

Cross-Party Group on Care Leavers

Wednesday 13 September 6pm – 8pm

Minutes

Present

MSPs

Paul O’Kane
Natalie Don
Pam Duncan Glancy
Karen Adam
Roz McCall

Invited guests

Lisa Macrae, Each and Every Child
Michael Wield, Each and Every Child
Oisin King
Chelbi Hiram
Andrew O’Halloran, EIS
Dominic Brack, Scottish Government
Patsy Kay, Scottish Government
Lorraine Moore, Hub for Success
Gillian Maxwell, Hub for Success
Rebecca Slater, SAAS
Victoria Murdoch, CATCH Scotland
Gillian Hamilton, Education Scotland

Non-MSP Group Members

Jeanette Miller
Chris Marshall, National Leadership Network
Jo Derrick, Staf
Pamela Graham, Staf
Marion Willshaw, Staf
Chris Kelly, Staf
Sam Upton, President Strathclyde University Student Union
Martin Canavan, Aberlour
Kirsty-Louise Hunt, Barnardo’s
Ryan McShane
Moir Greentree, Why Not? Trust
Jasmin-Kasaya Pilling
Sarah-Jane Morris
Chloe Dobson, Who Cares? Scotland

Becky Reynolds, National House Project
Charles Fernando, Scottish Youth Parliament
Moir Greentree, Why Not? Trust
Chris Kelly, Staf (Youth Justice Voices)
Katy Nisbet, Clan Childlaw
Sandra Cheyne

Apologies

Aimee Thorpe

Agenda item 1 Welcome from Paul O’Kane: Minutes and update on actions from previous meeting

PO welcomed everyone to the meeting, both online and in person. He then updated the group on progress made since the previous meeting in March referencing a meeting with COSLA with Staf and PO to start further conversations on highlighting topics raised around housing, education and skills and plans to present to COSLA’s board. Also reference meeting with Minister for Housing, Paul McLennan in the new year. Minutes from previous meeting approved.

Agenda item 2

Setting the scene: Jo Derrick

JD, Staf CEO and CM introduced the topic for discussion. Highlighted that the workplan for the CPG was generated by Staf’s Care Leavers Forum, of which CM was a member. CM explained that looking at stigma in education was important to him due to his direct experience. He referenced an instance of an issue with a care experienced student accessing SAAS funding which he was made aware of the day before the meeting.

JD highlighted that issues around stigma are not new, and quoted from the Promise that “the experience of being cared for must not be stigmatising” and that “Scotland should be a good parent for those it is responsible for and stop stigmatising. Universities and colleges in Scotland must also act on their responsibilities towards care experienced students, ensuring they are provided with access to mentoring and support throughout their studies.”

JD then went on to explain that the group will be presenting a series of asks which were generated at a planning meeting. The group were asked to think about what support is already in place that help students with care experience succeed in higher education. And the second question was what support needs to be in place. This generated 14 asks about what students need before, during and after higher education, relating to financial and mental health and wellbeing. The presentations and discussions will be around the *before* asks with during and after scheduled for the next cross party group meeting.

JD stated there is an overall ask which was that a mapping exercise to be undertaken to understand what's happening in further and higher education across Scotland in practise and Staf has separately committed to exploring how they might achieve this in collaboration with others. JD asked for those around the room to work alongside Staf to do that mapping which will be presented at a future meeting. JD thanked CH OK, SU, JM and CM for their work and presenting.

PO thanked Jo and welcomes Natalie Don, Minister for Children, Young People and Keeping the Promise to the meeting, noting that he hopes Ms Don will have a continued strong relationship with this Cross Party Group.

ND thanks PO and apologises for being late due to debate running on, thanking the group for her invitation, stating she was there to listen and particularly pleased to be at the first hybrid meeting of the group and that she would be happy to attend future meetings.

Agenda item 3

What do we mean by stigma? Each and Every Child

Paul welcomed Oisin King, a member of Each and Every Child's Voices of Experience Group to present on what we mean by stigma.

OK shared that One of Each and Every Child's recommendations is if we talk about stigma, we explain what it is and how it comes about. He referenced Each and Every Child and Frameworks UK research that the general public hold stigmatising views about people with experience of care and the care system. Often they don't realise that these views are stigmatising as they can come from being from a place of caring and passion, but that's not always the case leading to problematic views and assumptions about people in care being constantly reproduced and repeated. OK spoke of 3 main challenges we have when the public think about care experience: 1) Children and young people with experience of the care system are seen as forever damaged, due to the result of factors such as trauma and neglect. 2) The care system itself is viewed as dysfunctional and unable to provide the loving, nurturing care that children and young people need to thrive. 3) The public considers that children and young people generally end up in the care system due to poor parents and bad decisions. These fears are deeply fatalistic about people who have experiences of the care system, they continue placing people with care experience as other to mainstream society as to blame for the circumstances and their families to blame for coming into contact with the care system.

OK explained people have limited understanding of the care system. Stigma arises from the stories we hear and the stories we tell, in the news and culture and the conversations people have. It's this narrative of Tracy Beaker and the dumping ground.

OK also discussed that It's demonstrated when people talk about someone being an exceptional care leaver, going against all odds. Such as care leavers going to university and college which leads to assumptions about who you are, your capabilities, your hopes and your dreams based on your care experience.

OK stated that he has felt professionals in many different sectors, including educational institutions have not seen his true potential and underrated him due to his experience of care.

OK reflected on the importance of meaningful relationships in combating stigma, providing scaffolding to truly help children and young people thrive. Therefore, to challenge stigma, we need to tell a new story.

OK spoke of the Each and Every Child Toolkit which provides gives eight recommendations for tackling stigma and shifting public attitudes, and drive people to solutions to make real change. He stated the CPG meeting was about finding solutions and finished up by quoting one of the other members of the voices of experience, and James Docherty. "We can talk about what happened, that shouldn't have happened. But what if we talked about what didn't happen? That should have happened?"

PO thanks OK for his strong presentation.

Agenda item 4

Care experienced advisory group present collated ideas from those with lived and living experience of further and higher education.

How can we ensure care experienced students succeed in further and higher education?

Theme 1: Before Further and Higher Education – Sam and Chelbi will read out the asks generated from a previous planning meeting.

PO introduces Chelbi Hilan, a student at University of Glasgow and who set up University of Strathclyde's Care Experienced and Estranged Student's Society, and Sam Upton, a student at University of Strathclyde and current President of the Care Experienced and Estranged Students Society. CH and SU presented their 4 asks of

what care experienced students need before starting further and higher education.

SU stated all the asks should be standard across educational institutions. All students require a scaffolding of support that is tailored to the individual to support them, to succeed within their studies. And as mentioned earlier, we would like every institution to carry about a review with students, with lived experience of the support services on offer.

The following should be reviewed and solution should be sought if the reviews discovered support is inadequate ensuring a training gap analysis is carried out in order to support the workforce to fulfil their remit and sign posts to students.

What services are available?

Are they the right services?

Do students know about them?

How accessible are they?

Ask 1: Embarking on the journey of further and higher education is an experience that many of us can relate to, and it's a real mixture of emotions. Knowing what support is available to you before you start is crucial in navigating your educational experience, and it sets you up to reach your full potential. Students should hear from a named contact at the point of application, not after they've got their space, and that person should be knowledgeable and proactive in providing advice on all the support that is available to students throughout their time studying, and this support should be tailored and adapted for each student.

CH: Ask 2: For students to be able to thrive within further and higher education, they must have access to safe and secure home. Our homes are fundamental to our good mental health and physical wellbeing, and we want to set all students up with these foundations for their first time studying and to help them focus on their learning and their futures. Providing tailored housing support, including housing funds, for all people with experiences of care is crucial for supporting all of our student community to achieve their goals. All corporate parents, as key parts of the scaffolding and supports our children and young people, should work together to ensure that their newest students have access to support that helps them thrive.

We know that accessing housing support hasn't always been easily accessible to people with lived experience of care. CH shared two good practise examples that provided a housing support tailored to the individual that should be available to all students with care experience attempting to access such support which had a positive impact throughout their studies, as well as a long impact long-term impact on the opportunities their studies will help them to access.

Example 1) Local Authority working in partnership with children's services, after care and education to support a young person with care experience to study within further education. The implementation of continuing care enabled young adult to secure a room within the residential house whilst living in halls of residence during the week which was funded via aftercare.

Example 2) Local Authorities support a young adult with care experience who has a tenancy within one local authority while they're studying within another local authority. They provided financial support, which allowed the student with care experience to reside within halls during the week and at home on weekends and holidays, which provided the scaffolding of support for the student to thrive, successfully gaining their degree.

SU: Ask 3: we all know the care experienced bursary is a vital support that helps all key experienced students access further than higher education. However, not all students with experience of care are aware of the bursary or they may experience difficulties in providing evidence when applying.

And there are additional challenges when a learner transitions between educational institutions, which can really impact on their learning. For example, educational institutions and other services that provide the scaffolding of support for people with experience of care should provide a clear path to access this support.

1) working together to improve the application process, ensuring that important information is shared in a proactive and a timely manner to the student and other organisations.

2) processes across all educational institutions that ensures that information is shared quickly if a learner changes their institution to ensure that their financial bursary support is not interrupted.

CH: Ask 4) The cost-of-living crisis has impacted all of our lives may convey own necessities like food, heat in and travel more expensive. The cost of living is impacting on all of our students including our students with experience of care. We've seen a rise in students with care experience engaging within education since implementation of the bursary. So it's clear that the bursary has and continues to be a crucial element of the scaffolding of support.

For people with care experience to engage with in further and higher education, our call for action is for the bursary award to be reviewed and amended to reflect the increases in the cost of living and showing that all students are able to meet their needs and focus on your studies, not their finances.

PO: Thanks. Opens up floor to questions

Jasmin-Kasaya Pilling stated she was impressed with the points that some of the other members have made. She reflected that it was important to have prior meetings with care experienced advisors or mentor to help form and build on that relationship because it can be quite daunting and starting to study. If you're a student that's care experienced, that's moved away from your local authority, you're new in a town where nobody knows you it is important to create a strong support network and base to look at housing, finance and wellbeing, raising awareness of care experienced bursaries and discretionary funding because a lot of people don't know that they're entitled to it. Also, reducing the process of presenting evidence, JP stated it can be soul destroying having to contact the social work office, having to prove you are who you are and that's reliving your trauma which could take the focus off studying because you're brought back to a place that might not necessarily be in a positive time in your life.

PO thanks JP and asked for a couple more contributions before the panel responds.

Kirsty Louise Hunt thanked the presenters and said there were a lot of important recommendations. KH raised a point regarding the transition from school to further and higher education. She noted she had attended a conference which was on mentally healthy schools perceived an inequality on how information around support is able to be shared with universities, for example through UCAS but that when it comes to colleges, it's much more difficult to even share that information in terms of the transition. KH asked if that was something that was recognised, but something that could be improved?

SU replied to say that is something that has to be improved. She reflected that at present care experienced people have to come forward themselves and tick the box on UCAS to note that they're care experienced which some people may not realise they are or what that means. UCAS then takes that information and pass it on to the universities. SU reflected that she does not know how many people that information got passed on to. SU noted issues of transparency and how the information is presented that might not help a care experienced person in a way that works for them.

CH agreed, and in her experience, young people transitioning to FE/HE had experienced issues around knowing where to access support and knowing that your care experienced. If you have left care at 16, it just adds to that deficit of support,

putting the onus on the student to go out and reach out for support all the time, which can be quite draining. Regarding the mentoring that JP spoke of, CH agreed it was a good idea and where student unions can come in. CH cited a recent example that someone in the care experienced society at the University of Glasgow mentioned they were the only person there with no parents and people are asking people like where's your parents? And they were arriving on their own, immediately made to feel separated. Would be good to have support with moving in and getting used to the place and speaking to other students.

PO thanks CH and introduces Sarah-Jane Morris who shares that she is care experienced and a recently graduated mature student, who has worked with Hub for Success in the strategic space and described herself as a consultant advocate for care experienced students, particularly mature students. SM echoed the issues with evidence and inconsistencies across institutions. With some having a relational approach, with conversations with students. She highlighted that most people are aren't going to pretend that they care experienced so best practice is taking that at face value whereas other institutions ask students provide a letter from a social worker which can be quite problematic, especially if you are a mature student and your records may not be digitised which requires a note from doctor with little understanding of what you are reading which can be traumatising. SM asks that evidence to be relational throughout all of the institutions.

SM also noted that it's great to have a named person contacting every student but due to increasing numbers of care experienced students there's not been an increase in the number of staff in the widening participation teams, which is often just one or two people compared to the large numbers in recruitment within the same institution. SM asked for there to be a focus on getting more resource and more capacity for our institutions for widening participation. So we can get it right for it for each and every student.

PO thanks SM and notes the issues around capacity and resource.

PO welcomes Ryan McShane, a care experienced student at Strathclyde University who questioned the group on the ask to increase the care experienced bursary as it did increase this year to £9000. Did the ask predate this change? Or is it a review. The Government budget needs to be agreed by March and if you apply after this date you need to know what the amount is before applying.

RM also highlighted the UCAS payment for 5 choices and that care experienced students shouldn't have to pay this. Need to review the process so it's more than just ticking a box and provide support on how to write the personal statement as it can

take a number of attempts to get accepted. RM cited a good experience at University of Glasgow widening access team who was their throughout application journey. RM stated support can't just be one person, but needs to be across the board, highlighting the Barnhaus example of wraparound support.

Do we look at the bursary recommendation from a Government point of view, in December when draft budgets are being made in the second week of December?

PO thanks RM and welcomes JM to respond.

Jeanette Miller highlighted that it was her suggestion to include the bursary ask as in her and other care experienced students experiences it wasn't enough to cover the financial costs, especially those with own tenancy with rising energy and food costs.

PO thanks JM and welcomes CH

CH highlighted that the ask to increase the bursary was made after the increase to £9000 and if you think about costs, ie, rent, bills, food, emergency costs etc then it's not that much. CH highlighted that care experienced students don't have mum and dad to ring home to ask for financial support. It's about finding an amount that makes the students feel comfortable. This was based on CH own experience and from hearing from other care experienced students. She asks that the bursary be continually reviewed as costs increase to ensure people aren't living without.

CM responded regarding wording of the bursary and that it would be continually reviewed but CM queried whether it was and reiterated the point that £9000 is not enough and highlighted that some websites haven't been updated to reflect the increase. CM suggests there's still a lot of confusion about what the bursary is and what it's for and asks that we ensure students know what the bursary is and additional funding supports. CM highlighted Herriott Watt University offers emergency financial support and limitations of other hardship schemes at other institutions. Highlighting additional inconsistencies of delivery.

PO thanks CM and highlights issues of practicalities of how things and noted RM point about UCAS and reiterated that the issues raised will be shared with ND and colleagues to ensure we get a response and continue conversations.

PO welcomes MSP Roz McCall to the meeting and opens up floor to Gillian Maxwell from Hub for Success.

GM explains that Hub for Success is a partnership organisation that work with all the colleges and universities in Edinburgh and Lothians. They support care experienced students, they employ student ambassadors to inform their our practise and are

funded by The Promise as part of the support for workforce funding stream. GM reflected that she could speak about the many asks raised in relation to the FE/HE institutions she works with but would take a long time. GM stated that there are a lot of positive moves taking place, ie the named person. GM asks that we be mindful that care experience students often miss out on other financial supports offered through local authorities. The biggest issue is the interplay between the benefits system and the care experienced bursary with students having to choose to be on one or the other. GM asks this be taken forward by the government as a matter of urgency as the number of care experience students accessing FE/HE increases. GM also noted that links in with the housing ask and the issue of tenancies and benefits and to ensure we know who we are asking that of.

PO thanks GM and welcomes CM and JM to share their presentations.

CM asks those in the meeting to be respectful of the speakers and not to speak over when they are presenting. CM then shares a prerecorded video of his experiences of stigma and asks for the various people around the table.

CM spoke of his work as a Consultant at the National Leadership Network and his campaigning work. CM shared that for him, stigma comes in many forms and often people don't realise they are being stigmatising until it's too late. For him it means being cast aside because he comes from a care experienced background, and not being included in certain conversations and not feeling respected. They see him as a label and a barrier. CM shared that he experienced stigma in college when a lecturer told him he wouldn't amount to anything and didn't put in the one to one time to help and support him through the course, making it very difficult to progress. He also cited times at school when teachers would just say he wouldn't make it to further education so don't bother trying. He was able to return to the school and show him how much he had progressed.

CM reflected on other people's experiences of stigma, for example those who are part of the LGBTQ+ community who experienced stigma from multiple angles. The solution he said is to not assume care experienced people aren't going to achieve anything, get to know them and support them, providing awareness and development pathway to work towards goals. CM also shared positive experiences in education, citing his experience of liaising with the Open University's student advisors who are well trained, accessible and knowledgeable. CM asks that small changes be made like checking in or just sending funding information. CM also shared a positive example of support from a key worker at school who made it her mission to keep him in school providing relation support and learning and development which was fundamental to him staying in school.

CM's asks for educators is to support and not put down. With support to study, completing funding applications, and to listen to care experienced students, step back and understand the person and acknowledge that being care experienced they might extra support or they you might need to back off.

CM ask for SAAS is to make the application simpler, have a specific team that look at it and if possible to speed up the process or get in touch if there is a delay. For Government bodies such as Promise Scotland he asks for them to get more involved and consult with them as they did with the Independent Care Review.

For people like the third sector and Education Scotland there needs to be more training from those with lived experienced to ensure people such as teachers have a better understanding of what care experience is. For MSPs and Ministers CM asked them to get better, engage more with the care experienced community, attend CPGs, speak directly to care experienced people to understand what is needed to help care experienced people meet their goals. CM calls for more collaboration in meetings such as this to create some action points.

CM closed by stating that care experienced people don't want to sit in the background and their needs need to be prioritised and CM invited MSPs and Minsters to meet with him and others in Staf office.

PO thanks CM and introduces JM to share her presentation on her experience of college and university.

JM shared statistics on care experience students accessing FE/HE 27.9% of care experience degree graduates were undertaking further full time or part time study. That's compared to 24% other graduates (destinations of leavers in higher education). In 21/22 2% of Scottish entrants to under grad courses were care experienced, up 1.9% from 2021/21 increase of 35 care experience students (5.7% versus 4.4%) Care experienced, degree graduates were more likely to be unemployed than other graduates, 5.5% compared to 4.4%).

JM then went on to share how much education had meant to her over the years, despite the many barriers she faced and has persevered to learn, grow and achieve every step of that journey. She cited times when she wanted to give up, due to issues such as managing workloads whilst moving house and dealing with ongoing health issues.

JM shared her education journey from leaving school in 2015, going to college to do

NC in business level 5 which she completed followed by an NC in social services . JM didn't meet entry requirements to go ahead with HNC but got support from college staff to get an unconditional offer to embark on and then complete the HNC. She was then able to go through clearing to get a second year place at Queen Margaret University. Whilst at university she was allowed to keep her tenancy in East Fife whilst studying in East Lothian which meant she could focus on her studies and not travel. Due to classes moving online and impacting on her mental health, JM deferred a year during which time she focused on volunteering and looking after mental health. She returned in 2022 and successfully graduated from in July 2023 with a Bachelors in Social Science and Public Sociology.

JM then went on to share what the positives of her time at college were which included a named guidance support who helped her with funding applications, additional support for exams and assignments, employability service helped with CV creation, wellbeing service helped when things got overwhelming. Positives of university included good support network of staff and lecturers, the effective learning service helped with essay writing and proofing, study skills tutor wellbeing tutor who helped break down questions wellbeing tutor who did regular check ins to see how they were doing which was especially helpful when experiencing family bereavements. JM also shared she was grateful to have had support from Marie Todd, Natalie Don, Karen Adam and Nicol Sturgeon and her care sister Shumela who have all supported JM to keep going and not give up. At University JM also got support from onsite counselling, and a named person from widening participation. JM also helped to set up Career and Cares a peer support network for care experienced, estranged and young carers which looks at overcoming barriers and make things better. Through this JM has made good friendships and support networks.

JM then went on to state what could have been improved which included a more tailored wellbeing support for care experienced students at both uni and college, more understanding of challenges CEYP face, ensure are trauma informed and aware of corporate parenting responsibilities. University support has been inconsistent with a stop start approach.

JM's final slide shared Woody's asks (JM's kitten) which included extending the care experienced bursary to masters and PHD level which feels like a cliff edge approach there aren't enough funding options to progress, better support for after graduation to find employment and next steps.

PO thanks JM for her thought provoking presentation and noted that whilst progress

is being made there are still challenges for the MSPs to look at. PO noted we all have a role to make things right and continue on journey of improvement and listening.

PO then welcomes comment from Pamela Duncan-Glancy. PD thanks everyone for their powerful contributions. PO asks how can we make the changes asked happen? PD stated as a disabled person she related to the point about completing the UCAS form; selecting a box and then having to promote yourself in a personal statement. It can lead to an identity crisis where you've got to play to your worst experience to get the benefits and support but then also convince the employer/recruiter that you're ok and worth employing.

On the point of information and data sharing, PD is keen to explore more around what it is that colleges aren't able to do, that unis can do and look at data sharing more generally and overcome the need for people to have to constantly share and project manage their lives and the time it takes up. She acknowledged the asks around finance and in particular would like to explore the interplay between social security and the bursary. As Shadow Secretary for Education PO as Party Spokesperson for Social Security, they could come together to discuss further and asks for further information to be shared so they can do so.

PD finished by noting there were lots of 'could haves' throughout the meeting when we should think about the various touch points, the state, education institutions etc and are we doing enough at every point, are we doing everything we possibly can She wants those present to know the MSPs in the room are listening.

PO thanks PD and introduces Natalie Don, Minister for Children, Young People and Keeping the Promise.

ND thanks the presenters for sharing their stories. She starts by stating care experienced people are a priority for her and the Government, of continuing to listen to the voices of lived experience, throughout journey and doesn't end here. She assured the group she would attend as many CPGs as possible as well as meeting in a more informal setting to allow a more natural conversation and get into a bit more detail.

ND asked CM to expand on his point about not being listened to as much as they had been previously as listening to those with lived experience is a priority.

ND also noted the need for societal buy in to the Promise so they know what it is

which requires a huge amount of work to achieve and in doing so will address issues around stigma and improve understanding.

ND noted the importance of language in terms of how we speak about people with care experience, we're really important in terms of stigma which needs extra thought from Government.

ND also acknowledged the point about inconsistencies of packages of support being offered across different institutions, which SM confirmed for ND, and will look at how to bring this together.

ND noted she wasn't clear on how corporate parents are being lined together to connect and share best practice. ND will look into. ND pointed out some quick fixes such as websites having up to date bursary information.

ND closed by stating she and her officials have a long list of items to look into, considering and work on.

PO thanks ND and asks presenters to respond.

CM responded to point about his voice not being heard. Some organisations like Staf make it their mission to have lived experiences voices heard but others not so much so. CM local MSP is not responsive. Have heard lots of things before, Paul has stuck by as has another MSP. When Independent Care Review was happening felt heard, now not being listened to. Feel like Ministers aren't making the effort. CM will happily meet up with ND.

JM responded with question for ND, how can we raise public awareness of the Promise and get people alongside care experienced people?

ND responded by saying education is key, raising awareness of what care experience is, tying in with work around tackling poverty and poverty stigma and through educational systems settings. It won't happen overnight, but we need to work towards it/ People need a better understanding of it if we are ever going to truly overcome barriers. ND note that 'keeping the promise' that can sound like a hash tag but she reiterated that it's important and the government are committed to get to where we need to be by 2023. ND acknowledged that some people say the Government have not gone far enough, and although there has been good progress, but the Government needs to do more as a collective unit, do things differently, across different portfolios which should help the message and progress filter through

to the public.

PO thanks ND and notes the offer from ND to continue conversation which was accepted.

PO welcomes GM to speak. GM reflected on OK point on the importance of language and be mindful about how we're talking about care experience. In her experience people do not listen to negatives, but to the positives. GM shared that she has many examples from the Hub for Success where good practise is happening due to corporate parenting legislation and the responsibilities that have been put on further and higher education. GM asked if it was the minister's jobs to know the details of all those things, but invited ND and others present to learn more about some of those nuances that are being discussed and implemented. We need to celebrate the good practise that is going on and promoting that. GM asks Care Experienced Coordinated Support Plans in Education which should be in place for every care experienced young people be in place. GM notes that this is not currently happening and is vital to supporting them into higher education.

GM also notes the financial asks are coming at a time when cuts are being made by the Scottish Funding Council and that is restricting the ability to put in place the supports that are being asked for, which are essential to make sure that the educational journey is smooth. Widening participation teams are underfunded and under resourced and have to be a priority from the Scottish Government moving forward. GM final point is for the Scottish Government and SFC to work on making the outcome agreements clearer to raise the bar for what they expect from care experienced students which will lead to increases in numbers applying and therefore the supports will be in place from start to finish.

PO thanks GM and welcomes Chloe Dobson from Who Cares? Scotland.

CD thanks and refers to CM's positive experience of the OU. CD points out that OU studies are ideal due to their flexible nature but notes that the care experienced bursary is not available to OU students at degree level as it's classed as part-time study. There is a clear disconnect as the OU is a great option for care experienced students but the financial support isn't there. It also raises the point that the bursary is not available for part-time study overall which needs to be looked at as the flexibility can be really beneficial and there should be parity with the full time option. Due to additional responsibilities, care experienced students often can't commit to full time learning so we should look to extend the bursary to part-time students on a pro-rate basis.

CD referred to JM's presentation where we need to be more aspirational for our care, experienced students and extend the bursary to post-graduate studies. CD knows of care experienced students who have successfully applied for a post grad course but had to pull out when realised there was no financial support. This needs to be looked at alongside funding support for part-time study.

PO thanks CD and notes some may need to leave as meeting end point reached. Notes ND has left but her officials still present. PO welcomes Gillian Hamilton from Education Scotland.

GH, interim chief executive of Education Scotland thanks presenters for powerful contributions. JH noted the importance of hearing directly from those with lived experience which is something she has committed to do in her role. JH offered to continue conversation about what changes should and could feel like and acknowledged important role ES plays in knowledge building of the profession and her staff. JH noted she was struck by talk of teachers and lecturers who had made a difference but also where the system had let them know.

RM noted disappointment that ND and PD had left, his question was in relation to Programme for Government and Humza's commitment to a Promise sub committee and who would chair it, it wasn't to be ND would it be the First Minister?

RM also reflected on OK point about language and asks that instead of 'Keeping' the promise we should really say 'delivering' because it's ok to 'keep going'. Can ND change her title to Delivering the Promise.

PO suggested we add this to the letter to ND following the meeting and more imminently he could raise in the chamber as a written or oral question.

PO invites Moira Greentree from Why Not? Trust to speak.

MG notes in the area of best practice and reducing stigma, as a workforce don't share best practice enough or allow best practise to continue. A lot of work has been done through the Promise and others which are short term funded pilots which suggest change but that needs to fit into existing systems, not looking at changing the system itself to allow pilot to happen. There is a lot of good work being replicated in different parts of the country because there's not the opportunities to share that practise. MG also notes that different organisations are often competing for funding with no collaboration. If could work together we could achieve much more, create a scaffolding.

MG also notes the impact that listening to voice and the price that voice can have. There is a risk of complacency when asking people to share their stories to justify their opinion when they can have an opinion but they don't need to tell their story.

PO thanks MG and notes it has given him, and others in the room, a lot to think about. Do we actually hear and what do we do with that information? PO rounds up the meeting highlighting the rich and constructive discussions. He asks how can we collate the information to present to the Minister and how do those in the room make those links and connections to make things better.

PO highlights main points from the meeting

- Care experienced bursary – how is it working and how can it work better, where people are being missed and issues around cliff edges.
- Access and about support when you're at and college and university
- Application process support and costs .
- Experience of being a student and the challenges and barriers that exist.
- CPG will write to the Minister for Children, Young People and Keeping the Promise with a shared minute, shared understanding of what we've discussed tonight and then then get a response which we can take to the next meeting, looking at progress being made and where do we still have questions?

JD closes by saying PO confirms next meeting Wednesday 21st February, 6pm – 8pm which will look at supports during and after further and higher education. JD thanks those who have shared their voices and those who have listened. She reflected on the importance of relationships within many of the asks raised and the absence of them. If someone had a champion to support them throughout then some services may not be needed or in different ways. We can take forward many of the asks but relationships are vital.

PO closes by asking people to share ideas or offer to present at the next meeting to send the interest to Staf (info@staf.scot) and suggests the next meeting should take place as a hybrid model again due success of this meeting.

Ends.

