



Our Voice, Our Community, Our Future

Who Cares? Scotland Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027



**WHO
CARES?**
SCOTLAND

EQUALITY | RESPECT | LOVE

**'the best thing is people
to support you and you
make nice friendships. I
have met loads of
inspirational people. If I
didn't have Who Cares? I
wouldn't have met the
people I know today.'
(*Person we support*)**



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Welcome to our new strategic plan

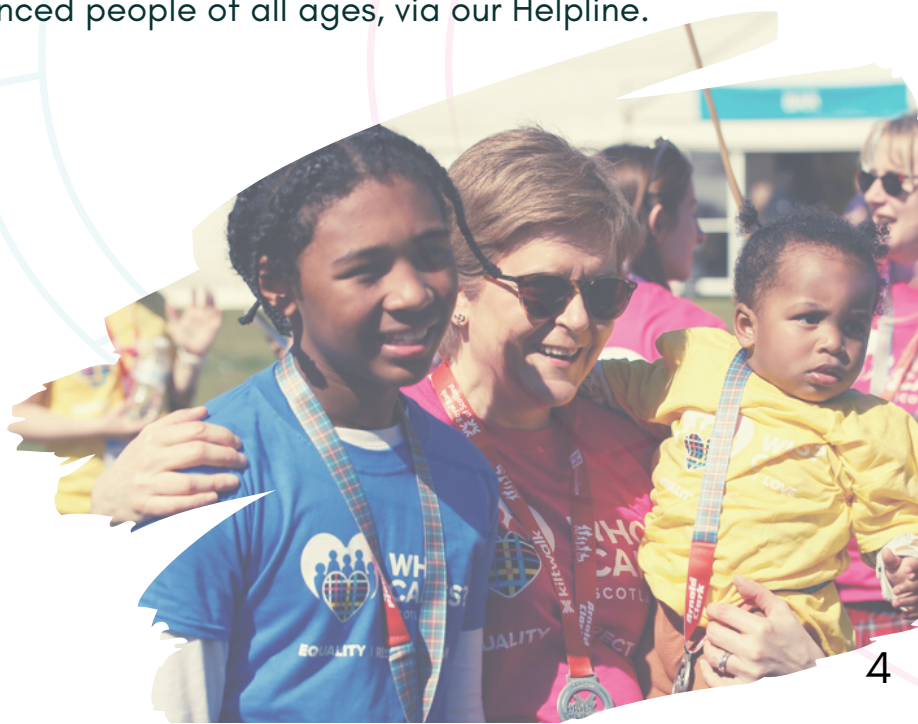
Every person in Scotland should grow up feeling equal, loved and respected, throughout their lives. Who Cares? Scotland wants to see a world where this is the reality for all Care Experienced people.

The term 'Care Experienced' refers to anyone who has been or is currently in care. This care may have been provided in many different settings, including: living with a relative who is not your mum or dad (known as kinship care); looked after at home with the help of social work; living in a residential home or school; living with foster carers, living in secure accommodation, and experience of adoption.

Who Cares? Scotland is the national membership organisation for all Care Experienced people. For over 40 years, we've held relationships with Care Experienced people across Scotland, working alongside them to make sure their voices are heard.

As a provider of Independent Advocacy, we ensure that Care Experienced people are listened to when decisions are taken about their lives, and through this, that their rights are upheld. Our advocacy provision is structurally, financially and psychologically separate from statutory organisations and service providers, meaning we can listen and represent Care Experienced people without judgement, prejudice or professional bias.

We are therefore uniquely placed to understand the issues impacting people who experience care across the country. As we embark on our new strategic plan, we have more than 3,700 Care Experienced members of all ages from every local authority in Scotland, and in the last four years our advocacy workers have dealt with over 22,000 individual issues which have been raised by almost 4,000 Care Experienced people. We have also extended our advocacy offer to Care Experienced people of all ages, via our Helpline.



Our learning, from what we've heard over five decades, tells us that Care Experienced people, from birth to old age, continue to have their rights diluted, infringed, or disregarded altogether. Our commitment to recording and evidencing what we hear from Care Experienced people, reinforces the [limited national data](#) available, which shows that Care Experienced people currently do not have the same life outcomes as their non-Care Experienced peers.

The inequality faced by Care Experienced people is why our core purpose is to support, inform and campaign alongside and on behalf of them, for a better world. We have a powerful track record of influencing change. We successfully supported Care Experienced people to secure the First Minister's commitment to a root and branch review of care in 2016, leading to the Independent Care Review of 2017-2020. We welcome the conclusion of that review, The Promise, and whilst we acknowledge that the road to true transformational change is long, we are ready to play our part.



We are fully committed to supporting Scotland to deliver the transformational change which has been promised to all Care Experienced people. We will use our data and evidence to highlight progress and barriers, and we will support Care Experienced people to campaign for change.

This strategic plan outlines the ambitious work we will undertake for the next five years, in pursuit of our vision. In devising this strategy, we have listened carefully to the views of our members, those we support, other Care Experienced people, our staff, and external partners and organisations. We are proud to be launching a plan that has been comprehensively co-produced, and is reflective of those we are here to serve.

Throughout the lifetime of the plan, we will demonstrate our values through all our behaviours and approaches: These are as follows:

Independent: We are uniquely placed to hold equal partnerships with Care Experienced people, while not providing any care services or having any power over decision-making. Those we support work with us voluntarily, and they decide how their views are shared.



Community-focused: We work with diverse communities across Scotland to help them understand care experience, to advance equality, love and respect.

Integrity: We so strongly believe in our vision that we have the courage to challenge and be challenged in order to create meaningful change.

Evidence-led: The voice, needs and rights of Care Experienced people are at the heart of what we do. Through advocacy, participation and influencing work, our data helps us create the change our members want to see within care.

Rights-based: We empower Care Experienced people to exercise their lifelong rights in a trauma-responsive way. We hold those responsible for upholding their rights, and the commitments outlined in the Promise, accountable via individual and collective advocacy, evidence, training and education.

Collaborative: We will recognise those who can add value to our work, and seek out likeminded individuals and organisations, with whom we can work in partnership, to further advance our cause.

Transparent: We will communicate openly and honestly with all those who are engaged with our work, including our staff, volunteers, members, those we support and our commissioners, funders and partners. We will continue to promote a culture that is reflective, open to ongoing learning, and provides a feedback loop to all those we are working with and for.



Our communities are stronger when everyone feels supported. We are ready to be bold, and to strive towards that brighter future for Care Experienced people and for everyone.

We will not stop until every Care Experienced person in Scotland has equality, respect and love which endures for a lifetime.

We are ready to deliver: **Our Voice. Our Community. Our Future.**

Ryan McCuaig
Chair

Louise Hunter
Chief Executive



ACHIEVEMENTS

2018 - 2022

We supported over 6,000 Care Experienced people during this period.

RIGHTS

21k+ ADVOCACY
ISSUES RAISED BY OVER
3,800 PEOPLE

REPRESENTED CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE AT OVER
2,000
CHILDREN'S HEARINGS

INFLUENCING

1,800+
CHAMPIONS
BOARD MEETINGS

6,000+
PROFESSIONALS
TRAINED

BELONGING

MEMBERSHIP MORE
THAN DOUBLED TO
3,700+

5,000+
ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

PIONEERING

1,000+
COMMUNITY FUNDRAISERS

NUMBER OF ACTIVE
VOLUNTEERS DOUBLED TO
64

Theory of Change

Who Cares? Scotland is Scotland's national organisation for Care Experienced people. Everything we do links together to help us achieve our overarching mission.



Strategic Priorities

Following detailed consultation with Care Experienced people, our members, those we support and external partners, we have identified five strategic priorities which must be delivered, if we are to achieve a lifetime of equality, respect and love.

These are as follows:

Upholding Rights

Aim

We will support all Care Experienced people to know, understand and protect their rights.

What will we do?

- We will continue to deliver high quality, relationship-based Independent Advocacy across Scotland, working in local communities and through our lifelong advocacy helpline.
- We will support Care Experienced people to understand their rights and the right to Independent Advocacy.
- We will continue to campaign for the legal right and provision of Independent Advocacy for Care Experienced people beyond the age of 26, as set out in The Promise.
- We will work in partnership to ensure that Care Experienced children and adults have access to Independent Advocacy, at all stages of their experience of care and beyond, as set out in The Promise.
- We will maximise opportunities to promote equality and diversity through our advocacy offer, ensuring non-judgemental practice at all times, a culturally sensitive service, and ease of access for those with protected characteristics.
- We will work alongside local authorities, the Scottish Government, care providers and other agencies, to recognise the value of relationship-based Independent Advocacy.
- We will use data and evidence, taking a collective advocacy approach, to highlight barriers to Care Experienced people having their rights upheld.



'Everyone deserves their rights to be protected all through life.'
(Person we support)

'It must be Independent Advocacy – if it's attached to the council, their carers, etc., children and young people won't use or trust it.'
(Person we support)

'I'm old now in terms of care experience, I think yeah, I want to still be included. Your parents don't just say you're too old, goodbye, it doesn't happen to other people why should it happen to me? You don't stop experiencing care, trauma, financial support, parenting in general. It would be nice to know if I fall on hard times, or I feel lonely, then that door is open.'
(Person we support)

'I should be able to go to the highest court in the land if my rights are not being upheld. I deserve the same choices as everyone else.'
(Person we support)

Aim

We will positively influence decision makers with the ability to impact on the lives of Care Experienced people, using our robust evidence database and through gathering the views of Care Experienced people.

What will we do?

- We will create space for Care Experienced people to influence decision makers locally and nationally.
- We will evolve and grow a national network of lived experienced representatives to be embedded in regions across Scotland, with key links to participation and belonging groups for Care Experienced people.
- Our influencing and campaigning work will be evidence-based, driven by the experiences and opinions of Care Experienced people.
- We will work with elected members across Scotland to demonstrate the value of Independent Advocacy and connection activities for Care Experienced people.
- We will support Corporate Parents and other key decision makers to uphold the rights of Care Experienced people, through provision of high-quality training and education opportunities and resources.
- We will promote equality in all our influencing activity, by ensuring we are maximising opportunities to listen to the views of a diverse cross-section of those we support.



'The young people we work with are encouraged to get involved with Who Cares, as this gives them a voice and a platform that they may otherwise not have or feel they have.'

(External stakeholder)

'We shouldn't have to fight for support we are entitled to.'

(Person we support)

'All society's decisions must be open to challenge and scrutiny.'

(Person we support)

'Continue to amplify the voice of Care Experienced people about the effective implementation (or not) of the Promise.'

(Person we support)



Creating Connection



Aim

We will bring Care Experienced people together for meaningful connection opportunities and to feel a strong sense of belonging.

What will we do?

- We will provide meaningful connection and belonging activities in every local authority area in Scotland.
- We will create a national network of shared lived experience, which represents the diverse population which makes up the care community.
- We will work in partnership with others to make this a collective objective for communities throughout Scotland.
- We will promote equality and diversity through our offer, ensuring we create fully inclusive opportunities and have equality of access to our events.
- We will develop and grow meaningful, impactful and exciting volunteer opportunities across Scotland, to maximise the impact and reach of our connection activities.
- We will work with Care Experienced people and volunteers, to shape and design the opportunities we offer for connection and belonging.



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'They go out of their way to make sure that we have the nice stuff and experiences everyone deserves, and most other people have. It doesn't matter who you're speaking to, what their job title is or what area they work in, they talk to you, they listen to you and want to help. And they don't let you down like most people.'
(Person we support)

'[Who Cares? Scotland] has given me another family.'
(Person we support)

'After that first camp, I realised something else. I realised that people do care and that I will always have people to talk to no matter what. After camp, I felt different, I felt better about who I was, and I felt able to share that part of my identity. I owned it.'
(Person we support)

'The first word I think of is community. It gives us a network. The other word is family. You're part of something bigger.'
(Person we support)

Providing Opportunities

Aim

We will provide an inclusive, consistent and appealing membership offer for Care Experienced people across Scotland, which promotes a positive sense of care identity and builds an engaged movement of people.

What will we do?

- We will build a membership programme with clear benefits and opportunities for Care Experienced people to enjoy.
- We will promote equality and diversity through our membership activity, ensuring that our offer is accessible to all and is fully inclusive of those with protected characteristics.
- We will create a compelling national events programme for members of all ages, with the power to create a positive sense of care identity.
- We will ensure that members voices, and the voices of those we support, is the filter through which we will shape our work across Scotland.



'In [the] North we push for advocacy for those 'on the fringes' of care too. Lifelong should mean pre-care too.'

(Person we support)

'They [third sector organisations] put a lot of work into building relationships and really listening and understanding the situation.'

(Person we support)

'[positive impact] - identification of being Care Experienced and being part of a group which have similar albeit different experiences. Helping me understand why it's been so hard and taken so long to achieve my goal. That I can be a voice/person to help/support others who have had similar experiences. Helping them believe anything is achievable with the determination, will and support from others.'

(Person we support)

'Advocacy in its purest form is so powerful and empowering for children and young people. Using a rights-based approach is so powerful. There are a lot of opportunities.'

(Person we support)



Creating Communities that Care



Aim

We will create more inclusive and caring communities for Care Experienced people to live in, by educating Scotland about care through awareness raising activity in local communities and in the media.

What will we do?

- We will create the conditions for Care Experienced children and young people to be nurtured and supported in their schools and communities across Scotland, through local training and awareness-raising activities. Through this, we will build stronger communities for everyone.
- We will maximise the impact of our public education activity by working with community partners and other third sector organisations.
- We will transform public attitudes to care by delivering a public education campaign, shaped by the voices of Care Experienced people.
- We will tackle the stigma which exists due to media stereotypes and depictions of Care Experienced people as damaged, by using reframing techniques in all our messaging about the care system and Care Experienced people. We will lead the sector in our exemplary use of these techniques to develop acceptance, understanding and support in homes, schools, communities and workplaces throughout Scotland.
- We will promote equality and diversity across our brand, through all our content and imagery, to ensure it fully reflects the rich and varied make-up of the Care Experienced population.



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'It's making a massive difference to the wellbeing of Care Experienced pupils and even the ones who aren't, having them understand that everybody's got a different life, everybody's got different families and always you have to be kind and understanding'
(External stakeholder)

'Public education should be a focus, if the general public really understood how it feels to be 11 or 12 and to experience care and create that empathy/understanding from communities.'
(Person we support)

'In an ideal world everybody would be treated the same and we would all be equal. People wouldn't be judged for their differences. If you are Care Experienced you don't get treated the same as other kids... this makes life really hard for people who are already struggling.'
(Person we support)

A solid foundation

Our Voice, Our Community, Our Future is a bold and ambitious plan, to deliver positive change for Care Experienced people across Scotland. If we are to be successful, we will require a solid foundation on which to build upon over the next five years. This foundation incorporates all our resources including our people, our business infrastructure and a sustainable funding model.



Over the next five years, the following principles will underpin our work:

Our people: We will be an employer of choice, recruiting the best and most committed staff and volunteers who share our vision and values, to make up our workforce. We will invest in their development, to ensure they are highly skilled, knowledgeable and informed in all aspects of their roles. We will strive to ensure that our workforce reflects the diversity of the society we live in, and the individuals we work with. We recognise the valuable knowledge and insight that lived experience brings to our workforce and we will continue to champion this.

Our infrastructure: We will provide an efficient and sustainable working environment for our staff and volunteers, through comprehensive finance and business processes. These processes will operate within a robust governance framework which will create a culture of transparency and accountability within the organisation. We will develop an IT strategy which ensures our staff have the right tools required to carry out their roles and which will support our evidence-based approach to our influencing work. We will seek to reduce our carbon footprint, by taking sustainable approaches which limit our impact on the environment.

Funding: We will develop a diverse, secure and sustainable funding base which allows us to be innovative and respond to the needs of Care Experienced people, in new and creative ways. We will increase our fundraised income by developing compelling fundraising campaigns, supported by powerful messaging, all of which is informed by the voices of those we support. We will increase our supporter base, develop new partnerships with likeminded organisations, and develop new propositions to enhance our income portfolio. All our income generation activity will be rooted in the sound evidence of our work, which will attract further investment from individuals, grant-making bodies, corporate organisations and philanthropists, with an interest in improving the lives of Care Experienced people. In so doing, we will develop a solid foundation of sustainable funding, which allows us to retain our independent status as the national membership organisation for Care Experienced people.



Finally, Care Experienced voice will remain at the heart of our organisation – in our workforce and among our volunteers; in our board and embedded in our governance processes. We will continue to champion Care Experienced voice and ensure the opportunities to participate in all aspects of our organisation are meaningful and truly valued.

Measuring our Success

This strategy will guide all the work we do at Who Cares? Scotland, with our values and priorities running through all our plans, across every directorate and team. The environment we operate within is constantly evolving, so we need to make sure we are progressing towards ***a lifetime of equality, respect and love for Care Experienced people.***

We will adopt a sensitive, proportionate, trauma-responsive approach to measuring impact under each strategic priority, and will use evidence from multiple sources. The experiences and views of those we support will be most important and will be supplemented by feedback from other key people around them. We will also make good use of our databases to collate important numerical data on reach and to ensure Who Cares? Scotland provides opportunities and services in an inclusive manner which respects diversity.

Our annual reports will provide an update on our progress towards achieving our five strategic priorities.

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To get in touch with
Who Cares? Scotland
please email –
hello@whocaresscotland.org

If you are a Care Experienced
person in need of support,
contact our Helpline on –
0330 107 7540
or email
help@whocaresscotland.org

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Who Cares? Scotland
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