Experiences of care leaver parents: A Comparative Study between Scotland and England

Shilla Shomai

On Monday, the Commission on Widening Access published their final report. I was delighted to see that some of the recommendations in the report were directly aimed at providing better support for Care Experienced young people. Last year, I went to the first Commission meeting and spoke to everyone in the room about my experiences of education.

WHO CARES? SCOTLAND

My Voice is Powerful Enough to Change my Future.

Care Experienced member, Shilla Zwizwai talks about the Commission on Widening Access to Education and her own experience at college.

Inverclyde council

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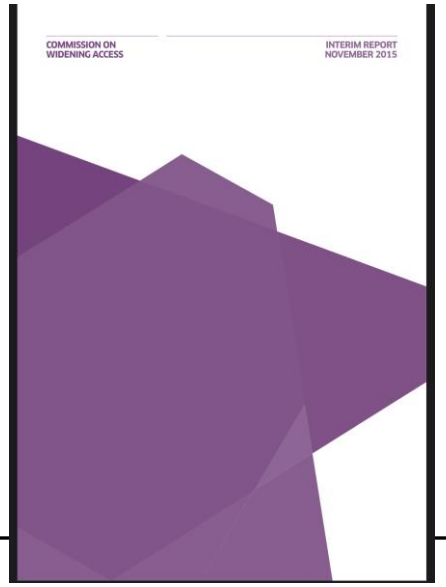
Council First in Scotland to Make Pledge to Young People Leaving Care

Council First in Scotland to Make Pledge to Young People Leaving Care

Inverclyde Council has become the first local authority in Scotland to sign up to a campaign promising increased support for young people who have been brought up in care.

The Scottish Care Leavers' Covenant is a commitment to improve the lives and opportunities of young people leaving care as they enter adulthood.

Council's Young People's Champion



Speaking to the UN about and for care experienced young people

By Shilla Zwizwai, Ambassador for Who Cares? Scotland

Cafe combines culture and care to provide help for refugees

This opinion piece is almost 8 years old

25 June 2015
Guest post

Shilla Zwizwai launched the Care 4 Culture Café during Refugee Week

Background to study

- Care-experienced / looked-after/ out of home care
- Care placements: residential, foster, kinship, looked-after at home, secure
- Differences in support offered Scotland compared to England

Research questions

- What are the challenges faced by care leaver parents?
- What support is available for care leaver parents in England compared to Scotland, and how accessible is this support?
- What additional support is required to ensure care leaver parents can raise their children without the involvement of social services?

Comparisons

- England and Scotland (due to the differences in policies)
- Residential care experience and Foster care / Kinship care / Looked-after at home

- Relationship building in residential care is difficult.
- Constant changes in staff/children = regular changes in home dynamics.

Policy differences

Scotland & England policy differences

- Careleaver definition
- Support offered
- Age range – eligibility criteria for support
- Education

Scotland & England policy differences

- Young people tend to make a series of overlapping transitions on the journey to adulthood
- compressed into the first few months of leaving care.
- Finding a home, starting a career or a new family often occur simultaneously.
- It is a testimony to the resourcefulness and resilience of many young people that they manage this process quite successfully.
- Others, however, struggle to establish a foothold in the adult world.

Care leaver outcomes

Outcomes for care-experienced yp

- Overrepresentation in ‘negative’ destinations
- Underrepresentation in ‘positive destinations’
- Around 40% of young people in police custody (Scottish prison service, 2021) and 25% of the adult prison population identify as care experienced (Carnie & Broderick, 2020).
- An estimated 30-50% of the homeless population are believed to be care experienced (Who Cares? Scotland)
- ‘70% more likely to die prematurely’ and they are likely to die from suicide, an accident or a violent crime (Nuffield foundation, 2021).
- almost half of those in residential homes meet the criteria for a psychiatric disorder (Ford et al., 2007).

Parenting Background

- Care-experienced young people are more likely to become parents at a young age than the general population (Biehal & Wade's 1996 ; Courtney et al., 2007 & Svoboda et al 2012).

- An audit of teenage pregnancies over a 1-year period found that the proportion of pregnancies for looked-after children (5.8%) was significantly higher than for non-looked-after children (0.8%) (Roberts, 2016).

- The 'why' is unknown.
- The impact of histories of trauma could potentially be the reason behind this. (Purtell et al., 2021).

International studies suggest CEYP birth rate 2 to 3 times higher than counterparts.

USA

- California: females in foster care gave birth at marginally higher rates (3.2 per 100) than females in the general population (2.0 per 100) (King et al., 2014)

- Missouri: 55% of females aged 17-19 with experience of foster care had had a pregnancy compared to around 20% of general 17-19-year-old female population(Oshima et al., 2013)

(CELCIS, 2023)

Evidence from the UK Millennium Cohort Study. Teenage children of mothers who experienced out-of- home care: How are they doing?

- More likely than peers to
- experience poorer health outcomes and health behaviours:
- higher levels of behavioural and mental health problems,
- self-harm and suicide attempts;
- higher levels of illegal drug use and more had been cautioned by the police.

(Parsons et al., 2022)

Australia

Where Is the Village? Care Leaver Early Parenting, Social Isolation and Surveillance Bias

- 16 service provider staff working with care leavers who had become young parents
- Lack of support provided to care leavers leading to early parenthood & parenting challenges.
- Placement instability = Social isolation = risk of early parenthood
- Inability to demonstrate practical, physical and financial means of supporting their children due to own experiences pre-care, in-care and post-care.
- surveillance bias – under greater scrutiny than non-care-experienced peers.
- The ‘emotional void’ motivation to parent

(Purtell et al., 2021)

Australia

Where Is the Village? Care Leaver Early Parenting, Social Isolation and Surveillance Bias

- *" international research has shown any young person who has experienced five or more placements actually steps into a higher risk category, and that's only five placements, and as you said, we know kids who have had forty. You know, and the more placements a young person experiences, the higher the risk level of them becoming pregnant* (Non-metropolitan post care programme staff).

- *Residential care … The lack of family, the lack of consistency of people who care, staff coming and going, there is ... you know, and young people being in residential care from a younger age, and being in there for a long period of time, I think it significantly increases their desire to have a baby at a younger age (Non-metropolitan post care programme staff).*

(Purtell et al., 2021)

Wales
Care-leavers and their children placed for adoption

- more than a quarter (27%) of birth mothers and a fifth (19%) of birth fathers with children placed for adoption were themselves care leavers
- more likely than their non-care leaver counterparts to have diagnosed mental health problems and were less likely to appeal the adoption plan

(Roberts et al., 2017)

Scotland

Births to care experienced teenagers and women aged 14-24 in Scotland: an estimation

- Care-experienced background of the general population is not widely recorded
- Pregnancies and births to children by care-experienced young people are not recorded in the Scottish Government's Children's Social Work Statistics annual return.
- Care-experienced people may not know, identify, or choose to disclose that they are care experienced
- very little information is known about fathers.

(CELCIS, 2023)

WHY?

Knowledge Gap

- The wellbeing of the most disadvantaged families needs to be better addressed
- A need to minimise intergenerational transmission of disadvantage associated with care experience being passed on to children in future generations.
- The voice of care leaver fathers is missing. Also only small samples of research on care leaver parents generally.

WHY?

- Lived experience: Residential care
- Mother of 3 (5yrs; 2yrs; 1yr)

HOW?

Conceptual framework

<u>Key Theories:</u>
Institutionalisation
Attachment theory
Social capital theory

Qualitative Interpretivist approach

Methodology & Methods

- Qualitative research
- Semi-structured interviews of Care leaver parents & Corporate parents
- An analysis of parenting policies (both England and Scotland)

Participant recruitment

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR PHD RESEARCH

Exploring care leavers' experiences and challenges of parenting

The purpose of this research is to:
a) Identify the current support available to parents with experience of care
b) Improve additional support to care leavers and parents with experience of care

CRITERIA

- **Are you care-experienced?**
- **Are you aged 18 - 26?**
- **Are you a parent?**
- **Do you live in Scotland/England?**
- **Do you live independently (out of care)?**

If all yes, then you are in!

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?

- **Take part in a one-to-one interview online/face to face (30 minutes)**
- **OR to take part in a focus group (30 minutes)**

As a thank you, you will receive a £20 Amazon gift voucher after completing the interview/focus group.

We appreciate your interest and time!

Please contact me for more details.
SHILLA SHOMAI
LEAD RESEARCHER
shos1_22@uni.worc.ac.uk

University of Worcester

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CRITERIA

- **Do you work with care leavers?**
- **Are you a Social worker, Personal Advisor, Advocacy worker, Health Visitor, Midwife or work for an organisation/charity support care leavers?**
- **Do you live in Scotland/England?**

If all yes, then you are in!

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Participants

10 care leaver parents

10 corporate parents (social workers, personal advisors, health visitors, staff from organisations/charities supporting care leavers etc.)

Face to face / online semi-structured interviews

Data analysis

inductive thematic approach (Seale, 2012) to be taken.

interview transcripts will be coded and collated.

key themes within and across participant data will be highlighted

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Questions?

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