



**WHO
CARES?**
SCOTLAND

EQUALITY | RESPECT | LOVE



Education and Gaelic Committee

Submission for pre-budget scrutiny session on the Promise.

15 September | 9.30am | Scottish Parliament

Who We Are

Who Cares? Scotland is Scotland's only national independent membership organisation for Care Experienced people, with around 2000 members. Our mission is to secure a lifetime of equality, respect, and love for Care Experienced people in Scotland.

By 'Care Experienced people', we mean anyone who is currently in care or has been for any length of time regardless of their age. This care may have been provided in many different settings, such as:

- Kinship Care – Living with a relative who is not your mum or dad. This includes both formal and informal.
- Looked After at Home – With the help of social work.
- Residential Care – Living in a residential home or school.
- Foster Care – Living with foster carers, including Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children.
- Secure Care – Living in a secure accommodation.
- Adoption – Living with adoptive parents.

At the heart of Who Cares? Scotland's work is the rights of Care Experienced people, and the power of their voices to bring about positive change. We provide individual, relationship-based independent advocacy, and a range of participation and connection opportunities for Care Experienced people across Scotland.

Every year, our advocacy workers support around 1,600 people with around 6,000 individual advocacy issues across all 32 Local Authorities in Scotland. As we take a human rights-based approach to our work, around 10,000 individual rights are logged every year in supporting these issues. We bring Care Experienced people together to connect and shape the world around them. Around 700 unique individuals come together every year to take part in around 800 of our activities across Scotland.

We work alongside Corporate Parents and various communities to broaden understanding and challenge stigma faced by Care Experienced people. We work with policy makers, leaders, and elected representatives locally and nationally to shape legislation, policy and practice. We do this collaboratively to build on the aspirations of The Promise and to secure positive change.

Reports for the Committee's Attention:

Who Cares? Scotland's response to Programme for Government 2026-31, September 2026

- Welcomes PfG recommitment to keeping the Promise by 2030 and developing an updated implementation strategy this year.
- Highlights the five asks in our Connected by Care manifesto, informed by Care Experienced people.
 - **Ensure the Promise is kept in full and fully resourced, with processes to track its delivery up to and beyond 2030.**
 - The most recent Oversight Board report in 2025 found that "some people, some organisations and some systems are not yet doing enough, and this risks the country as a whole failing."
 - **Keep Care Experienced people's voice at the heart of the Promise, implementing the statutory right to independent, relationship-based, lifelong and accessible advocacy for all Care Experienced people who need it.**
 - We celebrate the right to independent advocacy being included in the CCESP Bill, and are keen to see successful resourcing and implementation to realise these rights.
 - **Introduce the Scottish Human Rights Bill which includes Care Experienced people within the Equality section.**
 - We believe the law must recognise Care Experienced people as a group of rights holders who face barriers to enjoying their rights across their lifetime. It would also provide a clearer legal route to challenge discrimination and hold public bodies to account when Care Experience creates barriers to accessing rights.
 - **Our members voted mental health and education as areas requiring more focus.**

- Our 2022 mental health report '[Tend Our Light](#)' found that 100% of participants felt that their care experience had negatively impacted their mental health and 70% had been unable to access mental health support. Two years later, the impact of care experience on loneliness was also highlighted by participants who informed our [2024 Belonging and Connection issue paper](#). 75% of respondents reported struggling with loneliness, and around half felt that their time in care had negatively impacted on their sense of belonging and connection. We need a more proactive effort to change these outcomes and experiences.
- We urge the Scottish Government to commit to the national roll-out of the Communities that Care Whole School Approach across Scotland, ensuring every school has the knowledge and culture to support Care Experienced children and young people to achieve their aspirations.
- **We urge the Scottish Government to be bolder and braver in keeping the Promise to Care Experienced people. We want to see MSPs from every party work together across the chamber to ensure that policy and public investment deliver real change for those who need it most.**

'Exclusion Labelled as Support' Education Report, June 2025.

- **Barriers leave Care Experienced children struggling to access right to education**, says report published by CYPCS, written by Who Cares? Scotland.
- For Care Experienced people, receiving a good education can be a route to overcome socioeconomic barriers and enable them to pursue their goals and aspirations. Yet, [the most recent statistics](#) show that educational outcomes for Care Experienced children continue to be much lower than average including on attendance, school leaving age and SCQF level 5 attainment.
- Part-time timetables are being used to informally exclude Care Experienced students from their right to education, with some receiving as little as one hour a week of education.
- Care Experienced students described the difficulties in receiving the support they required in schools.
- We call for the Promise's recommendation for formal and informal exclusions to be banned for Care Experienced students to be upheld.
- We urge the Scottish Government to commit to the national roll-out of the Communities that Care Whole School Approach across Scotland, ensuring every school has the knowledge and culture to support Care Experienced children and young people to achieve their aspirations.

The Promise Scotland's Plan 24-30, June 2024

- 25 route maps intended to provide a detailed plan over several years of what must be delivered, by who, when and how.
- Updated Dec 2025 to translate all actions in the Promise into 'clear, measurable outcomes with timebound milestones', following [Audit Scotland report](#).
- **Many route maps have no actions planned beyond 2027, and many actions summarise what has been done instead of what should be happening.**
- **Has not been updated to reflect work needed following CCESP Act.**

Who Cares? Scotland's FOI Research Report on Scotland's Progress to Keep the Promise, February 2024.

- Compiled by Freedom of Information requests to all 32 local authorities.
- Warned about the **lack of progress, data gaps, and dilution in aims** on the fourth anniversary of the Promise.
- Unveiled **positive progress on areas such as keeping brothers and sisters together, addressing stigma in the care system and the work underway to reshape the youth justice system.**
- However, it highlighted that much more work needs to be done within all the priority areas. With **key concerns on the lack of progress in education, restraint and the monetisation of care.**

Care Experienced people's views on the Promise, May 2024.

- Views on the Promise from 37 Care Experienced people, shared in participatory sessions with the Education, Children and Young People Committee in 2024.
- Key message that **Care Experienced people did not feel enough had changed since the Promise was made, and had little confidence in the Promise being fully achieved.**
- They described the gaps between what was promised and what they had experienced in practice: inadequate resources, unstable relationships with professionals and a high turnover of social workers, issues with education and stigma, poor communication, disrupted relationships with brothers and sisters, lack of suitable support after leaving care and inappropriate use of secure care and restraint.