

# CORPORATE PARENTING NEWSLETTER

WHO CARES? SCOTLAND

JUNE 2020

# WE'RE STILL HERE



[www.whocarescotland.org/coronavirus-support](http://www.whocarescotland.org/coronavirus-support)

## Who Cares? Scotland's response to Covid-19

In these deeply challenging times we hope that all our Corporate Parenting partners and friends are staying safe and adapting to the "new normal" that now presents itself. Who Cares? Scotland have put a number of measures in place to continue to support Care Experienced people, and we'd like to update you on them in this newsletter...

### Dedicated Helpline

On Monday 16th March 2020, following the UK Government's advice regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, organisations were asked to allow their staff to work from home "where they possibly could". The following day, Who Cares? Scotland changed its operational model, adopting a new approach to supporting Care Experienced people across advocacy, participation and employment, which included the establishment of a Helpline. This helpline seeks to provide a main point of contact and support for Care Experienced people, recognising that they are particularly vulnerable during this public health crisis and are likely to be disproportionately impacted by the measures in place, with the potential to leave them isolated, anxious and destitute. Jemma from the Training & Education team has written a blog about her role on the helpline which you can read below.

We have compiled an impact report specifically for Corporate Parents that will be distributed along with this newsletter - please take the time to read it carefully to understand the impact this pandemic is having on the Care Experienced people you support.

For more information on the support we are offering Care Experienced people during this time please visit our website [here](#).

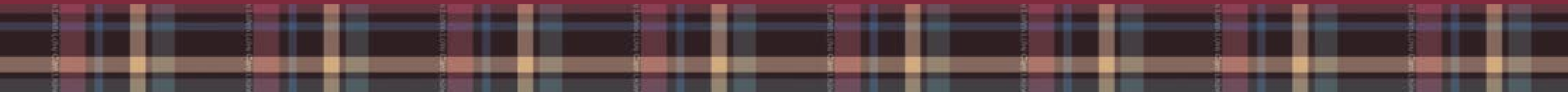


## National Connection Programme

A key aspect of our work is participation: Bringing Care Experienced people together as a community; providing space for them to be the majority in a room, rather than the minority. Naturally, with social distancing measures, our regular schedule of group work, Champions Boards and activist spaces have had to adapt and move online. Staff and volunteers have been wonderfully creative, coming up with all sorts of activities to engage our members - from exercises, cookery classes, to bedtime stories. A particular disappointment for many of our members was the cancellation of our annual Summer Camp. In response to this, we held our first ever Digital Festival, which you can read about further down the newsletter.

## The Training & Education Team

As a team we are used to going out and delivering live, face-to-face training to Corporate Parents and employers, alongside Care Experienced people. Although this model now has to adapt to our current circumstances, we know that ensuring Corporate Parents are fully aware of their duties and responsibilities towards Care Experienced people is more important than ever. We can now offer a version of our live training online through a variety of platforms - please get in touch to discuss this opportunity for your organisation.







# WE'RE STILL DELIVERING TRAINING - FIND US ONLINE!

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic we have been unable to deliver our live, face-to-face training for Corporate Parents and employers and many events that were in the diary have now been postponed.

However, we recognise that now more than ever, Corporate Parents and other supports are proving vital to Care Experienced people, and we are very much still here to support Corporate Parents and employers to best support and champion Care Experienced people.

We are delighted to announce that we can now offer a version of our interactive training sessions online, on a variety of platforms. Please get in touch to discuss the opportunity of fully funded training for your organisation.





# A HELPLINE FOR CARE EXPERIENCED PEOPLE

The Training and Education team's Jemma Kerr shares her experience of working as a First Responder on the Who Cares? Scotland helpline

When I first heard about our new national offer, a Helpline that would be a first point of contact for Care Experienced people out there who couldn't rely on family and friends, I thought, "yes, sign me up". I felt that it would be a purposeful role to take up during the outbreak (whilst still wearing my pyjama bottoms), I thought it would add some much needed structure to my uncertain days and I knew I had skills to offer – listening and talking, mainly.

After years of supporting young people as an independent advocate, I knew there was a need for the helpline. I went through a list in my head of the brilliant people I have relationships with and how government guidance about relying on family and friends for support wouldn't work for them. Care experienced people are living the isolation and the uncertainty of the Coronavirus in the same way as everyone else. What's different for many Care Experienced people, however, is that they were adrift before all of this happened. So it has made staying afloat even harder.

**“ WHAT'S DIFFERENT FOR MANY CARE EXPERIENCED PEOPLE, IS THAT THEY WERE ADRIFT BEFORE ALL OF THIS HAPPENED. SO IT HAS MADE STAYING AFLOAT EVEN HARDER ”**

The helpline is intended to be a first point of contact for Care experienced people who need us. We are not here to replace social work or those with duties and responsibilities to them. We're there for the in-between moments, when people don't know who to turn to or want to talk through whatm options they are considering. That's why if you were to ask me to describe a typical day on the helpline, I couldn't. I've helped with phone top ups; referred people to advocacy; referred young people to services who have a legal duty to support them; applied for funding on behalf of people; referred people who need support with income and work to our brilliant Lifelong Opportunities Team and I've arranged for food parcels to be delivered.

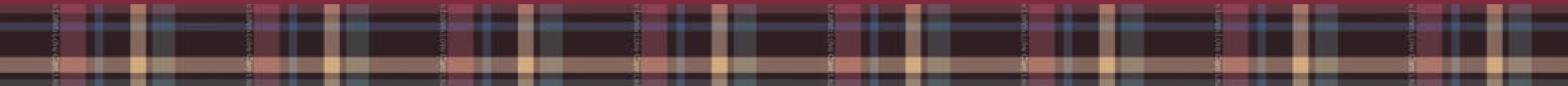
The only certainty is that we are here to take the calls, emails and texts that come in from Care Experienced people, and kinship carers, that need help. No two days are the same. No two calls are the same. I know that there are lots of things that stop people from reaching out. A recurring theme from many of the calls I have received is gas and electricity provision. The Government enforced lockdown has resulted in usage of these increasing, and because of this Care Experienced people are living in fuel poverty.

We've been providing top ups for gas and electricity to ensure that people can heat their home, cook their dinner and be as comfortable as possible during lockdown. I received a call from a young man who lives in his own flat. He had arrears on both his gas and electricity prepaid meters, which meant he had to pay £48 a month to clear his debt before he could even switch something on. Before he called the helpline, he had had no hot water for 3 weeks. I was able to clear his debt just a couple of hours after his initial call and he was so thankful for that. He phoned me to tell me he had water. I cheered and we laughed. It was hard not to think to myself seriously, cheering hot water?! He should never have been without it.

Our strategic vision has never felt more relevant – a lifetime of equality, respect and love. We advocate, we promote rights, we challenge stigma, we trust, we promote collaboration and we hold others to account.

To our Corporate Parenting partners I ask, how can you fully recognise your duties and responsibilities to our Care Experienced community at this time? How can you help support them during this pandemic, and help them to heal and build themselves up afterwards? Proactive and collaborative Corporate Parenting is more vital now than ever, to ensure Care Experienced people do not feel alone, that their needs are met, and they are provided with support and opportunities to thrive. This responsibility lies with all of us.

Love, Jemma



# NATIONAL CONNECTION PROGRAMME: SHARE THE LOVE FESTIVAL!

A key part of our work is bringing Care Experienced people together to connect as a community. Our staff and volunteers work all over Scotland running various clubs, groups and Champions' Boards for our Care Experienced members to come together in a safe space free of judgement. Since March, our regular calendar of participation groups have moved online.

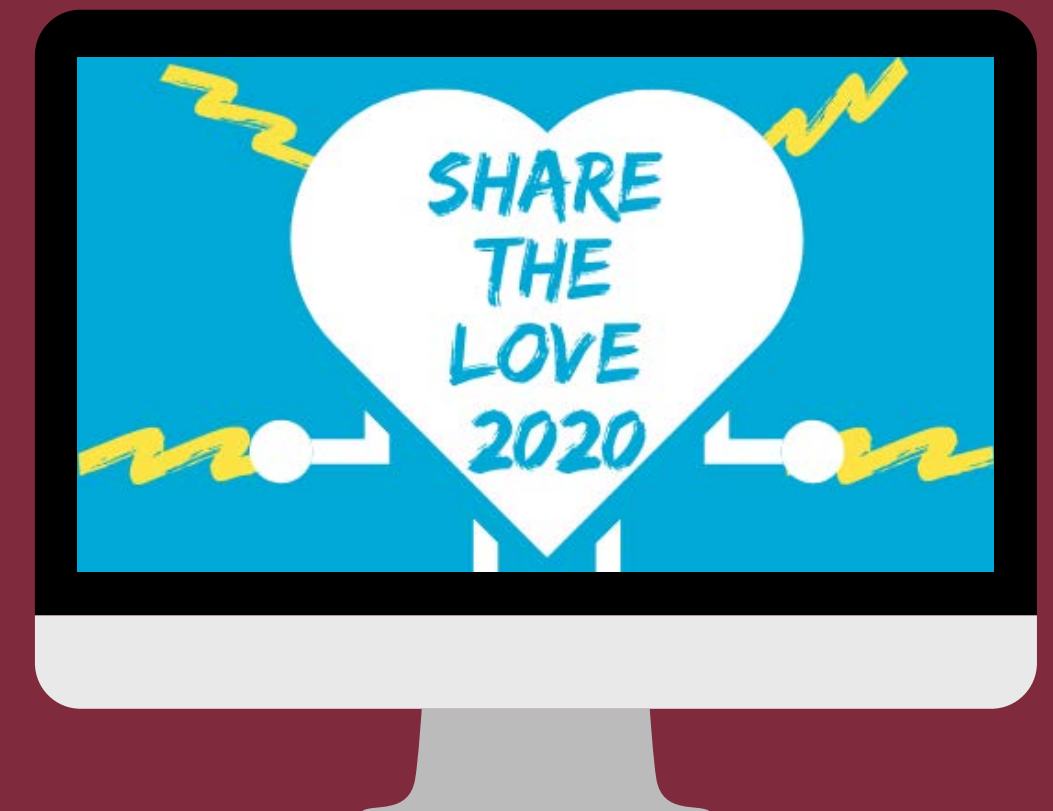
Many Who Cares? Scotland members were left incredibly disappointed when it was announced that our annual Summer Camp and other staples of our annual participation calendar could not go ahead this year. So it was time to get creative and think outside the box.

From the 29th to the 31st of May Who Cares? Scotland hosted Share the Love – the first ever digital festival for Care Experienced people. This was a chance for Care Experienced people to come together virtually to stay connected, learn new skills and to get active.

189 Care Experienced people registered for the festival, which hosted over 60 activities and workshops including yoga, song writing, film screenings, live quizzes, juggling, pet parties, live DJ sets and much more!

“*Share the love was a good way to connect us all who are struggling at these difficult times. The activities that were available distracted us from the outside world and brought a smile to our faces.*”

– WC?S Member





# DO YOU HAVE SOME PROMISING PRACTICE YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE?

We're always keen to hear from Corporate Parents about what they're doing to ensure the best outcomes for Care Experienced people, particularly during the COVID-19 crisis. Does your organisation have a project or policy relating to Corporate Parenting you'd like to shout about? Please get in touch to tell us all about it and we can include you in our next Promising Practice round-up to share with the whole Corporate Parenting community!

Email: **[corporateparenting@whocaresScotland.org](mailto:corporateparenting@whocaresScotland.org)**  
for more information.



SHARE  
YOUR  
STORY



# SEE YOU SOON...



If you'd like to talk to the Training & Education team about anything in this newsletter or to discuss a Corporate Parenting training event for your organisation, please get in touch!



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