

# Walking the Walk: Two Years On

## Scottish Care Leavers Covenant 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference

### Conference Report



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## Acknowledgements

The Conference was chaired by Joanne McMeeking, Head of Improving Care Experiences at CELCIS.

We would like to thank the speakers, Kenny McGhee, Fiona Duncan, Professor Mike Stein, Judith Tait and Neil Gentleman and Bruce Adamson; workshop presenters and chairs; all the young people who contributed to the event, Covenant Alliance members and CELCIS staff.

Many thanks to the Life Changes Trust for the financial support for this report.

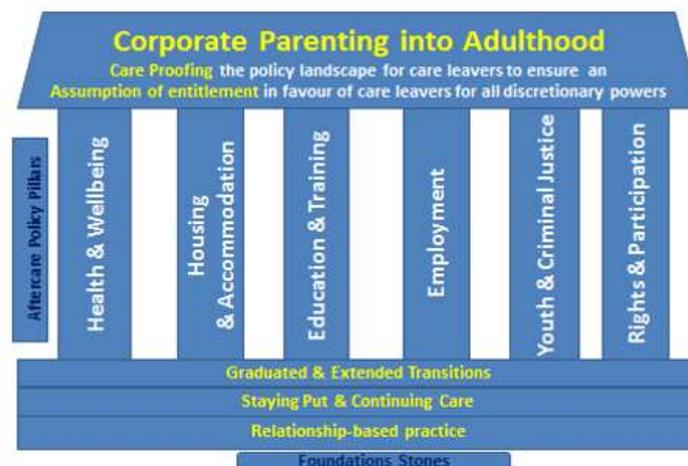


## Introduction to the Walking the Walk conference report

The **Walking the Walk** Conference was held in October 2017 by the Scottish Care Leavers Covenant Alliance. It was the first national conference following the launch of the [Scottish Care Leavers Covenant](#)<sup>1</sup> in 2015 and was a significant milestone in the ambition to close the gap between policy and practice when working with young people transitioning from care in Scotland. The purpose of the Conference was to reflect on and evidence progress by Corporate Parents who have endorsed the Covenant. As such, our keynote speakers were profiled specifically to highlight the importance of creating the enabling contexts to effect such change.



The Scottish Care Leavers Covenant is about ensuring continuing care and aftercare are consistently available and that all care leavers get the support they need into adulthood. It's about turning the rhetoric into reality and Walking the Walk.



This report is a record of the conference, which explored how practitioners and policymakers can make a difference to the lives of young people in care and leaving care. The conference was attended by 124 participants and signalled the beginning of the second phase of the Alliance's ambition to deepen and extend practice at a local level as well as make the best possible use of national policy and legislative tools.

<sup>1</sup> Scottish Care Leavers Covenant (2015) <http://www.scottishcareleaverscovenant.org/>



## Setting the context for Walking the Walk

Kenny McGhee: Scottish Care Leavers Covenant Alliance



Kenny discussed recent changes in legislation<sup>2</sup> and policy<sup>3</sup>, outlined challenges and opportunities in implementing these, highlighting the role of the Covenant as a collective driver for change.



'We already have many of the component parts: copious research evidence; progressive enabling legislation and policy; and a rich seam of practice wisdom...the question is 'what is the implementation Achilles heel?'

The 2014 Act is arguably seminal legislation, transformative in its ambition, but legislation and guidance are unlikely to bring about the desired changes by themselves. Sustained and committed political leadership at both national and local levels is therefore vital.

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<sup>2</sup> [Children & Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Staying Put Scotland Guidance \(2013\)](#)



Whilst the voices and experiences of young people are central, the responsibility, the legal duty, for delivering that change lies squarely with the Corporate Parents.

### **The Covenant: an agenda for change**

The Covenant offers an agenda for change that is both aspirational and rooted in practice, drawing on research evidence, practice wisdom and the voices of young people, underpinned by the principles of:

- Care-proofing of policy
- Assumption of entitlement
- Staying Put and Continuing Care
- Relationship-based practice

The aim is for greater consistency in support and opportunity for all care leavers, regardless of where they live, to address the 'postcode lottery' of support and services.

Highlighting areas of progress, delegates were asked to consider the **assumption of entitlement** and ask that rather than 'why should care leavers be entitled' the question should be 'why *shouldn't* they be...?' An example of this is the recent push and subsequent announcement on [council tax exemption for care leavers](#)<sup>4</sup>.



The public care of our children and young people remains a highly politicised and emotionally charged subject and is set against a backdrop of austerity where our care leavers are often the hardest hit.

Another area of development is the [Identification Protocol for Youth and Criminal Justice agencies](#)<sup>5</sup>, supporting very positive collaboration between key services and is a good example of a developing consistency in aspiration, planning and support for care experienced young adults involved with justice agencies.

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<sup>4</sup> CELCIS (2016) Care Leavers and Council Tax Exemption: CELCIS Inform Briefing

<sup>5</sup> Making Connections: Supporting the identification of care leavers in the justice system  
<http://www.cycj.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/SCLC-identification-of-care-leavers.pdf>



## Staying Put and Continuing Care are the foundation stones of the Covenant.

However, despite the number of individual good practice examples there remains substantial work to make this a reality for **all** young people. For example, there are

- issues regarding registration and approval of services and carers and a need to better align regulations with the 2014 Act
- specific issues with commissioned and out-with authority care placements

Crucially, cohorts of young people are being denied the opportunity to stay put.



‘Too often it is the most vulnerable young people who lose out. Whilst some are encouraged to stay put, the wee spiky kid gets encouraged to move out. Implementing continuing care consistently and meaningfully for all our young people depend heavily on the commitment of local managers and decision-makers.’

Signalling what was to be a recurring theme of the day Kenny spoke of **relationships** as the foundation of good practice and how this changing narrative is being driven and informed by young people. Whilst many young people do feel safe, secure and connected in their foster families and children’s homes, that experience should be replicated for **every** young person.



Children and young people have a basic need for belonging and connection, for ‘felt’ security and a need to be claimed especially if, and when, a return home isn’t possible. The challenge is how to offer this to young people in public care, which is by its nature bureaucratic and procedural.

Securing corporate engagement and endorsements from corporate parents and local and national care providers commits those with national oversight and influence to support an enabling culture that values and prioritises relationships.

### Covenant Sign Ups

516



### Website Visitors

8,288



15,011 views



## The Independent Care Review

Fiona Duncan: Chair of the Independent Care Review

A [short video](#) was shared with conference participants. The following is a summary of key points.



The Care Review aims to identify and achieve lasting change and transform life chances and wellbeing for children and young people in the care system. This is a complex and challenging task and is supported by the contribution of children and young people with experience of care through the [1000 Voices Project](#).

Workshops and meetings have taken place across Scotland with contributions from children and young people as well as hearing the views of many Corporate Parents

Fiona outlined the four phases of the Care Review.

- **'orientation'** around the infrastructure of the care system. The second stage, which is currently underway in October 2017, is
- **'discovery'** looking at two big questions around the care system in Scotland.
  - What would the best care system in the world look like for you?
  - What do you think the 'root and branch' review should be looking at?



- **'journey'** taking a strengths-based approach to identify and support immediate improvements as well as tackling some of the more gnarly issues. This will take into account the importance of relationships.
- **'what the care system should look like'** the fourth and final stage

Fiona reflected on how the work of the SCLC can contribute to the Care Review and invited all practitioners to share their priorities for care leavers with the review as part of its process of ongoing engagement.



What one thing you would like to see the Independent Care Review do for care leavers?



## Corporate parenting from care to adulthood: Messages from research

Mike Stein, Emeritus Professor of Social Policy, University of York.



Mike's presentation focused on messages from research, informed by UK and international research studies and theoretical perspectives. He explored two key questions

- 'Why do some young people from care 'do well' in adulthood?'
- 'What are the challenges facing corporate parents in helping more young people to do well?'



'Instant adulthood is very negative.'

### Care leavers doing well

The evidence from international research studies shows that doing well in adulthood from a background of care is associated with:

- stability in care
- success at school
- leaving care later
- being supported into adulthood



**Stability matters** because it provides compensatory attachment in young people's lives through continuity. It is also the foundation of healthy psychological development, good mental health and wellbeing. However,



...we do not hear a lot about love. 'I was loved' is a powerful comment on a young person's experience of care although it is only identified in 10% of the research literature.

Professor Stein highlighted critical issues in terms of placement instability

- 10-15% of young people have 10+ placements;
- 30% of young people have 5-9 placements
- 45% of young people have up to 4 placements.

Placement disruption has an impact on personal relationships, with young people becoming increasingly detached. This contributes to young people leaving care early. Scottish Government data on the number of placements young people experience does not say anything about stability and instability.

**Mental health matters** because it is linked to multiple placements, stability and quality of care. Later entry into care shows that young people's problems escalate and young people who leave care at the youngest age are more at risk. Significant issues around access to mental health treatment include gaps in access to adult services during transitions. However, services can work well, where, for example, there is co-location of services.



Access to mental health services is an area that should be explored by the Care Review.

**School matters** because the school experience is associated with:

- access to further and higher education
- employment and career choice
- future wellbeing



Research has found that education is a massive predictor of doing well in adulthood. Wider benefits of school, such as new opportunities, friends, leisure and other activities outside of care, are often downplayed. Education, along with other factors, gives young people a normative leap from a care identity to a common identity.

Whilst acknowledging the attainment gap, Professor Stein cautioned that attainment had to be contextualised in relation to pre-care experience and structural disadvantages such as locality, class, gender, ethnicity and disability as well pre-care interventions around maltreatment and neglect. The group with the lowest attainment levels are those looked after at home.



Recent studies, however, show that young people value doing well in education.

‘I am angry at folk for not pushing me at school.’

Educational attainment at 16 years has the potential to be reframed as ‘delay’ rather than ‘failure’. There is a need to consider the role of continuing education and a return to learning, recognising that attainment can increase with age.

**Leaving care later matters** because leaving care too young is at odds with normative, cultural and neurobiological development and is identified with a cluster of problems, poor and unstable accommodation, periods of homelessness and ‘trouble’



Scotland has the youngest age of leaving care, 17 years, in the UK.

Young people ‘staying put’ in foster care are twice as likely to be in full time education, more likely to be in training and employment and less likely to experience housing instability. The challenge is extending ‘Staying Put’ to the wider leaving care population. In Scotland entitlement to ‘continuing care’ to 21 years will require cultural shifts on age, information, training, managerial support and funding.



**Making corporate parenting happen** requires a strong legal and policy framework with a focus on:

- improving placement stability
- supporting leaving care later
- education
- maltreatment and neglect
- providing support on aftercare entitlements
- addressing structural inequalities

Central to corporate parenting is recognising the agency and individual qualities of young people and taking their responses to adversity into account.



Relationships, finding that ‘ordinary magic’, are at the heart of ensuring that young people find resilience to take forward their lives.

**See Appendix 2 for Professor Mike Stein’s selected research sources**



## Walking the Walk...gathering momentum

Judith Tait and Neil Gentleman: The Care Inspectorate.



Judith and Neil's presentation focused on how the Care Inspectorate is aiming to make a difference to services for young people through registration and inspection and the importance of the contribution of Young Inspector Volunteers. They also shared a [short video](#) of the work of the Young Inspection Volunteers

### **Inspection of services**

New inspection approaches include:

- exploring the care experience,
- relationship based care,
- predictability and continuity of care,
- cultures of practice and
- planning for children and young people.

### **Registration of care services**

Positive themes include:

- making things work
- considering and making necessary changes
- models of practice
- participation and involvement.



Challenges include the

- recognition of restrictions around continuing care and age ranges,
- recognising that the knowledge and experience of working with adolescents is not the same as working with younger children
- staff turnover
- understanding and implementing care and after care support.



#### Involving young people: Young Inspection Volunteers

Young Inspection Volunteers have been involved with inspections since the establishment of the Care Inspectorate in 2011. The volunteers have personal experience of care or using social work services and are aged 18 to 26 years. The volunteers are supported to be involved in inspection, speaking directly to children and young people. They see services through the lens of a young person and are able to ask difficult and challenging questions.

Currently the Care Inspectorate has 13 Young Inspection Volunteers. In 2016/17, they were involved in 14 care services and 6 joint inspections. They spoke to 269 children and young people, have been involved in all 32 joint inspections of services to children and represent the Care Inspectorate at national events and conferences.

#### Joint inspections

In a focus on care leavers in joint inspections, 300 records of young people using aftercare services were scrutinised alongside interviews with the young people, and focus groups. The Care Inspectorate looked at consistent relationships, joint working, engagement with services and impact on wellbeing, pathway planning, educational attainment and positive destination and housing options. Specific challenges were identified with out-of-area care and education placements.

#### What next

The Care Inspectorate is taking forward a number of developments, with the new methodology for service inspections being more outcomes-focused and less about process. The Care Inspectorate will support services with continuing care, at raising expectations of how well leaders can demonstrate the difference they are making, and a sharper focus on the role of adult services. It is also taking a closer look at transitions, focusing on relationship-based practice and how young people are engaged in consultation.



## Policy and legislative changes impacting on care leavers and care experienced children and young people

Bruce Adamson: Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland



In his contribution Bruce explored the relationship between children's human rights and the experience of being in care for young people in Scotland, acknowledging the significant policy developments whilst recognising areas where young people's rights need to be realised. Bruce offered a very powerful [keynote presentation](#)<sup>6</sup> which both challenged and inspired.



'The world is watching... the things that we do here in Scotland to ensure the rights of care leavers throughout their lives is based on international commitments. You are human rights defenders.'

### Human rights of children

The [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)<sup>7</sup> starts with the premise that children should grow up in a family environment of happiness, love and understanding.

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<sup>6</sup> Bruce Adamson (2017) Scottish Care Leavers Covenant Conference Speech  
<https://www.cypcs.org.uk/news/speeches/speech-text/celcis-care-leavers-conference-speech>

<sup>7</sup> UN Convention on the Rights of the Child <https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>



However, as Article 20 states:



A child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose own best interests cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the State.

### **Human rights of care experienced young people**

Special protection and assistance needs to be informed by the guiding principles of the conventions:

- Non-discrimination (Article 2)
- The best interests of children being a primary consideration in all actions concerning them (Article 3)
- The right to survival and development (Article 6)
- The right of the child or young person to express their views (Article 12)

The rights of care experienced young people are underpinned by Article 4 which requires the State to undertake all appropriate measures for the implementation of the Convention rights, and, where they cover economic, social and cultural rights, to the **maximum** extent of their available resources.

### **International Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children**

The requirement for States to promote the rights of young people making the transition from care to adulthood is also central to the [Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children](#)<sup>8</sup>, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2009. The Committee on the Rights of the Child is now considering States' actions against these Guidelines. The [Moving Forward Handbook](#)<sup>9</sup> explains how these guidelines should be implemented.

### **Children's Commissioner's role and care experienced young people**

Bruce reflected on his attendance at the Who Cares? Scotland summer camp, where young people talked to him about their care experiences. A consistent message was around the sense of not feeling loved, not being listened to, or feeling secure, of not understanding their

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<sup>8</sup> Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children

[https://www.unicef.org/protection/alternative\\_care\\_Guidelines-English.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/protection/alternative_care_Guidelines-English.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Moving Forward: Implementing the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children

<https://www.alternativecareguidelines.org/Home/tabid/2372/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>



rights. Issues about the age of leaving care, poor understanding from (some) professionals of young people's entitlements to throughcare and aftercare and, crucially, limited awareness from children and young people about their rights and how to access them.



What was clear was that young people didn't know what they were entitled to, or what their rights were when going through the leaving care process, or indeed how to challenge a failure to deliver. This sadly remains the case for some young people.

The Commissioner's Office worked with Who Cares? Scotland in 2017 to jointly produce a guide to their [Rights to Continuing Care and Aftercare](#)<sup>10</sup> to help young people in care, care leavers and the adults who support them.

### **Commitment to young people in care and care leavers in Scotland**



'Leaving care should be a positive experience for every young person... no one should be moved on without the proper preparation, support, love and guidance.'

Bruce spoke positively about Scotland's commitment to care leavers and reflected on the plethora of Scottish Government reports and guidance documents. Additionally, over half of Scotland's local authorities, and a range of MSPs, MPs and other influencers have signed up to the principles and actions in the Care Leavers Covenant. The advent of Champions Boards provides an excellent example of Corporate Parents coming together, agreeing actions and advocating for change at both national and local levels. The announcement and launch of the Care Review is an exciting development with care experienced young people playing a central role.



Despite these great policies, initiatives and legislation, young people feel pressured into leaving care at 16, unaware of their rights and entitlements, of being placed into unsuitable accommodation, because what they need is unavailable. There is also great variation across local authorities.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.cypcs.org.uk/rights/your-rights-to-care>



### Continuing Care provisions

The Continuing Care provisions are rights-based and aspirational, as is the accompanying guidance, but a culture shift is needed – young people should get this entitlement and it should be automatic. There is information about what these new rights mean, but little on what a young person should be doing if they do not get their statutory entitlement.



There is practically no information about how to challenge or appeal and this is something the Commissioner intends to address.

### Closing the implementation gap

Bruce finished by highlighting some of the [implementation challenges](#)<sup>11</sup> including leadership, learning and development, culture and practice, and the importance of relationship-based practice. Closing the implementation gap is clearly linked to political will, and the commitment of managers and decisions-makers to implement the changes required at a time of cuts and austerity. In short, the statutory right is there, but the problems around implementation include a lack of resources, and a lack of awareness of how to enforce those rights and crucially leadership and culture.



‘We need to get these great policies and actions into practice, together. We owe it to our young people to do so. We need to work collectively, using every opportunity available to improve the lives of care experienced young people. Most of all we need a robust accountability system and ensure that those who are responsible for implementing Continuing Care are held to account should they fail.’

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<sup>11</sup> Staying Put and Continuing Care: The Implementation Challenge, SJRCC, 2017, Vol.16, No.2. [https://www.celcis.org/files/4215/0641/7391/2017\\_Vol\\_16\\_2\\_McGhee\\_K\\_Staying\\_Put\\_and\\_Continuing\\_Care\\_The\\_Implementation\\_Challenge.pdf](https://www.celcis.org/files/4215/0641/7391/2017_Vol_16_2_McGhee_K_Staying_Put_and_Continuing_Care_The_Implementation_Challenge.pdf)



## Conference Workshops

The eight conference workshops profiled effective practice and explored issues, successes and challenges as well as future plans and opportunities. The Planning Group specified that all of the eight workshops should be co-designed and co-presented with care experienced young people to better demonstrate the vital importance of genuine partnership working with our young people in co-creating change at a local level.



Good balance of speakers and workshops, workshops an excellent way to share experience and learning.



Found it really helpful to hear from a young person in one of the workshops. Enjoyed the workshops

### **Outcomes that matter: recent findings from the Care Visions ‘Why Not?’ outcomes framework: Care Visions Why Not?**

‘Why Not?’ is Care Visions’ innovative approach to working with young people leaving care. Emerging is the importance of relationships; ‘the golden threads’ which support young people into adulthood. The success of this approach has focused on ‘connectors’, those workers and carers who maintain relationships with young people, beyond care. The challenge is that professional relationships are often time limited, controlled and bounded, and the nature of relationships cannot be easily measured and quantified. Systems do not consistently work in ways that support this and do not always allow meaningful relationships to flourish.

Care Visions is considering how these relationships work and how longer-term impact can be captured. Regular get-togethers, events, social networks, resources and information services are now provided for all young people approaching 16.



### **The GAFF in North Lanarkshire**

North Lanarkshire Council's training flat, the GAFF, has been operational since November 2015 and is a partnership project between Barnardo's, North Lanarkshire Council and the Care Leaver's Forum. The project developed when care experienced young people raised their concerns about a lack of flexible resources available before leaving care. They are encouraged to access the flat to help them gain the experiences and skills they need to make informed and supported choices about moving on. This project supports children and young people in transition and takes into account evidence that 95% of social workers do not believe young people are prepared to leave care.

The project involves housing, social work, health services and fire and rescue services. It considers the emotional issues of moving on and specific challenges such as managing loneliness. Support continues when young people move onto their own tenancy. A second training flat and a training pack are being developed. The project will continue partnership working and is looking to establish joint tenancies for siblings.

### **Residential Outcomes Now: building a relationship-based culture in children's residential care: Action for Children**

Action for Children explored the models of practice and relevant theories that promote relational practice, looking at attachment promoting, strength-based practice and social pedagogy. Building and nurturing this culture supports: productive positive relationships; stretching the aspirations of young people and encouraging young people to be positive about their future, as well improving relationships between children and young people and their parents/carers. This solution focused approach leads to young people realising their own potential. Through support, a culture of optimism and wellbeing can be created.

### **Supporting care experienced young people to be creative leaders of transformational change: East Renfrewshire YISS & Articulate**

East Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership Youth Intensive Support Service places young people at the heart of its vision and helps them to shape and define its service. It brings a fresh approach to supporting young people at risk of becoming looked after or accommodated. Partnering with the Articulate Cultural Trust, an arts organisation, the service explores with young people how they use their creative voices to express views, opinions and ideas within their community and influence their Corporate Parents.

**Partnership working using the Guiding Principles: Midlothian Council**

Midlothian Council has taken a new approach to its work with care leavers through a partnership between Children's Services, Housing and young people. The Corporate Parenting Strategy and Plan emphasises the need to embed the entitlements and rights of young people in routine planning and practice.

There are challenges. Looked after young people and care leavers have to present as being homeless to access housing and accommodation instead of being accepted as a priority and protected group. Bed and Breakfast accommodation is still in use for some care leavers, despite this practice being noted as unacceptable in the Housing Options Protocols guidance in 2013. Young people have complex needs such as mental health and substance misuse which services have to meet.

Midlothian Council will continue to develop this approach in the future.

**Moving on... in! : Dean and Cauvin Trust & Oilean**

The Scottish Care Leavers Covenant recognises that outcomes for young people in care and leaving care are much poorer than their peers. 'Moving On... In!' is a partnership project with the Dean and Cauvin Trust and Oilean to develop materials for the Tenancy and Citizenship Award. With educational outcomes for young people in care being poor, this project focuses on enabling care workers to use their key working relationships to give young people the opportunity to make informed choices about leaving care and continuing care as well as direct access to relevant qualifications.

**Are we interested in them or trying to get them to be interested in us?**

Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeen Foyer have worked in partnership to develop Learning Services which give young people the opportunity to explore their individual strengths and plan for the future. Good working relationships, as described by young people participating in the services, have led to effective assessment, co-produced plans, increased confidence, less dependency on staff, increased self-esteem and a sense of achievement.

Practitioners' experiences highlight that support that is joined up, individualised and builds on knowledge requires trusting and supportive relationships in an environment that is comfortable, welcoming and accessible. Continuity in relationships with people and services encourages learning and development. Providing holistic support is imperative and it is crucial to respond to children's needs developmentally rather than chronologically.



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Successes have included building shared understanding between and within agencies and working together with young people to shape services. There is changes in teacher training in partnership with the University of Aberdeen. Challenges have included how teachers understand the needs of children with additional needs and competing demands around professional roles.

**Care leavers' entitlement in a time of austerity – myth or reality? Dundee City Council and Carolina House Trust**

This workshop challenged the assumption of entitlement for care leavers in Scotland. Corporate Parents assume all care leavers are entitled to services, support and opportunities up to their 26<sup>th</sup> birthday and that, where discretion exists in definitions of vulnerability, or in giving priority access, these will be in favour of care leavers. The presenters discussed and reiterated the challenge of bringing the Scottish Care Leavers' Covenant to life and making it a reality for all care leavers in Scotland.



## Summary

### Reflections on the conference

The **Walking the Walk** conference focused on implementing policy, interpreting research evidence, the role of national and local leadership and examples of innovative practice from across Scotland in order to meet the needs of care leavers. It was a day of big ideas as well as scrutinising what still had to be done to fulfil the Scotland's aspirations.

The conference evaluation showed that participants welcomed this opportunity to explore the complex range of issues that confront them as professionals and the young people they work with on a daily basis. The diversity of the programme was welcomed along with the opportunities to sharing learning from practice:



'Great to hear about current research, findings and ideas for change.'  
(delegate)



'Good mixture of research, lived experience and service planning.'  
(delegate)

Participants spoke highly of the workshops, welcoming the interaction in these sessions, insights from peers and particularly the contributions of young people:



'Found it really helpful to hear from a young person in one of the workshops.'  
(delegate)



'Hearing about good practice in care settings and encouraging others to take these practices forward.'  
(delegate)

In terms of key learning points to take away, participants highlighted, amongst other issues, the importance of relationship-based practice, the need for structured implementation of policy and the ways in which research can inform practice:



### Implementing policy: making change happen

One of the core themes of the conference was the ongoing challenge around the implementation of legislation and guidance. Speakers highlighted that, although Scotland's legislation and guidance is enabling and provides a positive framework for meeting the needs of care leavers in Scotland, there is still an implementation gap which must be addressed. Closing the implementation gap requires consistent coordinated activity across a range of inter-connected areas at different levels, and an increasing understanding and use of [active implementation](#) approaches<sup>12</sup>. The support offered by Covenant partners contributes to that, and the principles and actions contained within the Covenant document provide a ready-made set of practical examples. Members of the Covenant Alliance are working in partnership to share practice, provide guidance, consultancy and on-site practical support to close that gap.



'Knowing that I'm not alone in recognising the implementation gap. Scotland's care leavers are the youngest in the UK.' (delegate)

There was support for the work of the independent Care Review and Fiona Duncan encouraged conference participants to share their priorities with the Care Review team as part of the review's process of being informed by practitioners and children and young people.

Both the Continuing Care and Aftercare duties and guidance are designed to support Corporate Parents to fulfil their legal and ethical responsibilities. But, as Bruce Adamson, emphasised, it was not enough to implement the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 merely to the letter of the law. Implementation must reflect the core and spirit of the law.



'Overall, made me more confident in challenging what we do i.e. we should be exceeding the legislative requirements and a moral imperative is imperative.' (delegate)

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.celcis.org/about-us/implementation/>



### **The ‘ordinary magic’ of relationships**

The conference returned again and again to the importance of what Professor Mike Stein called the ‘ordinary magic’ of relationships – love, consistent caring and emotional engagement with young people and their lives. Many of the workshops highlighted the need for systems to support relationship-based approaches in everyday practice with young people.



‘The core need for relationship practice.’ (delegate)

This recognition of young people’s agency had to be at the heart of young people’s care experience. The Care Inspectorate’s Young Inspection Volunteers, were profiled as an example of a national agency proactively engaging the experience and expertise of young people.

### **Realising young people’s rights**

Bruce Adamson, highlighted that Scotland’s obligations to realise children’s rights were based on international human rights treaties and standards, most specifically the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and that law, policy and practice in Scotland were central to realising the rights of young people in care and leaving care.

Speakers and participants stated that there was a need remove age references, removing the age ‘16’, still too often a trigger age for young people leaving care, from policy documents and guidance. To help practitioners, corporate parents and policymakers, Scotland has the most progressive and enabling legislation in the UK. But, as Professor Mike Stein reminded the conference, Scotland should not be complacent as it has the lowest age of leaving care, 17 years, across the whole of the UK.

### **Supporting young people’s transitions**

Throughout the conference, speakers and participants explored the complex factors that needed to be in place to support good transitions from care into adulthood. Professor Stein’s research overview highlighted that doing well in adulthood was underpinned by stability in care (including supporting young people’s mental wellbeing), success at school, leaving care later and being supported into adulthood.

There was general concern about gaps in services and meeting young people’s needs. Services were not adequate to support the mental health needs of young people with experience of care through either CAMHS or adult services. Young people’s housing needs



were not consistently being met with young people too often still having to present as being homeless. Out of authority and commissioned placements were seen to result in young people feeling dislocated and poor access to staying put and aftercare entitlements. Access to benefits and other entitlements were problematic. Education, training and opportunities for personal growth and creativity through access to the arts and other activities were seen to be essential contributors to young people's wellbeing.

### **Recommitting to the Covenant**

The success of the Alliance's first national conference was down to people, staff and young people from a wide range of agencies and organisations, coming together with a real commitment to make change happen. It also signalled the beginning of the second phase of the Covenant's ambition to deepen and extend practice at a local level as well as make the best possible use of national policy and legislative tools.

As a next step, everyone who worked with and supports young people in care or leaving care is encouraged to revisit the Covenant and to think deeply about how they contribute now and how that contribution can grow and develop.

### **Our keynote speakers with members of the Alliance Group at the conference**





## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### **Scottish Care Leavers Covenant Conference Programme**

##### **Setting the context**

Kenny McGhee, Throughcare and Aftercare Lead, CELCIS

##### **Independent Care Review**

Fiona Duncan, Chair, Independent Care Review

##### **Corporate parenting from care to adulthood: Messages from research**

Mike Stein, Emeritus Professor of Social Policy, University of York

##### **Workshop session 1**

Outcomes that matter: recent findings from the Care Visions Why Not? outcomes framework

The GAFF in North Lanarkshire

Residential Outcomes Now: building a relationship-based culture in children's residential care

Supporting care experienced young people to be creative leaders of transformational change

##### **14.00 Workshop session 2**

Partnership working using the Guiding Principles

Moving on... in!

Are we interested in them or trying to get them to be interested in us?

Care leavers' entitlement in a time of austerity – myth or reality?

##### **Walking the walk... gathering momentum**

Judith Tait, Manager for Strategic Scrutiny (Children & Justice), Care Inspectorate and Neil Gentleman, Inspector (Young People & Justice), Care Inspectorate

Toni, Erin and Carrie Ann, Young Inspection Volunteers

##### **Human rights and continuing care**

Bruce Adamson, Commissioner for Children and Young People in Scotland

##### **Closing comments and summary**

Joanne McMeeking and Kenny McGhee, CELCIS



## Appendix 2

### Chair

Joanne McMeeking, Head of Improving Care Experiences at CELCIS

### Keynote Speakers

Mike Stein, Emeritus Professor of Social Policy, University of York

Judith Tait, Manager for Strategic Scrutiny (Children & Justice), Care Inspectorate and Neil Gentleman, Inspector (Young People & Justice), Care Inspectorate

Bruce Adamson, Commissioner for Children and Young People in Scotland

### Workshop presenters

Brian Donnelly, Head of Products, Projects and Development, Care Visions

Danny Henderson, Senior Operations Manager, Care Visions

Jonathan Clough, Literacy and Life Coach Worker, Barnardos

Dylan Duff, young person and service user

Brenda Deacon, Registered Manager, Action for Children

Jacqueline Lamont, Registered Manager, Action for Children

Angela Griffiths, Improvement and Consultancy Manager, Action for Children

Jennifer McKean, Team Manager – Youth Intensive Support Service, East Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership

Eona Craig, Chief Executive, Articulate Cultural Trust

Nicola Thomson, Housing Support Worker, Midlothian Council

Alex Marks, Midlothian Council

Richard Costigan, Transitions Manager, Dean and Cauvin Trust

John Cran, Director, Oilean (Training and Nurture) Ltd

Luke Suddaby, Transitional Support Worker, Dean and Cauvin Trust

Isla Wilson, Development Coach, Aberdeen Foyer

Larissa Gordon, Virtual Head Teacher, Looked After and Accommodated Children, Aberdeen City Council

Chris Wright, Throughcare and Aftercare Team Manager, Dundee City Council

Michelle Rice, Care Leavers Young Person Participation Coordinator, Carolina House Trust  
Supported young people



## Appendix 3

### Selected research sources suggested by Professor Mike Stein

#### ***On stability***

Jones, R., Everson-Hock, E.S., Papaioannou, D. *et al* (2011) 'Factors associated with outcomes for looked after children and young people; a correlates review of the literature.' *Child: care, health and development*, 37, 5, 613-622.

#### ***On education***

O'Higgins, A, Sebba, J and Luke, N (2015) *What is the relationship between being in care and the educational outcomes of children?* Oxford; The Rees Centre

Jackson, S and Cameron, C (2014) *Improving Access to Further and Higher Education For Young People In Public Care*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Liabo K, Gray K, Mulcahy D (2012) A systematic review of interventions to support looked after children in school, *Child and Family Social Work*, 1-13, doi 10.1111

Berlin, M, Vinnerljung B, and Hjern A. (2011) 'School performance in primary school and psychosocial problems in young adulthood among care leavers from long term foster care.' *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33.12, 2489-2497

#### ***On mental health***

Luke N *et al* (2014) *What works in preventing and treating poor mental health in looked after children*, Rees Centre, Oxford University and NSPCC

Ford, T., Vostanis, P., Meltzer, H. and Goodman, R. (2007) 'Psychiatric disorder among British children looked after by local authorities: comparison with children living in private households.' *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 19, 319-325

Dixon, J. (2008) 'Young people leaving care: health, well-being and outcomes.' *Child & Family Social Work*, 13, 2, 207–217.

#### ***On leaving care later***

McGhee K (2017) Staying Put & Continuing Care: The Implementation Challenge, *Scottish Journal of Residential Care*



Munro R.E, Lushey C, National Care Advisory Service, Debi Maskell-Graham and Ward H with Holmes L (2012), *Evaluation of the Staying Put: 18+ Family Placement Programme Pilot: Final Report*, DFE

Courtney, M.E., Lee, J.A. and Perez, A. (2011) 'Receipt of help acquiring life skills and predictors of help receipt among current and former foster youth.' *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33, 12, 2242-2451.

***On pathways to adulthood***

Stein, M (2012) *Young people leaving care: supporting pathways to adulthood*'. London Jessica Kingsley

***On corporate parenting***

Dixon, J, and Lee J, with Stein M, Guhirwa H, Bowley S, and Catch22 NCAS peer researchers (2015) *Corporate Parenting for young people in care – Making the difference?* London. Catch22

McGhee, K., Lerpiniere, J., Welch, V., Graham, P., & Harkin, B. (2014) *Throughcare and Aftercare Services in Scotland's Local Authorities, A National Study*, Glasgow: CELCIS.