

has special responsibility for looked after children. This report recommended that they may benefit from training in the rights and confidentiality issues for looked after children.

People who care for children should encourage them to have ambitions and believe they can achieve them. They can do this by making plans together, helping with homework and providing extra support and equipment. Many young Scots now go to college and/or university. Adults who care for looked after young people should know how to help with admission, a place to stay, and funding.

Chapter 7: Respected and responsible children

This chapter looks at how children and their carers can be involved in decisions that affect them and how they can be part of their community. Finding ways to involve children in meetings and discussions about their future is important. Adults must be prepared to give time and, especially with young children, encourage communication through drawing, toys and play. Adults also have to be alert to the pressures upon children and young people, which may make it difficult for them to express their true feelings. There can be many pressures, such as fear of what might happen, loyalty to parents, guilt and feeling by the child that they are to blame.

This chapter ends by summarising a study of children who live with their relatives, i.e. aunts and uncles, grandparents. This is called kinship care. It suggests ways that local authorities can support relatives to care for children.

Chapter 8: Including children

This final chapter talks about the services children and their carers should receive. Staff training is discussed with an account of what is being done to make sure staff and foster carers are properly trained. The ways in which social workers can help families to look after their children at home are explained. There are suggestions for ways to support parents with problems to care for their children.

Looked after children have the right to take part in planning their own futures. In addition young people have much to offer to organisations who are planning services. This chapter suggests that local authorities should do more to involve young people in policy and planning.



Conclusion

This report ends by stating that the most important way to get the best care for looked after children is for local authorities to make sure they are a top priority. Looked after children need to belong and feel confident everyone is working with them and for them to achieve their best possible care.

Four young people, Katie, Darren, Stacey and Kelly (who between them have over 20 years' experience of different care settings) contributed their ideas about how this summary leaflet of *Extraordinary lives* should be written. They wanted young people to get the main points and then be able to decide if they wanted to read all or part of the full report. Kelly then put their ideas together and drafted this summary.



If you would like a copy of the full report to be sent to you, please contact the Social Work Inspection Agency on (0131) 244 5340. You can also download it from our website www.swia.gov.uk.

SUMMARY LEAFLET



extraordinary lives
Creating a positive future for looked after children
and young people in Scotland

Introduction

This is a summary of a report written about children who are looked after by local authorities (many people still call them children in care). The report is about how everyone who is responsible for children, who for lots of different reasons cannot live at home, can get it right for them. The report has eight chapters and this summary tells you briefly what is in each one.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the report

This explains how the report was written. Its authors talked to young people who had been looked after away from home, foster carers and staff.

Chapter 2: Looked after children in Scotland today

This chapter sets out the facts and figures about children who cannot live at home. They are of different ages, live in different parts of Scotland, go to day or residential schools and have different religions. Many children are in care for a short time and return to their families. Others stay for longer. Two-thirds of children live with foster carers. Residential care is provided by different organisations for children who do not want to be fostered or if a foster home is not the right place for them.



Chapter 3: Safe children

The Government wants all adults to have a role in keeping children safe. Adults who care for children should be chosen carefully. Children and young people can play an active part in recruiting staff who will work with them. This chapter also sets out the views of young people who feel they are treated differently from others when they want to stay overnight with friends.

Disabled children have the same needs as other children but they may want extra help from adults to keep them safe. If they do not use speech, then adults need to make sure they can understand how they communicate. Many children feel unsafe from their own age group and this chapter states that extra help is needed to prevent bullying.



Young people who leave care can be helped to feel safe if they have adults they can turn to. If they have had the chance to take part in adventure which they enjoy, this can help their confidence.

Chapter 4: Nurturing our children

This chapter looks at what is needed to make sure children are cared for and have positive and rewarding experiences as they are growing up. Children who have been moved from their families often feel hurt and lost. Many children go to live with strangers. Sometimes they are moved several times without any choice. The young people who contributed to this report explained how important it was that adults who cared for them gave them a feeling that they belonged. They also wanted adults who care for them to make careful plans so they could keep in contact with their brothers and sisters and families, not have to change school too often, keep up with their friends and feel secure.

Chapter 5: Healthy, active children

Many people who live in Scotland do not have good health, especially if they are poor. The Government is trying to improve children's health by making sure they can have regular check-ups. Children who do not live at home sometimes have more health problems, including feeling depressed. The report states that



staff who care for children should work together with health professionals to provide proper care and help for them. Young people who self-harm are often misunderstood. A report called *Truth Hurts* found that health and education staff needed training to understand and help them.

The chapter ends by pointing out the importance of looked after children being healthy and active. Active can mean different things for different children, for toddlers attending playgroup, or for older children belonging to a sports club. Special attention and planning may be required to make sure that disabled children have the same chances to take part in out-of-school activities of their choosing.

Chapter 6: Achieving children

This chapter is about how children can get the best out of school. There have been many previous reports about education for children in care and this chapter picks out the most important points from them. One called *Learning with Care* identified four key areas where children can have difficulties in education – getting through the school gates, settling in at school, being ready to learn and being able to achieve. As a result of this report all schools now have a teacher who

