



**National Discussion on Education**  
**Who Cares? Scotland evidence submission**  
December 2022

**Introduction**

Who Cares? Scotland is Scotland's only national independent membership organisation for Care Experienced<sup>1</sup> people. Our mission is to secure a lifetime of equality, respect, and love for Care Experienced people in Scotland and we currently have over 3,600 members. At the heart of Who Cares? Scotland's work are 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. 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 secure positive change.

Who Cares? Scotland has worked with, and supported, Care Experienced learners from early years right through to postgraduate study and as a result, has gained an insight into where the learner journey is significantly challenging for this group. Previously contributing to the education reform consultation, with representation on the Practitioners and Stakeholders Advisory Group and having a direct consultation meeting with Prof. Muir, it was disheartening to see no consideration given to Care Experienced people's education within Putting Learners at the Centre. Whilst we recognise that the reform process was specifically looking at reforming SQA and removing the inspection function from Education Scotland, it was also stated that the process wanted to hear about the changes that are necessary to enhance the experiences and outcomes of current and future learners. The National Discussion on Education has clearly outlined that its focus is answering:

**What kind of education, skills, knowledge and support do you think young people will need 20 years from now?**

Therefore, it is imperative that there is a focus on those who experience a significant attainment gap and often have their right to education infringed. As [The Promise](#) states: 'Schools in Scotland must be ambitious for care experienced children and ensure they have all they need to thrive, recognising that they may experience difficulties associated with their life story.' (p. 71).

We have prepared evidence to inform the National Discussion on Education, and this is coming from the perspective of what we know about:

- The full learner journey for Care Experienced people
- The changes that are necessary to enhance the experiences and outcomes of current and future learners

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<sup>1</sup> The term Care Experienced refers to anyone who has been or is currently in care or from a looked-after background at any stage in their life, no matter how short, including adopted children. This care may have been provided in a one of many different settings such as in residential care, foster care, kinship care, or through being looked-after at home with social work involvement.



# WHO CARES? SCOTLAND

- The impact of a whole school approach to make positive change for Care Experienced people

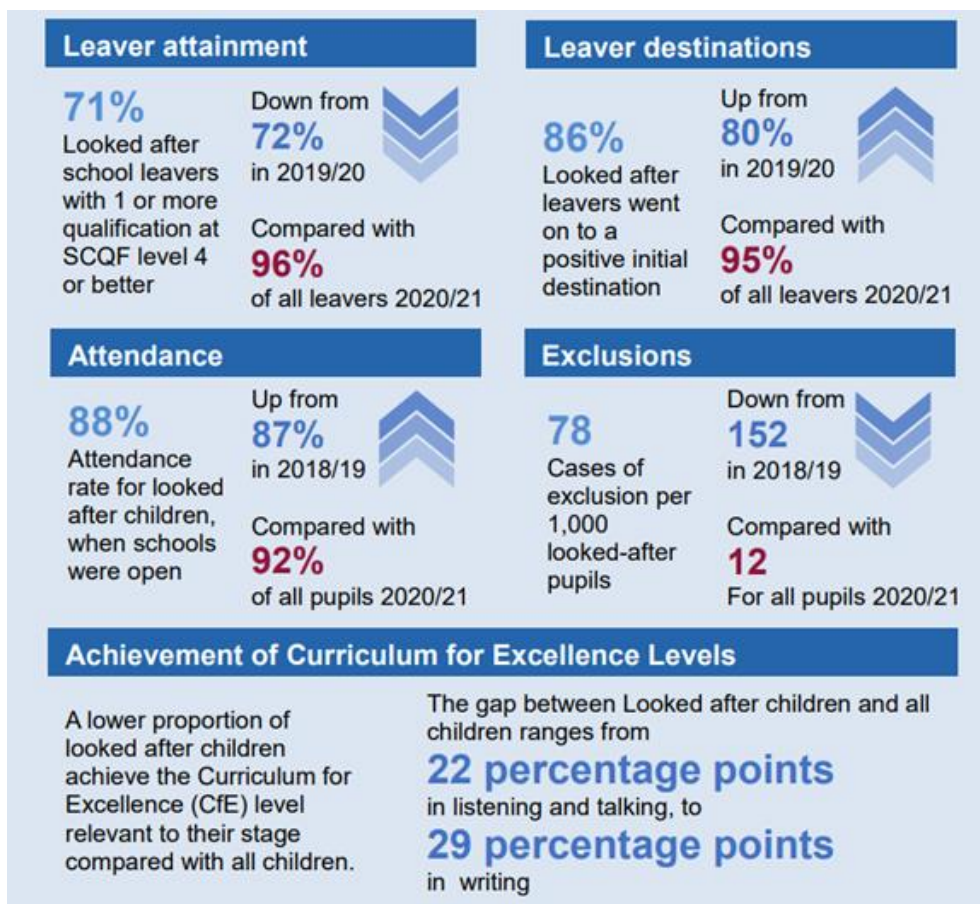
## The Vision

“Schools in Scotland must be ambitious for care experienced children and ensure they have all they need to thrive, recognising that they may experience difficulties associated with their life story.”

Care Experience is truly taken into consideration during the National Discussion and is given the time, space and thought that is deserved. The Blueprint for Fairness from the Commission on Widening Access and its consideration of Care Experience could be looked to as an example – it was known that Care Experience would be explored as part of their work but through the meaningful engagement with Care Experienced people it was recognised that specific recommendations were required for this group. The National Discussion now has the opportunity to make a real difference to the schooling and progression of Care Experienced learners by listening to them, taking the context in which they learn into consideration, embedding a human rights based approach and ensuring the right to education is truly realised.

## Evidence of inequality in education for Care Experienced children

Scottish Government: [Education outcomes for looked after children 2020/21](#)





# WHO CARES? SCOTLAND

## Key Themes

WC?S believes that the following must be considered in order to make positive change for Care Experienced people through education:

- All teachers should know and understand their Care Experienced pupils which can be achieved through embedding the [Communities that Care](#) programme across Scotland
- Embedding a child and human rights-based approach across education
- The specific context in which Care Experienced learners go through schooling and college
- The importance of robust meaningful relationships between teacher and pupil/student in a Care Experienced person's life
- In reforming two Corporate Parenting bodies (SQA and Education Scotland) – we need to be clear on where Corporate Parenting duties will lie in the new bodies that are formed

## Communities that Care

The [Communities that Care](#) model that WC?S has developed to work in, and with, schools is an example of how we can achieve [A Good Childhood](#) and in particular, the right to education:

*“Care experienced children and young people will receive all they need to thrive at school. There will be no barriers to their engagement with education and schools will know and cherish their care experienced pupils.”*

*School improvement plans will value and recognise the needs of their care experienced pupils with robust tracking of attendance and attainment so that support can be given early.*

*Care experienced young people will be actively participating in all subjects and extracurricular activities in schools.*

*The formal and informal exclusion of care experienced children from education will end.*

*Schools will support and ensure care experienced young people go on to genuinely positive destinations, such as further education or employment.”*

The Change Programme One, A Good Childhood, The Right to Education

The Communities that Care whole-school approach creates 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. The programme is replicable and sustainable, and it is our vision that this will be implemented in all Scottish school communities. Through this, we will build stronger communities for everyone.

The programme involves robust training and support to all members of school staff (including teaching, support, clerical, janitorial and catering staff) to increase their knowledge and understanding of care experience, upskill them in supports available to Care Experienced families and to increase empathy towards Care Experienced pupils.

At the heart of the whole-school approach are the “Learning About Care Experience” PSE Curriculum Resource Packs which contain lessons for children and young people to learn about Care Experience in a developmentally appropriate way from early years through to S6. The packs were co-produced



by Who Cares? Scotland staff and volunteers, Care Experienced people of all ages and teachers from a range of Scottish local authorities.

The programme also involves engagement with parents, carers and the wider school community to ensure an ethos of empathy, support and understanding for everyone.

“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.” Teacher

### Teacher Training

“Schools in Scotland must ensure that pupils and parents understand ‘care experience’ as part of their communities and as another type of family. Teachers and school staff must be supported to be aware of the issues facing care experienced pupils so they can best engage and encourage.”

The Promise (p.72)

Who Cares? Scotland believes that to ensure the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence are realised, consideration must be given to what is missing from the curriculum. Through WC?S work in schools it has been recognised that there is little understanding of care and Care Experienced people – both by pupils and teachers.

This has also been reflected in the interactions we have had when invited to provide inputs to student teachers, who made it clear how impactful they found the sessions and how surprised they were that learning on Care Experience and Corporate Parenting was not a mandatory part of teacher training. WC?S believes that learning about relationships, trauma informed principals of engaging learners and statutory Corporate Parenting responsibilities should be a fundamental part of teacher training and their ongoing continued professional development.

### Child and Human Rights-Based Approach

“In order to ensure that care experienced children are fully included and supported, schools in Scotland must have a clear understanding of the rights of children and how to uphold them.” The Promise (p.71)

The education sector must look at how existing duties to Care Experienced people, alongside child and human rights approaches can be embedded. There is an ambition to join up Communities that Care work in schools with the Rights Respecting School Programmes across Scotland as part of UNCRC implementation and a human rights-based approach. The National Discussion should consider the [PANEL principles](#) to adhere to a rights-based approach as well as ensure:

- Transparency for learners in decisions made about curriculum/other education choices
- There are clear ways to seek redress – complaints/feedback of views on new education set-up/assessments
- There is pro-active work from schools and new education bodies to understand student experiences, particularly those in the most disadvantaged situations



## WHO CARES? SCOTLAND

- Existing equalities duties are to be considered in the National Discussion. Although not a protected characteristic, care experience should still be covered by wider equalities duties that public bodies in Scotland must adhere to:

For example, [the Fairer Scotland Duty](#), set out in Part 1 of the 2010 Equality Act, places a legal responsibility on particular public bodies in Scotland to actively consider ('pay due regard' to) how they can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions. Many Care Experienced children and young people will be covered by that duty – and should be a particular group considered when assessing this new duty.

### Call to Action

The needs and views of Care Experienced learners should not just be looked at when mistakes are made or negative practice is raised in inspection of education, but should pro-actively be considered when planning, budgeting and making strategic decisions about our education system. This ensures any that the education sector meets public sector equality law, continues to improve on and respect Corporate Parenting duties set out in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and pro-actively embeds a child and human rights-based approach – in preparation for the incorporation of the UNCRC and wider human rights treaties in Scotland.

As Scotland's national organisation for Care Experienced people, Who Cares? Scotland would welcome further conversation about ensuring the needs of Care Experienced learners are central to the future vision for Scottish education. We believe that our Communities that Care whole-school approach provides a unique and innovative solution to ensuring that entire school communities across Scotland are able to understand and respond to the needs of Care Experienced children and young people. In the short-term this will improve educational outcomes for Care Experienced learners and in the longer term this could have transformational impact on the values and attitudes of the next generation.

### Additional Evidence Submitted

1. [Jeanette's learner journey – a case study](#)
2. [Josh's learner journey – a case study](#)
3. [Leanne's learner journey – a case study](#)
4. [Rebecca's learner journey – a case study](#)
5. Communities that Care – project overview (attached, not linked)
6. [Communities that Care – impact report](#)
7. [Supporting Care Experienced people with certification and appeals – SQA](#)

For further information about Who Cares? Scotland's work in education and with the National Discussion on Education please contact:

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