

**NO
TIME
TO
LOSE:**

NO TIME TO LOSE



**A MANIFESTO FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG
PEOPLE LOOKED AFTER AWAY FROM HOME**

Written by Susan Elsley

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Not all of the young people who appear in this publication have personal care experience.

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FOREWORD

I congratulate the organisations involved in the production of this manifesto. It contains some familiar things and some new ones; some things that young people in care and their supporters have been raising for many years, and other things that are – or may seem to be – new.

Of the familiar things, there is a danger that some may sigh and think – not that again – as they read the exhortations about listening to young people, ensuring a better qualified and supported staff, supporting families to try to prevent the need for children and young people being separated from them, and making sure that the education and health of children and young people does not actually suffer from being “looked after”, but hopefully even improves! But the fact that some things may have been said before does not detract from the importance of this manifesto. It is not a search for novelty,

but an urgent call to action for these longstanding issues. The manifesto proposes that the debate be energised by development of a National Strategy for children and young people who are looked after away from home. And indeed, a comprehensive and well-resourced approach must surely be the way forward.

Of things new – some of them benefit from being teased out to show their personal impact. One of the principles the manifesto says should underpin our services is that, “Children and young people should be able to access support from previous carers and from services for as long as they need to when they move on from care.” This relates partly to the well known issues about institutional support for young people leaving care; but there are also examples of foster carers being told to turn away from their doors young people leaving care who may have spent a number



of years as a member of their families. This fits uneasily with the messages from the Children's Charter produced by the Scottish Executive after consultation with children and young people. "Get to know us" was one of their important pleas. But it would be a cruel perversion if, having invested the time in doing so, those working in the system felt they had to break the relationship abruptly once a young person reached an age that can be as young as 16.

There is an acknowledged need for more placements for younger children coming into the system, heightened by the concern that more children of substance-misusing parents need to be cared for away from home. This may be driving the expulsion of older young people, at or just over the age of 16, before they are really ready for independence.

Being a "corporate parent" is a

challenging task. But while it may not be possible for an agency to substitute fully for the relationship an individual parent can bring, it must at least be possible for it to pursue the standards of education and basic care that are essential to a young person's development. The recognition that even these standards are difficult to achieve must lead to urgent action.

There is truly "no time to lose" for those young people currently moving out of childhood into an adulthood for which they must be well supported and prepared. They will not get a second chance at childhood.

Kathleen Marshall
*Scottish Commissioner for
Children and Young People*

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THE MANIFESTO

Children and young people who are looked after away from home face real challenges as they grow up. They have often experienced abuse, neglect and the impact of poverty on their families and are amongst the most vulnerable children in Scotland.

Children and young people in these situations can overcome substantial obstacles and achieve their potential if they have the right support and access to opportunities. Scottish society will reap the benefits if it invests in young people who are looked

after away from home. Providing good services which can help to do this requires commitment, an adequate level of resources and a skilled workforce.

We want to do the best we possibly can for children and young people. We need to do that hand in hand with government. This manifesto calls on the Scottish Executive and politicians to help us by providing the national and local leadership for children and young people who are looked after away from home. There is no time to lose.

This manifesto has been drawn up by national organisations with many years experience of supporting looked after children and young people and their families: Aberlour Child Care Trust, the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF), the Fostering Network, the Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care (SIRCC), the Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum and Who Cares? Scotland. It is also supported by many other organisations who have signed up to this manifesto (see list on page 44).

THE CHALLENGE

‘Spread the word that it’s not children’s fault for being in children’s homes because they think it’s you and you’ve done something wrong, but for us it was our parents that had the problem and not us.’

**Young person aged 15,
Let’s Face It¹**

- There are over 5000 children and young people looked after away from home in residential or foster care in Scotland at any one time².
- Many of these young people have suffered from the impact of poverty and deprivation on their families as well as the effects of drug and alcohol use, neglect and abuse.
- Children and young people with these experiences are amongst the most vulnerable in Scotland.
- There is still a stigma attached to being a child or young person who is looked after away from home.
- Poor educational achievement, health problems and mental illness disproportionately affect this group of young people.
- Although there are excellent services providing high standards of care, other services do not consistently meet children’s needs or protect their rights.
- Children and young people do not always get the help they need until their circumstances become desperate and then they are more likely to end up in the nearest empty bed, rather than being matched with the placement that meets their individual needs.
- Services are under enormous pressure, stretched to capacity and struggling to find the financial resources to meet demand.
- Foster carers and residential staff feel undervalued and believe that their professions have low status in comparison with other areas of social work and social care.

1 Paterson, S., Watson, D., and Whiteford, J. (2003). *Let’s Face It! Care 2003: Young People Tell Us How It Is* Glasgow: Who Cares? Scotland.

2 Scottish Executive. (2005). *Children’s Social Work Statistics 2004-5*. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/10/2791127/11278>

Children who are looked after and accommodated are children between the ages of 0 and 18 for whom local authorities have a legal responsibility and are living away from home. They may be placed with foster carers, relatives or in residential services.

Some children and young people are in care for very short periods, others have repeated spells of care and some remain in care for several years until they are 16 or 17.





SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Make a difference now not later

There is an urgent need to deal with the challenges of providing high quality services for children and young people. We want to do this sooner rather than later. These are our priorities for change.

A National Strategy for children and young people looked after away from home

We need a National Strategy for children and young people who are looked after away from home to inform our services.

A National Strategy should:

- Find out what services are required across Scotland by having a national audit of the needs of children and young people who are looked after away from home.
- Establish the best ways of providing adequate services.
- Make sure that there are quality placements for all children who need them.

- Work out what it costs to provide these services and fund them accordingly.
- Secure the commitment of service providers to deliver these services.
- Develop a national research strategy to ensure that our policies and services are informed by what works.

Providing the best services

We want to deliver services effectively and locally and in partnership with other agencies.

We need:

- A general review of commissioning and procurement practices including consideration of the impact of new services and providers on local authority resources.

Children and young people getting heard

We must make sure that children get the services they need, when

they need them. Children and young people have the right to influence decisions about their lives.

We need:

- Independent advocacy services across Scotland for all children and young people including children who are living in foster care, disabled children and unaccompanied young people.

Young people moving on from care: throughcare and aftercare

We must ensure that young people moving from care are supported in the transition to the next stage of their lives.

We need:

- National debate on the need for national standards for throughcare and aftercare to promote good practice and ensure a consistency of services and resources for all young people across Scotland.

Supporting families

We must provide services for families in their communities to help them meet their needs when they are experiencing difficulties. We must not leave them until their individual situations reach crisis point.

We need:

- More targeted and specialist community based support to be available to parents and families whose children are looked after both at home and away from home.
- A national parenting strategy for Scotland to include support for parents whose children are looked after and accommodated as a priority.
- Urgent consideration by the Scottish Executive of support and financial allowances for kinship carers so that more children can stay with their extended families.



A skilled and qualified workforce

We want a workforce with the right mix of skills to deliver services and respond to the complexity of children and young people's needs.

We need:

- A review of the skills, training and qualifications required for residential child care staff, foster carers and throughcare and aftercare workers.
- A review of the pay and remuneration for residential staff and foster carers to ensure that experienced and qualified staff and carers continue to work in this field.
- Staff with the specialist skills to work with children and young people who live in secure care, disabled children and unaccompanied young people.
- To move as quickly as possible to having an accredited qualified workforce across residential and foster care.

Health

We must provide high quality health services for children and young people, regardless of their circumstances.

We need:

- The development of a national action plan for children and young people's health which recognises the particular health needs of looked after and accommodated children.
- Annual NHS Health Board performance reviews to include reports on how the health needs of looked after and accommodated children have been addressed.

Education

We must provide education services which can ensure that children and young people have the best possible start in life.

We need:

- An evaluation of the Scottish Executive's Learning with Care strategy in order to identify future areas for action in educational services.
- To minimise moves for young people at crucial points in their school education.

Youth justice and secure care

We must ensure that secure care is only used when it is appropriate

for a young person and that there are a range of other services which can meet young people's complex needs.

We need:

- A range of alternatives to secure care including high quality residential services and appropriate provision for young people with mental health needs.

Disabled children and young people

We must provide services which meet the rights and needs of all

children and young people who are disabled and their families.

We need:

- A national audit of the number of places, needs and outcomes of disabled children looked after away from home in order to identify gaps and better develop services for disabled children.

Unaccompanied children and young people

We must acknowledge our responsibilities for the care of unaccompanied children and

young people so that their needs can be met as children first and foremost.

We need:

- More information to be made available to agencies on their duties and responsibilities for unaccompanied children and young people.

PRINCIPLES WHICH SHOULD UNDERPIN OUR SERVICES

- The articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child must underpin everything we do for children and young people.
- Children and young people's views should inform decisions that are made about them and about services and policy.
- Children and young people have the right to high quality care which meets their individual needs.
- Children and young people looked after away from home have the right to the same opportunities and experiences as those who live with their families.
- Children and young people should be able to access support from previous carers and from services for as long as they need to when they move on from care.
- Children and young people who are looked after away from home should be supported to stay in contact with their birth families when this is in their best interests.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN

'Realising the rights of young people in public care calls for additional considerations which informed, skilled workers can provide. Additional vulnerability means that great care has to be taken in ensuring that protection doesn't completely outweigh their right as individuals to have the space to learn and grow in the same way as other young people.'

Deirdre Watson,
Director, Who Cares? Scotland

Children and young people at the heart of communities

A smart, successful Scotland cannot afford to lose the active contribution of any young people, including children and young people who are looked after. Our society often gives mixed messages about young people. These are reflected in government policy on antisocial behaviour, local opposition to siting of residential units and in the media. We urge government to show through words and actions that young people are valued members of our communities.

Children at the centre of services

Children and young people who are looked after away from home are entitled to good parenting, regardless of who does it and the complexity of ensuring this level of care. Every child and young person has the right to high quality services whatever their age, ethnicity, disability, gender,

sexuality, where they live or their immigration status if they are unaccompanied children. No child should be left on the margins.

Principles and policies

In spite of Scotland's commitment to the international principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and a significant amount of Scottish legislation and initiatives, there is still a mismatch between policies and what children experience. We want an end to this patchiness and call for the provision of sustainable quality services across Scotland.

Solutions that work

The recommendations in this manifesto do not come out of thin air. They draw on the experience of many organisations, children and young people and their families. Some of the problems have been acknowledged for years but have proved to be difficult to solve. All the more reason why

thorny problems should be looked at again so that we can come up with solutions that work.

World class services for children

We need better insights into what is working well in Scotland, the UK and internationally and how it can influence what we do in the future. We want Scotland to provide world class services for all children and young people who are looked after away from home.



The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child outlines the UK Government and the Scottish Executive's obligations to protect and promote the rights of all children. Its articles are relevant to looked after and accommodated children including:

- Article 3 - the best interests of the child
- Article 9 - authorities' responsibilities in cases of abuse or neglect
- Article 12 - the right of children to have a say in decisions that affect them
- Article 19 - the right of children to be protected from maltreatment
- Article 20 - the right of children deprived of their families to have the special protection of the state

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child <http://www.unicef.org/crc/crc.htm>

WHY WE NEED A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LOOKED AFTER AWAY FROM HOME

‘Social Workers are not spending time with young people to get to know them.

They use jargon and big words in their reports and meet about young people without young people’s input.’

Comments from young people,
Who Cares? Scotland Focus Group

Filling the gap

With the best will in the world, we find it impossible to resolve some of the complex issues about service delivery and resources in the absence of a national strategic overview. A National Strategy would fill that gap, offering an opportunity to plan our resources and delivery across Scotland rather than developing them in a piecemeal fashion.

High quality services not just the nearest empty bed

The current situation is not good enough. Where children and young people are placed is a lottery, dependent on the availability of places rather than what is best for an individual child. We urgently need national debate on what services should be in place to meet the individual needs of children and their families.

Services wrapped around the child

Making changes for children and young people is not just the responsibility of social work. It also applies to other local authority services such as education, housing, leisure and recreation as well as health boards, the police, voluntary organisations and independent providers. A National Strategy would be able to take a bird’s eye view of everyone’s responsibilities and ensure that services are wrapped around the child.

Using resources effectively

Although the number of children and young people looked after and accommodated is a small proportion of the under 18 population, this group of young people requires significant investment from public services. A National Strategy would recognise the importance of providing adequate resources so that there are better outcomes for children and young

people in the future. Spending now to save later, both in economic and social terms.

Escalating costs

Costs for residential care and foster care have escalated over the last five years. There is severe pressure on residential and foster placements. New ways of providing services such as independent foster care agencies are becoming more common. However there has not been the opportunity to consider the implications of different services locally and nationally. A National Strategy would provide a much needed focus for debates on resources and services.

Looking at the whole picture

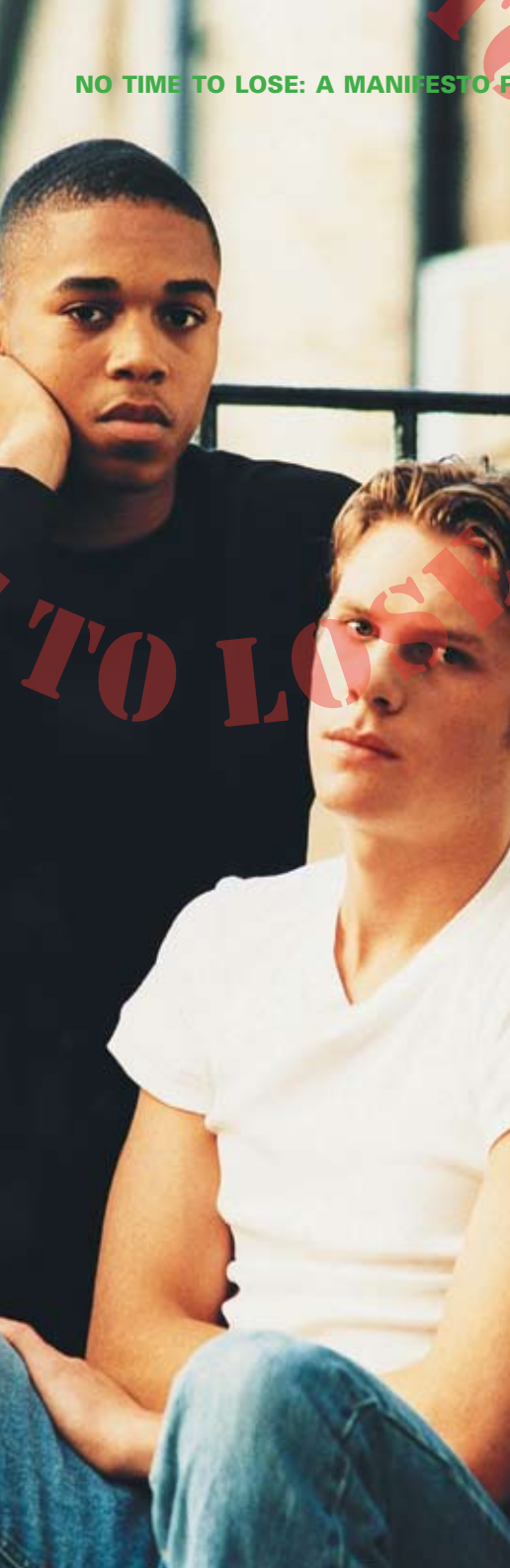
We know that there are many factors that help promote children and young people's resilience and promote their well being but it is not easy to put these in place for children without considering

the whole picture. Dilemmas and poor practice in services cannot be resolved by individual organisations alone. We need a National Strategy to help us find solutions.

National leadership

There is still a culture of low expectations about the services provided to children and young people looked after away from home. The complexity of responding to the needs of young people who are deeply traumatised as well as responding to sometimes very challenging behaviour should not undermine our determination to give each young person the best possible start in life. A National Strategy would provide leadership for our collective aspirations.





PROVIDING THE BEST SERVICES

'Local authorities, through their own services and in partnership with the voluntary sector, strive to provide excellent services for these children. But much still requires to be done to ensure their needs are consistently met and each child is responded to as a unique individual.'

Bernadette Docherty,
Vice President, Association of
Directors of Social Work

Services stretched to the limit

Services for looked after children and young people are stretched to the limit. More children are coming into the child protection system than five years ago and often with a high level of need. The reality is that there is not enough spare capacity in residential units or foster provision to offer young people choice and flexibility in provision. Unacceptable overcrowding in residential units is happening too frequently. Recent research shows that over 50% of admissions to residential care are being made in an emergency so that admissions are often unplanned³. This means that children are put under additional stress and often have to be moved again to find the right place for them to live.

3 Milligan, I., Hunter, L. & Kendrick, A. (2006). *Current trends in the use of residential child care in Scotland*. Glasgow: Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care.

Services close to home

Services are not managing to keep children close to home so that they can benefit from contact with their family, friends and communities. A small number of children are sent to placements in England because of a lack of specialist services in Scotland. Children and young people are placed in residential schools from around Scotland but there is not a national system for making sure that the right services are matched with individual children.

Workforce capacity

In order to deliver on Scottish Executive policies, service providers are increasing their capacity and developing the skills of their workforce. But this is difficult to achieve because of the difficulties in recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce. Residential and foster services would benefit from better co-ordination across services and the opportunity for staff and carers to develop more effective partnership working. Many are overwhelmed by the amount of regulation which surrounds their daily activities and undermines their capacity to meet children's needs.

What services cost

We need to have a much better understanding of what services cost so that we can provide services that meet children's needs. Children should be having fewer placement moves. There should be restrictions on the number of foster places in a foster carer's home to three to bring it in line with the recommendations of the Fostering Network. However, committing to quality care has implications for the funding and availability of placements. Although independent foster care services are providing essential placements for children, the costs of purchasing services are having a significant impact on local authority budgets. In the absence of the right kind of services, some young people are placed inappropriately in high cost services such as secure care units or residential schools. This is an unnecessary expense in these circumstances and not in the best interests of children.

Realistic levels of resourcing

We acknowledge that there has been government investment in services over the last few years

but it is not enough to meet the current demands on our services. High quality care for children won't happen unless there is a realistic level of funding across all services for children. The best possible care cannot be provided through the sheer good will of service providers and dedicated staff. It must be backed up by realistic levels of financial investment from government.

Being a good corporate parent

The Children (Scotland) Act states that children are the responsibility of the whole authority not just social work. But our perception is that there is some confusion about the role of the 'corporate parent', a term often used to describe the responsibility of the local authority for children in its care. A national review on the corporate parent duty would help to reinvigorate this role at a local level. However all agencies have a responsibility to ensure high quality services and good outcomes for children and young people. Local authorities, health boards and the police should appoint a senior officer in each area to be a champion for children and young people looked after away from home.



National audit of needs

We do not have a national overview of what services are available and where, and if they can really meet the needs of children and young people. A national audit, as part of a National Strategy, could assess what placements are required, explore how services could meet them, identify the resource implications and agree priorities with providers. Regular assessment of need over periods of time would give an opportunity to re-examine the planning and development of services.

National research strategy

We would like to see the development of a national research strategy which encourages, commissions and promotes a variety of research activities. This should include the evaluation of existing services so we know what is working and why, as well as the analysis of social trends and exploring ideas for developing new provision. More longitudinal research would provide a solid evidence basis for developing future services. Research should be made widely available to front line workers, managers and policymakers so that it can influ-

ence policy and practice.

Universal services

Supporting children and young people looked after away from home is not just the task of specialist services. We believe that universal services, whether they are family centres or youth clubs, have a significant role in protecting and supporting children and their families. Local services should meet the needs of all members of the community, including those who are most excluded by disadvantage and difficult circumstances.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- A national audit to assess what placements are required, explore how services could meet them and identify what it costs to provide high quality, flexible services.
- A general review of commissioning and procurement practices including consideration of the impact of new services and providers on local authority resources.
- A national review of the role and duties of the corporate parent.
- A senior person appointed as a champion for looked after and accommodated children in each statutory agency, including local authorities, health boards and police authorities and responsible for ensuring high quality services.
- The development of a national research strategy to commission and promote research activities.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE GETTING HEARD

'All decisions about young people should be explained more to young people so they know what is happening.'

Young people's recommendations, the Debate Project⁴

Reality of children and young people's experience

We know that the reality of children and young people's experience does not always evidence the implementation of children's rights.

Children and young people are not consistently getting the opportunity to participate in important decisions or develop good relationship with adults who support them. They are not always involved in decisions about where they are to live or have adequate support to ensure that they participate in reviews of their care. Young people in care are unsettled by having to move placement too often with 27% moving three or more times⁵.

Having regular access to their social workers is sometimes difficult. Too many say they have

four or more social workers during their time in care so they do not develop long term quality relationships. This is a particular problem for children when they are placed in foster care.

An everyday childhood

Children who are looked after and accommodated should be able to lead a life that is, to all intents and purposes, just like that of any child in Scotland. Young people talk about everyday problems which upset them like the difficulties of staying in touch with family and friends or of enjoying the same leisure and play activities as other children, such as staying overnight with friends. They do not always get the chance to try out new interests in arts and sports because of a lack of adult support. Access to these opportunities gives children and young people the chance to

⁴ Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum, The Debate Project. 2005

⁵ Scottish Executive. *Children's Social Work Statistics 2004-5*. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/10/2791127/11278>

develop self-confidence, life skills and peer support. Unfortunately, concerns about safety and protection mean that certain activities such as cycling or trips to the seaside are not always available to children because they are seen to be too risky, even where the risks are minor.

Feeling safe

Young people's relationships with residential care workers or foster carers are not always as good as they should be. Young people are concerned about the way physical restraint is sometimes used by staff in residential units and say that being able to trust staff to keep them safe is extremely important. Feeling safe and being protected is a concern in young people's relationships with their peers. They talk of being bullied in their placements, in school and in the local community where they live. Children and young people find it difficult to get access to information and do not always know how to make complaints when things go wrong.

Access to advocacy services

Advocacy services for children are overstretched and cannot meet the needs of all young people who

live away from home. Getting access to advocacy is a particular problem for young people who live in foster care, for disabled children and for young people detained under mental health legislation. Young people should have more opportunities to talk to independent, trusted adults when they need confidential support.

Participation in services and policy development

Advocacy services should not

fill a gap that other services have an obligation to provide. Everyone working with children has a responsibility to be an advocate for children's rights. Children and young people's views should influence service and policy developments including any systems for monitoring and evaluating services. Rhetoric is not enough. Professionals need to be fully committed to children's participation and have the skills to make it happen.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Better access for children and young people to their social workers with an emphasis on developing long term quality relationships in line with the recommendations of the 21st Century Social Work Review⁶.**
- **An evaluation of current advocacy services to establish what services are available and what they provide.**
- **Scotland-wide coverage of independent advocacy services for all children and young people, including access to a trusted adult or young person's supporter⁷.**
- **The development of guidance on involving children in decision making and service and policy developments.**
- **Guidance to service providers on a good parenting approach to risk assessment of play and leisure activities which facilitates children's access to the everyday experiences of being young.**

6 Scottish Executive. (2006). *Changing Lives: Report of the 21st Century Social Work Review*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.

7 Regulation 5, The Support and Assistance of Young People Leaving Care (Scotland) Regulations 2003

YOUNG PEOPLE MOVING ON FROM CARE: THROUGH-CARE AND AFTERCARE

'Leaving care for me was one of the hardest things in my life. The stress of leaving care was really bad. It's good to keep in contact, like with phone calls.'

Young person's comments,
The Debate Project

Leaving care too young

We know that many young people move on from the age of 16, leaving care too young with little attention being given to what it is like to live independently. This is in sharp contrast to other young people who are staying at home longer than ever before. But young people who are looked after away from home need support and access to care into their early twenties and beyond, just like any other young people. To help them, young people require backup from support workers who are in regular contact with them at a point of stress and transition in their lives.

Meeting the needs of individual young people

Young people placed away from their own community in residential schools or foster care sometimes want to remain in the area where they have been accommodated. Although a significant number



of young people leaving care are pregnant or are young mothers or fathers, there are few services available to support them as parents. Local services need to be geared up to meet the needs of

individual young people and the diversity of their circumstances and choices.

Keeping in touch

The break with previous care

arrangements can be very abrupt. Often staff and carers' time is too pressurised to allow for formal and informal contact with young people who have left. Young people's transition to other living arrangements would be made much easier if they could return to their foster carers or residential units from time to time for a chat, a meal or to stay a night. To make this happen, residential staff and foster carers need to have some space in their workloads and to be allowed to maintain these supportive relationships.

'Children and young people who have lived in care must have the same life chances as all children in Scotland. They have faced some of the most difficult childhoods. Let's make sure they can have a successful adulthood.'

Alison Caulfield,
National Co-ordinator, Scottish
Throughcare and Aftercare Forum





Planning for leaving care

Leaving care should be planned well in advance. In fact, learning about life skills should begin to happen as soon as young people arrive in care. Once young people live on their own they need good consistent sources of support and the opportunity to maintain links with their families, friends, neighbourhood and professionals.

Moving on

Statistics and young people's accounts show that many young people do not have pathway plans or contact with workers once they leave, despite this being a statutory requirement. Exit interviews should be available to all young people so that care services and the moving on experience can be improved.

Young people who are looked after away from home can be doubly disadvantaged by their negative experiences while they are growing up and by a lack of support as they move into young adulthood. We need to make sure that becoming a young adult is a positive and exciting experience rather than a matter of survival.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- A national debate on the need for national standards for throughcare and aftercare to promote best practice and ensure consistency of services and resources for all young people across Scotland.
- Every young person to have a throughcare plan well in advance of leaving care.
- Young people to be able to move to independent living when they are ready rather than be moved because they have reached 16 or 17 years old.
- Residential staff and foster carers to have the capacity to maintain ongoing supportive relationships with care leavers.
- Arrangements to be in place to support young people's transition to adult health services.
- Support workers for throughcare and aftercare who can stay with young people as they move, so that they are supported wherever they are living and whatever their circumstances.

SUPPORTING FAMILIES

'If you get put in one home and your sister or your brother gets put in another home, myself I don't really think that's right because you should be with your family, even if you're split up from your mum you shouldn't get split up from your sister or your brother.'

**Young person aged 13,
Let's Face It**

Preventative work with families

Our experience tells us that high quality preventative work with families is more positive for children and their parents than being taken into care in a crisis. The reality is that some parents cannot cope for periods of time and need help from outside the home. In these situations some children are left too long in difficult circumstances without support. Earlier intervention for younger children in particular would help to prevent poorer outcomes in the long term for vulnerable families.

Pressures on parents

The stresses and strains of living on a low income cannot be overstated. Most families cope well with these pressures but some do not. Young parents are vulnerable, in particular those who have had experience of being looked after.

We strongly believe that crisis intervention or respite services can have a significant role in supporting families when they are at breaking point, cutting down on the need for some children to be placed away from home and preparing other children for placements.

Impact of drug use and alcohol misuse

We are concerned about the 40,000 to 60,000 children and young people living with drug using parents and 80,000 to 100,000 who are affected by parental alcohol misuse⁸. These children and families need access to community based services which can support families to stay together, where children are being well cared for and are not in danger of harm. Services dealing with alcohol and drug misuse

8 Scottish Executive. (2006). *Hidden Harm – Next Steps: Supporting Children – Working with Parents*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.

need to be aware of both children and parents' needs.

Investment in extended families

We want more investment in work with families, parents and other significant adults such as grandparents to make sure that the best decisions are made about a child's future. Services and their staff need to work with parents rather than make them feel that they have failed or are being punished. Where children are looked after by members of their extended family, better support and allowances should be available for kinship carers.

'Even when children are looked after, their parents will remain of great importance in their lives and we need to make sure that positive relationships are supported wherever these exist – they will have lifelong significance.'

Romy Langeland,
Chief Executive, Aberlour

Keeping in touch with families

Some children are growing up away from their families without a sense of their family background and roots although the importance of maintaining family links for children's developmental needs is increasingly acknowledged.

Recent research about attachment indicates that we need to build on this knowledge to improve support to children and their families. This should include other significant adults who have a long-term relationship with children. Younger children in particular need to be supported to keep in touch with

their families. Young people are being split up from their brothers and sisters because of the lack of accommodation, despite the Looked After Children regulations which require siblings to be kept together.

Children's right to family life

For some children, stability in family life will come through long term foster placements or adoption where this is in their best interests. Children's right to family life should be seen as significant as young people's right to be protected from abuse and neglect.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support to all parents through parenting services in communities.
- More targeted and specialist community-based support to be available to parents and families whose children are looked after both at home and away from home.
- A national parenting strategy for Scotland to include support for parents whose children are looked after and accommodated as a priority.
- Sufficient and appropriate residential and foster provision to keep siblings groups together when this is in children's best interests.
- The Scottish Executive should urgently consider support and financial allowances for kinship carers drawing on evidence from recent unpublished research.

A SKILLED AND QUALIFIED WORKFORCE

'Foster care is at a crossroads, we face difficulties ahead if we don't do something now. We need to face the challenges and take action now before it's too late.'

'We will need to work together with all our drive and all our enthusiasm if we are to succeed, and there is a profound need to take into consideration the finite nature of childhood. We need to take action now.'

Bryan Ritchie,
*Director, the Fostering Network
Scotland*

Workforce planning

The increasingly complex needs of children and young people are putting strenuous demands on residential staff and foster carers. There is a shortage of appropriate foster carers and residential care workers and problems with the retention of staff which make it difficult to plan for high quality services. The majority of staff are unqualified. Poor status, pay and opportunities for professional development mean that those who are best qualified often move on. Recent recruitment drives are paying some dividends but it will require time, ongoing professional development and high quality supervision for staff to become experienced. This needs to be mirrored by safer recruitment practices which ensure that child protection is paramount.

Supporting foster carers

Foster carers are self employed except where they are employed





by independent providers. They are not registered by the Scottish Social Services Council and have no automatic route to training and education. The current level of remuneration for foster carers is unrealistically low, especially as there is a shortage of carers. The average age of a foster carer is increasing which will have a significant impact on services in the next few years. Figures from the Fostering Network conclude that foster care households in Scotland need to reach 5000 to meet need which is an additional 1700 foster care households based on current numbers. An appropriate level of funding for supporting foster carers, based on figures that BAAF and the Fostering Network have put together, would begin to ensure a funding level that reflects what fostering costs⁹.

Complexity of working in residential care

Residential care staff have the complex task of providing the care and nurture for children which is usually provided by their parents.

But they are not parents and require significant training and support to do this in a professional manner. A wide range of skills is needed to meet children's needs.

Investment in training and education in residential care

There has been a significant investment in training and education in residential care by the Scottish Executive through SIRCC but other factors have impacted on progress towards a qualified workforce. Staff who are unqualified often require intensive support to achieve qualification levels. Whilst some employers have been able to release staff to take part in educational courses and training, others have highlighted the pressures on budgets due to staff replacement costs.

Social work and social care qualifications

The Scottish Social Services Council removed the child care registration requirement in 2004 that residential child care workers should have a relevant HNC qualification. This signified that

9 Tapsfield, R., and Collier, F. (2005). *The Cost of Foster Care*. London: BAAF and the Fostering Network.

residential child care staff did not require pre-entry training in any form of child or social care. The consequences of this decision may be that there is a reduction in the number of appropriately qualified prospective students applying for entry to the BA degree in Social Work. Disappointingly, this could lead to fewer staff working in residential care who are equipped with training and education in social work skills.

An expert workforce

Our view is that an expert, well trained workforce across residential care, foster care and throughcare and aftercare as well as other services such as social work, health and education, is essential in order to deal with the complex needs of young people who are looked after and accommodated. This requires national action to make sure it happens.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- A review of pay and remuneration for residential care staff to ensure that it does not fall behind that of other social work and social care staff. Pay must recognise the challenges and complexity of working in residential child care.
- A review of child care registration requirements on the appropriate qualification level and the best mix of qualifications required for residential child care workers.
- The development and implementation of initiatives to support foster carers. This should include an increase in the number of foster care households, a training and education strategy and a review of foster carers' allowances and fees.
- Identifying and putting in place appropriate training for throughcare and aftercare support workers.
- A review of the role and use of staff exit interviews in order to identify issues about the retention of staff and as a strategy for contributing to the improvement of services.

'It has long been acknowledged that the complexity of the residential child care task demands a fully qualified workforce. The current registration requirements provide us with the platform to achieve this. The more we work together to transform this aspiration into a reality, the closer we are to delivering the world class residential child care services children and young people deserve.'

Steven Paterson,
*Acting Director, Scottish Institute
for Residential Child Care (SIRCC)*

EDUCATION

‘Growing up within a settled, loving family group is the best start in life that any child can have. Permanence is not just about a legal status, it is about feeling that you belong. Living with uncertainty and change damages children physically, emotionally and psychologically. Becoming accommodated should mean that children can put these experiences behind them, not experience even more.’

Barbara Hudson,
Director, BAAF Scotland

Poor record of success

Children are still failing in the education system. Young people who are looked after away from home have a poor record of success in schools and include a high number of young people who are excluded. Educational attainment continues to be significantly lower than for other children. Some young people have significant periods when they do not attend school because of disruption in their lives and fall behind in their school work. This is a particular problem for young people who are placed in secure care accommodation who may have big gaps in their education.

Children’s right to education

Children and young people who are looked after and accommodated have a right to the same education as other young people. This includes having access to the entire school curriculum and

the right to a fulltime education, whether they are attending school or not. These children also require education services to be flexible when they are experiencing difficult circumstances in their own lives.

Support out of school

Children and young people do not always get support with their school work where they live including quiet places to study and help with homework. Often children change schools several times as a result of placement changes. This impacts on their education and removes young people from friends and a familiar school environment at a point when they especially need support and security.

Schools getting it right

Teachers and education services need more opportunities to improve their understanding of

the needs and wishes of looked after children. Some schools are reluctant to admit children and young people who are looked after and accommodated. Schools should actively explore ways of supporting young people in education and work more effectively in partnership with other providers of education such as residential schools. Maximum effort must be made to make sure that children are kept in, rather than excluded from, the education system.

Educational transitions

Young people often leave care at the very point that they are studying for their exams at the age of 16 or 17. This is a particular problem in residential schools where funding is often withdrawn for young people when they reach 16. Leaving care at 16 impacts on young people's longer term ambitions of getting work or going onto further education. If young people are at college or university they are under particular pressures. They do not have the same ongoing family support that other students have and are at risk of being homeless during vacation times when they do not have access to student accommodation.

Achieving potential

We believe that children and young people can achieve their potential, given the right support by educational services, residential staff and foster carers. Low educational expectations of children who are looked after and accommodated need to be countered with a rich learning environment out of school. Children and young people need more than just formal education. They also have the right to access other opportunities for informal learning such as hobbies, participation in clubs, arts and sports where they can achieve personal success.

'I could have gone to university, but the headmaster at my school didn't want to know. He wanted you to leave all your problems at the door of the school.'

Young person's comments,
The Debate Project

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Minimising moves for young people at crucial points in their school education.**
- **Provision of resources which support young people's learning out of school, including quiet places to study, books, computers and access to mentoring or tutoring as well as opportunities for informal learning.**
- **Training for foster carers and residential staff so that they can support the education of children in their care.**
- **Support to young people in further and higher education including accommodation in vacations and financial support to take account of additional costs.**
- **Evaluation of the Scottish Executive initiative for the education of children who are looked after, Learning with Care, in order to identify future areas for action.**



HEALTH

'...we have been taught how to maintain regular health check ups so when I move on it will be really beneficial for me because my health won't suffer.'

Young person,

*Caring about health: Voices of young people in and out of care*¹⁰

Not enough recognition of children's health

We believe that children's and young people's health needs urgent attention. There is no national recognition of the particular health issues which confront children and young people who live away from home. Services are not prioritising their needs with the result that specialist or fast track services are provided on an ad hoc basis. This is not enough to make a difference to the high levels of ill-health of children and young people looked after away from home.

High levels of ill health

Children's adverse experiences when they are very young can have an impact on their development and can lead to difficulties in establishing close relationships as

they get older. Drug and alcohol misuse by parents can affect the long term health outcomes of children and impact on their social, physical and emotional development. There are worryingly high levels of self-harm amongst these young people.

Poor access to services

Children and young people looked after away from home are not getting access to everyday basic services such as GPs, immunisations and dental care and often have a poor record of primary health care before they are accommodated. There is a very significant demand for therapeutic resources which cannot be met by current provision. There is a need for much more good quality accessible mental health services with 40% of looked after and accommodated young people

¹⁰ Scottish Healthy Care Network. (2006). *Caring about health: Voices of young people in and out of care* (DVD).



having emotional or mental health problems¹¹.

NHS Health Boards have a significant role overseeing service provision for children and young people who are looked after. We would like to see more strategic planning and review by Health Boards of how they are providing services for these children.

Management of children's health needs

Where children and young people are living with chronic ill-health such as diabetes, there can be poor management of their health needs because of a lack of awareness and inadequate training of staff and carers. Although it is important that residential staff and foster carers share information effectively about children and young people's health needs, consideration should be given to young people's right to confidentiality about their medical records. The more placement moves children have, the bigger the impact this has on the continuity of their health care.

Promoting good health

There is a paucity of information and education on sex and relationships, sexual health and parenting. Potential problems are being stored up for young people's future health due to the number of young smokers, bad diet arising from young people's inadequate skills in the kitchen and the lack of opportunities for exercise.

Specialist services

The establishment of looked after and accommodated children (LAAC) nurses has been an effective response to tackling some of young people's health problems. LAAC nurses and paediatricians who are generally part of specialist LAAC teams, carry out health assessments of children and young people soon after they come into care. They identify each child's own health needs and fast track them to appropriate services where they exist. This has been very popular and successful with children and young people. However, not all areas have this service and it does not always include children who

¹¹ Public Health Institute of Scotland. (2003). *Needs Assessment Report on Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Final Report- May 2003.*

live with foster carers or children who are placed out of their own local authority or health board area. Young people moving on from care require support in their transition to adult services particularly when they are facing

homelessness, addiction and mental health problems. Children and young people's poor health is therefore being compromised because of a lack of Scotland-wide provision of specialist LAAC health services.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- **The development of a national action plan for children's and young people's health which recognises the particular health needs of looked after and accommodated children.**
- **Annual NHS Health Board performance reviews to include reports on how the health needs of looked after and accommodated children have been addressed. This should be signed off by children's service planning partners.**
- **A system for fast tracking these children and young people to universal services including GPs, dental care and mental health services.**
- **Mandatory training on health for those working with young people who are looked after and accommodated including residential care workers and foster carers.**
- **Provision of looked after and accommodated children (LAAC) nurses for all relevant young people so that young people get a comprehensive health assessment wherever they are in Scotland.**
- **Provision of throughcare nurses to help with young people's transition to adult services and to promote better health care.**
- **Better collection of national statistics on the health of children and young people looked after away from home so that services can plan more effectively.**

YOUTH JUSTICE AND SECURE CARE

'Well, I've been in nine foster placements and one children's home and one residential school and one secure unit.'

Young person,

*I wish I could turn back time*¹²

Complex needs of young people in secure care

Young people in secure care have complex needs. A significant number have had chaotic life experiences prior to coming into secure care. Young women may be placed there because of their sexual vulnerability and other forms of self-harming. Many of the young people need significant support and intervention in relation to their emotional, behavioural, educational and physical needs. This often requires the specialist input of therapeutic and mental health services. Some young people may not be able to access specialist health services even though they urgently need it because they are on remand. Many have not been in school for some time and require intensive support with their learning so that they can maximise their educational opportunities.

Resolving problems

Generally there are a high number of young people who are persistent offenders and are looked after and accommodated. We are concerned that looked after and accommodated young people may be over-represented in the youth justice system. In order to ensure that young people are not needlessly entering the youth justice system, rigorous attempts should be used to resolve problems through behaviour management, conflict resolution or mediation so that young people do not come into secure care in the first place. More legal representatives are required who are in tune with young people and their circumstances so that they can better support and represent young people's interests.

¹² Foreman, L. (2006). *I wish I could turn back time*. Who Cares? Scotland.

Increases in secure care accommodation

There has been wide ranging debate in Scotland on the best approaches to deal with antisocial behaviour and young people who are offenders. As a result of these policy discussions there has been an increase in the number of beds in secure care accommodation. We believe that any increases in the secure care estate need to be balanced by investment in other provision for looked after and accommodated young people.

Alternatives to secure care

We do not believe that secure care is the best solution for every young person who ends up there. Research should evaluate the effectiveness of secure care in producing positive outcomes for young people. We wish to see a range of alternatives developed to ensure that, for example, young people with mental health needs can be appropriately accommodated. We would urge the Scottish Executive to consider whether secure care can best meet the needs of the young people who are placed there whether they have offended or not.

Supporting young people in communities

Planners of local services have to take account of those young people who are regarded as particularly challenging, hard to reach and who do not use their services. To do this, services will have to find ways of being flexible as well as innovative in responding to young people's needs.

Moving out of secure care

Secure care will only be effective if it is mirrored by robust, good quality open residential provision and the availability of services to support young people when they return to their communities after leaving care. There should be standard procedures for supporting young people when they are moving out of secure care to help facilitate their transition to independent living or to other care arrangements.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure that there is a range of alternatives to secure care, including high quality residential services and appropriate provision for young people with mental health needs.
- Use of standardised procedures for young people entering and leaving secure care to ensure better planning and continuity of support and resources.
- Specialist training and education for all those working in secure care.
- Provision of intensive education support for young people in secure care.
- Commission research which evaluates the effectiveness of secure care in producing positive outcomes for young people and can inform the development of secure care in Scotland.
- More access to specialist services particularly in mental and physical health at the point of entry to secure care.



DISABLED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

'I am really looking forward to having a home of my own with my friend. We will be adults and looking after ourselves – doing things that adults do – shopping and cooking. In the next few weeks there are lots of things to do. I'm hoping that I can come back and visit everyone.'

Young person,
The Mallard Project

Disabled children and their needs

Little is known about the needs of children and young people who have disabilities and are looked after and are accommodated in Scotland. This should be addressed by national level audit and research. Otherwise there is a real danger that services will not be meeting the needs of disabled children and their families.

Appropriate services

Disabled young people are often accommodated in residential schools instead of in services closer to home because of a lack of good local services including residential accommodation or foster carers with specialist skills. There is little appropriate accommodation for emergencies when children with disabilities have to go into care at short notice. For some children, such as those on the autistic spectrum, specialised services nearer to home could

meet their needs. Children who are looked after in short break services should have their needs reviewed regularly regardless of the basis on which they are accessing services. Services should be flexible and responsive to the requirements of individual children and young people and as local as possible.

Specialist training and education for staff

Staff should have access to specialist training and education to meet the diverse needs of disabled young people. Some disabled children are not having the opportunities to communicate with those around them due to the lack of staff skills and training. There is a need for medical and medicine administration support for staff working with disabled children. Young people with disabilities do not have access to the same level of advocacy support as other young people who are looked after



and are not sufficiently involved in their own reviews.

Transition to adult services and independence

For young people who are older, more attention should be given to better planning for the transition into adult services. The availability of more services aimed at 18-25 year olds with a focus on preparing for independence would help the move of disabled young people into young adulthood.

'Taking part in her review was brilliant for her. It made people realise that, although she's disabled she still has her own thoughts and comments to make. People need to realise that disabled people have a lot to say.'

**Parent of disabled young person,
NCH**

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- A national audit of the number of places, needs and outcomes of children with disabilities looked after away from home in order to identify gaps and better develop services for disabled children.
- A better range of local services, including shared and respite care, so that families can care for their children at home.
- Specialist training, including communication skills, for staff working with disabled children.
- Access to appropriate advocacy services for disabled children, including advocacy workers with specialist training and communication skills.
- Planned transitions for disabled young people aged 16 to 21 years as they move from child care services to adult care or more independent living.

UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

'I came to Glasgow from Pakistan, everything was different. I felt lonely, did not understand the language and did not know what to do. I am now well looked after, go to school, have friends and I am beginning to understand the language more and I am very happy now.'

Young person,
Young Survivors' Steps To The Future Group, the big step.

Experience of unaccompanied children and young people

Children and young people who arrive in Scotland without their parents or other adult carers are particularly vulnerable. There are increasing numbers of children and young people in this situation who have come to Scotland unaccompanied from areas of conflict throughout the world¹³. Young people, who may have been through traumatic experiences in their own country, are particularly isolated because they may not speak English and are often on their own, without family members or friends and without official documentation. They may have been trafficked into the UK, have been sexually abused or be pregnant. Sometimes the age of young people is unknown. These factors contribute to high levels

of distress amongst children and young people and cannot be ignored by agencies. Young people who are separated require specialist services and support, particularly in the areas of physical and mental health.

Duties and responsibilities

Although there is a lack of clarity over whether UK or Scottish legislation applies to young people who are separated, the Scottish Executive, local authorities and health boards do have duties with regard to this group of young people. We believe that urgent action is needed to clear up any confusion about our responsibilities to unaccompanied young people.

Specialist support for young people

Separated young people who

¹³ 'Separated children' or 'unaccompanied minors' are children under 18 years of age who are outside their country of origin and separated from both parents, or previous/legal customary primary care giver' *Child Asylum and Refugee Issues in Scotland (Caris)*; Save the Children/University of Glasgow http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/caris/legal/srandi/sr_03.php

are leaving care or who arrive in Scotland when they are 16 or 17 are in a particularly difficult situation. Those who are coming up to 18 years old and awaiting decisions on their immigration status are under great stress. This makes planning and preparation for throughcare and aftercare complex, with support needed from staff who are knowledgeable about the issues that confront young people in this situation. There is a lack of independent advocates and legal representatives who can provide specialist support.

'I had a tough time when I came here first of all because of this I was alone and also didn't understand the language. When I had people who care about me, I started to get used to them and then I felt better.'

Young person,
Young Survivors' Steps To The Future Group, the big step

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- More information to be made available to agencies on their duties and responsibilities for unaccompanied children and young people.
- Access to specialist advice services and advocacy for children who are separated and unaccompanied.
- Training for staff who are working with unaccompanied children and young people.
- Access to specialist health services including primary care and mental health services.
- The development of appropriate throughcare and aftercare services for unaccompanied young people.
- Maintaining up to date information at national level on the needs and profile of unaccompanied children and young people in Scotland.



Organisations that have signed up to the manifesto

Aberlour Child Care Trust	Edinburgh Connect	Scottish Borders Council
Andrew Kendrick, Professor of Residential Child Care	Falkland House School	Scottish Healthy Care Network
Anne Black, Independent Social Work Consultant	Ferniehill Young People's Centre	Scottish Institute for Excellence in Social Work Education (SIESWE)
Applied Care and Development (ACAD)	Fostering Solutions Northern	Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care
Article 12 in Scotland	Geilsland School	Scottish Refugee Council
BAAF Scotland	Glasgow Caledonian University	Scottish Society for Autism
Ballikinrain 'Include Me In' Services	Glasgow City Council, Education Services	Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum
Balnacraig School	Good Shepherd Centre	Seamab School
Barnardos Scotland	Harmeny Education Trust	South Lanarkshire Council
Bob Holman	Hillside School	Spark of Genius
British Association of Social Workers (BASW)	Includem	Springboig St. John's
Cairn Mhor Childcare Partnership	Inverclyde Council	Starley Hall School
Capability Scotland	John Triselitois	St Andrew's Children's Society
CareVisions	Kibble Education and Care Centre	Stirling Council: Children's Services
Children 1st	LAAC Nurses, Scottish Forum	St Mary's Kenmure
City of Edinburgh Council	Langside College	St Philip's Residential School
CORA Learning	Malvern Grange Scotland	The Action Group
Criminal Justice Social Work Development Centre for Scotland	Moore House Care and Education	The Adam Smith College
Curo Salus	Moray Council	The Big Step
Dean and Cauvin Trust	Napier University	The Children's Parliament
Donaldson's College	NCH Scotland	The Debate Project
Dr Graham Connelly, University of Strathclyde	North Lanarkshire Partnership	The Fostering Network
Dumfries and Galloway College	Oakbank School	Voluntary Service Aberdeen (VSA)
East Dunbartonshire Council	Quarriers	West Lothian Council
East Park	Rossie Secure Accommodation Services	Who Cares? Scotland
	Save The Children UK - Scotland Programme	Young Minds
	Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights	Youthlink Scotland

Organisations that have signed up to the Manifesto – Continued

Aberdeen City Council

Carolina House Trust

Crossreach



The manifesto can be accessed at: www.sircc.strath.ac.uk/manifesto

