

CARE EXPERIENCED PARENT'S CHARTER



A collaboration with the Why Not?
Trust, The Promise Scotland, Staf,
Aberdeen City Council, and Early
Years Scotland

FINAL REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE CHARTER

The Care Experienced Parents Charter work in Scotland, led by Aimee Thorpe-Mundt, is following on from similar work that has already been completed in Wales[1]. Led by Dr Louise Roberts, a lecturer on the MA Social Work course at Cardiff University, she completed her PHD research in 2014 which explored Support Care, a short breaks service designed to prevent family breakdown. She was then awarded a post-doctoral fellowship, funded by Health and Care Research Wales, which explored early parenthood for young people in and leaving state care[2]. In 2021 she worked with organisations in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Italy, holding consultations in each country. Dr Louise Roberts and one care experienced parent gave evidence to the Senedd Petition Committee. With this deep-rooted research, Wales developed a charter that set out guidelines that should be followed when supporting a parent who is care experienced[3].

As an organisation, The Why Not? Trust seeks to support relationships and as an organisation that works directly with care experienced parents, the resources and foundations to support this work were already there.

It is important to recognise Scotland's commitment to the care experienced community through the existence of The Promise [4]. By implementing this charter, Scotland would be further emphasising the importance of support for the care experienced community, especially as they enter parenthood. Scotland can look to Wales as an example of good practice, and adapt to meet the needs of care experienced parents, parents to be and future parents in Scotland.

[1][Microsoft Word - Best Practice Charter.docx \(exchangewales.org\)](#)

[2][Dr Louise Roberts - People - Cardiff University](#)

[3][Key messages - CASCADE \(cascadewales.org\)](#)

[4][the-promise.pdf \(thepromise.scot\)](#)

ABOUT THE ORGANISATIONS

THE WHY NOT? TRUST FOR CARE EXPERIENCED PEOPLE

The Why Not Trust exists to promote, offer, and support meaningful relationships for people who have experience of care. Positive relationships are the greenhouse for growth and by offering and supporting these relationships everyone can reach their potential. The Trust was developed with a focus on promoting the importance of continuing relationships between young people moving on from care and those who cared for them. The need for continuing relationships at this stage in life is now embedded within The Promise, so we now focus on other transitional periods in life when everyone needs support. Our current focus is The Village which offers a supportive community for parents and The Wee Campus offering a supportive community for students. All our work is led by voices of lived experience and our overarching principles, which bring our values to life.

THE PROMISE SCOTLAND

The Promise Scotland is an organisation that exists to support Scotland in keeping its promise to care experienced people. It provides information about the promise Scotland made to care-experienced children and young people—that they will grow up loved, safe, and respected.

SCOTTISH THROUGH-CARE AND AFTERCARE FORUM (STAF)

Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum (Staf), was formed in 1998 and is Scotland's national membership organisation for all of those involved in the lives of young people leaving care. Staf is the only membership organisation for frontline workers and managers focused on throughcare and aftercare of young people from a care-experienced background, with over 70 members.

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

Aberdeen City Council is the local government authority for the city of Aberdeen, an area in Scotland. Aberdeen City Council was established in 1996 under the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994. The charter has been supported by the Principle Planning and Development Officers, located in the Integrated Children and Family Services department of Aberdeen City Council.

EARLY YEARS SCOTLAND

Early Years Scotland is Scotland's leading national specialist organisation that supports our youngest children from pre-birth to 5 years of age. Our fully qualified Early Years Practitioners work directly with children and their families to deliver our unique Stay Play and Learn sessions in a variety of settings. We work in areas where children and families who have the greatest need, will benefit most from our services. As a Third Sector organisation, we have been established for over 50 years. We are very proud of our long track record, supporting all of those who work for, and on behalf of, Scotland's youngest children.

TERMINOLOGY

Care experience(d) - Someone who has spent part of their life in any of the following - foster care, residential care, kinship (formal or informal) care, secure care, adopted or was looked after at home under a supervision order^[5]. (The term 'care experienced' is not legally binding however is the preferred term in the care community). Some parents may not identify with the term care experienced.

Care experienced parent - A parent who is care experienced.

Professional - Anyone who supports care experienced parents - ranging from unpaid kinship carers to paid staff.

Charter - A charter can be defined as a document that sets out the rights, aims or principles that certain people have to follow.

This charter aims to raise the standards of support available to the care experienced community as they enter parenthood. It will give the workforce clear expectations of what they should or shouldn't do when working with care experienced parents. This charter will raise awareness of care experience and what it means to be care experienced. It is hoped that the implementation of this charter will allow care experienced parents to feel supported and to have a better understanding of their rights as parents.

[5][Care experienced people \(thepromise.scot\)](http://thepromise.scot)

GATHERING FEEDBACK

This Section provides an overview of feedback that was gathered throughout the Care Experienced Parents Charter project and how gathered feedback became the recommendations.

QUESTIONS

We asked care experienced parents if they agreed with the following statements and to provide comments based on their experience and knowledge.

- 1.'It takes a village to raise a child'
- 2.'Parents (or parents to be) know where to get help from and feel comfortable asking for help'
- 3.'We know our children's rights and our rights as parents. We know where to get help if our rights are not being upheld.'
- 4.'Care experienced parents have the right help and support when they become a parent'

We asked professionals if they agreed with the following statements and to provide comments based on their experience and knowledge.

- 1.A) It takes a village to raise a child. As a corporate parent/champion, do you see yourself as part of the village and what role would you like to play in that village?
B) Is there anything that stops you from being in that village and do you have any ideas on how to overcome this?
C) What can we or others do to help you feel a part of this village?
- 2.Do you have any views on how a care experienced charter could be best implemented/taken forward in your local authority/organisation/ setting? What do you think would work well?
- 3.Having heard about Wales and having time to reflect, do you feel a charter may be helpful for you in your role and if so, how?

CARE EXPERIENCED PARENTS – IN PERSON SESSIONS

Three in person sessions were held to gather views from care experienced parents. These sessions were held in various locations across Scotland to allow many parents to take part. The choice to join each session online was also offered for accessibility.

GLASGOW – 20TH SEPTEMBER 2023

This session took place at the Staf offices. This session had four parents in person.

STIRLING – 26TH SEPTEMBER 2023

This session took place at Stirling Champions 'home'. This session had online attendees. There were two parents in person and one parent online.

ABERDEEN – 29TH SEPTEMBER 2023

This session took place at Westburn Resource Centre. There were three parents in attendance.

PROFESSIONALS – ONLINE SESSIONS

Two online sessions were held for those who support care experienced parents. Recognising busy working schedules, these sessions all took place online.

Online Session 1 – 18th January 2024 – There were six professionals in this session.

Online Session 2 – 24th January 2024 – There were five professionals in this session.

PROFESSIONALS – SURVEY (CLOSED 19TH APRIL 2024)

Further recognising the busy schedules, a survey with the same questions was circulated to allow professionals to complete at their own pace. There were nineteen responses to this survey.

To turn the feedback into recommendations multiple mural documents were created. This brought feedback together and allowed specific themes (recurring feedback) to be identified. Exploring both the feedback and the identified themes, the working group made the recommendations.



PICTURES SHOW A SAMPLE OF THE MURAL DOCUMENTS.

CHALLENGES

Reaching every care experienced parent in Scotland will always be a challenge. Reaching rural communities and working parents are two of the barriers faced during this consultation. Every effort was made to ensure maximum opportunities to participate.

We also recognise the stigma that still exists within the care experienced community and acknowledge that this is a barrier to participation. Some parents who are care experienced may not want to volunteer their care experienced 'identity' for fear of how it will impact them and their child(ren), or they may wish to put their past behind them and move forward in their life.

We recognise that there is already a limited amount of willing participants, due to stigma, lack of compensation or not seeing desired results, within the care experienced community to take part in research. This number is further limited when looking to narrow this group down to care experienced parents.

To compliment the consultation sessions and surveys, desktop research has been considered when making recommendations.

FINDINGS

WHAT THE PARENTS TOLD US

Anyone can be in a parents village; it is not only family.

Parents do not know their own rights or the rights of their children. They do not know where to find this information.

There should be no age limit on the support available.

A non-judgemental, non-stigmatising corporate grandparent role should be implemented.

WHAT THE PARENTS TOLD US – CONTINUED

Parents who left care before the age of 16 are not entitled to the same support as parents who left care after the age of 16.

Pre-birth and parenting assessments are stigmatising, and parents are not supported through the assessments.

Accessing support can be unclear and stigmatising. The support available can also be stigmatising.

Proving care experience to access support is stigmatising and traumatising.

WHAT THE PROFESSIONALS TOLD US

More communication and networking are needed to support each individual parents' need. Support must be flexible, and trauma informed.

Support should not have an age limit.

Location should not be a barrier for support. Moving to another council area shouldn't reduce access to support.

There is the need for a supportive and non-judgmental corporate grandparent role.

WHAT THE PROFESSIONALS TOLD US – CONTINUED

High staff turnover rates make it hard to build genuine relationships with parents. Work is needed to reduce stigma of services. This will make parents feel more comfortable to engage with support.

More access to resources is needed to support families.

Pre-birth and parenting assessments must be done with the parents and not to the parents. Support must be provided throughout any assessment.

Training is needed to raise awareness of The Promise and everyone's role in keeping it.

Joint Messages

These are the common themes that came up. This section is not mutually exclusive, as some professionals are also parents.

→ A corporate grandparenting role is required.

→ No age limit on support.

→ Stigma is a barrier to accessing support.

→ Pre-birth and parenting assessments need to be done supportively. Tick boxes can feel stigmatising, space to expand on answers should be considered.

Desktop Research

These are some key quotes from further desktop research;

→ “Wherever possible, the Reporter’s investigation prior to a baby being born must involve seeking the voice of expectant parents.”[6]

→ “The fractured nature of care experienced parent’s relationship to their own family was also highlighted as a problem, indicating a need for targeted support for parents with care experience”[7]

→ “The ‘corporate parenting’ responsibilities of local authorities and communities require that tailored support be provided for young people, with young care experienced parents having recognised needs for enhanced support.”[8]

→ “There must be more support, training and reflection for healthcare professionals to ensure that care experienced people are supported but not stigmatised as they become parents”[9]

→ “There must be a national review of multiple ongoing child protection, care and support processes and meetings, including review meetings, to identify where unnecessary duplication takes place, where drift and delay is introduced, and where information could and should be better shared collaboratively with the Panel or Reporter to better inform decision-making.”[10] - With this quote it is hoped that pre-birth and parenting assessments are included in this national review.

[6][hearings-for-children-the-redesign-report.pdf \(thepromise.scot\)](#) (page 112)

[7][hearings-for-children-the-redesign-report.pdf \(thepromise.scot\)](#) (page 244)

[8][Final Report: Supporting Roots \(www.gov.scot\)](#) (page 12)

[9][the-promise.pdf \(thepromise.scot\)](#) (page 48)

[10][‘Hearings For Children’ Scottish Government Response - Policy Responses \(www.gov.scot\)](#) (page 11)

CONCLUSION

Consultations with both care experienced parents and professionals and considering the previously completed research have shown that changes are necessary. For the charter to be upheld, commitment from each local authority in Scotland is pivotal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

→ Corporate parents must take on a corporate grandparent role where additional support or advice is required. This should look like practical support or emotional support.

→ Age must not be a barrier to support.

→ The pre-birth and parenting assessments must be reviewed with input from care experienced parents. This must involve consultations with those who have experienced these types of assessments to support with all reviews and any changes.

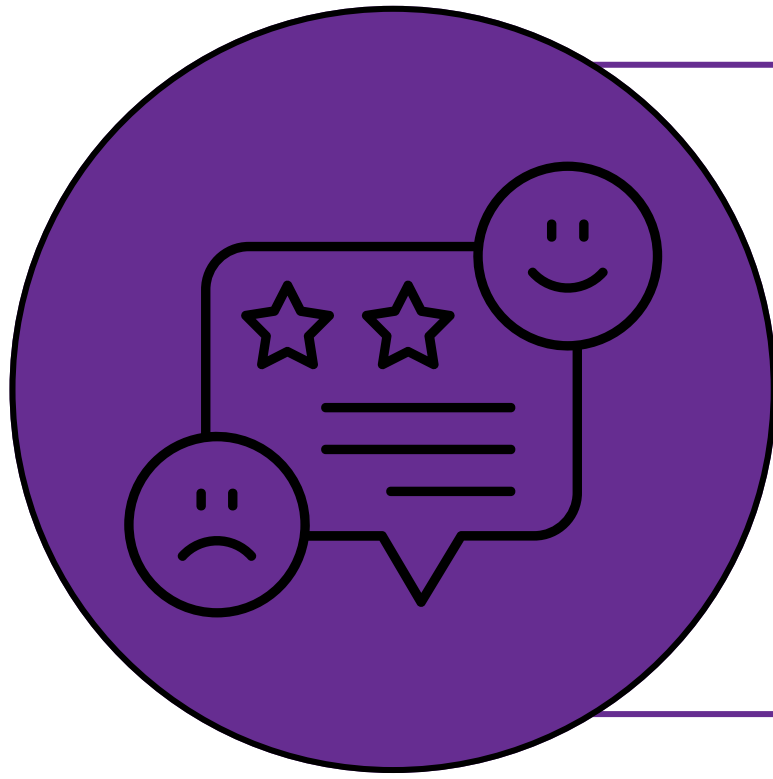
→ With permission from parents, services must work together to ensure information is only shared once where possible. This requires better communication between services and the parent(s).

→ Appointments must accommodate children attending with parents. This may look like offering later appointments to allow for travelling with an infant or working around childcare.

→ More training in the workplace is needed to ensure that each member of staff is aware of what being care experienced means and what The Promise is. Knowing what support is available for care experienced parents will make signposting easier.

→ An identified contact clearly listed, and kept up to date, on council websites who can signpost any care experienced person to the right place at the right time.

NEXT STEPS

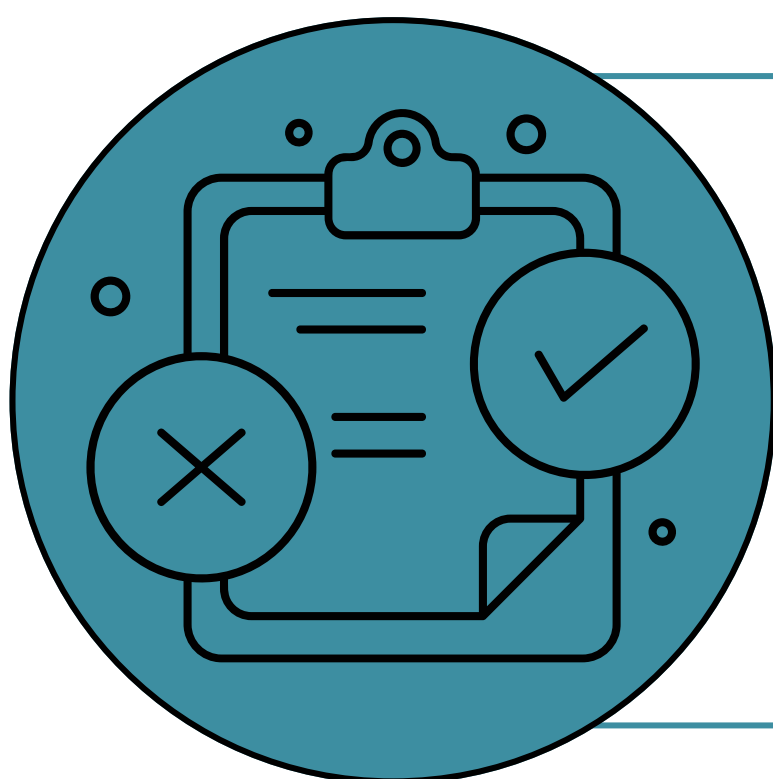
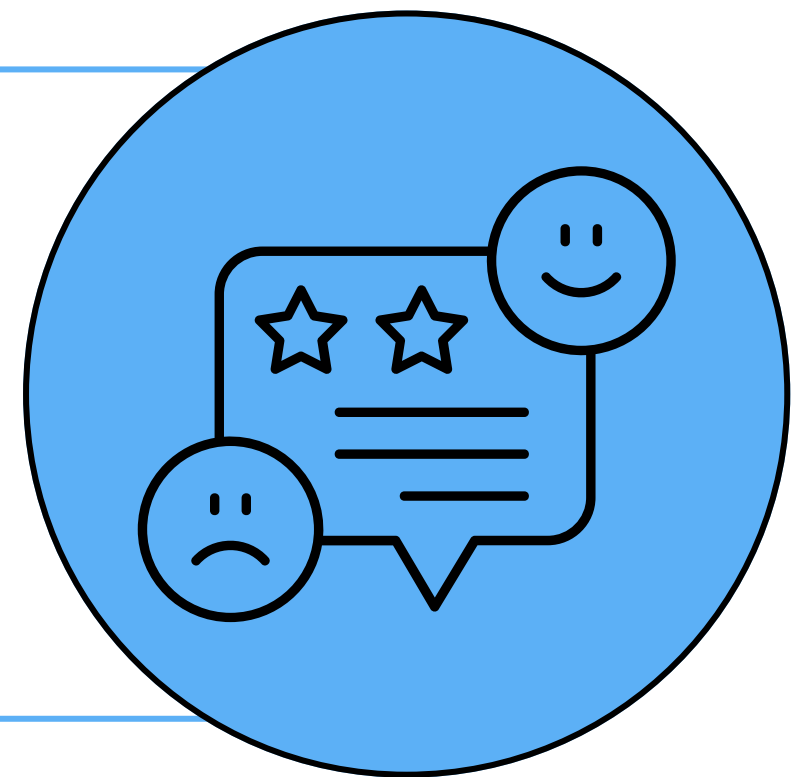


01. SMALL ROLLOUT - GATHERING INITIAL FEEDBACK

Sending charter to the people involved throughout the process and a few council areas for initial feedback.

02 WIDER ROLLOUT

Sharing charter with the wider sector allowing for further feedback.

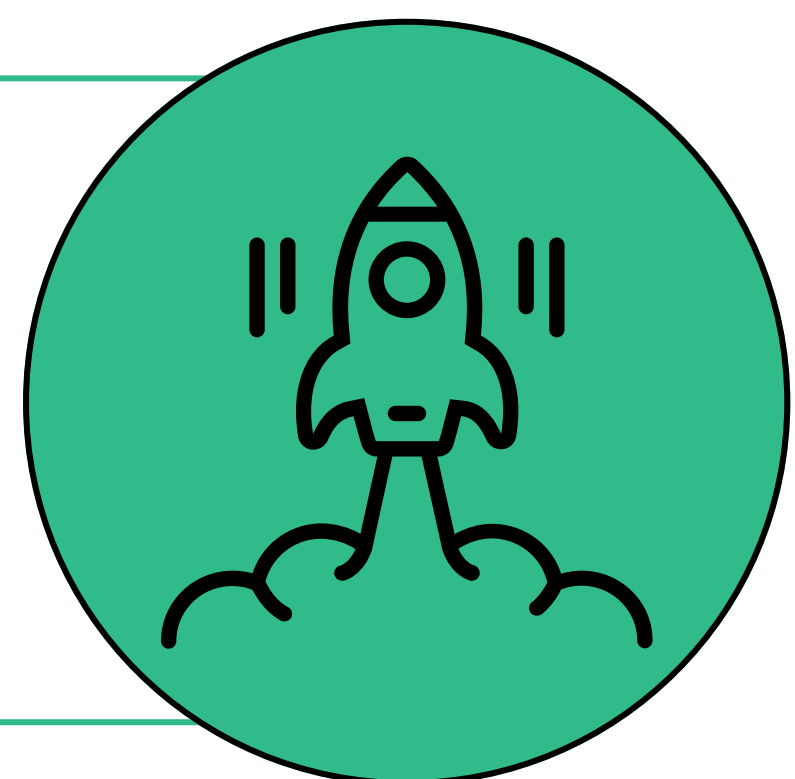


03 TESTING FOR CHANGE

Calling out for a small number of council areas to implement the charter in their area. Then evaluating the impact of the charter.

04 WIDER LAUNCH

Implementing the charter Scotland-wide based on the feedback and evidence gathered up until this stage.



The
Why Not?
Trust

for care experienced young people



the promise
scotland

staf



ABERDEEN
CITY COUNCIL



**Early
Years
Scotland**

Investing in our youngest children