

# THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 GUIDANCE ON SCOTLAND'S CARE EXPERIENCED COMMUNITY

Period covered: 20<sup>th</sup> March to 9<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Report date: 9<sup>th</sup> April 2020

A LIFETIME OF  
EQUALITY,  
RESPECT  
AND  
**LOVE**



FOR CARE EXPERIENCED PEOPLE

WHO CARES? SCOTLAND

## Table of Contents

<b>PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>POVERTY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
DESTITUTION, MATERIAL DEPRIVATION AND SITUATIONAL POVERTY .....	3
Impact of UK and Scottish Government Response .....	5
FINANCIAL IMPACT OF EMPLOYMENT/EDUCATION CHANGES .....	6
Impact of Scottish Government Response .....	7
RELIANCE ON SOCIAL SECURITY .....	7
Impact of Scottish Government Response .....	9
<b>HEALTH AND WELLBEING .....</b>	<b>9</b>
MENTAL HEALTH .....	10
PRACTICAL/CRISIS SUPPORT .....	10
Impact of Scottish Government Response .....	12
<b>INFORMATION AND PARTICIPATION .....</b>	<b>12</b>
DIGITAL DIVIDE .....	13
PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES .....	13
Impact of Scottish Government Response .....	14
<b>PROVISION OF CARE .....</b>	<b>15</b>
CONTACT WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS .....	15
MAINTAINING GROUP LIVING .....	16
Impact of Scottish Government Response .....	17
<b>FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON POLICY AND PRACTICE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>CONTACTS .....</b>	<b>22</b>

## PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER

The measures introduced in the U.K. to reduce the spread of the Covid-19 virus are centred around the need for individuals to socially distance themselves, or self-isolate completely when needed. Official guidance includes advice to the public to rely on family and wider support networks in order to stay healthy and safe. Unfortunately, many individuals will be without the support network they need to cope with the impact of social distancing, self-isolation and the unprecedented impact on employment and financial stability.

On Monday 16th March 2020, following the U.K. government's advice regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, organisations were asked to allow their staff to work from home "where they possibly could". The following day, Who Cares? Scotland changed its operational model, adopting a new approach to supporting Care Experienced people across advocacy, participation and employment. This new approach included the establishment of a Helpline. This helpline seeks to provide a main point of contact and support for Care Experienced people, recognising that they are particularly vulnerable during this public health crisis and are likely to be disproportionately impacted by the measures in place, with the potential to leave them isolated, anxious and destitute.

This paper presents an overview of how Covid-19 and the associated safety measures have impacted Care Experienced people in contact with Who Cares? Scotland, using an analysis of the helpline, examples of advocacy tasks relating specifically to Covid-19 and the questions most commonly asked by the Who Cares? Scotland workforce, as well as wider partners and friends. These examples can be grouped thematically under the following areas:

- poverty,
- health and wellbeing,
- information and participation, *and*
- provision of care.

Each thematic area presents a summary of the issue and contains real case study examples<sup>1</sup>. These examples show the very real challenge to human rights that the Covid-19 pandemic presents. The emergency legislation created to support the U.K. through this crisis importantly seeks to protect public health, but in doing so will ultimately impact on human

---

<sup>1</sup> All case study examples have been anonymised.

rights. This will be felt most by certain groups in our society. The evidence gathered so far by Who Cares? Scotland displays how many Care Experienced people are experiencing the negative effects of competing rights. It is hoped that by capturing this information, the Scottish Government and others can continue to take a human rights-based approach to protecting the health of society, ensuring any guidance or legislative developments do not limit the everyday protections that exist to support those who need it.

For each of the case study examples presented below, Who Cares? Scotland has been able to provide immediate emotional, practical or financial remedy. However, the complicated, recurrent and interwoven nature of each case study presents clear systemic issues that need to be addressed.

## **POVERTY**

Those experiencing poverty, insecure housing and homelessness will experience significant challenge in accessing support and applying preventive measures during the Covid-19 pandemic. Many of the Care Experienced people who have reached out to Who Cares? Scotland for support during this time have zero-hour contracts, are reliant on benefits and are subject to punitive measures under the system of Universal Credit. The culmination of these factors means that many are facing financial barriers which impact on their ability to safely practice social distancing.

## **DESTITUTION, MATERIAL DEPRIVATION AND SITUATIONAL POVERTY**

A large number of those engaging with Who Cares? Scotland since the social distancing measures began have reported having little to no food left to feed themselves, their children and their families. Indeed, often they have had to rely on food banks and subsequently volunteers from Who Cares? Scotland to purchase or even deliver food. They have frequently fell short of money to pay essential utility bills such as rent, electricity, gas, mobile and broadband bills, which helped them stay connected to their, already, depleted and limited networks of friends and family. Some have been learning to become independent, but their

support was removed completely due to the risk of Covid-19. This has left them with faulty kitchen appliances or even without the basics, such as cutlery.

### **Case study 1:**

An older kinship carer who looks after their grandchildren is struggling with the challenge of caring for the children every day without school or wider support networks. Some of the children have additional support needs and are struggling with the change in situation. This experience has also impacted on the necessary daily expenditure and the kinship carer reports of the strain of trying to hold the family together.

### **Case study 2:**

A young person in homeless accommodation is struggling with buying food that they can cook in their flat which has limited cooking facilities. This has been impacted by reduced availability of food products and having to pay for more expensive products than normal.

### **Case study 3:**

A young Care Experienced parent living in a rural area cannot afford to pay for food or electricity and is not due their Universal Credit payment for another week. All local shops have closed and travelling to a supermarket involves paying for a taxi. In addition to this, electricity is running low and there is little in the way of local support to help.

### **Case study 4:**

A young Care Experienced parent cannot afford to maintain their energy payments. Both their washing machine and fridge freezer have broken. With social distancing they are unable to lean on their networks and as a result they are experiencing significant challenge in feeding and clothing their children, as well as heating their house.

### **Case study 5:**

A young Care Experienced parent is struggling to afford energy payments, food and nappies. They had been reliant on local shops prior to them closing as they feel anxious about taking their children to the supermarket. With little in the way of family support, they are unable to

lean on the usual networks. Having no way of alleviating the financial strain has intensified their feelings of anxiety.

### Case study 6:

A Care Experienced young person living with foster parents is struggling to pay their phone bill and has been unable to contribute for the household food as they would normally. Prior to lockdown they had a zero hour contract and is no longer getting paid. In addition to this, due to an administrative error, they have not received their student bursary. This means they will be without their usual income for a total of 4 weeks.

## Impact of UK and Scottish Government Response

The financial impact of coronavirus has been recognised in emergency legislation by the U.K. and Scottish governments, which try to mitigate the loss in financial stability for many individuals. Increased protection from eviction from rented accommodation and a moratorium extension on debt collection, are two examples of measures which aim to remove the pressure of paying bills which people cannot afford. Additionally, the Scottish Government have provided Coronavirus funding so that people worried about food during the crisis, can contact their local authority for further information on the help and support available to them.

Despite these efforts, there are Care Experienced people who will still struggle with impacts of poverty during this outbreak (whether caused by the impact of the outbreak or from pre-existing financial difficulties). A lack of family or support networks are key factors, both in understanding where to access financial support available and in helping to fill the gaps of universal provision on offer. The protections in place may also not apply to all individuals struggling financially, for example, some eviction notices will only be extended to 3 months, instead of the full 6 months available for most, for cases where anti-social behaviour is the grounds for the eviction. CYPCS and others have explained this may disproportionately affect particularly vulnerable groups of children, including those experiencing domestic abuse, and Care Experienced young people.<sup>2</sup> It is also worth noting that those living in temporary or

---

<sup>2</sup> [Children and Young People's Commissioners Office, Coronavirus \(Scotland\) Bill MSP Briefing.](#)

supported accommodation are also not protected by the extended eviction notices legislated for by the Scottish Government.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT OF EMPLOYMENT/EDUCATION CHANGES**

Stories of unexpected redundancies faced by Care Experienced people, their partners and families have been very common during the pandemic. Unemployment soared leaving them with no income and trapping them in the complex benefit system with some experiencing further stigmatisation and a sense of shame. Zero-hour contracts while initially provided some level of certainty, were increasingly being depleted leaving some Care Experienced people facing an unknown and troubling future.

Those in education have struggled with the impact of home-based learning, with many experiencing uncertainties around whether or not they will receive their usual finances including bursaries and student loans.

### **Case study 1:**

A young adult currently in full-time education did not receive their student loan when they were supposed to and as a result has been unable to pay bills. With no family support to lean on, this individual found it hard to seek advice or information about what to do.

### **Case study 2:**

A young person who lost their job at the start of the social distancing measures has no money to pay for food, electricity or other bills. Their partner is pregnant, and they are concerned about how to exist safely with no heating or food. They have applied for Universal Credit but are having technical issues accessing their account. As a result, they will not receive payment for another 2 weeks.

### **Case study 3:**

A Care Experienced single parent is struggling to afford food and electricity due to being self-employed and now left without work. Although they have now sourced a temporary job, it will be a while before they receive pay. They recently moved into a new tenancy with their

child who has additional support needs. They are awaiting white goods and so cooking affordable meals is challenging.

## **Impact of Scottish Government Response**

The need to protect access to stable employment and education during the outbreak has been recognised with measures put in place, such as the ability for certain employers to 'furlough' staff and claim back up to 80% of wages so they can continue to pay their workforce, as well as student bursaries remaining in place for those at college and university.

However, the support available for Care Experienced people to access education is an ongoing area of concern. The closure of schools and educational settings has led to a reliance on parents and carers to continue teaching their children from home or in care settings - including the added pressure on potentially vulnerable Care Experienced parents to educate their children with limited resources. The emergency coronavirus legislation has also resulted in a significant reduction in the requirements of local authorities to assess and support students with Additional Support Needs.

In terms of employment protection, there has been little to no protection for immediate redundancies by employers as a result of the crisis and the response from the Scottish Government is for individuals to access Universal Credit through DWP if they find themselves suddenly out of work. There is a lack of support for those who were working in insecure employment, for example, having zero-hour contracts, and many are finding access to DWP challenging.

## **RELIANCE ON SOCIAL SECURITY**

In the face of increasing financial hardship, many have turned to the state for support to fill in the gap created by the pandemic. However, many are not used to navigating the complex benefit system and have experienced difficulties accessing the right support at the right time. Others saw their benefits and payments delayed, cut down or even stopped without any clear reason.

### **Case study 1:**



A Care Experienced young person living in supported accommodation received a Universal Credit sanction prior to lockdown. This sanction has meant they have been unable to keep on top of payments to their supported accommodation. During lockdown, they have received a 21-day eviction notice as a result of this debt and now face homelessness.

### **Case study 2:**

A Care Experienced young person living independently received a Universal Credit sanction just prior to lockdown. They want to appeal this sanction but due to the reduced accessibility of DWP, they have been unable to speak to anyone about this. They are experiencing significant financial hardship as a result and are unable to buy food or pay bills.

### **Case study 3:**

Two young Care Experienced parents have lost their zero-hour contract jobs as a result of Covid-19. Staying at home more than normal is resulting in a need to spend more money on energy bills. They applied for an advance Universal Credit payment but were rejected. This extra financial strain has led them to apply for a crisis grant through the Scottish Welfare Fund, however this service is reporting significant strain and an inability to meet demand.

### **Case study 4:**

A Care Experienced young person has lost their zero-hour contract job as a result of Covid-19. They have applied for Universal Credit but have been told they will have to wait until the end of April. They currently live in supported lodgings and is being well supported by the carer however they have no money to pay their phone bill and therefore will be cut off from other support networks.

### **Case study 5:**

A Care Experienced young person who recently left care and lives alone, reports that they have not received their usual financial support and does not understand why. They also have an eating disorder which has been exacerbated due to the panic buying and lack of varied food on offer. Although they have a social worker, they are limited in what they can do. They have no family and limited friend networks.

## Impact of Scottish Government Response

There is recognition of the vital role of social security systems in providing universal provision for those who need it during the outbreak. The changes to Statutory Sick Pay delivery by the UK Government and changes to the assessment processes by DWP for claimants, demonstrate the need to prioritise access to funds as quickly as possible for those that require social security support. Social Security Scotland are also continuing to deliver seven new devolved benefit payments to those who need it during the outbreak.

However, the huge increase in new Universal Credit claimants and impact on the social security workforce has caused a significant delay of some new devolved benefits in Scotland being rolled out by Social Security Scotland. The Scottish Government have announced changes to the implementation of the Child Disability Payment and the Scottish replacement for Personal Independence Payment. The timeframes for redeterminations and appeals from those claiming devolved benefits have also been relaxed in emergency legislation, meaning further delays could exist for those applying for support from Social Security Scotland, alongside those already existing delays for many trying to access the oversubscribed DWP benefits throughout this period.

## HEALTH AND WELLBEING

One of the most common issues faced by Care Experienced people of all ages has been the daunting prospect of social isolation and loneliness. While initial days felt novel, the reality of not being able to be in close physical proximity to their networks of supports, friends and family, felt overwhelming by many. Additionally, complicated family dynamics have been exacerbated during this time and without the usual supports, many are descending into crisis. The new way of living has exacerbated many Care Experienced people's mental health issues, especially when combined with ill health associated with the fear of Covid-19.

## MENTAL HEALTH

A huge number of those contacting Who Cares? Scotland for support have spoken about the impact that social-distancing and the fear of the unknown future has had on their mental wellbeing. Many reports of existing mental health struggles and acknowledge how these have been intensified by the current crisis. For many the usual networks of support are now no longer there and this is proving challenging for those already in crisis.

### Case study 1:

A Care Experienced young person with pre-existing mental health issues is due to be released from hospital while the Covid-19 social distancing measures are in place. Their support worker, who they have a positive relationship with, has been told to isolate for 12 weeks and so they will now receive a form of support from a different worker. This change in support, alongside the challenge of being released from hospital during the crisis, is causing significant impact on their mental health.

### Case Study 2:

A Care Experienced young person who recently left care and lives independently is struggling with the impact of isolation and reports that this is significantly affecting their existing mental health issues. This has been intensified by an inability to pay for WIFI connection and therefore they feel alone and unsure about how to cope for this undetermined period.

### Case study 3:

Instances of reported self-harm behaviours have escalated rapidly during this period, from both young people and adults. With little in the way of accessible support, these individuals are finding it challenging to understand and manage this.

## PRACTICAL/CRISIS SUPPORT

For many, the challenge of fractured relationships and uncertain living environments continues to exist during this period of isolation and social distancing. Experiences of crisis, with reduced supports available, mean that many will be unable to comply with social

distancing guidance. Others will be struggling with the reality of relationship or placement breakdowns and where services would normally be on hand to support directly, many will be left to navigate this alone.

### **Case study 1:**

A young person is struggling with how to comply with the Covid-19 safety measures after experiencing a relationship breakdown with their parent who has asked them to leave the house and live elsewhere during lockdown. They are unable to live in their own tenancy due to poor living conditions. The young person is sofa-surfing and is experiencing associated anxiety which is intensified with not knowing who to seek support from during this crisis.

### **Case study 2:**

A Care Experienced young person who has recently moved into their own accommodation after a placement breakdown, just prior to isolation measures, reports of feeling alone, incredibly isolated in the new accommodation and unsure how to pay bills. Referrals for support from agencies are now paused due to the pandemic, leaving them isolated and with no direct help.

### **Case study 3:**

A young person who very recently left care is living temporarily with their parent while they await their own tenancy. This move has been delayed due to Covid-19 and they have been told it could take months now. During lockdown, their parent has chosen to live elsewhere and so the young person is alone. The house has limited household necessities, including flooring. The young person is incredibly isolated and although they have a supportive throughcare worker, they are limited with what they can do currently.

### **Case study 4:**

A young Care Experienced parent is struggling with their finances and the reduction in additional support from social work and carers. One of their children has an illness which requires round the clock care. Some of the supporting care equipment is broken and is costly to repair. The usual support of overnight carers has stopped, and the family are exhausted with the additional challenges Covid-19 presents. In addition to this, their energy provider has

suddenly increased their direct debit and they are struggling to find affordable food during the current crisis. They are doing everything they can to cope but are exhausted with the challenge.

## **Impact of Scottish Government Response**

Within emergency legislation, there is recognition that the social and health services available to individuals will be significantly impacted by workforce absences, sickness and reduced capacity to carry out essential support for the most vulnerable people in Scotland. This has resulted in several measures, for example the emergency registration of health workers, temporary registration of social workers and importantly, changes in the way patients are treated and detained under mental health legislation. The response from government has focused on relieving administrative or practical pressures of the social and health care workforce to ensure the ongoing delivery of the most essential services during the outbreak.

Local authorities in Scotland have not yet fully implemented the powers to change, or delay, key administrative processes and reviews of individual's needs in order to access or be supported by key health and social care services. However, the impact of these changes may be that assessments of the needs of vulnerable Care Experienced people cannot be prioritised during the outbreak, as the need for such services rises in a context where mental health issues linked to isolation and potential family and relationship breakdown due to pressures of lockdown measures, will continue to grow.

## **INFORMATION AND PARTICIPATION**

It is widely accepted that one of the best ways to protect the rights of children and young people is to help ensure they are fully informed about their rights and the world around them. During this pandemic, there is a huge expectation that individuals should access up to date advice and information daily.

Equally, many children and young people in care rely on the workforce and carers to explain the complicated nature of Covid-19 to them. It is imperative that the workforce and carers

are provided with clear and simple information to help them inform those children and young people that they support. The implications of not explaining the Covid-19 pandemic calmly and clearly can lead to fear, disregard for the guidance and poor mental health.

## **DIGITAL DIVIDE**

For many, maintaining connection via digital means is difficult or impossible. This method of connection has proven to be a huge issue for the Care Experienced people Who Cares? Scotland has engaged with. Any attempts to move society towards more digital means of engaging should actively address the digital divide that too many still experience.

### **Case study 1:**

A young person without a smartphone and no WIFI reported of the challenges in trying to remain connected to people and informed of ever-developing national advice. The impact of this lack of connection has caused their mental health to significantly deteriorate.

### **Case study 2:**

A kinship carer spoke about their lack of ICT equipment and the impact this would have on helping their grandchild keep up with education during the pandemic. Prior to solution, this issue caused the grandchild to feel fear and anxiety about getting into trouble with school.

### **Case study 3:**

Due to financial barriers, a kinship carer had been forced to choose between WIFI and electricity. Prioritising energy bills resulted in the challenge of having fewer educational and entertainment opportunities for the young people in their care.

## **PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES**

Increasingly organisations, including Who Cares? Scotland are moving their participation opportunities online. There is huge concern about how the digital divide experienced by many could exclude some from being able to remain connected to the people, groups and

discussions that they care about. This is particularly important where individuals have specific needs, disabilities or are subject to legal systems that determine their day to day care.

### **Case study 1:**

A kinship carer reports that they are struggling to help their nephew remain entertained and educated during this period. Their nephew has several disabilities and requires a significant amount of support due to this. Any digital participation opportunities or activities would need to be identified and consider these additional needs.

### **Case study 2:**

A Care Experienced young person has heard that Children's Hearings are to be reduced in number and will operate through digital methods. They are concerned that they will be unable to share their views and inform the decisions being made. They currently have no means of participating digitally as they do not have a laptop, tablet or a smartphone.

### **Case study 3:**

The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration have advised that while they set up digital participation methods for Children's Hearings, children and young people can only submit their views online. During this initial period, only the Reporter and panel members will be present in Hearings, significantly reducing the opportunity for young people to genuinely participate in the decisions being made about their lives.

## **Impact of Scottish Government Response**

Emergency legislation allows local authorities to delay essential processes in the child protection and care system, which supports vulnerable children and families. In particular, the Children's Hearing System will no longer be able to operate face-to-face and the frequency of Hearings will significantly reduce. Provisions to allow digital participation in Hearings by relevant persons, as well as existing rights for children and young people to digitally participate, will change the practical operation of Hearings throughout the outbreak. While these digitally accessible provisions are not in operation yet, children and young people will not have opportunity for live enquiry – to challenge and ask for clarity about potentially life-

changing decisions. Ultimately, not recognising this immediate issue may in the long term create a higher number of appeals for SCRA and CHS to respond to.

Other review processes, such as placement into secure care settings and reviews of emergency placements, are also amended to allow delays and flexibility for the social care workforce that are under pressure and reduced in capacity. However, there has been a lack of emphasis on maintaining the participation of Care Experienced people in the decision-making processes which affect their lives, even when changes to reviews and Hearings must happen, due to resourcing implications of the outbreak. In addition, a move to digital participation for key decision-making forums, such as Hearings, will only be possible if action is taken to reduce the digital divide and ensure Care Experienced people can access the technology they need to participate.<sup>3</sup>

## PROVISION OF CARE

Carers, providers and local authorities have been attempting to interpret the general government guidance and use this to help them make decisions about how to provide care and support to those currently still in care. Unfortunately, the complicated nature of providing state care to children and young people means that general guidance is making it hard for the care sector to understand how to safely care for those they look after, while also respecting their wider human rights.

## CONTACT WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The impact of limiting contact with friends and family or being forced to move children and young people across different placements, may be necessary for now, but with what we understand about stability and relationships, it could have significant detrimental impact later on for many who are currently in care. This is a challenge that the sector is grappling with, amidst huge staff shortages and limited specialist guidance.

---

<sup>3</sup> More information on our concerns about participation rights can be found in the [Children and Young People's Commissioners Office Coronavirus \(Scotland\) Bill MSP Briefing](#).



### Case study 1:

A young person who has been having weekly overnight stays with their parent has been told this has to stop due to the Covid-19 measures. Their residential workers understand the importance of this contact and have seen how it has been beneficial in rebuilding this very important relationship. They have developed creative means for this young person to maintain contact digitally but are worried about the impact of this on the developing relationship; especially because the parent is not used to using digital methods and could feel anxious about this.

### Case study 2:

A children's home makes the decision to allow contact and overnight stays with family members. They make this decision using government guidance about how two parents with shared custody manage contact with their children between two households. They are not sure if this is the right decision but given the importance of family contact and the absence of specific guidance to children's homes, they choose to go ahead.

### Case study 3:

A sibling group who are looked after at home but in shared custody between two parents have experienced challenge in moving between their two houses as is permitted by government guidance. Movement between households must happen by public transport however relying on this has made movement challenging due to reduced service, financial strain caused by the pandemic and a fear about exposing the children to Covid-19.

## MAINTAINING GROUP LIVING

Group living environments have experienced significant challenge over this period, with a lack of clarity around how to manage and maintain a caring and supportive household amidst guidance which restricts the liberty and freedom of both their workers and the young people in their care.

### **Case study 1:**

A small number of residential placements are reportedly closing and moving the children in their care across other placements. This is an undesirable and last resort decision as a result of Covid-19 rendering the workforce unwell, taking pre-cautionary isolation or providing emergency support elsewhere. The local authorities do not want to make this decision but are unable to provide another solution during this time.

### **Case study 2:**

At the start of Covid-19 social distancing measures, a children's home direct all young people to isolate in their individual rooms, even though no one is exhibiting symptoms. The lack of guidance to children's homes and the fact that the shift rota means workers are regularly changing, results in a blanket approach which has significant impact on the wellbeing of both young people and their workers.

### **Case study 3:**

A young person living in a children's home returned to their placement later than the curfew given by their workers. In response to their late arrival, their workers refused to let them inside and instead suggested they stay with their grandparent overnight.

## **Impact of Scottish Government Response**

Emergency legislation has introduced several measures to support the provision of care, for example foster care placements will be able to look after a greater number of children if needed and kinship care placements will be reviewed within 6 months, rather than 3 weeks. Alongside other relaxations of review and assessment time periods within the care system, there are further steps being taken to ensure that children and young people can be cared for during the outbreak.

There has also been general guidance issued for the care sector to follow, for example by Health Protection Scotland on the management of Covid-19 in residential settings. However, there is concern of a lack of tailored guidance for the workforce providing care for accommodated children and young people in Scotland's care system, especially for children's

homes and schools where there is a group living environment. The response to covid-19 has focused on care homes and health settings in a variety of areas, but there has been a gap in understanding for those working in the care system about how to cope with the pressures and impact of the outbreak, whilst still providing the support and care all looked after children and young people are entitled to from statutory services.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON POLICY AND PRACTICE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

During the Covid-19 outbreak, the Who Cares? Scotland Policy team has received a variety of queries about important issues impacting the lives of Care Experienced people. These questions have mostly come from Advocacy and Participation Workers supporting young people in care and from our First Responders running our national helpline for the Care Experienced community. We have also had requests for information and guidance from those within the care and health sector and from other third sector providers looking for clarity on a variety of practice issues.

This has resulted in a 'Frequently Asked Questions' resource being pulled together internally, to ensure we are able to provide updated and accurate information to those requesting advice and support. We are keen to ensure the responses we have created include any additional information or guidance that the Scottish Government would recommend we communicate.

Listed below are the F.A.Qs we have compiled so far:

Topic	Question	Response	Useful links/resources
<b>Financial Support</b>	A Care Experienced person is worried if their FE/HE bursary will still be getting paid – since all schools and colleges shut. Will these payments continue?	Guidance issued from the Scottish Funding Council shows that financial support should continue as normal.  Any payments that rely on attendance will still need to be evidenced e.g. if there are online learning	<a href="http://www.sfc.ac.uk/COVID-19/COVID-19.aspx">http://www.sfc.ac.uk/COVID-19/COVID-19.aspx</a>

Topic	Question	Response	Useful links/resources
		options, students will need to take part in this.	
<b>Contact</b>	My young person has had their contact arrangement cancelled or changed. This has been cancelled due to the virus and government advice that their placement/carers are following. This is distressing for the individual.	Although the UK government guidelines state that children under 18 can move between homes of parents who are separated - there is no clear guidance on what should happen for looked after children.	Scottish Government are due to publish guidance on managing covid-19 in residential care settings. We will provide an update when this is published. <a href="#">Useful guidance for families with children in care about indirect contact by Family Rights Group in England/Wales.</a> <a href="#">Information on family contact is available from the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory</a> <a href="#">Advice from CHIP Partnership on Contact for children in care.</a>
<b>Residential Care</b>	What advice is there for staff in children's units on how they should be supporting the young people in the context of the virus?	<a href="#">Most up-to-date advice is from Health Protection Scotland.</a> <a href="#">Most up-to-date advice from UK Government.</a>	Scottish Government are due to publish guidance on managing covid-19 in residential care settings. We will provide an update when this is published. The Care Inspectorate have also advised staff to approach their individual Care Inspection Inspector who will hopefully have knowledge of their settings. Most up to date guidance available at: <a href="https://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/coronavirus-professionals">https://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/coronavirus-professionals</a>

Topic	Question	Response	Useful links/resources
<b>Foster Care</b>	What advice is there for foster carers on how they should be supporting the young people in the context of the virus?	<a href="#">The Fostering Network have useful FAQs on their website.</a>	We are unsure if there is national guidance being created for foster or kinship carers at this time.
<b>Residential Care</b>	My young person has received a letter from staff in their residential unit, stating they should spend time in their rooms and avoid socialising with other children in the home.	<a href="#">Health Protection Guidance to residential staff makes it very clear that in group settings, isolation to individual rooms is only necessary if that individual is showing symptoms.</a>	Scottish Government are due to publish guidance on managing covid-19 in residential care settings. We will provide an update when this is published. The Care Inspectorate have also advised staff to approach their individual Care Inspection Inspector who will hopefully have knowledge of their settings. Most up to date guidance available at: <a href="https://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/coronavirus-professionals">https://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/coronavirus-professionals</a>
<b>Children's Hearings</b>	I have a young person with an upcoming Children's Hearing. They won't be able to physically attend the hearing; how do I support them to have their voice heard and still participate? Is there any developed guidance around a new way of working yet, to manage the lack of physical attendance at hearings?	At the moment there isn't a central point of contact for SCRA on this. APWs should use their local mailboxes to feed in views and copy in the Locality Reporter Manager. Reporter contact details are on the Hearing notifications as well as an email address, however, if you e-mail SCRA the specific area then they can provide the contact information if needed.	A dedicated webpage by SCRA is currently being created to hold all information on how to participate in children's hearings during the outbreak. The contact for SCRA if you need more info is: <a href="mailto:Marianne.McIntyre@scra.gov.uk">Marianne.McIntyre@scra.gov.uk</a> Click for the list of local mailboxes: <a href="https://www.scra.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Cp-contact-someone-local.pdf">https://www.scra.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Cp-contact-someone-local.pdf</a>

Topic	Question	Response	Useful links/resources
			<a href="#">Statement from CHIP partnership on plan for CHS going forward.</a>
<b>Health/US Children</b>	How should unaccompanied asylum-seeking children be treated if they have recently arrived from countries at high risk from the virus?	We are not sure how best to advise this and have signposted to the Scottish Refugee Council for clarity.	
<b>Financial Support</b>	A Care Experienced person is struggling to pay their utility bills, what can I offer in terms of support?	An energy update has been provided, with additional support in place for those who have top-up energy meters. Contact information for energy providers has been shared on WC?S social media.	<a href="https://twitter.com/whocaresscot/status/1243238581084327939?s=20">https://twitter.com/whocaresscot/status/1243238581084327939?s=20</a>
<b>Legal Advice</b>	A Care Experienced child or young person I support needs legal advice about a situation they are experiencing, where can I contact for support?	Clan Childlaw are still operating and providing free and confidential legal advice to any child or young person that needs it during the outbreak.	<a href="https://www.clanchildlaw.org/news/open-and-ready-to-help">https://www.clanchildlaw.org/news/open-and-ready-to-help</a>
<b>Justice Issues</b>	A Care Experienced child or young person I support is in conflict with the law, what does this mean for them whilst the	<a href="#">CYCJ have created a useful resource on how to support young people in conflict with the law at this time - as many justice and police processes will</a>	<a href="https://www.cycj.org.uk/news/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-young-people-in-conflict-with-the-law/">https://www.cycj.org.uk/news/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-young-people-in-conflict-with-the-law/</a>

Topic	Question	Response	Useful links/resources
	Covid-19 outbreak is ongoing?	<a href="#">be changing due to coronavirus.</a>	
<b>Impact of being out of school</b>	I'm worried about a child or young person who may be particularly vulnerable due to schools' closures and social isolation measure - who should I contact?	Education Scotland have created a resource for signposting teachers, parents, and children and young people about groups who may be more vulnerable during this time of school closures and social isolation.	<a href="#">ES Signposting to Supports and advice around potentially vulnerable groups</a>

## CONTACTS

Should you wish to discuss the contents of this report, please contact:

Carly Edgar, Policy Manager, [cedgar@whocaresscotland.org](mailto:cedgar@whocaresscotland.org)

Lucy Hughes, Policy Officer, [lhughes@whocaresscotland.org](mailto:lhughes@whocaresscotland.org)