, that there is a negative label attached to being in care. For some this stigma can have a real and lasting impact on a young person’s wellbeing.

“We therefore welcome the recommendations calling for teachers to receive training so that they have a greater awareness of the issues children in care face. We hope that the messages from young people in this report from the start of a national conversation to tackle the stigma.”

The report recommends:

* Schools should teach children and young people about what it is like to be in care as part of the PSHE curriculum;
* Everyone in the team around the child should sign a written commitment to believing in, aspiring for, and working with and on behalf of that child – so that the child knows that those around them expect and want the best for them and from them.

You can download the full report, Perceptions of Care, on the Become website.

**-ENDS-**

**Notes to editors**

For more information, or to request an interview with Chloë Cockett, please contact Dominic Stevenson on 020 7017 2781 / dominic.stevenson@becomecharity.org.uk

**About Become**

Since 1992, Become (formerly known as The Who Cares? Trust) has been working to improve the everyday lives and future life chances of young people who are unable to live with their birth families.

Find out more about Become on our website, [Becomecharity.org.uk](http://www.becomecharity.org.uk/) and follow us on Twitter [@BecomeCharity](http://www.twitter.com/BecomeCharity)

**About Voices from Care**

Voices from Care is a charity that supports, and promotes the views and experiences of, those who are or have been looked after in Wales.

1. Forty-nine children in care and 61 care leavers completed our online survey, and 60 children in care and care leavers took part in the focus groups