

PE1958/I: Extend aftercare for previously looked after young people, and remove the continuing care age cap

Petitioner written submission, 11 September 2024

I would like to begin by thanking the Committee for providing me the opportunity to provide further information. It is positive that on the [5th of February 2020 Scotland's Parliament and Government committed to Keeping the Promise](#), to ensure that all children will grow up safe, loved, and respected. This will enable them to thrive and achieve their full potential. The findings of the Independent Care Review highlighted that children and young people with experience of care have a harder challenge than their peers, in securing a safe and happy adulthood.

The petition I lodged on the 6th of September 2022 calls on the Scottish Government to:

- Extend aftercare provision in Scotland to “Previously looked after” young people who left care before their 16th birthday on the basis of individual need.
- Extend continuing care throughout care experienced people’s lives, on the basis of individual need.

These asks were made in recognition that when care planning and delivery for children who have required the care and protection of the state does not go well the consequences are borne by the child or young person.

Care experienced young people have informed Scotland, through campaigning over the last decade, and with contributions to the Independent Care Review, that the move on from care can be an experience of being propelled into adulthood before they feel ready to do so. If they have not been fortunate enough to have an experience of care that has provided a sufficient network of support, they often experience real hardship in isolation. This hinders individuals’ ability to secure opportunities to thrive and contribute to Scottish society in the way we would hope for all citizens.

The Promise Scotland and the Scottish Through Care and Aftercare Forum (Staf) launched the ‘Moving On’ Change Programme in the summer of 2023. This programme is seeking to accelerate the pace of change required for the Promise to be kept for those moving on from care.

During the period the 23rd of October 2023 to the 29th of February 2024, the programme’s 100 days of listening phase was undertaken. The 100 days of listening sought to engage with ‘Moving On’ experts, those with experience of care or part of the care workforce, to understand the experience of those moving on from care currently, and to identify the change opportunities to deliver the Promise.

During the 100 days of listening, the ‘Moving On’ Change Programme heard from over 365 ‘Moving On’ experts. The insights they provided were broad and extensive, however, there were four cross-cutting themes identified from the analysis of what was heard:

- Systems and Services
- Housing, Finance
- Practical Support
- Life Skills.

[The report detailing what was heard can be accessed via the Staf website.](#)

It is my view that what was heard during the engagement phase of the 'Moving On' Change Programme builds upon what was heard during the Independent Care Review and reaffirms the need for the changes this petition has called for.

It is evidenced beyond doubt that the care system has the autonomy to provide needs-based support to those in need, however, too often this required support can only be accessed when the person with care experience can evidence legislative entitlement to such support; [this was highlighted by Who Cares? Scotland in a recent issue paper on lifelong rights for care experienced people](#). The transition into adulthood can be a challenge for all young people, but it is made harder for those with experience of care when the State elects not to provide them with the support to meet their needs. This petition seeks to provide a way of mitigating this inequity. Without addressing the barriers that are faced due to loopholes within current legislation many young people will continue to be denied access to support to meet basic need such as shelter or sustenance.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this submission, we should celebrate that Scotland's Parliament and Government have committed to Keep the Promise by 2030.

In June 2024, [the Promise Scotland launched Plan 24-30](#) to support Scotland on its journey of keeping the promise to children, families, and those with experience of care. The plan acknowledges that it is ambitious for Scotland to strive and deliver upon the vision set out by the Independent Care Review by 2030.

The scale and challenge of delivering the necessary change will take time. This is accepted. What is not accepted is that children and young people should continue to absorb and endure the consequences of the imperfect system, that they have been brought into, and that has been built over generations by the state and partner agencies.

Scotland should not waiver from its endeavour to get it right for those born to inadequate or unwilling parents. Scotland must ensure, whilst it is on this journey, that it does all it can to provide social justice for those children and young people it has assessed as not being able to be cared for in their own family. This is why the asks of this petition were relevant when it was lodged, continue to be relevant today, will remain relevant up to (and possibly beyond) 2030.