

Staying Together and Connected



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The experiences we heard, showed that we are still far away from fully keeping the Promise when it comes to sibling rights.

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**WHO
CARES?**
SCOTLAND

Brothers and Sisters Participation Project

What was the Brothers and Sisters Participation Project?

Between July and December 2022, Who Cares? Scotland (WC?S) were funded by the Scottish Government to work with a small group* of Care Experienced children and young people to ensure their voices were heard by the Scottish Government on sibling rights. This was to help make sure the new law and guidance on siblings rights is being put into practice in real life.

16 Care Experienced people aged 6 - 27 took part**



Through group work, 121's and case studies



What did we find out?

Most of the young people who took part didn't already know about or weren't sure about their sibling rights, but learnt more during this project.



EVERYONE IN SOCIETY!

ALL CARE EXPERIENCED PEOPLE

CARERS

TEACHERS

PANEL MEMBERS

Who needs to know about sibling rights?

SOCIAL WORKERS

GOVERNMENT

LAWYERS

A group from Moray felt that public education for everyone in Scotland was important, to know about and understand both Care Experience generally, as well as specifically the rights of Care Experienced people in relation to sibling rights. This would help to educate and inform people to ensure that rights are being upheld.

*The views in this flyer represent the small group we worked with. We would need to do a bigger piece of work to find out more about all Care Experienced people in Scotland's views on sibling rights.

** Majority aged 6-20 years-old.

We need better culture and attitudes!



SEPARATION

One young person reflected that they had not been able to see their two youngest siblings when they first went into care for around 5 months which was extremely difficult due to their role bringing them up. They described it as like 'losing their own children', and wanted social workers to have a better understanding of how it feels to be separated and the harm that that can cause.

One young person lived in residential care and so was separated from many of their siblings. They used to see their siblings once a month, but now sees some of them just twice a year.

Two siblings were separated when removed from kinship care earlier this year, and lost sibling-like relationships overnight in their home, school and village. They now live 1.5 hours away from these relationships, and there has been no effort from any adults involved to maintain them.

We spoke with a family where the mother and gran hadn't seen one of their children, for 4 years, and the young person we support hadn't seen their sibling for nearly a year.

INCONSISTENCY

"Treat us how you'd want to be treated, or how you'd treat your own child."

FEELING POWERLESS

- "Social work don't have the capacity to accommodate the new changes in legislation - case loads are too high."
- "Process and support should be consistent no matter who your Social Worker is - it shouldn't depend where you are."
- One young person's social worker had laughed at them when sharing their views.
- One young person's social worker hasn't facilitated family time for 6 months.

The experiences we heard showed that we are still far away from fully Keeping the Promise.

Many of the young people hadn't seen their siblings for months, including over 18 months in a few instances. They told us in their words throughout this report of the harmful impact that was having on their lives and sibling relationships, and we know the impact can be lifelong.

Some young people spoke of the only family time they had with their brothers and sisters being through a social work supervised Whatsapp chat. While we are aware of the many challenges to making these rights real in a safe way, there needs to be better culture and attitudes in order to uphold sibling rights.

How can we spread the word about sibling rights?



- Who Cares? Scotland
- A one-page summary for advocacy workers to take to hearings
- Books
- Documentaries
- Adverts on TV
- Social media
- Videos/Vlogs

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Adults need to know the barriers we face. They need to know what we are going through in this present moment and what we are living with.

No one seems to see how badly it affects us.

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How do we make Sibling Rights a reality?

One sibling group discussed that they didn't know about their sibling rights nor what they're entitled to in terms of financial help to realise their rights through legal aid, for example.



Care Experienced people need to know how to access advocacy through social work, and who would provide advocacy for each sibling.

There should be an on-going responsibility for social workers to uphold these rights.

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Whose responsibility is it to contact other siblings?

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Golden Rules

We heard many ideas from the young people and advocates of solutions to making sibling rights real in Scotland:

1.

Care Experienced children and young people, their families and advocacy workers must know about these rights, and know what to do if they are not being upheld.

2.

Knowing about sibling rights should be mandatory for adults supporting Care Experienced children and young people.

3.

Rights must be upheld across every care setting, including secure care and for unaccompanied asylum-seekers and refugees if possible.

4.

Young people need to know how to access advocacy and legal advice.

5.

There should be more ways to hold duty-bearers to account.

6.

The young people didn't want brothers and sisters to be separated into different houses, but felt that if that had to happen they should at least be in the same local authority.

7.

Principles for family time were in-person, fun, choice, normality, privacy and having enough time.



Staying Together and Connected

We expect the Scottish Government to feedback to our young people in 2023 how the views heard are effecting change.

Some of the young people engaged in the project would like to meet with the Minister for Children, Young people and Keeping the Promise to present and discuss their views and hear more about the work being done to make sibling rights real.



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