



# People make change – harnessing the power of people’s experiences to bring about a fairer future

Unlocking Change webinar: A Fairer Future | 4 November 2020, 11.00am

## **Speakers:**

[Henrietta Imoreh, Applied Theatre Practitioner/EY Foundation, Programme Delivery Coordinator](#)

[Kate Watson, Senior Projects Manager, PhotoVoice](#)

[Sophie Hutson, Drive Forward Foundation Policy Forum Ambassador](#)

[Chelbi Hillan, Drive Forward Foundation Policy Forum Ambassador](#)

[Megan Sutherland, Vice-Chair, Who Cares? Scotland](#)

**Facilitator:** Hannah Lim, Funding Manager – Lead Social Change

**Welcome by:** [Caroline Mason, Chief Executive](#)

## **[Q&A](#)**

Hello and welcome everybody to this webinar, People Make Change - harnessing changes to bring about a better future, we're delighted so many of you could join us today. I am Hannah Lim, a Funding Manager at Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. I'll be chairing today's session.

To bring about fairer future, we believe people affected by issues should have a role about how to improve them. This means bringing the voices, perspectives and experiences of people facing injustice and inequality into the justice making process. In this webinar you'll hear from people who are using their experiences and voice to bring about change to improve the care system.

Just a few brief details on practicalities before we get started. Live captioning is available for this session. Please click the closed captioning or CC button at the bottom of screens and we'd like to thank Darlene for providing live captions for us today. There will be an opportunity for questions and answers once we've heard from all the speakers. Please use the Q&A function, which you can find at the bottom of your screens to submit questions whilst panellists are speaking. You can also upvote questions submitted by another participant if you'd like to see this asked. My colleague Luna will be reviewing your submissions throughout and we'll come to her at the end of the presentations to hear what your burning questions are.

We'll be tweeting about the event using #PeopleMakeChange so please join us in sharing your reflections by using that hashtag. We'll also be recording this webinar to share on our website along with a written transcript.

We're very excited to be joined by our speakers today who will give you a wave as I say their name. We have: Henrietta Imoreh, an Applied Theatre Practitioner and EY Foundation Programmes Delivery Coordinator. Kate Watson who is Senior Project Manager at PhotoVoice. Chelbi Hillan, Drive Forward Foundation Policy Forum Ambassador and Sophie Hutson, also a Drive Forward Foundation Policy Forum Ambassador. And Megan Sutherland, Vice Chair at Who Cares? Scotland.

Before we hear from those fantastic speakers, I'm going to hand over to Caroline Mason. Caroline is Chief Executive of Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and she's going to give us some brief background of the Foundation's new strategy and why that's brought us here today.

## CAROLINE MASON:

Thank you very, very much for taking the time to come and hear about our new strategy and in particular our plans around A Fairer Future. I have to admit this is the first webinar we've ever done where we have led the seminar. And actually, this is the first time I've had to articulate the new strategy publicly, so I hope you'll bear with us.

Esmée has always been an incredibly responsive Foundation. Our previous strategy was really to effectively support other people's outcomes, and we had a really broad range - up to a thousand organisations at any one time covering up to 29 different beneficiary groups across the arts, children & young people, education, the environment, food.

And that was fine for the times. But we are living in a different world now. And there are just some huge changes underway which we all know about. The old systems are effectively falling apart. We've got issues of climate change. We've got COVID which revealed incredibly stark inequalities, which were there but have become very explicit.

So we have spent the last while thinking about what is the role of philanthropy in this new world and specifically, what can the role of Esmée be if we want to be more than an organisation that supports good work how can we become an organisation that is actually proactive and very clear about what its purpose is. And we did a lot of consultation and I suppose I can summarise changes in what we're doing in three ways.

One is to understand what we're good at and what we're not good at and where we can add most value. So, knowing our purpose. And understanding what the best contribution is that we can make. We know no-one is going to solve all of these problems on their own. So, let's understand where we are able to make the best and most effective contribution.

The second is understand, accept, and use our privilege. We can be way more than just a grant maker. We can use our endowment. We can use our voice as an investor, as an asset owner, we can use our resources to convene people, to commission. So, we are now saying that our responsibility is to use all of our resources to support our purpose.

And the third area, I suppose, is about knowing our place and understanding our place. I always think of foundations as we are just another charity and what we have is effectively money and expertise in certain areas. So, who is it that we have to always work with? We should never work on our own. We should always work in collaboration with others. We should see ourselves as part of jigsaw rather than part of a pyramid. And listening to those who are genuinely expert by experience is fundamental to the new strategy.

And the three areas that we believe is where we can contribute most is first and foremost what we call Our Natural World. We are one of the very few environmental funders at scale in the U.K. and so we have combined our environmental and food work and we want to restore and protect the environment and Our Natural World and also make sure that people benefit from it. We have done a lot of work around injustice and inequality. So, A Fairer Future is our way of bringing all of that together and having a clear articulation of that. And finally, Creative, Confident Communities which is about how we help and contribute towards strengthening and building bonds within communities so that they are confident.

We know we can't do everything and so we think that where we have a high tolerance for flexibility and risk We already known as a core funder, we want to move that as far as possible to unrestricted funding, long-term to really back our work so our strategy is a 5-year strategy but we have 10-year goals. So, we're really thinking long-term. I think that it's sort of encapsulated by the term 'unlocking change'. In these areas what we're trying to find is what is the thing that is stopping something good from happening. And how to we clear those barriers or facilitate people talking to each other or catalyse new ideas. And use all of our resources that we have to you know, use them well and use them effectively and always alongside others.

I'm happy to answer any questions on any of the strategy and this session is specifically around A Fairer Future and how we want to listen genuinely to people and voices to help in our decision making, and to articulate what it is we're trying to achieve. I'll stop there but happy to answer any questions at all on the strategy.

## HANNAH LIM:

Thank you so much for that Caroline. A reminder, Caroline's mentioned there, we'll be doing Q&A at the end of the session. Please put questions in Q&A box. We'll also be sharing a recording and transcript from this session as well if you'd like to listen to anything again.

Without further ado then I'd like to introduce the first of our speakers today. Henrietta Imoreh is an Applied Theatre Practitioner with a lifetime's history of being engaged with policies that tackle the over- representation of Looked After Children in the criminal justice system. She is passionate about social change and uses her creativity to support young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Henrietta is an ambassador for her local authority and as an advocate for care leavers, she uses her care experience to inspire change. She set up up her own theatre company Redefine, funded by Battersea Arts Centre for care leavers not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Henrietta is now working at EY Foundation as a Programme Delivery Coordinator and has co-designed EY Foundation's new programme 'Care to Employment' with care experienced young people. Over to you, Henrietta.

## HENRIETTA IMOREH:

Great, thank you, Hannah. I just wanted to say before I start a huge thank you to Esmée Fairbairn. It's been a really long holistic and supportive relationship that I built with you guys over time. So, I'm really happy to be part of this panel. It's really lovely to see you guys and to be back.

Before I start of, I'd like to introduce myself. I know Hannah has given me a bit of a bio. But yes, I am 26 and I'm care experienced. At the age of about 11, I was well into the care system, so I've been moved about six times around London into lots of different foster homes. My experience is not different to a lot of care leavers. A lot of care leavers have had similar experiences to me as well.

From my experience I'm an ambassador. It's why I wake up in the morning. And it fuels me to want to create social change, as Hannah mentioned. I utilise my experience and think of my little brother who's actually still in the foster care system, still fighting battles that I'm fighting - that I fought back in the day, so it makes me constantly want to be the catalyst for change.

As mentioned, I'm a care experienced person. I went on to the arts. I was a young person who got into a lot of trouble. I went into a pupil referral unit, got kicked out of school. So, I was very naughty - not what you see on the screen today. And the arts was the transformative tool for me to get me to where I am today. So, the arts is what built that confidence. The arts is what I could pour myself into to really be the catalyst of my change and my narrative.

We all know the statistics of care leavers. Only 6% of us go on to university. But actually, there are some amazing care leavers out there. Some are on the panel right now that are doing great work, and these are the young people we need to see in the statistics.

So, for me, I went on to the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama University. And my time at that drama school was really hard. Being able to fit in as a Black woman who was care experienced was really hard to fit in. But I utilised experience and I went on to get funding for a social entrepreneurship programme and I then set up my theatre company called ReDefine.

So, I'd like to share a few pictures. Here I set up my own theatre company in 2016. So, ReDefine, the reason I called it that is a theatre company that is set up to define and change what the care system and statistics show about care leavers. I actually think that if we redefine those stats, there will be change. Those stats are not empowering. Those stats are not inclusive, and those stats definitely don't identify me and the young people I work with.

So, this theatre company I set up is not all about creating a stage where it's tokenistic or creating a stage that is about young people performing their trauma - young people

performing their stories to sell tickets. ReDefine is actually a theatre company that allows young people to be agents of change. All my young people advocate for other young people. We had a few stakeholders that would come into some of the sessions and really find out what are the issues we're talking about.

My theatre company is about looking at what are the factors that affect young people in care and how do we bring in stakeholders to really come into the show but also tackle and have an open conversation about some of these issues. It's a 12-week programme where we talk about housing, we talk about how many stakeholders and professionals that young people have to see, we talk about the issues and battles that care leavers have to face. All of these young people you can see in these photos at the start of my project were not working.

So, I recruited NEET young people that were not in education or training or employment. And that was purposefully to try and get them to use the arts as a transformative tool. So, all these young people are now successfully working in part-time jobs and also in education. I don't like to take that reward. I don't like to make myself powerful because of that. I'm just an instrumental part of their success. But a lot of them are just like me and they constantly tell me that representation is key. For these young people, they saw a leader who is care experienced. They saw someone who is an Ethnic minority that is a director in that space. And that's one thing that I think, for me, was a catalyst of their change is that they were able to see representation.

I constantly put up loads of statistics around my theatre space to really showcase what is happening. And if people are not aware of the statistics or landscape of care. In the show, which is called Battles, we got young people to rip up the paper and that was a bit of a show of action, a bit of a riot to show that they are taking the stage. And that those statistics do not define them. I would often get the MPs to come, so we had the MP of Battersea to come in and see the young people. But also for them to listen to what they're going through and it's not just about coming to watch a show - it's actively hearing about what they want, what change they need, what support they need and thinking about what is the exit strategy for those young people as well.

Here, we have a young person as well that had quite a lot of issues, and she would often say that representation is key. And she'd often speak about the fact that she is now an agent of change. When I met Rupa, I now understood about how can we support care leavers to become care leaders. And that's something that this theatre has taught me that it's not about putting us on podium or putting us on a main stage. It's actually about putting us in the strategic policy change rooms.

And I'm getting to the point now where I'm often tired of speaking. I want to be part of the influence. I want to be part of that change making. And that's something I wanted to leave with you guys today. I actually wanted to share my screen and show you an image. So here I saw this image and it actually encapsulates what I'm talking about.

So, at the bottom in the first corner it says, "I am tired of fighting to be heard." And second it says, "We want to hear from you. We will help you be the voice that you could never be. And so, tell me about your trauma, and it's a fantastic opportunity to get your voice heard." We'll may make your story into our story. And actually, I want you guys to all visualise this image and take a moment to really think about how many times care leavers are often asked to be at the podium to talk about their trauma.

But actually, how many of us are at the Boards? How many of us are a trustee? How many of us are the vice chairs, and that is where I want to be and that's where I think care leavers need to be. So, at the moment I'm a trustee of two Boards of two major charities. I'm doing lots of work outside. I look at my own social capital and I look at my own privilege of being in the arts sector, and I often think about how can we enable young people that don't have these opportunities or don't have a network to talk to the big charities like Esmée Fairbairn.

How are we upscaling those young people to speak? I think we need to start to unlock the change and the change starts to think about the shift of power and that dynamic.

Organisations need to shift their power and I think it's time. It is time that we've seen with the Black Lives Matter movement, that's just a movement in itself. But actually, care leavers want that as well. Now we're tired of organisations talking for us. So how can we enable young people to be agents of social change and how can we enable young people to be agents that can now go out and really spread that power and how can we shift that power and get them onto the Board.

That's something I just want to leave with everybody today and I'll be able to take questions after. But, for me, that's one thing I'm passionate about is that care experienced people are quite tired of speaking about their trauma. I think now through COVID and through everything that's happening, young people are the next generation and they're very political. I think the charity sector have a duty to these young people to really shift their power. That's the last thing you're going to hear from me today. Thanks for listening.

## HANNAH LIM:

Thank you so much Henrietta. Some really powerful comments there on importance of challenging negative narratives and using the power of the arts to share and represent those transformative stories as well. So thank you for speaking to all of that. Please remember if you have questions to submit them by the Q&A function and we'll come to these after all the presentations.

On to then our next speaker. Kate Watson is Senior Projects Manager at PhotoVoice ([www.photovoice.org](http://www.photovoice.org)) - a UK based charity that delivers participatory photography, digital storytelling and self-advocacy projects with under-represented communities, in the UK and internationally. PhotoVoice, alongside a consortium of partner organisations, is currently delivering 'Care Leavers in Focus' - a 3-year project which uses participatory photography to develop advocacy materials with care-experienced young people to inform and improve services and support for other care leavers across England and Wales. Over to you, Kate.

## KATE WATSON:

Thank you very much Hannah and thank you Esmée for having us involved in such an interesting event. Just to echo what Henrietta Imoreh said, it's amazing to be part of such an inspiring panel so I'm looking forward to hearing the other speakers as well. I'm going to share my screen so just bear with me while I do that.

My name is Kate and I'm Senior Project Manager at PhotoVoice. And PhotoVoice works internationally in partnership with a range of different organisations and we work across a range of different issues. And the issues we work with are really diverse as is the way that we employ our methodology but throughout all of these projects, our overarching vision is for a world where everyone has an opportunity to speak out and be heard and we use photography to deliver positive social change.

Our methodology brings together participatory photography and participatory development and grassroots collective action. And the direct participation of the groups and individuals that are involved in the issues that we seek to change is really central to our approach. And so, we place the camera in the hands of individuals where they have the opportunity and power to ensure their own realities and to affect the changes they want to see.

So, in 2019 PhotoVoice and a range of partners who you can see on the slide here launched Care Leavers in Focus. And as Hannah said, it's a project which explores the perspectives of care experienced young people, using photography as a tool for advocacy and to ensure that the voices of these young people are central in championing the changes that they want to see. Participants have been sharing their views on what's working and what could be improved in the support and services they receive. And these insights will be made into new resources and toolkits which will be distributed across the U.K. to support other young people in and leaving care.

Whilst the experiences of each care experienced young person is different and obviously the support and services that they receive need to reflect this diversity of experience. As we all know here, in general the outcomes for care experienced young people are far worse than their peers.

In the last year, we have been running a series of workshops using participatory and photo advocacy with different young people and they've been reflecting on their experiences of care and the support they've received. And their work explores some of the barriers that you can see on the slide here.

But really importantly it also identifies solutions and opportunities for change. And so, it's not about them simply recounting their experiences and trauma. Because we believe that they're the real experts and we want to offer them the opportunity to make sense of their experiences, to inform future safeguarding, but also to gain agency and so that they can equip other services and practitioners to support them better.

I'd like to share with you now some of the work produced by the young people. It represents their thoughts, responses and experiences through photography and text. Really important with our methodology is that it's not explicitly therapeutic and so participants are given a choice about the work which they make and the themes which they would like to explore within their work, and this is really important for building confidence and resilience and for self-actualisation.

So, key in this project is the meaningful engagement of young people throughout the project life span beyond those initial workshops where they're making the work. So, this really follows our methodology where the project might start with individual impact and self-advocacy.

But the project is designed to have a ripple effect where that personal change informs a more structural change by strengthening the framework in which the issues are situated. So that's why the insights that have been generated from these photographs and these photo stories will be developed into new resources to support other young people and the workshop participants and other young people will be directly engaged in that process. And you can see some activities that we have done and will be doing in the following slides to achieve this.

So in ensuring that the voices of care leavers are foremost in informing and improving the services that they access, providing opportunities for the young people to advocate and to recognise their rights, the project aims to improve the rates of successful transition for future care leavers and influence the policy making and effective implementation of those policies to improve the context for them.

So, I think we all know that self-advocacy is an important part of person-centered change. However, becoming an advocate is a really gradual process - realising what your needs are, being comfortable in decision making and speaking and even having the confidence to believe that your voice deserves to be heard is a process that needs to be supported for a lot of care experienced young people.

Why is photography to do this? Well, as described, photography can be adapted to a range of different outcomes. And at PhotoVoice we believe it to be a tool or a process rather than an end product. So, looking at the changes at an individual level, photography can be an entry point for engaging with past experiences so it can provide a way for participants or young people to speak without necessarily having to talk. And as a creative tool, it can overcome some of the fatigue or resistance to engage with services and it has skills building opportunities. So, building confidence and providing a platform for affirmation and growth.

Our workshops brought together lots of different young people. And as we move into the next phase, we'll be bringing different regional groups together so it's an important opportunity for peer support networks and for reducing the isolation and because of the different age range of the participants, you have positive role models that Henrietta was talking about in her presentation. More widely, we understand that these are complex issues, there needs to be structural change, so we are engaging with wider stakeholders and decision-makers to set the context.

Photography can provide a new way of engaging, opening up this process for change. Photographs can carry powerful messages and it can present more nuanced personal stories, which might speak to different audiences more than statistics or facts alone. And they can be easily disseminated. Photography is everywhere. We can reach really wide audiences from those initial workshop groups and young people we work with.

I just wanted to share this quote by photographer, Irvin Penn, which points to the power or the potential for photography to effect change:

“A good photograph is one that communicates a fact, touches a heart, leaves the viewer a changed person for having seen it. It is, in a word, effective.”

And I think that sort of encapsulates the impact that we believe that the participants' work is having and will continue to have as we move forward with this project. This project is an



opportunity to share authentic voices to gather insight and to devise ways of achieving sustainable improvements for the support that young people receive.

Our methodology is about applying creativity, partnership and cross-sector activity. In doing so, we aim to impact solutions that ensure better experiences for young people as they journey through the preparation and transition out of care and onwards into adult or independent life.

Within all of this we will be making sure that care experienced young people are at the centre of championing these changes I'm going to leave you with a couple more slides of the images. Great, thank you. And I will stop there.

## **HANNAH LIM:**

Thank you so much, Kate, for that presentation and sharing some of those photo stories. I think we'd all agree with the quote that they are indeed effective. And for those particularly inspired by what we've heard about creativity, I'd recommend joining another webinar, we've got planned for this series: Creativity is everywhere will be on the 3rd of December. More details are on the Esmée website.

On to our next speakers: we have Chelbi Hillan and Sophie Hutson. Chelbi and Sophie are Drive Forward Foundation Policy Forum Ambassadors. The Forum is made up of Drive Forward Ambassadors and care experienced young people with the aim to communicate the disconnect between policy makers, parliamentarians and the lived experiences of those in and leaving care.

Sophie is a 22-year old care leaver who has campaigned for change since her teenage years. She's just finished her degree at Manchester Metropolitan University and Sophie was one of the founding members of Drive Forward's Manchester Policy Forum.

Chelbi is a student at the University of Strathclyde studying immunology and microbiology and has taken a year out for her Masters year to work as Vice President, Education at Strath Union For the past two years she's been deeply involved with student politics and campaigning for the better treatment of students especially care experienced students. Her journey was inspired by fellow care experienced speaker, and she hopes to inspire the next generation of activists.

Sophie over to you.

## **SOPHIE HUTSON:**

For me, I've been promoting the voices of children in care since age of 14. I moved into care when I was 13 and I started by the fact that my friend had to have a DBS check for me to go to visit her. So I started to get in touch with my local authority saying why are you doing this? None of my friends have to do this and started going through the whole rigmarole. I ended up drawing in the Children in Care Council and being involved with that for that.

And then continuing on from there, I got through secondary school and carried on with my local authority and then moving up to uni, I became a care leaver ambassador, which is basically using my lived experience to work with other children and young people within education from the university to help inspire them to continue into higher education because obviously we know the statistic of children in care going into higher education is so low and it's because they don't feel supported and they don't feel like that is an open option.

And then I got invited to the Drive Forward Policy Forum so I was part of the one of the founding members in Manchester. I started about a year ago. And the one main thing that I've done for them is I was a part of the Greater Manchester Higher Education Scheme so basically what we did is we got a bunch of local authorities and university heads and different people from that area together and me and a few other care leavers did a massive presentation on what care leavers need in order to be able to access university and have the right support at university because we don't have parents to fall back on.

We're currently doing a new scheme where we're trying to promote better mental health services throughout care leaving services and promote that through change and policy.

So Chelbi, over to you.

## **CHELBI HILLAN:**

Thank you Sophie. My journey into activism started from hearing someone speak at an event so I didn't know I was care experienced until a couple years ago. Because obviously there was a lot of ways you can define care and I don't think anyone's experiences are particularly the same.

So, I found out maybe two and a half years ago I was care experienced and since then I've been on a whirlwind trying to get the message out there. So when I registered for support, I was already a student rep so representing was something that I was kind of used to and I thought okay, I'm care experienced - how many people don't know they're care experienced or don't know how to access the support for care experienced people at university, how many people are slipping through the cracks and I tried to do some work with UCAS to get the care experience button added and you can self-define as care experienced which makes it a lot easier for universities to support these students when they do transition there.

So, I think working with charities like Drive Forward Foundation and Who Cares? Scotland is the biggest opportunity for young people that are care experienced.

I took part in the Independent Care Review. That let me use my experience on children's panels and remembering them was quite difficult to actually improve the lives of others and I think it's really tough because care experienced people are particularly - their actions are criminalised at a very young age. And it's then difficult to make that progression. I think a lot of people don't like to talk about being care experienced because they feel it's going to hold them back or they don't want to let the uni know because that's going to go against their applications.

A lot of the work I'm trying to do now is to break that stigma. I work with Strathclyde Cares at my university. We write the policy and make decisions about how to support our care experienced students. But, I think, there's a whole piece of work to be done so I'm managing to control this environment that I work in about higher education and empowering care experienced young people but I think the bulk of the work has to be done way further down the line - as soon as you enter the care system, there's got to be these positive role models.

And I think you're pretty much condemned to being - it feels like you're condemned, you can stay in that box - you're care experienced That's your title - you can't be anything else. And I think it's inspiring the next generation of young people to think 'I can be a lecturer', 'I can be a doctor' even though I've been through this.

So, I started a society and that's really to bring people together because I find when you bring people with these lived experiences together, they get confidence from it. You start inspiring each other and I think that's what the work of Drive Forward and Who Cares? Scotland is like.

It's very much people in the room at the top making all the decisions which makes it so much more powerful. But with the Drive Forward Foundation I find it so easy to campaign. And I think trying to break the barriers to -- it's really hard as a care experienced person I think to actually engage because usually you support yourself so you work at university but you also want to be involved in all these policy things but what's amazing about all these charities is they make it really easy to engage If we're wanting to create change, we need to make it as easy as possible for people to engage and to be able to use their lived experiences to their advantage.

But the one thing I wanted to leave everyone is how do we reach this younger generation of care experienced people. The people who are going to be coming to university who are going to be starting their own companies. The figures right now are stark. I think that the work we're doing will change that in the future. I think we really need to start thinking about how we get in there early and how we inspire these younger generation of people to become the change makers like Henrietta said - on the Boards, not just speaking to the Board. Thank you.

## HANNAH LIM:

Thanks very much to both of you. Really inspiring to hear how you've both been using your experience to make change and I know that you will definitely have a role in inspiring others to do so as well.

A reminder again I can see lots coming in but if you've got any questions to put them in the Q&A function. We'll come to these after we've heard from our final speaker.

Our final speaker is Megan Sutherland. Megan is the Vice Chair of the Board of Who Cares? Scotland and has been a consistent advocate to put the voices of care experienced people at the heart of Scotland's agenda. She became involved with the charity at 15 when she requested advocacy to have her voice heard in decisions about her care placements.

She received a scholarship to study at Harvard University over the summer of 2016 and became a Trustee of the charity at 17. She was awarded SCVO's Terrific Trustee Award in 2019. Megan worked as a policy officer in the Scottish Government's Homelessness Unit. She is currently in her final year of a Social and Public Policy with Quantitative Methods degree at the University of Glasgow.

## MEGAN SUTHERLAND:

Thanks so much. I am the Vice Chair of the Board of Who Cares? Scotland. We are a national advocacy organisation for care experienced people. And I've been involved in our campaign work for about 6 years. But prior to this, I lived in a huge, noisy residential care home unit in the Highlands I was often the only girl. And I had grown up with domestic abuse and violence and I've learnt that keeping myself as small and amicable as possible was the best way to get through life.

As Hannah said, I became a member of Who Cares? Scotland at 15 because I definitely needed my voice to be heard in decisions being made about my care. I was offered truly independent advocacy which meant an advocate that existed solely for me - to speak on my behalf and they had no vested interest or ties with care providers or care service. They had the freedom to say to me as a child 'you're my boss, what do you need from me?' You can imagine they're not always the most popular person in the room, but they were for me, however, the most trusted person.

Over time I became more able to speak for myself with their support beside me and reassuring me that what I was saying didn't sound stupid or unreasonable but was actually what I deserved and what I should be getting anyway. I became more involved in participation activities. Going to a summer camp where a lot of our young people for the first time experienced non-judgmental friendship and belonging, attending local groups such as our champions boards which brings young people together with the key decision makers in the local authorities and also attending and organising our past five Christmas Day dinners. To pass potatoes between other laughing young people who had otherwise been on their own all day.

The sum total of all of this was that I became part of a wider community and became aware of other young people's stories and the financial and emotional challenges they were also living with due to failing system. I became more determined not only to self-advocate for better for myself but for as many others as possible. Who Cares? Scotland empowered and supported me to become that activist.

For some context, our charity was founded by a group of social workers in 1978 who were tired of their hands being tied by procedures and bureaucracy that was stopping the children in their charge from being heard and getting what they needed. As we grew as an organisation, we became more able to offer participation activities to bring young people together who had a shared experience and understanding. I have met care experienced people from all over the world from the other nations, from Sweden, New Zealand, from the Native American community in Oregon. I feel like I have more in common with them than the people I sit beside every day or used to sit beside in lectures because we

understand what it feels to be separated from our brothers and sisters, to move houses with no say.

Our communities protest against you living there next to them as their neighbour. To have no one to phone outside of Monday to Friday, 9 to 5 to help. Our advocates know this too as they walk beside care experienced people who live this reality every day in every part of our country.

And this realisation that our organisation had that these problems were systemic but that individuals were being left to pick up pieces is why we became a campaigning organisation because campaigning is collective advocacy and campaigning with Who Cares? Scotland is founded in empowerment and voice and listening. We made it our mission to speak on behalf of oppressed people straight to the decision makers and the oppressors.

We put people with power and responsibility in a room with people who had been affected by their systems and had a message for them to hear and act upon. But we really want to be able to basically walk the walk as well as we talk the talk. So, we prioritise voice to be at the centre of everything we do because we exist for the care experienced community. We've got over 3,000 members and there's nobody better to be driving our work and shaping it than the community itself.

We aim to have at least 30% of our staff with care experience at all levels from the receptionist you meet when you walk in the door to myself and our care experienced Chair of the Board. We're about to constitutionally recognise our National representative body in a move towards democratising the organisation. We are the most representative organisation for the care experienced community in existence and it's a real privilege to be able to share our learnings and grow a movement of partners across the world.

Our staff culture is very flat so that what our advocates hear from the front line is shared right through to the policy team, the public affairs team, the senior management and ultimately the public bodies that we exist to hold to account. It's a constant reminder we need to do more, and we need to do it faster.

When we recruited recently for our new Chief Executive, it was key to us that the decision made was by the entire membership because the role of our Chief Executive is not to speak for us and tell our stories to funders, media and politicians. Their role is to open the doors and get us the space and time we need to tell our story and agree actions for ourselves and hire the good quality people we need to support us while we do it. So it was really key that we had a survey that went out to all of our members, we had an interview stage for our CEO with our national representative body and that what our membership told us really shaped the role profile we put out for our CEO. It wasn't a decision that was made by a couple Trustees in a room and no one knew what happened.

In 2013, the Scottish Government was considering a new Children and Young People's Bill. Who Cares? Scotland took 21 care experienced people to Parliament, asking them to raise maximum age of leaving care from 18 to 21. On the back of this success in advance of the 2016 election, we launched the 1,000 Voices manifesto and every party signed up to it agreeing that if they were elected to Government, they would listen to 1,000 care experienced children, young people and adults. We didn't ask for more because we knew

that after hearing one 1,000 stories of how Scotland was raising its children, they would have the same urgency to act as we do.

So, Nicola Sturgeon came to our offices to begin her 1,000 voices challenge in June 2016. I remember the frantic cleaning that was happening in the office in the night before. We were getting light bulbs changed. the skirting boards were getting polished. I was in the quiet room with three other activists and our CEO, preparing to be the first four of the thousand voices that she heard. I still have the old school jotter that I wrote out my plan. I asked her for a Commission of the care system so that no child has to experience what we did again. We were waiting for 1,000 voices, we were pretty surprised and over the moon when after just 12 voices she announced a root and branch review of the care system which would be led and driven by car experienced voices. And 4 years later, the Scottish Government is getting ready to implement those recommendations.

But as other speakers have said today, getting to the point of understanding someone that some like I who could have something useful to say that could help to transform a small part of the world was a massive process. If you'd asked me when I was in residential care what transformative change I would have wanted, I would have told you that I wanted Wi-Fi. But now I would tell you I want life-long relationships and equal opportunities and outcomes and life chances for children who have a billionaire Government as their parent.

But people need guidance and support to think really deeply about what is possible - especially young people who have spent most of their lives limiting their expectations of adults and having their own expectations managed. It's difficult to imagine a rainbow if you're colour blind in the same way that it's difficult to imagine what having a lifelong network of support and loving relationships would feel like and do for you if you've never been told you're loved.

So that's why bringing the community together to explore and share and debate and refine our message in a safe space is so important. I've seen this happen up a hill organically in a campsite when other young people also learn that they've been moved schools a few times or that their teacher went above and beyond to help them sit their exams.

We created the One 1,000 Voices team to go all across the country and engage with people to think really deeply about what they'd like to tell the Care Review through all different forums. From painting, playdough, drawings and interviews.

I've heard in my professional life the phrase 'hard to reach' and I've seen discussions go around and around and nowhere ultimately. About how to respond to people who have adverse childhood experiences or ACEs as the sector jargon calls it and I believe these conversations are stagnating because they frame the issue on the person with the experience rather than the professional or the body needs to adopt a new way to live and work and think and respect people who are experts in their own right.

The First Minister met us where we are. She's come to camps; she's listened to poetry written by our members. She's led with her heart and it's thanks to her openness and her willingness to learn and try something new that we are where we are today. We've shown that it's possible to reach everyone and amplify marginalised voices to inform Government policy through speeches and poetry and conversations that started in a tent. I think it's really time for the rest of the country to open themselves up to an experience-led way of

creating change and fairer futures too because we have a duty to do that to our young people.

## Q&A

HANNAH LIM:

Thank you, Megan, really valuable to hear about 'Who Cares?' journey over time there and all that you've achieved in having care experienced voices heard externally but also how you've shaped your own organisation to centre that too so thank you very much.

I know we've got lots of questions that are waiting to be answered and very little time left. Whilst we've got our amazing panellists with us, we're going to focus on questions that are for them, that need their input. But we know there are lots of questions about Esmée's strategy so we'll try to pick those up in a Twitter Q&A later.

Luna, can I come to you for the first question for our panellists?

LUNA DIZON:

Yes. We've got a question from Sam to Kate at PhotoVoice, they say they're very excited by your work with care leavers with the Care Explore project. Have there been any barriers to working in Scotland? Do you want to answer that first?

KATE WATSON:

Yeah, we had thought to work across the UK and all 4 nations and that was original plan but we ended up working where we could find or secure partners who were experts on the issue and who were already engaged with the participant groups, with the young people and in this case, that happened to be in England and Wales and didn't manage Scotland but we would be open to discussing opportunities in Scotland and it's worth saying that the project when it's disseminated, we'll be looking to do that U.K. wide so reaching Scotland and Northern Ireland as well.

LUNA DIZON:

Great. There's a good question here for all of you from Dawn. Is there any research or learning around empowering young people to be active on Boards and what changes might be needed in how Boards tend to work to ensure equity of voice for different generations and lived experiences.

HANNAH LIM:

Megan, can we start with you on that one?

MEGAN SUTHERLAND:

Yeah, so our Board is pretty 50/50. We have quite a large Board because everyone is bringing different skills. I joined the Board at 17. I remember the first accounts meeting and I was like oh my God, what is this? But our Board members understand that although we have different knowledge and understanding we're all equally valuable means we kind of paired up Board members with different experiences to help them understand the other person's perspective.

So, whether I've got extra questions about how the accounts work or what does it mean, what does an advocate actually feel like when you're working with an advocate. Ultimately there's no sense on our Board that one person's voice is more important than another. Ultimately, we're chaired by care experienced people. So, I think it's basically a culture of respect that really helps our Board work efficiently.

HANNAH LIM:

Henrietta, do you have anything from your Board experience? And then we'll try to squeeze in another question.

HENRIETTA IMOREH:

Definitely. I think two things. So, I think the way we recruit for Board members needs to be more diverse. Actually, going to your local authorities and meeting amazing people like our panellists today, finding out who is doing great work. How do we get in touch, upscaling them. And as Chelbi mentioned, the younger generation, so not just diversifying Boards just based on race but also diversifying Boards based on experience and age and class should be really important. So how we recruit based on those mediums as well.

I think I've been on Boards but I also know I'm often on Boards because of my race. So, I think just being mindful of that, of age as well plays into it and class. So, I think people need to be mindful when recruiting as well.

And second thing would be about not just putting a young person on the Board and not actively making any change. I find a lot of people are like yeah, that person is on my Board and they're not even comfortable to speak on that Board. They don't feel like they have anything to contribute and they don't feel like they're eloquent enough. How do we train and mentor young people on the that Board to be the best leaders that they can.

HANNAH LIM:

Luna, have we got one more quick question before I ask for final comments from our panel?

LUNA DIZON:

I think as you said before, we are going to do a Twitter Q&A on our strategy because there are a number of questions here about that. And we do want to answer them all but because we're running out of time. We're going to leave it until then. I think panellists have been answering questions along the way as well. And so yeah, we can go to final thoughts.



HANNAH LIM:

Wonderful. Before we close today, we wanted to pose a final question to each of the panel members. And that is what would be the one piece of advice that you would offer to others on how to bring the voices of those most affected by issues into decision making?

CHELBI HUTSON:

Yeah, I think it's important like I said not to just hire because someone has a really good experience and something that's relevant to the role. I think experience can be a pretty broad term and the experience you bring doesn't need to be like academic or past experience. It can just be you being who you are and having your lived experiences and that's going to be really valuable.

SOPHIE HUTSON:

I agree with Chelbi with a lot of what she's said. And it's just listening as well and taking on board what that lived experience is because we've lived it. We know what that experience is for us. So, our experience will actually help you do things that will help things for future generations and make that positive change in the future and therefore, kids that are entering the care system or going through it aren't going through the issue that we go through. They're not facing the same barriers. There's always going to be some sort of barrier. But, if we can limit them by using our lived experience to prevent it, then do it.

HENRIETTA IMOREH:

Great. I'm trying to limit this down I've got a few points but the top two:

One is about shifting power so start to see that relationship where young people are the experts and actually, they are the professionals and you're not. So, I think if we start to shift that power dynamic, that would be the best advice. We don't want to talk to any more professionals. We are actually the experts. We know quite a lot about care experienced young people, and we can help better your organisation so start to shift that power.

Second thing is, there needs to be more care in the care system so how do we become more human and how do we start to bring more love in everything we do. So yeah, a bit more love and start to give them more power. Let young people be the agents of change that they are.

KATE WATSON:

Yeah, I'm probably just echoing what's already been said but I think this thing about engagement being meaningful and not just extractive is really important so we're not simply asking care experienced young people to recount their experiences and struggles. I think this limits them and they have this expert knowledge and insight. So, we should be asking them what are the solutions? What are the opportunities for change?

And then the second point would be engagement can't be tokenistic. It's a process for young people to become self-advocates. It's about supporting them to realise that their voice does

matter, and photography is a great way to do that. But whatever your approach, it's about supporting so there's meaningful participation that can drive long term change.

MEGAN SUTHERLAND:

I think it's key examining power honestly and critically and naming who has power and who doesn't. Creating spaces for us to reflect together and support to imagine what can be possible as well as taking the risk to let us have the opportunities to have the platforms to be heard and the respect to let us take it.

HANNAH LIM:

Thank you, I think sadly that's all we have time for today. I'm sorry we couldn't get to your questions. We're delighted to see the discussion has sparked such a conversation though. For those who wanted to continue with any panellists in particular, we'll be putting up a slide with all the contact details of all the organisations discussed today if you'd like to get in touch with them. I know the conversation has certainly been really thought provoking for me so thank you to all of the speakers, for Luna for fielding questions.

And a big thanks to all of you who have joined us today for the session. A reminder that you will be able to find a video and a transcript of the webinar on our website soon so if you'd like to share to refer back to important points made. And we also have two further webinars coming up. Creativity is everywhere and Restoring Our Natural World. Please see the Esmée website for more details of those. A big thank you again for joining us today and we hope you found this useful and it's a bye from all of us for now. Thank you.