

MY
MESSAGE
FOR
SCOTLAND

INTRODUCTION



My Message for Scotland is a collection of individual experiences, messages and reflections that survivors of institutional care in Scotland have generously shared with us. During their hearings with the National Confidential Forum, participants either provided these quotes while sharing their testimony or afterwards, by writing their message on a card.

Some people had several messages to convey, others just one. Some messages are brief and to the point, others are more detailed. Without exception, every experience, message and reflection is honest and compelling, evidencing the immense courage shown by every participant who came to the Forum.

It is now incumbent upon us as a nation and as individuals to listen to survivors with compassion, to treat what we hear with respect and dignity, and to hold to account those responsible for ensuring that lessons are learned from the past so that real change happens now and in the future.

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A photograph of a woman with long blonde hair smiling warmly at a young child with short blonde hair. They are sitting at a yellow table in what appears to be a playroom or classroom, with colorful toys and shelves in the background. A teal speech bubble is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing white text.

**Supporting
parents to
look after
children**

Foster parents get paid for this job now, could they not help the parents a bit more? The parents wouldn't be in such stress and have that wee bit extra money. Foster parents get this extra money to look after the child whereas their own mother doesn't. It's easy to look after someone if you've got money, it's more difficult if you don't have money. I wish they could do something there. I dare say there will be families that would resent social workers' help. My experience was that I wanted them away from my children because I was scared of them in case they would take my children away. I remember being in homes and there was always a member of staff that you just hated. If they were on shift your whole day was going to be hell because that person was on. I tried to be the nice person in the home for them. I actually did get my notes, but I can't read very well. I got them and took them home from this social worker gentleman and I was very upset when I went through them. I actually kept some stuff that I didn't like anyone reading, I just said that you're no getting that back but you gave the file back? Very unhappily I gave the file back. I was in a psychiatric hospital at the time and I feel very angry about this, the psychiatrist or whoever I was seeing at the time asked for the files and they returned them back to the rightful place and I was so angry because they were only going to sit in a cupboard and then get burnt when I'm 99 or 100.

I want people to know the impact of institutionalisation. I feel strongly that I ought to have been taken care of in the family home with the necessary support. Had I been left in my family home I would not have been sexually abused. I want to record the importance of providing training for parents on how to parent children with disabilities. I feel my mother was unable to take care of me because of her lack of understanding of my condition and therefore wanted me to be placed in care. I feel that I had no choice in the matter and it was a mistake. Because of this decision I was disadvantaged and not given the same opportunities as my brothers. I wanted to go to a normal school like my brothers but instead was sent to a "special" school. My parents had frequent arguments and I believe it was because of me. Despite being told by doctors that I would be unable to walk or talk, I can now do both and live an independent life. I feel that because my mother believed the doctors, I was removed from the family home and still feel angry about this. I felt misunderstood throughout my life as not only was my condition not properly dealt with, but also my physical health. I also want to reflect how difficult it is to report abuse as I felt powerless and afraid that no one would believe me.

In terms of reception into care, don't undermine and mitigate against the opportunities for attachment, siblings attachments to continue to be fostered, nurtured and developed. Also parents should be supported as best they can on the ground and in the community to make appropriate changes for the children to be returned safely to their care. The parents themselves should be assessed and their needs identified, effect positive change in order to become better parents and help them get their children out of institutions and back into their families of origin. Preparation for life is so important and the lack of it even nowadays, it's not there. There needs to be an emphasis on the emotional welfare of children, of nurturing and encouraging children, not about containing and managing them. They need to be given a sense of free will within the confines of acceptable behaviour but to allow them to stretch themselves and develop belief in themselves and self-confidence. They need to have the fundamentals on board so that they're not fighting to consider whether to go into higher education or wondering whether they will be thought of as stupid because they didn't achieve. It's also vital that the child is not lost, or the profession is pandering to the needs of the institution. In terms of the requirements of the service, we need to have everything functioning right in order to deliver a service. Resources should not be drained, resources need to support the child, the family and the community.

i think there should be early intervention, sort out poverty for families because there are situations that just escalate beyond a point of coming back from safely. there are things we can all do to change things for children and young people, it's the simple things. i think just now poverty, welfare reform, it's pushing people into further depths of vulnerability and it masks so many other things that are going on. i think we have to address that and to support families at that early stage because children belong with their families. just because you're in care it doesn't mean that you aren't loved. i've got a very loving relationship with my mum and we've always maintained that fully. she was always a protective factor but at times she wasn't always protected herself.

A photograph showing a person in a grey hoodie being held by another person's hand. The person in the hoodie has their face partially obscured by the hood and their hand is near their face. The background is bright and out of focus, suggesting an indoor setting with a window. A red speech bubble is overlaid on the image, containing white text.

**When care
is the better
option than
staying with
family**

I wished I had been taken into care. My school teachers and social workers asked me what I wanted to do, do you really want to be doin this? I said aye, this is what I want to be doin, that was my answer. My pals are doin it and that's what I want. I'm no getting any love in the hoose, nobody is showing me any love as a family, a family unit should be everyone gets together and I never had that. My ma and father would be oot the door at half five or six o'clock in the morning, both of them to their work and I wouldn't see them right up until 8pm at night. It wis ma older sister who was feedin us. So they were working all the time and it wasn't a family unit, it was my parents and they loved us but the love wasn't in the hoose when it should have been and that's the way I ken it growing up. If I'm no getting it in the hoose I'll accept it elsewhere, whether it be ma friends' families or just friends in general as in girlfriends and things like that. I was getting it from them and I was like I'm no getting it there so I'm going to go here, I'm going to look elsewhere. I'm going to go to what makes me happy. So what I was doin, the lifestyle I was leading, that was what was making me happy. If someone shows a better way of life accept it, otherwise things will get worse. Never go down the path of taking drugs and alcohol. Nothing goes right until you are shown a better way. Young people need the truth to be spoken to them from a real person standing in front of them.

People who were in care must speak out regardless of their experiences. They must speak out, tell the truth, speak out and someone will believe you. Don't carry it inside yourself because it's destructive and I know there are a lot of people out there who can't speak for themselves and will never ever be able to speak for themselves. They will not be taken seriously because their lives have been totally destroyed. I have been lucky, my life was not destroyed by this. There are some people out there who would take drugs, they drink, and they do whatever. They've got no teeth, they've got no life and no one wants to listen to them and if something was done to help these people there wouldn't be all this money that is spent on the NHS that there is now. Children should be accompanied by an adult or responsible person at all times. As for teachers, they're not all bad. If a child needs a cuddle they should get a cuddle because this distancing yourself is not good for a child especially if you don't know their circumstances. All you have to do is put your hand on their shoulder and a child is reassured, a child needs that. I know this is a day and age of revelations but children need that.

Thank you all for your kindness
my story has never been told after all those
years its amazing how you feel after talking
about it. It choked me for a little while
but it was great to get it off my chest.
I am so pleased things are different nowadays
yours faithfully

i would like people to take responsibility for what happened to me. i want an apology and would like some compensation before it is too late for me. i want to see the time bar lifted as i feel this is unfair. i was effectively silenced all my childhood and could not be expected to tell anyone what was going on as i was terrorised into silence. i would like to go away on a holiday. for me it's a fight for justice as i had no life, i lost all my schooling and childhood. i am angered that justice is not pursued because perpetrators are dead, we are not dead and we had to go through it. i want to ensure that no other children experience anything like i did and came to the national confidential forum for this purpose. my experiences should not be covered up, i was placed in care to be cared for. i am very keen that there is an understanding of how important it is to get the right staff caring for children that homes are inspected and that children today should not experience what happened to me. they put authority into the hands of people with a big belt in their hands and no one came to check on them. children were just left and no one cared.

if you feel you are born in a world you don't fit in, it's because you were born to create a new one. By coming forward and sharing your experiences of childhood abuse we all become part of a future where all the children of Scotland will be safer and go on to live the life we never had.

My guilt seems to be getting worse, a lot of people say I am always so bubbly but they don't realize it's a front, they don't know how angry and guilty I feel. It is the guilt that's killing me and sometimes I wish I wasn't here so I didn't feel the guilt, I just wish I could've done something. I am still hurting and I just want to say sorry to all the wee ones who were in there and let them know how sorry I am that I stood by and let this happen to them. I still feel guilty, everything that's happened to you and everything that's happened to everyone else it's just guilt, guilt, guilt. I just find it hard to accept that people who become nuns and priests and ministers and brothers can do this to children, I've never had so much hatred in my life.

I've said everything about my experiences but if anyone's ever going to send their child to a boarding school they have to explain to the child why they are going. They really need to check it out quite carefully, in fact very, very carefully because I don't think anyone should have to be treated that way. It's very important that there are spot checks of establishments just to make sure that respect has been given and that children are being encouraged. They shouldn't have to go through their life wondering if they are to blame or could they have done better. It's really important that's done.

I WOULD SAY, WHERE IS THE TRUST IN THIS WORLD NOW-A-DAYS WERE SOCIAL WORKER CAN SAY AND WHAT THEY WANT AND NO ONE CAN DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT NOT EVEN A JUDGE WHY ARE THEY ALLOWED TO TAKE CHILDREN AWAY AND THEY DON'T HAVE TO SAY WHY. A JUDGE CAN ASK A SOCIAL WORKER WHY DID YOU TAKE THE KIDS AWAY AND THEY CAN SAY I CAN'T TELL YOU. ? THEY GET AWAY WITH IT

For every Survivor of child abuse it is not just the child that suffers. It is also the family. ~~and~~ Also don't be scared to tell the world or whom you feel necessary because you will be believed however long it takes and Justice will prevail. Never feel you are on your own. As a human being I feel for you even though you don't know who I am.

I am out here and stranger than ever you would be surprised who is around you who is going through the same as you are now or has in the past! If you think that not speaking out and speaking about things will make it go away.. It won't Trust me I am speaking from experience. It may be hard to start with but believe me it will be the best thing you have ever done. You deserve to be heard and ^{the} perpetrators to be brought to Justice.

Children should have a sense that they're still loved, wanted, needed and cared for by somebody somewhere. I think about Christmas, it's coming up to Christmas now. We didn't get any presents. I got one present one year and it was a Robocop VHS video, it was a certificate 18 so I wasn't allowed to watch it. It was like someone had bought a bunch of presents and wrapped them, taken them to local kids' home and said give those to the kids. When I was transferred to England I very quickly tried to get back but I'd crossed the border so nobody wanted to talk to me anymore and I just felt abandoned, I really did. I didn't know what to do, I was almost at the point of looking to go back to my dad, you know, it was that bad. I phoned the home and they said they couldn't help me and to make the best of what I could. I tried social services, none of that was easy in those days, before computers, you know, when you had to find a phone box and have some change and find a number and phone them. Nobody wanted to talk to me anymore and I just felt really abandoned and afraid.

I want people to know how important it is for a child to be shown love and affection and the impact that physical punishment can have on a person's self-confidence. You live in fear all the time, it affected my self-confidence, my inner strength. I want people to know what happens to a child when they are abused. It takes taxpayers money to heal these kinds - some of these kids will never be healed. I am so grateful I am one of the lucky ones. I am not what they said I was - that I was useless and never going to get anyway. I feel that children in care are still worse off - the authorities are not getting it right. It's about time they sat down and listened to those who had been in institutions. I feel that because of the abuse I received while in care and the lack of love and affection received I lost everything (family and the business I built up) and turned to alcohol and drugs. I wanted to draw particular attention to my belief that children are still ending up worse than when they went into care. I feel very strongly the impact of observing the abuse of other children, leaving me in constant fear, affecting my ability to learn and all other aspects of my life. When a child is deprived of love, they have a constant craving for love, and so that then leads to confusion around sex, and unhealthy sexual consequences. The expert is the child who was abused, that is in relation to the need for those in government to recognise the scale and nature of what needs to be done in respect of support services for children who were abused.

A young boy and girl are walking away from the camera on a stone path. The girl, on the right, has her arm around the boy's shoulder. She is wearing a colorful floral tank top and blue jeans. The boy, on the left, is wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt with a white logo on the back and blue sneakers. The path is made of large stone tiles and is bordered by a metal railing on the right and a stone wall on the left.

**Keeping
brothers and
sisters
together**

Children should, wherever possible, be kept together. I believe that the separation of my siblings following being placed in care has been damaging to the cohesiveness of my family and our relationships as time has passed. My experience of care, although not abusive, was like being left to fend for yourself.

AT THREE WEEKS OLD MY TWIN AND I WERE DISCHARGED FROM HOSPITAL TO THE CARE OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD NUNS AND THEN AT THREE MONTHS OLD WE WERE PLACED AT CARDONALD, BECAUSE THE GOOD SHEPHERD CONVENT WAS SHUTTING DOWN. I THEN WAS SEPARATED FROM MY TWIN AT ELEVEN YEARS OF AGE AND DID NOT SEE MY TWIN UNTIL TWELVE YEARS LATER, WHICH WAS VERY TRAUMATIC FOR US BOTH!

I BELIEVE SIBLINGS SHOULD NEVER EVER BE SEPARATED, AS THIS IS THE DNA IDENTITY THEY HAVE OF ONE ANOTHER.

THERE SHOULD BE STRINGENT LAWS AND GUIDELINES FOR PEOPLE LOOKING AFTER CHILDREN TO FOLLOW AND THEY MUST BE ADHERED TO BY HAVING REGULAR CHECKS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES, ALSO, THEIR NEEDS TO BE STAFF FULLY TRAINED FOR EVERY EVENTUALITY BECAUSE EVERY CHILD IS UNIQUE.

SEX EDUCATION SHOULD BE TAUGHT AT AN EARLY AGE. BOYS AND GIRLS SHOULD NOT BE SEGREGATED FROM ONE ANOTHER — IT GIVES THEM MORE OF A FAMILY FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE, IT IS ALSO HEALTHY FOR THEM TO MIX AND WOULD HELP THEM TO FORM A RELATIONSHIP IN LATER LIFE BY NOT LOOKING DOWN AT THE OPPOSITE SEX AS SOMETHING THEY SHOULD KEEP AWAY FROM AS THOUGH THEY ARE BAD / MONSTERS.

WHEN CHILDREN COME OF AGE, THEY HAVE TO LEAVE THEIR SECURE SURROUNDINGS THEY HAVE BEEN FAMILIAR WITH FOR MANY YEARS. SOMETHING MUST BE PUT IN PLACE LIKE STUDENT ACCOMMODATION SELF CONTAINED FLAT WITH AN ADULT ON CALL THAT THEY COULD CALL UPON IF THEY NEED TO, THEY NEED SOMEWHERE THEY CAN COOK, CLEAN AND ENTERTAIN FRIENDS UNTIL THEY'RE MATURE ENOUGH TO HANDLE THE OUTSIDE WORLD. THEY NEED CONTINUED SUPPORT FROM PEOPLE TRAINED IN DEALING WITH ADOLESCENTS

Being away from parents is an awful thing to happen, I had a horrible, horrible childhood. Children should be kept together with their siblings, separating them adds to the misery of being away from parents. It really helped when I was with my siblings. I felt no one in the residential establishments saw me as an individual or cared about my welfare, nutrition, whether I brushed my teeth. There was nae love and care, I was just a wee boy. I felt let down by social workers as I did not feel believed about the abuse I experienced. Children back then were seen and not heard. Getting records of time in care is very helpful as it completes the picture a wee bit. I found finding my way through the legal system was very difficult, it would be helpful to have a go-to person who could make sense of what is happening. I felt that no one had explained why matters were not being proceeded with when I had reported the abuse as an adult. Victims could do with support. I have a real need for justice to be achieved, it eats away at me, I could not bear the idea that the foster carers would die without them being accountable. I don't have the resources to undertake a private prosecution. I also think that stability in education placements is important, I had been to 12 different primary schools, I was bullied and I feel it impacted on my education.

Ma main worry about see the care is like I'd love to tae know who decided tae put us tae 8 because we were still children and it just came to me and I was saying tae HCU about it. Eh, they put us in the boys' hostel all guys and yet ma young brother got put oot o the hostel. He hit another boy wi a bottle, C, ma young brother. Eh, he got put in a home called 34, in 21 and there was a home roond, I think it's [address] where the boys' hostel, roond the corner and wan o the staff frae 3, P1, she went tae work there and see when we were in the boys' hostel we were still kids. When they went on their holiday tae 9 we went wi them and I've never understood why you'd put two children, thirteen and fourteen, in wi all these older guys when there was two homes in 21 we could have been at.

i would say the most evil thing is splitting up siblings. asking the person, not just this is the way it's going to be. how can you decide what's best for the wean if you've not asked the wean. that should be a major thing in care, ask the wean, even at a young age. don't assume they can't make a choice, they can. they know what they've been through they can make a choice at that age. and if a family of three came in, don't split them up, that doesn't help the problems that just creates the problem and it's not fair to do it like that. they're growing up without a mummy or daddy so don't take the brother away or whatever. that means the world to them, it's a person they can remember from home. i think that causes a lot of the problems, the splitting them up. how they can say it holds another child back, that's rubbish. it's just so wrong. thing is back then kids did come forward and they were told to shut up, they were liars. they knew what was going on back then. and i read in the papers about Saville and the BBC and the footballers and all that. i take my hat off to those people, i do, but what will change? do you think it will change? i think it's just a lottery, i think there's a lot more, i think it goes a lot higher than they think it does, everywhere. we felt them back then, but they didn't deal with it back then, it's corrupted, the lot of it. they need to treat every child individually, to be listened to, to be heard. when you have a meeting when you're in care, what do they call it, case conferences, well they should be in the room. not this worker coming out after the meeting and telling you this is how it is. they should be in the room, they should be heard in the room, not just this. the case conference is finished and them coming out and saying this is the way it is. your voice should be the most important one in the meeting.

I am one of five kids that were in care we got split up in the same town. I was the oldest it was very heart-breaking to learn no one had given us a thought of how we felt being kids and no relatives coming to visit us even when we were older. The hard times we went through even then was hard to take in. We are a ~~broken~~ broken as a family still. Today we are broken so please please spare a thought for the kids that are going on our journey or and worse help them to be part of a family and to grow as strong. Adults give them the start we never had make them feel they mean something and worth helping please follow up their lives after they have grown into adults they need to know someone cares about them even finding them jobs or a place to call their own and their ability to survive their broken lives and most of all let them meet up now and then with their siblings. Thank you for taking the time to listen to me as an adult that acts for other kids.



**Children
need to be
listened to
and believed**

Children in care need to be listened to and believed. They ought to have a say in their lives. Wherever they are cared for needs to be properly monitored, no excuses accepted for not seeing and hearing what the children say about what's happening to them. Staff need to be suitable, understand and like children, and to be a happy and cohesive staff group, because children who have only lived in a care setting benefit from living in that atmosphere. Favouritism was a big problem in the institutions, and those who were not a staff favourite missed out or suffered. People need to remember the children don't go home at night like staff, this is their home, this is their whole life, and people must look to the individual needs of each child. Children in care need to feel they matter and belong and to be protected, sometimes from themselves if they have had bad experiences. Their care experience needs to ensure that when they leave care and embark on adulthood, they have been properly prepared and continue to feel supported. They should not just end up on the streets with no means or sense of how to support or care for themselves, and with no one looking out for them. If they have been failed by care systems the damage is long-term, and that ought to be recognised in lifelong provision of/access to support. Lost opportunities, and missed chances for a better childhood, and lost potential for choice in adult life were all big concerns. The system let me down. I told SW I was unhappy, miserable I got no education, no qualifications, no say. My life was just horrible for 18 years. My lack of education has affected me worst of all. You can't blame the care system for everything, but they need to learn and let children have their say, believe them when they say they are miserable. It's also important that staff don't have favourites. I did bend rules to get attention - but I never got any. No one protected me. I was vulnerable and got into really risky situations. Staff should at least know if you are in your bed, and if you're not, report it to the police. This was when I was aged about 14 or 15, I was climbing out of the window to escape my care home, where I was bullied and unhappy in. I climbed out the window and went to nightclubs, etc. I feel as though I could have died, a lot of people in care didn't survive. I'd have been just another child with a sad story. I started out in life as adult, like an alien - no parents, no family, no history and no preparation for life, no support. I didn't have choices or anyone I could turn to (when homeless age 16/17 leaving abusive relationship) I couldn't call up parents, family, and friends and ask for help. I came into care with nothing, I left care with nothing and even now I would have nothing if I left a marriage I don't want to be in.

i believe that children should be cared for and protected from abuse. children should be listened to and respected.

People, young people, should be given more support.

People must be listened to. I deserve trust as well man, trust, I've not had anyone since I was diagnosed HIV in 2009 I've not had one single person.

The care system is an apprenticeship for the criminal justice system and jail. The word of an adult is always taken before that of a child. Policies which are considered therapeutic and acceptable by staff can be abusive (e.g. pin down or time-out restraint).

Children need to have a say.

My experiences led me to believe that normal care home staff should be trained in the same way as secure unit staff so that those in care are treated as an individual. Social workers should listen to the child rather than the parents. If I had been listened to then my life would have been better. I wasn't protected from my father. Its hard for a child to trust an adult and social workers have to build that trust, particularly when the child is scared of their parents. I hated being put back into danger when it should have been obvious to them that I was being harmed. It was very important to me when staff began to believe me.

I hope that someone will get the help I didn't and it is so important to be believed. When children say they have been abused they must be listened to and believed. People shouldn't turn a blind eye even if they believe it might not be true. It is important to investigate further rather than to ignore them. My own daughter was abused and I felt that the support I gave my daughter was what should have been given to me when I reported my abuse. I felt that no one believed me, not even the social worker. This has left me with a very negative attitude towards social workers as I feel I was let down by them over the years. This has left me very angry and with difficulties in trusting anyone, especially men. The abuse I suffered continues to impact on my present life as I have mood swings and anger management problems. I still find it difficult to understand how those in charge of my care allowed the abuse to continue. Although compensated, I feel that the money received can't remedy the abuse I suffered, £6000 - is that what my life is worth? After all these years I want to emphasise the importance of having someone, like a befriender, who a child can talk to, someone who they know will believe them. It's so important to have someone to listen to you, others in my position needed that too. These people should be non-judgmental and possibly someone who had been through care system as well.

LISTEN TO OUR CHILDREN

LOOK FOR SIGNS OF LOW MOOD
& ASK WHAT'S GOING ON

" BE OUR KIDS VOICES "

We should never allow this to happen again
Why didn't we listen to the children?
Why did we allow this to happen?

my message would always be LISTEN TO THE KIDS
EARN THEIR TRUST and TAKE IT WE BIT AT A TIME
The kids will learn you are there to help them
Don't try to do too much in a short time once
you realise you have their trust don't look
back they will be grateful

LISTEN TO THE CHILDREN AND
BELIEVE WHAT THEY ARE SAYING
BECAUSE WHEN A CHILD WANTS
TO TELL SOMETHING IT'S NOT LIES
IT'S SOMETHING THAT'S BEEN DONE
TO THEM OR SOMETHING THEY HAVE
SEEN. JUST DON'T DISMISS THEM AS
TELLING TALES.

LISTEN TO THE CHILDREN! PLEASE
PROTECT THE CHILDREN! PLEASE
LOVE THE CHILDREN! PLEASE
NEVER LET THE ABUSE OF
CHILDREN GO UNPUNISHED
REMEMBER THE FORGOTTEN CHILDREN

GIVE kids a say
on their FUTURE

Children should be listened to but this did not happen when I tried to talk about my abuse. Even when there were a number of children saying the same thing we were not believed. There should be good investigations when children say something has happened. I feel very strongly that the right sort of people should be employed in child care. When children come out of care they need some emotional support possibly counselling to help them adjust and deal with their time in care.

Being 'seen and not heard' as it always used to be, isn't acceptable any more.
Let us be seen, let us be heard, we do matter.



**Being
supported
to speak
out**

I want to highlight the need for those in authority to listen to children who say they have been abused and to believe them. I am still struggling to understand why the things that happened to me had been allowed to take place while he was in care where he was meant to be safe and protected. I want to understand why no one intervened when I was physically abused and why a known sex offender was allowed to work with children so soon after he was paroled. Had this been avoided, I would not have been sexually abused. I was young and too afraid to tell anyone at the time. I felt powerless to stop offenders and lived in fear. I needed support, someone to speak to. I had no social worker after the one assigned to him went on leave - so I felt I had to deal with the situation alone when I was only 14-years-old. I felt unable to tell the head of the institution as he was not supportive and frequently made fun of me. He had a habit of going out of his way to wind me up and if I reacted to this I would be placed in detention - a room with no heating or toilet. I coped with the situation by withdrawing and trying to keep a low profile but given my vulnerability - my abusers knew that I had no relationship with my family and no visitors, so I was an easy target for abuse. After I left care I was not prepared for independent living - I did not know how to get housing, benefits or a job and this had an impact on the way my life turned out. There was a pattern of abuse following me, why? What did I do or say to attract abuse? I still can't understand why no one intervened when I was being abused in care - I feel that I still need answers.

I think, what I'm trying to say with this is if caring is seen and felt then even a criminally active hurting soul can be made to want to be worthy. When care is lackadaisical base instinct can undo good caring work and if this is so, social workers need to be able and willing to show they care. Just because one is 18 should not mean just dump the problem. Better results would come from some form of after care and housing for those deemed worthy and knowing that is possible might not 'after care' make children in care try to be worthy. Ask for help because if they are so busy they don't see it happening or if it is out of sight you are never going to get any help. You've got to have the nerve, I was going to say the bollocks but, you've got to have the nerve to say to someone I am being bullied. They want me to be as villainous as them and I want to stay honest. Care, care enough. You can't be cared for unless you let people know you are in trouble. I never did. I just let people do it to me.

I FEEL CHILDREN NEED TO BE LISTENED TO SOCIAL WORKERS NEED REASSURANCE NO HARM WILL COME TO THEM. AS KIDS GET SCARED

Children in care should have frequent visits from professionals, in a confidential space, to listen to their views and experiences away from carers. I was not able to express my own abuse as a result of being questioned in front of my carer. The questions should be framed in a way which allows disclosures to be made. Positive experiences in care during my early years set me up for life and buffered the later impact of abusive experiences in foster care.

tell someone.

Don't take the blame
or carry the shame
Stand up and be counted.
It's not your shame
it's theirs.

"I'll never know what it feels like
to be loved as a child."

From my experience I offer the following suggestions.

- In a situation of child care I feel there should be the following arrangements.
- 1) An advocate or representative to hear what is going wrong in a child care situation.
 - 2) Outside monitoring so that a closed system, which may be harmful, is allowed to be inspected and if necessary corrected.

Authorities should thoroughly investigate serious incidents like what I observed in the institution. Abusers should be called to account to prevent them harming more children. I made a "promise" to achieve justice for a child I believe was killed in the school.

There have been many times when I have reflected whether I should have spoken out about the social worker who behaved inappropriately towards me throughout my time at school. But I remain of the opinion that this would not have been possible. Locally he was a highly-regarded professional while I was just a schoolgirl. But I have some gratitude that he had set things in motion to get me out of a highly-stressful situation at home. The move away from home had been a positive one and I worried about jeopardising this and perhaps being moved away from my home area. Although I hated his behaviour (inappropriate touching and holding) I knew he had been the architect of improving my life. The main reason for telling this story now is that there may be others who have had a similar or worse experience of the abuser. I had been able to protect myself but there may be others out there who hadn't been able to do that. If this is so then I hope that my story would give some credence to them.

A close-up photograph of a heavily worn, brown teddy bear lying on a light-colored concrete floor. The bear's fur is matted and frayed, particularly around the eyes and nose, where the underlying fabric is visible. A red speech bubble with a white border is overlaid on the left side of the bear, containing white text. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

**Being
damaged by
neglect and
abuse in
care**

Don't forget THAT care experiences cling to young people for life. even if it's only a few months, THOSE feelings + memories stay. please be mindful of the import of your relationships with young people... it could BE THE Difference Between Happiness or not. Relationships matter.

Children should be valued and listened to. When a child tells of abuse they should be believed and professionals should build the kind of relationships with children that allow them to be able to disclose abuse, not just check in on a superficial level. Children should not ever be returned to an abusive environment and professionals have a duty to ensure this does not happen. When a child discloses abuse, everything possible should be done to ensure they feel believed and to keep them safe from further abuse and harm.

i can never forgive my mother for putting us into care and starting a new life for herself. what we endured was barbaric and cruel. it has affected my whole life, even though i'm happy now i'll never forget what happened to me. it still hurts today.

I think, what I'm trying to say with this is if caring is seen and felt then even a criminally active hurting soul can be made to want to be worthy. When care is lackadaisical base instinct can undo good caring work and if this is so, social workers need to be able and willing to show they care. Just because one is 18 should not mean just dump the problem. Better results would come from some form of after care and housing for those deemed worthy and knowing that is possible might not after care make children in care try to be worthy. Ask for help because if they are so busy they don't see it happening or if it is out of sight you are never going to get any help. You've got to have the nerve, I was going to say the bollocks but, you've got to have the nerve to say to someone I am being bullied. They want me to be as villainous as them and I want to stay honest. Care, care enough. You can't be cared for unless you let people know you are in trouble. I never did. I just let people do it to me.

Children deserve to be heard and believed. There is a need to look beyond authority/religion to appreciate the nature and existence of institutional child abuse.

Authorities should thoroughly investigate serious incidents like what I observed in the institution. Abusers should be called to account to prevent them harming more children. I made a "promise" to achieve justice for a child I believe was killed in the school.

I want to record the physical abuse (regular brutal restraint by staff) I suffered in two institutions and the damage that the practice of restraints within institutions can cause to a child. I also want to record my "dehumanising experiences" and to highlight the need for children to be treated as though they matter. People can make you behave differently because of the way they treat you. I was described as a difficult child - always angry, but I now realise that I am not a cold and angry person, I reacted in that way as a child because of the severe physical restraints I had to endure. I felt that the only way I could get some control was to fight back - so I spat at the staff and kicked them as hard as I could to hurt them like the way they were hurting me. I knew that no one would come to my rescue because nobody cared. I felt that she was not allowed to behave like a "normal" child and was restrained for doing ordinary things like colouring my hair, and using lipstick and mascara. I felt I was not treated as a human being. As an adult, when I tried to access my documents from my time in care I was originally told that they were lost - I felt that this was a lie as I eventually got access to them. I felt that they lied to prevent me from seeing how badly I was treated. I was horrified to read about the way I was described, my files were filled with fantasy. They portrayed my behaviour as "attention-seeking behaviour". In one of the institutions I was restrained 30 times in 30 days and was sedated by force. I was a small child weighing less than seven stones and was restrained by an obese man who crushed her arms to the ground with such force I felt that every bone in my body was breaking.

I suffered sexual abuse but could not complain. No one would listen to me. Staff would not believe me. When someone goes up and says he did something to me they've got to listen. There were also too many male staff in the school.

I want to highlight the impact of the abuse on my life. I felt I was taken advantage off by a priest who was there to care for me and protect me. Instead, I was subjected to violent physical and sexual abuse. I feel angry that I was treated in this way yet there is no justice for me. Because I was small in build, a loner and vulnerable, the priest picked me - showed me love and then continued to abuse me. This had a profound impact on my life as I became an alcoholic and drug abuser and although I tried to address these, I lapse. I have been unable to form relationships and for the short periods when I have managed to form relationships, they ended tragically. I have had periods of homelessness and attempted suicide three times. Im still feeling suicidal. Im feeling let down, Im feeling insulted, Im feeling misused. I feel it is a massive cover up. Its disgusting the way victims of abuse are treated in Scotland. I have been campaigning to have my case investigated and feels let down by the judicial system. I believes that my reporting of the abuse by Father X has led to a current court proceeding where several staff members have been arrested yet I will not be called to give evidence as my abuser is dead. I feel strongly that the Scottish Government ought to address the time bar issue and ensure that justice has been done for all those, including me, who have been historically abused. I regularly raise my concerns with the police and media but feels that no one cares. I have threatened to kill himself if the police continue to do nothing. I am extremely depressed and feel that something bad happens to everyone I come into contact with. I was told during therapy that I was very damaged. I have tried several times to change but I continue to relapse.

I want to reflect the importance of having someone who a child can trust and talk to in a safe environment, and in confidence, if they are being abused. I also feel that those working with vulnerable children ought to have background checks to see if they have the appropriate skills for working with children in care. Many who were there when I was in care were not really interested in child care. They were routinely told by the priests and nuns that they were doing "God's work, you (the children) are God's work." I believe that there is a pattern between religion and institutional care. I went into the institution at the age of 6 months and recall experiences from the age of one until I left at five and a half years of age. I am still haunted by these memories. Not a night goes by without me dreaming about it, thinking about it, you don't treat children like that. I felt that because I was punished all the time I found it hard to understand what I did that was bad, nothing you did seemed to be right. I could not tell right from wrong. I was too young to understand what was going on but saw children being beaten all the time and I lived in fear. You can't learn when you live in fear. It was as though they were waiting to catch us doing something wrong. I felt I was being punished because I was a bad boy, no child deserves guilt for any reason. I feel that because of the violence I suffered, I became violent but I am glad that I did not turn out like them, I have children and take good care of them. I hope that by coming to the Forum it will help other children, no child deserves to go to bed crying, starving and sore.

Why has it taken until now for Scotland to accept children were given away through orphanages? Why does no one appear to know some of us were () trafficked through and given away to people? Police in my case were involved and are threatened me and covering it up. Why has the Scots Government ignored this till now, or the Scotland Office in London?

A VICTIM OF SEVERE
CHILD ABUSE.

THE NCF HAVE HELPED AND
BEFRIENDED ME, AND MOST
IMPORTANTLY SHOWED ME COMPASSION
AND LISTENED TO MY STORY

you cannae change the past, we can only sort today and tomorrow out, as in the future. if there is anything to be learnt from what i ve said it is that churches, if they re involved in the care of people, they ve got to be transparent, they cannae be hidden, they cannae be running away to rome. i shouldn t be saying that but it can t be that a pope or a cardinal will say, right, you ve been a bad egg in scotland, away to mozambique or something, that cannae be. i found that out as i grew up, i found that out as an adult. if you could put plans in place then things like that would never happen again but we won t necessarily be able to stop people abusing other people. we might be able to read the signs quicker. the scary thing was that the brothers had, i think it was five or six homes at the time, they were in charge of them. you knew what was happening in your home, you knew what was happening in d and e and f, it was just f⁺⁺⁺⁺⁺g crazy. hundreds and hundreds of kids and we were all made out to be wrong and the brothers were men of the cloth, fine upstanding members of the community.

A young man with short, dark hair is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark blue or black hooded jacket. He is looking down and to the right with a thoughtful or somber expression. The background is a blurred outdoor setting, possibly a rocky shore near water. A dark grey speech bubble with rounded corners is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text 'The Losses' in white.

The Losses

I want those in power to understand that incidents of violence were not just that, they were seeds that were planted in children and grew into them as adults, shaping their lives. This has a wider impact on society because of the behaviours and needs of those individuals. I believe three quarters of my chances were taken away because of the impact on the way I think and how I behave. I didn't realise how much they have taken from me, they've taken everything. I feel there is a huge effect of a complete absence of love on a child, when that is something a child will crave. So then when puberty hits there becomes a confusion of sex with love, and this creates problems, and behaviours which are a problem, and a problem in relationships. I witnessed a savage assault on my six-year-old friend that I believe resulted in his death. Even now with the life I've had, I cannot comprehend somebody doing that to a six-year-old. Telling others about this is the most important thing to me. I've done everything I can. The importance of understanding that children placed in England by the authorities and still under the Scottish Care system should mean as adults they could come to the NCF. Feels his identity was taken by being placed in England.

Things were fundamentally wrong in my experience of institutional care. And it was the same for other children I knew in terms of lack of substitute relationships. Relationships which were important to the children were not valued and were in fact positively discouraged, and this was damaging, irretrievably so for some. Bullying is liable to occur within institutional settings and must be tackled more proactively. Children in care need better models of care around support, identity, trust and safe environment. I hold the Presbyterian Church of Scotland to blame for its failures in respect of proper assessment and ongoing protection and support of children who were migrated overseas from institutions it ran. They exposed children to repeated displacement and disruption to the few important relationships they had formed, and did not equip them for life with people outside the confines of the institution. I want legal changes to allow those who had their identity and potential or actual family contacts, and friendships lost or knowingly withheld, to be able to access information to allow them to try to make contact or learn their history. I eventually received documents containing information about my birth mother and father, siblings I did not know existed, I realised there was a life there I had known nothing of. If a child in care gets close to someone it's important to try to keep that friendship going. I lost contact with all those boys, and they were my brothers. Children need to feel they belong to society, they need role models, opportunities for relationships and for safe testing of relationships for adult life, marriage and parenthood with no understanding of how to live in a family.

Children should have a sense that they're still loved, wanted, needed and cared for by somebody somewhere. I think about Christmas, it's coming up to Christmas now. We didn't get any presents. I got one present one year and it was a Robocop VHS video, it was a certificate 18 so I wasn't allowed to watch it. It was like someone had bought a bunch of presents and wrapped them, taken them to local kids' homes and said give those to the kids. When I was transferred to England I very quickly tried to get back but I'd crossed the border so nobody wanted to talk to me anymore and I just felt abandoned, I really did. I didn't know what to do, I was almost at the point of looking to go back to my dad, you know, it was that bad. I phoned the home and they said they couldn't help me and to make the best of what I could. I tried social services, none of that was easy in those days, before computers, you know, when you had to find a phone box and have some change and find a number and phone them. Nobody wanted to talk to me anymore and I just felt really abandoned and afraid.

Institutional living is no substitute for home comforts.

stole our childhood and no one seemed to care.

A dark, textured background featuring a chalk drawing of a face. The drawing is composed of yellow and blue lines, with the eyes and mouth area rendered in a more detailed, shaded style. A bright red speech bubble with rounded corners and a tail pointing towards the bottom right is overlaid on the lower-left portion of the face drawing. Inside the speech bubble, the text "Don't lie to me" is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

**Don't
lie to me**

My time in care was all negative. I am very angry and feel that all of those in authority in society, particularly police and procurator fiscal services, were not to be trusted. I came into care after an attempted suicide and felt my treatment was rough and unhelpful. There was nothing good about being in care, it was of no benefit to me at all. The system is a lamentable farce, a mind bending joke. I saw medication and restraints being used frequently. I felt that things I told people about what happened to me in care were dismissed. If I could suggest the introduction of polygraph testing (for staff)...use of voice stress analysis...I would like to see it introduced within the whole system to be done electronically so it cannot be erased. I remember constant rough restraints, my face being ground into the carpet and getting carpet burns and being hit with a phone book so it would leave no marks. I believe that many young people I was in care with are dead, I remember multiple incidences of them self-harming and being very unwell.

I had a stolen childhood. I was placed in an institution at the age of one and remained there for 15 years. I thought I was an orphan and was told that I was wrapped in newspapers and left at the door. I later discovered this to be untrue and am very angry about being lied to. I discovered correspondence from my mother to the institution requesting visits but not being granted them, as she could only visit him on Sundays. I have proof that my mother placed me in care as she was unable to take care of me due to being a single mother and working six days a week. During my time at the institution I was very unhappy and unloved. I came to the hearing because I wanted people to know what happened to us and to understand what it was like to be in care so that children in care today are not harmed like how we were. At the time I could not talk to anyone about what was happening to me as I would have been called a liar and be beaten. I felt that a number of things written about me were untrue and that vital information pertaining to my mother had been withheld and that this prevented me from finding my mother while she was alive. I am extremely unhappy about having no photos of myself as a child or any pictures of my mother. I am still trying to find some as I want to erect a headstone in her honour at the place where her ashes were spread.

I wasn't believed as a child and I should never have gone through this, I know certain people let me down. I was bloody punished as a child and as an adult for their mistake or should I say negligence. I now do not trust any social work or police or damn agency no longer. I would like to see social workers up on charges for incompetence and negligence for what they do to children.

i am happy that large institutions are things of the past, they are too impersonal and children get lost in them. they are breeding grounds for abusers. the children felt so impersonal, really just a number, like a production line. i am still not sure that the system has got the balance between children and their parents rights. the idea of keeping children with their parents at all costs is damaging to children. my mother prevented me from being adopted even though she had no interest in having me at home, her interests were always put ahead of mine. children should be at the centre of everything. it is a positive that children are now listened to in a way they were not in the past. i feel i was let down by the system. the social worker visited annually and i felt it was a box-ticking process, the social worker did not really want to hear what was going on. it's so important that i can give evidence in the forthcoming trial of my abuser and that i will be able to face him in court. i want to know that he is feeling the mental anguish, or at least some of it, that i felt as a child.

A young boy with short brown hair, wearing a red hoodie, is seen from behind with his arms raised in a gesture of joy or freedom. He is standing outdoors against a bright, clear sky with some blurred greenery in the background. A teal speech bubble is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text 'The positives of care'.

**The
positives
of care**

I think it can make you stronger in certain aspects. There's a wee bit, I would have said, if I had done this interview maybe 10, 15 years ago I would have said there's no such thing as a victim. Life's what you make it, you know, but there's so many horror stories coming out that you think well, you know, maybe, you know I think I've got more, not quite empathy but I'm more along that line with people that have found it. I do think that every time I read a paper and I think another victim, you know, there's a wee bit in me that draws back.

BEING IN CARE IS NOT STRIFE
IT'S ABOUT CARING & SHARING YOUR LIFE
WITH PEOPLE WHO CARE
AND PLANNED THAT YOUR THING
TO HELP YOU TO LEAD A NEW LIFE
ACCEPT LIFE IN CARE
DON'T THINK IT UNFAIR
IT MAY BE THE BEST CHANCE YOU HAVE
TO BE HAPPY WITH LIFE
WITHOUT MENTAL STRIFE
WITH GOOD THINGS TO CHERISH AND SHARE
THROUGH HOW YOUR IN CARE
THERE'S NO NEED TO DESPAIR
GOOD FORTUNE MAY LIVE STRAIGHT AHEAD
DON'T SUFFER SELF DOUBT
LIFT YOUR CHIN, STICK IT OUT
YOU MAY BE PLEASED WITH THE LIFE THAT YOU LIVE
THANK!!
IF YOU'RE INTO CRIMES INSTEAD OF DOING TIME
AND WERE IN CARE AT WHICH YOU FEEL OUT OF HINK
DON'T BLAME OTHER FOLK FOR THE RISKS THAT YOU BROKE
IT'S YOU TO BLAME EVERY TIME

Not all children are abused or have bad experiences in care, it was a happy time for me. I had bad experiences at home, before and after my short time as a very young child in care. But in that brief time in care I experienced gentleness, kindness, felt safe and experienced comforts for the first time in my life. In that short time I saw that people could relate to each other in a way that was different to the violence that was the norm in my family home, where children were being screamed at and sworn at was an everyday occurrence. I experienced a different way, I liked it, and I believe it made it possible for me to have a different adult life from most of my family. I got an education, I am a professional running a business where I have good staff who I value and treat well. I have a family of his own where they treat each other with gentleness and kindness. There is more good than bad in this world and there are people working in social work who are doing a great job, this never gets recognised. People are quick to blame if anything goes wrong but they never acknowledge all the good people and good work. I believe people do better if you value the good they do than if you are always finding the negative and make them afraid.

Like life, it can be...it can be better than you ever expected.

Like life it can be better than you ever expected

i had a very positive experience in care, it was an amazing place, it really was. i feel this prevented him from ending up in prison. the first head teacher was more regimental but this changed, the second head teacher was more educational, he never raised his voice, he was never aggressive, he was a father figure. he stood out - if it wasn't for him i would have been in jail by now. my behaviour when i went into care was violent and extremely aggressive and i calmed down and was able to attend mainstream education. the psychiatrist was amazing and really understood child aggression. it's so important for children to have an adult they can relate to and trust, to share confidences with, someone who listens and doesn't judge, who doesn't share everything with other professionals. education has a significant impact on children's life choices and poor education limited them. it has a major impact on them because if someone can read and write it helps them throughout life. i do get embarrassed when i have to write things and help the children with homework. children should have encouragement to develop a hobby as it helps develop them to become individuals. but i have a concern that things that happened in my childhood are passed on inappropriately. it has followed me all the way down in reports.

I want to record my positive experiences at the institution. My life in care was perfect, they took very good care of me, gave me lots of opportunities, we were like their own children, they cared. Being in care at this institution was the best thing that happened to me as it prepared me for life by teaching me several skills. I learned maths, writing, rock climbing, tree climbing, canoeing and to cook. Before going into care I used to wet the bed however this changed, I can't even remember if I wet the bed at (X), it just stopped because it was secure and I felt loved by staff. The Head and his wife took us horse riding, mountain climbing, walks in the woods in the evening and involved us in several other activities. He took us to church every Sunday and for evening walks, they showed a lot of care, not like now. I learned canoeing and was proud to have met Princess Anne during one of her visits to the home. Participants brought photos to show how happy we were. I felt that it was a safe place and that the proportion to staff and children was just right. You could talk to any one of the teachers, they were that open. I felt that I would not have given the opportunities I got had I been in the family home. I liked the place so much that I wished I could have worked there. I still wish I was back at (X). If I could start my life again I would start it back there. I visited the place recently and was pleased to note that the children there are still happy and singing. There are physical changes to the place now but kids still have big smiles.

I want to share my very positive experiences at the institution. I feel it is important to do so as I can't understand why others express negative feelings about their stay in care there. I went into care at this institution at nine years of age and was previously passed on from family member to family member. I had also been in a Children's shelter for a short period of time and in foster care for about six-nine months. The best part of my experience was after the leadership at the institution. He created "more like a family environment" and I called him dad because he was so good. I felt that the house parents encouraged the development of social relationships with the other children in the house and other houses on the premises and that they were all like brothers and sisters. We were taken on several holidays and camping trips and had a smashing time, we went swimming and had discos, we were quite privileged. Most of us were there for a long time and I still keep in touch with many of the children who were in care, one of them was a maid of honour at my wedding. My house father was absolutely terrific. I also felt it was very easy to talk to his wife if something concerned me. I had a very good relationship with several staff members who I have kept in touch with. Most importantly I was happy because I was able to keep in touch with my brothers, they should never separate families. I have photos to show how happy I was and all the different places I was taken to. I would have liked to have stayed there a year longer, but had to leave because of my age. I feel that young people need to be better prepared for adult life, I wasne quite ready. I felt safe and stable at the institution, everything was done for us. I was unable to cook or budget when I left. The institution felt like home, the best thing I ever had.

A young boy with dark hair is shown from the chest up, covering his face with his right arm. The word "HELP" is written in black marker on his forearm. He is wearing a dark blue t-shirt. The background is a plain, dark grey wall.

**Being bullied
by other
children**

I suffered extreme bullying which started at primary school and continued when I attended secondary school, during which time I stayed in an institution. I believe that the platform for my bullying experience was built on the very first day at primary school when I was "befriended" by a child who then treated him as his "personal property" by manipulating him to do whatever he demanded. This experience robbed me of the confidence to confront those who bullied me throughout my childhood and adult life. I felt that bullying was not treated as seriously as any other form of abuse, for example, sexual abuse, despite it having significant negative impact on the lives of those who are bullied. In my experience, bullying was normalised and seen as "character building" so no action was taken by the institution to stop the bullying despite them knowing that it was happening. As a result, I felt unable to tell anyone for fear of reinforcing the idea that I was a soft touch. I believe that I am not different from others but was perceived as being "soft" and was therefore targeted for severe bullying which has left me feeling ashamed and lacking in confidence. In this type of institution, there are two groups of children: those that are bullied and those who bully. This culture is accepted and if you complain you are asked to "man up" as you are seen as weak. I provided several examples of cruelty and extreme bullying which included doing things that terrified me, being spat at and being given a nickname which stuck with me throughout my childhood and my time at the institution. This has had a lasting impact on me and influenced the choices I have made in life, including ones relating to employment. My experiences resembles "Lord Of The Flies" and "Tom Brown's School days". The institution neglected its duty of care.



**Accessing
care records**

i want to reflect the importance of accessing records of time in care i feel that i have been prevented from accessing my records. the whole purpose of accessing my records was to find out why things happened, why i went into care? why i was moved? i believe that the information i have seen so far was not an accurate record of my time in care and that the information recorded was handpicked reflecting lots of criminal justice but not much of social care. all i got of my life was three photos, two from a foster placement and one from a care home. i need to know why i was in care and where my parents were. it's important for children to be found appropriate placements as quick as possible. did that time in care affect my behaviour, my attitude, even though i was only ? it was so much more difficult for me to settle down, i was hyperactive. for a great part of my life i have felt misunderstood. i was brought up in an unconventional way so it's important for me how i come across, that i am clear. even today there are still difficulties with the amount of placements, i'm sure it's better now, but it's so important. people need to know how damaging multiple placements are, especially when children are placed out with their local authority. think about how distant you can come from your department. how extensive is the communication between the department/local authority and the children's homes? they need to make sure not too much time passes before things are chased up. the children's home should have sat with me and explained why i was in care, but that was never done. i don't know who has the most power, is it the local authorities or the children's homes?

Its so important for me to find out information about my past and why I was put into care. I believe that the city council lied to me. They were very unhelpful. When I approached them for information the shutters came down. People should stop closing invisible doors. Information about my past was withheld. I was told my papers were burnt, then later that there had been a flood. I told him they didnt have any information. They eventually sent me my life in a nutshell, three months when I was with my granny. I feels that I didnt exist and no help was given to me. I am desperate to find my fathers resting place, his history and the person who put me into care. I want someone to be accountable for my experiences in care, I want to be heard. I located the findings of a three-year investigation into the home where I had my terrible experiences, there were no findings, nothing could be proven, and it was a closed shop of staff. I would like to see inspections that identify that the child isnt feeling obligated to the place where they are staying and can talk freely. I want checks to make sure that the child is being looked after and is progressing. My experience of being abused was that I wanted to tell someone but they didnt want to open up that can of worms.

leaving an institution and being literally put out into the world with no clue how to cope is a very scary thing. There are all sorts of aspects that should have been dealt with to help a vulnerable person facing a world they know nothing about. As they progress in their lives they should be able to speak with confidence to their carers. Tell them how they are coping, if they have any problems, they should be able to share their hopes and anxieties their dreams. When I left Nagareth House where I had spent nine years of my life, I was given no documents whatsoever. Not even my birth certificate. I only found out later that I had been given the wrong date of birth. When I registered with a GP, I could not give any information on past vaccinations or any illnesses. When I applied for a job I was unable to supply the details they required. I had no school leaving certificate. Fortunately as I was

A close-up photograph of a stone wall. The stones are rectangular and arranged in a grid pattern. The wall is illuminated from the upper left, creating strong shadows that cast across the stones. The shadows are dark and elongated, suggesting a low sun position. The overall tone is warm and textured.

**Proper
vetting and
training of
staff**

Remove sex offenders from society. Child abusers should be removed from their target market indefinitely.

to Support ALL CHILDREN IN POVERTY AS GLASGOW and other PARTS OF SCOTLAND IS POLLUTED with children needing a lot of help.

-) Good training and selection of care staff. It is not enough to say "God told me that this is to be my life's work."
-) A yearly interview and written record of every child's mental, physical and developmental progress.
-) Preparation of the child for the world beyond care. Follow up of the child.
-) If possible, do not let a child experience 14 years of institutional care as I did. It can break your spirit, *break*

Things are inflicted in life that shouldn't be inflicted on you, whether that be by people in care, by the power that be, staff, perpetrators in homes, care homes, nursery schools and schools. You sit back and say, 'How the f*** could that happen? Who's vetting these people to work with kids? I would like to know why people who are known perpetrators or who have a past in perpetrating are allowed to work with kids, be that in a home, primary school, a secondary school, a religious place, wherever with vulnerable kids. I'm all right, I can speak up, what about someone who is handicapped, or someone who can't speak, kids, who haven't got that voice. People are allowed to work with those kids and I can't understand why. I think it's absolutely scandalous what goes on in this day and age, and to come close, being a victim, it's hard. Is it easier to cure a kid than cure an adult? Is there's tipping point, do you do this, do you do that? Why are people allowed to work with these kids? So I would like to say to the Prime Minister or whoever and say why? Who is letting these people work with kids, why are they slipping the net, and why? I'm not kidding, but paedophiles are allowed to work with kids, and they have no right, more than me or you, they should be hung. Bring back capital punishment, public money, chop their b**** off. That's what I don't understand. They must make some sort of effort to make sure that he or she has not been involved in abusing kids.

There were many people who helped me, who *deserve* recognition. It was not the unit that abused him, just one person. Most of the staff were good people. I believe that the only failure of my final care home was to allow an abuser to work there. The people who worked there have to live with the stigma of the place and that's not right. It is important for me to keep my positive memories of staff, they helped people and came in on their *days off*. These people gave me experiences I wouldn't have otherwise had, they protected me. The care system let me down in a big way. I think I should have been put in a secure unit because of what I was doing. I should have been protected from my environment and my own behaviour. I shouldn't have been released back to home, I was still vulnerable. There was no support, no "pick-up" when I returned home. People shouldn't be expected to go through difficult court cases without any support, that's wrong. Give people awareness and access to people you can go and speak to. There should be people who will listen and follow through on what is said to them. People who make allegations are considered to be lying but 10 years down the line there are 30 people making the same allegations, 30 people aren't lying. I don't want a memorial that will remind me of being abused, that's a waste on money. I want to see posters in care homes for young people on how to get help. Resources should be put into care homes and education. Parts of the home I was in were falling down. Abuse should be discussed and not be a taboo subject. Staff should be trained in recognising abuse in children's homes. Compensation would be an acknowledgement of what was done.

It is vital we make sure that children don't get abused any more - there will always be predators out there who go into the job specifically to abuse children. You can't allow them to fester, kids need to know they matter and that they are loved. I feel the children's home I was in for the longest period has been portrayed as a perfect setting, the model for the future, I don't know where they got that idea from. There were TV crews in and truckloads of toys. People thought so well of some children's homes but they weren't all lovely. From my own experience things were very different and this should be known. I know that people - particularly other staff - knew about how badly I and some other children were treated. One staff member said she had never seen the life drop out of a child so quickly but no one did anything. Children should be put first, not parents, and contact visits in unsuitable situations should be stopped. Children need to be listened to, to ensure they feel safe.

Some sort of training should be put in place for those chosen to look after children in care - where they can develop the qualities required to look after these vulnerable and already traumatised children.

Perhaps best qualified would be those who have been brought up in care themselves and want to make a difference. Regular checks should be done by people outside the care home with whom the children can speak freely.

Discipline is required in the lives of children if we are to grow into responsible adults. I can only share my own experience of having been in two very different institutions; I spent a miserable nine years in Nayarth House being exposed to all sorts of discipline it cared (once for coughing in church) slapped, made to stand on stone tiles with hands above my head, had my head banged off another child's head and spent long hours working in



**What we
need when
we leave
care**

My time in the institution meant I was left out there a broken person and expected to function. How can they expect a child to grow without the basics? I felt I was just a number. I think that emotional neglect was so powerful in leaving me like this. The home had made a really bad job in their care of me, very neglectful. This lack of care has damaged my whole life and left me with very few choices. I have been trying to understand why staff enjoyed inflicting pain and humiliation. I have needed years of therapy to be able to function at all, however EMDR has been a really powerful tool in assisting me to tackle issues in my life. I feel very strongly that the power of not being believed is so significant.

MORE SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN
GROWING UP IN CARE & WHEN
THEY GET OUT.

Make sure the After Care is in place
for a child leaving care

Give the child the opportunity to say
Goodbye to their friends and staff

Scotland has to clean up its past before it can look to its future. The first thing I remember about care was fear I was robbed of my childhood. I had no sense of personal history or identity, I have three dates of birth and don't know which, if any of them, is correct. I do not know why my mother put me into care, I learned later that she had children before and after me. I have a strong sense that I have things to say that could maybe help somebody and so I will keep trying even though I have had doors slammed in my face all my life when I have tried to talk of my experiences of abuse. It gets so bad that I get depressed, there's not a lot of fight left in me. If a child reports something then it must be looked into. I am terribly troubled by the consequences for my own family life. I feel I have destroyed my children's lives, just as mine was destroyed. I want an apology from the Pope for victims of child abuse within the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland and its institutions, to accord with that given to English and Irish survivors. Prison has been a big part of my adult life. In some respects, aspects of my life were better in prison than some of my childhood care experiences. But I am equally clear about my personal regrets surrounding my offending and the effect it had on those I cared about - and also the ongoing detrimental impact on my life opportunities. I would like to help others, to do voluntary work, to retrain - but many avenues I explore are unavailable to me because I have a criminal record.

It is not the child's fault that they are in care. Make sure that children count, that they matter and that they are heard. After they leave care, help is needed and counselling should be offered before children go out into the world. Homes need to be vetted every year to stop things going undetected and being harmful to children.

the hurt, stigma and fear throughout my childhood, the constant feeling of rejection, all of this persisted into adulthood and affected everything - relationships, employment, ability to mix in society, my mental health. every child is a human being, no child should suffer the shame, rejection and humiliation i did, as did the other children in the home i grew up in. there was also the terrible impact of the sudden separation from my siblings, without any notice. that has a terrible effect on relationships as adults, and the sense of loss from that. there is a failure of government and services to recognise the impact of mental health problems and the benefits system. there is no recognition of how people with mental health problems struggle to do what is required of them to claim even what they are entitled to and depend on - and they have to go through it all over and over again even though every time causes trauma. i want things to be better for children today. and for me i would like to enjoy the holiday i never had and to feel i could live as part of society. i feel so comfortable with other people who have been through trauma, more than other people. i have had fantastic support from icss and find it much easier to spend time with people who experienced similar childhood experiences. it helps with my anxiety and panic, i feel understood and that i doesn't have to explain myself.

- Prepare kids for adult life
- Don't just dump them at 16 years old
- Give kids choices : school, area, children's home
- Value my opinion and what i think
- Help kids move gradually into adulthood

I was placed in a children's home as a tiny baby of 3 weeks old and remained there until I was 21 yrs old. I then had to go out into a world I had little knowledge or experience of - completely alone. (I did not realise then that I was, in fact, institutionalised.) I was bewildered, very scared and felt socially and practically inadequate. It was a huge struggle for me and it took time, effort and a lot of hard work before I became a comfortable and confident individual. The stigma attached to me for being in care was enormous. I was treated like a second class citizen!

In my opinion I think children should be given more guidance in regards to: Such things as sex education and also should be made aware of the worldly ways, I say this because when I left Nazareth House I was totally vulnerable when it came to being involved with the opposite sex, no idea at the general running of a house, doing the weekly shopping and how to manage bills + money.

16-year-olds should not be made homeless by the system when care comes to an end. Kids need to be prepared for adulthood gradually, preparation for life needs to be structured, organised and meaningful. Care leavers should be given accommodation and support, young people should be offered choices and their opinions taken into account.

It is vital to stress that when an individual leaves care they must not be forgotten and should be given a proper start in life. Just because a person leaves an establishment such as that, they should never be forgotten, they should be checked on, given the right start in life which I wasn't. Children should be given a chance. I never want anyone else to experience some of the things I did. My life has been full of fear, apprehension and loneliness. Just hopeless, hopeless, nothing. I was left wandering in the dark, that was the outcome for me and this should never happen again. But I have a positive care experience, and that was that the home I was in home built my values. I was taught that violence is wrong. Good can come out of the bad.

I was in a home where I felt like I was locked away from the community, typified by physical abuse and lack of affection. I had limited contact with my family and felt unwanted by them. I ran away from the home frequently and think that childrens homes should be a last resort. I know what it does to children, I know five of them that ended up as serious sex offenders. It was all because of the isolation and just being locked away - as soon as you get out into the big, bad world you cant handle it you want locked up again. Care was all to do with finance, if a child needs to go into care as a final resort then the care package should be appropriately funded. There is an out of sight, out of mind attitude because its cheaper, its been like that for 40 years, even today. I can imagine how kids in care feel today, they must feel alone and isolated and the system doesnt want to do anything, its just out of sight, out of mind. I was left with no aftercare and nowhere to go when I left care.



**People need
to be treated
as individuals**

Please give them dignity
and respect, it's not their
fault they are in care.

WE ARE ALL ^{*}PRECIOUS^{*};...

Not Every kid in Care is BAO



**People in care
shouldn't be
treated
differently
because of their
background**

TO BE A PLACE OF EQUALS
WHERE PEOPLE ARE JUDGED
ON ABILITY NOT RACE
CREED OR GENDER
SAOR ACBA

Believe in me
Educate me

**Message of
support to
NCF**



SHINE
A
LIGHT
ON
CARE

Let me thank you for letting me have the opportunity to give my account relating to my childhood in foster care it opened up some very painful memories I thought - I had put - them well behind me. It makes me weep just writing this, the early years were happy and there were some very nice people around but sadly - that all ended in the latter half bad very bad.

It's comforting to know that people do care and things have greatly changed and continue to so for the children for generations to come, children are the future so they must have the best start in life, a hug goes a long way. anyway Angela thanks again for your kindness and hospitality.

SCOTLAND. STAY TRUE TO YOUR
WAYS I AM PROUD TO BE A
SCOTTISH LASS PLEASE HELP YOUNG
VULNERABLE CHILDREN WHO ARE IN CARE