

Who Cares? Scotland
Response to Covid-19
March 24th 2020



IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE CARE EXPERIENCED COMMUNITY

The measures introduced in the UK 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 that has been published](#) includes advice to the public to rely on family and wider support networks in order to stay healthy and safe.

We understand that many individuals will be without the support network they need to cope with the many impacts of social distancing, self-isolation and the unprecedented impact on many people's employment and financial stability.

Care Experienced people are particularly vulnerable during this public health crisis and are likely to be amongst those left isolated, anxious and destitute by the impact of this virus for a variety of reasons:

SUPPORT - Are less likely to have family and support networks if they need to self-isolate, or to talk to if they are worried about the impact of the virus on daily life

PARENTING - Those with children, but without family networks, may find themselves less able to manage due to school closures and childcare provision, as public services become stretched.

HEALTH - May be less equipped with information on where to seek specific clinical guidance if living with underlying health challenges, and/or if starting to show symptoms of the virus.

EMPLOYMENT/FINANCES - May be in precarious work with no financial safety net if their income stops, potentially affecting their ability to maintain safe and secure housing.

PUBLIC SERVICES - May be more reliant on state provision for a variety of reasons, which will become less able to function due to impact of the virus on the workforce.

LIVE EXAMPLES OF COVID-19 RESPONSES ON THE CARE EXPERIENCED COMMUNITY

We have already started to hear about the specific ways in which the response to Covid-19 is affecting the Care Experienced community:

- A young person was asked to leave their supported carer's house with a few days' notice, due to the fear that extra people in the carer's home would lead to additional exposure to the virus.
- The contact arrangements for a young person to see their parents were disrupted due to social distancing measures. They only get to see their family once a month.
- Whole children's homes have been forced to self-isolate in their rooms for 14 days, when a single young person shows symptoms.

It is important to recognise that people are responding in an environment of unprecedented challenge. However, the impact of Covid-19 is exposing the challenge of upholding human rights, while mitigating the effects of the virus. Therefore, we will be continuing to monitor impact of the outbreak on Care Experienced people's rights throughout the coming months.

WC?S ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE CARE EXPERIENCED COMMUNITY

WC?S has adapted its organisational offer in a bid to support the Care Experienced Community through this challenging time. This enhanced offer includes the following.

1. Continuing to provide advocacy to those who need it

The lives of Care Experienced people are profoundly structured and shaped by the state in ways not experienced by their peers, which means their rights are particularly at risk in a context where the provision of statutory services is at risk. Therefore, it is more important than ever to continue providing advocacy in order to uphold the rights of Care Experienced people during the Covid-19 outbreak. Our Independent Advocacy workers are still operating across Scotland, using phones and digital communications to ensure they can keep connecting with those receiving advocacy.

[To access our advocacy support, more information can be found here.](#)

2. Supporting Care Experienced people with information and advice

We have created an additional offer of support for Care Experienced people, as part of a new information service, as [advertised on our social media](#). Currently, on **Monday-Friday, from 10am-6pm, individuals with care experience can access support and advice by contacting a phone number or e-mail address**. This will allow us to listen to concerns and reduce levels of anxiousness and fear. If we don't have the knowledge or expertise, we will sign-post people to a trusted partner.

[Full information about the offer of support and advice via phone is available here.](#)

3. Continuing to create spaces for Care Experienced people to connect

We are already transitioning many of our groups that run across Scotland onto online spaces, with activities that can entertain, inform and educate the Care Experienced community at this time. This is vital in ensuring our participation work with members does not stop because of social distancing and we will continue to create safe spaces for Care Experienced people across Scotland to connect and support each other, to combat isolation and loneliness.

[To find out what is available in your local area, e-mail \[help@whocarescotland.org\]\(mailto:help@whocarescotland.org\)](#)

4. Providing Care Experienced people with practical support and resources

Some Care Experienced people will have support from statutory services, however, we know that many do not or cannot access this support - sometimes due to the legal definitions which govern eligibility. We want to offer Care Experienced people practical solutions to the immediate impacts they may be facing and examples of what we are currently helping to resource include:

- Mobile phone and data package top-ups.
- Food and essentials via an online shop, to be delivered directly.
- Support with amenities, such as gas and electricity, if there is a threat to them being cut-off.

*[We are continually raising funds in order to provide this support, **please support us and donate here.**](#)*

A letter to our members and to the Care Experienced community

Our CEO Duncan Dunlop, [has written a letter of support](#) to all those with care experience, who may feel alone or without support at this time. Please take time to read through this to understand the motivation which drives our organisation, and our passion to help in whatever way possible to support a particularly vulnerable part of Scotland's population at this difficult time.

Please contact Lucy Hughes, Policy Officer, if you have any questions about the contents of this briefing: lhughes@whocarescotland.org.