

Podcast Transcript

*Why We Frame
Our Stories*
*with Roseanna
Campbell & James
Docherty*



Each and Every Child



Podcast Transcript

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[Intro music playing under voice over]

Claire O'Hara – Welcome to the Each and Every Child podcast. I'm Claire O'Hara, the Programme Director. Each and Every Child is all about exploring different ways to speak about care and care experience in order to shift public understanding, and to tackle stigma and discrimination. We have eight evidence-based recommendations that have been tested to do this.

This podcast series will focus on the voices of people with lived experience, how they use the framing recommendations, the impact of sharing their stories or experiences, and how organisations and workers can fully support people when they're sharing their stories. For more information about the Each and Every Child Initiative, please see the show notes for each episode.

[Intro music fades out]

Claire – Hi everybody, and welcome to Each and Every Child's podcast. This is our first podcast and what we're going to be talking about today is, first and foremost, why do people share their stories and what are the challenges of sharing your stories, and how can we make that a safer environment, and an environment where we pass the power of your story back to you?

Joining me today are two of my favourite humans, from our Voices of Experience group; we have James Docherty and Roseanna Campbell. Would you just like to say... introduce yourself?

Roseanna Campbell – Hi! I'm Rosanna. I am 23 years old and I'm from our Voices of Experience Group.

James Docherty – Hi! James Docherty... nice to meet you.

Claire – Um, okay guys, we're just going to dive straight into it and, first and foremost, I was thinking it'd be really good for people to understand from your own perspective why you share your story. Why do you share the experiences that you've had? James?

James – Um, so humanity is built on stories... So before we had social media or we recorded stuff in books, then stuff was passed in fae your elders through stories...storytelling. So I, I think stories are massively important. And, also when you speak to subjects like care, et cetera, the way we do, then it can foster hope in people who might feel as if they're in a hopeless situation and that, especially people experiencing care, probably navigating that deep feeling of separation that it can elicit when you've been separated from your family or you're cutoff fae your wider social connections, like your friends and all that if you have to go in to a care setting.

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James – So, it can cut through that sense of separation as well, so that young people experiencing care don't need to feel alone in the world. And I think that's why it's important to be able to tell your stories as somebody who's been care experienced; has been through that journey; who's come out through the other side; who can speak back to young people and say, "I know you might be feeling a particular way the now, but you're not alone in that. And it absolutely will get better. That there's always... Where you are now, there's always a better place you can get to".

Claire – So, it's actually.... I love that James! You shared your story to actually support people who are experiencing it and to get that shared humanity and experience.

James – Yeah, absolutely. Because I know through my own experience when I was younger experiencing care, there was nae adults in my life, um... speaking to the reality of what I was experiencing. So, what I was getting off people was opinion, and it wouldn't have really landed because people were giving me an opinion on an experience they never had and my attitude as a wee boy was; "What do you know?" – which is the common theme by young people anyway, like – "What do you know?" – you know? – "You don't know what it's like to be me" – but when somebody's been in that type of care experience, they might know... know what's it's like or feel like you in that moment. But the experience of having been there is cathartic to the individual who might be experiencing it, 'cos it lets them know that there's a way past it and that elicits hope and where are we without hope in our stories?

Claire – Thanks James. Rosie, what are the reasons that you've... you've shared your story on lots of different platforms. Why do you do it?

Rosie – One of the reasons that I share my story is because I don't want children and young people to be facing the same barriers that I faced when I was sharing my story. I think sharing your stories – it's really vital, especially when you come from a setting where we've come from... like the care systems. It used to be when I was younger, it used to be kind of like – "Oh, your care experienced, you're over there in a corner" – and I don't want that for this generation or for any to come. I've got younger siblings myself and I wouldn't want them to face that. I think if you're care experienced you, you should own it. And if you don't want to own it, that's okay as well. Personally, for me, the most vital thing about sharing my story is letting young people know that they are not alone. And saying, like – "Look, I am care experienced; this is what I faced, but that's not going to define my future. I'm gonna be who I'm gonna be and nobody's gonna stop you".

Claire – And you've been very particular in what you do and how you support young people and in particular using... talking about the things that worked, the things that made a difference to you. And as somebody who, as James says, I don't have lived experience. So, to have that insight that you bring and tell us what is the stuff that works. Because sometimes as professionals, we think we're doing the right thing and that's why your voice is so vital.

How do you find working with young people – 'cos you do that, you work directly with young people who have care experience, to support them in advocating for a better way and the supports that they need – how does that make you feel?

Rosie – I, personally, I love it. I wouldn't change my job. I mean, working with care experienced young people on a daily basis is probably one of the best things that I've done. I mean, before I got the job that I'm in now, I used to volunteer and that fulfilled my happiness and that pointed me in the career that I wanted to go in. And I think if I can help impact a young person's life and help them change a policy and procedure that *needs* to be changed and it *should* be changed, why are our young people gonna back down and say – “No, I'm just gonna sit here and say like, this system's fine, if it's not”. I think working with young people on a daily basis, it promotes them to be... advocate on what they're going through, which is a really positive thing because – yeah, as a professional, you might not be getting it right, but if you sit down for five minutes and have a conversation with that young person, you're gonna see a completely different side to them. The barriers are gonna be broke down. They're not gonna be sitting on the fence, on edge, being like, well, you're just a professional. You're listening to them. You're seeing what they want to do and what they want to change, and you're helping shape that and potentially bettering our future for our care system and our young people. And I think, yeah, it's a vital thing to be doing.

Claire – I'm very grateful for the work that you do with the young people, and I've seen you in action. Rosie, you've had quite a strong voice and there have been lots of times when you've been asked to come into settings to share your own experiences. Has there been any times when you felt that's not been a safe space or you have come out the other side and it's... it's not sat right with you?

Rosie – Yeah, I mean, I've shared my story a good few times. Anyone that knows me knows that I've, I've shared it a lot and I'm quite vocal about that. I think a couple of years ago, maybe... I'm going back about five, six years ago, it wasn't safe for me to share my story, but at that time I didn't realise that. I think at that time I was still very anger-fuelled. It wasn't coming from a place of positivity, it was coming from a place of – “Look, you've done this, you've hurt me”. And you know, well – “I'm gonna make sure everyone knows that”. Now, as much as that was fine, I think there's ways I could have done it better.

Rosie – But for the people that were involved in helping me share my story, I think they should have realised like...this young person's clearly going through something traumatic, and the way she's feeling right now isn't where she needs to be. And I guess that that ties into why I do what I do now, because you... you need to feel safe in sharing your stories. You need to be able to share your stories in a positive way that's gonna have meaningful action behind it. And I think prior to recent years, it wasn't done in that way, which for me is not okay. I mean, we need to be sharing our stories so that our young people feel safe, and they feel protected. I caused a lot of trouble growing up – the way I was sharing my stories, um, whether that was through my family or friends, um, a lot of people didn't know my background. And I went into this thinking, you know what – yeah, I'm gonna show everyone exactly how it is and no one's gonna say anything to me about it. But that wasn't the reality of it. I think it was really hard to deal with, and I was left in the process to go home and deal with that trauma that I was already dealing with because I just spoke about it. And I think even just a follow up phone call to be like – “You all right Rosie? How you doing? Done a smashing job yesterday but I bet it was tough” – like that would've went a long way. I think now we're in a position where hopefully stories aren't being shared in the same way they were as myself a couple of years ago. And I hope that people are doing follow ups with young people and if they're sharing their story, they're doing it in a safe environment where they're respected, and they can speak about their story and kinda...that saying, what's stays in this room, like stays. So yeah...

Claire – Thanks, Rosie... James, I could feel you are twitching beside me. [overtalk]

What's your opinion of people sharing their stories and making it safe and that idea of the potential to retraumatise?

James – So it was dead interesting listening to... I was just agreeing with everything that Rosie was saying because when we share our stories from a place of woundedness, it can exacerbate the wound. And the thing about that is when you heal the wound – or the trauma – which... trauma is a wound, um... then you can look back and say fae a place of healing... when you look on something you shared fae a place of woundedness, it might be regret because you did it in a setting where you did nae feel safe, or even for example, um... what I've always said, that not everybody deserves a front row seat at the detail of your life. And the reason that is, eh...is because as you grow and heal, your story changes anyway.

Claire – Mm-hmm.

James – So when I was angry and hurt and I was projecting that pain towards the people who harmed me, when I started on my own healing journey, I started to look on them more compassionately.

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Claire – Mm-hmm.

James – So, I would nae a spoke to them the same way – but it's all relevant anyway, 'cos that's part of the healing journey is you need to... even in the healing journey, you need to be able to metaphorically take a baseball bat to stuff because some people harmed you. And I'm not meaning do that tae them... I'm meaning...uh... 'cos part of the healing process is ejecting unresolved hurt and anger.

Claire – Mm-hmm.

James – And if you do that in the wrong setting, then, and it's on the public domain, for example. So, if you've shared that and there's a record there and it's on YouTube, you... you might have regret because it can be replayed. And plus... and plus, I've always been very conscious of protecting people, as well. You need to protect people because they might not be on their healing journey yet. For example, like my own experience with family, for example. Or the system. And realising that people harm people from a place of woundedness, mostly, not a place of wickedness. There's very few people that are innately wicked. So, a lot of it comes from their own unresolved trauma. And if that's on the public domain, getting replayed all the time, then it could trigger...constantly be triggering shame in them. So, a big part for me has been about protecting the people who I know that loved us, but at the same time didn't meet certain developmental needs or nurturing needs, and having that space of, that, it's possible that the people who harmed you, loved you, and they traumatised you at the same time. Those two things can coexist.

Claire – Mm-hmm.

James – But at the time, when I was in the wounded part of myself, I wouldn't even had love in the equation. It woulda just, kinda...been about what you'd done tae me.

Claire – Mm-hmm.

James – And not even taking into account what had maybe happened to them.

Claire – Mm-hmm.

James – What was their life experience? What was their environment like? What shaped their worldview? Why did they think it was okay to participate in a particular type of behaviour that might have harmed me? And I've learned in my own journey that I don't want tae pass the hand back the way.

Claire – Mm-hmm.

James – Or even pass it forward and start to create, eh... So having a safe space for storytelling is about having the wisdom to know the difference, showing what you keep to yourself, what goes on the public domain, and always, always trust your gut because the people who are asking you to share the story, they cannae consult that part of your gut that you need tae, in order tae say – “I don't really think I should say this the now because I might regret it further down the line”. Or are you having autonomy over the... the content? Like having a debrief, going back over it and saying – “Right, that needs to be taken out” – or – “I'm not comfortable with that being on the public domain anymore cause I'm at a different stage of my life and I've realised that I've said something and it keeps getting played out maybe in the family system and it's causing stigma in my life or causing emotional harm in the family setting”. Cause you know what families are like, for example. So, if you share something that happened in a family, then you could form relationships with them again, cause that's what happens. And then, somebody mentions... This is a thing that's misunderstood. Resentment means to refuel old anger. So, if you are not responsible for resolving other people's resentments, but you can arouse bitterness in people with participating in a particular behaviour or whatever it is, and what happens is families can replay that – “I was watching YouTube last week and you said, blah, blah, blah about my 'ma”. And then you've got the brothers and the sisters saying – “Now you should never have said that. What gives you the right to say that?”. And then it causes a rupture in the family system and ultimately, as a care experienced person, we're trying to heal the family unit anyway. You would nae want to pour more pain into the arena. Does that make sense?

Claire – Absolutely. You've just, um... I'm going to pull out from that, from a learning for people who support people to share their stories 'cos we've actually got a duty of care almost on a yearly basis to look at the materials that we use of people's stories. And go back to them at least once a year and go, – “This is still on our system”. And give that autonomy back. We need to let go of those personal stories and give people... because...both of you do it a lot and you might even not remember. So, actually, the onus is on us who are supporting you to ensure that we are checking in...

James – Yeah.

Claire – ...every year... every couple of years to go – “This is still in our YouTube channel, this is still in our website. Are you still comfortable with that?” That's a really lovely messaging... learning for us.

James – It's also... it's also worth noting as well that, if people wanted us to speak nicely about them, and this applies to us as well, then they should have treated us better.

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Rosie – Mm-hmm.

James – So it pull's people into a sense of responsibility as well, when they realise that these people are telling us stories now, or in the future, they might be telling their stories. So, the work you do the now... get's pulled back the way further down the line. So, it pulls people into that sense of responsibility on the type of relationship provided in the present. Because I would like to think that people are looking back at my life and saying things nice about me, and I'm not pouring, I'm not pouring the... my shortcomings back the way, even though I've got lots of them...

Claire – I am not sure about that but that's [laughs]... I'll hear that. Eh, no, absolutely, James, of that... that responsibility that we have, and it takes us back to that relationship-based practice of...before you ask somebody to tell or share their story, you need to build that relationship so that you then know that they can trust that you will come back and we can always edit. That's the thing – we can always edit. Is there anything else that you want to add?

James – Uh, so you said, um, about how... So, I've... I've listened to thousands of people's stories earlier, over the years. And especially people who have navigated adversity. And what I'm always struck by is they... they aren't just telling us about what happened that should nae happened. They're telling us in that same story about what should have happened, that did nae. And ultimately... I mean, I've listened to a lot of these people who are telling us this, this... about the stuff that should have happened, that did... the stuff that should have happened, that did nae – they're talking about relationships and the importance of surrounding people with healthy relationships. And that's what I've found. That's the bit that was missing in my own healing journey. And the thousands of stories I've listened to. It's people telling me that some enlightened leaders in services or um, mentors or social workers, whatever it was, provided a type of relationship that was otherwise missing in their life. And when you look at how young people orientate relationships, if you surround them with as many healthy relationships as possible, they can potentially orientate in a different way because everything's a function of attachment. And if you leave young people to orientate by their own level of woundedness, then the outcomes aren't that good – that's what the research is telling us. But if you put in what's missing. And that's where the wisdom comes. It's having the wisdom to know the difference, i.e, this is what's missing in this person's life, we can provide that. And if you can provide that, then the outcomes are better.

Claire – Absolutely, James, again, big smile. Rosie, just before we finish up, have you got any final reflections in... just in what James was saying, what we've been discussing?

Rosie – Yeah, I mean I think since I've been at the Each and Every Child initiative a while now and that, that quote that we use, um, what should have... We should be talking about what should have happened. It's always really stuck with me and I think especially going into the career I'm in now, I use that a lot with my thinking and the way I speak to professionals, the way I deal with young people, and it has a really positive impact as well. And I think, James has hit the nail on the head there as well. It, it helps you with your own self-healing as well. I, I tend to think about now, the positives and what could I have used when I was younger? What could my young people need now that's gonna benefit them in the long run? So, I think whether it's telling your story, whether it's wanting an action change, whether you want policy and procedure changed, always start with what should have happened that didn't happen? Um, and I think if, if you start with that, you always have a more positive kind of audience coming back to you and they're like, "You know what? Actually, see if we did do that then maybe we would get a bit further". And that's the reaction I've always had to it. So personally, for myself, I just wanted to thank James as well on that note because it, it has really helped me progress in the past year in the career I'm in. And I know for a fact it's really helped my young people too. And even in my own healing journey, I've been through... been through a fair bit as we all have. Um, but it, it's really helped me in the past year or so to be like, you know what, actually – don't use that fuelled anger, Rosie... use it in a positive way. What could have you used and what support mechanism did you need in place, right then, to make it right? And I think if you start with that, you're onto a winner, aren't you?

Claire – Absolutely. Rosie, you've totally hit the nail on the head. And I think as people who work to support children, young people, and families within the care system... sometimes somebody tells a story and you go – "oh, but we provide that service". Maybe we do, but why are people not accessing it and taking it right back to James... it's that relationship-based approach. So even if you think, well, we are providing that – well, how does that young person...how did they not access it? Because maybe our approach is wrong. Maybe the service we're providing is good but our approach and...that trust and that relationship isn't there and we really need to look at that.

Rosie – I think... I think the thing is as well is obviously for Each and Every Child as well, or locality offices, wherever it is that you're working with a child in care, you're not always gonna get it right. And that's okay, but you take that five minutes to listen to that young person, maybe we will get it right within time. I mean, God, we've worked on some projects that we've had to tweak 1,000,001 times, but that's fine because not one shoe fits all, does it? So keep tweaking away at it and you'll get it right eventually.

James – Because all learning follows attachment. You learn off of people you like. So, if a service is saying, "we provide that service", then the next thing you should be thinking is well, why are they not learning?

Rosie – Mm-hmm.

Claire – Yeah, absolutely. Both of you. Thank you so much for your generosity of spirit to share, and to share in a much wider scale. We are very privileged at Each and Every Child, 'cos we get this learning from you guys. We get this development of our knowledge and understanding. We get that every day and it's so empowering to be able to share with other people, the journey that you've taken us on. And, and I thank you, both of you for that, and the support that you continue to give, not just us but across the board. And we will continue to listen and learn from you both.

I'm going to take on to... the kind of final thing that I wanted to explore with you, particularly if there's people listening who have been asked to share their story and aren't sure or have maybe done it and gone – "I'm not in a good place with this". What advice would you give to yourself? So, the Rosie of 4-5 years ago, the James, when he started out talking, what advice would you give yourself in the journey that you've been on? About how to prepare to share your story, or what boundaries do you think that you could put up? Rosie, I'm gonna come to you first.

Rosie – That's a question and a half, Claire. Um, I think for myself, the best advice I could, I could give to me is like – it's... it's okay to share your story. Try and do it in a more positive way, though, Rosie, don't be doing it from a place of anger and hurt. Take a step back before you start speaking. And actually like analyse the situation that's going on. Why are you sharing your story? Why are you doing it? And are these people that are wanting you to share your story? Are they wanting you to share your story for, for you to do good? Or is it just another platform for someone to look like they're doing good? Um, I think a lot of the time I got wrapped up in that, oh, you want me to share your story, so you're gonna, you're gonna smash it, you're gonna do a good job. But in reality, maybe nine times outta 10, it probably wasn't the best platform for me to be sharing my story. And I'm, as James said, still trying to build relationships up and, and come away from that. Um, so for myself, it'd be... really look into how you're sharing your story. Are the people that are asking you to share your story, are they doing it in a safe manner for you to share it? Um...and what platforms is it going on as well? Like, do a bit more deep-diving into why you're sharing your story and where it's going and who's gonna listen to it. And I think now I would share my story in a completely different perspective. Um... And also think about what is it that you want to share. I feel like a lot of the times when I'm sharing my story, I went off on a tangent about things that probably shouldn't have been said, but you're in the moment, aren't you? So. really like just looking into...deeply within yourself about, is this really what you want to do? And if you're looking back on it in five years' time, is it, is it still something you want the world to know? Because once it's out there and once it's public knowledge, that's it. It's out there for everyone to see and there's no going back from that. Um, so that's probably the best advice I could give myself.

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Claire – Thanks Rosie. Big smile. I keep forgetting, it's just talking [trailing off]...and no one can see. Lots of nodding around the table as well. Jamie, what advice would you give to yourself?

James – Um, make sure everybody pays you!

Rosie – [Laughs]

Claire – Really strong!

James – Yeah, because, um, not everybody values your story as much as you do, and the thing is, um, you never asked for your story. So, if you have to go through all sorts of pain to arrive at your experience and somebody, for example, who might be sharing the same platform as you, i.e. maybe an academic who's went through a whole host of education to arrive at their experience, they get paid for it and you don't, then that's no fair because I know what I would have rather went through I would have rather went through the academic experience, to arrive at their knowledge base and insight, than have to go through neglect and trauma and abuse and all the other arduous processes that I personally had to go through it to arrive at my experience, and that's, that's why I tell my story because fundamentally it's about prevention. So, I ultimately, cut me out, I want to prevent unnecessary childhood suffering. That's basically it in a nutshell. So, tell your story from a place of compassion, honesty...eh, speak life over yourself, as well. Don't undermine yourself. Know your value. If they don't value your story, and by that, meaning numeration...

Claire – mm-hmm.

James – ...then cut and run. Don't go because it's not to serve your best interests. It's usually to serve their agenda. And eh, you are a person of worth and that needs to be reflected back to you constantly and how people work with you. So don't let anybody use you.

Claire – James, you had a really strong point. Um, it's something at Each and Every Child that we feel very strongly of...effective and sustainable change is only going to happen when lived, and learned experience come together.

James – Yeah.

Claire – And we need to be in a space where they're equally valued.

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James – Yeah.

Claire – And, that absolutely is. We treat everybody in the same way and give them the same space and respect of that experience because, eh, we know at Each and Every Child, the knowledge and expertise that all of you have shared has really shaped and informed and changed, and it's been a huge privilege to learn. And there's a really amazing thing that you, James, have said. Um, about how we share our stories and instead of talking about what didn't happen, why don't we talk about what should have happened? And we were working with young people at the weekend....

James – Yeah.

Claire – And that really resonated for them. And because we want change... We're only sharing our story because, as Rosie you said, you don't want it to happen to other people. So, we need to tell them what needs to be there. We need to go, this is what wasn't there and what would've made the difference. And I just want you to know how much that resonated with this next generation...

James – Yeah.

Claire – ...of young people who are much more vocal. And I also want to thank both of you because the young people are standing on your shoulders and they're standing on your shoulders and their voice is louder. And their voice is safer and it is stronger because of what you've sacrificed and the challenges that you've faced. So I'd like to thank you both for today and for everything that you do. It's an absolute privilege to know both of you and every day, we are thankful for what you bring and the knowledge and expertise you share.

James – Thanks, Claire.

Rosie – Thank you.

[Music outro]

THANK YOU



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