



**WHO
CARES?**
SCOTLAND

EQUALITY | RESPECT | LOVE



Vision for Kinship Care

Response to the Scottish Government's Vision for
Kinship Care Consultation.

February 2026

www.whocarescotland.org

Who we are

[Who Cares? Scotland](#) is Scotland's only national independent membership organisation for Care Experienced people. Our mission is to secure a lifetime of equality, respect, and love for Care Experienced people in Scotland and we currently have around 2000 members.

At the heart of Who Cares? Scotland's work is 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.

Every year, our advocacy workers support around 1,600 people with around 6,000 individual advocacy issues across all 32 Local Authorities in Scotland. As we take a human rights-based approach to our work, around 10,000 individual rights are logged every year in supporting these issues. We bring Care Experienced people together to connect and shape the world around them. Around 700 unique individuals come together every year to take part in around 800 of our activities 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 to secure positive change.

Summary

Who Cares? Scotland broadly welcomes the National Vision for Kinship Care and Scottish Offer to Kinship Families, and in particular, commitments on independent advocacy, family relationships, financial parity, improved collaboration between services, and increased opportunities for learning and peer support for carers.

However, we are concerned that the proposals lack meaningful commitments for children, young people and families with informal kinship care arrangements. Whilst the policy pledges to ensure it applies to all types of kinship care arrangements, without legislative change on this issue, we do not believe this commitment is strong enough to guarantee support, and particularly financial support, for informal kinship children, young people and carers in the current climate of very stretched resources and services. This risks promising informal kinship families support without any legal enforceability to claim it, and leaving families to continue to fall through the cracks. This feels insufficient to ensure the Promise is kept for all of Scotland's care experienced children, young people and their families, and unfair to informal kinship carers who have been calling for more tangible support for many years.

Who Cares? Scotland is calling for:

- Extension of equal legal rights and entitlements to informal kinship children, young people and carers. This should include:
 - Access to aftercare support for the young person
 - Access to lifelong, relationship-based independent advocacy services
 - Financial support for the carers
 - An inclusive definition of care experience in regulations which includes informal kinship care.
- Adoption of our 'Communities that Care' training project nationally across Scottish schools, as part of the proposed work to raise awareness and understanding of kinship care and care experience within communities.
- A trauma-informed, respectful and person-centred approach to offering short breaks and training to kinship carers.
- Action to reduce delays in kinship care assessments for families.

Response to the consultation questions

1. Does the National Vision for Kinship Care (Section 5) reflect what matters most to kinship families?

Who Cares? Scotland appreciates the vision and believes that this reflects a large portion of what matters most to kinship families that we support. However, we believe that the vision lacks sufficient commitment and meaning for a large portion of kinship families in Scotland, and in particular, those in informal arrangements. Please refer to our answers to questions 2, 3 and 4 for further information.

2. What do you like about it, and what would you change? Are there aspects that feel unclear, unrealistic, or missing?

Who Cares? Scotland appreciates the vision and believe that this reflects a large portion of what matters most to kinship families that we support. However, we believe that the vision lacks sufficient commitment and meaning for a large portion of kinship families in Scotland, and in particular, those in informal arrangements.

Whilst the vision states it will apply to **all** kinship families in Scotland, including those in private arrangements, it does not change legal entitlements or duties under Part 13 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the Kinship Care Assistance (Scotland) Order 2016 or those who are looked after in kinship care.

This means that informal/private kinship families will benefit only from policy support from this vision, and their entitlements will not change. In a cost-of-living crisis, and a time where the public sector is struggling financially, **all** kinship families need support. The potential benefits of policy-only support feel unrealistic, particularly when the public sector is already struggling financially, as local authorities would have no legal duty to offer support to informal kinship carers. We believe that the commitment to changing legal entitlements and duties for informal kinship care families is a large part of the vision that is missing. Please refer to our answer to questions 4 for further information on how the Vision and Scottish Offer of support could be strengthened.

3. Does the Scottish Offer to Kinship Families (Section 6) include the kinds of support that would make the biggest difference for kinship families?

Who Cares? Scotland have broken down each section of the Scottish Offer below to outline key elements which would make the biggest difference for kinship families.

1. Voice

Who Cares? Scotland welcome the commitment in the Voice section of the Scottish Offer to improve access to independent advocacy support through legislation and statutory guidance for children and young people who live in kinship care.

Through our participation work, advocacy evidence, and Lifelong Helpline, we repeatedly hear that Care Experienced individuals are not receiving adequate and sufficient access to advocacy, and are unable to access it at times when they need it most. As outlined in

[The Promise](#) (p. 115), “Care Experienced children and adults must have the right and access to independent advocacy, at all stages of their experience of care and beyond”. At Who Cares? Scotland, we are in a privileged position. We are able to gather evidence on the lives of people with care experience, their outcomes, and whether they receive the support they need to thrive through our advocacy work. Our advocacy data shows us that over the last two years, we supported 443 people living in kinship care with a total of 1,899 issues. Independent advocacy ensures Care Experienced people know their rights and can make informed choices about their lives. Our advocacy workers have supported Care Experienced individuals to raise issues pertaining to their wish to have less/no contact with their parents, siblings, and extended family members:

“[Name] was very clear that she did not want to speak to Mum or see her right now.” - entry to our advocacy database.

Independent advocacy ensures that Care Experienced people are able to express their views and ensure their voice is heard in decisions that impact their care. One kinship carer, whose child attends a Who Cares? Scotland participation group, described Who Cares? Scotland’s independent advocacy as “a lifeline” during a participation event in 2026. Please refer to our [Action on Advocacy campaign](#) for further details on why independent, relationship-based advocacy is vital for Care Experienced people, including those living in kinship care.

Furthermore, as outlined in Who Cares? Scotland’s response to the Scottish Government’s consultation on defining ‘care experience’, we are in support of a broad and inclusive definition of ‘care experience’, which is supported through legislation and guidance. We believe that informal kinship care should be included within this definition. Please refer to [our response](#) to question 4 in this consultation for further information.

2. **Family**

Who Cares? Scotland welcome the commitment in the Family section of the Scottish Offer which states that “Kinship families will be supported to maintain and strengthen relationships with parents, siblings and wider family where it is safe and, in the child’s, best interests”. Our advocacy data tells us that over the past two years, the top advocacy theme we supported those living in kinship care with was relationships. Our advocacy workers supported those living in kinship care to raise issues pertaining to relationships with their parents, siblings, extended family, and a large proportion of these issues related to Care Experienced individuals wishing to have more contact with their family:

“[Name] feels he is not getting enough contact with his mum and wants to see her more because he misses her.” – entry to our advocacy database.

“[Name] would like to see her Granny [Name]. She was not able to see her for a while and has spoken to her on the phone recently. She would like to see her in person.” – entry to our advocacy database.

Furthermore, [The Promise](#) (p. 21) states “Kinship carers must be supported to continue to care for the children they are looking after and this must include, but not be limited to, financial support. Too often, children have been placed with an ‘auntie’ or ‘granny’ or other relation with no ongoing support to manage a complex set of circumstances. Finding a biological relation to place a child with is not enough to ensure that a child grows up in the context of love and kindness. These families are often managing the impact and pain of

the biological parent not being able to care for their children.” The commitment to support Kinship families to maintain and strengthen relationships with family is welcomed by Who Cares? Scotland and we believe this would make a big difference in kinship families’ lives.

3. Care

Who Cares? Scotland welcome the commitment within the Care section of the Scottish Offer to ensure national parity of allowances paid to kinship carers. This was also clear within [The Promise](#). We have heard from kinship carers of Care Experienced people we have supported through advocacy, that kinship carers would like allowances to be equal to those of foster carers.

We also welcome the commitment to extending Aftercare applications to Care Experienced individuals living in kinship care, who were ‘looked after’ but left care before age 16. During a discussion with the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee about Jasmin’s petition (PE1958), Care Experienced people discussed being removed from their Compulsory Supervision Order (CSO) before their 16th birthday, meaning they are not eligible for aftercare support. Care Experienced people tell us that coming off their CSO is viewed as a positive step, e.g. by being able to have more independence, but they are not being made aware of the consequences for ongoing support by coming off of this before they are 16 years old. Some Care Experienced people have been ‘looked after’ for their whole lives so far, but are taken off their CSO a few months before their 16th birthday, therefore have no support after turning 16.

“18 year old was on a CSO and Child Protection Order until just before they turned 16. Allocated a discretionary Through Care Worker. Through Care have said that they weren’t entitled to any financial support/section 29 monies to help furnish their flat. Through Care have said as they were not looked after until after their 16th birthday, they will not support them financially.” - entry to our advocacy database.

“[There is a] loophole of leaving care before 16th birthday then no duty on social work to support through 20s - can lead to social work service predominantly being to get care experienced people back home before their 16th birthday to ensure no ongoing financial commitments. Everything is categories - we are all care experienced.” - Care Experienced person, Who Cares? Scotland’s Summer of Participation, 2023.

Participants also highlighted particular challenges that arose from being in an informal care arrangement, for example when kinship care ends. One participant shared their experience of informal care arrangements resulting in a sense of ‘falling through the cracks’ as no one took responsibility for continuing support.

Although a Care Experienced person may currently have ceased to be formally ‘looked after’ before turning 16 and therefore do not qualify as a ‘Care Leaver’, they may still require support. We believe that extending applications for Aftercare applications to Care Experienced individuals living in kinship care who were ‘looked after’ but left care before age 16 will have a positive impact on their lives, and allow them to benefit from the vital stability and support in which Aftercare offers. However the [policy memorandum](#) states that “guidance in relation to care experience” is not intended to replace existing statutory definitions which apply to those who are Care Experienced or affect their existing legal entitlements (paragraph 78). Whilst we welcome the proposed extension of aftercare in the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Bill, we are concerned that it fails to address the barrier for young people in informal kinship care to access aftercare, and leaves this group still excluded from support. We believe young

people in informal kinship care must also be extended the right to apply for aftercare support and have their needs assessed.

Similarly, we welcome the addition of section A1 to the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Bill on kinship care assistance, requiring local authorities to proactively offer an assessment of needs to kinship families applying or considering applying for a kinship care order, or who have a kinship care order in place. This will ensure that more timely support is provided to families in need. However, we feel this should be available to all kinship families, including private arrangements. Seeking a kinship care order is not necessary or helpful for some families and should not be a process families and children in kinship care need to go through in order to have their asks for support acted on. An assessment of needs should be available and offered to all kinship families. Support would then be provided on an as needed basis and could support families to stay together without a greater need for state intervention in their lives at a later crisis point.

4. People

Who Cares? Scotland welcome the commitments within the People section of the Scottish Offer which outlines further support for kinship carers through access to learning, peer networks, and professional advice. In February 2026, we held a small participation event with kinship carers to ask their views on this consultation. A key theme of their response was that they would really benefit from this further support outlined. However, this should be done in a trauma-informed and respectful way, taking into consideration that many kinship carers may already have experiences of being parents. A needs-based assessment would allow holistic, person-centred support to be offered to kinship families dependent upon their needs. Whilst it is a positive step that kinship carers would move towards the level of support and training offered to adoptive parents and foster carers, there must be recognition of the differences in these types of care. A needs-based assessment would prevent flooding new kinship carers with resources in what may be an overwhelming situation as they navigate the early stages of this journey. Please refer to our answer to question 4 for further information.

Another key theme which emerged from our participation event was the benefit of support and friendship that the kinship carers have gained from each other through their children attending Who Cares? Scotland's participation groups. These opportunities for connection should be available nationally to Kinship Carers for peer support and advice, as they have made a huge difference in the lives of Kinship Carers who have already accessed them. Please refer to our answer to question 5 for further information.

Finally, kinship carers also expressed support of the commitment within the People section of the Scottish Offer, which outlines offering short, child-centred breaks, particularly as they struggle with a lack of family support of childcare options. However, there was some hesitation around this as some kinship carers expressed concern over not knowing who their children would be placed with. Ensuring that this mentorship builds a strong, trusting relationship would be essential to ensure kinship carers feel confident in the experience their children would have during any break. They also suggested that former kinship carers could offer the same to foster carers.

5. Scaffolding

Who Cares? Scotland agree with the statement in the Scaffolding section of the Scottish Offer that to make this offer real, delivery must be underpinned by robust structures, resources, and partnerships. We also welcome the commitment to facilitate sharing of

good practice and innovative ideas between housing and social work professionals to tackle some of the challenges faced by kinship families. At our participation event with kinship carers, multiple families stated they felt “let down” by housing teams in their local authority, feeling like there was a real lack of understanding of their situation. One family described being placed on the priority list for a new home due to overcrowding after becoming kinship carers. After spending 4 years on the list, they reached out to their local housing team, who told them that they were going to have to wait another 6 years.

Who Cares? Scotland has also advocated for Care Experienced people who are part of families which have been prevented from formalising kinship care due to overcrowding. The issues they’ve faced included a lack of bedrooms or siblings facing separation due to rules about sharing of bedrooms at key stages. There must be collaboration between housing and social work teams and other important services across Children’s Services Planning Partnerships, to ensure that kinship families are receiving the right support. This collaboration has the potential to make a huge difference in the lives of kinship families.

6. **KCASS**

Who Cares? Scotland welcome the commitment outlined in the Kinship Advice Service for Scotland (KCASS) section of the Scottish Offer, which would embed this service in Scotland, providing a national route to clear, consistent advice and referrals. Although this section outlines that KCASS is pre-established, we believe that it could benefit from more awareness raising with both kinship families, and the organisations which support them. At our participation event, some kinship families that we spoke to had never heard of the service. One kinship carer stated they would welcome this service, but they have apprehensions due to previous helplines not being helpful. KCASS must be as outlined; an inclusive national advice hub which provides guidance to all kinship carers, both formal and informal, and works collaboratively with local services across Scotland.

4. **What feels most important to you, and is there anything missing?**

As outlined in our response to question 3, there are many positive elements to the Scottish Offer to Kinship Families which will make a big difference in the lives of kinship carers. However, Who Cares? Scotland believe there are key elements missing from this offer.

1. **Voice**

Who Cares? Scotland welcome the commitment within the Voice section of the Scottish Offer to promote positive recognition of kinship care through awareness raising, improving understanding among professionals, including health and education, and the public. Key learning from our advocacy work and [Communities that Care](#) project has been that kinship care is not widely understood. This is felt by those living in kinship care, and by their families and carers.

“A lot of people don’t know what kinship is and now you can tell them. It’s important to learn this at school.” - Kinship carer, [Communities that Care Stakeholder Interview Focus Group Report](#), 2020.

“They [peers] used to always ask questions about like why I stayed with my Nana and they didn’t get what it meant.” - Care Experienced person, [Communities that Care Stakeholder Interview Focus Group Report](#), 2020

Who Cares? Scotland would like to see this commitment strengthened by outlining what awareness raising will take place. In particular, we are calling for a commitment to embed our 'Communities that Care' training project nationally across Scottish schools. Our project has a Whole School Approach that involves educating entire school communities on care experience with the aim of creating more empathic and inclusive communities.

An important element of this work involves teaching school pupils about care experience. Those with direct experience of care highlighted that there is a lack of understanding present within schools which can result in Care Experienced pupils being treated differently by their peers. Both kinship carers and Care Experienced people have experienced positive change in relation to this due to the Communities that Care project's work educating school pupils. Care Experienced people now feel more accepted and included within their schools due to improved attitudes of their non-Care Experienced peers:

"The project has helped being in the school, not everyone knows about what kids go through, it helps other kids to understand." - Kinship Carer, Communities that Care Stakeholder Interview Focus Group Report, 2020.

Another key theme is that many Care Experienced people do not know that they are Care Experienced. This has been particularly true for those who have experience of kinship care. Through learning about care at school, Care Experienced people have had the opportunity to learn more about, and embrace, their care identity:

"Without the project [Communities that Care] I don't think I would know I am Care Experienced." - Care Experienced person, Communities that Care Stakeholder Interview Focus Group Report, 2020.

"See when we were talking in the class, we went through a presentation about kinship care, and see when they asked what we were, and I said 'kinship care', none of them got what it meant, but then see when you came in and spoke about it and you told us about all the different types of care, and told us about other people's stories, I think it was good. I think they learned more about it." - Care Experienced person, Communities that Care Stakeholder Interview Focus Group Report, 2020.

At the end of the training delivered to teachers and other staff across schools in Renfrewshire, participants filled in an online survey regarding their experience of the training. 95% of 1,382 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that attending the training had enhanced their understanding of what life is like for young people in care, and 88% of respondents strongly agreed that attending the session would help them to include and support Care Experienced young people more effectively.

"The whole programme with regards to coming to staff first making sure staff are aware, not just teaching staff but support staff, staff across the establishment, to make them have an understanding that benefits the children and the parents I think that has been vital within the school community." - Head Teacher, Communities that Care Stakeholder Interview Focus Group Report, 2020.

The project has enabled staff within schools to be more aware of which pupils within the school are Care Experienced and to be more alert to recognising when these pupils may need support and understanding. Embedding our Communities that Care project

nationally across schools would help to raise awareness and understanding of kinship care across the education sector in Scotland, and the public.

Who Cares? Scotland also provide 'Care Aware' employer training, which could help raise awareness of care in other organisations. Our training is CPD certified and supports organisations to build and empower a care aware workforce that can confidently engage with, and support, Care Experienced colleagues.

In 2025, we delivered 5 'Care Aware' training sessions to The Kings Trust, with 95% of participants who responded to the survey agreeing that the training enhanced their knowledge of Care Experience, and that it would help them to include and support Care Experienced people more effectively. When asked to what extent did you find the presentation education and informative, one participant fed back:

"It was an eye opener! 40 years working in psychiatry and psychotherapy and I've not been exposed to this."

Who Cares? Scotland believe that our training programmes promote positive recognition of kinship care through awareness raising and improving understanding among professionals and would encourage the Scottish Government to consider embedding these programmes across the workforce that supports Care Experienced people.

2. Family

As outlined in our response to question 3, Who Cares? Scotland welcome the commitments in the Family section of the Scottish Offer to support kinship families to sustain family relationships. However, we believe that this section could be strengthened by ensuring independent, relationship-based advocacy is available to infants, children and young people in formal and informal kinship care placements to amplify their views on family relationships and their care arrangements, and provide additional rights protection.

Who Cares? Scotland welcomes the commitment in the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Bill to place a duty on Ministers to ensure that independent, relationship-based advocacy is available for all Care Experienced people. However we note that the [policy memorandum](#) states that "guidance in relation to care experience" is not intended to replace existing statutory definitions which apply to those who are Care Experienced or affect their existing legal entitlements (paragraph 78). We call for reassurances that leaving the specification of eligibility to future regulations will not limit the right to advocacy to particular care processes, and exclude those from informal kinship care arrangements from being able to access this essential support.

3. Care

Who Cares? Scotland believe that a key element of the Scottish Offer to Kinship Families which is missing, is the commitment to changing legal entitlements and duties for informal kinship care families.

As outlined in the Scottish Government's [Kinship Care Statistics report](#) in 2025, an estimated 12,800 children were in kinship care in 2022, with around two thirds of these being informal kinship care arrangements. This would mean that informal kinship families account for more than half of the kinship families in Scotland, yet they receive significantly less support than formal kinship care families. During our Membership survey in 2024, we asked our members what they thought of our definition of 'care experience', and whether they agreed with it. One of our members fed back:

“I'm happy to see kinship care included, as I believe they face the same struggles as me. With less support from the government.”

Who Cares? Scotland have consistently raised this in our consultation responses to the Scottish Government over the last few years, including the [Definition of Care Experience](#), [Future of Foster Care](#), and [Moving On. The Promise](#) (page 74) also states “Whatever the mode of arrangement, Scotland must ensure that children living in kinship care get the support they need to thrive.”

Care Experienced people in informal kinship care arrangements have described feeling like they are ‘falling through the cracks’ due to their ineligibility for support. This is because informal kinship care is often not recognised as a form of ‘care experience’ by organisations providing support.

For example, the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) require kinship families with private arrangements to have “been [in] contact with the local authority or social work regarding the arrangement to be eligible for support, even if they did not arrange the placement”. This is something which is out of the Care Experienced person’s control, and can result in them losing out on support.

Furthermore, at our participation event with kinship families, informal carers discussed the impact that the lack of support had on them, particularly financial support. One carer described having to rely on charitable grants where possible, as they were not eligible for financial support from their local authority. Another carer stated that if you are not legally entitled to support, it feels like the door is closed on you.

This was also prominent in [The Promise](#) (page 74): “The Care Review has heard from many kinship families about the lack of support they have in caring for children and the fear they sometimes have of asking for help. Kinship families spoke of being fearful of being seen as not being able to cope and if they do ask for help it can feel punitive and they worry about what might happen as a result.” One carer at our event discussed beginning caring for their child when they were a baby, but they had to buy everything themselves and did not receive a baby box. Whilst adoptive parents and foster carers have a lot of preparation and time before they begin formalised care for a child, kinship carers often do not, and are often asked to step-in and support during times of crisis, particularly informal arrangements.

Who Cares? Scotland therefore have concerns about the Scottish Offer's aims to increase support to informal kinship families. We understand that the offer is not about increasing unnecessary statutory interference in private family life, however, we feel it is unrealistic to expect informal kinship families to receive the support they need through the proposed Scottish Offer, when there are no legislative changes taking place. When informal kinship families, and Care Experienced people who live in kinship care, already struggle to access support nationally, the Scottish Offer lacks sufficient commitment and meaning. Informal kinship families can only benefit from policy support, and **the current Scottish Offer is encouraging them to believe that they could receive this support, but it is not legally enforceable**. Without legal changes, there is a lack of commitment to changing the lives of informal kinship families, and they may struggle to believe that this Vision and Offer will change anything for them. Many informal kinship families struggle to access financial support, and there is nothing within the Scottish offer which commits to this changing.

Who Cares? Scotland would encourage the Scottish Government to consider how they can guarantee support will be available for informal Kinship families if they need and choose it, particularly financial support such as Kinship Care Allowance.

4. People

As outlined in our response to question 3, Who Cares? Scotland welcome the commitments in the People section of the Scottish Offer which outline further support for kinship carers through access to learning, peer networks, and professional advice. The kinship carers we spoke to were unsure of what the pilot of foster carers mentoring new kinship carers. Some participants expressed concern over this power imbalance, and instead suggested that previous kinship carers could mentor new carers instead. As outlined in our response to questions 3 and 5 of this consultation, many kinship carers have told us about the benefit of support and friendship they have gained from each other through their children attending Who Cares? Scotland's participation groups. Who Cares? Scotland would encourage the Scottish Government to consider strengthening the commitments within the People section of the Scottish Offer by introducing a national peer mentoring programme, with previous kinship carers mentoring new kinship carers.

5. Scaffolding

Whilst we welcome the commitments within the Scaffolding section of the Scottish Offer, Who Cares? Scotland feel that they lack understanding of the impact that uncollaborative working is having on Care Experienced people living in kinship care, and their families. A lack of collaboration between services is causing a range of challenges to the Care Experienced community in Scotland, particularly when it comes to having to prove eligibility of their care status. For example, our advocacy evidence shows that young people living in kinship care have requested support to gather the necessary proof of being Care Experienced to pass on to their dentist. Delays in gathering this proof leads to issues accessing Care Experienced people's basic needs.

Furthermore, our advocacy evidence shows us that Care Experienced people, and their kinship carers, have experienced communication difficulties with their local social work teams. This is impacting Care Experienced people across Scotland, in both rural communities and cities. In one instance, a Care Experienced person requested advocacy support as their social worker had left their post, but had not provided a proper handover to their new allocated worker, leading to information gaps and delays in kinship assessments taking place. This theme was also prevalent during our participation event with kinship carers, who felt that there is a lack of understanding from social workers about their situation and/or lives.

Support for kinship families is often subject to delays in processes, which is a key advocacy issue that we support with. We have advocated for children and young people in kinship care whose families have been told they will be caring for them temporarily, only for the child to still be waiting on a permanent placement years later. This can lead to huge financial strain, as the arrangements are not formalised by social work, and the family are therefore not eligible to receive support. A vast majority of kinship carers are grandparents, and our advocacy work tells us that many are having to work past retirement age due to the financial strains that delays to kinship processes are having on them. Carers need access to financial support for food, clothing, and activities for their children, and are sometimes having to access charitable grants in order to backfill this gap. Delays to processes can also impact on the education outcomes of children in kinship care too. A young person looked after at home often has significantly less support than a young person looked after and accommodated who has carers to ask for advice and support. This is reflected in the worse [education outcomes](#) between these two groups.

One of the four key pillars of [The Promise](#) is to Keep Families Together. Thousands of children live with relatives in kinship care where loving relationships exist and are able to stay within their wider family and their local community. This is in line with The Promise and saves the council a huge amount financially given the costs of residential or foster placements they would otherwise need to arrange for these children.

Scotland has a strong commitment to end child poverty and closing the attainment gap, however, many of initiatives to achieve this are promoted to parents. As outlined earlier, **financial support to all kinship carers is an essential step to ensure children in care do not grow up in poverty, and that they have the best chance to achieve equal outcomes to their peers.**

Regardless of the incredible work kinship carers do for Scotland's children, they do not receive nearly as much recognition, support and financial support as foster carers. Who Cares? Scotland feels the Scottish Offer is missing a commitment to minimising delays to kinship processes for kinship families, and ensuring they have appropriate support in place in times of delays also.

5. Are there supports you currently struggle to access that should be prioritised nationally?

As outlined in our response to question 4 of this consultation, the main supports we believe should be prioritised are minimising delays to kinship assessments, offering support to informal kinship carers, and encouraging more collaborative working between services that support kinship families.

We also believe that national adoption of our Communities that Care programme across Scottish schools should be prioritised as part of the work to promote positive recognition and understanding of kinship care. Our project has a Whole School Approach that involves educating entire school communities on care experience with the aim of creating more empathic and inclusive communities. At the end of the training delivered to teachers and other staff across schools in Renfrewshire, participants filled in an online survey regarding their experience of the training. 95% of 1,382 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that attending the training had enhanced their understanding of what life is like for young people in care, and 88% of respondents strongly agreed that attending the session would help them to include and support Care Experienced young people more effectively.

"The whole programme with regards to coming to staff first making sure staff are aware, not just teaching staff but support staff, staff across the establishment, to make them have an understanding that benefits the children and the parents I think that has been vital within the school community." - Head Teacher, Communities that Care Stakeholder Interview Focus Group Report, 2020.

We also wanted to highlight a key theme that emerged from our advocacy data, and our participation event with kinship families, which is opportunities for those in kinship care to attend groups. Who Cares? Scotland are Scotland's only national membership organisation for Care Experienced people. Any Care Experienced person can become a member for free, and access a wide range of benefits, including the opportunity to attend belonging and connection events and groups. We bring Care Experienced people together to connect and shape the world around them. Our engagement activities are attended by a wide range of Care Experienced people living in different types of care. Below are some examples of feedback provided to us by Care Experienced people who participate in our connection and belonging offers:

“I met other people like me and felt like I could be myself.”

“I have a deep sense of belonging here and from the very beginning to end of the event I felt so much love, care and inspiration.”

“It's like a family.”

“I don't usually belong and I did feel like I did at this event.”

“It's like an unbreakable bond.”

These quotes highlight a strong sense of belonging and shared identity among the Care Experienced people who participate in our activities, which seems to traverse age, and types of care. As outlined in our [Belonging and Connection Issue Paper](#) published in 2024, we found that 75% of respondents reported feeling lonely occasionally, sometimes, often, or always. We suggested that services providing spaces for connection, befriending, peer support, talking therapy and pet therapy, should be made available and accessible to Care Experienced people of all ages. Providing these opportunities for belonging and connection could be a lifeline for many Care Experienced people.

As outlined in our response to questions 3 and 4 of this consultation, a key theme which emerged from our participation event with kinship carers was the benefit of support and friendship that they have gained from each other through their children attending Who Cares? Scotland's participation groups. These opportunities for connection should be available nationally to kinship carers for peer support and advice, as they have made a huge difference in the lives of kinship carers who have already accessed them. We believe it is vital that opportunities to connect with others exist for those living in kinship care and their families is part of the Scottish Offer, and appropriate funding is given to local government to ensure opportunities like these can exist.

6. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about the vision or offer for kinship care?

Who Cares? Scotland calls for section 5 of the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Bill regarding a duty to publish guidance on care experience to be amended at Stage 3 to require Ministers to publish regulations on care experience instead of guidance. Section 5 should also place a duty on public authorities to have due regard to these regulations. These regulations must include informal kinship care as a recognised type of care experience in order have a stronger influence on future policy developments regarding financial and other supports for young people in informal and formal kinship care, and their carers.

These changes would evidence and help to deliver on the Scottish Government's commitment to keeping families together, improving the support available to all kinship care families, and improving the outcomes of all children and young people in Scotland who cannot live with a parent and are in need of support, regardless of whether their kinship care placement is a formal or informal arrangement.

Should you wish to discuss the contents of this response, please contact:

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