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International insights into paid care experienced voice and influence roles:

lessons from groundbreaking practice from around the globe









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“We are trained to be intentional in our roles and work from a place of hope and well being. This means we: Slow down. Be present. Build relationships. We listen and don’t assume.”

Young Consultant, Create Australia

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The questions I took on the road:

1. Psychological safety: how can voice roles be as psychologically safe as possible - these roles are a big ask and present a unique set of challenges.
2. How do we create progression within the roles so they act as a gateway to a longer term career or something else?
3. How do such roles create ongoing, rolling systemic change in organisations?





Psychological safety: DEEP DIVE

1

How can voice roles be as psychologically safe as possible - these roles are a big ask and present a unique set of challenges.

KEY FINDINGS: Psychological safety

1. The importance of working in a culturally appropriate way.
2. The presence of a clear ethos and framework.
3. Taking time to focus on the purpose of the role and project.
4. Going at the pace of relationship and trust.
5. Having a Team Charter or Collective Commitment
6. Having a co-produced policy on the ethics of outputs that includes if someone's care status is revealed or not and can change over time or project to project.
7. Training and skilling up all workers with the tools to be Systemic Advocates.
8. Get the ending right from the beginning.
9. Lived experience is valued and recognised as a professional skill in itself.

Psychological safety:
KEY FINDING 1

The importance of working in a culturally appropriate way.

Spotlight:
VOYCE, New Zealand

VOYCE New Zealand had a 2 day Advocacy Conference which began with a traditional Maori opening ceremony called a Powhiri delivered by Maori elders.



Psychological safety:
KEY FINDING 2

Having a clear ethos and clear framework

Insight:
Melbourne and Brothers of St Lawrence

"Everything I heard before was based on deficits and negatives. At first I heard about Advantaged Thinking when I was living at The Foyer and I thought Advantaged thinking was weird - I was skeptical. But over time I got used to it. I liked the way staff asked about me in all different areas of my life. It made it easier to work with them all."

Young consultant reflecting on advantaged thinking



Psychological safety:
KEY FINDING 3

Take time to focus on purpose.

Insight:

"We tried 3 advocacy internships 5 years ago and rotated them around different government departments. Overall it didn't work. The workers spoke of too many pieces of work that were triggering and that the support was unstructured and not formal. We learnt from this. It was hard."

Staff member in NZ

Psychological safety:
KEY FINDING 4

Go at the pace of relationship and trust. Within this be really clear about what the offer of wrap around support and training looks like.

Insight:

*"People are living through their lived experience and repair and rupture will happen and sometimes the repair can be for the first time in people's lives. Within that we need to be able to help them sit in and work through s**t and discomfort and create a biom where there is permission for this to be messy. We can only move at the speed of trust."*

Y Change Berry St, lived experience staff member

"Support is such an ambiguous term! There needs to be clear mandatory training and a clear offer."

VOYCE worker, NZ

Psychological safety:
KEY FINDING 5

Having a Team Charter or Collective Commitment

Spotlight:
UC Change, Sydney

"The collective commitment is a real starting point for everything here. It protects us. When we have senior leaders come and work with us they see it too. We have copies and ask everyone to read and know it and it feels 'ever present'. We all talked it out together and hold each other to it."

UC Change



Psychological safety:
KEY FINDING 6

The ethics of outputs and of care status

Insight:

"I used to get an 'emotional hangover' from speaking to Ministers about my lived experience. I have learnt to stop and think - why am I sharing this and for what impact? I tell others now and remind them that this is their story and they can choose whether to share it or not as there is that saying that every time you share you give a little bit of yourself away. I remind others with lived experience that as a staff member supporting them I don't care about social change right now- I just care about you and want you to really think about what you want to share and not share and also be here for you to check in. I am here to help safeguard you."

Care experienced staff member at CREATE that supports Young Consultants

"I really publicly shared my story in lots of different ways and I have real regrets about that now."

Paid staff member with lived experience

Psychological safety:
KEY FINDING 7

Training workers to be skilled up with the tools and language to be Systemic Advocates.

Insight:

"I used to have a lack of hope for the future and didn't know what my life could look like. I was really drawn to Advocacy work and got hope, passion and drive from it. It's saved my life and I have got a positive traumatic growth avenue from it. I have learnt from a systems lense and a trauma lense. I have stopped blaming myself for what happened to me and I channel my frustrations into systems change and change for others."

UC Change care experienced coordinator role

Psychological safety:
KEY FINDING 8

Get the ending right from the beginning.

Insight:

"There are some real challenges with endings: aging out of the roles and how we help them see the changes they have made, keep a connection with them afterwards and have appropriate professional boundaries around keeping in touch."

UC Change care experienced coordinator role



Psychological safety:
KEY FINDING 9

Lived experience is valued and recognised as a professional skill in itself

Spotlight:
CREATE, Australia

Australia Create CEO has lived experience of care and many full time members of staff across the organisation also do. It is widely recognised as a professional skill. Time is taken to support staff with lived experience in a confidential lived experience staff group.



DEEP DIVE

2

How do we create progression within the roles so they act as a gateway to a longer term career or something else?



KEY FINDINGS: How do we create progression within the roles so they act as a gateway to a longer term

1. Paid voice roles can be life changing.
2. Be clear and intentional around "support" offered.
3. Be really honest and clear around: workplace culture, behaviours and expectations.
4. Thinking clearly about how to share opportunities, build skills, intentional language, clear. Feels transparent and fair.
5. Can easily become 'boxed in' with skills and experience but no onward route or qualifications. Is this fair? You must take the responsibility to provide this even if young people are saying they are happy doing it.
6. Strongest examples of progression opportunities were when organisations have a wide net, training attached and clear messaging and purpose. Young people are encouraged to go off and then many come back in as staff later on as seen in Create, Australia.
7. Link to other organizations and think about what they can provide and map out progression routes together as a collaboration.
8. Be clear on your aging out and age offer. Think about it and link it back to purpose and ensure it fits.

How do we create progression within the roles so they act as a gateway to a longer term.

KEY FINDING 1

So many examples of such roles being life changing.

Insight: CREATE, Australia

"I learnt advocacy as a life skill, a transferable skill. This will help me be a better nurse. I can't put into words how much CREATE has helped me."

Young consultant

"Someone believed in me, so I could believe in myself too and this has led to a whole career pathway for me."

Young person who is now a staff member,

"Give me lemons and I will make chocolate cake."

Care experienced full time member of staff that came from a Young Consultant role

How do we create progression within the roles so they act as a gateway to a longer term.

KEY FINDING 2

Be clear and intentional around "support" offered.

Insight: VOYCE, New Zealand

Support is such an ambiguous term! There needs to be clear mandatory training and a clear offer.

"I kept getting asked what I wanted and needed- I had no idea! I haven't ever had a job before. I wanted the professionals around me to shape an offer and say this is what we can offer you: Mental health support, peers, a manager, work buddy and or mentor. You tell me first- then I can tell you if it's working!"

VOYCE, NZ



How do we create progression within the roles so they act as a gateway to a longer term.
KEY FINDING 3

Be really honest and clear around: work ethic, behaviour and expectations.

Spotlight:
UC Change, NSW

Having a clear Collective Commitment used both as a group and individually to hold others to account. The facilitator also used this to hold guest speakers to account.

How do we create progression within the roles so they act as a gateway to a longer term.

KEY FINDING 4

Thinking clearly about how to share opportunities, build skills, intentional language, clear. Feels transparent and fair.

Spotlight: UC Change, NSW

UC Change, NSW has a clear open recruitment that is rolling, clear core hours, length of service and expressions of interest for additional work. Members can apply to stay in additional 6 months to mentor the next cohort. There were clear, transparent recruitment practices.

How do we create progression within the roles so they act as a gateway to a longer term.

KEY FINDING 5

Can easily become 'boxed in' with skills and experience but no onward route or qualifications. Is this fair? You must take the responsibility to provide this even if young people are saying they are happy doing it.

Insight:

"I have worked in this area for years, firstly as a young consultant for Create and now full time for 2 years at BSL. I was at the first youth parliament. I have created information packs for the first young people on Better Futures Programmes. I want to be a professional that draws on my lived experience. I've loved this job for the past 2 years but I feel disappointed that I don't walk away with a qualification."

Lived exp full time staff member on a 2 year contract

"A lot of stuff is springing up but without the thinking behind it to make it purposeful and meaningful with channels and pathways for what's next for the young people with lived experience. There needs to be more methodology behind the planning."

Youth engagement lead Brisbane

How do we create progression within the roles so they act as a gateway to a longer term.

KEY FINDING 6

Strongest examples of progression opportunities are when organisations have a wide net, clearly defined opportunities with progression opportunities.

Spotlight: CREATE, Australia

CREATE Australia - Speak Up! Advocacy training- levels 1,2 and 3. Once you have done level 3 you can take on pieces of work as a Young Consultant. If you engage in being a Young Consultant other opportunities often then open up. Now they have members of the permanent staff team who had begun as a Young Consultant, moved on to do other work and then come back into the organisation.

How do we create progression within the roles so they act as a gateway to a longer term.

KEY FINDING 7

Can easily become 'boxed in' with skills and experience but no onward route or qualifications. Is this fair? You must take the responsibility to provide this even if young people are saying they are happy doing it.

Spotlight: CREATE, Melbourne, Victoria

Melbourne Victoria CREATE was well networked in government and voluntary sector partners to create progression routes and opportunities together. All grounded in 'Advantaged thinking' offer and plan and create new opportunities across sectors.

How do we create progression within the roles so they act as a gateway to a longer term.

KEY FINDING 8

Be clear on your aging out and age offer. Think about it and link it back to purpose and ensure it fits.

Spotlight:

Does it have to **"age out"** at the same time a lot of services do?

Could it be up to 30? Or does there need to be an age cut off?



DEEP DIVE

3

How do such roles create ongoing, rolling change in organisations?

How can we create accountability that results in continuing change?

KEY FINDINGS: How do such roles create ongoing, rolling change in organisations? How can we create accountability that results in continuing change?

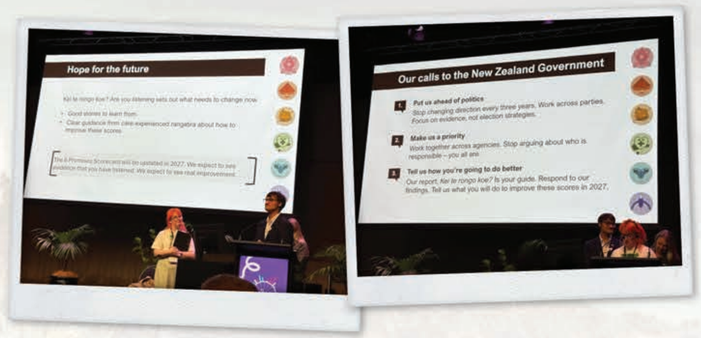
1. Advocacy is the starting point to having agency within the system and this needs to start early.

2. When it gets tough - a sense of being in and a part of a wider advocacy community is really important.

3. Boundaries of the role are important. So many Young Consultants spoke of this being hard and confusing in the beginning.

4. Young Consultants need to be involved at all stages and rolling process: design, pilot and roll out. Need to find ways to hold people to account that are built into the systems and not reliant on individuals.

5. Systems design - so there is rolling accountability and mechanisms to hold people to account. SO often this is missing. One off story telling events, toolkits or training packages.... What's the impact? How is it measured? How is it embedded? Where is the on-going conversation and accountability?



Key findings How do such roles create ongoing, rolling change in organisations? How can we create accountability that results in continuing change?

KEY FINDING 1

Advocacy is the starting point to having agency within the system and this needs to start early. Systemic Advocacy needs to be understood at every level by all staff, not just the roles and staff around them.

Insight: CREATE, Australia

"It can be hard for young consultants and the youth advisory groups as there is no clear feedback process to review and feedback the actions that they've suggested and it can feel like systemic change. It's very much playing the long game and some of the young people involved don't get to see when they make a change as it can be years later."

Worker at Create

Key findings How do such roles create ongoing, rolling change in organisations? How can we create accountability that results in continuing change?

KEY FINDING 2

When it gets tough - a sense of being in and a part of a wider advocacy community is really important.

Insight:

"Advocacy can be a stepping stone to agency and engaging with the system. If young people feel a part of the process and it's not done TO you then you are more likely to engage and influence it."

Advocacy worker in NZ

"Over my Advocacy journey I've seen how change happens over time and real results from it."

Young consultant

Key findings How do such roles create ongoing, rolling change in organisations? How can we create accountability that results in continuing change?

KEY FINDING 3

Boundaries of the role are important. So many Young Consultants spoke of this being hard and confusing in the beginning.

Insight:

"Having lived experience myself really helps- I have been there and here now. The system needs changing and if we don't do the work then we can't change the system."

Worker from Y Change, Berry Street



Key findings How do such roles create ongoing, rolling change in organisations? How can we create accountability that results in continuing change?

KEY FINDING 4

Young Consultants need to be involved at all stages and rolling process: design, pilot and roll out. Need to find ways to hold people to account that are built into the systems and not reliant on individuals.

Spotlight:
Melbourne Transitions from Care Team - Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

Melbourne Transitions from Care Team Department of Families, Fairness and Housing worked in partnership with 2 voluntary sector organisations to set up a Youth Expert Advisory Group. Better Futures: Development Coach for pathway planning based on Advantaged thinking.

With flexible funding through homestretch to support and achieve goals across the 5 pillars of Advantaged Thinking. It was launched in April 2019 and there were 250 people in the pilot. As of April 2021 it was made universal and up to 21. The whole workforce has needed to be trained in Advantaged thinking. All language used reflects this and it is hard to get consistent and good practice but last year 5,500 young people were involved in better futures. Many of the young consultants involved in the YEAG moved onto other paid roles in organizations doing paid voice roles.



Key findings How do such roles create ongoing, rolling change in organisations? How can we create accountability that results in continuing change?

KEY FINDING 5

Systems design - so there is rolling accountability and mechanisms to hold people to account. SO often this is missing. One off story telling events, toolkits or training packages.... What's the impact? How is it measured? How is it embedded? Where is the on-going conversation and accountability?

Spotlight: McCreary Centre Society, Vancouver



McCreary Centre Society Vancouver: Youth Research Academy has been running for 30 years. There is a cohort of 10 care experienced young people at a time for a 10 month contract and they do 8 hours a week paid over the 10 months They learn research skills and work on commissioned pieces of research as well as a longitudinal study on care leavers. They have a programme of learning that links to the commissions: qualitative and quantitative survey design and statistics.

The longitudinal study covers over 400 people from the whole province that are care experienced.

In response to observations and feedback from indigenous researchers that were struggling to move onto something else at the end of their time, they created longer term ringfenced indigenous research posts of a few hours a week for people that wanted longer developing their work and research skills.

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In summary:

- A lot of it is about giving it a go but doing so with care and thought. Slow down and start with values and purpose. Build or use a framework. Recruit critical friends and go on the journey together.
- Messy journeys are common and almost inevitable. But trying and learning and building this into the model. Young Consultants valued being on the journey and developing the model for future generations.



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In summary:

- Having systems designed for feeding in a wider voice and rolling accountability over long periods of time was key. Share the outcomes, successes and challenges widely - so those in past positions can see continuing change and feel they were part of this.
- Systemic Advocacy golden thread in successful organisations in all 3 areas. This meant there was a shared understanding of systemic advocacy across the organisation and partners.



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And finally...

If we get this right, it could be win, win, win.

Win 1: These roles can be an untapped talent pipeline into the organisation bringing innovative thinking, ideas and skills that are often missing.

Win 2: This is community parenting at its finest - creating nurturing workspaces with and for our own care experienced young people.

Win 3: This is a really strong solution to the youth unemployment crisis. We know so many of our care experienced young people struggle with the employment current offers presented to them. If all local authorities were asked to have paid entry level roles in voice and influence this would be a small but important jigsaw piece in creating a better landscape for our care experienced young people to thrive in jobs their own local authorities.



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Question sheets

Please use the following 3 sheets as a tool to take stock of where you are up to as a team and organisation.

Answer the questions honestly and reflect on any actions based on the examples you have heard and read about:

How to create psychological safety in paid lived experience voice roles:

	Yes, happy doing this	Started, but not doing this yet	Need to start doing this	Any actions:
1. Do you plan and shape your voice and influence work to reflect the culture of those in the care experienced population of your area?				
2. Do you offer a strong and warm welcome to people joining the team as staff and volunteers, and does this reflect your values?				
3. Is there a clear and positive framework that your team and all partner organisations know well and embed through all of your practice?				
4. Are you crystal clear on the purpose of having lived experience voice roles in the team? Why have you created these roles and what are the core objectives of the posts?				
5. Do you create time and space for relationship building with the wider team?				
6. Do you take time to do a team charter or collective commitment? Is it co-created? Is it consistently looked at, shared, and visible? Is it reviewed?				
7. Do you have rolling consent that can be different for different pieces of work?				
8. Do you prepare for people changing their mind about sharing their care status and stories in later life?				
9. Do you plan for the ending of the posts from the beginning? Is there support for what they go onto next? Is it clear how they can stay in touch?				
10. Is lived experience recognised as a professional skill in itself in the wider organisation?				

How to create career progression in paid lived experience roles:

	Yes, happy doing this	Started, but not doing this yet	Need to start doing this	Any actions:
1. Do you record, share and celebrate examples of people's lives changing from these roles?				
2. Do you widely share opportunities to volunteer and get involved with all eligible children and young people? Do they know how to build up their skills to apply for paid roles in the future?				
3. Do you have a clear support offer that includes mental health support, developing work skills and professional relationships with colleagues?				
4. Do you deliver regular, timely, clear and actionable feedback?				
5. Do you share opportunities in a fair and transparent way that allows all team members to build up their skills and record them?				
6. Are there opportunities to work towards a qualification that allows career progression? Is there career advice and guidance alongside the role to look at transferable skills and what might be next?				
7. Do you know your local employment services? Are you partnered with them?				
8. Are you connected to local organisations that could offer development opportunities for people in these roles? Both whilst in post and after?				
9. Do you have an upper age cutoff? If so, is there any reason it cannot be older?				

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How to create ongoing systemic change from lived experience voice roles:

	Yes, happy doing this	Started, but not doing this yet	Need to start doing this	Any actions:
1. Does your organisation, at every level, have an understanding of systemic advocacy?				
2. Do commissioners understand that those in post are representatives of wider voice and not just sharing their own views?				
3. Do the young people in the posts and the wider team feel part of a wider advocacy community?				
4. Do you think about and continually revisit boundaries? Do you explore what good boundaries look like? Do you explore the 3 P's: What's Professional only? Personal but okay to be shared at work? And what is Private?				
5. Are the team involved in all stages of consultation, design, roll out and evaluation of projects?				
6. Do you ensure partners and commissioners know and understand the importance of voice workers being involved at all stages?				
7. Are there systems and structures in place for rolling and ongoing accountability to voice findings?				
8. If yes, are they embedded into systems and structures so they continue even when individuals in the posts change and they move on?				

