

# Who Cares? Scotland

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## Briefing: Education and Skills Committee – 02/11/2016

### 1000 Voices – thank you

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee for their ongoing support of Scotland's care experienced children and young people. It is thanks to this committee, and its predecessor the Education and Culture Committee, that some of the most important changes in the care system have occurred; care experienced young people expressed that they wanted the opportunity to stay in care longer and they were listened to. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 represents this success.

The Education and Culture Committee openly demonstrated the power of listening to young people and treating them as the experts in their own lives. There is now the opportunity to recreate this on a much larger scale, following the 1000 Voices campaign led by care experienced people. The recent announcement of the 'root and branch' review will allow care experienced children and young people across Scotland to receive much needed attention not only from the Scottish Government and the professionals around them, but also from the general public. We believe this committee has the knowledge, experience and determination to ensure that the review is as bold, ambitious and life changing as Scotland needs it to be.

### Holding children and young people at the centre

It is vital that the independent review holds listening to care experienced children and young people at the centre. The 1000 Voices campaign was driven by care experienced people and they deserve to be afforded status as the **experts** of the care system. Professionals and academics have historically informed and shaped care and protection services for children, young people and families across Scotland. Legislation and policy have also played an influential role, with children and young people at their core. Scotland now has an opportunity to take a different approach and undertake a world leading comprehensive examination and **appreciative review** of care; through the lens of care experienced journeys.

It now must be decided how we will **meaningfully include children and young people** in the review, and how their voices will be involved at every level. The success of the review will depend on ensuring that **care experienced children and young people are robustly supported to unite** with politicians, professionals and the public. The care experienced population will be able to lead us to innovative solutions, however they will need support and encouragement to do so.

### Considering the whole person

Every story has a beginning, middle and end. To understand the whole story, each individual part must be considered and connected to the others. In order to progressively review care, it is vital that each journey is understood from start to finish including **experiences before coming into care, during care and how life exists for care experienced people once they have left care.**

The scale and scope of this independent review is significant and should encompass the developmental journey of children and young people. We believe that instead of confining discussions to processes and systems, **the review should view it through the lived experiences of children, young people and adults.** This method will hear from care experienced people, taking account of their story to date. This might mean that some stories are unfinished, or are still within the system. This is a unique and momentous opportunity to make care better and so it is critical that we are as **ambitious** as possible.

In addition to the care experienced perspective, the review should also engage with the sector itself, including social work, key stakeholders and third sector organisations. It is important to ensure that academics, professionals and caregivers are meaningfully included within the review and vitally, understand and support its objectives. However, to ensure that the review retains its progressive, ambitious and positive edge, **care experienced people should be the driving force from within.**

The care system does not exist in a vacuum. It affects every aspect of our society; from our nurseries to our prisons. We urge the committee to consider the role of the general public within the review and their role following it. **While love cannot be legislated for, an environment in which it exists and thrives can be created.**

We suggest that the areas in the diagram below need to be considered, discussions within these categories will allow reflections on all types of care and at all stages.

## The next steps

We now have the opportunity to ensure that this review works as intended; that it is appreciative, progressive and genuinely engages the care experienced perspective. Scotland must demand innovation, ambition and attention from every individual with a part to play in this review.

We ask the committee to continue leading by example and consider how we ensure the following:

- **Care experienced people are held at the front and centre of the review**
- **Care experienced people of all ages are involved throughout the review**
- **The review considers life before, during and after care**
- **The review is honest about the current system**
- **The review is widely supported and politically neutral**
- **Scotland's communities are involved in and supportive of the review**

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