**Notes on Young People’s Panel Session**

**Initial reflections from each young person on what they’ve heard/read so far about the concept(s) of a developmental approach**

* Struck by the passion with which the subject is talked about.
* Recognise that an understanding of children’s development is not new but it is good to re-look at these things.
* Important that different professional groups are being brought together.
* Welcome the fact that we have been invited to be part of the conversation.
* Question why a developmental approach is not happening in everyday practice.

**What does a developmental approach mean to you?**

* About focusing on the child
* An approach that share’s responsibility – it’s everyone’s business
* Helping the child achieve their full potential
* At present, the system is very protective of itself – everything is a risk assessment. We don’t need systems to be complex. Organisations need to take down their guard a bit.
* It’s an approach where relationships are key and central.
* This isn’t rocket science. Even though we are talking about it we are not doing it.
* Development is about growth that needs to be worked on forever, over a lifetime.
* Question how developmentally we think – once in care, everything becomes a fight.

**What does ‘care’ mean to you?**

* About feeling safe and having a consistent person looking out for you. That person should be loving, look out for you, be able to challenge you when you’ve done something wrong and share your experiences.
* My memories of care are about boundaries and oppression. The care I received was very systems driven where the rules served the system. For example, I had to have a Looked After Review make a decision about whether I could go to T in the Park or not. I understand people are trying to keep children safe but this wasn’t necessary.
* I didn’t want ‘care’ to replace family but needed someone to look out for me – that I mattered, that I was important, that I wasn’t a lost person. I needed someone to help me unlock that potential that I knew I had. It needs to be about love.
* ‘Care’ sounds fuzzy & warm but add ‘system’ and it becomes dark, like a business – 1-in-1-out. It’s like a bureaucratic beast has been created. The care system is something we’ve created but something we can entangle ourselves from.

**What do you think children and young people need to thrive?**

* It’s about relationships – that you have 1 person to give you a cuddle.
* What children in care need is no different to what anyone in this room needs– purpose, love, consistency. Everyone needs to be responsible for all aspects of care. We need to stop seeing people as write-offs or as damaged. This is not just seen in the ‘system’ but also in the media and in society as a whole. All of us need to challenge this.
* The focus on being ‘child-centred’ rather than ‘family-centred’ can pathologies the child. There is a need to have wrap-around care.
* Sometimes rules are not rules at all but perceptions of rules. These false perceptions can get in the way of helping a child to thrive.

**What do you understand by ‘child-centred’?**

* Being child-centred doesn’t need to be at the expense of being family focused.
* Families often feel powerless. We know that in many cases, children go back to their families so we need much more family support at the start.
* Everyone needs to know how to be a parent so we need to get rid of what we know doesn’t work.

**What were some of the messages that you took away from some of the video clips of the speakers from Stage 1 of this series of events that took place last November 2017?**

* The importance of seeing the ‘whole-person’ rather than a series of ‘issues’.
* The idea of behaviour as communication. Some young people act out but we’ve got to look at the communication behind this.
* Michael Tarren-Sweeney’s idea that the system acts against carers getting close to the children they look after.
* Also his idea of ‘built-in impermanence’ for young people.
* I see in my own carers, that although it wasn’t personal, young people wanting to leave can really hurt carers.
* There is also the issue of carers ‘burning-out’. When a child has a lot of difficulties and needs a lot of help, some carers don’t know how to deal with this. Can there be better training / support here. Can you train carers to love?
* The Duty SW system doesn’t work. I moved out over a weekend. I had a really powerful relationship with my carers and yet now, I don’t speak with them. Think they need really practical support and things to be put in place should an emergency / difficulties arise, that is not respite. Could a family member step in on a temporary basis?
* Struck by what was said about the number of placement moves and the importance of community. We need to look at what prevents young people from feeling part of their community. There are 2 main barriers – a) media portrayal and b) stigma – often seen in the use of language; the use of LAC is one example. Think we need to challenge the idea that a child taken into care for their own protection is somehow to blame or is bad. We don’t hear people celebrating care experience enough.
* We don’t often speak about how children are introduced to families. Children can feel uncomfortable.

**What do you think helps to create positive mental health & well-being?**

* Needs to be person-centred.
* Need to have access to resources and the reality is the services are not there. Waiting times (for CAMHS) are too long for everybody.
* Promoting participation is important – encouraging those in care to go out and engage with the world.
* Sometimes it’s about looking at the things we can do for ourselves – we need to be helped to develop a set of tools where we learn to look after ourselves.
* There should also be more emphasis on helping young people develop creatively and there should be more access to art / music therapy. Although informal, it is important. I really like the idea of ‘social prescribing’.