

A photograph of two children, a young girl and a young boy, running happily on a grassy field. The girl is on the left, wearing a light blue tank top and denim shorts. The boy is on the right, wearing a white polo shirt and blue jeans. They are both smiling and looking towards the camera. In the background, there is a colorful playground structure with yellow and blue elements.

The
who
CARES?
Trust

Annual Review **2009/10**

Helping children in care to thrive

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Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| A message from our Chief Executive | 2 |
| Delivering innovative projects: | |
| • Building Futures | 4 |
| • Choice Matters | 5 |
| • Who Cares? about education | 6 |
| Influencing policy: | |
| • Connecting young people in care with parliamentarians | 7 |
| • Leading debate | 8 |
| • Informing the sector | 8 |
| Providing advice, information and support: | |
| • Our magazines | 9 |
| • Spreading the word through e-communications | 10 |
| • Engaging through social media | 10 |
| Financial summary | 11 |

A message from our Chief Executive

The past year has been an exceptionally busy time for The Who Cares? Trust, and I'm really proud of what we've achieved.

Our ultimate goal is to do ourselves out of a job – and that means helping to create a care system where every child receives the love, support, encouragement and opportunities they need to enjoy their life and to achieve. We are unwavering in our belief that every child in care can thrive and become the person they were meant to be. Everything that we do aims to make this goal a reality, and this year has brought us another step closer.

One of our central aims is to help young people to build confidence, resilience and to aspire for themselves. Through their direct involvement in our magazines, our website (which underwent an amazing transformation this year!) and our campaigning work, we allow them to tell their life stories and share their experiences. This helps other young people in care to gain strength from knowing they are not alone and that there are others out there who understand. They tell us that it can feel empowering and cathartic just to bear testimony to the things you have experienced, survived and overcome.

Our Building Futures project enabled us to work directly with care leavers across a number of local authorities, supporting them in work experience placements with local businesses. We partnered with Business in the Community on this project, and we anticipate more partnership working in the future in order to use resources to best effect.



Your support is helping us to shape a care system where every child receives the love, support, encouragement and opportunities they need to enjoy their life and to achieve.

Natasha Finlayson

In addition to supporting young people themselves, another very important part of what we do is helping foster carers, social workers and other professionals such as teachers and nurses who are an important part of these children's lives. We enable the people who work with children in care to be inspired by examples of best practice and supported with practical tools and advice. This year we produced a DVD to be used as a training tool for foster carers, and started work on guides for foster carers and social workers about the role they should play in raising the educational attainment of the children in their care.

We also continued to work closely with government to relay the perspectives of children in care, so that their needs can be better met through policy and legislation. In our role as organisers of an all-party parliamentary group representing the interests of children in care, we brought together young people, MPs and peers to discuss improvements needed in the care system.

We've had a good year, but there is still a lot to do. There is a recognition among politicians, professionals, carers and of course young people themselves that many things remain very wrong with the care system. We are determined to make care a good place to grow up, but our work is only possible through the generosity of our supporters – donors, tireless fundraisers, grant-making trusts and businesses.

Your support is helping us to shape a care system where every child receives the love, support, encouragement and opportunities they need to enjoy their life and to achieve.



Natasha Finlayson
Chief Executive

Delivering innovative projects

Building Futures supporting care leavers

Securing training or employment is an important step in any young person's transition to independence. It not only provides financial security, but also increases their self-confidence and sense of self-worth.

This year saw the conclusion of Building Futures, a two-year pilot project which created work experience placements for care leavers.

In partnership with Business in the Community, we worked alongside four local authorities to arrange and support work experience placements for care leavers. The participants took part in an intensive three-day course to build confidence and prepare for the workplace before embarking on a fortnight's placement.

For a number of care leavers, Building Futures had significant and tangible outcomes; the project gave them a new-found sense of confidence, and helped some of them to secure long-term employment.

The project also clearly demonstrated that strong partnerships between employers and local authorities can enable young people from the care system to start to fulfil their potential, become active citizens and make successful transitions into the world of work. Our project report and online information for leaving care workers ensured that these messages were shared with professionals in the sector.



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"I would definitely say that doing the work experience changed my life. It gave me more confidence and made me think more of myself. It made me get up and have a routine. I enjoyed it all."

(Sian, care leaver)

Delivering innovative projects

Choice Matters

supporting foster carers

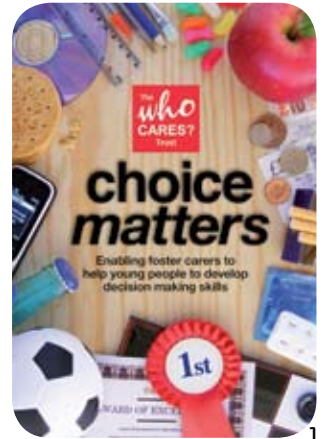
Foster carers play a crucial role in the lives of many children in care. It's not an easy job, and so it's essential that they are equipped with the support, tools and resources that they need to do the best for the children in their care.

This year we completed Choice Matters, a year-long project which explored and addressed some of the common challenges that foster carers experience.

Through facilitating discussion groups of carers and young people, we found that many foster carers struggle to discuss sensitive issues such as sex, drugs and body image with the children they look after, and support them in making good decisions.

In close collaboration with foster carers and young people, we developed and disseminated a DVD-Rom which offers new ways for foster carers to introduce young people to topics that they might otherwise find difficult to discuss, and helps young people to decide what the best choice is for them.

More than 1,000 foster carers have been sent the DVD-Rom, and we've received a huge amount of positive feedback about the difference it has made to their relationship with the young people in their care.



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"I asked the girls to point out which statement they felt most applied to them. This proved very interesting. I am sure it was easier for them to point these out rather than vocalising their feelings and difficulties without any guidelines. My 13-year-old identified that she was 'feeling angry all the time' and we were able to talk about why."

Foster carer

1: Choice Matters front cover

Delivering innovative projects

Who Cares? about education driving up educational attainment

Despite a raft of well-intentioned policies and initiatives, statistics consistently show that the educational attainment of children in care is lower than that of their peers. This is hardly surprising; school can be difficult enough without having to worry about the added stress and frequent upheavals that so often come with being in care.

There's a lot of support in place – designated teachers, for example - to help make school a better experience for children in care, but we constantly hear from young people that they don't know or understand what they are entitled to. Another constant theme is that children in care often lack the ongoing, unconditional encouragement and back-up that a good parent provides to help their child succeed in education.

That's why we felt it important that our new handbook *Who Cares? about education* had an, upbeat, irreverent but aspirational tone, as well as practical content for young people about how to get the most out of school and college and why it matters.

The publication has now reached over 3,000 children in care. Following the success of this project we will be producing education guides for foster carers and social workers in 2010, so they can do their best to support the education of children in their care.



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“School. Like it or loathe it, there’s no getting away from it. So, the savvy thing to do is to make sure you’ve got the survival skills to get through school life without losing your mind, your friends, your temper or your lunch money. If Ray Mears was lost in the urban jungle, this would be his guidebook. Less bush tucker, more Mars Bars. Not so much choosing a good campsite as choosing the right GCSEs. OK? You get the idea.”

(excerpt from *Who Cares? about education*)

1: Who Cares? about Education front cover

Influencing policy

Connecting young people in care with parliamentarians

We helped to set up the Associate Parliamentary Group for Looked-after Children and Care Leavers in 1998, and have provided a secretariat service for the group ever since.

The group ensures that the voices of care-experienced young people get heard by those with the power to bring about change.

Meetings this year included:

- Moira Gibb CBE, Chair of the Social Work Task Force, led a discussion on what needs to be done to improve social work and attract more people into the profession.
- David Holmes, Chief Executive of the British Association for Adoption and Fostering, talked about private fostering and the risk it can pose for young people.
- The National Care Advisory Service gave an update on their project From Care 2 Work, a programme to help care leavers into employment.
- The group discussed the government's consultation on what constitutes 'suitable accommodation' for care leavers, and put together a response for the Minister with responsibility for children in care.

The group celebrated its achievements over the year with a Christmas reception, very kindly hosted by the Speaker in his state apartments in December 2009. The guests included more than 70 young people in and from care.



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"I think the parliamentary group is a great opportunity and an important arena for people to be heard. I loved seeing so many young people in there and how some were wearing suits and taking pictures outside as well. Look forward to the next one!"

APG attendee

1: Young person at the House of Commons
2: Young person with The Speaker, John Bercow MP

Influencing policy

Leading debate

We continued this year to play an active role in a wide range of policy groups that seek to improve life outcomes for children in care, including:

- The Alliance for Child Centred Care, which promotes the embedding of child-centred care into the policy and practice of statutory, public and private bodies who either provide care services or are responsible for the development and implementation of policy.
- The Kinship Care Alliance, which works to enable more children who are in the care system to live safely and securely with their wider family to assist children who are currently being raised by impoverished relatives.
- Aim Higher Kent & Medway National Reference group.
- Ofsted Social Care National Consultative Forum.
- Social Work Reform Board Wider Reference Group.
- Forum on Teenage Pregnancy.



Informing the sector

Our senior team have been involved in a wide range of conferences and events during the year in order to share our knowledge about the issues faced by young people in care.

May: Chief Executive Natasha Finlayson chaired 'Supporting the Transition to Independence', a conference which gave professionals working with care leavers the chance to learn from each other's experiences.

September: Natasha spoke about the importance of placement stability at a national care conference.

October: Natasha chaired a national conference about kinship care.

November: Natasha chaired a national conference about improving the life chances of looked-after children.

January: Programmes Director Andrea Warman spoke at a national conference about the importance of training carers to support looked-after children's education and learning.

1: Natasha speaking at a The Who Cares? Trust reception

2: Former Children's Minister Baroness Delyth Morgan and television presenter David Akinsanya at a debate hosted by The Who Cares? Trust

Providing advice, information and support

Our magazines

This year has seen another four successful issues of Who Cares? and Who Cares? Junior magazines. The magazines reach over 20,000 children and young people in care, creating an extended family of young people in care around the UK.

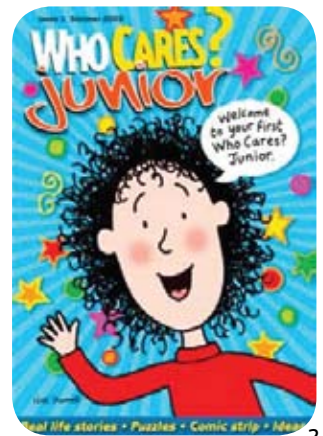
We treat our readers first and foremost as young people, with many of the same problems, passions, issues and questions as any young person. But we also know that living in care brings its own challenges and complexities, so our magazines acknowledge that with a balance of care-related content and material that's relevant to all young people.

A sign of our success is the enthusiasm of our readers for engaging with the magazines – every day we receive emails responding to content in the magazines, ideas for future articles, poems and letters for our agony aunt.

Features over the year have included the challenge of finding suitable accommodation for care leavers, what happened during National Care Leavers' Week and the problem of siblings being separated in care.



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“I really enjoyed Who Cares? magazine when I was in care, it was definitely a positive influence. It helped my self-esteem and increased my awareness of what being in care was all about. I think you can often feel quite isolated, so it was really good to get Who Cares? and realise that there are other people all over the country who are going through similar things.”

Tim, 20, Care leaver

1: Who Cares? issue 89
2: Who Cares? Junior issue 1

Providing advice, information and support

Spreading the word through e-communications

June 2009 saw the launch of our new state-of-the-art website, a comprehensive and accessible information resource about life in care.

The website features dedicated sections for foster carers, teachers and professionals working at local authorities as well as an area specifically designed for young people in care.

At the same time we launched a regular e-newsletter, which is sent out to over 4,000 contacts from local authorities and other relevant organisations, to promote debate around important and timely issues to do with children in care. Topics during the year have included placement stability, 'careism' and leaving care.



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Engaging through social media

The digital world is constantly changing to suit people's busy lifestyles, and we strive to ensure that we adapt our communications accordingly.

This year we joined Twitter, which enables us to highlight our project work as well as news from the sector.

We also launched a blog for young people in care called 'Own Two Feet'. The blog, which follows the thoughts and reflections of John, an inspirational care leaver, has been enormously well received and sparked much debate.

We've got lots more planned for 2010/11 with the launch of our Facebook page and a new website for young people in care and care leavers, Who Cares? Town.

"I never really thought about what it would be like having to be in care. Reading John's story really opened my eyes to a world I didn't know existed. Thank you for sharing John, I'll pop back every now and then to see what's being discussed."

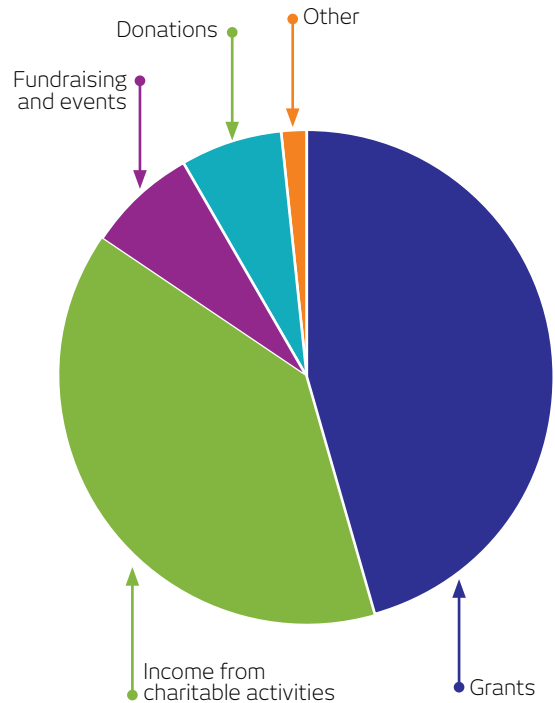
Comment left on the blog

1: The Who Cares? Trust homepage
2: E-newsletter on placement stability

Financial summary

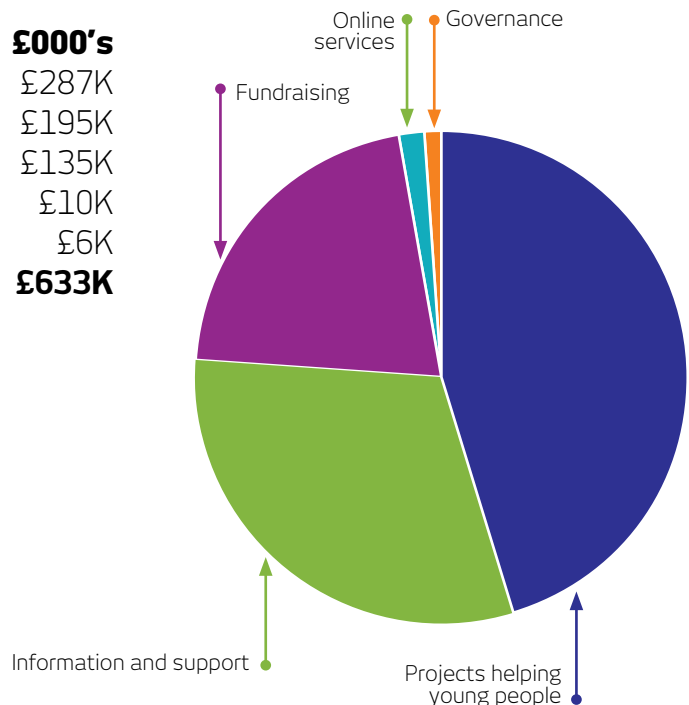
Income

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Grants | £304K |
| Income from charitable activities | £258K |
| Fundraising and events | £49K |
| Donations | £44K |
| Others | £10K |
| Total | £665K |



Expenditure

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Projects helping young people | £287K |
| Information and support | £195K |
| Fundraising | £135K |
| Online services | £10K |
| Governance | £6K |
| Total | £633K |



This is a summary of The Who Cares? Trust's income and expenditure in 2009/10, taken from our audited accounts which are included in the full Annual Accounts.

To see a full copy of the accounts email: mailbox@thewhocarestrust.org.uk.



The Who Cares Trust?

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