



Your details

Please complete the following details below. It is essential that we have a name and the name of any organisation if you are responding on their behalf. Contact details would be helpful if we need to follow up on any points.

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Would you like us to keep your response confidential:	No

Consultation questions

Below you will find response boxes for each of our consultation questions. If possible, please base your response on answers to these questions.

Some questions may be somewhat irrelevant to your interests, in which case please feel free to answer as many or as few as you like. And please feel free to offer other comments if you think they are relevant to our remit. There is space at the end for you to do so.

You can skip to the section(s) that you wish to respond to through the links below:

1. [Wellbeing](#)
2. [Housing and investment](#)
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Section 1: Our assessment of the importance of housing for wellbeing in Scotland

Q.1. Has our assessment of housing and wellbeing missed any important benefits and, if so, which benefits and what is the evidence for this?

Young people leaving care in Scotland are vastly overrepresented in the homeless population. Research identifies the transitional time between care and independent living as being the most difficult for young people, experiencing significant levels of trauma and rejection.

Dixon and Stein (2003) state that young care leavers are at greater risk than any other group, of becoming homeless. Broad (1999) argues that poor outcomes of those leaving care derive from the structure of the welfare state, previous parenting styles experienced and a failure to equip care leavers with the skills required to progress into adult life successfully.

The young people that we engage with consistently inform us that when the transition into independent life is not sufficiently resourced and supported, then this negatively impacts on their wellbeing and their ability to fully realise their rights as young, independent adults.

When young care leavers secure accommodation tailored to their needs and within a community to which they have a connection to, their wellbeing can be enhanced. In our experience, when a young person is able to form a meaningful connection to their local community, then this can in some way assist in mitigating against the adverse consequences of having an insecure attachment to their parents and family.

Q.2. Has our assessment exaggerated any of the benefits of housing for wellbeing and, if so, in what respects and what are your reasons for saying this?

We do not believe that the assessment has exaggerated the benefits of housing for wellbeing however we do believe that for the care experienced population being able to access accommodation in the communities that they have support in, can help them access the same opportunities as their non-looked after peers. The benefits of housing for wellbeing for care leavers will only be realised when they can reside in accommodation that enables them to progress towards self-actualisation.

Young people growing up in the care system can often be subject to multiple moves and a lack of stability throughout their young lives. Continuous placement moves can make it harder for young people to develop a sense of belonging. Without feeling like they have a secure-base, the benefits of housing on wellbeing will be difficult for them to realise.

Section 2: Does Scotland invest enough in housing?

Q.3. Do you agree with our assessment of the current position on investment in housing?

We agree to an extent with the assessment of the current position on investment in housing. We were surprised that there was no acknowledgement of the lack of investment in emergency accommodation. At present Scotland has world leading legislation which entitles all to accommodation tailored to the individual's needs, should they find themselves homeless. Despite this, from our experience we are aware of incidences where local authorities have only offered advice to care leavers who find themselves homeless, rather than accommodation. The reason cited by local authorities for failing to meet these statutory obligations is that there is a lack of housing stock – both permanent and temporary.

Q.4. Do you agree with our brief assessment of current policy on investment in housing?

We agree with the assessment of current policy on investment in housing, with the additional information we have provided above.

Q.5. Do you agree with our suggestions for further action in the area of investment in housing?

We would encourage that any further action in regards to investment in housing would take account of the needs of the care experienced population and current policies relevant to the care journey – specifically the recent developments within the Children and Young People Act 2014.

We would hope that any future actions would complement or enhance the delivery of suitable accommodation for care experienced young people who are entitled to after care services and those who are able to take advantage of continuing care placements. These rights have been afforded to care experienced young people, who satisfy the necessary criteria, in the new Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 which comes into force in April 2015.



DQ6. Do you have any other suggestions that we have not mentioned in relation to investment in housing?

We believe that the local authority in their role as corporate parent to their looked after population, should ensure that sufficient levels of investment has been made that will enable care experienced young people to transition into independent living in a safe and supported manner.

For care experienced young people, the transition into independent living should not be resource led, but rather should be dictated by the needs of the individual. At present the care system does not provide all care leavers with a suitable safety net to which they can rely on in difficult times, making it harder to maintain independent living in times of difficulty.

Investment has to be made in housing stock that is allocated to care leavers upon their departure from the care system. They should be able to obtain accommodation of adequate quality and affordability. Too often, in our experience, this does not happen.

Section 3: Getting a better fit between housing and the economy

Q.7. Do you agree with our assessment of the current position regarding housing and the economy? What more would you add?

Austerity measures should not negatively impact on the care leaving population. At present they are greatly disadvantaged in relation to buying their own property due to the lack of opportunities and poor experiences they face while growing up.

Q.8. Do you agree with our assessment of the current situation of UK Government policy with regards to the housing market and the economy?

Yes, we agree with the assessment of current Government policy. We believe that housing policy has to begin to be more reflective on the needs of the general population.

Current Government policy on housing negatively limits the social mobility of the most disadvantaged – particularly the care experienced population. If we are to ensure that deficits in need are being addressed, then the basis of policy responses must reflect the needs of those reliant on the poorest quality of accommodation.

Q.9. What are your views about the five areas of policy reforms suggested here?

We believe that the suggested policy reforms do not adequately consider the needs of the care experienced population.

Care experienced young people tend to move into their own accommodation ten years earlier than their non-looked after peers. Accommodation secured by this group of young people is most often from the social and private rented sector. The young people we engage with have informed us that the aspiration of owning their own property is almost unachievable due to the current government structures and policies.

Section 4: Getting a better fit between housing and welfare policy

Q.10. Do you agree with our assessment of the current position regarding housing and welfare benefits? What more would you add?

We believe that the current stance on housing and welfare provision limits the social mobility of the care experienced population.

For example, the care experienced population are not able to take advantage of funded traveling opportunities or opportunities to work abroad as they would have to source additional funding to ensure they had accommodation to return to. At times they are unable to attend the higher educational establishment of their choice as they would have to give up accommodation in their hometown to be able to secure accommodation whilst studying. Employment and career success can enable care experienced young people to address unmet need yet current policy appears to discourage this group of young people from pursuing educational and employment fulfilment.

11. Do you agree with our assessment of the current situation of government policy at UK levels and the possible outcomes post-referendum? What more would you add?

Draconian measures such as penalising care experienced young people who live in accommodation with an extra room should never be permitted. Those leaving the care system are supported by their corporate parents - their local authority - in securing accommodation.

This practice has to stop regardless of past, current and future political discourse.



Q.12. What are your views about the medium term policy options presented here? What other ideas and issues strike you over this time frame?

At Who Cares? Scotland we agree that responsibility of housing benefit should be devolved to the Scottish Parliament. This would enable the Scottish Government to introduce less draconian policies to address under occupancy in social housing.

We also believe that the devolution of such responsibilities will better enable newly named corporate parents to adhere to the new statutory obligations they will have from April 2015, in relation to the care experienced population.

Q.13. Do you agree that we have a unique opportunity to consider longer term policy options over the next key period in Scotland's history? How do you respond to the options proposed here? Are there other options that should be considered?

Yes. However future policy will only be effective when it acknowledges the views, experiences and needs of those it affects. For example, the care experienced population.

Care experienced young people need to be enabled to feel as if they have a right to self-determination. From our experience a large number of the care experienced population do not feel as if they have control over, or influence in, any decision making processes in their lives, including where they will reside after leaving care. For example Resource Prioritisation Groups, the process used to identify accommodation options for care leavers, does not involve the young person but instead discusses where they should live with the adults in their lives.

Section 5: Getting a better fit between housing and the environment

Q.14. Do you agree with our assessment of the importance of housing to the environment?



Q.15. Do you agree with our brief assessment of current policy on housing in relation to the environment?

Q.16. Do you agree with our suggestions for further action in the area of housing and the environment?

Q.17. Do you have other suggestions that we have not mentioned in relation to housing and the environment?



Commission on Housing & Wellbeing

Q.18. Do you agree with our on our assessment of the importance of housing to health and education?

Yes we agree with the assessment of the importance of housing to health and education.

At Who Cares? Scotland, we firmly believe that care experienced young peoples' needs have to be assessed in a holistic manner. Current government policy, relating to children and young people such as Getting It Right For Every Child, acknowledges that there is a correlation between a young person's living arrangements and their health and educational performance or attainment.

Q.19. Do you agree with our brief assessment of current policy on housing and health and education?

Yes.

Q.20. Do you agree with our suggestions for further action in the area of housing and health and education?

It is of our belief that the suggestions forwarded by the commission do not fully acknowledge the needs of disadvantaged young people; in particular the needs of care experienced young people.

We believe that care experienced young people should have greater support prior to and after their transition into independent living. There is also action required to make health and education more accessible for care experienced young people placed in temporary accommodation; or for those who have experienced numerous placement or house moves during their childhood.



.21. Do you have other suggestions which we have not mentioned in relation to housing and health and education?

We are aware that relationship breakdown and poor physical and mental ill health are the most common reasons cited for immediate homelessness for young people. We believe that an extension of, or investment in mediation and support services should be considered, better enabling young people to seek a resolve to relationship disputes.

We also believe that the National Health Service has to get better in being more accessible to the care experienced population. The Scottish Government recognises that care experienced individuals with complex needs are more likely to leave the care system as early as possible. These young people find it difficult in engaging with services and therefore unmet health needs are regularly ignored. If the National Health Service became more accessible to the care experienced population, risk of experiencing youth homelessness could potentially be mitigated against; an experience that would only increase risk and exaggerate current health issues for the individual.

Section 7: Housing and Community Regeneration

Q.22. Do you agree with our on our assessment of the importance of community regeneration?

Yes, at Who Cares? we fully agree with the commissions' assessment of the importance of community regeneration. Care experienced young people often find themselves placed within deprived communities, following their transition into independent living.

It is essential that the Government acknowledges the importance of community regeneration for the general population, but more specifically those who are care experienced. Young care leavers most often find themselves reliant on social housing once they have left care. It is detrimental to their wellbeing when the communities around them are unable to meet their individual needs or provide them with opportunities to grow and develop as active citizens.

Q

.23. Do you agree with our brief assessment of current policy on community regeneration?

Yes. In particular we believe that the regeneration of communities requires a multi-agency approach; with partnership central to the success of regeneration projects.

We also acknowledge that regeneration of local communities is more than just improving the quality of accommodation. We would like to see care experienced young people being given the opportunity to work in partnership with other residents in improving the community around them, as well as increasing understanding and reducing the stigma which surrounds the 'care' label.



Q.24. Do you agree with our suggestions for further action in the area of community regeneration?

Yes. We are encouraged by the suggestion of partnerships being affirmed between residents and public bodies such as the police and fire service.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 names 24 public bodies as corporate parents, with specific obligations to the care experienced population. We believe the establishment of partnerships between local residents and such public bodies, as suggested by the commission, will ensure the relationship between corporate parents and care leavers will continue after their transition into independent living.

Q.25. Do you have other suggestions which we have not mentioned in relation to community regeneration?

We believe that those belonging to communities have to be placed at the centre of regeneration projects. This would be beneficial to the progress of such projects and we believe it would better place all care experienced young people, and those at risk of being accommodated, in having a greater attachment to their local community.

Strong attachments to a local area for care experienced young people, and those at risk of being accommodated, can help protect against the effects of poor attachment to parents and carers. Better attachments to the local community enable care experienced young people develop a sense of belonging and a secure base - a basic human need.

Section 8: Do we need a more robust private rented sector?

Q.26. Do you agree with our views on the need for a more effective private rented sector which can make a greater contribution to meeting housing needs?

Yes. However we believe that mainstreaming the private rented sector would only be effective if standards and management of housing is enhanced considerably, and can offer a degree of stability and security to those residing in this type of accommodation.



Q.27. Do you agree with our brief assessment of current policy on the private rented sector?

While we understand the brief assessment of current policy on the private rented sector, current policy does not improve access to or the experience of privately rented housing for the care experienced population. To ensure this sector is able to meet the needs of young people leaving the care system, current policies need to reflect the unique experiences and needs that this often disadvantaged group face.

For example, currently the private rented sector can be often out of reach of those leaving care due to the higher rent costs. Where formally looked after young people can access privately rented housing due to flexibility and lower rent costs, this often comes at a price with poorer quality accommodation and inadequate management.

Q.28. Do you agree with our suggestions for further action in the private rented sector?

We agree with the identified suggestions for further action in the private rented sector. However we strongly believe that much more work has to be done to understand the groups of people who may be accessing privately rented housing. To understand who these people are, would better equip Scotland in ensuring housing is suitable and affordable.

While the private rented sector is used less than social housing by looked after young people due to various reasons, those who do use it have varying experiences. Their unique situations, having grown up in local authority care and often having little in the way of family support must be recognised by this sector to ensure their needs can be best met.

29. Do you have other suggestions which we have not mentioned in relation to the private rented sector?

As aforementioned, we believe that the suggestions forwarded by the commission have to acknowledge the views of those supported; in this instance care experienced young people.



Commission on Housing & Wellbeing

Do you have any further comments in relation to the Commission on Housing and Wellbeing's consultation paper?

Who Cares? Scotland has recently undertaken several consultations with care experienced young people and care leavers in Scotland. These consultations have looked at the experiences faced by this unique population, both within their care journey and throughout independent living. We believe that the Commission would strongly benefit from accessing this research, in strengthening their understanding of the care experienced population. Should the Commission wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

We held a consultation with a small group of young people looking at their experience of housing and homelessness after care. This report will be forwarded along with this response.