

JERSEY CARES

Love, Belonging and Opportunity

Jersey Cares offers the best opportunity we have to support Jersey to meet its commitments to children and young people who are unable to live with their own families or need social work support to do so. Together, we can create an environment of love, belonging and opportunity for children and young people in care, which endures into adulthood.

Typically, children enter the 'care system' because of abuse or neglect at home. Their experience of care can involve multiple moves, stigma and low expectations, as well as past and present family trauma. This childhood is very often followed by an expectation that the child will live 'independently' from the age of 18, or sooner. Children in care experience this situation in many countries, including the UK.

The opportunity for the child to heal from trauma, and thrive can be missed. Children move from a difficult family home, into a 'system' within which they seek and many times fail to find belonging. They are progressed to 'independence' at a young age, often with no family to fall back on, or return to, when times are tough.

Across the world, notably in Scotland and New Zealand, people are realising that the solution to this often damaging experience lies in listening to people who are, and were in care, and acting informed by what you have heard. This turns an intractable problem of service delivery into a community mission of enabling love, belonging and opportunity for those who need it most.

The Independent Jersey Care Inquiry found that:

'there was a failure to value children in the care system, listen to them, ensure they are nurtured and give adequate opportunities to flourish'.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

The Independent Jersey Care Inquiry was set up to establish what went wrong in the Island's care system over many years and to find answers for people who suffered abuse as children. The Care Inquiry Panel spoke to over 450 people with experience of State care or connections to it.

The Inquiry found that the Government of Jersey had been a 'neglectful and indifferent corporate parent.' It found that children in care, and people who cared for them had been unable to speak out and be heard. It stated that there should be 'action without delay.' Yet one year later, in September 2018, Ofsted found that vulnerable children still have not been a priority for the Government of Jersey. They stated that the rights and entitlements of children in care and, most importantly, the responsibilities of the Government of Jersey as the corporate parent of these children, are not as clear as they need to be.

LISTEN LOUDER REPORT

In May 2018, the Government of Jersey commissioned a report, later named Listen Louder to inform:

How people with experience of care in Jersey could be heard;

The structures that would need to be in place for the Government to be held to account for taking action;

What sort of organisation/collaboration would facilitate this and establish it in local culture.

[Read the full report here](#)



Listen Louder, informed by the testimony of people with lived experience of care, set out the stark consequences of not being heard, including:

- Being moved from care to homeless accommodation
- Being unable to look for their birth family
- Being denied the promised opportunity to appeal their child's adoption
- Becoming homeless and without a guardian at 16 after the death of a parent when the young person wanted 'a home, a place where I was wanted'.

Situations like the one described below by a young man who was in care, are likely to persist without the provision of a model of advocacy, which would have allowed him to consider what he wanted to happen, enabled him to speak out and held those responsible for his care accountable to listen and act:

'At 17 they moved me out into guest houses. I didn't know how to pay rent or other things like that. They said I should have prepared myself. At the time, I agreed but now I look back and think how young I was. (...) I lived in a homeless hostel for a long time. They call you a 'client'. It makes you feel worthless, like an animal.'

WHY JERSEY CARES?

The sole focus of Jersey Cares is enabling people with care-experience to be heard and action to be taken. Our priorities, and our work to enable love, belonging and opportunity will be driven by the individual and collective experiences and views of people with experience of care.

Jersey Cares is a collaboration between local charities, people with experience of care, civil servants, politicians and individuals passionate about enabling children in care to be heard. The Children's Commissioner and the Director General for Children, Young People, Education and Skills are actively supportive. Several charities and community organisations support Jersey Cares, including Barnardo's, Shelter Trust, St Helier Methodist Centre, Caritas, Brightly and the Foster Carers Association.

The local community have offered support to Jersey Cares in a variety of ways. These include event space at cost from local restaurant Pizza Projekt; office space from the Salvation Army; free legal advice from Corbett Le Quesne's Family Law; training in mentoring skills from the States of Jersey's Skills Jersey service and support to ensure we are sensitive in our approach from the Emotional Wellbeing Team.



Some of the particular strengths that Jersey Cares brings to this work include:

1. PROVIDING A WIDE, LOCAL COMMUNITY WHICH CAN HOLD THE GOVERNMENT OF JERSEY ACCOUNTABLE TO LISTEN, AND CRUCIALLY, TO ACT IN A WAY WHICH PROVIDES CHILDREN IN CARE WITH A HAPPY, AND HEALING, CHILDHOOD

2. Allowing for the community to learn about the lived reality of care and to take steps to show we care.

Children in care are Jersey's children and, through Jersey Cares, there is an opportunity for the community to show them they are loved and belong.

3. Being driven by individual and collective lived experiences of care. This provides the expertise on what needs to happen so that children in care are loved, belong and are given opportunities to reach their potential

4 A growing UK-wide community of organisations and individuals working to transform care, these include :

Child-Friendly Leeds; Centre of Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland; Who Cares? Scotland; Voice of Young People in Care Northern Ireland; Dr Mike Stein of York University; and the Scottish Independent Care Review.

THE LISTEN LOUDER REPORT FOUND THAT 'BEING LISTENED TO' IN ISOLATION WAS NOT ENOUGH

Listening needs to lead to action to be taken, to having loving relationships, and a sense of belonging. One young person observed 'I know I don't have family, but I don't want to be treated like I don't.' Jersey has not prioritised love, belonging and opportunity for children in care. A consequence of this is that:

'The overwhelming majority of the adults who have been in the care system, and whose stories the Inquiry heard [in the 100s], still suffer from the effects of abusive or emotionally neglectful childhoods in the care system, their difficulties compounded by being turned out, unsupported, into a world with which they were singularly ill equipped to cope.' (IJCI 12: ix)

A Jersey approach to listening to children in care will need to address local barriers. These include a fear amongst professionals of speaking up. They may fear losing their job, being pushed out or their reputation being damaged. They speak about an environment where 'if you put your head above the parapet, it will get chopped off.' The Care Inquiry referenced the 'fear factor and lack of trust' (IJCI 13:18-19). The States of Jersey Employment Board Review of Bullying Cases (2018) found a 'culture of discouragement of complaints in many quarters and a consequential fear factor.'

Against this backdrop, the diverse local network Jersey Cares offers is crucial for the sustainability, success and self-possession of this work.

UK-WIDE BEST PRACTICE

Across the UK, independent advocacy and the ability to influence public awareness, services and policy (called 'participation') is recognised as key to transformational change.

All the nations of the UK offer advocacy and participation, as reflected in the 5 Nations, 1 Voice group, which Jersey Cares has been invited to join. In England, the right to advocacy is enshrined in legislation. In Scotland, the advocacy and campaigning charity Who Cares? Scotland recently won the Rathbone UK Charity of the Year award for their influencing work. The presence of a strong advocacy and participation organisation in Scotland has led to legislative change such as increasing the age of staying in care to 26. It has also led to a root and branch review of care with people with care-experience at its heart. Nicola Sturgeon stated:

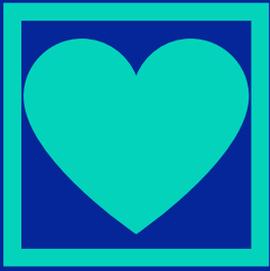
'there is no more sacred duty than that which we owe to the children in our care' and 'the lived expertise of those with experience of care will ensure a focus on what matters.'

Leeds City Council cite:

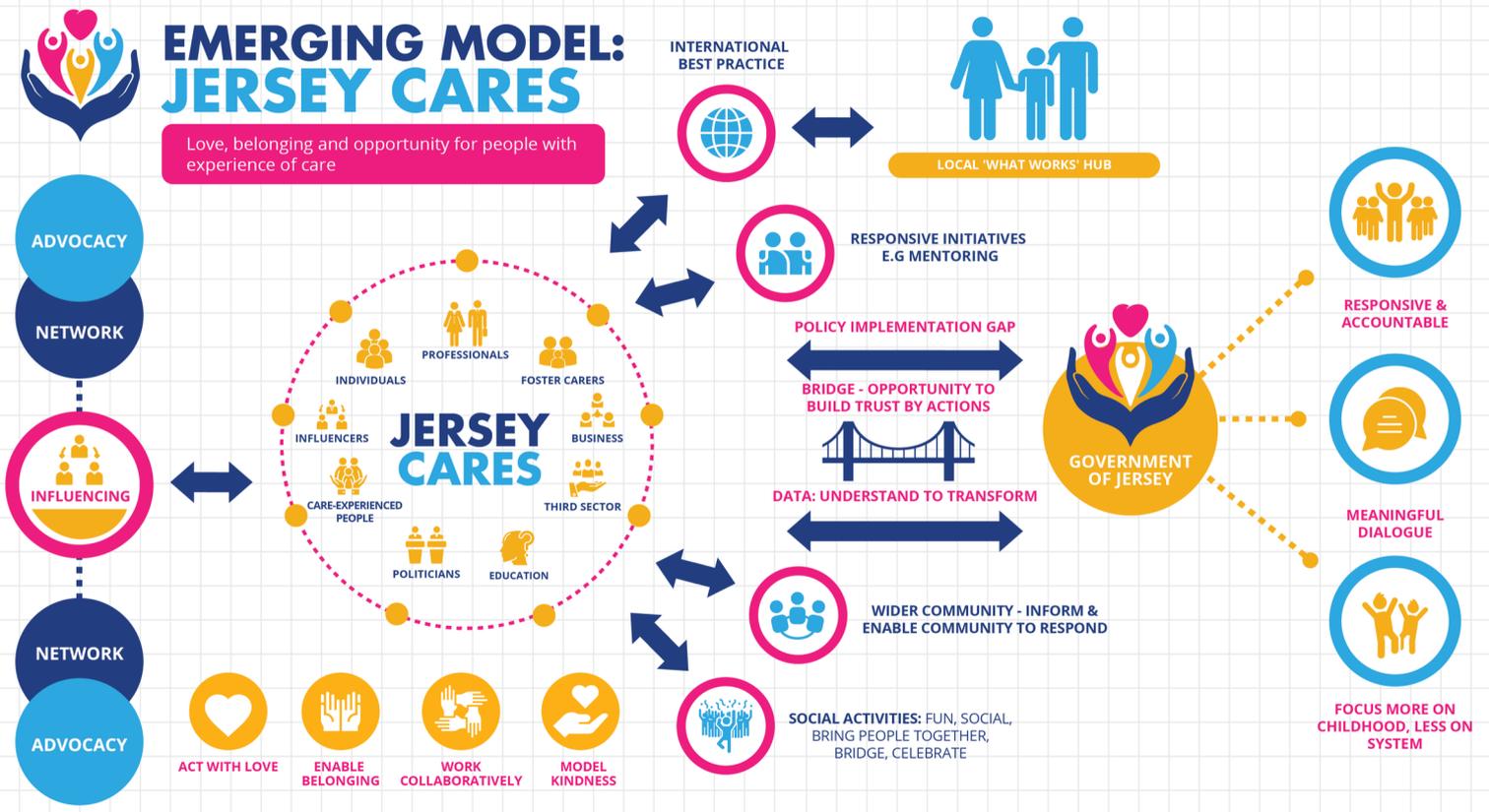
'listening to and involving children as one of the key pillars of their 'remarkable and impressive' service improvement' (OFSTED, 2012).

All of these advocacy organisations also offer a sense of community and belonging for people with experience of care. This looks different in each nation but may involve birthday cards, Christmas day celebrations, mentoring and 'Time to Shine' parties.

In Jersey, an independent advocacy service for children and young people in care and child protection was a key recommendation of the 2008 inquiry into child protection by Andrew Williamson, the Williamson Implementation Plan (2011), as well as the 2013 Children's Services Inspection Report by the Care Inspectorate and the 2017 Independent Jersey Care Inquiry. Two respected children's charities, NSPCC and Barnardo's, have offered advocacy and participation during this period.



WHAT WE WILL DO



IN OUR FIRST 18 MONTHS WE WILL:

> Provide **one-to-one relational advocacy** for children and young people in care. This will enable the Government to know and act on their wishes. Jersey Cares, working with others, will hold them to account for doing so. Advocacy will further enable young people to become **aware of their rights**; the **opportunities** they can access; and to be **connected** to people and organisations who will enable their rights to be realised and create opportunities;

> **Improve care by listening** to what children and young people tell us about their own experience of the care system. **Enable the wider community to show expressions of love and care** towards those in care or with experience of care. The data gathered with, and about, people with experience of care, will inform what this looks like. For example, if young parents tell us they have no extended family to support them, Jersey Cares could facilitate collaboration between a delivery organisation, a philanthropist and the wider community to offer an 'Adopt A Granny' scheme.

WHAT WE HAVE ALREADY DONE

Jersey Cares has **brought together** a network of local people: politicians, civil servants, and people with lived experience of care, businesses and charities. **We share a vision** of people with experience of care consistently knowing love, belonging and opportunity. We have **worked collaboratively** to develop Jersey Cares into a delivery organisation.

One member of the alliance hosted the Jersey Cares development roles. Another provides all the HR function, another hosted our meetings, yet another offers 'pastoral support'.

We have **facilitated a number of visits** to mainland UK for people in Jersey with lived experience of care. This has enabled us **to link** with people with lived experience of care, and organisations who are **driving transformational change** of care, **with love at its heart**.



We have heard from people with experience of care, professionals both locally and in the UK around what is needed for people with experience of care to really be heard and loved, in Jersey. **Our findings** are collated in the Listen Louder report, and the direction of Jersey Cares responds to its recommendations.

We **held an event** for people who participated in this report to meet with the Children's Minister, the Head of Children's Services and the Children's Commissioner for Jersey to identify next steps.

We have **coordinated 'restorative meetings'** between the Head of Children's Services and people with lived experience of care, who have been failed. This has led to commitment to seek out one person's birth family, and to provide university funding for other young people. This **relational approach** and quick action has been welcomed by people with care experience. It has also **spurred on people's hope for better** and desire to make this happen – both for themselves and those in care now.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

- By listening to and acting upon the voices of care-experienced people their **lives can be transformed**;
- Nations such as Scotland (including islands such as Shetland!) and New Zealand are demonstrating that **a focus on lived experience can transform debate about a 'care system' to discussion about a 'childhood and a lifetime'**. This offers the **insights** which can **transform the care** of our most vulnerable children;
- The Government of Jersey can also begin to **turn around its culture** and respond more appropriately to prevent problems in the future and provide some restoration for past failings.

Jersey Cares provides the **insights and information** needed to transform the care of Jersey's most vulnerable children into a **world-leading model, with love at its core**;

- Jersey Cares demonstrates that **a collaboration** between people with lived experience, charities, the public sector and the people of Jersey can make a **sustained positive difference**.

CONCLUSION

All eyes are on the care system in Jersey. The island's response to the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry will define who we are and what kind of society we want.

Jersey Cares can foster a positive culture for people with experience of care to be heard and action to be taken. Along with this, Jersey Cares can drive the understanding and compassion necessary for the community of Jersey to demonstrate that people with experience of care are loved and belong.

WE HAVE A ONCE-IN A-LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE A MOVEMENT TO ENSURE THAT PEOPLE WITH EXPERIENCE OF CARE CAN KNOW

**LOVE,
BELONGING
AND
OPPORTUNITY.**