

CHAPTER 5

FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND ALTERNATIVE CARE

STATE OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS
IN SCOTLAND 2019



WHAT IS THIS CHAPTER ABOUT?

This chapter is about children's right to a safe and caring family environment. It looks at how governments should support parents and carers to look after children. It also looks at the rights of children who can't live at home with their parents, or need extra support to live with their parents, and the difficulties they can face. These children are often called 'care experienced' children.

WHAT HAS SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT DONE?

Scottish Government supported the Independent Care Review. This was a 3-year-long study of the care system which looked at what needs to change to make it better for children. More than 2500 people with experience of the care system took part in the review – most of them were children and young people.

WHAT DID THE COMMITTEE SAY?

The Committee said that families play an important role in children's lives and families should be supported to look after their children. It said that children shouldn't be separated from their family unless this is best for them, and that children who can't live with their parents should be cared for by others and get extra help.

Children who can't live with their families are sometimes looked after by other adults, such as foster carers. The Committee said that children should be able to build long-lasting caring relationships with their carers, rather than being moved around a lot. Children should be supported to stay in touch with their birth family where this is safe and possible. Children should also be included when decisions are made about their care, and they should get extra support when leaving care.



WHAT DO CHILDREN THINK?

Care experienced children say they face challenges in having their rights respected. They can feel like their voice hasn't been listened to when decisions have been made. Others have talked about the need for stable care placements and the importance of contact with their siblings.

"I feel that I was never listened to. At times, it was like my opinion was never heard by the social work or the children's panel when I tried to express my feeling about moving back in with my mum. They always made decisions regardless of how I felt about it."

"When you're brought into care, all your family has been ripped away. Your relationship with your siblings is your last shred of stability."

"Children and young people should not be moved around as much. I had several accommodations and found it hard to settle."

WHAT DOES TOGETHER THINK?

Government should make sure that enough support is given to families to help them stay together where this is safe. Where children can't live at with their families, children need to be supported so that they can access their rights all of the time. Changes to the care system should be shaped by children's views.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, has welcomed the results of the Independent Care Review. She said that Scottish Government would keep listening to and working with care experienced people as they make changes to the system. She said that Scottish Government would make these changes as quickly and safely as possible.



WHAT ELSE IS TALKED ABOUT IN THIS CHAPTER?

- Nursery care for young children
- Supporting children who care for their family members
- Supporting children with a parent in prison

If you want to see the full chapter, you can find this [here](#).