

Pigeon Liberation at George Square Glasgow

**To mark the start of the
ANTI-STIGMA CAMPAIGN WEEK**

ORGANISER: WHO CARES? SCOTLAND

VENUE: GEORGE SQUARE, GLASGOW

DATE: WEDNESDAY 1ST SEPTEMBER

TIME: 10.15AM – 12.30PM

Embargo: 10.15am Wednesday 1st Sept 2010

NOTE: Tam Baillie, Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People will release the pigeons to officially launch the Anti-Stigma Week and the release of the anti-stigma clip.

You are invited to attend....

Earlier this year, Who Cares? Scotland, the leading charity working with and representing the views of looked after children and young people in Scotland, developed the '**Give Me a Chance**' campaign designed to address the misconceptions and negative attitudes towards looked after children and young people and the care system itself. Now the charity is focussing a week-long promotion throughout Scotland to further raise awareness amongst all of Scotland's Local Authorities and members of the public.

The charity has received support from the Scottish Government to develop the campaign.

To mark the start of the Anti-Stigma week, there will be a symbolic "liberation" of homing pigeons in George Square, Glasgow – each bird will carry an anti-stigma message. Also, a two minute video clip (broadcast quality) about stigma, recently made by young people in care, will be shown throughout the country during the campaign week.

The George Square launch event will be attended by:

- Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, Tam Baillie,
- Glasgow City Deputy Lord Provost, Bailie Allan Stewart

- David Crawford, Director of Social Work for Glasgow City Council.

Twelve other agencies such as the National Fostering Agency and Respect Me that have connections to the child care sector in Scotland will participate in the George Square event.

Heather Gray, Chief Executive of Who Cares? Scotland said: “Young people who are looked after deserve the same opportunities as other children to reach their potential. Our goal with the campaign is to fundamentally shift public attitudes to ensure all young people who are looked after in Scotland have equal rights and opportunities’.

“The campaign, first launched earlier this year by Scotland’s Children’s Minister Adam Ingram and Who Cares? Scotland, aims to dispel myths about children and young people in care and promote positive images.

Sarah Smith, Director for Children, Young People and Social Care for the Scottish Government, added: “This campaign will benefit children and young people who are or have been in care by countering negative stereotyping. It is important that we all see beyond the label and recognise what these children and young people can achieve, despite the very difficult circumstances that they might have faced.”

Adam Ingram, the Minister for Children and Early Years, commented: “Many of these young people have had to overcome substantial turmoil and upheaval in their lives and it is our duty to ensure that is not compounded by ill-founded stereotypes and stigma.”

Councillor Matt Kerr, Executive Member for Social Care, said: "Children living in care are among the most vulnerable in our society and also the most misunderstood. The reasons for accommodating young people are extremely varied but at the heart of it all is invariably a child who simply needs to be looked after properly.

"Anyone facing great uncertainty or upheaval in their family life can find it difficult and challenging, far less someone who is still in their formative years. But we know from our own experience that young people in care have resilience, can adapt and develop and ultimately move on to lead fulfilled lives.

"All children in care deserve a proper chance in life and that's why I fully support the campaign by Who Cares? Scotland."

Background Information

Research by Who Cares? Scotland revealed strong public confidence in the benefits of being in care for those who need it. A Scottish Opinion survey, commissioned by Who Cares? Scotland, found that almost three in four members of the Scottish public believe that being in care can help children and young people get their lives back on track. However, many believed that children and young people are in care because they have done something wrong. (www.whocarescotland.org/publications/caringaboutsucces)

The Anti Stigma campaign (www.givemeachancescotland.org) which has the backing of the Scottish Government, addresses the misconceptions and negative attitudes towards looked after young people and residential child care. It also addresses stigma from other young people which creates problems for looked after young people ranging from difficulties in making and keeping friends to bullying, and, the stigma from adults including teachers and other professionals which can lead to low expectations of success at school and can often result in emotional difficulties.

The campaign is also strongly linked to the Governments commitment through Higher Aspirations, Brighter Futures (Scottish Government 2009) to improve the life chances and outcomes for looked after children.

It:

- challenges negative attitudes and encourage positive attitudes to Looked After children and young people.
- engages organisations and individual allies who share the goal of reducing stigma and discrimination against Looked After children and young people, the residential childcare system and those who work in it.

Ends

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