



## Who Cares? and IRISS Research Project Young People and Adults Learning Together

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In October 2010 Who Cares? Scotland, in partnership with IRISS (The Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services) gave young people from South Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire the opportunity to take the lead on a new research project designed to find out what children and young people in care and the professionals who look after them think about the advocacy services that we provide.

We asked young people if they would like the chance to share their views and experiences of being looked after away from home to make a difference to the lives of children and young people in care while gaining new skills and experiences as researchers.

Our partners IRISS help people who work in social services to use “evidence” to improve their services for the people who use them. IRISS are experts in research and they provided the help, support and training which allowed the young people involved to learn the new skills they would need to become researchers.

At the heart of the project was the principle that the young people would be supported to design, develop and carry out the research. This meant that over the next 6-7 months they learned about;

- What advocacy is
- How to plan a project
- Different ways to do research
- How to analyse research results
- Skills in presenting research findings

The young people made a commitment to attend weekly training sessions at our National Office in Glasgow. During these sessions using a number of different creative workshops the young people began to learn about the practical tools and methods they would need to carry out their research. Group discussion and debate allowed the young people to share their

insights and experiences with each other and to develop the questions they should ask and how they would ask them.

They decided that they wanted to use a number of different methods to seek young peoples' and professionals' views. These included developing one-to-one interviews to be carried out with young people – designing and holding a focus group with young people – designing and producing paper questionnaires to be completed by residential care staff – and designing an on-line “survey monkey” to be completed by professionals from a number of different services like Health, Police, Social Work, The Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People etc

All of this hard work led to the young people visiting children and young people in their houses to interview them, running a focus group with young people in Renfrewshire, and collecting and analysing all the responses received from residential care staff and other service professionals. From this information they have developed a presentation of their findings which they will deliver to Who Cares? Scotland management and regional teams. The young people's research findings and a report produced by IRISS on the outcomes of their research will help Who Cares? Scotland develop and design their services into the future having listened to what children and young people say is important to them.

### **What the young people say they have learned;**

The young people acknowledged the importance of all the practical skills and methods needed to carry out research; - questionnaires, survey monkey, interviewing and facilitating skills. They discussed how through their training they had learned the need to be aware of their own views as researchers and how they could impact on how they “listened to” and reacted to the responses of others.

Importantly though when asked what they had learned they also talked about;

- Having greater self-confidence and feeling valued and listened to.
- How to work as a team
- How to problem solve
- Positive group skills
- To work through challenges within the group
- How to debate with each other
- How to make compromises
- How to stay calm when under pressure

All agreed that the work had been worthwhile, that they had felt included and that the skills they had learned together as a group had helped them become better listeners and more understanding of others and their views.

Finally what was most important to the young researchers was that it was young people who carried out the research with children and young people and that the adults supporting the group had also had the opportunity to learn from their unique experiences of having been in care. Adults and young people learning together!

A great big thanks to all the young people who took part in the project;

Barry –Chelsie - David - Dionne –Jimmy - Kirsty – Kourtney – Laura – Sharon  
Not forgetting Kenzie and Jayden

Many thanks to Emma and her colleagues from IRISS for their hard work and commitment to the young people throughout,

And many thanks to Jen and Amanda for supporting the young people with travel and taking part.

Best wishes from us all to Amy

Advert originally used to recruit young researchers

**Want a chance to share your views and make a difference to the lives of children and young people in care? Keen to gain new skills and experience as a researcher?**

Who Cares? Scotland is looking for 6 young people to lead on a new research project. This is your chance to be part of a national organisation which listens to and works with children and young people who are, or have been, looked after away from home. What we want to do is find out the views of children and young people in care about how well Who Cares? Scotland are doing at providing our advocacy service.

We will be working on this project with IRISS (The Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services). IRISS help people who work in social services to use 'evidence' to improve their services for the people who use them. IRISS are experts in research and will help and support you to carry out this project and make sure that you gain the skills you need to get the most out of it.

Working as a team, you and the other 5 young people will decide on the best way to do the research and will plan how to carry it out. You will take the lead in doing the research, which may involve visits to residential units. Together, you will then make sense of what you have found and work out how to present your 'research findings'. This is the just the sort of 'evidence' IRISS is interested in and it's exactly what Who Cares? Scotland wants to know to help us improve the service for children and young people. We make sure your findings are listened to and taken seriously by the people who need to know both in and outside Who Cares? Scotland.

**You don't need any qualifications or experience to apply for this project, as you will get support and training throughout the project. Training will include:**

- What advocacy is
- How to plan a project
- Different ways to do research
- How to analyse research results
- Skills in presenting research findings.

**You can apply as long as you:**

- Are aged between 16 to 25 years
- Live in Renfrewshire or South Lanarkshire, or are a member of Who Cares? Scotland's board of directors
- Know a bit about what Who Cares? Scotland does and/or have met your local Who Cares? Worker
- Feel strongly that children and young people should have a say
- Want to make services the best that they can be for children and young people in care

- Are interested in gaining new skills and experience that will boost your CV
- Can spare about 6 hours a week (preferably on Wednesdays or at weekends) from November until March 2011.