

Policy Memorandum

Care Experienced people, from birth to old age, continue to be at risk of having their rights diluted, infringed, or disregarded. They currently do not have the same life outcomes as their non-Care Experienced peers. Their support networks might look different from someone who is not Care Experienced, and often decisions are made about them but not with them.

Independent advocates can change this!

Independent advocates can help to make sure Care Experienced people are informed of their options, rights and have their voices heard.

At Who Cares? Scotland, our professional independent advocacy workers work one-on-one with Care Experienced people to have their voices heard in decisions affecting them. However, not all Care Experienced people are able to access advocacy.

Whether it's helping a young person reunite with their brother or sister, signposting Care Experienced adults to critical housing support, or accompanying a young person to their Children's Panel, independent advocacy is a vital and valuable service for all Care Experienced people who need it.

Crucially, this advocacy should be **independent, lifelong, relationship-based and accessible to all**, following SIAA's Principles, Standards & Code of Best Practice.



Independent

The advocate has **no conflict of interest**— they work only for the person and operate completely free from outside influence.



Lifelong

Advocacy is **available at every stage of life**, ensuring no Care Experienced person is left without support, regardless of age or time in care.



Relationship based

Care Experienced people can rely on **a consistent and trusted advocate who understands their unique circumstances**, building a strong, ongoing connection that enables better support over time.



Accessible to all

Non-instructed advocacy ensures that the rights and needs of very young children and people with complex communication needs are represented, making sure their voices are heard.

Every day, our members tell us about the difference this type of advocacy makes to their lives. We've used this experience to develop our 'Advocacy in Action' comic strip series, which shares the real-world life-changing impact of independent advocacy.

Check out these comic strips to better understand why we're calling for action on advocacy now..



Right now, too many Care Experienced people cannot access advocacy when they need it...

The Promise states that:

“Care Experienced children and adults must have the right and access to independent advocacy, at all stages of their experience of care and beyond.” (p. 115)

Yet, five years later, Care Experienced people tell us action still needs to be taken to make this a statutory right. Many still struggle to access independent advocacy when they need it most.

We are calling for this to change

We are calling for a statutory right to independent, relationship-based, lifelong advocacy for all Care Experienced people who need it.

The upcoming Promise Bill is a critical opportunity to enshrine this right in law, fulfilling the commitments made to Care Experienced people five years ago.

Why are Who Cares? Scotland campaigning for this?

For almost 50 years, Who Cares? Scotland has been at the heart of the Care Experienced community in Scotland.

Last year, our advocacy workers supported over 1,600 Care Experienced people with more than 6,000 individual advocacy issues across all 32 local authorities.

We have seen first hand the impact independent advocacy can have. With **93% of Care Experienced people** we surveyed supporting our calls, the message is clear: It's time for action on advocacy.

“Personally, independent advocacy has made a big difference to me, it feels like **it's helped me a lot to express my feelings and get my point across about things I probably would never have opened up about.** I think you should be able to have an advocate at any age as you can still struggle to express yourself when you are older, and you still need to have that person who can help you to tell people how you feel.”

(Who Cares Scotland, Summer of Participation Evidence, 2023)

Now is the time to take Action on Advocacy

MSPs, we urge you to support our call to enshrine independent, relationship-based, lifelong advocacy in the upcoming Promise Bill.