



# CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS



## Interpreting the Children and Young People Act 2014

November 2014

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**‘A huge thank-you to every care experienced young person who gave their time freely, and their views generously for this research. Conversations with these young people on their care journey and their experiences are always a privilege to be a part of. Change can never happen without them... they are the experts’**

Duncan Dunlop, CEO, Who Cares? Scotland

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## Welcome and introduction

Who Cares? Scotland directly consulted with **87 young people** to establish their experiences of living in care, their hopes for life after care and the types of support they would need to achieve this. The [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#) (hereafter referred to as the Act) has the ability to change the disproportionately poor outcomes of this often forgotten about group of young people. It provides new rights and opportunities, particularly in ensuring the voices of care experienced children and young people are heard in any discussions or planning which directly affects their lives. We believe it is imperative that these voices are also heard in the development of any guidance and the frontline interpretation of this legislation.

Three main parts of the Act directly relate to the care experienced population. Part 9 specifically covers duties on Corporate Parents and what looked-after young people and care leavers can expect from them. This includes a duty on corporate parents to promote their interests and provide opportunities for these children and young people. Part 10 of the Act refers to the new Aftercare duties and outlines that young people who leave care after the age of 16, are entitled to local authority support until age 26. Part 11 of the Act covers the Continuing Care law and provides young people in specific care placements when they reach 16 years of age (foster, residential and kinship) with the right to stay in that or a similar care placement until the age of 21.

Based on this, we developed a series of questions to engage with care experienced young people. The conversations which we were able to have with 87 care experienced young people across Scotland, have provided us with vital views on how they feel the Act should be interpreted and applied. These young people were able to articulate their views and experiences on a range of issues important to them and also relevant to our hopes for effective use of the Act in practice. Please see appendix 1 for the full set of questions which young people were asked.

This report will highlight the experiences and views of looked-after young people and care leavers. It will clarify which issues are important to this group and provide suggestions for how the Act can deliver effectively on its intentions.

The views presented here are intended to help corporate parents and others involved in the implementation of the Act to **get it right for every care experienced child and young person across Scotland**. Please also see the 2012 publication from Who Cares? Scotland which provides similar insights and views from over 100 care experienced young people. The 2012 report helped to influence the Act when it was in its public consultation phase. It is available at <http://www.whocaresscotland.org/professionals/publications-briefings-research/>. A list of useful resources is available in appendix 4.

## 1. Who we spoke to

We spoke to 87 young people, with the following age and current care placement status breakdown. *Please note, for the following two charts, totals will not equal 100% due to rounding.*

Figure 1:  
young  
people by  
age

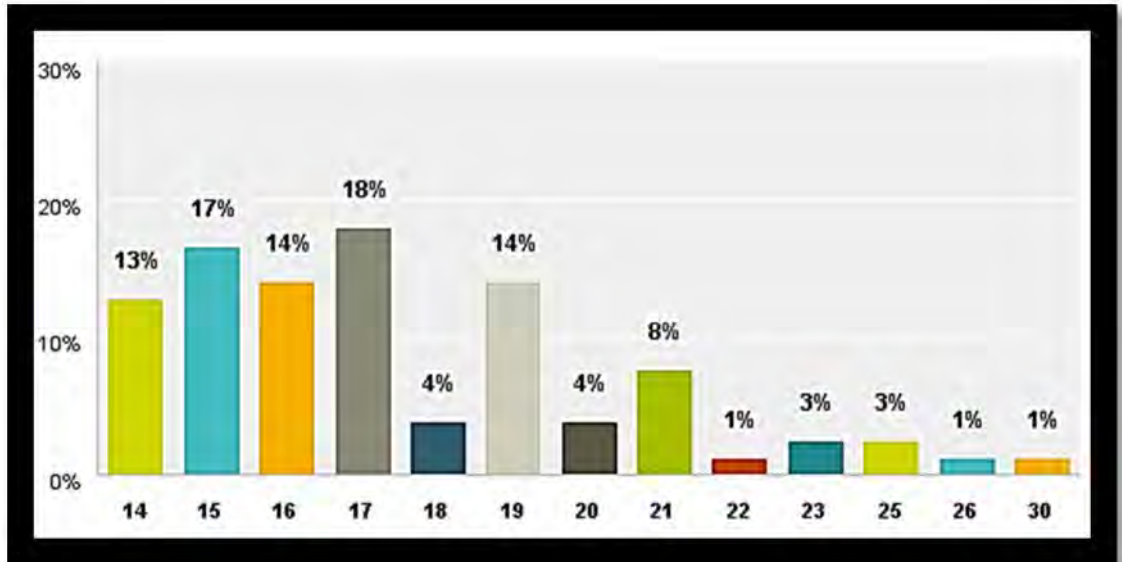
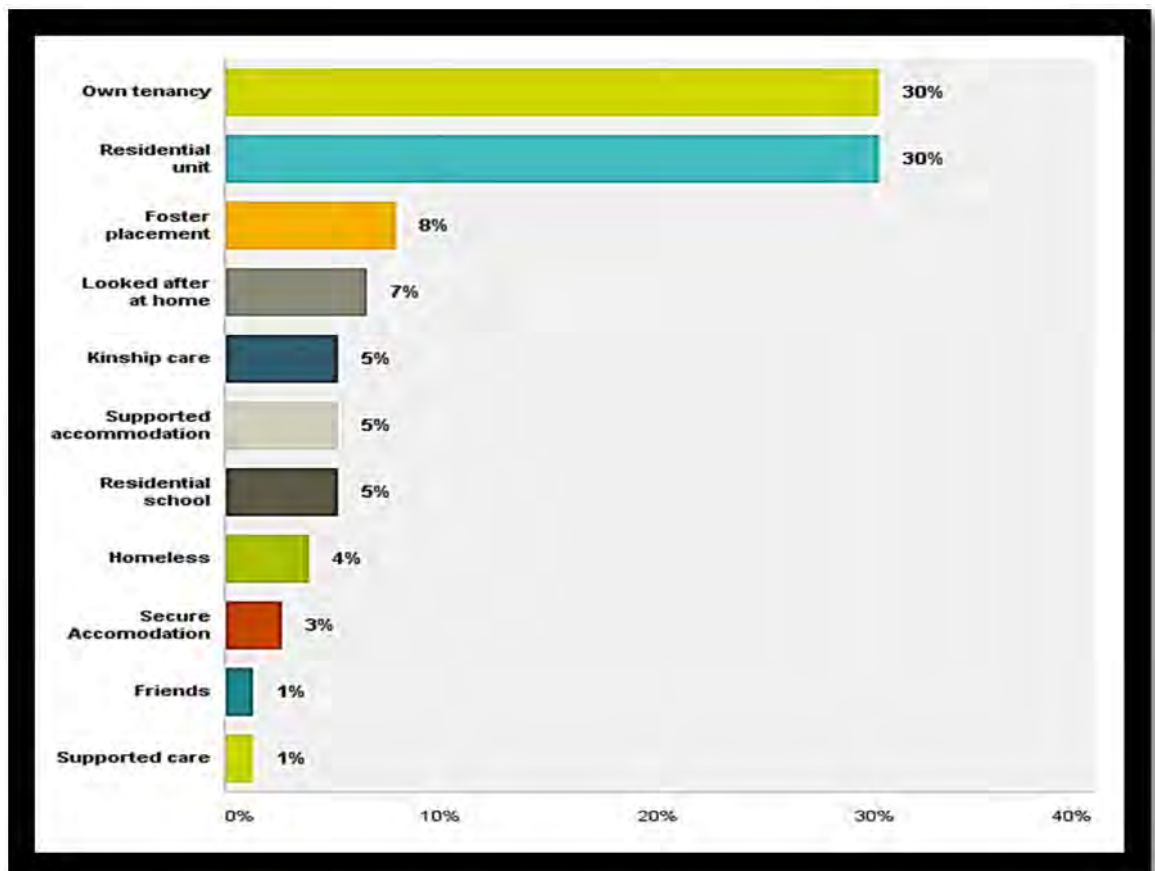


Figure 2:  
young  
people  
by  
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setting

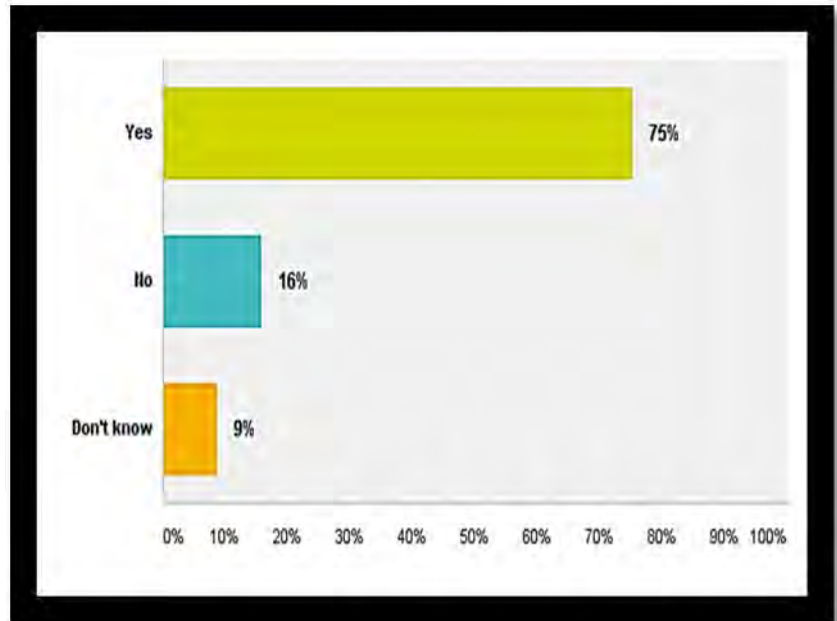




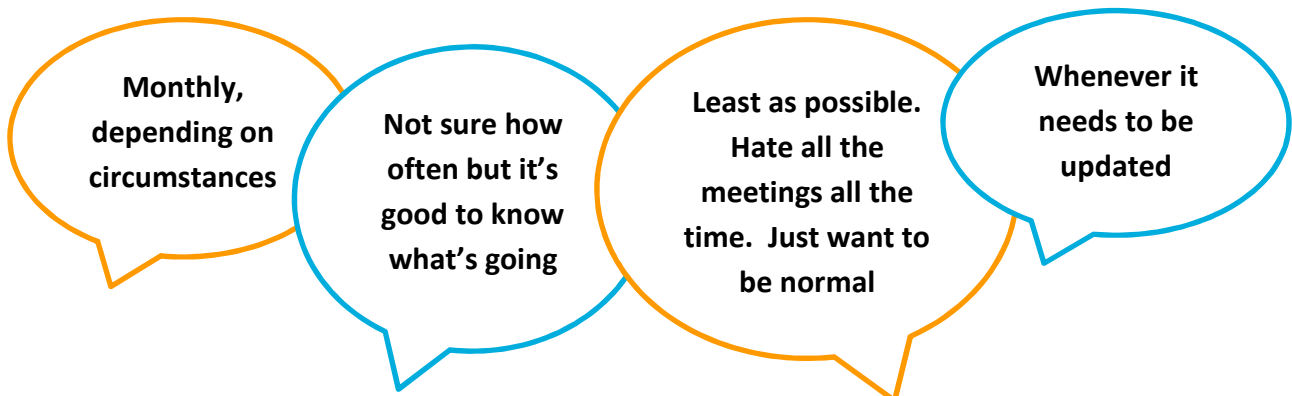
## 2. Care planning and future planning

*Figure 3: young people and feeling listened to/involved in their care planning*

Care planning is important in directing the journey a young person takes through care. It is vital therefore that young people understand their care plans, and more importantly are involved in them. **82%** of young people who we talked to were aware of having a care plan during their time living in care. Of those who remembered having a care plan, **75%** said they had felt listened to and engaged with their plan.



Overall, for those who remembered having a care plan, engagement levels were positive. In addition to this, **70%** of young people believed that their care plan had been reviewed regularly and updated where necessary to reflect their opinions. Importantly, **80%** of those young people who felt listened to in their care plans, also believed their plans were reviewed and updated regularly. In terms of **the frequency of how often plans should be updated**, there were mixed feelings, however generally it was felt that it should be dependent on the individual young person. Several commented:



While the majority of young people suggested their care plans be updated on a monthly basis, a common feeling was that they should be able to ask for a review of their care plan

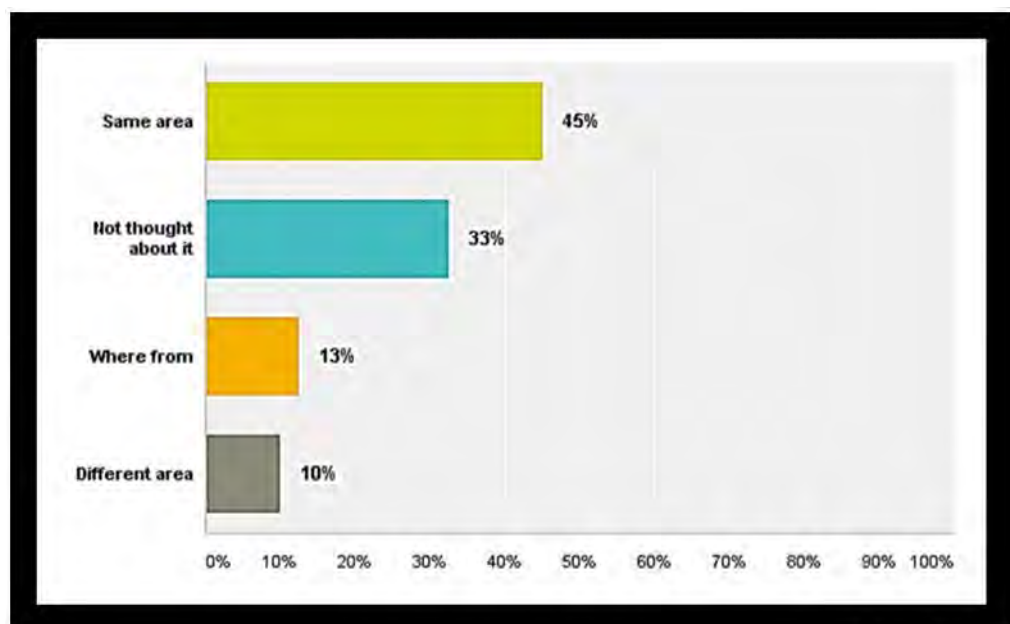
whenever they need to. However it is clear that in order to do this, they must first have a positive relationship with those coordinating their care plan. This positive relationship, they felt, would encourage them to voice their concerns, their feelings and their views and seek a review whenever is necessary.

We asked the young people who were currently looked-after to answer honestly about what they want to happen when they leave care. When asked what age they would like to leave care at, responses were mixed. Some said aged 18, others said aged 21 - but many commented that it does not matter what age, **as long as they feel ready**. Practitioners supporting a young person must be able to help them recognise when they feel ready to leave and how they would know. For looked-after young people, we continually hear that during this phase relationships with trusted, adult professionals can be key to positive transitions out of care. A vital part of this transition must include the support to recognise when a young person is ready to venture into independent living, or to take the next step towards it (such as a supported carer placement or a supported tenancy).

Young people were also asked about where they would like to live after they leave care. Responses to what types of accommodation they would like were varied with many simply stating they had not thought about it yet. **45%** of young people identified that they would not feel ready to live alone straight from care. When asked what local authority they would like to reside in, responses were again varied with **45%** of responses identifying their current local authority. Again however, **33%** of young people had not yet thought about what area they would like to live in after care.

For both questions – what accommodation and where - **those who responded by saying they had not yet thought about it were mainly 14-19 year olds** and all were still currently looked-after. This age group is made up of young people who will very soon be expected to enter the world of independent living. *Please note for the following chart, totals will not equal 100% due to rounding.*

*Figure 4: young people’s views on where they want to live after their final care placement*





The fact that so many of them had not yet thought about where they would like to live after care was concerning. **The young people that we spoke to who were no longer looked after, believe that we must recognise the importance of having these conversations early and often.**

We know from our 2012 research which explored young people’s views on their care journey that feeling like they are listened to is one of the most important things needed whilst in care. Crucially, within this survey we asked young people if they felt listened to during discussions about their future. **Less than half** felt they had been had been listened to, while the rest either felt they **had not been listened to at all**, or they **did not know** if they had been as they had not thought about it. For those respondents who stated they had been listened to, the majority fell within the 17-19 age range. Those who either had not felt listened to or did not know, significantly fell within the 14-16 age range. This indicates that important discussions about the future are not happening early enough or consistently enough. Additionally, **those who stated they had felt listened to were more likely to reside in residential schools or children’s units**, while those who either did not feel listened to or did not recall, were predominantly from kinship care or foster placements. Again, this highlights the need to have the same discussions, as early and as often as possible, **across all placement types.**

A clear message resonating from the survey findings is that those who felt they were listened to in regards to their future, indicated they would like to live with others; while **those who felt no one had listened to them preferred the idea of living with their birth family.** This suggests that those who do not feel consulted with or listened to are more likely to return to a potentially unsuitable family home, rather than progress to independent living or supported and shared environments. We can infer from this that if young people do not know what options they have for the future, then they may simply choose to select the option that feels most familiar – regardless of whether or not it is what they want or if it is the right decision for them.

### **Recommendations relevant to interpretation of the Children & Young People Act**

**The evidence highlights the importance of the care plan – referred to as the Child’s Plan within the Act - to a young person’s understanding of their life in care. Who Cares? Scotland would recommend that discussions around care planning happen as often as is required, in young people’s terms and are fully reflective of their feelings and views. While unnecessary formal meetings can prove difficult for young people and so should be kept at a minimum, there is a need to ensure young people understand they can access a formal review of their care plan whenever they require. The Child’s Plan should be**

**something which care experienced young people feel they have ownership of, and not just something which professionals hold on behalf of the young person.**

**The following recommendations are relevant to Part 5 of the Act – the Child’s Plan.**

- Care plans must meaningfully involve young people in both creation and updates.
- Care plans should be coordinated by someone who has a positive relationship to the young person to encourage engagement and understanding by them.
- Care plans and their updates must be flexible and subject to the young person’s age and stage.
- Care plan discussions should happen early and often in the young person’s care journey, although formal reviews should only take place where necessary.
- Care plans should be understood fully by all involved in the care of the young person – so that a coordinated and collaborative approach can be taken.

**The survey evidence provides very clear messages in relation to the preparation needed to equip a young person for the future. Who Cares? Scotland would encourage an early and often approach to be taken with young people about their futures. This is also important if young people are to understand their entitlement to continuing care and aftercare provisions too.**

**The following recommendations are relevant specifically to the interpretation of Part 5 – the Child’s Plan, Part 10 – Aftercare and Part 11 – Continuing Care.**

- Discussions about the future must happen early and often for ALL young people living in various care placements. This will help them to feel more prepared when moving on from care.
- These discussions must be led by adults who have built a positive and trusted relationship with the young person.
- All involved with the care of the young person, must take a coordinated and collaborative approach to meaningfully discuss life after care with them.
- Young people need to know what their options are for life after care. This will help them plan and work towards future goals with support from those who care for them.
- Long term, stable relationships must be around young people both during and after care.

### **3. Corporate Parenting**

We asked young people about their understanding of corporate parenting. Young people answered questions on the following: **their knowledge of corporate parenting; their expectations of corporate parenting and their current relationship with corporate parents.**

Ahead of the enactment of Part 9 and the introduction of new public bodies as corporate parents under the Act, it is important that the term corporate parent is more widely understood and recognised by care experienced young people in all care placements. **Please also see appendix 3 for findings from a residential workshop Who Cares? Scotland held with care experienced young people, on how they view their corporate parents.**

### 3.1 Knowledge of corporate parenting

**37%** of young people recognised the term ‘corporate parent’ and **16%** had some understanding as to what a corporate parent is. However with **47%** of young people still unaware of what a corporate parent is, more work must be done to equip young people with this knowledge and understanding. In ensuring our young people recognise what corporate parents can do for them, we will be ensuring they are in a better position to hold their corporate parents to account and importantly, have positive relationships with them.

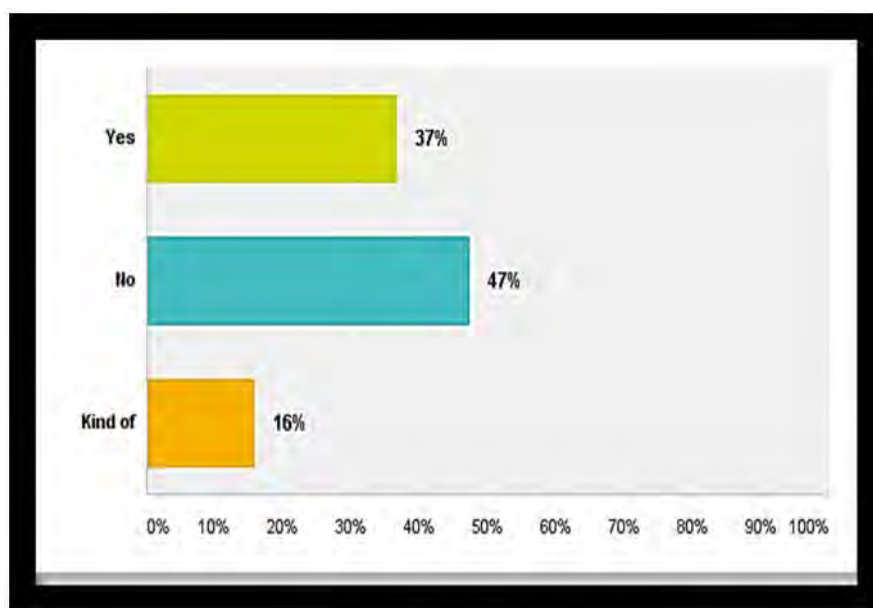
In general, the younger the respondent, the less likely they were to have knowledge of corporate parenting. **70%** of currently looked-after young people did not know what a corporate parent was. Of the young people who did recognise the concept of corporate parenting, a staggering **80%** indicated they received this knowledge from **working with Who Cares? Scotland**.

*Figure 5: young people’s awareness of corporate parenting*

Other young people had received corporate parenting information from support workers and social workers; however this was the case for a very small number.

While the majority of young people who talked to us would be in receipt of support from Who Cares? Scotland and therefore more

likely to select ‘yes’ as the response to being aware of the term ‘corporate parent’, it provides very relevant insight into where young people get this information from. If a young person is not connected to a knowledgeable adult who can give them this important information about corporate parents and what they can do for them, Part 9 of the Act, in our view, will not be fully realised.



We wanted to understand the levels of association or recognition which the young people we spoke to had with the new list of public bodies due to have legal corporate parenting duties from April 2015, as a result of the Act. Of the 24 corporate parents, those most commonly recognised were: **the Police; Children’s Hearings Scotland; the local authority; the Fire and Rescue Service; Health Boards** and **the SQA**. The identification of these specific corporate parents is not surprising given the often traumatic early experiences of those growing up in care and by default the interaction they would have with several of these bodies – especially the Police, Children’s Hearings Scotland and local authorities.

Who Cares? Scotland also carried out a focus group activity with a group of young people and asked them to highlight those corporate parents who they first came into contact with prior to living in care. The most common were **Police, Paramedics** and **Social Work**. They also commented on the corporate parents they felt had no influence over their life. These corporate parents were:

- **Healthcare Improvement Scotland**
- **The Police Constable of the Police Service of Scotland**
- **Scottish Ministers**
- **The Principle Reporter**
- **Bord Na Gaidhlig**
- **Sport Scotland**
- **Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People.**

Despite the frequent use of many of these services by looked-after young people, their participation and knowledge of anything other than the frontline services, **often at crisis point**, is minimal. Who Cares? Scotland asked young people to identify the corporate parents they come into contact with at each point of their care journey. The results display the importance of certain corporate parents at different stages of care and this information is integral in ensuring corporate parents understand how their services affect looked-after young people and care leavers.

*Figure 6: young people’s interaction with corporate parents before, during & after care*

| Before care                    | During care                        | After care                         |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Police</b>                  | <b>Local Authority</b>             | <b>Local Authority</b>             |
| <b>Fire and Rescue Service</b> | <b>Police</b>                      | <b>Housing</b>                     |
| <b>Creative Scotland</b>       | <b>Health Board</b>                | <b>Mental Welfare Commission</b>   |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | <b>Children’s Hearing Scotland</b> | <b>Skills Development Scotland</b> |
| <b>A Health Board</b>          | <b>Principle Reporter</b>          | <b>Post 16 Education Body</b>      |

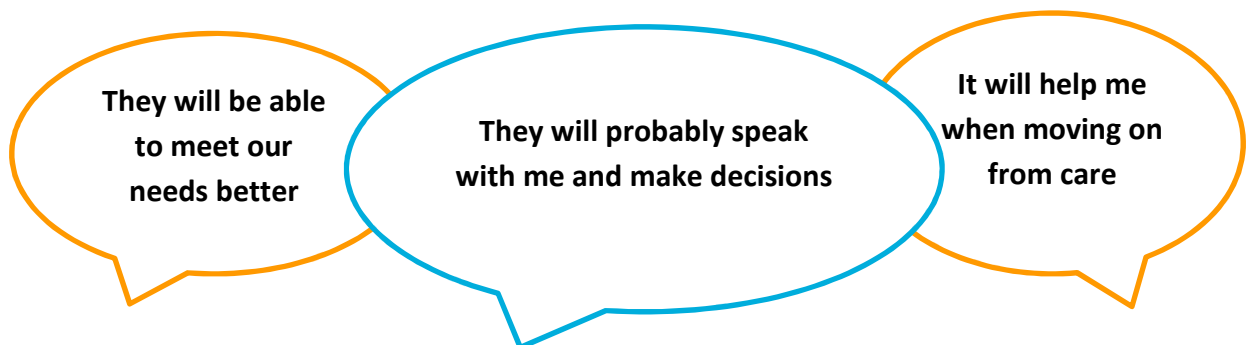
|                                  |                     |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Fire and Rescue</b>           | <b>Police</b>       |
| <b>Mental Welfare Commission</b> | <b>Health Board</b> |
| <b>Legal Aid</b>                 |                     |

Only **12%** of young people are aware of their local authority’s corporate parenting strategy. This is despite corporate parenting existing in legislation as early as the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. This is particularly relevant for the interpretation of Part 9 of the Act and should be communicated with corporate parents. However, the challenge here is for corporate parents to determine the best ways to engage with and communicate on a strategic plan to care experienced young people. This is where collaboration across corporate parents, as well as agencies in the third sector will be vital.

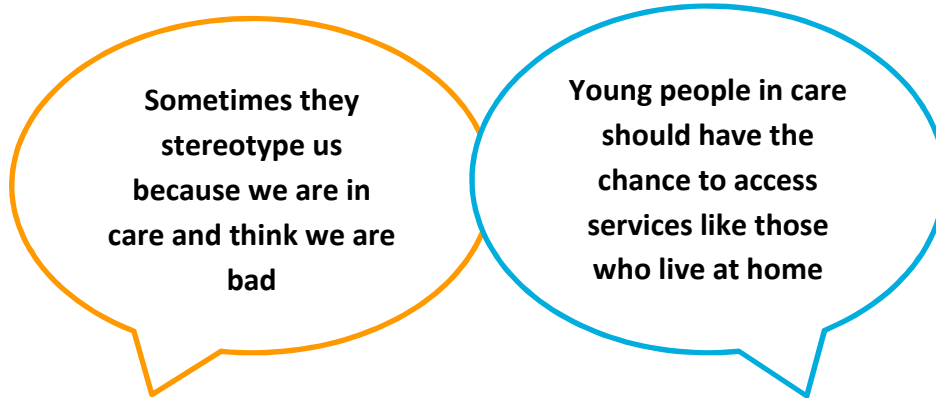
### 3.2 Expectations of corporate parents

The young people who we talked to were asked what they think a corporate parent should do for them and for other care experienced people. **Over half** of the respondents wanted to be **meaningfully included in planning** how corporate parents will operate. They said they wanted to help ensure that corporate parenting frontline services and staff were easy to access and more importantly, understood fully what life is like for a looked after child. They believe this would help in the connections and level of service young people could have with corporate parents, especially those in front line services.

Respondents were asked if they understood what the new duties within the Act would mean for corporate parents and how they work with care experienced young people. The majority - **80%** - answered no. This response again highlights the importance of the duty under the Act to inform young people who corporate parents are and what duties they have towards young people. Of the **20%** who answered yes and felt they understood in part or fully the new duties under the Act for corporate parents, several commented on what they felt corporate parents need to do to get this right.

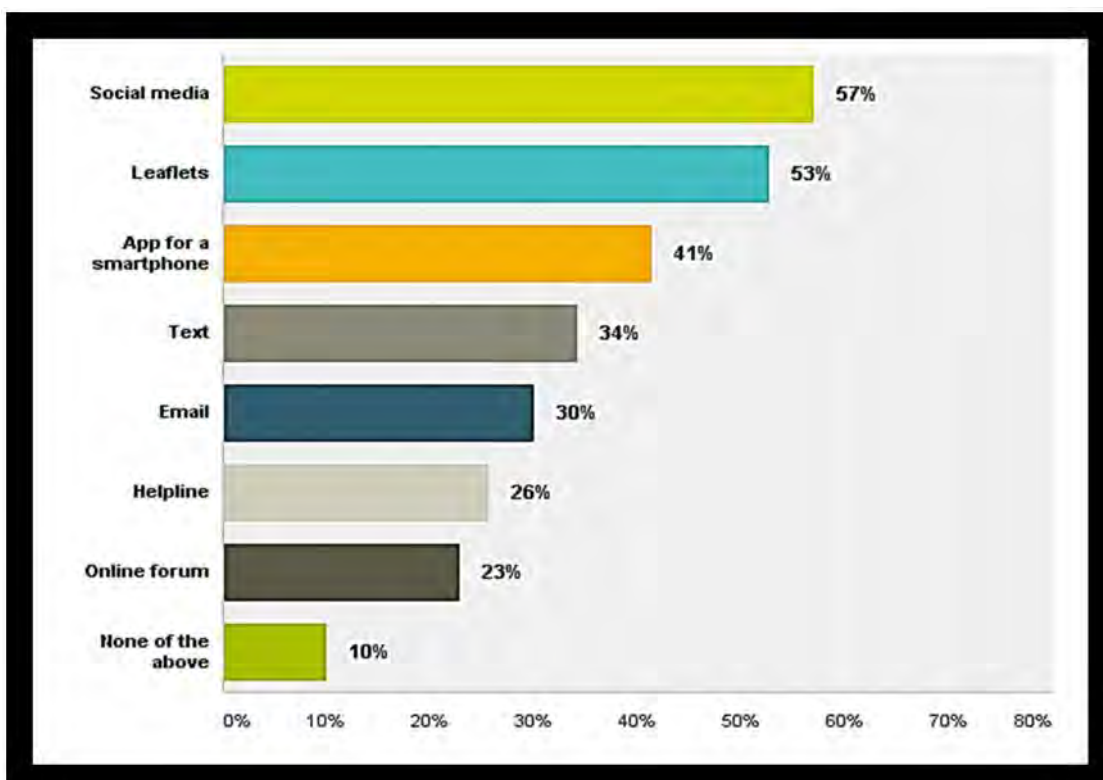


In addition to this, the young people we talked with spoke well about their general understanding of and feelings towards this influential group of organisations. Several felt stigmatised or judged by these institutions. Others felt they should endeavour to offer them the same type of services and consideration as they would young people who are not looked after:



### 3.3 Communication between young people and corporate parents

Young people were asked about how best corporate parents can reach out to them, inform them of their services and engage them in planning processes to ensure they are providing the very best service to the care experienced population. This understanding of how to communicate with young people will be imperative in ensuring corporate parents engage effectively with as many care experienced young people as possible. It is also relevant for those corporate parents who do not provide direct care related services to young people- especially in understanding how they can inform young people on their services and their role to them.





### **Figure 7: young people’s preferences on communication methods**

For young people, **social media** was unsurprisingly the preferred method with almost 60% identifying this as the best way for corporate parents to get in touch with them. While interestingly, **53%** identified **leaflets** as being another effective way of communicating with young people, forms of contact through the use of internet – including social media and apps for smartphones – was agreed as being the best method. It is important to recognise that leaflets play a large part in communicating with care leavers in particular and can resolve the issue of having little access to the internet. Young people both in and after care can often be unreachable via telephone or internet for various reasons including affordability and also due to frequently losing phones as a result of their chaotic living situations. Corporate parents must be aware of this reality and in delivering their duties under the Act; they must take account of this and utilise a range of information methods to connect with care experienced young people. The idea of a central corporate parenting helpline to give information to young people was also supported by 26% of the young people we talked to. However, they did feel that this helpline would be more useful to young people who are needing aftercare support.

### **Recommendations relevant to interpretation of the Children & Young People Act**

**From the evidence in this section it is clear that more can be done to help young people understand who corporate parents are and what they can offer. Whilst these formal legal duties do not come into force until April 2015, it is recommended that understanding the complexities of communicating with care experienced young people, and on what matters, is considered fully ahead of the Act’s implementation. The following recommendations are relevant specifically to Part 9 of the Act – Corporate Parenting:**

- Professionals must help young people to understand corporate parenting including who they are and what they can do for young people with care experience.
- Corporate parents must be helped to understand the care journey and when in this journey they are likely to meet a care experienced young person.
- Corporate parents must know what care experienced young people need help with and how to provide better and specific services for them. They can do this by involving young people directly in planning their services.
- Corporate parents must understand how best they can reach out to the care experienced population in order to fully deliver on their duties.
- Corporate parents least likely to be known to care experienced young people must be encouraged to find ways to better engage this population.
- Specific corporate parents, within the wider group have key roles to play for care experienced young people. Especially teachers, the police, social workers, panel members and children’s reporters. They must be supported to apply their duties

consistently for all types of young people across Scotland. This is where working with care experienced young people is needed.

#### 4. Wellbeing

The Act now identifies the need for corporate parents to ‘safeguard or promote the wellbeing’ of looked-after young people and care leavers. Wellbeing is also relevant to the assessment criteria for young people who are seeking or in receipt of aftercare support.

**Being happy, comfortable and healthy**

For this reason it is imperative that corporate parents understand what wellbeing means to this group of young people. Importantly however, it is also necessary to understand, from a young person’s perspective, what wellbeing isn’t. Some young people gave their specific views on what wellbeing means to them.

**It means that I am happy in all areas of life and get the same chances as everyone else**

We also asked young people to link the concept of wellbeing to SHANARRI indicators – **Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible** and **Included** - since this will provide the grounding for the guidance which will support practitioners’ interpretation of the Act.

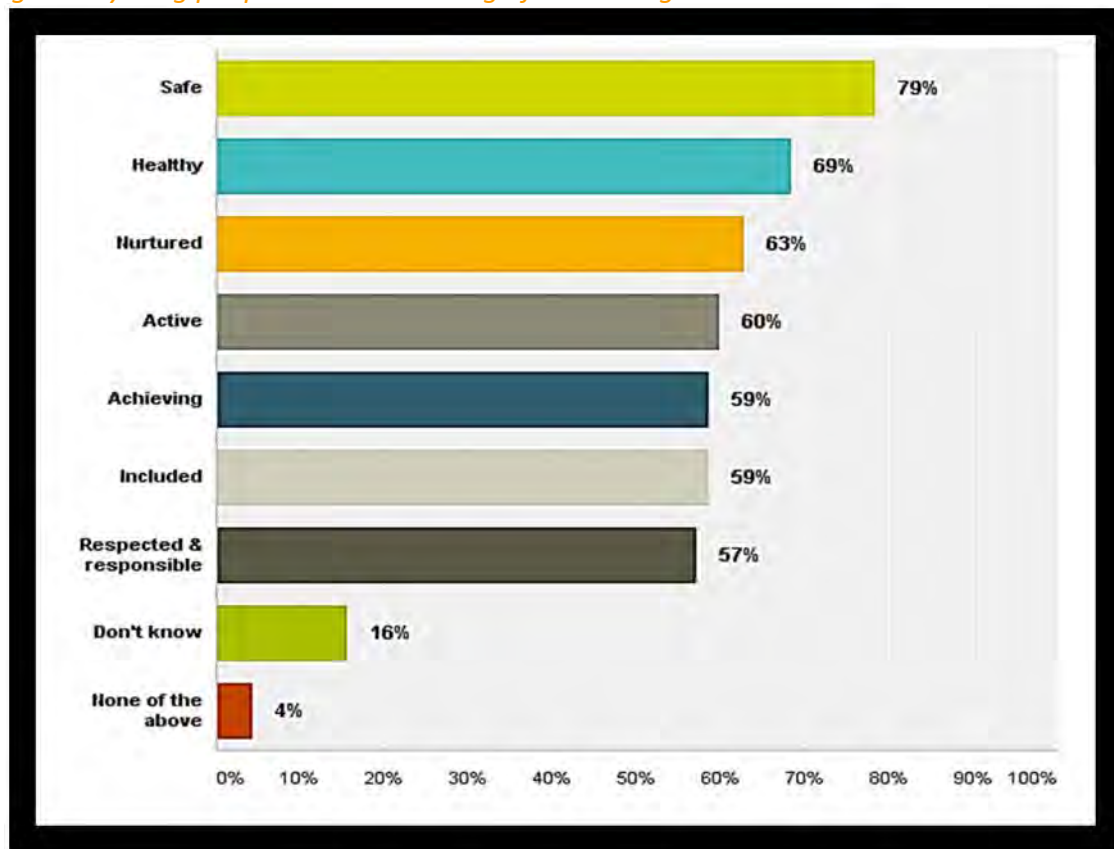
**Just being cared about and keeping yourself safe**

**Food in your belly, roof over your head, bed to sleep and to not be abused in any way.**

SHANARRI should ensure that professionals have a consistent method for assessing the wellbeing of young people and for identifying any concerns relating to it. Who Cares? Scotland uses the SHANARRI indicators to help a young person tell us how we are doing in terms of their advocacy representation.

The language associated with SHANARRI seems widely understood by the young people who we talked to.

Figure 8: young people’s understanding of well-being



The young people we talked to had a good understanding of the importance of SHANARRI and linked each of the indicators strongly to the concept of wellbeing.

They felt, however, that a common understanding amongst all of those involved in their care is necessary to ensure that all young people’s wellbeing is considered and nurtured consistently. Importantly, they believe this is fundamental if young people in all types of care placements are to have the rights, relationships and support around them to safeguard and promote their levels of wellbeing consistently.

There was also recognition that young people who are not supported to understand what their wellbeing is and what it means to their care – could be at a disadvantage once the Act is implemented. They believe that those workers that they have relationships with that are trusting and positive are more likely to inform them on their wellbeing rights and work with young people to protect it. Relationships again, are highlighted as important to young people both understanding and realising their rights.

### Recommendations relevant to interpretation of the Children & Young People Act

From this part of the research it is apparent that ‘wellbeing’ needs to be defined and interpreted consistently. It is important that the interpretation of wellbeing by corporate

parents is supported by care experienced young people – as young people know better than anyone the day to day and long term consequences of their wellbeing not being safeguarded or promoted. The following recommendations are relevant to Part 9 of the Act – Corporate Parenting:

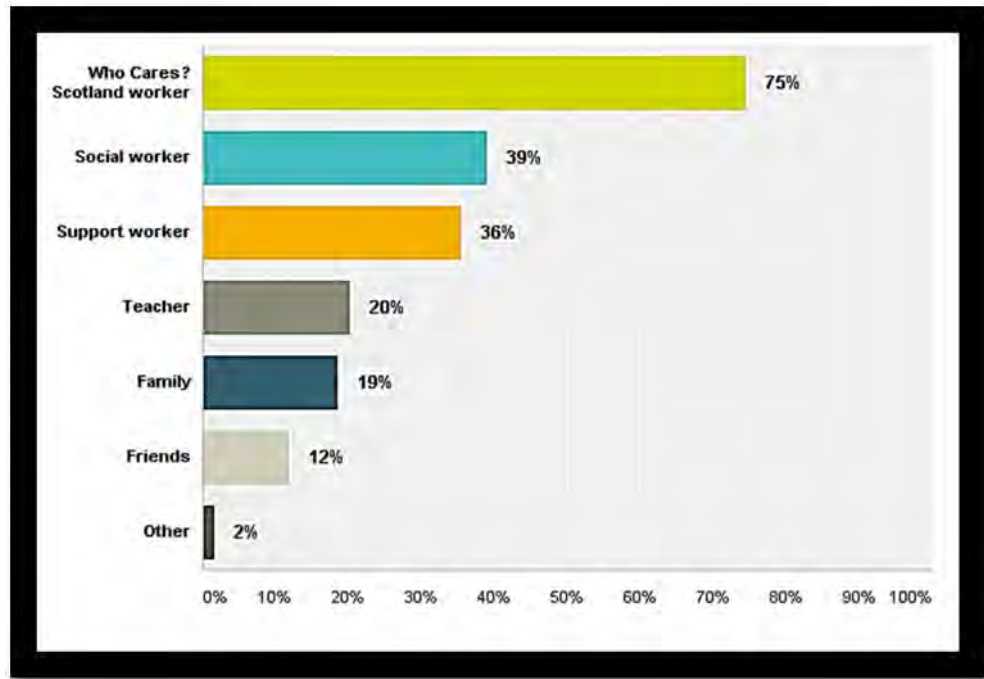
- The interpretation of ‘wellbeing’ must be informed by care experienced young people.
- The definition should incorporate the SHANARRI indicators to encourage a consistent language across services, corporate parents and care placements.
- The concept of ‘wellbeing’ must be understood by corporate parents and care experienced young people must have a part to play in this.
- The role which all professionals involved in the care of young people should always be viewed as connected and relevant to the overall wellbeing of young people.
- Care experienced young people must be supported to identify and voice their views on all aspects of their care and their emotions / feelings, if wellbeing is to be considered in the holistic way which the Act seeks to enable.
- Wellbeing of a young person can change daily; therefore assessments of wellbeing need to be flexible and responsive enough to account for this – both during and after care.
- After care services and entitlement to them, must be responsive enough to the changes in wellbeing a young person feels due to changes in their life.

## 5. Children and young peoples’ rights

Knowledge of rights is a pertinent issue for young people in care with **99%** of those we spoke to stating that they are important. Further, **half of the young people** were confident that they knew what their rights were, while another **40%** suggested they knew at least some of their rights. When asked where this knowledge came from, an overwhelming number said their **Who Cares? Scotland worker**, however just as relevant were **social work, support workers and teachers**. It is not surprising that Who Cares? Scotland workers came out top in this question as the majority of young people answering the survey were represented by a Who Cares? Scotland advocate who would speak to young people about their rights regularly.

However it is just as important to recognise that these young people often identify the positive, trusting relationship they have with their advocacy worker as key to them understanding what their rights mean – and not a general awareness of them. Because of this, young people are more likely to listen to what these workers say, belief that they have their best interests at heart and also appreciate and respond well to knowing that the advocate’s responsibility is to them and only them.

Figure 9: young people’s understanding of their rights



The young people we talked to were also able to give us strong examples of times when having knowledge of their rights has helped them throughout their care journey:

It helped me get contact with my real dad and also got social work to listen to me and realise how important it was to see my dad

If I am not being listened to I remind staff it is my right

It has helped me later in life – can’t go through life fighting with fists

I was denied contact with parents because I didn’t go to school. I knew I had the right to see my parents regardless of my attendance

A member of staff chose when I would have my meals. When I discussed this with my WC?S worker I realised I had the right to choose

When I wanted to go to the gym and a staff member said no, I said it is my right to 1 hour of gym a day

Knowledge of rights was high across all age groups, however when young people reported that they **felt listened to** in the care system, they were also **much more likely to know all of their rights**, in their view. It is important to recognise then, that those young people, who

did not feel listened to, also had a poor understanding of rights and what they could potentially do for them. Knowledge of rights is the best route for young people to not only stand up for themselves, but also to participate meaningfully in their care journey. What is clear from this research however is that this knowledge must begin early on and must be reinforced regularly by all involved in the young person’s life and care journey.

### Recommendations relevant to interpretation of the Children & Young People Act

**From this evidence, it is clear that rights are important to young people in care and can help them to feel included within the care system and their care journey. The following recommendations are relevant to interpretation of the Act as a whole, however specifically to Part 9 of the Act – Corporate parenting:**

- There is a strong link between feeling listened to by corporate parents and having knowledge of rights. We must ensure that all involved with young people in care, help them to recognise their rights and how they should be applied.
- Discussions in regards to what rights young people in care have must begin early on and must continue throughout the care journey to ensure young people are empowered to participate in their care experience.
- Corporate parents must have a good understanding of rights and how they apply to care experienced young people.
- All involved in the direct and indirect care of young people must positively promote and uphold the rights of them at all ages and stages.
- Stable, long-term relationships with adults in their lives, help young people access information on their rights, and therefore must be encouraged to be present by all corporate parents. .

## 6. Continuing care

We helped young people explore the concept of being able to live in their care placement for longer, as is a **new right within Part 11 of the Act** for young people in kinship, residential or foster care when they turn 16 years of age and are residing in one of those placement types. In doing this, we encouraged the respondents to identify their hopes and fears for their future – as this often dictates a young person’s views on the level of support they may need to achieve them.

We asked them what would help a young person be more prepared for moving on from care. The majority of young people spoken to said that **help to understand when they will be ready** to leave was important to them. They also recognised the importance of time and using this time to **speak to people they trust** about what comes next. Another significant message was that they would like the opportunity to **try out options for the future**, especially in relation to education, employment and housing options. The young people

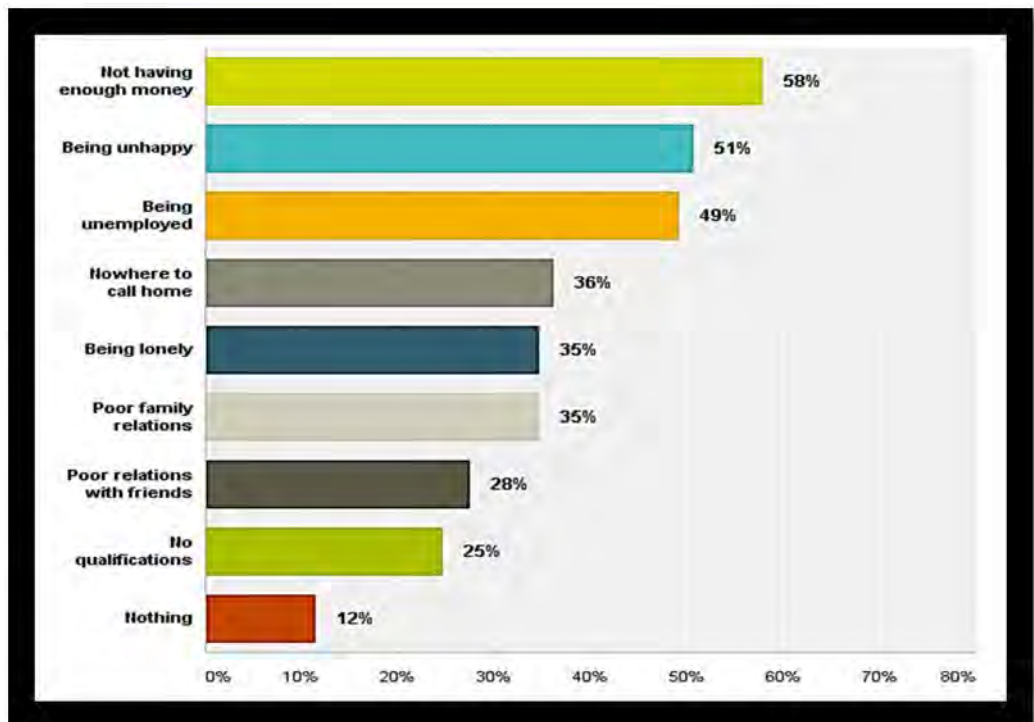


were asked to tell us about the feelings they have towards the future. While many were positive and had high hopes for what the future could bring, others were more anxious.

We asked young people to expand on their worries about the future and identify the kinds of feelings they get when they think about it.



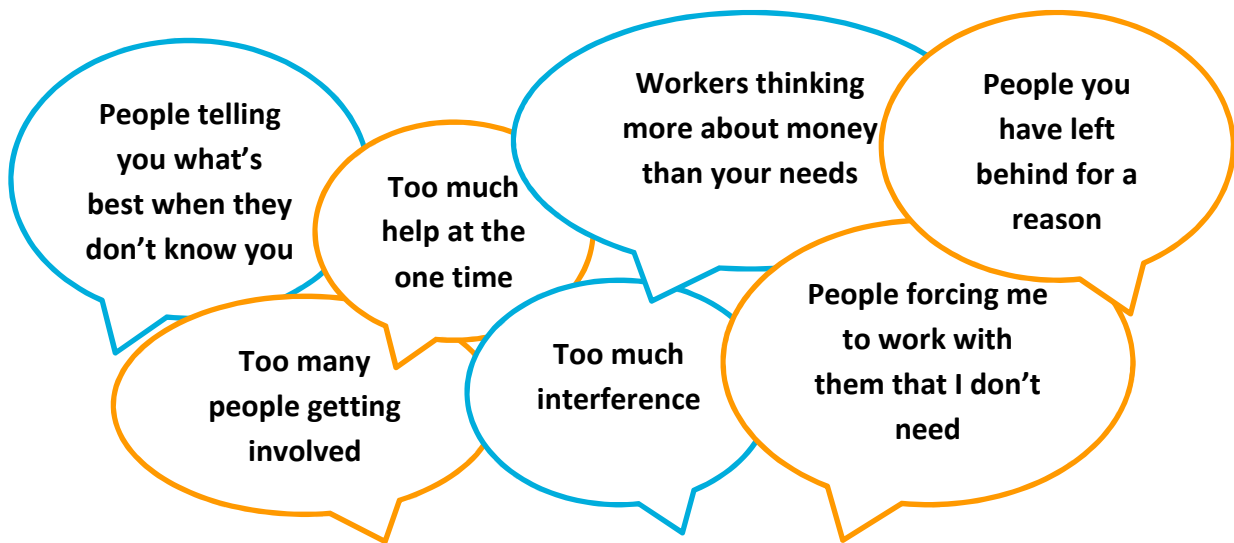
Figure 10: young people’s worries about the future



When asked what young people needed to

secure a happy future they were most likely to identify: **having enough money**; having **safe and settled accommodation** and having **enough opportunities** to do things in life. We recognise however that there are things which can potentially hold a young person back

from moving on successfully from care, so we asked young people what kinds of things these were. The answers they provided are particularly relevant to Part 5 of the Act – Child’s Plan:

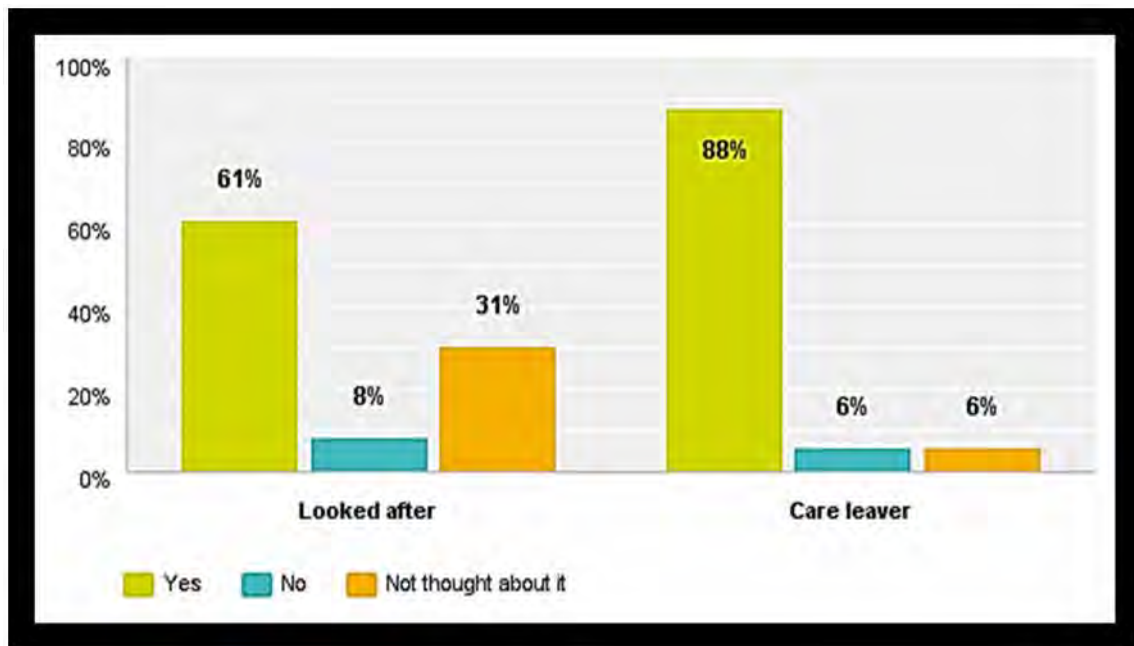


Several important messages regarding Part 11 of the Act - Continuing Care, were clear from the survey. The young people who are currently looked-after, have knowledge of their rights **and** have felt listened to throughout their care journey, are **much more likely to stay in care** for as long as possible. In addition, the group that identified openness to staying in care for as long as possible, fell within the 14-17 age range. This is important and displays the potential for professionals to encourage young people to stay in care until they are ready to leave – but only if these discussions are happening early and often enough. This is vital if young people who are entitled to continued care are to believe it is a real option for them when considering their future.

We asked all the young people who participated, who would help them decide to stay in care as long as possible and **60%** felt it should be **someone they trust and have a good relationship with**. This included Who Cares? Scotland workers, support workers, social workers and family. Interestingly for care leaver respondents alone, **80%** said that anyone who they have a good relationship with can help when leaving care. This identifies how important good, stable relationships are to young people, particularly for those who have already left the care system and can therefore recognise how they would use these relationships.

Similarly the option to return to care when they need it was an important option, particularly for those who had already left care. Almost **90%** of care leavers, who had chosen to leave care between the ages of 16 and 21, would like the option to return to care again if they need to. The reflection that these young people are able to have on their lives since leaving care seems to heavily impact on this response.

Figure 11: young people views on returning to care



Young people also overwhelmingly agreed that there should be a ‘**plan B**’ option in the lead up to leaving care. They felt this would give them a safety net should the first plan fall through or become problematic. They felt this was also what many non-looked after young people would have, provided usually by their parents.

**Recommendations relevant to the interpretation of the Children and Young People Act:**

The evidence shows us the importance of providing young people with security and support when moving on from care. The following recommendations are relevant to Part 11 of the Act – Continuing Care, but also have relevance to Part 5 – Child’s Plan and Part 9 – Corporate Parenting.

- Young people need to understand what options they have for when they leave care. These discussions must give the young people time and space to reflect and decide. Discussions must happen early and often.
- Both ‘Plan B’ and return to care options were welcomed by young people and should be considered fully.
- For the Act to be fully realised, we must understand the importance of good relationships to young people in care. These are the relationships which must help young people decide when it is right to move on from care.
- The duty to inform young people on their right to continued care if they meet the eligibility criteria is vital in realising the intentions of the Act.

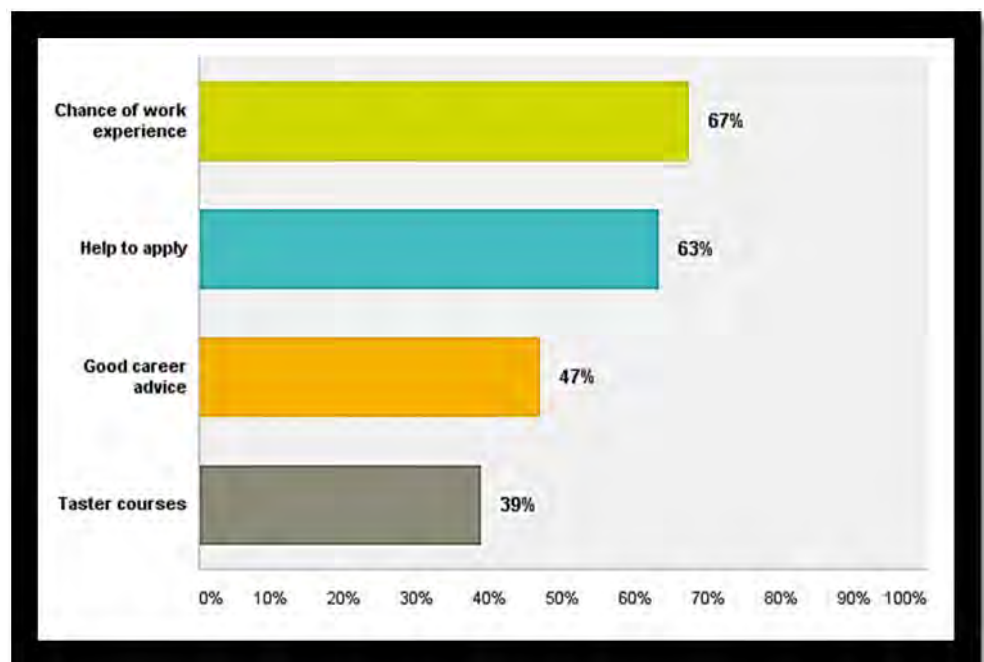
- Where young people are informed of their continuing care options, they should be supported to access these in retrospect.
- Young people, and the care placements available to them as part of their continuing care rights, must be fully understood.

## 7. Education and Employment

Access to and engagement with employment or education on leaving care is imperative to helping a young person contend with life after care. From the survey responses, it is clear that young people **have high hopes for their future** in terms of furthering their education. **75%** of the young people spoken to were not in college or university, however **60%** of this group said they want to go in the future and **30%** said that they might want to go. For both responses there was a fairly even distribution across age categories and in relation to where they currently live.

Figure 12: young people’s views on what they need to gain employment

Unfortunately, the young people also recognised the barriers they can face when trying to seek further education with **50%** of young people stating **they would need significant financial help** to do this successfully. It



is clear that care experienced young people tend to access further and higher education **later** than their non-looked after counterparts. The barriers to them accessing this education in their young adulthood (usually after 21 years of age) will likely correlate to the level and quality of aftercare support and experiences post care which they have – especially in relation to housing, health and financial support.

Regardless of hopes for the future, the current Scottish Government statistics on education outcomes for looked-after young people highlight the importance of supporting this population to fulfil their hopes. Across the survey there was wide agreement on what kinds

of support is needed to help young people in care access such opportunities. Essentially young people want to be able to try out employment and education options to see where their strengths and interests lie. Due to the levels of disruption many young people face in their primary and secondary education whilst in care, it is often impossible for them to understand fully what they are good at, the academic potential they have and importantly what other skills they possess. This places them at a disadvantage when compared to many of their non-looked after peers. Therefore, they recognise the importance of receiving help from others to make their way through this process. In identifying who this could be, the young people spoken to recognise the importance of **Skills Development Scotland** and **Job Centre Plus** as being the people best placed to help them achieve.

### Recommendations relevant to the interpretation of the Children and Young People Act:

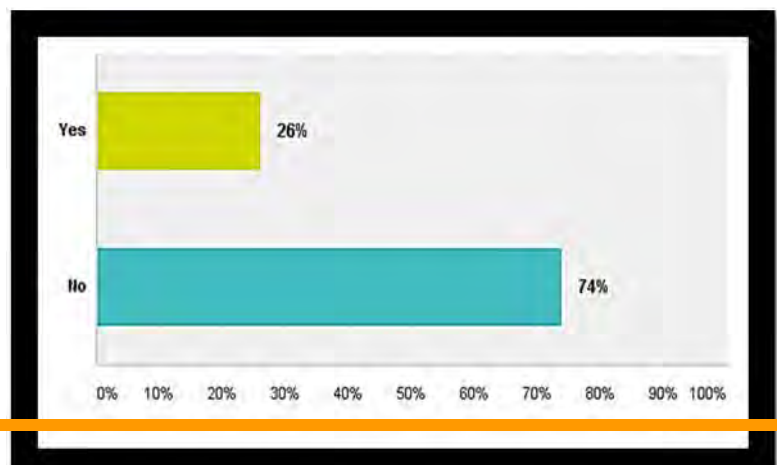
The evidence in this section highlights the widespread interest in further education or employment. This interest exists regardless of placement type, age or local authority. The following recommendations are relevant specifically to Part 9 – Corporate Parenting, Part 10 – Aftercare and Part 11 – Continuing care:

- Corporate parents must help young people to understand how to break down the barriers they can face in regards to further education, such as funding.
- We must provide young people with the ability to try out options for the future to help them truly recognise their ability and strengths.
- All corporate parents should work together to provide young people with the best possible opportunities to learn and determine for themselves what they are interested in, good at and what potential they have.
- Care experienced young people tend to access further and higher education at a later age than non-looked after peers. Therefore corporate parents must recognise this reality and provide services and support which reflect this.

## 8. Homelessness

*Figure 13: young people’s experiences of homelessness*

Homelessness is a reality for many care leavers. Despite a lack of



research in the area, we know from consulting with young people that on leaving care, homelessness is something many have come to expect – either not long after leaving care, or in the future.

For those who responded to the survey, **nearly 30%** had experienced homelessness at some point in their lives. While the majority of those who had experienced homelessness were over the age of 17, a small number of 14-16 year olds also told us they had experienced homelessness.

When asked how homelessness made them feel the young people said **angry, sad, lonely and frustrated**. **45%** of young people stated that they just did not cope with this experience, while **50%** were able to get help. In trying to access support, young people recognised that they could reach out to **social work, support workers, friends, family and Who Cares? Scotland workers**.

Please also see the Who Cares? Scotland response to the Equal Opportunities Committee inquiry into ‘Having and keeping a home’ via [http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4\\_EqualOpportunitiesCommittee/General%20Documents/Who\\_Cares\\_Scotland.pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_EqualOpportunitiesCommittee/General%20Documents/Who_Cares_Scotland.pdf) This involved direct evidence from care experienced young people and presents a specific set of care studies of relevance to homelessness prevention and better housing support and provision for care leavers in Scotland.

### **Recommendations relevant to the interpretation of the Children and Young People Act:**

The evidence gathered from this section gives a good understanding of how difficult life can be for those young people with care experience.

The following recommendations are relevant specifically to Part 11 of the Act – Continuing Care:

- We often speak of homelessness as an issue for those having left care, but the results of this survey make it clear that this can be a reality for those still moving through the care system. Corporate parents must recognise this and how best to support young people to get help.
- Corporate parents must involve young people in designing their services to make sure they can best support young people with care experience.
- Part 11 – Continuing Care must learn from the research above and take account of the importance of relationships in helping young people with care experience to move on successfully.
- The right to suitable accommodation afforded by the Act must be interpreted consistently across all local authority areas.



- The access to suitable accommodation is often hindered by the lack of available options of housing stock and other accommodation options. This must be tackled collaboratively by all relevant corporate parents and not only be viewed as a housing issue.
- The wellbeing of young people can be seriously affected or positively reinforced by their housing status upon leaving care. Therefore regular and meaningful support and review on how the young person is progressing should be undertaken by corporate parents involved.
- Trusting and supportive relationships matter to care leavers – and upon leaving care, these are often needed to support the young person cope and progress well in the journey to independent living. They are also vital to helping young people overcome barriers and should be supported to work with after care services and other corporate parents where this is the case.

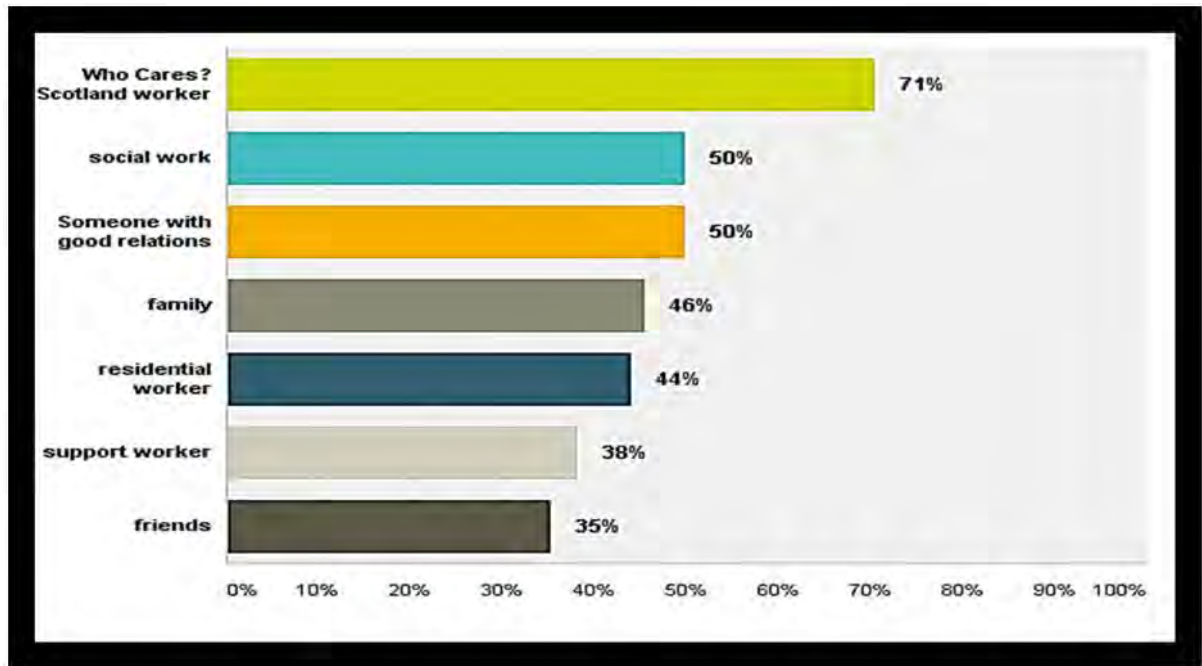
## 9. Throughcare and Aftercare

The period after leaving care is a critical stage in a care experienced young person’s life, where they can face increased levels vulnerability and in many cases feelings of isolation. Through the strengthened legislation under Parts 10 and 11 of the Act, we have an opportunity to ensure young people making their transition out of care are better supported than ever before.

We asked young people who they would most like to access for support if life became difficult after leaving care.

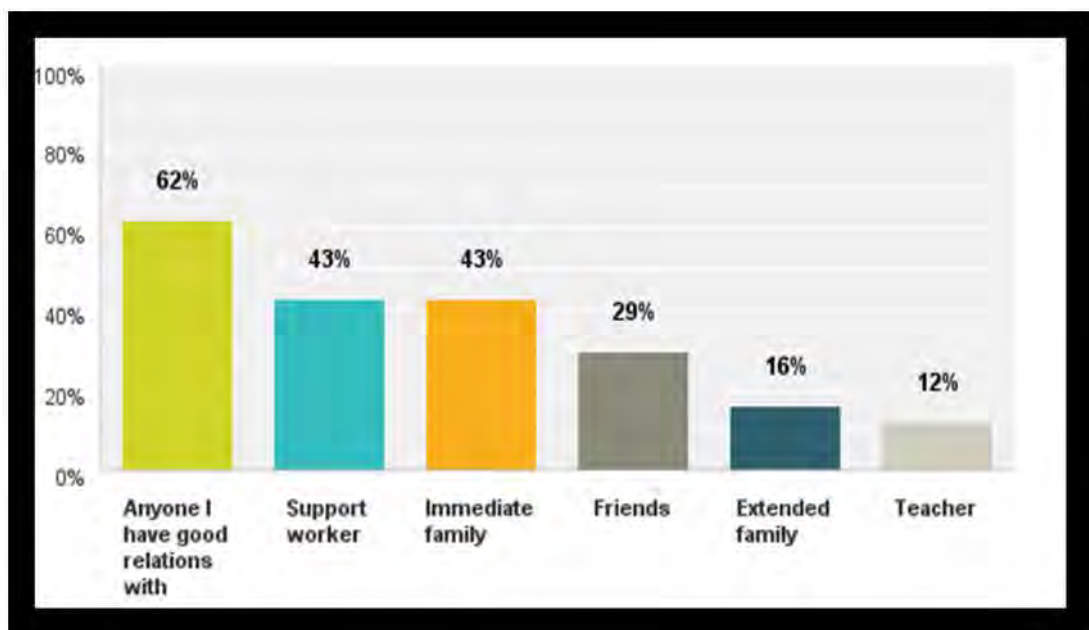
While most again identified their Who Cares? Scotland worker due to the number of those who responded being supported by our organisation, there was also recognition of the importance of social work in terms of support, as well as people they generally have a good relationship with.

Figure 14: young people’s support options upon leaving care



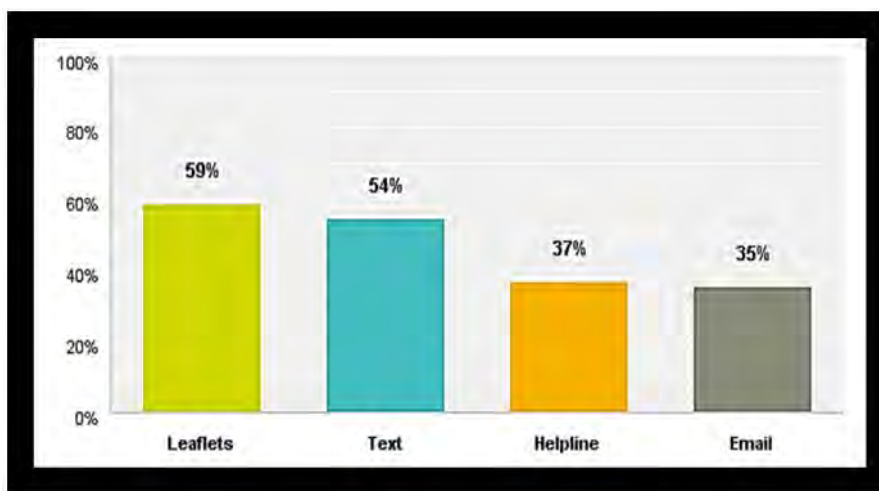
However we recognise for young people leaving care that despite their right to access Throughcare support, the reality is that these relationships can disappear over time for many reasons. These would include the young person disengaging from the Throughcare professional supporting them. As a result, we asked young people to identify the people that would be best placed to help them reengage with social work should this happen:

Figure 15: young people’s support option out with social work



**60%** of young people said they would ask for help from **anyone that they trust**. **40%** said they would use their support worker, highlighting **the importance of the third sector** in providing support to care leavers. Aside from workers, **40%** said they would ask **immediate family**, while **30%** identified **friends** as being able to help. These responses were widely spread across age range and current placement type. As a result this provides a good understanding of who is deemed to be important to care experienced people throughout their journey.

As mentioned previously, we also understand the difficulty that social work and other services can have in reaching those young people who have disengaged on leaving care. We therefore asked the respondents to identify the ways in which they would like to find out about services and support after leaving care:



*Figure 16: young people’s preferences for accessing support as a care leaver*

The young people who responded were open to various ways of finding out about support after leaving care. The majority of

young people preferred to receive leaflets and texts with information on services. Again, as mentioned previously, the use of leaflets in communicating information to young people who have left care would take account of the very likely possibility that some will not have mobile phones and nor will they have access to the internet. Again, the suggestion of a central helpline was also supported by 37% of young people that we spoke to.

### **Recommendations relevant to the interpretation of the Children and Young People Act:**

**The evidence tells us that certain people are best placed to help young people after their care journey has come to an end. The following recommendations are relevant to Part 10 of the Act – Aftercare:**

- Young people must be able to identify who is important to them and who should support them in their transition to independent living. The guidance must identify the importance of relationships in this process.
- The guidance must help corporate parents understand how best to get in contact with care leavers in order to ensure as many care leavers as possible recognise what

support they are entitled to. A variety of information sources must be utilised and a central helpline was also suggested.

- Corporate parents must engage directly with care leavers to work out how best their services can support this population.
- The duty to inform young people on their aftercare entitlement is vital if young people are to understand what support they can access.
- The journey of care leavers progressing towards independent living can change regularly and with significant impact. Access to aftercare support must be simple and not act as a barrier to seeking support.
- Young people, who are not engaged with aftercare services, must know how to access them if they hit a problem or need support. This will be difficult where these young people do not hold relationships with the services they are seeking help from, or have negative associations with them from their past experiences. This must be taken into account to ensure that aftercare access is as easy for a 24 year old who is completely disengaged, as it is for a 21 year old who has consistently been engaged with services.
- The criteria for assessment to aftercare services must be flexible and responsive enough to the changing circumstances a young person faces upon leaving care. This is especially relevant given the extended aftercare support services many will be entitled to up to 26 years of age.
- A coordinated and collaborative approach for accessing aftercare must be taken by relevant corporate parents and other supports involved.

## Appendix 1: What care experienced young people were asked

1. Question on giving consent
2. What is your age?
3. What is your gender?
4. What is your ethnicity?
5. What local authority are you from?
6. What local authority do you currently live in?
7. What kind of accommodation do you currently live in?
8. Have you ever lived in the following?
9. How many placement moves have you had?
10. Are you....looked after or a care leaver?
11. At what age would you like to leave care?
12. Once you leave your placement, where do you see yourself living?
13. Have you discussed with your workers/social workers where you will go after you leave care?
14. Have you felt listened to during these discussions and as though you have been able to voice your opinion?
15. If no, why do you think these discussions haven’t happened?
16. Do you want to live...alone; with someone/ others; not sure yet?
17. What type of accommodation do you want when you leave care?
18. What age were you when you left care?
19. Do you know what a corporate parent is?
20. Where did you hear about corporate parents?
21. The new Children and Young People (Scotland) Act names all the different corporate parents. Please select any you have heard of before.
22. What should a corporate parent do for you and others?
23. Why have you chosen these examples?
24. Out of those you have heard of, what have you used them for and why? If you haven’t used any, just skip this question.
25. From April 2015, these new corporate parent these new corporate parents all have a duty to think about you when planning and providing their services. Do you have any ideas how this would affect you?
26. In what ways do you think this will affect you?
27. Have you ever seen or heard of your local authority’s corporate parenting strategy/plan?
28. If yes, who told you about it?
29. From April 2015, your corporate parents need to make sure they look after your well-being. What does this mean to you?
30. From, April 2015, corporate parents need to work together to deliver the best possible services and care for you. What does that mean to you?
31. How can corporate parents inform you of their services so you can benefit?

32. Do you or did you have a care plan?
33. Do you or did you know who sees your care plan and why?
34. Do you/did you have input in your care plan – have you been involved and listened to?
35. Is/was your plan regularly reviewed and updated with your opinions?
36. How often would you like your plan to be reviewed?
37. Do you think Children’s and young people’s rights are important?
38. Do you know what types of rights you have?
39. If yes, how did you learn about your rights?
40. Can you think of any times you were in care, when understanding what your rights are has helped you?
41. If you are still in care, do you think you would like to stay in your placement for as long as possible?
42. If you have left care, do you think you would have liked to stay in your care placement for as long as possible?
43. Who do you think should help young people make a decision about whether they stay in their care placement past their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday?
44. What sort of help/support would you need to make that decision?
45. In the lead up to leaving care, should there be an agreed decision on what your ‘plan b’ should be if it doesn’t work out when you leave care?
46. Do you ever think about your future?
47. Who do you speak with about your future hopes and plans?
48. What should future planning involve for someone in care?
49. What are you looking forward to most about your future?
50. What worries you about the future?
51. Would you like to be able to leave care between 16 and 21 and then have the option of returning to care if you felt you needed it?
52. When you leave care (or if you have left already) what would help you live the life you want?
53. What help would you not want? Think about the types of things that you think would not help you and be more likely to set you back?
54. Are you in college or university?
55. If you answered no, would you like to go to college or university in the future?
56. What support do you think you, or other care leavers, would need access to college/uni and to complete your course?
57. Would you prefer to do one of the following?
58. If you are in a job just now, how did you get it?
59. If you are not working, what would you need to get a job, join a training programme or start and apprenticeship?



60. Have you ever been homeless?
61. How did being homeless make you feel?
62. How did you cope with feeling like this?
63. Who helped you during this time and why?
64. If things get difficult after living in care, what would you want to do?
65. How would you want to ask for help (remember you might have been out of care for a few years)?
66. If not social work, who would you go to for help?
67. How would you like to find out about the support on offer once you have left care?

## Appendix 2: Recommendations relevant to interpretation of the Children & Young People Act - summary

### Care planning

The evidence highlights the importance of the care plan to a young person’s understanding of their life in care. Who Cares? Scotland would recommend that discussions around care planning happen often, in young people’s terms and are fully reflective of their feelings and views. The Child’s Plan should be something which care experienced young people feel they have ownership of, and not just something which professionals hold on behalf of the young person.

The following recommendations are relevant to Part 5 of the Act – the Child’s Plan.

- Care plans must meaningfully involve young people in both their creation off and in ongoing reviews and update processes.
- Care plans should be coordinated by someone who has a positive relationship to the young person to encourage engagement and understanding by them.
- Care plans and their updates must be flexible and subject to the young person’s age and stage.
- Care plan discussions should happen early and often in the young person’s care journey.
- Care plans should be understood fully by all involved in the care of the young person – so that a coordinated and collaborative role can be taken.

The survey evidence provides very clear messages in relation to the preparation needed to prepare a young person for the future. Who Cares? Scotland would encourage an early and often approach to be taken with young people about their futures. This is also important if young people are to understand their entitlement to continuing care and after care provisions too.

The following recommendations are relevant specifically to the interpretation of Part 5 – the Child’s Plan, Part 10 – Aftercare and Part 11 – Continuing care.

- Discussions about the future must happen early and often for ALL young people living in various care placements. This will help them to feel more prepared when moving on from care.
- These discussions must be led by adults who have built a positive and trusted relationship with the young person.
- All involved with the care of the young person, must take a coordinated and collaborative approach to discussing meaningfully life after care with them.

- Young people need to know what their options are for life after care. This will help them plan and work towards future goals with support from those who care for them.
- Long term, stable relationships must be around young people both during and after care.

### Corporate parenting

**From the evidence in this section it is clear that more can be done to help young people understand who corporate parents are and what they can offer. Whilst these formal legal duties do not come into force until April 2015, it is recommended that understanding the complexities of communicating with care experienced young people, and on what matters, is considered fully ahead of the Act’s implementation. The following recommendations are relevant specifically to Part 9 of the Act – Corporate Parenting:**

- Professionals must help young people to understand corporate parenting including who they are and what they can do for young people with care experience.
- Corporate parents must be helped to understand the care journey and when in this journey they are likely to meet a care experienced young person.
- Corporate parents must know what care experienced young people need help with and how to provide better and specific services for them. They can do this by involving young people directly in planning their services.
- Corporate parents must understand how best they can reach out to the care experienced population in order to fully deliver on their duties.
- Corporate parents least likely to be known to care experienced young people must be encouraged to find ways to better engage this population.
- Specific corporate parents, within the wider group have key roles to play for care experienced young people. Especially teachers, the police, social workers, panel members and children’s reporters. They must be supported to apply their duties consistently for all types of young people across Scotland. This is where working with care experienced young people is needed.

### Wellbeing

**From this part of the research it is apparent that ‘wellbeing’ needs to be defined and interpreted consistently. It is important that the interpretation of wellbeing by corporate parents is supported by care experienced young people – as young people know better than anyone the day to day and long term consequences of their wellbeing not being safeguarded or promoted. The following recommendations are relevant to Part 9 of the Act – Corporate Parenting:**

- The interpretation of ‘wellbeing’ must be informed by care experienced young people.
- The definition should incorporate the wellbeing indicators (SHANARRI) to encourage a consistent language across services, corporate parents and care placements.
- The concept of ‘wellbeing’ must be understood by corporate parents and care experienced young people must have a part to play in this.
- The role which all professionals involved in the care of young people should always be viewed as connected and relevant to the overall wellbeing of young people.
- Care experienced young people must be supported to identify and voice their views on all aspects of their care and their emotions / feelings, if wellbeing is to be considered in the holistic way which the Act seeks to enable.
- Wellbeing of a young person can change daily; therefore assessments of wellbeing need to be flexible and responsive enough to account for this – both during and after care.
- After care services and entitlement to them, must be responsive enough to the changes in wellbeing a young person feels due to changes in their life.

## Rights

**From this evidence, it is clear that rights are important to young people in care and can help them to feel included within the care system and their care journey. The following recommendations are relevant to interpretation of the Act as a whole, however specifically to Part 9 of the Act – Corporate parenting:**

- There is a strong link between feeling listened to by corporate parents and having knowledge of rights. We must ensure that all involved with young people in care, help them to recognise their rights and how they should be applied.
- Discussions in regards to what rights young people in care have must begin early on and must continue throughout the care journey to ensure young people are empowered to participate in their care experience.
- Corporate parents must have a good understanding of rights and how they apply to care experienced young people.
- All involved in the direct and indirect care of young people must positively promote and uphold the rights of them at all ages and stages.
- Stable, long-term relationships with adults in their lives, help young people access information on their rights, and therefore must be encouraged to be present by all corporate parents.

### Continuing care

**The evidence shows us the importance of providing young people with security and support when moving on from care. The following recommendations are relevant to Part 11 of the Act – Continuing Care, but also have relevance to Part 5 – Child’s Plan and Part 9 – Corporate Parenting.**

- Young people need to understand what options they have for when they leave care. These discussions must give the young people time and space to reflect and decide. Discussions must happen early and often.
- Both ‘Plan B’ and return to care options were welcomed by young people and should be considered fully.
- For the Act to be fully realised, we must understand the importance of good relationships to young people in care. These are the relationships which must help young people decide when it is right to move on from care.
- The duty to inform young people on their right to continued care if they meet the eligibility criteria is vital in realising the intentions of the Act.
- Where young people are informed of their continuing care options, they should be supported to access these in retrospect.
- Young people, and the care placements available to them as part of their continuing care rights, must be fully understood.

### Education & Employment

**The evidence in this section highlights the widespread interest in further education or employment. This interest exists regardless of placement type, age or local authority. The following recommendations are relevant to specifically to Part 9 – Corporate Parenting, Part 10 – Aftercare and Part 11 – Continuing care:**

- Corporate parents must help young people to understand how to break down the barriers they can face in regards to further education, such as funding.
- We must provide young people with the ability to try out options for the future to help them truly recognise their ability and strengths.
- All corporate parents should work together to provide young people with the best possible opportunities to learn and determine for themselves what they are interested in, good at and what potential they have.
- Care experienced young people tend to access further and higher education at a later age than non-looked after peers. Therefore corporate parents must recognise this reality and provide services and support which reflect this.

## Homelessness

The evidence gathered from this section gives a good understanding of how difficult life can be for those young people with care experience.

Please also see the Who Cares? Scotland response to the Equal Opportunities Committee inquiry into ‘Having and keeping a home’ via

[http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4\\_EqualOpportunitiesCommittee/General%20Documents/Who\\_Cares\\_Scotland.pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_EqualOpportunitiesCommittee/General%20Documents/Who_Cares_Scotland.pdf) This involved direct evidence from care experienced young people and presents a specific set of care studies of relevance to homelessness prevention and better housing support and provision for care leavers in Scotland.

The following recommendations are relevant specifically to Part 11 of the Act – Continuing Care:

- We often speak of homelessness as an issue for those having left care, but the results of this survey make it clear that this can be a reality for those still moving through the care system. Corporate parents must recognise this and how best to support young people to get help.
- Corporate parents must involve young people in designing their services to make sure they can best support young people with care experience.
- Part 11 – Continuing Care must learn from the research above and take account of the importance of relationships in helping young people with care experience to move on successfully.
- The right to suitable accommodation afforded by the Act must be interpreted consistently across all local authority areas.
- The access to suitable accommodation is often hindered by the lack of available options of housing stock and other accommodation options. This must be tackled collaboratively by all relevant corporate parents and not only be viewed as a housing issue.
- The wellbeing of young people can be seriously affected or positively reinforced by their housing status upon leaving care. Therefore regular and meaningful support and review on how the young person is progressing should be undertaken by corporate parents involved.
- Trusting and supportive relationships matter to care leavers – and upon leaving care, these are often needed to support the young person cope and progress well in the journey to independent living. They are also vital to helping young people overcome barriers and should be supported to work with after care services and other corporate parents where this is the case.

### Aftercare and Throughcare

**The evidence tells us that certain people are best placed to help young people after their care journey has come to an end. The following recommendations are relevant to Part 10 of the Act – Aftercare:**

- Young people must be able to identify who is important to them and who should support them in their transition to independent living. The guidance must identify the importance of relationships in this process.
- The guidance must help corporate parents understand how best to get in contact with care leavers in order to ensure as many care leavers as possible recognise what support they are entitled to. A variety of information sources must be utilised and a central helpline was also suggested.
- Corporate parents must engage directly with care leavers to work out how best their services can support this population.
- The duty to inform young people on their aftercare entitlement is vital if young people are to understand what support they can access.
- The journey of care leavers progressing towards independent living can change regularly and with significant impact. Access to aftercare support must be simple and not act as a barrier to seeking support.
- Young people, who are not engaged with aftercare services, must know how to access them if they hit a problem or need support. This will be difficult where these young people do not hold relationships with the services they are seeking help from, or have negative associations with them from their past experiences. This must be taken into account to ensure that aftercare access is as easy for a 24 year old who is completely disengaged, as it is for a 21 year old who has consistently been engaged with services.
- The criteria for assessment to aftercare services must be flexible and responsive enough to the changing circumstances a young person faces upon leaving care. This is especially relevant given the extended aftercare support services many will be entitled to up to 26 years of age.
- A coordinated and collaborative approach for accessing aftercare must be taken by all corporate parents involved.



## Appendix 3: Understanding our corporate parents – report from residential workshop with care experienced young people

### Introduction

Who Cares? Scotland ran a residential workshop over 2 days with care experienced young people which sought to explore in depth the interaction and knowledge they had of the new corporate parents (as introduced by the Children and Young People Act 2014).

The purpose of this was to understand better the points at which care experienced young people were likely to come into direct or indirect contact with these corporate parents. This would help to inform the approach which Who Cares? Scotland took in targeting key groups for the Corporate Parenting National Training Programme, as well as the specific messaging they should receive. It also has helped to provide further insight into how the Children and Young People Act 2014, Part 9 needs to be applied and interpreted by corporate parents – from a young person’s perspective.

**Who Cares? Scotland would like to thank the young people who gave up their time freely to take part in this residential.**

### Who took part

| Young person | LA area             | Age |
|--------------|---------------------|-----|
| 1            | Highland            | 17  |
| 2            | West Dunbartonshire | 18  |
| 3            | Glasgow             | 17  |
| 4            | Stirling            | 21  |
| 5            | North Ayrshire      | 19  |
| 6            | Fife                | 17  |
| 7            | Inverclyde          | 21  |
| 8            | East Renfrewshire   | 19  |
| 9            | Argyll & Bute       | 26  |

### 1. General knowledge of corporate parents

The corporate parents where at least half of the young people who participated, recognised or felt they understood the purpose of were listed as:

- **A Health Board**
- **The Scottish Qualifications Authority**
- **The Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland**

- **A body which is a post-16 education body for the purposes of further and higher education (Scotland) Act 2005**
- **Skills Development Scotland**
- **Children’s Hearing Scotland**
- **The Scottish Children’s Reporters Administration**
- **The Scottish Housing Regulator**
- **A Local Authority**
- **Social Care & Social Work Improvement Scotland**
- **The Scottish Fire & Rescue Service**
- **The Scottish Legal Aid Board**
- **The Scottish Police Authority**

None of the young people had any knowledge of how the following corporate parents could play a part in their lives or would have a role in any part of their care journey:

- **Healthcare Improvement Scotland**
- **The Police Constable of the Police Service of Scotland**
- **The Scottish Ministers**
- **The Principal Reporter**
- **Bord na Gaidhlig**
- **The Scottish Sports Council**
- **The Commissioner for Children and Young People & Children**

Some young people commented:

*“I don’t even know who they are, so I don’t know what they’d offer me”*

*“I don’t know three-quarters of them... If I don’t know  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the stuff, how am I supposed to know what rights I have?”*

*“I did some summer projects... drama and stuff, would that have been them [Creative Scotland]?”*

*“Are postmen and shopkeepers corporate parents?”*

*“I have never heard of Skills Development Scotland, should I? I don’t work or go to college”*

*“Panels don’t come across as friendly”*

*“Every young person should go to a Children’s Panel with an advocate to talk up for them”*

*“The Reporter could come across as quite scary and threatening”*

*“Health should be involved more in the life of looked after young people”*

The difference in recognition levels of the corporate parents is perhaps reflective of the type of services and direct and indirect roles they may play in the lives of care experienced young people. However, all of the young people felt that there has to be investment in increasing the levels of awareness they have of these corporate parents. This was felt especially important once the Act comes into force.

## 2. Contact (direct and indirect) with corporate parents

### 2.1 Before care

All the young people were asked which of the corporate parents they remembered having contact with *before* they were placed in care.

Those selected were:

- **The Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration**
- **A Local Authority**
- **Children’s Hearings Scotland**
- **A Health Board**
- **The Scottish Police Authority**
- **The Scottish Housing Regulator**

There were some corporate parents of whom the participants had never heard of, and this caused some confusion. Some participants found it strange that **schools** and **social work** were not included in the list of corporate parents. It had to be explained that these services would fall under the **local authority** corporate parent term. Some of the young people felt this was strange and confusing. They highlighted that most young people are probably unaware of everything that falls under the **local authority corporate parenting role** and felt that this should be better understood and explained to young people.

The young people gave some specific views on the interaction they had with these corporate parents before care.

*‘Police were only involved when there was trouble, not always with us but were called all the time to extended family.’*

*‘Saw a lot of the Police but they never seemed to do anything’*

*‘Think the only time I saw someone from my Local Authority was if I saw my social worker’*

*‘I had lots of contact with Health professionals – doctors, dentists, school nurse and hospitals’*

*“I’m not too sure how exactly social work got involved, they’ve always been there as far as I can remember but I believe I went into school with a hand print on my face and school intervened and contacted them [social work]. They became heavily involved and tried to help by offering respite care once a week and other services which my mum refused to engage in yet I still remained at home.”*

*“I felt let down by the police because they just let me go back to my mum’s”.*

Most noted that their involvement with the police was mainly due to domestic violence, neglect, antisocial behaviour or criminal behavior by their families. They all agreed that it was the Police that made the most referrals to the Children’s Hearing System.

## 2.2 During care

The young people were asked which of the corporate parents they had contact with *during* their time in care.

They were:

- **The Scottish Ministers**
- **A Local Authority**
- **The National Convener of Children’s Hearings Scotland**
- **Children’s Hearings Scotland**
- **The Principal Reporter**
- **The Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration**
- **A health board**
- **A board constituted under section 2(1)(b) of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978**
- **Healthcare Improvement Scotland**
- **The Scottish Qualifications Authority**
- **Skills Development Scotland**
- **Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland**
- **The Scottish Sports Council**
- **The Chief constable of the Police Service of Scotland**
- **The Scottish Police Authority**
- **The Scottish Legal Aid Board**
- **The Commissioner for Children and Young People in Scotland**
- **The Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland**
- **Creative Scotland**
- **The Scottish Housing Regulator**

Young people commented on their interaction with several of these corporate parents as follows:

*‘The only Local Authority staff I knew was my social worker’*

*‘I remember having overnight visits to my Mum when she lived in Homeless Units and they were always in really bad areas’*

*‘There’s definitely more involvement with the Police when you’re in care’*

*‘I think young people end up with more charges if they live in a Children’s Unit. Picking up charges for stuff like vandalism, absconding, breach of the peace, is just a by-product of unit life.’*

*‘When the Care Inspectors were coming, staff in the unit got stressed and looked scared. The unit got cleaned out. I don’t know why they were worried because mostly they were all right.’*

*‘I remember Princess Anne came in a helicopter’*

*‘I know what the SQA is but I wasn’t able to study and was held back.’*

*‘Because I had so many moves, I missed out at school and couldn’t catch up’*

*‘I remember when I was 10, I spent hours in a police cell and I was terrified’*

*‘All our windows kept getting smashed and because of pressure from the community we got evicted. For 2–3 years we were moved about’*

*‘I had to go to a children’s court so had a lawyer for that.’*

*‘My mum had a lawyer if she was up in court’*

*‘Mental welfare provides stuff like CAMHS and counselling’*

*‘We once went to visit the Scottish Parliament but that’s all I know about Scottish ministers’*

*‘We saw a lot of health professionals in care – the LAC nurse, doctors, counsellors’*

*‘My first contact with the NHS was waking up in an ambulance’*

*“Without a doubt the one who makes the biggest decisions is the children’s reporter.”*

*“Most contact was with my social worker”.*

*“Because my mum still had parental rights I hardly saw social work. Social work came round once every few months, the absolute minimum requirement.”*

The young people’s experiences highlight just how high a level of interaction those in the care system have with several of the corporate parents – especially those who provide direct services to them. The young people also believe that more needs done so that they and others would understand the other parts of a local authority which have a role towards them, during their care journey.

### 2.3 After care

The young people were asked which corporate parents they had contact with when they left care.

These were:

- **The Scottish Ministers**
- **A Local Authority**
- **A Health board**
- **A board constituted under section 2(1)(b) of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978**
- **Healthcare Improvement Scotland**
- **Skills Development Scotland**
- **The Scottish Sports Council**
- **The Scottish Police Authority**
- **The Scottish Legal Aid Board**
- **Creative Scotland**
- **A body which is a —post-16 education body|| for the purposes of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005**
- **The Scottish Housing Regulator**

The group thought everyone leaving care needs to have a job or be in education, a safe and secure home, a daily structure and a positive purpose to their lives. They all agreed that corporate parents would be important in helping young people to achieve these.

*“Housing was a terrible corporate parent. They wanted to just put me in a bad B&B, in a really horrible area.”*

*“There feels like there are less corporate parents for when we leave care”*

*“Housing’s just about waiting and waiting for something”*

*“I remember going to an adult court when I was just 16 and they took me through the back which was considerate”*

*“We all use NHS24 and ambulances”*

*“I was involved in giving evidence to Mike Russell, Secretary for Education”*

*“My Local Authority provides Throughcare services”*

*“We still have involvement with the Police”*

*“Everyone should have good unit staff and good through care staff”*

All the young people had different experiences to share as part of their aftercare journey. However, they all felt that this was just another reason why the aftercare services to young people need to be better understood and promoted to care leavers across Scotland.

### 3. The importance of corporate parents – young people’s views

Each young person was asked to rate out of 10 (with 10 being the highest and most positive rating) each corporate parent in relation to the following:

1. **During a young person’s care journey how important is the involvement of each corporate parent?**
2. **In your experience how do rate their involvement in *your* care journey?**

In order for young people do answer objectively on question 1, the roles and remit of each of the corporate parents were clearly understood to them by Who Cares? Scotland workers.

For question 2, young people were then asked to use the increased knowledge they had of corporate parenting and the new corporate parents, to reflect on the involvement they had in their care journey. This was therefore a subjective, but reflective response.

| Corporate Parent       | How important is the corporate parent in the life of a young person in care | In your experience how would you rate their involvement in your care journey |
|------------------------|---|--|
| The Scottish Ministers | 10  | 6  |
| A Local Authority      | 10  | 5  |



|  |    |   |
|--|----|---|
| The National Convener of Children’s Hearings Scotland  | 10 | 6 |
| Children’s Hearings Scotland   | 10 | 5 |
| The Principal Reporter   | 10 | 4 |
| The Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration  | 10 | 4 |
| A Health Board   | 10 | 5 |
| Healthcare Improvement Scotland  | 10 | 6 |
| A board constituted under section 2(1)(b) of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978                       | 9  | 5 |
| The Scottish Qualifications Authority  | 10 | 8 |
| Skills Development Scotland  | 10 | 7 |
| Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland   | 10 | 6 |
| The Scottish Social Services Council   | 10 | 6 |
| The Scottish Sports Council  | 5  | 6 |
| The Chief constable of the Police Service of Scotland  | 10 | 4 |
| The Scottish Police Authority  | 10 | 4 |
| The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service   | 9  | 6 |
| The Scottish Legal Aid Board   | 10 | 6 |
| The Commissioner for Children and Young People in Scotland   | 10 | 3 |
| The Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland   | 10 | 3 |
| Bòrd na Gàidhlig   | 10 | 3 |
| Creative Scotland  | 10 | 8 |
| A body which is a –post-16 education body for the purposes of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005 | 10 | 7 |
| The Scottish Housing Regulator   | 10 | 3 |

#### 4. The role of advocacy

During the residential workshop we explored the young people’s experience of advocacy and the interaction between advocacy and corporate parents.

Overall there were two distinctive views regarding advocacy and the relationship with Corporate Parents.

- **Young people who received advocacy found it beneficial in helping them to communicate with or hold Corporate Parents to account.**
- **Young people who received no advocacy felt alone, isolated and not part of the decision making process (care done too as opposed to with).**

Young people spoke about accessing advocacy to give them a voice and represent their views when they felt that some Corporate Parents **‘failed to listen and provide support’**. All of the young people focused on the individual service as opposed to the broad label which describes Corporate Parents and named within the Act.

The below services and professions were identified by the young people as not supporting young people enough and includes a brief outline of the reasons why this was felt to be the case.

- **Teachers** - not listening to young people who disclosed not feeling safe at home when abuse was present
- **Social workers** – didn’t meet young people as much as they would like and young people did not always feel listened to
- **Housing** – being placed in poor accommodation, experiencing homeless and experiencing little to no support
- **Police** – taking young people in to care and young people not being supported to understand the process by the police
- **The children’s panel members** – not listening to children and not being friendly enough.

The young people identified that they would have benefited from advocacy support in all of the above situations. They emphasised that having someone there to represent them would have been invaluable and important. One young person asked if their local authority provided independent advocacy and was not aware of any services.

#### 4.1 Solution identified by the young people

Young people stated that there should be a mechanism which automatically makes them aware of their local authority’s advocacy service. Young people identified that receiving advocacy was often due to chance or by other young people telling them. Sometimes it was because an advocate made a point of visiting them and trying to engage. All young people felt that a right to advocacy should be available to help young people participate fully in all decision making process (i.e. Reviews, Hearings and the decision to take young people in to care)

The young people noted that a lack of advocacy during crucial times of service intervention meant that young people felt let down, not part of the decision making process, lonely and isolated. In summary, they felt this posed the following issues with several corporate parents.

- **Teachers** - not listening to young people who disclosed not feeling safe at home when abuse was present **(an advocate could have communicated this, resulting in earlier intervention and the young person not being in to care for offending or bad behaviour)**
- **Social workers** – didn’t meet young people as much as they would like and young people not feeling listened to **( advocates can highlight this and communicate this to social workers, ensuring that an adequate service is provided and young people do not face barriers to working with these professionals or others)**

- **Housing** – being placed in poor accommodation, homeless and experiencing little to no support **(an advocate could have challenge these decisions, ensuring the young person was placed in appropriate accommodation and accessed support)**
- **Police** –taking young people in to care and young people not being supported to understand the process **(an advocate could explain the process and explain their rights)**
- **The children’s panel members** – not listening to children, making decisions without children at hearings and taking young people off supervision requirements without knowing their full views on that **(advocates can be the voice of the young person).**

For the young people who did not receive advocacy it was apparent that this had a profound impact on their well-being. With several of the young people stating that they:

- **Were isolated**
- **Lived in poor accommodation**
- **Had no finances and poor quality of life**
- **Did not know their rights and entitlement**
- **Did not know who to turn to for help, support and guidance**
- **Experienced feelings of rejection and lack relationships with positive role models.**

These young people highlighted that it is essential Corporate Parents make young people aware of who they are and what they will offer them. It was thought that this approach is more likely to make young people want to engage with services and build relationships with their Corporate Parents.

Although advocacy was viewed by the young people as a solution to ‘problems’ it was stated that **‘if corporate parents just done their job properly’** there may not be a need for more workers in the young person’s life. All of the young people we spoke to said that every young person should have the right to an advocate and know how to access them.

### 5. Young people’s recommendations for corporate parents

To summarise - the following corporate parents had the most interaction with the care experienced young people who took part in this residential, before, during and after care.

| Before care             | During care                 | After care                  |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Police                  | Local Authority             | Local Authority             |
| Fire and Rescue Service | Police                      | Housing                     |
| Creative Scotland       | Health Board                | Mental Welfare Commission   |
| Local Authority         | Children’s Hearing Scotland | Skills Development Scotland |

**A Health Board**

**Principle Reporter**

**Post 16 Education Body**

**Fire and Rescue**

**Police**

**Mental Welfare Commission**

**Health Board**

**Legal Aid**

The young people felt that there were clear lessons to be learned from their experiences which they think the new corporate parents should take into account when the Act comes into force. Whilst they realise that their interaction with several of the public bodies were not always under a legal corporate parenting duty, they feel that there is worth in utilizing their experiences with them.

**They said that corporate parents should endeavor to:**

- 1. Communicate with care experienced young people on their role and what duties they have under the Act.*
- 2. Involve care experienced young people in their planning of services – especially where they provide direct services to them.*
- 3. Treat care experienced young people with respect and how they would expect services to deal with their own children.*
- 4. Always learn and do things better for care experienced young people.*
- 5. Every Corporate Parent should have a name, a face, and be a person or people... not just a label.*

## **Appendix 4: Useful resources and contacts**

Corporate Parenting website

[www.corporateparenting.co.uk](http://www.corporateparenting.co.uk)

Who Cares? Scotland website – and links to other publications

<http://www.whocaresscotland.org/professionals/publications-briefings-research/>

Scottish Government website – and the Children and Young People Act 2014

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/people/young-people/legislation>

CELCIS website

<http://www.celcis.org/>

| Who Cares? Scotland contact                       | Email  |
|---|--|
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