

Who Cares? Scotland event – 7 October 2025

Informal Session notes

Group 1 (Age 11–15)

Advocacy

Independence

Participants were asked whether it is important that an advocate is independent. Some felt that

- advocates should work separately from social workers to 'avoid corruption' and to make sure that complaints are followed up; complaints about social workers would be taken more seriously if raised through an advocate.
- independence is important because a young person should feel comfortable expressing what they need.
- One participant felt that independent advocacy is not important, and it would be more helpful if other people were involved.

Lifelong

Participants were asked whether advocacy should be available throughout their whole lives, or whether it should stop at a specified age. They said:

- it should be lifelong so that, even when you are an adult, you know where to go to get your needs met.
- it should be available until around 30-35 years old.
- everyone should have support available to them when they need it; it should be based on need, not age.

Relationship based

Participants were asked about the importance of the relationship with an advocate. They said:

- The relationship is important so that you can trust the advocate to address any 'desperate needs'.
- It is important to build up a relationship with an advocate, so that you feel more comfortable sharing information with them.
- You have to have time to get to know your advocate so that you can trust them.

Accessibility

Participants were asked how accessible advocacy is, and whether there are any barriers to accessing advocacy. They said:

- Advocacy and support should be accessible to everyone who needs it.
- There should be advertising, including posters and letters through doors, to highlight the availability of advocacy – the information should also be made available in different languages.
- It is challenging to gain access to an advocate; in a care home staff said to one participant that they did not need an advocate.
- Another participant found it easy to access an advocate and has contact with them every other day – if they need their advocate, they can message them and ask for help. They meet every two weeks.
- Social workers visit care experienced young people when they need to whereas advocates are available and responsive to the needs of the young person, which is more accessible.
- One participant said that their local area does not have an advocacy link through the council (for example, a link to services provided by Barnardo's, etc).
- People should be able to say to their social worker or teacher that they would like access to advocacy and that should be followed up; One participant said that their social worker had told them that they could access the services of an advocate.
- One participant said that their advocate supported them at a recent hearing – sat beside them and was able to answer questions on their behalf when she did not feel comfortable answering them herself. Another participant said that their social worker does the same (they meet their social worker to let them know their thoughts and the social workers answers questions on their behalf at meetings).

Aftercare

Participants were told that once you leave care you can get help and support until you are 26 (for example, assistance with paying rent, etc) - but if you leave care before you turn 16, you are not entitled to such support. Some case studies were highlighted about care experienced people who had accessed aftercare, and those who had not. Participants were asked whether aftercare should be extended as set out in the Bill. They said:

- It would not be fair for people to receive aftercare if they have money when others do not have access to it.
- Aftercare should be available beyond the age of 26 if needed. There should not be an upper age – aftercare should be available where it is needed (but if you have money – and, for example, a house and a job – you should not get financial support)

- 35 years old would be an appropriate upper age for aftercare as the brain is fully developed by then.
- The current system is not fair; everyone should have equal rights, no matter how old they are.
- It is important to make care experienced young people aware of their rights.
- One participant said that because of their order, they will not be eligible for aftercare. They will be reviewed 6 weeks before their 16th birthday; they have no family or other support.
- There is a need to look at providing aftercare for care experienced young people in different settings (such as informal kinship care).
- One participant left care many years ago and was living with parents but stated that they have special needs and may need aftercare at some point in the future. They feel that they should be eligible for that.
- The local authority should write to care experienced people to make them aware of their entitlement to aftercare; one participant thought that this would be 'less humiliating' than the care experienced person having to approach the council themselves.
- The council could track care experienced people through school, university or Who Cares? Scotland; social workers should also contact care experienced people to make them aware of aftercare provisions. For those who have left care, their family/carers should be notified of aftercare provisions.
- There should be advertising and publicity about aftercare – people should not be ashamed to be in receipt of it; it should be normalised.

Profits

Participants were asked whether care providers should be allowed to make profits.

Some people in the group thought that profit making should be allowed, others said 'it's complicated.'

- Profit is fine, so long as there is an annual report on spending and the percentage of income which constitutes profit; 60-80% of profit should go back to the young people in the home.
- Financial reporting is very important for private residential care homes so that there is full transparency. Profit is fine as long as there is clarity about how it will be spent.
- Foster carers should be paid according to their income (if they earn a good salary, they should not receive as much support as those who do not work or earn a low salary).

- Some participants were concerned about what would happen to care services if profit was targeted by the Bill (for example, the prospect of residential care homes closing down and disrupting the lives of young people in care).
- Profits should be used to support the residential care homes (for example, to pay for staff training).
- It is not right for a residential care home to make a profit if they get bad inspections.

Other issues

Discrimination

- When asked whether they would change anything about care, one participant said that all people in care should not be discriminated against for being different; people in care should be able to choose where they live and what they want.
- One participant said she felt discriminated against for being care experienced.

Support

- Young carers have support groups; there should be support groups for care experienced people – it is good to share issues with people who understand.
- When they go into foster care, children should be told that they are not different from anyone else. One participant was scared to admit that she was in foster care when she was asked about parents/guardians in hospital; she was scared that she would be made fun of.
- One participant said that she did not know who her social worker was and only met her once, a year ago.
- One participant said that they have access to a solicitor for support in court – the solicitor explains what is happening in a way that makes sense. They have had the same solicitor over a considerable period of time, which has provided consistency.
- One participant has had 3 social workers – one for only a few weeks – but their current social worker is very nice and has told her how to access aftercare, etc.
- One participant said that they had never had a bad experience in care.

School

- One participant was in 4th year at school and information about being care experienced had never been covered in school; there is prejudice about it and bullying.
- There are very negative feelings around being care experienced in schools There is nothing on the curriculum about it; it should be taught to all young people.
- Training should be provided to teachers so that they can provide support to care experienced people (tailored to their needs).

- One participant asked the Committee to write to the Scottish Government to say that all schools should have the same training/information available about what it is like to be in foster care.
- Everyone across society should learn more about what it is like to be in care; people should be educated so that they can understand what care experienced people have been through.

Register of foster carers

- When asked about the possibility of a register of foster carers, one participant said that they would support the creation of a register so that complaints can be properly documented – when a foster carer changes agencies, their records (and any complaints about them) are not passed on to their new agency. One participant said that the register should also include positive feedback about foster carers, who should be encouraged to learn from each other.

Group 2 (Age 16-21)

Advocacy

The group discussed what makes the perfect advocate.

Does an advocate need to be independent?

- Some felt that it should be someone outwith social work or education etc. so, although they can still contact them on your behalf, they aren't tied to those services.
- Others said that the person was more important than where they were from, so it could e.g. be your social worker.
- Care experienced people should have not only the right to access an advocate, but there should be an obligation for them to know that they have that right. However, is it important that the relationship is with a person, not an organisation.
- Social workers are stretched thin and have to prioritise across their cases. They can't break themselves into pieces and be everywhere at once.
- When asked if advocates need to understand social work and schools, some group members said that as long as they understand how to stand up and advocate, that is the most important thing.
- When asked if advocates could be volunteers, some group members said that volunteer services could help but they needed to be resourced properly.
- Care experienced people could be help other, younger people, in terms of advocate but also other supports although, again, volunteers would need to have means / training to support the children/young people that they would be supporting.

Does advocacy need to be lifelong?

- Participants strongly believed that it doesn't matter how old you are, you should always have a right to an advocate
- It also shouldn't matter when you left care
- Many said that even when people are older, they still need their support network, but when you are care experienced, you don't have that support. You could need help well into adulthood.
- The need for support doesn't end because you reach a certain age. The need for support, and for an advocate will come and go. It is important to be able to come back for the support when you need it, regardless of your age.
- Group members pointed out that children and young people who are in the country without their families have no other support, and will therefore need help and support for much longer.

Relationship-based

Some group members set out what an advocate should be. They said that an advocate should be someone—

- you can trust, that you feel safe with, that understands you, your feelings, can read your body language and make sure that your voice is heard.
- Someone who is caring and empathic and who can take the strain of the fight for you, so you don't have to fight for yourself all of the time. They added that finally finding someone who will fight for you can help give you the courage and the confidence to say things that you hadn't before.
- Group members said that if you can't trust your advocate, you need the power to change them.
- When asked if there should be a limit on the number of times you could change, group members said no, that it is important for a young person to have the right to choose their advocate. They added that if someone is going through lots of advocates, there is a problem with the people who are matching them.
- Group members said that it was important that there was consistency with your advocate but also in the people who are supporting you is important so that the faces are familiar. Consistency helps to build bonds and can develop person specific support.
- Care experienced people are used to seeing so many faces, at different meetings and children's hearings etc. Having a consistent small team, and people that you can recognise is important. When I recognised people at hearings, it was really helpful and reassuring.

Accessible

- Some participants said that the advocate should be someone local. A young person was allocated an advocate based several local authority areas away. They have never met them, and their only contact is via text, and they don't really know each other and don't really speak about much. It feels like there was no thought put into who was going to be their advocate, and how practical it would be to see them. A local advocate would be more useful and they would probably have a better relationship.

Aftercare

The group discussed the Bill's proposals to extend aftercare eligibility to those in care prior to their sixteenth birthday. Currently, young people have to be in care on or after their 16th birthday to be eligible.

Group members agreed that the right to aftercare should be extended.

- It shouldn't be different if you have left care before 16. You might not see the danger of going back to a parent if you are young, or don't fully understand the consequences of losing support should going back not work out.
- Some participants said that young people are being encouraged to leave care before they are 16. You can't look into the future, you can't know that the situation could fall apart.
- Family members may also want you to leave care, because they don't understand the implications of losing that support.
- Some commented that people want to leave social work, and lots of kids don't want people to know there are in social work because there is a stigma. Teachers see you in a different light. It is noticeable. You are singled out.
- Participants reiterated that everyone needs support at points when they are older. Their need doesn't end because they have reached a certain age. Being able to access support when needed is important.

Profit limitation

During the group discussion on the Bill's proposals to consider profit limitation in residential care:

- Participants agreed that it was complicated but were clear that if the profits that are being made are going back into the children, the support and the services then that is ok but if money is being made off the children, then that really isn't.
- Young people shouldn't be living in rooms with wallpaper falling off the walls etc. when there is high executive pay and shareholder dividends.
- Some suggested that profits could be ring-fenced to support services and care for young people – and care experienced young people should have a say in what the money goes to support. Examples included a youth led project to help support refugees who need appropriate clothing and heating for dealing with the cold / wet weather or a training flat, to help support people develop skills and learn to cope with being on their own, before fully moving into their own flat.
- Someone mentioned that a residential care home for people with ASN, which is run by a charity, is one of the best care homes that they had ever been to, as the money is reinvested. But not all services / organisations do that.
- When asked if it would be better if residential care homes were was run by local authorities, participants said that they thought it was better that it is charity based.
- Participants said that there should be more funding for council run services, don't take money out of children and young people's services to sort potholes etc. I appreciate that roads are shocking but take it from somewhere else.

Other

During the session, members also talked about the definition of care experience, the support required for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and what is missing from the Bill.

Definition of care experience

During the session, members were asked what does care experience mean. Participants responded that it means anyone who is or has—

- Been taken off their parents
- Had any social work support
- Stayed with other family members
- Been in residential care
- Been adopted
- Been in foster care

One member said that someone should also be considered care experienced even if it isn't a local authority decision. i.e. that the arrangement for e.g. kinship care has been the choice of the young person.

Participants also said—

- It was a big problem that organisations don't know what care experienced means, corporate parents don't know what it means, there needs to be cohesion [*= everyone should have the same understanding of what care experienced means*].
- There needs to be more education in school so that there is more understanding about what it means and that being care experienced isn't the fault of the child. It wouldn't have to be a full course but needs to raise some awareness.
- A lot of opinions are inherited so it is really important that children are taught about care experienced people. It should be done in PSE or pastoral care.

Support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

Some group members said—

- there are limited places where unaccompanied children can, and are being housed. In some places, there is a lack of support for young people and opportunities to make friends and do things.
- As unaccompanied children don't have their families with them, they need more help and money as they are struggling to manage on the money they receive, which is £93 a week, to buy everything that they need.
- A participant said that, despite being in the country for two years, they had still not been given an asylum card yet. It is difficult to focus on studies because of the worry.

What is missing from the Bill?

- Group members agreed that there needs to be someone, whether a person or a department, who needs to be culpable if it isn't delivered. There needs to be someone held accountable for delivering this.
- Some also said that the Bill should have all of the promise in it but is only part of it. It is missing consideration of other services such as mental health services. It would be good if the Bill could help smooth the transition to CAMHS for care experienced people.

Group 3 (Age 16-21)

Advocacy

The group discussed what components would make a perfect advocate.

On whether advocates need to be independent:

- Some group members said they should be as this means they are 'apolitical' and not tied to a local authority or service provider so would have no hidden agenda.
- Some group members said they would not trust an advocate unless they were independent.
- Others did not have a problem with an advocate being tied to a specific service (e.g. residential care).
- The need to focus on building trust in relationships with advocates was highlighted, with group members stating this could be impacted by trauma and could take two to three years to build.

On whether advocacy needs to be lifelong:

- Group members overall believed it is good for care experienced people to have lifelong access to advocacy.
- Some group members noted that services are oversubscribed so accessing the advocacy services needs to be possible. Being able to engage young people in specific services is important.
- The role advocates could continue to play in helping care experienced young people access housing was strongly emphasised by a number of participants. The shortage of housing and the difficulty to access housing as a care experienced young person were highlighted repeatedly by group members.
- One participant stated that the impact of being care experienced is lifelong and can include discrimination. Having an advocate on side helps young people understand what support they should have access to as a care experienced person.
- The need for support to navigate school, college, university and the workplace were also highlighted.
- Some group members said the meaning of 'lifelong' needed to be clearly set out.

Participants were asked how important relationship building is in the delivery of advocacy.

- Some group members felt it was not important, and professionalism was more important.
- Some felt a good relationship helped them share their experiences/issues.

- Many group members said the relationship should be two-way. The advocate needs to share info about themselves and build an understanding of the person they are working with.
- Group members wanted more information about how advocates are hired and what the requirements are to do the job. A number of participants said advocates needed to be passionate about their work and the rights of care experienced people.
- Group members were also clear that advocates needed to be properly trained and that appropriate resources were required for advocacy services as there are costs attached to providing a good service.
- The need to fund and expand advocacy services to meet the demand of lifelong provision was highlighted. Ensuring employability routes to a career in advocacy was identified as a way of meeting these demands. Some group members said people with lived experience of advocacy would make good advocacy workers and there should be opportunities for them to pursue this.
- Also during discussions on advocacy, one participant said that the need for advocacy was a symptom of problems with the system and existing legislation. The example of corporate parents missing engagement points for early intervention was given.

Aftercare

The group discussed the Bill's proposals to extend aftercare eligibility to those in care prior to their sixteenth birthday. Currently, young people have to be in care on or after their 16th birthday to be eligible.

- Group members were generally in favour of the right to aftercare support being extended to all care experienced people and removing the current eligibility criteria (of being 16 years or older at the point of leaving care).
- Participants shared numerous examples of young people being taken off their care orders before reaching the age of 16. The example of a young person being taken off their order aged 15 years 10 months was given. In these circumstances, young people did not receive aftercare support and could no longer receive support/advice from their social work team.
- Where young people were taken off orders prior to turning 16, the repercussions of doing this were often not explained to them by social work. Many did not know they would not be eligible for further support. Some of the young people in this situation had been in care for many years prior.
- In addition, of those who were eligible for aftercare, some said their entitlements were not explained to them.
- Others with experience of kinship care described being left with no support and no access to a social worker.
- Housing was raised as an issue in relation to aftercare support with participants stating that not being able to access aftercare support via social work made

accessing housing services even harder as the only option is to go via adult services and there is no recognition of care experience for those leaving care before their 16th birthday.

- Group members said having no access to aftercare also limits access to education as some young people have to go into full time work in order afford to live.
- Many group members said aftercare support should be an opt out system, all care experienced people should be eligible, and the onus should not be on the young person to apply for support.

Profit

During the group discussion on the Bill's proposals to consider profit limitation in residential care:

- Some participants said it was not right that businesses can profit from children without carers.
- However, when given a scenario where care provided by a profit-making organisation was good and the potential of having to move was raised, young people said the situation became complicated.
- When the idea of profit was explored further, some group members said profit should only be used to reinvest in care services and businesses should not be making profit (for shareholders etc) from providing services to care for children.
- High salaries of staff at the top of organisations were also discussed and there was mixed views, with some group members stating there is a need to ensure staff directly caring for the children were well paid.
- The majority of group members said money provided for a child's placement should be spent on the child.
- Some group members said they felt homes run by councils were of a slightly better standard than private as they believed money at these placements is invested in the young people.

Hearings system

When asked about proposals for single member panels:

- Most group members had concerns about single member panels. They also expressed concern around even procedural decisions being taken by single member panel.
- Some group members felt certain procedural decisions could be taken by a single member panel.

Foster care register

On the Bill's proposals for a register of foster carers, group members said:

- There were pros and cons to the proposal.
- Some group members said there was potential for the register to be abused if it noted complaints. One participant said some young people might register complaints against foster carers out of spite, and parents who have lost the care of their children might also register complaints.
- If the register is to note complaints, clarity around how complaints would be investigated was needed. One participant suggested complaints should be investigated outwith the local authority in which they were made.
- Some group members said it was important the requirements of the register do not put people off being foster carers, though others stated if the register did put a person off then perhaps fostering was not the right choice for them.
- There was a clear view that the foster care register should not be public, and that it should avoid being seen to be rating foster carers.

Other

During the session one member said that legislation on corporate parenting is vague and leaves room for abuse of power. They wondered whether punitive measures in legislation would be appropriate.

Group 4 (Age 22-43)

Build your own independent advocates

Questions asked:

- Why do you think Independent advocacy should be a thing? Conflicts of interest for advocates? What's their job – to amplify your voice?
- When should independent advocacy end? 26 or later?
- Should it be relationships-based? How long does it take for you to trust someone?
- How can we avoid people having to repeat their story?
- Accessibility – how can they access advocacy?

Responses:

- If you have an advocate who works for the local authority and is paid for by the local authority, they are not independent.
- Advocacy may change throughout the life-long journey because people may need different things at different stages in their life.
- Think it's important for independent advocates to be independent, rather than partnered with the Council.
- Shouldn't be able to take this away [*advocacy service*] overnight. With Who Cares? Scotland you know they are only there to advocate for you.
- Shouldn't matter which council area you live in – which contracts they have – it should all be equal.
- Home and host authorities – trying to get support from home authority [*when living in another local authority*] and getting nowhere.
- We need to make sure there is advocacy that is free from conflict of interest, not paid for by local authority
- Relationships-based – advocacy should ALWAYS be with a person who we can trust with our thoughts, feelings and our problems.
- Accessible – all people with disabilities, care experience etc. should have access to support as easy as possible, such as text line, e-mails, drop-ins etc.
- Life-long – advocacy support should be available to all care-experienced people no matter what age or where we live.
- Independent – advocacy shouldn't be taken away due to funding and everything doesn't need to be partnered with all councils.

- Social workers, teachers, staff and foster carers should all have training on trauma, mental health, lifelong trauma and young people leaving care.
- Advocates should be affiliated with council or sector so there is some kind of accountability.
- There should be a factsheet about advocates *[for care experienced people]*.
- You should be able to ask your advocate other questions too and not just what they are working on. E.g. how do I shave? Can you show me good razors etc.?
- You should be able to access *[advocacy]* support regardless of accessibility needs and it shouldn't be a postcode lottery – if you need it, there should be access to it, no matter what your needs.
- Advocacy shouldn't stop at 26 – it should be as and when needed, not because of age! You will never not need advice etc. from people (parents etc.)
- Life-long rights are something that should be implemented - as you *[would]* have access to support - since we don't have a nuclear family/support network.
- Relationships *[are]* formed with *[an]* advocate through genuine interest in young person's wants and needs – formed over time.
- Advocacy should be life-long.
- Getting rid of boundaries – where there are all sorts of rules that stop you having a personal and trusting relationship with your advocate – e.g. you can't give them a hug/send a text.
- Have a good bond with your advocate – relationships matter!! Trauma-informed.
- Advocates should be accountable – and it should be clear who they are answering too if things don't go well.
- Need a factsheet so you know who they are.
- Advocacy shouldn't stop at 26 – should be as and when it is needed.
- Be able to access support regardless of accessibility needs – shouldn't be a post-code lottery. Should all be built around you.
- If you have trauma – e.g. being able to choose that you want a female advocate.
- Life-long access to support – recognising that you will need a support network throughout your whole life.
- It's not just for one thing and one thing only – you might not need an advocate for another wee while – but can you answer this question/help me? Basic things – how to turn on a washing machine etc.
- Adoption isn't really included in the Bill as the Government hasn't decided if we are care-experienced.

- Independent, must include adopted people – shouldn't include service- providers.
- *[Advocates]* must be trained in legal and complex issues experienced by care experienced children and young people.
- Adoptees don't have a right to request care info until 16 in Scotland and often don't look at files until later in life. No duty to inform an adopted person that they are adopted so many don't find out until later life and there's no support or support is from a social worker.
- Social workers should be record-dispensers – they are not advocates, mental health professionals, emotional support etc. (from an adoption perspective – they are working for the adoptive parents). Others from a non-adoption background felt that social workers could be advocates.
- We need life-long advocacy – should not cut off at 25. Should be relationships-based and trauma-informed, meeting the needs of individuals.
- Accessible – all people with disabilities should have access to support as easily as possible – e-mails, drop-in.
- Advocacy should always be someone we can trust.
- Advocacy shouldn't be taken away due to age/funding. Should be equal across the board. Should be available no matter what the person's age and where they live.
- Advocates should all be trauma trained.
- Think about how people can access information, particularly if they've accessed services across different local authorities.
- In the Scottish Government's 2023 apology for forced adoptions – there was a recommendation that those records should be held at the National Records of Scotland. Corporate parents should make sure that the information is easily accessible.
- Independent *[advocates]* must not have a vested interest and must respect the rights of care experienced people.
- Independent *[advocates]* must understand the impact of care and not be a contributor.
- Independent *[advocates]* must not wear too many hats.
- Independent *[advocates]* must be trained in the legal process and complex issues faced by care experienced people.
- Independent *[advocates]* must include empathy, not judgement.
- Independent advocacy should be independent with no conflict of interest.
- Adoptees may not know they are adopted until later life. There is no duty to inform them of this – many will, and do, need lifelong support (e.g. to search for records).

- For adoptees, adoption is lifelong, no rights to end the order, so support must be lifelong.
- Lifelong advocacy should have NO CUT OFF as if it has cut off at like 25 or 26 it's NOT LIFELONG
- Lifelong Advocacy should be rights based and trauma informed in order to meet the needs of individuals and not what the organisations need.
- *[Advocacy]* should be needs-led e.g. video call, coffee shop.
- Over 26 – used helpline as my partner left and I had no money. They *[partner]* took the appliances. Helpline helped access funding for white goods.
- Advocacy should not stop – it should change throughout lifelong journey
- *[Advocacy should be]* free from conflicts of interest – not paid for by Local Authority.
- Relationships *[with advocacy workers]* come with time. Need consistency – not always changing.
- *[Advocacy workers should have a]* genuine interest in young people – and their wants and likes.
- WC?S don't provide residential care.

Case studies - Aftercare

Questions asked:

- Is it fair to change the law?
- What difference will it make?
- What else needs to change?
- What support is required?

Answers provided:

- Yes, it shouldn't matter if someone is 16 or not *[when they come off a CSO]*, they should be entitled to aftercare.
- Care experienced rights should be lifelong, including advocacy and help from aftercare if needed.
- Adoptees who return to care should be classed as returning to care.
- Adoption should be *[counted as]* care experience.
- One person didn't know until adulthood that they were care experienced and was told they weren't entitled to aftercare by local authority – but Clan Childlaw sent a letter to say they were entitled and they were able to get the support.
- I think it's fine and well giving people access to the adult world – are you going to put more in place to help support them through the transition – independent living skills

or adulting at 16 is hard. Aftercare is great but not as supportive as you think it is – e.g. if your plumbing goes. What are we putting into place to support 16 year olds transitioning out of care?

- Local authority aftercare only up to the age of 26 – an aftercare website could be helpful – doesn't mean everyone is entitled – but at least you can find out what's there. Should have audio description resources too.
- Colleges/uni websites – half of the websites don't have a designated part of their website for care experienced students. [*Makes it very hard for care experienced students to find out what they are entitled to.*]
- It is also hard as well because there are 20 times more care leavers than there are people in care. Who are you going to support? You get to a certain age and you are frozen out – but I know people from years ago who still carry trauma – but they don't have access to advocacy. Scotland is very forward thinking in that we can sit here and talk about this.
- I was told I wasn't eligible for aftercare support as I wasn't care experienced under the current definition – I left care 6-8 weeks before 16. I have had friends dying from drugs. At 24, I am only just going back to education now. I am having to choose between food, rent, heat. For people who are in care just now – that needs to change [*when they leave care*]. I am having to choose to do a 3 year [*university*] course rather than the Masters because I can't afford it. My life is not what it should be. I should be thriving. I'm not even surviving just now.
- SAAS isn't working – care experienced bursary doesn't cover the cost of college/uni and life things like bills, gas, electric etc. so you have to choose education or not.
- As far as care experience goes – those who are eligible - there is a rent shortfall. [*I believe that*] the local authority doesn't have an obligation to put you in safe housing, for many private rent is becoming an option and council do help support with paying a deposit, however, there is a 5 week rent shortfall as universal credit are not paying this straight away, so care experienced people are getting into debt. If the house hasn't even got gas and electric on the mains, they can't top it up. No way to pay off that debt and that's not a nice feeling for anybody, let alone a care-experienced person with no support.
- Accessible – extra support to care experienced people with/without disabilities no matter the age, background or childhood experience.
- Everyone should be able to access support, regardless of background, such as adoption, at home, residential or foster care.
- Care leavers should be able to have LIFELONG bus passes to help with appointments, education and social life.
- Care experienced people need and should be given priority with housing.
- [*There needs to be*] better housing structures for all care experienced people, regardless of age.
- [*There should be*] extra money each month for care leavers lifelong.

- Better mental health support for care experienced people *[is needed]*.
- Better equip care experienced people with life skills.
- Why should I be left traumatised by a system that was legally supposed to protect me?

Profit Limitation

Questions asked:

- Is profit just profit or can it be a surplus?
- What if there is money left over and it is reinvested into services?

Participants asked to stand on a line of agreement, with prompts including:

- Ban all profit (like Wales)
- It's complicated
- Allow profit (current system)

Answers:

- I think profit is not necessarily a bad thing depending on who it is benefitting – e.g. if it's going back into the services for children and young people, not the shareholders.
- *[Limiting profit]* could take away the incentive for people to have private residential placements.
- I am on the fence between profit and it's complicated – if it is profit that goes back to children and young people, instead of clients or customers....
- However, I would also say that I don't feel it should be classed as profit at all – it should be caring for young people, not a business – we're not numbers on a page
- Where I draw the line – is it going to care experienced people or people's back pockets? If it is having a positive impact *[on care experience children and young people]* then that's not profit, that's just funds. If it's for bonuses, then no.
- This *[proposal in the Bill]* needs to make sure it doesn't affect current people - who are settled in a placement where they feel secure – but it should affect newer placements.
- I am for banning all profit – because of my own experiences – I was in a private care home. People *[workers]* have to put food on the table – but why would you want to make a profit off care experienced children and young people. They are employing staff who only want the paycheck at the end of the month. Staff didn't care. The person who owned it eventually sold the company and moved abroad with the millions of pounds they made out of the people they had been looking after.
- It's complicated – every local council is given money for an adoption fee, however, that child loses all rights, they have no right to revoke that order and we *[adoptees]* are also not classed as care experienced so we have no right to complain about anything profit driven. There shouldn't be any profit on vulnerable children.

- I have gone with ban all profit – we shouldn't be profiting from vulnerable children who have been through so much trauma and experiences that have never been their fault in the first place. Privately owned companies – my own experience of growing up in residential – there was a privately owned children's home in my local authority – thankfully it's no longer there. They were making millions off of vulnerable people who were staying in the care home and they sold it and that has now been taken over by the council. But we shouldn't be profiting from traumatised pasts.
- People should not be making a profit out of vulnerable children and young people in care.
- You can say this about foster carers too – at 16 *[I was]* put into a homeless shelter as the local authority refused to pay for my placement.
- I went to a special needs residential boarding school. It was a charity – the money has to be put back into the service. That's OK. It can provide an absolutely amazing service. You shouldn't be making a profit from someone's misery. Fine if it's being put back into the charity.
- Why should care-experienced people living in a privately funded placement – residential or foster care – be left traumatised from their experience there? Why should we leave care without support, with no counselling? I had more trauma from my time in that unit. Leaving care two weeks after my 18th birthday was the best thing I've ever done.
- I think we need to be careful about wages *[for private providers]* – you could pull in people who are just interested in the wages.

Other

- Definition of care experience – *[we need to think about how you]* prove your care experience. Going to college, I had to tell my life story *[to access support]*. Fought so hard to get trauma work, then had to move *[areas]* and so *[this meant I was]* back at the bottom of the waiting list.
- I am adult adoptee – I am pleading with you to include us as care-experienced. The Scottish Government gave an apology for forced adoption. Right to be informed at 16 of own adoption, for autonomy to leave orders and the right to be known (to be classed as care-experienced). To be given that support and choice. These things are deeply important. I can't make a complaint about social work. I wasn't asked if I was OK at any point. Adoption trauma. We have given out over 800,000 adoption orders. We are excluded from the Child Abuse inquiry. If you can't make a complaint or appeal a court order.
- I was in kinship care and this also isn't recognised as much, especially informal kinship care.
- Today's session was extremely rushed – is there an opportunity to speak again later in the process?
- Generational care – and when are you going to start taking responsibility – I grew up in the same residential care as my mum. I looked at the numbers of babies with care experienced parents. You need to put the money into early prevention measures *[to*

stop that happening]. We're (young parents) being vilified when it's your responsibility to teach us. If you asked us to help peer to peer, we would be so happy to do that. We are told we just don't have the money. But there's money for people in homelessness/prison. We need to put the money in the right place.

- Accessing records - Is there a way to be able to get records (health, education, social work) from all councils from one subject access request, instead of having to submit four per council?
- Scottish Government needs to take responsibility for our trauma now.
- *[Care experienced people should be]* exempt from Council Tax up to 26