



Carer Council

Member Spotlight

James Hemphill | Carer Council Member

Background

James was appointed to the Carer Council in December 2025 and holds a position as a metropolitan-based foster carer.

What type of care do you provide?

My husband and I are specialist carers with two children aged 3 and 5.

How did you become a carer?

We decided to explore becoming carers through my local gym instructor. He was also in a same-sex relationship and spoke about how they became parents through the foster system.

What are some of your fondest memories of caring?

I have many fond memories of caring for our children. Some of my fondest ones are the spontaneous hugs and kisses, the silly games that turn into uncontrollable giggles, the pride they have when they achieve something. I love watching our children grow in confidence as they overcome challenges that once felt overwhelming!

As a carer, I have grown to meet the needs of neurodiverse children. I have taken on a range of supports through advocacy to and see some incredible results through health, education and child protection systems.

Can you share something about yourself outside of caring?

Outside of caring, I am a secondary school science and mathematics teacher, and education is a big part of who I am. I teach senior Chemistry, and have previously taught Physics and General Mathematics. I genuinely love helping young people develop curiosity, confidence, and critical thinking skills. I'm particularly passionate about STEM education, student leadership development, and creating inclusive spaces within schools especially supporting LGBTQIA+ students and mentoring peers and student leaders.

Through my educational leadership, one "hidden talent" might be my ability to juggle multiple complex responsibilities while staying solutions-focused.

Whether it's coordinating events or managing people, I tend to approach challenges with persistence, empathy, and strategic thinking.

Outside of work, I enjoy learning new things (I'm a bit of a lifelong learner). I'm interested in gardening and music (in particular classical voice). I like to think creatively about projects and ask the difficult questions to advocate for better systems.

From your experience, what are some of the areas that need addressing in child protection?

From my experience, there are several areas in child protection would benefit from systemic review. These include:

- Clearer and more transparent processes and procedures — particularly around funding requests, assessments (CAT scores etc), and decision-making timelines. This would reduce uncertainty for carers and ensure children receive timely support.
- Greater recognition of carers as professional partners, with consistent access to information and documentation. This would improve collaboration and trust.
- Earlier access to specialist assessments and therapeutic services is also critical, especially for children with developmental, neurological, or trauma-related needs. This would promote placement stability.
- Improved and inclusive communication between departments, education settings, and external providers would support more coordinated care.
- Investing in peer connection and wellbeing supports for carers would help sustain foster carers in what is highly skilled and emotionally demanding work, ultimately leading to better outcomes for children and young people.

I personally believe that by taking care of carers will lead to the recruitment of more family based carers. This would have a long term benefit to child protection systems.

What are your hopes for the Carer Council?

My hope for the Carer Council is that it serves as an authentic bridge between carers and the decision-makers (in particular DCP and the minister), ensuring lived experiences meaningfully shape policy, practice, and culture. I would like to see stronger systemic transparency, clearer funding/assessment processes, and timely access to specialist supports so children's needs are recognised early and responded to effectively. I also hope the Council fosters connection amongst carers, valuing their expertise and creating opportunities for shared learning and mentorship.

I hope it contributes to a system where children experience stability and belonging, and carers feel respected, heard, and empowered.

What experiences and skills do you have that will be useful to the Carer Council's work?

I bring a combination of professional experience, education systems knowledge, and lived experience that I believe would be valuable to the Carer Council's work. As a school teacher and former educational leader, I have strong skills in communication, advocacy, policy interpretation, and collaborative problem-solving. I regularly work within structured frameworks, contribute to committees, and develop policy — skills that are directly transferable to the Carer Council.

I understand the emotional and administrative realities carers face, particularly when supporting children with complex developmental and behavioural needs.