



# Young People's Rights Review

## Ryan McShane MSYP - Love and Relationships for Care-Experienced Young People.

My name is Ryan McShane, MSYP for WhoCares? Scotland.

*Who Cares?* has an active membership of 1600 care experienced people from around the country. Our consultation included engaging with local participant groups of young people as well as national, digital engagement through online surveys and consulting with our national representative body- the Scottish Care Council.

Our members support the implementation of the Children and Young People's (Scotland) Act which, amongst other developments, saw the age at which young people can leave care raised from 18 to 21.

They also support the commitment to listen to children and young people in the Children's Hearing System through a national advocacy service and to the entire care experienced population through the now established independent care review in paragraph 5.3.

Our member believe these developments are positive and welcome them. We feel that our focus on the importance of advocacy was really listened to, and that the #RightsRoadTrip to inform this report last December with Maree Todd MSP, thank you.

However, a key rights issue has come up repeatedly in every consultation we have held - that love is not guaranteed in the care system. However, for a young person being taken into care, it is supposed to be a new start and a chance to feel unconditional love that our parents could not give or provide, to some extent.

But, to put it straight, due to a broken system, this is only experienced by a minority. This system is actually breaching our rights as children and young people. These are very few key relationships that we can rely on, when feeling vulnerable. Becoming settled in a placement is supposed to be a success, so that we can achieve things to the best of our abilities, by receiving honest and regular support. One key relationship that also fails, which should be prominent, is a social worker. If this person isn't giving the young person the support and information that they need, the transition period going into care will be a failure, and a waste of time. This then results in unrest between the young person and their carers, where the young person is not feeling part of the family, which they should as part of the supposed *New Start*. Advocacy is supposed to be about trust and is invaluable when a lot of relationships break down.

As a care experienced MSYP, I have noticed that, only in the last year, other care experienced young people have experienced how much they want to see the

UNCRC incorporated into Scots law, and are beginning to understand their rights as a care experienced young person growing up in Scotland.

Care experienced young people campaign for change because they have knowledge of their rights as part of the Scottish Youth Parliament's national campaign, *Right Here, Right Now*.

Therefore, I welcome the commitments made by the Scottish Government to extend the age that young people can remain in care; but also ask you to **commit to making the experience of being in care a story of love, stability and care** - right now, they don't really know what the definition of care is. We can try.

**Specifically, I recommend that you ensure that the proposed advocacy service is well-funded, accessible, and suitably tailored to care experienced young people, and *Who Cares? Scotland* is happy to assist you with the latter point. Furthermore, we feel that the UNCRC should be incorporated into Scots law.**

With the system being as complex as it currently is, it means that the problems are vast, but it illustrates how much work has to be put in place to make care great rather than bad. **Our members know that the solutions are simple, and are determined that care can work, so that love can become a right.**