



Caring for our Children and Young People: An update on Scotland's Corporate Parenting

2018 - 2021



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Foreword



It is a pleasure to present the second statutory Corporate Parenting Report since the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act was introduced in 2014.

There is no doubt that this has been a difficult and challenging period both for corporate parents and the community that they support. Since 2020, in particular, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on children and young people, and a disproportionate impact on those who experience disadvantage. Corporate parents have continued to work throughout a global pandemic, many on the front line, to provide vital and often immediate support to our children and young people in need of care and protection – these efforts have not gone unnoticed and

the Scottish Government extends its gratitude for the support provided.

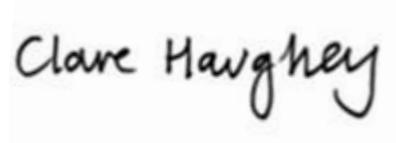
Since 2014, corporate parents have worked hard to improve the way in which we look after children in our care. The Scottish Government is, of course, a corporate parent itself and ensuring those with care experience have the best opportunities possible continues to be a priority for this Government with the work of the Independent Care Review having been critical in shaping how this will look as we move forward collectively.

The Independent Care Review completed its work during this reporting period and its conclusions, articulated in The Promise, set out the transformational change required by 2030. The Promise makes clear what it is Scotland must do to make sure our children feel loved, safe and have the childhood they deserve. It is our job now, collectively as a nation but also collectively as corporate parents to collaborate with each other, in achieving that transformational change. This change will not be about making changes to the 'care system' as we know it, but going much further by supporting families much earlier and much more impactfully so that they can stay together and thrive, where that is appropriate. Transformational change of this nature will have its challenges, I have no doubt. Key to achieving this ambition, though, will be partnership working throughout Scotland across all agencies and at all levels. Critically, children and families – and crucially lived experience – must be at the heart of all of our work to ensure that the legislation, policies and practice we deliver are meaningful, accessible and impactful.

The Promise has clearly set out the issues which directly and indirectly impact children and young people with care experience and their families and carers. The Scottish Government is committed to addressing the inequalities in our society which affect children's and families' ability to thrive, by taking action on child poverty, housing, employment, education, health and mental health and wellbeing, welfare and children's rights. This reports sets out in more detail the activity the Scottish Government has undertaken over the reporting period as well as more recent developments announced through the Programme for Government 2021. Through our work to reform public services, including the proposed creation of a National Care Service and to #KeepThePromise, it is vital that we all work beyond traditional policy or service delivery silos, and focus on the collective needs and priorities of children and young people with care experience and their families.

This report highlights some excellent practice, shines a light on collaboration at its best and identifies areas where we can learn from the experience to date. We are entering a significant new phase of work on corporate parenting as plans are refreshed and we consider our commitments ahead in terms of offering the opportunity to look afresh at how we can better support children and young people with care experience, with a clear focus on how Scotland will #KeepThePromise, while also recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the next three-year reporting period, I look forward to working together with other corporate parents and with children and young people in delivering the priorities identified in The Promise Plan 2021-24 and Change Programme ONE, and the wider transformational change needed to #KeepThePromise.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Clare Haughey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

CLARE HAUGHEY
Minister for Children and Young People

Chapter 1: Introduction

Purpose

This is the second national report on corporate parenting by Scottish Ministers to the Scottish Parliament. There is a statutory requirement for Ministers to report to the Scottish Parliament on how they have exercised their corporate parenting responsibilities every three-years. The first report, [Turning legislation into practice together: First Report on Corporate Parenting Activity in Scotland April 2015–March 2018](#), was published in June 2018.

In this 2018-21 report, we provide an overview of corporate parents' activities over the last three years, and how they have delivered their duties to support children and young people with care experience. Throughout the report, we highlight many examples of creative, collaborative and child and young person focused activities but also identify opportunities for further improvement across the sector. We hope that corporate parents will use the information to work more closely together and to share and use ideas and examples of good practice, so that together, we continue to drive improvements in the outcomes for children and young people with experience of care.

Methodology and Report Structure

To undertake this review, we wrote to Scotland's corporate parents to ask that they provide (i) their corporate parenting plan(s) and report(s) covering the 2018-21 reporting period; and (ii) their response to our survey which asked them about their corporate parenting activities over the 2018-21 period. We thank corporate parents for the quality and comprehensiveness of their responses, recognising that this would have taken colleagues across all organisations time to complete. We have then used the vast amount of rich information provided within the submitted plans, surveys and (to a lesser extent) reports to produce this report.

We have organised the report under the following chapters.

Chapter 2	We set out the wider and changing policy landscape in which corporate parenting operates, and we remind ourselves of the key findings from the 2015-2018 review
Chapters 3 to 8	We present the corporate parenting activities delivered by different groupings of corporate parents between 2018 and 2021. Chapter 3 sets out the Scottish Government's activities , and is then followed by chapters that respectively outline the activities of local authorities, universities, colleges, health boards, and national bodies
Chapter 9	We first consider the factors that enabled and inhibited organisations in advancing their corporate parenting activities, before setting out what corporate parents view as their future priorities into 2021-2024
Chapter 10	We aim to assess the impact of Scotland's corporate parenting activities on our care experienced children and young people, using nationally available statistical indicators to do so
Chapter 11	We conclude by considering the key learning from this review of the 2018-21 corporate parenting activities and setting out some key areas for future development and improvement as we continuously seek to better support care experienced children and young people

We have written the report with the aim that it becomes a useful learning resource for corporate parents. This means that:

1. We have organised Chapters 3 to 8 under the **six Section 58 duties** of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014: **Alert, Assess, Promote, Opportunities, Access and Improve**. We recognise that many activities cover more than one duty, and organising activities in this manner may feel artificial and subjective, but we believe this approach helps to provide examples of how corporate parents can strengthen how they fulfil each of their duties.
2. We have highlighted **key points of learning and good practice examples** via the use of **'Spotlights'** and **'Learning Points'**. The **'Spotlights'** in particular aim to bring the activities and duties to life using a selection of real-life, illustrative examples of what corporate parents can and have put in place. However, these should not be read as a definitive or exhaustive list of all activities that have been progressed.

We recognise that this is a detailed report, however, it is an accurate reflection of the time, energy and detail that corporate parents have given to their responses. Readers may choose to read the chapter(s) most relevant to their needs and context and we hope that the report becomes a useful tool for learning and collaboration amongst Scotland's corporate parents.

We have also published, as an appendix to this report, our review of the Corporate Parenting Plans prepared by Scotland's corporate parent organisations. Specifically, this appendix includes a review of whether plans contained the duties of corporate parents, an action plan of intended activities and outcomes, and details surrounding plans' governance and review arrangements and engagement with children and young people.

The key audience for this report are Scotland's corporate parenting organisations and, indeed, we recognise that the information used within this report predominantly comes from corporate parent organisations and not from children and young people with care experience. However, it is important to recognise that evidence has been routinely sought from children and young people through various consultation discussions, Champions Boards and most prominently during the Independent Care Review. For the 2021-2024 report, we will adapt the methodology used to carry out the review so that children and young people are central contributors to the report and its findings.

We have worked with children, young people and Who Cares? Scotland to produce an alternative version of this **report and other accessible resources for children and young people** so that they can equally understand the corporate parenting activities which have been delivered in 2018-21, how these have benefited children and young people with care experience, and what future changes and improvements are needed.

A Note about Language

The Independent Care Review completed its work during the three-year period covered by this report, with publication of The Promise in 2020. One of the Independent Care Review's findings was about language. The use of 'corporate parent' as a term was specifically highlighted as potentially demeaning and an example of cold, process-driven relationships. The Independent Care Review avoided use of 'corporate parent' and emphasised the importance of Scotland being a 'good parent' for those it is responsible for.

Corporate parent is the term used in Scotland to refer to organisations (and individuals who work for them) who have a legal duty to respond to and support the care and protection needs of all children and young people. Their duties are laid out in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. In Scotland corporate parents and their duties are set out in legislation. We have therefore continued to use the term corporate parent in this report, given its statutory nature.

Looked after and looked after child are the terms used in current legislation to refer to a child or young person with care and protection needs who is cared for under a formal arrangement with a local authorities. Children who are looked after are either 'looked after at home' (living with a parent in their home) or 'looked after away from home', for example, by kinship carers, foster carers or residential care.

Contact is the term used in legislation to refer to formal arrangements made for when children in need of care and protection spend time with important people in their lives who they are not living with at that time.

Placement is the word used in legislation to refer to the place where a child is being cared for away from the care of their parents.

Siblings is the word used in the Children (Scotland) Act 2020. It refers to the relationship where two or more children have one or both parents in common, or where they have lived together and have an ongoing relationship which is like this. This is also referred to in the [Staying Together and Connected: Getting it Right for Sisters and Brothers guidance](#) as sibling-like. Where possible, brothers' and/or 'sisters has been used.

Carers refers to anyone over the age of sixteen who is providing care for a child either formally (having an order through the court or a children's hearing) or informally (no order from a court or a children's hearing). A carer who does not have parental rights and responsibilities is still responsible for doing all that is reasonable to safeguard the child's health, development and welfare.

A care leaver is a young person who ceased to be looked after on, or at any time after, their sixteenth birthday.

Chapter 2: Policy Landscape and Findings from 2015-2018 Review

Introduction

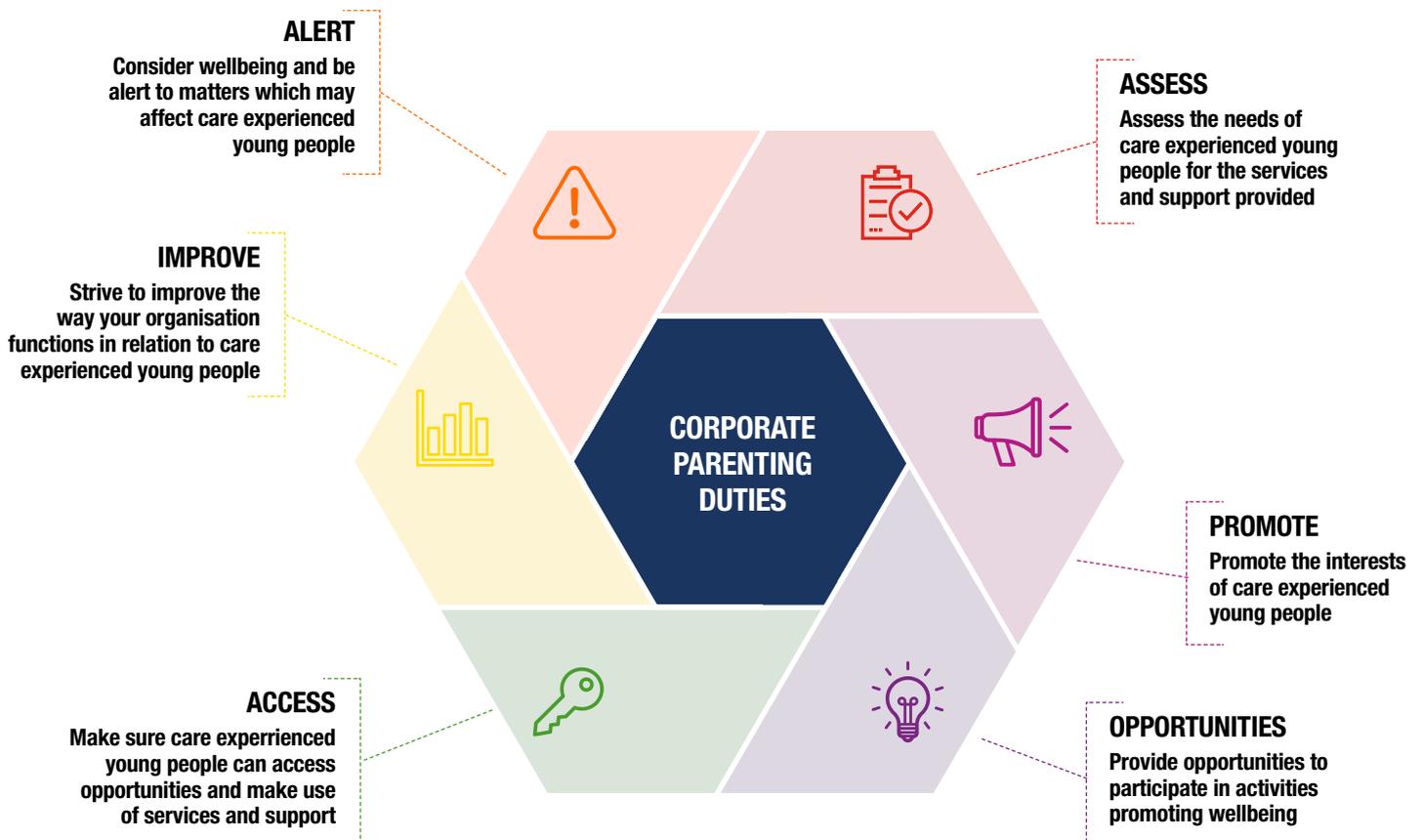
In this chapter we first explain what corporate parenting is and who Scotland's corporate parents are, before outlining the key findings from the first 2015-2018 review, thus setting a content and baseline to later chapters. We then provide an overview of the wider policy landscape in which corporate parenting exists. In particular we highlight the significant developments from the 2018-21 period, including the Independent Care Review and The Promise.

What is Corporate Parenting?

Corporate parenting is defined¹ in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and places a number of duties on public sector organisations to uphold the rights and safeguard the wellbeing of looked after children, young people and care leavers. The term² refers to an organisation's performance of actions necessary to uphold the rights and secure the wellbeing of a looked after child or care leaver, through which physical, emotional, spiritual, social and educational development is promoted, from infancy through to adulthood.

In other words, corporate parenting is about certain organisations listening to the needs, fears and wishes of children and young people, and being proactive and determined in the collective efforts to meet them.

What are the duties of corporate parents?



1 A corporate parent is defined under section 56(1) of the 2014 Act as "The persons listed, or within a description listed, in schedule 4 are "corporate parents" for the purposes of this Part (subject to subsections (3) and (4))". Under section 56(4) of the 2014 Act, the Commissioner for Children and Young People in Scotland and a "post-16 education body" for the purposes of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005 are not subject to comply with any direction issued by the SM about its corporate parenting responsibilities, its planning, collaborating or reporting functions under or its other functions under Part 9 of the 2014 Act

2 [Statutory guidance on Part 9 \(Corporate Parenting\) of the Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot/resources/documents/2014/06/Statutory-guidance-on-Part-9-Corporate-Parenting-of-the-Children-and-Young-People-Scotland-Act-2014.pdf)

As the Independent Care Review highlighted, the experience of being cared for must be normalised and free from stigma. Scotland should be a good parent and at every turn and in every setting, children must have access to safe, consistent nurturing relationships and environments that enable them to reach their full potential. Taken together these six duties provide an alternative definition of corporate parenting, and it is a corporate parent's responsibility to ensure they take action to uphold the rights and promote the wellbeing of Scotland's looked after children and care leavers.

Who are Scotland's corporate parents?



EQUALITY | RESPECT | LOVE

*(THIS IS THE CATEGORY THAT INCLUDES ACCOUNTANT IN BANKRUPTCY; DISCLOSURE SCOTLAND; EDUCATION SCOTLAND; THE SCOTTISH PRISON SERVICE; THE SCOTTISH PUBLIC PENSIONS AGENCY; STUDENT AWARDS AGENCY FOR SCOTLAND; AND TRANSPORT SCOTLAND).

Previous Learning – Findings from the 2015-2018 Report

Before considering the changing and developing policy landscape in which corporate parenting exists, we return to the findings from the first 2015-2018 review. [Turning Legislation into Practice Together Report](#) (2018) specifically highlighted the journey corporate parents were on and focused on strengths and areas of development. It also reflected on how the voice of children and young people had informed Corporate Parenting Plans, and how corporate parents were creative with the actions within their plans to maximise their input in order to achieve better outcomes from children and young people.

Key highlights and learning from the 2015-2018 review included:

- Use of Permanence and Care Excellence (PACE) programme methodology to test small changes to local practice.
- The importance of regulatory and scrutiny bodies such as Care Inspectorate, Scottish Housing Regulator, Healthcare Improvement Scotland, Scottish Social Services Council, Education Scotland and Commissioners, in holding other corporate parents to account.
- The importance of regular monitoring and recording of issues and improvements.
- The opportunity to build corporate parenting into other planning and reporting cycles.
- The value of support from organisations funded to support corporate parents and how this could be tailored for maximum benefit.
- The benefits of collaboration between corporate parents, and in particular the role of local Children's Services Planning Partnerships.

Key challenges identified included:

- **Difficulties in identifying and/or engaging with care experienced children and young people.** Many organisations recognised up front a need to be better at coordinating and collating the views of care experienced children and young people on an ongoing basis to inform planning or improve communication more generally. The report noted there was limited levels of success either due some organisations not readily knowing if a young person is care experienced or how to approach young people respectfully and through the appropriate channels available.
- **Inadequate IT/data collection.** Depending on the category of corporate parent, there were a number of approaches where data is already collected to establish a baseline for engagement. But for those with less front-facing roles, they reported difficulties in understanding where their input would add most value.
- **Limitations of staff/resources.** Different organisations and individuals understand corporate parenting in different ways depending on their statutory responsibilities and role. On a number of occasions, the 2018 report mentioned the need for staff training to better understand the role of being a good corporate parent. Young people fed back that many corporate parents did not know their full responsibilities/duties when speaking to them, nor did they offer advice on how other corporate parents could support them.
- **Inconsistency of support across the sector.** This was highlighted mainly through the diverse range of corporate parenting plans, their actions and activities. Where organisations delivered their corporate objectives in isolation, there was potential for ineffective communication, delayed decision making, poor assessment of an individual's needs and lack of person-centred support.

The 2015-2018 review also offered key messages from care experienced children and young people, including them:

- Experiencing what they feel is impersonal support at times of crisis.
- Experiencing unnecessary administrative barriers rather than a dedicated and transparent consideration of what can be done to support them in their specific circumstances.

Overall, the report demonstrated that greater success can be achieved where there is strong engagement with children and young people with care experience, strong partnership working and senior level support, clear corporate parenting goals and appropriate staff training. Four areas of focus were highlighted for the 2018-21 period:

- Seeking the views of looked after children and young people and care leavers.
- Assessing their needs and how they can be addressed.
- Collaborating with other corporate parents to share learning and reach a wider care experienced population.
- Securing support and understanding at senior levels of each organisation.

The Policy Landscape and the Key Policy Developments in 2018-21

The Scottish Government's National Performance Framework outcome for children and young people is that *'we grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential'*. The Framework sets out a vision for Scotland where children's human rights are embedded in all aspects of society, where childhood is free from poverty, hunger, and abuse and where children's life chances are enhanced by supporting families when they need it.

Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) continues to be the national approach to improving the wellbeing of children and young people in Scotland. Using a GIRFEC approach to improve the wellbeing of our looked after children, with the policy intention of The Promise at its heart, means that we are committed to putting the best interests of the child at the heart of decision making and taking a holistic approach to the wellbeing of the child.

Poverty is both a key driver and can be a consequence of many of the other wider societal issues that have been identified by children and young people with experience of care as particularly important to them. These issues have been highlighted by the Independent Care Review and identified in The Promise as needing to change. People with experience of care are more likely to experience poor mental health³, homelessness⁴, more likely to be excluded from school⁵ and leave school with fewer qualifications, and less likely to go to a positive destination after leaving school⁶, than their non-care experienced peers.

The [Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018-22](#) sets out the initial actions developed to meet the ambitious targets set out in the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. The plan includes new actions on Fair Work, the costs of living, food insecurity, affordable credit, financial support for lower-income families and a number of actions to improve the quality of life for children now in poverty. Since the first corporate parenting report was published, some key stepping stones have been put in place to help deliver our vision to get it right for all children and young people. The world has also experienced the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had significant negative impacts on the lives of children, young people and their families. This section highlights key developments with regard to the independent care review, our work to embed children's rights, and how the needs of children and young people have been considered in our response to COVID-19.

3 [Care experienced children and young people's mental health, Robert Sanders \(2020\) Iriss ESSS Outline](#)

4 [Independent Care Review Evidence Framework, v2.1 \(2020\) and Beyond The Headlines Homelessness May 2019.pdf \(celcis.org\)](#)

5 Looked after children: education outcomes 2018-2019, Scottish Government Statistics (2020)

6 Looked after children: education outcomes 2019-20, Scottish Government Statistics (2021)

The Independent Care Review and The Promise

The Independent Care Review was announced by the Scottish Government in 2016 as an independent root and branch review of the care system. Chaired by Fiona Duncan, and driven by care experienced people, the review commenced in 2017 and was one of the most substantial, ambitious and necessary reviews in the history of devolution. Over 5,500 people were engaged in developing its reports and conclusions, with over 2,500 of those being children and young people with lived experience of care. The Promise set out the need for fundamental change in the way children and families are supported and delivered a powerfully simple message: care must have love and nurture at its heart.

In 2020, the Scottish Government made its promise to the care community. The First Minister accepted the review's conclusions in full, with cross-party support, and committed the Scottish Government to work along with local authorities, care providers and all relevant stakeholders and corporate parents, to make the changes identified in The Promise so that all children will grow up loved, safe and respected so that they can realise their full potential.

Since 2020, work has progressed aligned to The Promise's ten year transformational change programme. The Promise Scotland has been established as a non-statutory company owned by Scottish Ministers and funded through a grant from The Scottish Government. The Promise Scotland's role is to oversee the changes needed and support them to happen. The Promise Scotland published The plan 2021-24 in March 2021, outlining the priorities for the next 3 years; and The Change Programme ONE in June 2021, which outlines and assesses the work in progress to deliver these priorities.

Working collaboratively will be essential to transform how Scotland cares for children, families and carers and the Scottish Government is committed to providing a leadership role in driving the change required and to working alongside The Promise Scotland and other partners to realise this change.

Throughout the duration of the Independent Care Review, the First Minister heard first-hand from over 1,000 children and young people with experience of care. The key emerging themes from those discussions aligned with those emerging from the Review as well as from representative organisations of people with care experience, such as Who Cares? Scotland and the Scottish Through Care and After Care Forum. Scottish Ministers responded to these priorities by committing to a number of actions in the 2019-20 Programme for Government which included:

- Promoting time for children and young people's important relationships, specifically committing to keeping children with sisters and/or brothers together, where this is appropriate.
- Improving access to dental care.
- Extending entitlement to funded early learning and childcare.
- Extending the entitlement to the Job Start Payment.
- Working with local government to ensure young people with care experience and who are receiving qualifying benefits can obtain discretionary housing payments.
- Removing the age cap on the bursary for students with experience of care.

Further detail on a number of these actions is provided in later chapters of the report.

United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The UNCRC sets out the specific rights that all children have to help fulfil their potential, including rights relating to health and education, leisure and play, fair and equal treatment, protection from exploitation and the right to be heard. In March 2021, the Scottish Parliament unanimously passed the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill, a landmark piece of legislation which would incorporate the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scots law to the maximum extent possible within the powers of the Scottish Parliament, signalling a revolution in children's rights in Scotland. Royal Assent for the Bill is not possible at this point as the Supreme Court has since ruled that certain parts of the Bill fall outwith the competence of the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Government remains committed to incorporating the UNCRC into domestic law to the maximum extent possible, as soon as practicable. While the reference means that the Bill cannot receive Royal Assent at this stage, we are considering with urgency the most effective way forward for this important legislation. The majority of work in relation to implementation of the UNCRC can and is continuing.

Through the implementation of the UNCRC the rights of all children should be fully realised and protected. Respecting, protecting and fulfilling children's rights is central to our commitment to #KeepThePromise and to Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC), which will continue to underpin how we love, care for, and support all children and young people in Scotland.

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically affected every aspect of life in Scotland. The virus and public health measures necessary to suppress it had, and continue to have, a substantial, wide-ranging impact on our lives, our business and our public services. We know that the pandemic had a significant impact on children and young people, and a disproportionate impact on those who are care experienced. However, as set out in the [Scottish Government's Covid-19 Recovery Strategy](#) it has created an opportunity for renewal, to tackle the root causes of inequalities, to prioritise whole family wellbeing support, and to ensure that those most in need of help know how to ask for it and how we are able to respond quickly, accessing appropriate services and building trusted relationships.

Stakeholder governance groups were established early in the pandemic to ensure that the Scottish Government response took account of the views, expertise and experience of stakeholders, delivery partners and those with direct experience of how children and families were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. These included the COVID-19 Education Recovery Group and the COVID-19 Children and Families Collective Leadership Group (CLG).

CLG developed an action plan, on the basis of intelligence gathered from a range of sources and direct experience of delivering support during the pandemic. The action plan included work to improve access to information on the support available to care leavers; raising awareness of corporate parenting responsibilities particularly amongst further education and higher education institutions; and providing a greater role for the Care Inspectorate in assessing the support and planning involved in what children and young people need to help them at key transition points in their lives including moving to independent living.

During the height of the pandemic, support for people with care experience in Scotland was prioritised by providing direct funding to organisations who had close contact with our young people and their families who were negatively impacted by the pandemic. Families were supported had needs concerning to digital connectivity, utility bills, mental health and wellbeing support and this was achieved through the distribution of digital devices, fuel and food vouchers as well as direct help from frontline statutory and third sector family workers to cope and reduce isolation. Funding was distributed via our third sector, social work teams, housing and communities, with the role of Children's Services Planning Partnerships instrumental in ensuring a local joined-up approach.

Through this involvement, many families were assisted at a critical time. The speed at which this support was offered by corporate parents and partners was incredible and we are thankful for their support during these challenging times. With a recovery focused on the wellbeing of people, and aligning services to the needs of individuals, now, more than ever, is the time for bold, decisive, and collective action. We can help create a supportive and nurturing environment in which love is possible for everyone.

In Summary

Whilst much of the Scottish Government's focus over the past 18 months has been responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, key government priorities have continued to progress. Whilst The Promise and the incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots Law are in their early stages, there is a clear commitment to transformational change to improve outcomes for children, young people and families, particularly those who need extra support. The response to the pandemic has demonstrated effective collaborative leadership to address impacts on children, young people, families and carers. Lessons learned are already contributing to the collaborative work underway to put in place a whole system approach, improve coherence across the policy and delivery landscape and create a better Scotland for children, young people and their families, with a collective focus on the principles of The Promise in doing so.

Chapter 3: Corporate Parenting Activities of Scottish Ministers

Introduction

Scottish Ministers have particular responsibilities with regard to setting the legislative, strategic and policy frameworks within which they and other corporate parents deliver their duties. These responsibilities span the broader context for children, young people, families and carers in Scotland as well as more specifically the current care system and support for children and young people with experience of care.

In this chapter, we review the corporate parenting activities of the Scottish Ministers, providing examples of specific activities through which Scottish Ministers have delivered their corporate parenting duties. Many of the activities described have been delivered in partnership with other corporate parents and further detail for many of these activities can be found in later chapters of this report.

We have presented the corporate parenting activities under the six Section 58 duties of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 – Alert, Assess, Promote, Opportunities, Access and Improve – as explained in the Methodology section of Chapter 1. To bring the activities and duties to life, a selection of ‘Spotlights’ have been used to provide real-life, illustrative examples of what supports the Scottish Government has put in place.

Alert

It is the duty of every corporate parent to be alert to matters which, or which might, adversely affect the wellbeing of children and young people.

The Scottish Government has been alert to the matters affecting the wellbeing of children and young people via a number of different routes. The main routes to boost awareness and understanding were:

- Work connected to, and findings of, the Independent Care Review.
- Understanding the challenges faced by children and young people during the pandemic.
- Listening to the challenges faced by the workforce across the sector.
- Including the voice of young people with care experience in policy decisions.
- Surveys and research focused on experiences of care.

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>1000 Voices</p>	<p>1,000 Voices: In September 2016, the First Minister committed to listening to 1,000 young people with experience of care. These engagements were completed in early 2020 and formed a key opportunity for the First Minister to understand the priorities of children and young people with experience of care.</p> <p>Issues frequently raised by participants included homelessness, age limits for support for children and young people with care experience, stigma, transitions from care, and mental health support. The impact of separation of children with brothers and/or sisters who are cared for away from home on their lifelong relationships was evidently significantly felt. Participants also highlighted the benefits of Champions Boards and positive experiences with Modern Apprenticeships.</p> <p>These voices informed both The Promise and the Scottish Government's commitment to #KeepThePromise.</p>	<p>In addition to input from the 1,000 Voices engagements, a variety of different ways and methods were used to involve people in the Independent Care Review. These often involved a strength-based and appreciative enquiry approach to encourage and stimulate things that were already working well. Infants, children, young people and adults with experience of care were involved in roadshow events, one-to-one conversations with a participation worker, inviting the Review to their own groups, showing the Review something they've created as a group or as an individual, emailing, writing in or completing an online survey. The Review listened to over 5,500 experiences in total, with over half of these from children and young people with experience of the 'care system', adults who had lived in care, and families.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>COVID-19</p>	<p>During the height of the pandemic, a number of emergency funds including the Immediate Priorities Fund and the Winter Support Fund were open to third sector organisations to apply to which in turn supported people within their reach who were experiencing financial, digital, emotional and/or wellbeing assistance.</p> <p>£350 million of additional Communities Support Funding was made available to local authorities to help people most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in their areas.</p> <p>To strengthen the evidence available on the impacts of the pandemic, we supported a range of new research activities to address evidence gaps, including three Lockdown Lowdown surveys of young people aged 11–25; the Children's Parliament survey of children aged 8–14; the COVID-19 Early Years Resilience and Impact Survey (CEYRIS) survey of parents of 2–7 year olds; questions on mental wellbeing in the Young People in Scotland Survey of secondary school pupils; as well as qualitative work with groups of young people and their families facing a range of challenges.</p>	<p>Aberlour were funded to ensure the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children being looked after at home and kinship carers. They delivered practical in-home support and telephone support interventions where there was significant COVID-19 risk to support staff and their families.</p> <p>Following calls to action from third sector bodies representing their communities, further assistance was put in place to support children and families with little or no digital access. In addition, digital devices and broadband connections were provided through third sector organisations and Connecting Scotland to over 4,000 care leavers.</p> <p>Guidance for residential children's houses, residential schools, secure care, and residential respite/short break facilities on staffing, social distancing and self-isolation was developed to protect children, young people and staff. This was done in collaboration with sector representatives and published in October 2020 and regularly revised. Following changes to local levels in Autumn 2020, Guidance for Family Contact for children and young people cared for away from home was developed collaboratively with the sector, and published in December 2020.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
COVID-19		<p>The second Lockdown Lowdown Report had an additional report on: <u>The Voice of Seldom Heard Groups During COVID-19 Pandemic Report - November 2020</u> – Scottish Youth Parliament held five focus groups with groups of young people with particular lived experiences, asking them questions and documenting the impact of the pandemic on their lives. One of these focus groups was with care experienced young people.</p> <p>Themes discussed included education, employment, relationships, physical and mental health and access to information. The results have been widely publicised and have helped to inform the responses of Scottish Government and partners developing and delivering policy and services during the pandemic.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Housing</p>	<p>A Way Home Scotland is a national coalition set up by the Rock Trust and funded by the Scottish Government until March 2022. It is committed to ending youth homelessness in Scotland within ten years. It is made up of organisations and professionals across Scotland representing delivery partners, service providers, local and national government as well as people with lived experience.</p> <p>The coalition has held conferences to inform their partners and established working groups to address specific issues.</p>	<p>A Way Home Scotland Coalition was commissioned by the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group (HPSG) to take forward work in relation to young people and care leavers following the initial publication of the Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan in November 2018. The coalition has had a strong focus on young people with care experience. The A Way Home Scotland Coalition is also currently working with Government on the implementation plan for the recommendations in both the young people and care leavers pathways.</p> <p>Aff the Streets is the National Youth Steering Group created to ensure young people are represented on the A Way Home Scotland coalition. Some of the members represent people who are care experienced, which is one of the groups of people at higher risk of homelessness.</p> <p>Aff the Streets is also represented on the Scottish Government's Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group, meaning that young people's views can be heard directly in discussions of future housing policies and legislation.</p>
<p>Kinship Care Forum</p>	<p>The Kinship Care Forum was established with third sector partners who were delivering services directly to kinship families. This ensured information about challenges experienced and appropriate responses were shared and developed together. These included information about direct aid and therapeutic parenting resources.</p>	<p>In partnership with Children 1st, the Kinship Care Forum suggested and contributed to a series of webinars led by therapeutic parenting expert Suzanne Zeedyk and supporting information sheets to help kinship families provide therapeutic responses to their children and young people. Collaboration also ensured families were signposted to the most appropriate local partner for direct aid.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Foster care</p>	<p>The Fostering Network (TFN) interacts regularly with Scottish Government to influence policy and legislation in order to support and promote excellence in foster care. All registered fostering services in Scotland are members, along with 97% of foster carers. Scottish Government provides annual funding of £145k to The Fostering Network through the Children Young People and Families Early Intervention Fund.</p>	<p>The funding provided to The Fostering Network has enabled the operation of Fosterline Scotland – a telephone and e-mail advice service to listen to and support the needs of foster carers, foster carer practitioners and services involved in the provision of day-to-day foster care to care experienced children and young people in Scotland. Fosterline has provided both practical and emotional support especially throughout the pandemic to ensure that children and young people receive the best possible care. The Fostering Network carry out a UK-wide State of the Nation survey every two years to get feedback from the fostering community on a variety of issues. They extrapolate Scotland-relevant information and publish a Scottish report. The next report is expected in December 2021.</p> <p>Quote from foster carer <i>“I didn’t know who could help me or give me advice but everything I needed was provided by this wonderful service.”</i></p> <p><i>“I think you all do such a fantastic job. If it wasn’t for you I would not feel as supported as I do now.”</i></p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Youth Justice</p>	<p>Throughout August and September 2020, the Scottish Government commissioned a group of four young people with experience of the care and justice system to lead a project seeking the views of their peers on three separate, but related topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the priorities for a future Youth Justice Vision and Action Plan; ● the use of a place of safety (under the Age of Criminal Responsibility Act); and ● raising the age of referral to the Principal Reporter. <p>The views gathered have been used to inform the new Youth Justice Vision and Action Plan. They were also incorporated into guidance on the use of a place of safety.</p> <p>Views from young people showed strong support for changing the law so that all under 18s can be referred to a children's hearing. These views are included in a report published on 7 December 2020. We are now working with partners to identify what needs to change to allow this to happen.</p>	<p>Supported by the Youth Justice Voices Project staff, the 'Youth Justice Visionaries' were responsible for developing and co-producing an engagement strategy to gather views. They developed the questions, a topic guide, and facilitated online workshops to gather views for us.</p> <p>Around 80 young people, aged 15–28, shared their views on all three topics through online sessions and face-to-face discussion.</p> <p>One of the Youth Justice Visionaries wrote about the experience:</p> <p>“Having young people themselves involved in the care and justice systems participate to direct the collection of evidence from their peers about the shaping of a policy that affects them all is a significant but welcome change in direction by the government. It gave responsibility and also a pride to the youth justice visionaries who say they feel increasingly listened to and respected by those in power. A job well done!”</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Adoption</p>	<p>The Scottish Government funds Adoption UK Scotland (AUKS) and the Adoption and Fostering Alliance (AFA) Scotland to undertake a scoping study based on online surveys of a) the adoption support services provided by local authorities and voluntary organisations and b) adoptive parents' experiences of accessing adoption support. The study highlighted some good adoption support practices and services, but identified these are not consistently available across Scotland.</p>	<p>To help make the adoption process as smooth and uncomplicated as possible the Scottish Government funded Adoption UK Scotland (AUKS) and the Adoption and Fostering Alliance (AFA) Scotland to develop the Adoption Journey publication. The Adoption Journey is a guide for every prospective adopter in Scotland to help prepare them for the reality of adoption and to point them in the right direction for further help and support. The Scottish Government has also funded AUKS to set up the Adoption.Scot website to support adoptive families from the first day with advice and resources.</p> <p>In 2018 the Scottish Government made a commitment to “increase support for children and families affected by FASD” given the high incidence of care experienced and adopted children living with this condition. As part of this commitment the Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD) Hub Scotland was established in 2019 and we have committed to fund Adoption UK Scotland over three-years to carry out work to support children and families affected by FASD. The FASD Hub was originally set up to support adoptive parents and carers, but due to demand the Scottish Government has extended the support and Adoption UK are now offering its services to birth parents.</p>

Assess

It is the duty of every corporate parent to assess the needs of those children and young people for services and support it provides.

Scottish Ministers evidenced assessing the needs of the care community effectively in order to ensure national legislation and policies support the provision of help, advice, support and protection when it is required. This was done by:

- Understanding common themes across children's services.
- Co-designing system changes with children and young people.
- Collating real time data across Scotland to assess and prioritise, needs and support.
- The use of third sector support to support mental health and wellbeing.
- Encouraging and upskilling a trauma-informed workforce.

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Children's Services Planning Partnerships (CSPP)</p>	<p>The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014⁷ requires local authorities and health boards, working in partnership with other public bodies and organisations, to undertake strategic assessments of need in preparing Children's Services plans.</p>	<p>A Scottish Government Strategic engagement exercise with CSPPs in 2019, and feedback sought during the pandemic, highlighted examples of good practice focused on meeting the needs of care experienced children and young people. The national review of Children's Services plans (2017-2020) identified a common theme of addressing the specific needs within plans.</p>
<p>COVID-19</p>	<p>The COVID-19 Children and Families Collective Leadership Group was established in 2020 as an operational leadership group to tackle the impact of the pandemic on children, young people, families and carers facing challenges and undertake longer-term work to improve support for health and wellbeing.</p> <p>A regular data collection was established to provide intelligence to the COVID-19 Children and Families Collective Leadership Group, with input from the 32 Chief Officer Groups, national agencies and delivery partners including the third sector, Police Scotland and the Health Service. This included key data on what was happening across Children's Services Planning Partnerships to support children and young people on the child protection register, children in care and children and families needing extra support.</p> <p>A second data set covering aspects of adult protection was also established to help provide a broader picture on related issues such as domestic abuse, problematic substance use and other populations with specific vulnerabilities.</p>	<p>The assessment of data along with the wider evidence base has been used to inform policy decisions on the COVID-19 response, as well as to develop actions to address emerging issues.</p> <p>A short-life working group was formed to identify key issues relating to transitions for young people leaving care and aftercare support that emerged as a result of COVID-19.</p> <p>The data suggested variation in the contact rate for young people requesting aftercare support throughout the pandemic. The group worked with Chief Social Work Officers to ensure that difficulties in real-time data collection were not indicative of the reality and that young people were being provided with consistent support. In response to this we continue to work with local authorities and statisticians to explore how we can refine data collections to obtain real time data that is more reliable and provides relevant information that can be used to inform ongoing policy development and decision making.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Children's Hearings</p>	<p>The Better Hearings programme, being delivered under the Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership (CHIP) created local multi-agency groups to assess where improvements are required and implement standards across the hearings system. Many changes have been co-designed with children and young people. The broad work of the programme includes: the redesign and refurbishment of hearings centres to create safe, calming and child-friendly environments; the production of guidance on planning and preparation for a hearing to better equip children and young people to participate and influence their hearing; the involvement of children and young people in the recruitment and training of panel members; and the production of child-friendly information material on rights. The views of children and young people have been essential to the success of this work.</p> <p>Review of Children's Hearings System Scottish Government made a Programme for Government Commitment that we will undertake a comprehensive review of the Children's Hearings System, to rethink the structures, processes and legislation that underpin it, ensuring courts can facilitate child-friendly justice that upholds children's rights.</p>	<p>The Our Hearings, Our Voice (OHOV) board was established in 2018 to ensure that the views of children and young people are fully embedded in work to improve the Children's Hearings system. OHOV is composed of 12 children and young people with a wide range of care experience and current and/or live experience of the hearings system. Full support is provided to enable OHOV members to develop and to be fully participative. OHOV reports regularly to CHIP, and therefore has a direct link to key decision makers to facilitate change and drive improvement. In 2020, OHOV published '40 Calls to Action' for changes in the hearings system to improve the experiences of children and young people. Progress on the 40 calls will be reviewed before the end of 2021. The progress report will be key to informing the ongoing modernisation and improvement of the Children's Hearings system in line with delivering the changes needed to #KeepThePromise.</p> <p>The Promise announced on 15 August that former Sheriff David Mackie has been appointed as the independent chair of The Hearings System Working Group. This Group will facilitate a redesign of Children's Hearings System with representatives from The Promise, Children's Hearings Scotland, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration and young people with recent experience of Children's Hearings and care services. Scottish Government are members of the group. The Promise asks for a rethink of the structure, processes and legislation in relation to the Children's Hearings system, ensuring that children and families continue to be at the heart of decision making. A review will ensure that Children's Hearings fully align with incorporation of the United National Convention on the Rights of the Child.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Housing</p>	<p>Through the Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan, originally published in November 2018 and updated in October 2020, we committed to developing and implementing pathways to prevent homelessness for people at high risk, which includes young people and young people moving from care to independent living.</p> <p>The A Way Home Scotland Coalition, the national coalition to end youth homelessness, was commissioned by the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group (HPSG) to take forward this work and a report setting out recommendations around what needs to change to prevent homelessness for care leavers was published on 12 November 2019.</p>	<p>The report, Youth Homelessness Prevention Pathway: Improving Care Leavers Housing Pathways sets out the evidence-based steps required to ensure corporate parents act on their legal and moral duties to prevent young people leaving care experiencing homelessness, at the point of leaving care and later, by fully implementing existing policy and legislative frameworks. This includes ensuring more consistent implementation of continuing care and aftercare policy.</p> <p>The pathway report recognises that not all young people with care experience fit into the legal definition 'care leaver' and as such are not provided with the same protection, such as corporate parenting supports. The pathway highlights that additional support should be in place to help the transition to adulthood for this group, with consideration being given to any trauma or adversity they may have experienced.</p> <p>In March 2021, A Way Home Scotland published a second Youth Homelessness Prevention pathway aimed at all young people in Scotland. Young people who have experience of care but are not legally defined as care leavers will benefit from this pathway.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Mental Health</p>	<p>Since 2020 and in light of enhanced worries people with care experience were facing because of the pandemic, the Scottish Government provided funding to Who Cares? Scotland through the COVID-19 Social Justice Fund to assist with the delivery of a national helpline for care experienced people and their families.</p> <p>The Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Joint Delivery Board has been formed to continue to progress the aims of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Programme Board which met for the final time in December 2020. The Joint Delivery Board is jointly chaired by COSLA and the Scottish Government and is expected to run until December 2022.</p> <p>The deliverables have been revised to meet new and ongoing priorities and agreed by Scottish Ministers and COSLA spokespeople. One of the Task and Finish groups (group 3) is considering how best to support mental health pathways and services for children and young people facing challenges, aligned to the work of The Promise. This would include children and young people who may be at increased risk of experiencing mental ill health, in line with GIRFEC which would include children/young people in care or who have left care.</p>	<p>Using this funding, Who Cares? Scotland, in partnership with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BCAP) offered a number of one-to-one counselling sessions to support people with high levels of stress, anxiety and experiencing difficulty with their mental health.</p> <p>The Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Programme Board is overseeing a £50m investment into improving mental health support, advice and care for women, infants and families. The work of the programme board, but most specifically the infant mental health work, is aligned to The Promise with a focus on its foundations, Voice, Family, Care, People and Scaffolding.</p> <p>The joint delivery board has engaged regularly with organisations representing care experienced children and young people as part of the planning process of the boards future work. The task and finish group 3 has also begun a consultation exercise to understand the experiences of children and young people seeking access to mental health support and how these pathways to support can be improved.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Trauma-informed Approaches</p>		<p>As part of the NTPP, work is currently underway to develop tailored trauma-informed training resources for people who support care experienced babies, children and young people. This learning programme is building on existing progress to date. For example, in 2020/21 work was undertaken by NES in partnership with the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) and Children's Hearing Scotland (CHS) to support embedding the principles of trauma-informed care for their service users and also for their staff and volunteers. This included an event focusing on the application of trauma-informed practice within their organisations and identifying priority areas for development with input from people with lived experience of trauma. Both CHS and SCRA have highlighted their ongoing commitment to further developing trauma-informed systems and services.</p>
<p>Kinship Care</p>		<p>Informed by this work, a commitment was made in the Programme for Government to work with key stakeholders to improve outcomes for children and young people and better support kinship carers and professionals. The Kinship Care Collaborative was created to take forward this work.</p>

Promote

It is the duty of every corporate parent to promote the interests of those children and young people.

The Scottish Government has taken action to promote the interests of looked after children and care leavers. Activities and policies include:

- Working collaboratively across the sector to tackle stigma for people with care experience.
- Promoting and providing advocacy support for Children's Hearings.
- Providing and promoting services to kinship carers, foster and adoptive parents and their families when children become looked after.
- Promoting the rights of brothers and sisters.
- Ensuring child protection guidance is strengthened to protect children at risk.
- Promoting the right to education regardless of age.

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Advocacy in Children's Hearings</p>	<p>The Children's Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011 placed a legal duty on the chair of every Children's Hearing to inform the child about the choice of having an independent advocacy worker present. This duty was commenced on 21 November 2020 and a national advocacy scheme was launched to ensure the availability of advocacy and reinforce the rights of children involved in the Children's Hearings System. A Children's Hearings Advocacy Expert Reference Group supported the design, delivery and continues to support the implementation of this demand-led service, which was backed by £1.5m in 2020-21. The national advocacy scheme was expanded in July 2021 to provide support for the right of children with brothers and/or sisters to participate in Hearings on matter of staying together and keeping connected, and funding increased to £1.8m for 2021-22.</p>	<p>The Children's Hearings Scotland Learning Academy developed a new learning module on the national advocacy scheme in collaboration with Partners in Advocacy, Children 1st and Aberdeen Civil Legal Aid Office. The module is mandatory for the Panel Chairs and 2,403 members of the CHS community have successfully completed this course.</p> <p>Over 500 children and young people were referred for support through the national advocacy scheme, and support for their Hearings in the period up to 31 March 2021.</p> <p>The national scheme is made up of 10 third sector organisations who collectively provide the Scotland-wide independent advocacy services for Children's Hearings. A dedicated website about Hearings Advocacy (Home - Hearings Advocacy (hearings-advocacy.com)) was developed. Other publicity materials and activity has included developing posters and leaflets and the views and direct input from Our Hearings Our Voice Board has helped to develop these resources. Information about the national scheme is also available on the Education Scotland National Improvement Hub. The advocacy organisations funded to provide the national scheme have also promoted services with local partners involved in Children's Hearings to ensure children and young people know how they can get advocacy support.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Tackling stigma</p>	<p>Since 2018, in collaboration with organisations who champion and support the care community, we have funded and participated in the Each and Every Child Initiative. This partnership funded by CELCIS, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Life Changes Trust, The Robertson Trust, Social Work Scotland and the Scottish Government, aims to help us improve and better understand public attitudes on the stigma around being 'in care'. The project gathered evidence on the main communications challenges around the care system and tested 'reframing' strategies to counteract these.</p>	<p>The Each and Every Child toolkit based on this work was launched in May 2021 to help people reframe how people talk about care and people who have experience of care. The toolkit is online and open access and training to stakeholders began in June 2021.</p> <p>A group of Early Adopters are working with the the Each and Every Child initiative to produce examples of how the reframing techniques can be used. Who Cares? Scotland are using it in their support for corporate parents, while The Promise Scotland are looking at how it can be used to change discourse with policy makers. The toolkit has been shared with Scottish Government officials, with training offered to officials across the Children and Families Directorate.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Vulnerable Witnesses</p>	<p>For some children and young people, their contact with the care system is linked with justice proceedings in which they are a witness. It was recognised that the justice system risks re-traumatising child victims and witnesses. The Vulnerable Witnesses (Criminal Evidence) (Scotland) Act 2019 created a new rule for child witnesses under 18 to ensure that, where they are due to give evidence in the most serious cases, they will be allowed to have this pre-recorded in advance of the trial. This will usually be by the special measure 'evidence by commissioner'. The Act builds on the earlier Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Act 2014 which introduced new rights for vulnerable witnesses to help them give their best evidence. Management of the phased implementation of the Act is being progressed through a multi-agency working group chaired by officials from the Scottish Government.</p>	<p>In January 2020 the Vulnerable Witnesses (Criminal Evidence) (Scotland) Act 2019 (Commencement No.1 and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2019/392 came into force to ensure that any child witness under the age of 18 giving evidence in the most serious cases in the High Court, will be allowed to have this pre-recorded, sparing them from having to give evidence during a trial. The regulations have had a practical effect to all relevant cases in the High Court from autumn 2020, with the remote evidence suites having to be adapted to meet public health requirements of the COVID-19 pandemic, including those in relation to physical distancing.</p> <p>The Scottish Government has also committed to the Barnahus model, to ensure that by 2025, all children in Scotland who have been victims or witnesses of abuse or violence, as well as children under the minimum age of criminal responsibility whose behaviour has caused significant harm, will have access to a 'Bairns' Hoose': a child-friendly environment which designed to provide them with trauma-informed recovery, improve their experience of the criminal justice system, with the aim of preventing children being re-traumatised.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Kinship Care</p>	<p>There has been a significant rise in the number of children living in kinship care over the past 15 years, with over 4,400 children living with kinship carers in 2020. This represents around 40% of children and young people who are cared for away from their birth family.</p> <p>The Scottish Government currently provides around £270k per annum to Adoption UK Scotland (AUKS) and the Adoption and Fostering Alliance (AFA) to deliver the Kinship Care Advisory Service Scotland. The purpose of the service is to raise awareness of kinship care and to provide information, advice and support to kinship families across Scotland and develop networks of knowledge for professionals working with them. The service also provides events and learning opportunities for the kinship community, builds capacity within informal peer networks and organises Kinship Care Week.</p>	<p>In 2020, Kinship Care Week was a virtual event, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and took place in March, with 282 people attending over 10 information and training events. The week also included family fun events, an art project for children and a recruitment campaign to create an advisory group for the Kinship Care Advisory Service Scotland (KCASS). In response to a request from kinship carers, the key theme for the week was empowering kinship carers to understand how children and young people's behaviour may be related to trauma and how to support recovery from trauma. The Minister for Children and Young People answered kinship carers' questions on a range of the challenges they face, and a video message of thanks from the First Minister was viewed 23,200 times by the end of the week. 98% of participants who responded to a survey rated their experience of the week as good or excellent.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Adoption</p>	<p>There were 211 adoptions registered in Scotland in 2020, a decrease of 261 compared to 2019. Overall the number of adoptions has fallen over the long term. The Scottish Government provides the following annual funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● £270,000 to the Adoption and Fostering Alliance (AFA) to maintain and expand Scotland's Adoption Register. ● £98,000 to AFA Scotland to maintain services to professionals and practitioners in the adoption sector. ● £75,000 to Adoption UK Scotland (AUKS) to provide a national helpline and support for adoptive families in Scotland. ● £55,000 to Birthlink in order to provide and maintain the Adoption Contact Register for Scotland. ● £40,000 to St Andrews Children's Society to support adoptive families, both during and after the adoption process. ● £18,000 to AUKS and AFA to organise and facilitate Adoption Week. 	<p>Scotland's Adoption Register is an online database which facilitates finding a match between young people and prospective adopters. In 2021 it has been 10 years since Scotland's Adoption Register was formed and in February 2021, the Register celebrated its 700th match.</p> <p>Adoption Week Scotland (AWS) 2020 was held in November and 15 events were held over the week as part of the main programme, with 698 attendees – an increase of 68% on attendees from the previous year. The themes of the week were fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, sibling relationships and therapeutic parenting.</p> <p>AWS made full use of the newly created www.adoption.scot website, with a specially created section acting as the hub for the week's activities - www.adoption.scot/adoption-week. The website was used widely to share information.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Foster Care</p>	<p>The Scottish Government provides annual funding of £145k to the Fostering Network (Scotland) through the Children Young People and Families Early Intervention Fund. Part of this funding includes support for the annual 'Foster Care Fortnight'.</p>	<p>The Foster Care Fortnight campaign aims to promote foster care within Scotland and to attract new carers who are equipped to meet the needs of children and young people who come into the care of local authorities. Scottish Ministers support events to help promote foster care during the campaign to the wider community, as well as to show their appreciation for the care that foster carers provide to children and young people. A successful event was carried out in 2020 in the Scottish Parliament to promote the voices of primary school children being care for by foster care which was attended by the Minister for Children and Young People, MSPs and foster families, some of whom cared for children and young people with disabilities.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Maintaining relationships</p>	<p>The impact of separating children who have brothers and/or sisters when children are cared for was a major issue raised by children and young people with care experience who contributed to 1,000 Voices and to the Independent Care Review. Following a commitment in the 2019-20 Programme for Government, changes have been made to law and guidance to enable siblings to maintain their relationships with each other. Section 13 of the Children (Scotland) Act 2020 places on a duty on local authorities to promote contact and relations between siblings. The duty to ensure that, where appropriate, siblings are placed together is contained in Regulation 5A of the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009. Where it is not appropriate for brothers and/or sisters to live together, steps should be taken to help them stay in regular touch with each other and to nurture their relationships.</p>	<p>Staying Together and Connected: Getting it Right for Sisters and Brothers: National Practice Guidance was published on 26 July 2021, the same day the legislative changes came into force. The Guidance will help practitioners to implement the legislation and was developed in consultation with children and young people with care experience.</p> <p>The Guidance is focused on the nurturing of sister and/or brother relationships, offering a range of creative examples for professionals to use in support of this. This collaborative approach in production continues with partners across the sector and people with care experience committing to involvement in the Staying Together and Connected Implementation Group, formed in Autumn 2021.</p> <p>At the same time we implemented changes to the Children's Hearings Rules of Procedure⁸ which will help hearings focus on maintaining strong relationships between children with brothers and/or sisters. These changes are designed to respect siblings' right to family life. Siblings, and those with a sibling-like relationship, will now have the right to participate in Children's Hearings and give their views on keeping in contact with each other.</p>

8 The Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 (Rules of Procedure in Children's Hearings) Amendment Rules 2021 Rule 2(2)

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Child Protection</p>	<p>The primary purpose of child protection processes is to ensure the safety and long-term wellbeing of the child. This may in some cases, involve a child being cared for away from their original home. The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 was published on 2 September 2021. This non-statutory Guidance describes responsibilities and expectations for all involved in protecting children in Scotland. The Guidance promotes partnership between all who care about and have responsibilities for the child, and entails a collaborative approach between professionals, carers and family members.</p>	<p>The Guidance has a strengthened focus on children's rights, engagement and collaboration with families, and on building upon existing strengths. It incorporates the experiences and views of children, young people, families and carers and includes a greater emphasis on ensuring that a child's views are taken into account in all decision making that affects them. These views have also informed the development of a series of Practice Insights, published alongside the Guidance, ensuring a central focus on the child's voice and perspective.</p>
<p>Council Tax Exemption</p>	<p>In October 2017 the Scottish Government announced its intention to exempt care leavers from paying Council Tax allowing care leavers up to the age of 26 to be exempt from Council Tax. The policy was introduced in 2018.</p> <p>A practice note was drawn up following a round table participation event hosted by CELCIS and the Scottish Care Leavers Covenant Alliance. It outlines key considerations and a range of measures for local authorities to take as Corporate parents to ensure consistent and effective implementation of the regulations, now established in law⁹.</p>	<p>The Scottish Care Leavers Covenant Alliance welcomed this measure as a good example of leadership and corporate parenting, and a practical and positive benefit to care experienced young people.</p> <p>There are no national statistics on how many people have benefited from this exemption; some anecdotal information suggests that not all local authorities make it straightforward to claim the exemption. This will be an area of focus in the next reporting period.</p>

9 Paragraph 6 of Schedule 3 to the Council Tax (Discounts) (Scotland) Regulations 1992

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Education</p>	<p>The Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP) Grant was introduced in 2018-19, recognising that children with experience of care need additional support. Funding is provided to local authorities, with anyone in care, or who has had experience of care at any stage in their life, no matter how short, is eligible for this support. More than £33 million was made available over the last parliamentary term and additional funding of just over £11.5 million is being provided to local authorities over the 2021-22 academic year. The operational guidance for the fund articulates the need for all corporate parents to co-ordinate services and support across organisational boundaries.</p>	<p>This funding is making a real difference, through increasing attendance and reducing exclusions. It has supported developments such as the Virtual School Head Teachers, who help ensure strategic support is in place for care experienced children and young people. Additional Attainment Scotland Funding has helped support CELCIS to bring together and enhance a virtual school headteacher network, to help facilitate the sharing of good practice to benefit care experienced children and families. A new online resource has also been developed and may be accessed here:- Virtual School head teachers (celcis.org)</p> <p>The closing the poverty-related attainment gap: progress report 2016 to 21 and the 2020 Headteacher Survey showed good progress was being made and the Scottish Attainment Challenge, supported by the £750m Attainment Scotland Fund, was having a positive impact.</p> <p>Funding has been used in way which has increased attendance and reduce exclusions. It also supports programmes such as enhanced tutoring and mentoring, which help care experienced children and young people, and their families to engage better with education.</p> <p>Resources have been provided by partners in Education Scotland in this summary to help support corporate parents to support care experienced children and young people in educational settings.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Education</p>		<p>The MCR Pathways mentoring programme has grown from its initial base in Glasgow to over 10 local authorities across Scotland with more to follow, thanks in part, to support through Care Experienced Children and Young People Grants.</p> <p>The education outcomes statistics for looked after children for 2019-20 showed a narrowing, albeit continuing, gap with overall school leaver population. The attainment of looked after children and young people has risen between 2012-13 and 2019-20 at SCQF level 4 or better, SCQF level 5 or better, and at SCQF level 6 or better. The gap between looked after children entering positive initial destinations (80%) and all school leavers (93%) has narrowed over the last ten years (from 30 percentage points in 2009-10 to 13 percentage points in 2019-20).</p>

Opportunities

It is the duty of every corporate parent to seek to provide those children and young people with opportunities to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing.

The Scottish Government has provided opportunities for children and young people with care experience to help them improve their wellbeing and become successful learners, confident individuals and effective contributors to their communities. For Scottish Ministers, this has included a focus on the provision of direct opportunities within the Scottish Government and its agencies as well as support during the day to day lives of children and young people, where opportunities have included mentoring support, internships and family and young people wellbeing activities.

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Social Justice & Mentoring</p>	<p>The Social Innovation Partnership (SIP) was set up in 2016 to test and scale different approaches to tackling inequality and poverty that focus on increasing people's wellbeing and capabilities. In practice this means supporting people to flourish in terms of who they are and what they are able to do, based on what they value and what matters to them.</p> <p>MCR Pathways is a key SIP partner, delivering school-based mentoring support to young people in, or on the edges of care. MCR Pathways and Columba 1400 are working in partnership to improve young people's education outcomes, career opportunities and life chances.</p>	<p>Independent evaluation of the MCR Pathways programme suggests that there is positive impact on young people's attendance at school, attainment and post-school destinations.</p> <p>MCR Pathways is a mentoring programme that supports young people with care experience or who may need more support, to realise their potential through education. The programme aims to inspire and support young people into positive post-school destinations, including employment or further education. Mentors are drawn from across the community and provide a listening ear, support and continuity as a role model and reference point. Mentors are trained to develop strong relationships that are at the heart of the programme and key to helping young people achieve their full potential.</p> <p>We are supporting the rollout of the MCR Pathways programme to enable it to reach up to 15,000 young people, alongside expansion of Columba 1400's values-based Leadership Academy for Young People to put their experiences and voices at the heart of the change journey.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Social Justice & Mentoring</p>	<p>We are improving experiences and outcomes for children and young people looked after at home with the Intandem Mentoring Programme, delivered by Inspiring Scotland.</p> <p>The programme aims to help children and young people to develop positive relationships with an adult role model, recognising that the disruption they have faced in their lives can make this challenging in a family setting. This helps them to set and make progress towards their own goals and aspirations.</p> <p>Between 2016 and March 2021 £3.75m has been invested by the Scottish Government, including to develop the 664 volunteers trained and supporting 385 matches in 19 local authorities areas. 125 matches continue to meet on a weekly basis.</p>	<p>Through intandem, a 17 year old young person was supported to continue with his studies during a challenging time at home. By developing positive relationships and having a safe space to discuss his challenges and talk through achievable solutions, this approach resulted in Jamie passing all required work, meaning he was able to return to school for sixth year, and now has a conditional place at college to study HNC childcare.</p>
	<p>Through the Children, Young People and Families Early Intervention Fund, funding is provided to over 100 organisations to promote wellbeing, prevention and early intervention activities and improve parenting and family support.</p>	<p>The Scottish Mentoring Network receive £136,000 to increase the scale, quality and awareness of mentoring across Scotland.</p> <p>From their most recent survey of members in 2019, they estimate that there are over 12,454 trained mentors and over 32,000 mentees across Scotland. Voluntary mentors are providing over 1,948,684 voluntary hours of mentoring, giving a value in kind of at least £27 million.¹⁰</p>

¹⁰ Calculation based on Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings: 2017 Provisional and 2016 revised results (ASHE) Median hourly rate of £14.06 (£550 median gross weekly earnings divided by weekly hours worked of 39.1)

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Internships in the Civil Service</p>	<p>Since 2019, the Scottish Government has participated in the Civil Service Care Leaver Internship. The programme, aimed at those aged between 18 - 30 offers an opportunity to undertake a 12-month paid internship to develop and enhance skills and experience within the Civil Service.</p> <p>Fair Start Scotland took a role in promoting the internships and offered direct advice and support to anyone who was interested in applying.</p>	<p>Through this programme 18 interns have taken up posts across core Scottish Government and Executive Agencies in a range of policy and business support roles.</p> <p>Quote from Intern: <i>"The Care Leavers Internship Scheme has provided me with a unique opportunity to grow professionally and personally. My role as a policy officer has helped me become more adaptable and flexible within a fast-paced work environment. So far I have had to opportunity to work among some of the leading experts in COVID-19 response strategies both internally and externally.</i></p> <p><i>Besides the wealth of knowledge around me, the Scottish Government is also home to some of the kindest people. Everyone in the Scottish Government interacts with one and other in an empathetic manner."</i></p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>COVID-19: 2021 Summer Offer for Children and Young People</p>	<p>As a component of the Education Recovery Plan the Scottish Government has provided £20m to deliver the Summer Offer to support those children and young people most affected by COVID-19 with a specific focus on improving mental health and wellbeing. £15m was available and Children's Services Planning Partners, and up to £5m to national organisations across Scotland to deliver the Summer Offer for children and young people. The Summer Offer has been designed to capture those care experienced children and young people – one of the target groups for Children's Services Planning Partnerships to support as part of the offer – and therefore covers activities up to 25 years of age.</p> <p>In addition, 18 National Partners have been providing tailored support to care experienced children and young people such as Barnardos; Who Cares? Scotland; Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum; Scottish Association for Mental Health; sportscotland; Youthlink and Creative Scotland; Mental Health Foundation and the Family Fund.</p>	<p>The Summer Offer has provided increased opportunities to get it right for every child and has care experienced children and young people at the heart of its delivery. Each local authorities has been able to, as required, tailor experiences for children and young people who are care experienced. This includes supporting participation, opportunities to go to the cinema with friends, support to travelling to activities and providing opportunities for holidays.</p> <p>£200,000 of the total funding was allocated to projects to support physical health and wellbeing of young people with care experience.</p> <p>Who Cares? Scotland were provided with funding to create a broad range of activities with their regional coordinators to support both physical and mental health and wellbeing. This included social engagements, family fun days, and a street soccer tournament.</p> <p>Staf (Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum) were provided funding to expand an existing proposal working with Scottish Forestry (in their capacity as a corporate parent) to create opportunities for young people to explore woodland spaces across Scotland.</p>

Access

It is the duty of every corporate parent to take such action as it considers appropriate to help those children and young people to:

- access opportunities;
- make use of services, and access support, which it provides

Scottish Ministers have introduced national actions to improve access for children and young people in general, and for those with care experience in particular, access to digital services, education and employment. Actions to keep children and their families informed of the services available to them became even more important during the pandemic and is also included in the examples provided in this section.

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
Digital	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown meant that the internet has become a critical route for staying connected to friends and family, being able to learn, work and access information on health and other services. Those who are digitally excluded could not access these benefits.</p> <p>The Digital Divide has been recognised as significant issue for Scotland's care experienced young people highlighted and exacerbated by COVID-19 pandemic. Reports by CELCIS and the Scottish Care Leavers Covenant Alliance, and other key partners and corporate parents, have helped inform the response and strategy to meet these needs.</p>	<p>Connecting Scotland is a Scottish Government initiative which run in partnership with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, local authorities and third sector organisations. The programme was set up in May 2020 in response to the pandemic, providing those who need it with access to a device, an internet connection, and training and support. Building on the success of the initial rounds, the programme has been extended to reach 60,000 people by the end of 2021, including families with children, young care leavers, socially isolated older people and disabled people, residents in care homes, lone parents, and people seeking employability support.</p> <p>In total, Scottish Government has committed over £48m to Connecting Scotland and to date the programme has delivered over 45,000 devices, including over 4,000 to care leavers.</p> <p>The programme is capturing information to help with evaluation through surveys, case studies and evaluation interviews. Stories are also being shared on social media using #ConnectingScotland and #NeverMoreNeeded. An impact report looking back at the first year of Connecting Scotland was published in August 2021.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>COVID-19</p>	<p>Through the Immediate Priorities Fund (IPF), Barnardos and Action for Children were funded to support families negatively impacted by the pandemic. A condition of this funding was to ensure they joint approach to provide assistance where required across all 32 local authorities.</p> <p>Our Coronavirus (COVID-19) Mental Health – Transition and Recovery Plan, published in October 2020 outlined the mental health impacts of the pandemic across the wider population and the actions planned or in progress in response.</p>	<p>Through the IPF, Action for Children and Barnardos identified a gap in third sector provision in Orkney Health and Social Care Partnership. They worked quickly to provide financial assistance with a short turn-around period to benefit families in Orkney and care leavers, at the height of the pandemic.</p> <p>An additional £15 million was provided to local authorities to respond to children and young people's mental health needs, with a focus on impact on mental health and wellbeing brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Over £1 million was provided to roll out the Distress Brief Intervention programme to those over the age of 16.</p> <p>With Scottish Government support, Who Cares? Scotland, in partnership with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), opened a counselling service in May 2020. The offer included eight sessions available for up to 150 care experienced children and adults over the age of 12 from a qualified counsellor or psychotherapist of their choosing who was registered with BACP. The service cemented people with care experience's expectations around opportunities and access to mental health support.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>College and University Education</p>	<p>Following a recommendation to Scottish Ministers from the Commission on Widening Access (2016), a Care-Experienced Bursary (CEB) for learners with care-experience was introduced in April 2017.</p> <p>The bursary was introduced as a non-income-assessed, non-repayable grant of £7,625 and available to both new and continuing eligible students in higher education (HE) up to age 26. At that time, in further education (FE), care-experienced students were awarded the maximum FE bursary level of £4,185. Following the independent review of student support, the CEB was updated to £8,100 for both FE and HE students from April 2018.</p> <p>From 2020-21, the age 26 cap for access to the CEB for both FE and HE sectors was removed. In addition to the bursary entitlement, HE students are also eligible for an additional repeat year (known as +1 year) if they require it to complete their studies. They can also use this plus one-year to complete one-year of their course over two-years (on a part-time basis) and retain their full bursary and other living cost support for both years.</p> <p>Students who are in receipt of the Care Experienced Bursary can apply to SAAS for the Care Experienced Accommodation Grant. This is a grant payment of up to £105 per week to assist students with the cost of accommodation in the long (summer) vacation.</p>	<p>545 HE students accessed the care-experienced bursary in its introductory year National Statistics Publications (saas.gov.uk) . Since that time, we have seen a steady increase in numbers with 840 CEB awards in 2018-19 (increase of 35%) and 1,045 in 2019-20 (increase of 20%).</p> <p>In 2019-20, 1.7% of Scottish-domiciled entrants to undergraduate courses at Scotland's colleges and universities were care-experienced. That's up from 1.2% in 2018-19 and represents an increase of 425 students. The reporting of students from care-experienced backgrounds has been given more focus in recent years, with increased efforts made to encourage students to declare themselves as being care-experienced.</p> <p>In the college sector, 3.5% of enrolments to full-time HE and 8.7% of enrolments to full-time FE courses in 2019-20 were from care-experienced students. That's up from 2.3% (full-time HE) and 5.5% (full-time FE) in 2018-19.</p> <p>In the university sector, 87.0% of Scottish-domiciled entrants to full-time first degree courses with experience of care continued their studies into Year 2. This is lower than the overall retention rate of 90.9%.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>College and University Education</p>	<p>All higher education institutions in Scotland committed to guaranteeing an offer of an undergraduate place at university to care experienced applicants who meet the minimum entry requirements for learners entering university from autumn 2020.</p> <p>The 1,000 Voices exercise and Independent Care Review highlighted that people with care experience can take more time to enter further or higher education. In line with a Programme for Government 2019-20 commitment, the bursary has been available to all students from a care experienced background, regardless of age from academic year 2020-21.</p>	<p>In 2017-18, 94.5% of Scottish-domiciled care-experienced graduates from full-time first degree courses at university were in work or further study 15 months after completing their course. The proportion of graduates not declaring themselves as care-experienced in positive destinations was slightly higher at 96.5%.</p> <p>In 2018-19, 90.7% of care-experienced leavers from full-time HE college courses and 94.8% from full-time FE courses with known destinations were in work or further study 3–6 months after qualifying.</p> <p>The rate of care experienced students withdrawing from FE early was lower for eligible Bursary recipients (4.1%) in 2018-19 than all care experienced students (8.2%).</p> <p>Data from the SFC for the 2019-20 academic year suggests that the bursary is having a positive impact and providing extra financial security, helping care-experienced students stay at college and university. It should be noted that SFC and individual institutional corporate parents provide a range of other support for students with care experience.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Employment</p>	<p>Fair Start Scotland (FSS) is the Scottish Government's employment support service, launched in April 2018. FSS aims to support those who face the greatest challenges accessing the labour market, contributing to tackling inequalities and growing Scotland's economy. FSS offers personalised, one-to-one support tailored to individual circumstances. This includes 12 – 18 months of pre-employment support (depending on specific needs of the individual) followed by up to 12 months in-work support.</p>	<p>An evaluation of the third year of FSS delivery highlighted that compared to the second year of delivery, there was a reduction in the number of young people, and people who have care experience joining the service with 4% of FSS participants between April 2020 and March 2021 being care experienced (just over 10,000 people joined FSS in Year 3).</p> <p>Access to the service for specific groups of people, including people with care experience was initially available after six months of unemployment. However, following assessment of who was using the service and of the impacts of COVID-19, a series of eligibility pilots were successfully ran across Scotland in 2020 and as a result FSS eligibility was extended for people facing particular disadvantaged in the employment market to 'Day 1 unemployed' status. This includes, amongst others, people with care experience to ensure immediate support is available for people who need it most.</p> <p>The Year 2 FSS Evaluation Report highlighted the continued need to ensure that FSS was accessible to those groups who are currently under-represented on the service including care experienced young people. In response, the Scottish Government worked in collaboration with FSS Service Providers during Year 3 and the extension period to develop action plans to identify and engage with both national and local organisations to extend the reach of FSS.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
Employment		<p>The FSS Year 3 evaluation report stated that a higher proportion of people who had experience of care, left the service early. In line with our 'test and learn' approach to employability services, we introduced changes to the service delivery model for the FSS extension period which included allowing a 'right of return' to previous FSS participants who still require support to access work after their initial pre-employment support period has ended.</p> <p>FSS provided a direct offer of support to any young person applying for the Care Leaver Internship in Scotland during 2019, 2020 and 2021.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Employment</p>	<p>No One Left Behind has been developed by Scottish and Local Government as a collective approach to employability, built around the needs of individuals. The delivery plan published in November 2020 responds to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including its disproportionate effect on young people aged between 16 - 24 years. The Scottish Government committed £100m of new investment for employability and skills support. This included the Young Person's Guarantee, extending Fair Start Scotland for a further two years and continuing momentum on existing strategies to drive inclusivity across the Labour Market.</p> <p>Under No One Left Behind, Local Employability Services, including support for young people will be designed locally to address identified needs. Services are likely to include those targeted at young people at risk of not being in education, or in employment or training on leaving school.</p> <p>Phase 2 of No One Left Behind will commence from April 2022 and will see national employability programmes – Employability Fund and Community Jobs Scotland cease with the funding transferring to No One Left Behind. People will continue to receive their full balance of support. In 2021/22, we are investing up to £7.078 million in No One Left Behind.</p>	<p>Young people in receipt of support under No One Left Behind may often have experienced challenging circumstances in their lives and be facing barriers to access and sustain employment, this can include care experience.</p> <p>COVID-19 and the associated restrictions and 'lockdown' have impacted on delivery to all participant groups within No One Left Behind. However some local authorities reported that interacting with participants at home has been beneficial.</p> <p><i>"Bringing clients together in remote groups as well as offering one-to-one video calls has helped boost confidence in the majority of participants. This has been complemented with an offer of one-to-one engagement for those clients deemed at most risk of disengaging during lockdown due to feelings of isolation and/or poor mental health and wellbeing."</i></p> <p><i>"We are calling on the public sector and other partners to build on new ways of working, based on what has worked well during the pandemic, and to develop new arrangements for local governance, best suited to the communities they serve." (Social Renewal Advisory Board 'If Not Now, When'; January 2021, Call to Action 18)</i></p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Employment</p>	<p>The Job Start Payment was launched on 17 August 2020 and aims to help young people aged between 16 - 24 into employment by providing a cash payment to those who are offered a job after being out of work and receiving a low income benefit for at least 6 months. In recognition of the additional challenges faced by young care leavers in entering the labour market, they are not required to have been out of paid work for six months, and will be eligible for a year longer – until their 26th birthday.</p>	<p>High level statistics published in August 2021 show that applications from more than 1,800 young people were approved between the launch of Job Start Payment on 17 August 2020 and 30 June 2021. That represents an investment of more than £470,000 in helping young people into employment.</p> <p>5% of applications included evidence of care leaver status (care leavers who met the standard eligibility criteria would not have been required to provide such evidence). Data is not available on the proportion of applicants who were care experienced.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Employment</p>	<p>The Young Person's Guarantee was launched in November 2020.</p> <p>The aim of the Young Person's Guarantee is to provide every person aged between 16 - 24 in Scotland the opportunity of a job, apprenticeship, further or higher education, training programme or volunteering.</p> <p>While inclusive in approach, the support is particularly valuable to those in most need of assistance. Care experienced young people were identified as a priority, alongside people with protected characteristics in the development of the EQIA and Equality Action Plan. To support the Young Person's Guarantee Activity Plan, an Equalities Subgroup was formed to support and monitor progress, which includes the Scottish Through Care and Aftercare Forum.</p>	<p>Since the launch of the Young Person's Guarantee, we have committed up to £130 million to provide new and enhanced employment, training and educational opportunities for young people. Supporting greater inclusion and equity are central to the Young Person's Guarantee and we recognise that care experienced young people may require additional support to achieve their potential. Scottish Government funding has enabled the development and delivery of initiatives and programmes designed to enhance the support available for care experienced young people, including via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Local Employment Partnerships: the majority of local plans have identified care experienced young people for specific employment, training, educational and support programmes. Many local plans also recognise the need to co-design and co-develop programmes with the care experienced community, as they take forward plans to implement The Promise; ● Developing the Young Workforce: working with MCR Pathways to help address the attainment gap for care experienced young people through mentoring as well as other initiatives at regional level; ● Discovering Your Potential: an employability programme that provides specific, flexible and intensive support for young care leavers.

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Early Learning and Childcare</p>	<p>For people with care experience, we understand that becoming a parent can often be more challenging because young care experienced parents can be less likely to have consistent support around them. That is why, as of August 2021, entitlement to funded early learning and childcare for care experienced parents was made available.</p>	<p>Although COVID-19 impacted on the delivery of expanding ELC provision to families with care experience, it was agreed with COSLA that full implementation of this commitment would be aligned to the new date for implementation of the 1140 Expansion Programme, from August 2021. It was agreed that local authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● will use their discretionary powers to provide access to places for these families; ● use a wide definition of 'care experience', in line with the findings of The Independent Care Review, published in The Promise; ● adopt a pragmatic, sensitive approach to establishing eligibility. <p>In order to support initial and ongoing implementation of this work, a working group has been established with representation from a local authorities in each Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC) area, Scottish Government and Who Cares? Scotland.</p> <p>This group ensured commitment from the 2019 Programme for Government – to provide 2 year olds who have a parent with care experienced with access to funded early learning and childcare. This was in place from August 2021.</p> <p>We continue to work with the working group in order to ensure care experienced parents feel able and willing to access this offer, if they choose to do so.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>The Promise Partnership Fund</p>	<p>The Promise Partnership Fund offers funding and support to organisations and collaborations to #KeepThePromise and help drive forward the required system change that matters to children, young people and families.</p> <p>In 2021 the Scottish Government committed £4 million investment per annum up to 2024-25 to support early intervention and prevention, holistic family support and enable system and infrastructure changes needed to #KeepThePromise.</p>	<p>In 2020/21, a £4 million fund was administered by The Corra Foundation on behalf of the Scottish Government. Grants were awarded through a decision making process involving a decision panel of people with care experience, with support of an advisory group.</p> <p>Funding of up to £50,000 was awarded to over 60 public sector and third sector organisations working with children, young people, families and carers to support them with a range of change activities, including testing new approaches, training and developing staff, driving culture change, building capacity, redesigning services, increasing engagement with children, young people, families and carers and improving how they use data.</p> <p>Funding of up to £200k was awarded to five collaborations contributing to the delivery of The Plan 21-24. £500k additional funding was provided by the STV Appeal and the Cattnach Trust to support the PPF, aimed at – getting it right for sisters and brothers to look at helping relationships to be restored or maintained between children young people and families. An additional £750k was added to this from the 21-22 PPF allowing eight projects in total to be supported.</p>

Improve

It is the duty of every corporate parent to take such other action as it considers appropriate for the purposes of improving the way in which it exercises its functions in relation to those children and young people.

For this duty, the Scottish Government has reviewed their performance as a corporate parent to help bring about improvements for people with care experience. Information received regarding improvement activity includes reviewing data statistics collated to inform the national looked after children datasets, secure care pathway, and youth justice work and the discussions on capturing data to inform policy decisions on preventing premature deaths of care experienced young people.

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
Review of statistical data	<p>A public consultation focused on developments to statistical data collection took place in late 2020, with findings published in February 2021. This sought views from users and producers of statistical data on Looked After Children and Care Leavers on how data collection, data quality, and statistical outputs could be improved to better meet user needs.</p> <p>National Looked After Children datasets have been developed to facilitate longitudinal analysis of data currently held on children in care or with experience of care.</p>	<p>Ongoing user engagement to oversee developments to statistical data collection. Initial priorities to develop national data collection have been agreed with local authorities partners, on the basis of recommendations arising from this engagement activity. This includes improving current data collection to provide more robust information on continuing care and aftercare provision and uptake.</p> <p>Longitudinal datasets have been developed with supporting guidance and metadata leading to improvements to the process for researchers securely accessing research-ready data. Further work is ongoing to improve the scope of linking this longitudinal data to other national datasets.</p>
Joint inspection of children's services	<p>The Care Inspectorate, Healthcare Improvement Scotland, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland and Education Scotland undertake joint inspections of services for children and young people across Scotland. These inspections look at the difference services are making to the lives of children and young people in need of care, protection, and corporate parenting, and the lives of children and young people for whom Community Planning Partnerships have corporate parenting responsibilities.</p>	<p>Findings from joint inspections are one of the sources of evidence that have informed the development of the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Kinship and Foster Care</p>	<p>In April 2020 amendments were made to legislation via the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020¹¹ that temporarily relaxed the foster care upper placement limit of three children in a placement at any one time.</p> <p>In Feb 2021 we made amendments to the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009¹² to introduce a further level of exemption to the placement limit for children in emergency or short term placements. Previously it was only possible for more than three unrelated children to reside with the same foster carer for a four-week period, such arrangements can now continue in the longer term, if it's assessed as appropriate for the child and all other members of the household, including the foster carers</p>	<p>As set out earlier in this report, Staying Together and Connected: Getting it Right for Sisters and Brothers our National Practice Guidance was published on 26 July 2021, the same day that legislative changes came into force.</p> <p>The amendment of the regulations enabled placement flexibility for children and young people and foster families who might be impacted by illness as a result of COVID-19.</p>

11 Coronavirus (Extension and Expiry) (Scotland) Act 2021 Schedule Paragraph 1 continues Paragraph 10 of Schedule 3 to the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 in relation to foster care upper limit.

12 Regulation 27B of the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Secure Care</p>	<p>The Secure Care Pathway and Standards, Scotland were published in October 2020.</p> <p>The fundamental approach to drafting the standards was a commitment to ensure that young people and adults who had experience of secure care were central the development of the standards. The standards are written from child's perspective and have specific standards on the areas children detailed were most important to them and had the greatest impact on their experiences.</p> <p>This method of co-production resulted in a wealth of direct quotes, written statements, letters and art designs from young people all expressing what needs to be different and delivered through the new Secure Care National Standards. These are gathered on the dedicated Secure Care Pathways and Standards (Scotland) website.</p> <p>For the first time, the Standards set out what all children in secure care, or potentially needing such care in future, in Scotland should expect across the continuum of intensive supports and services. They provide a framework for ensuring the rights of children and young people are respected and improve experiences and outcomes for children who are need extra care and support.</p> <p>The standards are rights-based and outcome-focused and they will be used by children, their parents and/or carers, families and advocates to help them all understand what their rights are and what they should expect from corporate parents and professionals when being supported in the community or in secure care.</p>	<p>Since the launch of the standards in October there have been several on line events held to raise awareness of the standards and offer direct support with their implementation.</p> <p>The five secure centres in Scotland all have a dedicated Secure Care Standards champion. This group meets regularly to share good practice and experience of implementing the standards. All five secure centres have made strides towards full implementation.</p> <p>Children and Young People's Centre for Justice (CYCJ) have contacted all 32 local authorities to offer support and tools to help with self-evaluation to assess where they are with regards implementation. The offer of help has been accepted by a number of local authorities.</p> <p>Whilst there are challenges working towards full implementation this work has gone well.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Youth Justice</p>	<p>There has been significant progress made over the last 12 years since the introduction of the whole system approach to preventing offending by young people and the shift towards prevention. However, there is still more we can do to ensure that the rights of children who come into conflict with the law in Scotland are protected.</p>	<p>Following a public consultation between November 2019 and February 2020, a working group was set up to review existing youth justice standards.</p> <p>Revised standards for those working with children in conflict with the law were published in June 2021.</p> <p>These standards outline minimum expectations for all strategic and operational services delivering youth justice in the community, secure care and Young Offenders Institutions, in line with GIRFEC and the recommendations of The Promise.</p> <p>The Youth Justice Improvement Board will provide governance to oversee the implementation of the standards. In anticipation of the changes in practice, approaches, experiences and outcomes which the standards will bring, they will be subject to ongoing monitoring, review and updating.</p>

Policy	Activity	Spotlight
<p>Evidencing Health and Wellbeing Outcomes</p>	<p>The Scottish Government is working with partners to explore how we can link existing data collections together to provide a clearer picture of health and wellbeing outcomes for care experienced young people.</p> <p>In 2020, in response to a reported rise in deaths of looked after children and care leavers an advisory expert group was established to identify actions to better capture health, wellbeing and mortality in the lives of those with care experience across Scotland.</p>	<p>The advisory group has identified a piece of work which will help improve our understanding of outcomes and aligns with broader Scottish Government data and evidence objectives. The Scottish Government is undertaking a pilot project with a small number of local authorities to link Community Health Index information with existing looked after children data with the aim of developing a more longitudinal understanding of outcomes for people with care experience once they no longer to receive direct support.</p> <p>This work will provide a better understanding of longer-term outcomes for our young people and will additionally provide us with clearer data to help us measure improvements in the care system as we work together to #KeepThePromise.</p>
	<p>A National Hub was established in March 2019 by Healthcare Improvement Scotland, in partnership with the Care Inspectorate and Scottish Government, to focus on reducing deaths in childhood.</p> <p>On 1 October 2021, we launched a national child death review system across Scotland to ensure that every such untimely death is the subject of a high-quality and consistent review – to inform learning and ultimately help reduce the number of preventable deaths (and harm) of children and young people.</p>	<p>Following consultation with key stakeholders and policy officials and in line with corporate parenting legislation, the reviews will be extended to those up to the age of 26 where they are in receipt of continuing care or aftercare.</p>

In Summary

The work of the Independent Care Review has set the context for much of the activity for this reporting period, with Scottish Ministers pledging to delivering on the commitments of The Promise. As set out in the highlighted examples, the Scottish Government has worked in collaboration with other corporate parents and third sector organisations to remain alert to and assess the needs of children and young people with care experience; to understand the barriers they face, to improve access to opportunities and benefits and to improve the services provided to the care community. Collaboration across the sector has been essential, as is the support of our partners and the continued input from children and young people themselves, to help influence and drive policy change and improvement.

Chapter 4: Corporate Parenting Activities of Scotland's local authorities

Introduction

In this chapter we review the corporate parenting activities of Scotland's local authorities between 2018 and 2021. The chapter is based on the survey responses provided by 30 of Scotland's 32 local authorities¹³, with the survey asking corporate parents about their corporate parenting activities, the impact of these, and the extent to which children, young people and other corporate parents have been involved in their design and delivery.

Alert

It is the duty of every corporate parent to be alert to matters which, or which might, adversely affect the wellbeing of children and young people.

We found that local authorities were alert to the matters affecting the wellbeing of children and young people via a number of different routes. Furthermore, these different routes had become more established between 2018 and 2021, so helping to strengthen the understanding of corporate parenting among local authorities and other local staff. The main routes to boost awareness and understanding were:

- Corporate parenting training for staff.
- Establishing (Young People's) Champions Boards.
- Multi-agency Corporate Parenting Boards – with care experienced children and young people's voice and representation on these.
- Events and activities led by care experienced children and young people.
- Dedicated corporate parenting or children's rights jobs and roles.
- Care experienced children and young people's input to recruitment.
- Use of data and intelligence.
- Use of smartphone apps.
- Surveys and research focused on experiences of care.

13 Some local authorities provided their response as part of a combined health and social care partnership (HSCP).

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Corporate parenting training for staff</p>	<p>Local authorities have continued to provide corporate parenting training for new and existing staff, with more e-learning options being developed to help widen access to the training.</p> <p>Local authorities are also delivering training that extends beyond corporate parenting into important related themes and concepts, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) ● Trauma-informed practice ● Nurture ● Mental health ● Strengths-based practice (e.g. Signs of Safety programme) ● Dyadic Developmental Practice ● Mentoring (via MCR Pathways) <p>In delivering the training, some local authorities reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Care experienced children and young people were directly involved in its design and delivery ● Use of ongoing support and coaching, rather than one-off training events 	<p>In Dundee, educational psychologists provide ongoing support to staff in children's houses to increase knowledge and understanding of issues affecting children and young people, for example trauma.</p> <p>In Glasgow, and in partnership with Who Cares? Scotland, corporate parenting learning and education programmes (including e-learning module) have been developed.</p> <p>In Glasgow, The How Nurturing Is Our Children's House programme helps staff to support children in children's houses in line with education nurture principles.</p> <p>In Perth & Kinross, a virtual and hard copy Corporate Parenting toolkit has been developed by young people in association with Perth College design students.</p>

Activities	Spotlight	
<p>Establishing Champions Boards</p>	<p>Champions Boards (or 'Champs Boards') have been established in most local authorities, often with support and funding from Life Changes Trust. Champions Boards provide a space for care experienced children and young people to express their views, ask questions and be listened to by senior members of staff and elected members.</p>	<p>In some local authorities, Champions Boards for younger children have been set up, such as 'Little Fix' in Moray, 'Mini Champs' in East Renfrewshire, 'Little Champs' in Highland and 'Mini Clacks Voices' in Clackmannanshire.</p> <p>In West Dunbartonshire, the Champions Board have sub-groups of young people ('Foster Care', 'Residential Houses' and 'Throughcare' groups) who meet separately to discuss specific themes.</p> <p>In East Renfrewshire, and working with In Control Scotland, the Champions Board embarked on a project to support young disabled people with care experience to be more included in their home life, local community, in decision making and in their local champions board.</p>
<p>Multi-agency Corporate Parenting Boards – with care experienced children and young people's voice and representation</p>	<p>Multi-agency Corporate Parenting Boards (noting the name of the strategic grouping varies across Scotland) have been established in local authorities to bring together social work, education, health, housing, police, Children's Reporter, third sector and other partners to share intelligence, identify priorities for action, and provide leadership. In some local authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Multi-agency sub-groups have been established to support the strategic Corporate Parenting Boards around specific themes and needs ● Care experienced children and young people are supported to become members of the Boards, thus allowing their voices to be heard 	<p>In Argyll & Bute, its Joint Resources Group of operational and senior managers across education, health and social care meets monthly to monitor the progress of care experienced children and young people to identify individual or collective concerns and needs.</p> <p>In West Lothian, a multi-agency sub-group was set up to identify young people at risk of homelessness, all of whom were care experienced. The group alerts the Corporate Parenting Board of the need for housing, outreach, financial, advocacy and other supports.</p>

Activities	Spotlight	
<p>Events and activities led by care experienced children and young people</p>	<p>Local authorities have led or supported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Festivals and conferences to build understanding of and celebrate the experience of care among staff, children and young people and wider communities • Short films and drama productions led by children and young people that tell the stories and experiences of care • Informal activities (such as alpaca trekking, go-karting, graffiti, pizza making, trampolining and walking football) involving children, young people and corporate parents that allow getting to know each other as individuals and equals 	<p>Hebridean Year of Care in 2021.</p> <p>Two festivals of care in Shetland.</p> <p>Films include 'GRIT' in Dundee; 'Milestones' in Perth & Kinross; and East Lothian's Champions Groups' films on Mental Health.</p> <p>In Highland, working with drama and arts organisations to enable corporate parents to feel what it is like to be care experienced and the issues children and young people face.</p>
<p>Dedicated corporate parenting or children's rights jobs and roles</p>	<p>Local authorities have created positions that are dedicated to listening to and promoting the voice of care experienced children and young people, so helping to ensure children's rights are being upheld.</p> <p>These positions have job titles that highlight their function in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate parenting • Children's rights, or • The Promise <p>A number of local authorities stated that these positions are ring-fenced for and held by care experienced children and young people.</p>	<p>In Aberdeen, newly created Children's Rights Development Assistants positions have been filled by those with lived experience. Their roles include working with young people across a range of looked after settings to understand and share their experiences with wider partners.</p> <p>In Argyll & Bute, there is an established group of four children's champions (all of whom are elected members) who have a particular responsibility for engaging with and listening to their care experienced children and young people.</p> <p>In Glasgow, Promise keepers have been appointed in each Social Work team to ensure Social Workers are aware of their responsibilities in relation to The Promise.</p> <p>In South Ayrshire, the position of a Corporate Parenting Lead Officer has been established.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Care experienced children and young people's input to recruitment</p>	<p>Some local authorities have had care experienced children and young people as members of interview panels when recruiting new carers and staff (such as residential staff), and Children's Hearing panel members.</p> <p>In Angus, three care experienced advisors were involved in the design of a new children's house and the recruitment of staff for it. They have also been involved in the recruitment of foster carers.</p> <p>In Dundee, care experienced young people now play an active role in the recruitment of staff, with the key concept of 'compassionate care' embedded within the interview process.</p>
<p>Use of data and intelligence</p>	<p>With connections to the 'Improve' duty, many local authorities have developed statistical data sets focused on care experienced children and young people. Spanning data from social work, education, housing and other service area, the data is then analysed for emerging trends and acted on.</p> <p>Use of self-evaluation and quality assurance data to identify emerging trends and support needs.</p> <p>Spending time reading key research and reports related to care experienced children and young people (e.g. the Independent Care Review / The Promise reports and research from Who Cares? Scotland or Scottish Children's Parliament) and then considering the implications for them as corporate parents .</p> <p>In Fife, intelligence has been gained from the annual reviews of carers; and in Stirling, their annual reviews of foster care placements enabled children and young people in foster care to share their views about their placement.</p> <p>In Moray, the offending rates of young people have been closely monitored for police to check in with social work around the challenges the young people concerned may be facing.</p>
<p>Use of smartphone apps</p>	<p>Local authorities are widely using smartphone apps that have been developed for children and young people to express their views and needs, to keep in contact with professionals, and to receive information and updates on supports and opportunities available.</p> <p>Apps include the Mind Of My Own (MOMO) app in Edinburgh and North Lanarkshire; Viewpoint in Argyll & Bute, East Lothian, Glasgow, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian; and My Views in Angus.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Surveys and research focused on experiences of care</p>	<p>Local authorities have widely used surveys and other participative opportunities to hear from and capture the views and experiences of care experienced children and young people; with the findings then shared with and used by the local Corporate Parenting Board and/or Champions Board to bring about changes to supports and services.</p> <p>Some local authorities have adopted a 'You Said, We Did' approach so that children and young people can see that their views are being taken seriously and acted upon.</p>	<p>In Dumfries & Galloway, its Listen2Us group engaged with over 100 young people to understand their experiences of care and wider services; while its Youth Council led a consultation looking at the impact of COVID-19 on young people.</p> <p>In Glasgow, mental health research has been led by the Champions Board, and supported by Who Cares? Scotland, to explore the mental health needs of care experienced young people.</p> <p>In Stirling, care experienced young people were asked what should 'Stop' and 'Go', with many things changed as a result. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 'Stop' care placement moves – Stirling Council carried out research into unplanned endings, pinpointed situations where there was a higher level of placement disruption, and took steps such as recruiting and training foster carers ● 'Go' on providing options for accommodation when young people leave care – Stirling Council recruited supported lodgings carers, opened two new supported accommodation flats, and developed a business case for 10 additional supported accommodation places <p>In West Dunbartonshire, the Champions Board have created surveys, social media and opinion polls to capture the voice of care experienced children and young people.</p>

Assess

It is the duty of every corporate parent to assess the needs of those children and young people for services and support it provides.

We found that assessment, which assist with and inform good decision making in the best interests of the child was a significant activity area for local authorities, with local authorities introducing new or different assessments around:

- Individual children and young people's health, educational achievements and needs, housing and employability options, and wellbeing.
- Parents' and families' assets and support needs, so helping brothers, sisters and families to stay together.

Local authorities also focused on how children and young people, family and agencies are involved in assessment and then planning for care experienced children and young people.

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Health, mental health and sexual health assessments</p> <p>Typically forming part of Looked After Children Health Assessments, local authorities have been placing greater focus on children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing.</p> <p>Some local authorities have also sought to develop or enhance assessments relating to sexual health and teenage relationships.</p> <p>Spanning different health specialities, examples were given of new, dedicated roles being established to better assess and meet the health needs of care experienced children and young people.</p>	<p>In Argyll & Bute, psychologist supported meetings have been introduced for care experienced young people in mental distress or at risk of self harm, to support improved assessments and planning.</p> <p>In East Lothian, Scottish Government funding was used to develop and implement a mental health triage system, providing care experienced young people with access to school counselling, mental health youth workers and early low level supports for young people's mental health.</p> <p>In Eilean Siar, multi-agency guidance has been developed on supporting children and young people at risk of suicide or self-harm.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
Health, mental health and sexual health assessments		<p>In Glasgow, the Vulnerability Health team works closely with Sandyford Sexual Health Service for sexual health testing and support for young people, where required.</p> <p>In Stirling, guidance was introduced to improve assessment for Vulnerable Pregnant Women.</p> <p>Specialist roles to support care experienced children and young people include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Dundee, a psychotherapist • In East Ayrshire, a Looked After and Accommodated nurse • In North Lanarkshire, a CAMHS for Accommodated Young People specialist
Early Years assessments	Working with Health Visiting services, some local authorities reported how they had sought to assess and identify child and family needs early (i.e. for pre-school children) and then ensure supports are then in place – including ensuring access to Early Learning and Childcare places for 2 year olds.	In West Lothian, the Family Assessment and Support Service Screening (FASS) group brings together health, education, third sector, early years, Parenting Groupwork and Sure Start services to assess and meet the needs of vulnerable children from pre-birth up to 5 years and to provide a singular referral route for professionals and family.
Educational assessments	Local authorities have sought to widen their educational assessments of care experienced children and young people beyond exam results and attainment.	<p>In Highland, a Schools Advocacy and Participation Development Officer (based with Who Cares? Scotland) has been established.</p> <p>In North Ayrshire, the needs and interests of care experienced pupils are assessed via the staged intervention Additional Support Needs process.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Housing and Employability options assessments</p>	<p>For care experienced young people, local authorities gave examples of person-centred assessments being made of their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employability (e.g. employment, training and further/higher education) options • Housing and tenancy options to help ensure their place of living on leaving care is sustainable and safe
<p>Wellbeing (SHANARRI) assessments</p>	<p>Local authorities have made greater use of the GIRFEC National Practice Model and available wellbeing tools to assess the wider safety and wellbeing of children and young people.</p> <p>Linkages have also been made to other processes and approaches to wellbeing assessments, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contextual safeguarding • Care and risk management processes
<p>Parenting assessments</p>	<p>Local authorities have developed their approaches to assessing parenting skills and capacities, doing so within a more strengths-based ethos of focusing on parents' strengths as opposed to their deficits.</p> <p>The strengths-based approach can be seen in, for example, Dumfries and Galloway, East Renfrewshire and South Ayrshire adopting and using the Signs of Safety programme.</p> <p>Assessments also include areas of concern, such as substance use, and children, young people and carers' need for short breaks (respite care).</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Whole family assessments to better enable brothers, sisters and families to stay together</p>	<p>Building on approaches such as Family Group Decision Making and Lifelong Links, local authorities have enhanced their assessments of the child and young person to include the relationships and assets of the wider family.</p> <p>Linked to this, greater priority has been given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping children with brothers and/or sisters together wherever possible and appropriate • Kinship care placements so that children can be cared for by relatives, with local authorities increasing the level of financial and emotional support for kinship carers (as well as foster carers) 	<p>In Clackmannanshire, the setting up of the Family Group Decision Making team and the extensive searches they conduct for extended family and networks has meant that a number of children who were unable to remain in the care of their parents have been safely placed with kinship carers.</p> <p>In Fife, the Kinship Team has more than doubled in size to 13 dedicated staff supporting carers. The team carries out assessments and provides direct support that families need to remain together.</p> <p>In West Lothian, concurrency planning has led to practice improvements throughout the Children and Families Service with the inclusion of family partnership working agreements, information leaflets for parents, and training for social workers on removing barriers to engagement.</p> <p>In Glasgow, Independent Reviewing Officers are now responsible for whole families, making simultaneous decisions for children with brothers and/or sister to ensure an optimum solution for maintaining relationships, and respecting rights to be included in one another's 'My Meetings'.</p>
<p>Increasing child and family participation</p>	<p>In line with The Promise, local authorities reported they had been reviewing how the voices of children, young people and families could be central to care planning and decision making.</p>	<p>In Fife, a focus has been on how to increase child and parental attendance at decision making meetings.</p> <p>In Scottish Borders, increasing child and family voice in Plans has been a key area of activity.</p>
<p>Accessibility of assessments and plans</p>	<p>Many local authorities have been making their assessments and the resulting Child's Plans and Pathway Plans more child-friendly and accessible.</p>	<p>In Clackmannanshire, parent and child-friendly GIRFEC-integrated assessments have been developed with pictures, colours and visuals.</p> <p>In Glasgow, terminology has been changed from the (acronym and professional-worded) 'LAC Review' (Looked After Child Review) to the more inclusive term of 'My Meeting' and 'My Plan'.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Collaboration across multi-agency partners</p> <p>As part of the assessment or planning stages, examples were given of social work staff working closely with multi-agency staff to identify different supports for children, young people and families.</p> <p>In particular examples were given of local authorities working closely with Police Scotland and the Children's Reporter to review the needs of young people involved in offending and help identify alternative, preventative activities.</p>	<p>In Argyll & Bute and Stirling, their Early and Effective Intervention models monitor the young people involved in offending and then understand and respond to their needs at an early stage.</p> <p>In Moray, the local authorities has been working with Police Scotland and the Courts to understand which young people are involved in the criminal justice system.</p> <p>In North Lanarkshire, social work staff work closely with a number of Sheriffs to assess need and implement the 'structured deferred sentencing' model for all young people aged 16–21, including care experienced young people, and offer holistic, wrap around support to prevent young people potentially coming into conflict with the law.</p> <p>In Stirling, a social work post based in the Police Scotland Forth Valley Public Protection Unit has been funded to review all referrals from Police to the Children's Reporter and ensure that all possible family support is in place.</p> <p>In West Lothian, the inclusion of third sector organisations in screening groups has widened the perspectives of assessment and the range of services available for care experienced children, young people and their families.</p>

Promote

It is the duty of every corporate parent to promote the interests of those children and young people.

We found that local authorities were playing a strong role in promoting the interests and needs of care experienced children and young people, both through championing the rights, needs and lives of care experienced children and young people as a whole and by enabling the interests and needs of individual children and young people to be heard. We have grouped the promote activities under the following themes:

- Committing to national policy innovations, such as the enshrining of the UNCRC, The Promise, and the Scottish Care Leavers Covenant.
- Adopting local protocols that place care experienced children and young people's interests first.
- Establishing Virtual Schools Headteachers.
- Providing advocacy support for children and young people.
- Events to promote and celebrate care experienced children and young people.
- Opportunities for care experienced children and young people to influence consultations.

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Committing to national innovations</p>	<p>Local authorities, along with their multi-agency partners, have committed to international and national movements and policies that advance and promote the interests of care experienced children and young people. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) • Independent Care Review / The Promise • Scottish Care Leavers Covenant • Council Tax exemption • Care Experienced Young Person Further Education Grant • Early Years provision for 2 year olds • Sustainable Housing on Release for Everyone (SHORE) Guidelines for care leavers leaving prison and ensure access to housing and re-integration into their community 	<p>In Angus, and in line with The Promise, the Through Care and After Care (TCAC) team consulted with care experienced young people and adults engaged with the service about a new name for the service which would be less stigmatising. They chose 'Horizon' as the name.</p> <p>In adopting a rights-based approach, Falkirk has produced its first Children's Rights Plan and Stirling has produced its first Children's Rights Report.</p> <p>North Lanarkshire have adopted and embedded the '7 golden rules' – <i>Understand my rights, A chance to be involved, Remember, it's my choice, Value me, Support me, Work together, and Keep in touch</i> – produced by the Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland.</p> <p>In South Ayrshire, they have changed the language used to help embed love and support for care experienced children and young people – as portrayed in the video.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Adopting local protocols that place care experienced children and young people's interests first</p>	<p>Within individual local authorities services (e.g. education or housing), local protocols or policies have been adopted that put the interests of care experienced children and young people first. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Zero exclusion policies within schools ● Additional financial support for young people moving from care to independent living ● Housing protocols that are supportive in enabling care experienced young people to maintain and sustain their tenancies ● Changing application forms and referral forms so that they recognise care experience ● Employer recruitment incentives 	<p>In Stirling, a 'Second Chance Protocol' has been established in housing that recognises that care experienced young people may need more support in the transition to independent living.</p> <p>In Aberdeen, the Throughcare allowance has been increased, income maximisation is promoted, and there is more flexible access to monies.</p> <p>In South Ayrshire, employer recruitment incentives have been increased locally to increase opportunities for care experienced young people.</p> <p>In Dundee, where there is a possibility of school exclusions, a process involving assessment and communication across schools and social work overseen by the Chief Education Officer and Head of Service for children and families is undertaken. The final decision rests on an agreement by these leaders and includes a clear assessment and understanding of the impact on the child and family concerned.</p>
<p>Establishing Virtual Schools Headteachers</p>	<p>Many local authorities have established Virtual School Headteachers – with their role including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improving the educational experiences and outcomes of care experienced children and young people in the local authorities area ● Providing key links between multi-agency teams and advocate for the needs and rights of care experienced children and young people 	<p>In Stirling, the Virtual School Headteacher team focus on the wellbeing and participation in school of children and young people with care experience. The team have increased schools' focus on, and aspirations for, their care experienced pupils, with measurable improvements in the attainment, attendance and post-school participation rate of care experienced young people.</p>
<p>Providing advocacy support</p>	<p>To support children and young people in decision making meetings, and in preparing for these meetings, the majority of local authorities are providing advocacy services so that their interests and needs are able to be heard and listened to.</p>	<p>In many local authorities, third sector organisations (such as Who Cares? Scotland) are funded to enable care experienced children and young people to access and be supported by skilled advocacy workers.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Events to promote and celebrate care experienced children and young people</p> <p>In addition to the festivals, conferences, films and drama productions discussed under 'Alert', other events supported by local authorities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● National Care Leavers Week ● Kinship Care Week ● Foster Care Fortnight <p>Some local authorities have encouraged the writing of 'letters' from their care experienced children and young people to communicate their interests and needs to corporate parents in an accessible and powerful manner.</p>	<p>In Stirling, a '<i>Dear Corporate Parent...</i>' letter from the Champions Board on behalf of all care experienced children and young people was shared with thousands of Stirling Council staff, including teaching staff. It generated a tremendous response and led to many pledges of support.</p> <p>In Glasgow, achievement events for children and young people are held, such as the Care Leavers annual Celebration Event.</p>
<p>Opportunities for care experienced children and young people to influence consultations</p> <p>Via Champions Boards or other mechanisms, local authorities have sought to have children and young people's voices contributing to consultations on national and local policy, legislation and guidance developments.</p> <p>Examples of consultations where care experienced children and young people have been supported to contribute include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Independent Care Review ● Secure Care Standards 	<p>In Falkirk, care experienced children and young people were centrally involved in the development of their first Children's Rights Plan and in shaping Falkirk's Health and Wellbeing Service supports.</p>

Opportunities

It is the duty of every corporate parent to seek to provide those children and young people with opportunities to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing.

We found that local authorities have worked hard to provide opportunities across their different services for care experienced children and young people. We have grouped the opportunities created by different local authorities service type – i.e. schools and education, employability, housing, and community development – noting that health, further and higher education, and other opportunities are reported in later chapters.

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Schools and Education</p> <p>To support care experienced children and young people to flourish in schools, opportunities provided by local authorities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring via MCR Pathways • Use of the Scottish Attainment Challenge Care Experienced Fund to provide creative arts options <p>Many local authorities have also established a Virtual Schools Head Teacher, a senior member of education staff in a local authorities who works at a strategic level, not in a physical school building, who focuses on improving the educational experiences and outcomes of care experienced children and young people in the whole local authorities area.</p> <p>In terms of extra-curricular activities, local authorities have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid for care experienced children and young people to go on school trips • Supported care experienced pupils to enrol on the Duke of Edinburgh Awards • Enabled use of outdoor resource and activity centres <p>Local authorities have supported and removed barriers for care experienced children and young people to participate in activities that lead to awards, such as the Youth Achievement Awards.</p>	<p>In Angus, the Active Schools coordinator has assessed and monitored the engagement of care experienced young people in school and extra-curricular activities to ensure that opportunities are targeted towards care experienced young people and they are supported to access and benefit from these.</p> <p>The Dundee 'Track Music' programme, supported by Articulate Cultural Trust, aimed to encourage care experienced young people to express themselves creatively through music.</p> <p>In Argyll and Bute, two young people were selected for the Who Cares? Scotland Harvard University Scholarship Summer School Scheme.</p> <p>In East Renfrewshire, the Active Schools Team has identified all care experienced children and young people in schools and has prioritised their access to extra-curricular school clubs and activities in support of schools.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Employability</p> <p>A number of local authorities have adopted a 'family firm' approach within and beyond the local authorities that spans work experience, tasters, employment, skills and training opportunities to enable care experienced children and young people progress to a positive economic destination.</p> <p>Guaranteed interviews for care experienced young people applying for local authorities (and partners') work experience, Modern Apprenticeship and job opportunities have all been provided. Similarly some ring-fenced Modern Apprenticeships for care experienced young people have been created.</p> <p>The hours and skills given and demonstrated by care experienced young people have been recorded and accredited to help them with future job applications.</p> <p>Jobs have been created that are designed to be attractive to care experienced young people – including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children's rights workers ● Participation workers ● Peer mentors ● Home link workers <p>Support has been given to care experienced young people when completing application forms and preparing for interviews (including providing interpreter services where needed).</p>	<p>In Dundee, the throughcare and aftercare team has co-located with its youth employability service, and there is a dedicated employability worker in post to support care experienced young people.</p> <p>In Fife, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service delivered two taster 'Firefighter for a day' sessions specifically for care experienced young people.</p> <p>In Glasgow, work has been progressed with Marriott Hotels, Skills Development Scotland and CELCIS to develop an extended 'family firm' approach that involves wider employers.</p> <p>In Highland, the local authorities has continued elements of the Activity Agreement approach via its 'Positive Pathways' provision that is delivered by a dedicated 'Youth Employability Service – CEYP' team.</p> <p>In Scottish Borders, a work experience scheme was established that led directly on to a Modern Apprenticeship.</p> <p>In West Lothian, a £30 weekly training allowance is provided on top of funding received for an apprenticeship or work-related opportunity as an additional incentive and to ensure that care experienced young people are not financially disadvantaged while no longer receiving social security benefits.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Housing</p>	<p>For young people in continuing care or moving to independent living, local authorities housing teams have worked with partners to provide supported opportunities to experience independent living and develop essential life skills.</p> <p>Many local authorities have invested in and expanded their supported accommodation / independent living housing stock to provide more and better quality options for young people leaving care.</p> <p>Many local authorities have adapted their housing policies and protocols to provide young people leaving care with priority access to housing and ensure there is no need for them to register as homeless.</p>	<p>In East Dunbartonshire, Fife and Midlothian, the National House Project has been introduced to provide training and support for care experienced young people so they can successfully transition into their own tenancy.</p> <p>In East Lothian, care experienced young people offered a starter flat will retain the same housing officer throughout the tenancy, rather than a change, allowing relationships to grow and be maintained over time.</p> <p>In North Lanarkshire, housing, education, families services and Barnardo's have worked together to develop training flats to help upskill care experienced young people learn essential skills and so maintain their tenancy.</p> <p>In Orkney, a protocol has been developed that helps ensure young people leaving care can attain a 'gold priority pass' for housing without having to go through the homeless route thereby avoiding an unnecessary additional 'label'. Joint training was provided to ensure all relevant staff have awareness of the protocol.</p> <p>In Glasgow, changes in procurement have been made to authorise use of credit cards for speedier purchase of furniture and equipment for supported tenancies.</p>
<p>Community Development</p>	<p>In helping care experienced children and young people to feel part of, be part of, connect to and contribute to their local communities, opportunities have been created to engage with and participate in community groups and events.</p>	<p>In Inverclyde, care experienced children and young people were supported to become pen pals with older people living in care homes. They sent letters and at Christmas worked with a local music studio to produce a virtual Christmas concert.</p> <p>In West Lothian, care experienced children and young people are encouraged and supported to engage in community-based groups (with practical or emotional support provided to support their participation).</p>

Access

It is the duty of every corporate parent to take such action as it considers appropriate to help those children and young people to:

- **access opportunities;**
- **make use of services, and access support, which it provides; and**
- **take such other action as it considers appropriate for the purposes of improving the way in which it exercises its functions in relation to those children and young people.**

In reviewing the different activities reported under 'access', we found local authorities referred to activities that centre on how to enable care experienced children and young people to understand and then access the range of opportunities available to them. We have grouped these activities under the themes of:

- Increasing awareness of available opportunities.
- Increasing access to IT / Wi-Fi.
- Access to sport and leisure services.
- Budgets to support access to wider hobbies and interests.
- Increasing access to care records.

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Increasing awareness of available opportunities</p>	<p>Local authorities have used a number of different approaches to help care experienced children and young people to understand and actively promote the different education, leisure, employability housing, throughcare and aftercare, financial and wider supports and opportunities available to them. These approaches include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated Facebook pages and social media – often developed and managed by care experienced young people • Key workers working directly with children and young people to discuss the options available to them <p>Some local authorities have worked to ensure that children and young people who are cared for in another local authorities area are also kept informed of the opportunities available to them.</p>
<p>Increasing access to IT / Wi-Fi</p>	<p>Local authorities have helped care experienced children and young people to access the Internet – with this need heightened with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. By doing so, children and young people have been able to access a wider range of services, such as social media platforms and education provision.</p> <p>Connecting Scotland have been a key partner and supported in the funding and provision of digital devices and Wi-Fi connectivity.</p>

Activities	Spotlight	
<p>Access to sport and leisure services</p>	<p>Local authorities have enabled care experienced children and young people to access sports and leisure services and facilities by providing free membership cards.</p>	<p>In East Renfrewshire, care experienced children and young people are able to bring a friend for free.</p> <p>In South Ayrshire, the sport and leisure pass includes some non-local authorities run facilities.</p>
<p>Budgets to support access to wider hobbies and interests</p>	<p>Flexible budgets have been made available so that there are monies available to pay for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Musical instruments and music lessons ● Outdoor pursuit, such as horse-riding and golf ● Outdoor play equipment ● Driving lessons <p>To access these opportunities, transport or free bus travel is provided</p>	<p>In Argyll & Bute, a policy on supporting care experienced children and young people to keep pets has been developed.</p> <p>In East Lothian, Heavy Sound was funded to provide music opportunities on both a group and individual basis to care experienced children; while Biking North provided the opportunity for six care experienced young people to build a bike from scratch and then ride it in the North of Scotland.</p> <p>In Glasgow, flexible funding of £400 was provided to care experienced young people during the COVID-19 pandemic with no application process.</p> <p>In Orkney, a local enhanced Young Scot offer is provided to care experienced young people to allow them to access more local benefits and entitlements.</p> <p>In Scottish Borders, children and young people in Children's Homes were provided with debit cards to enable them to quickly buy items online, so reducing time and paperwork for purchases.</p>
<p>Increasing access to care records</p>	<p>Some local authorities referred to work that helps children and young people access their care records.</p>	<p>In Aberdeen City and Perth & Kinross, increased access to care records also includes 'Write Right About Me' where children and young people explain how they want their records and plans to be written.</p>

Improve

It is the duty of every corporate parent to take such other action as it considers appropriate for the purposes of improving the way in which it exercises its functions in relation to those children and young people.

For the Improve duty, and with a slightly different emphasis to the wording contained in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, we asked local authorities how they have reviewed their performance as a corporate parent to help bring about improvements for care experienced children and young people.

We found that local authorities responded to this survey question in four different ways:

- At the individual child and young person level, through improvements made in the review and analysis of individuals' plans and activities.
- At the care experienced child and young person population level, through the review and analysis of statistical data and wider intelligence centred on this population.
- At the service level, through inspections and reviews of services.
- At the strategic level, through reviews and changes made to the corporate parenting governance arrangements.

We present examples of these four types of improvement activity below and, importantly, we found that local authorities were using the knowledge and learning gained from these activities to make positive changes to the supports and services for care experienced children and young people.

Activities	Spotlight	
INDIVIDUAL CHILD AND YOUNG PERSON DATA DEVELOPMENTS		
Gathering and analysing data from children and young people	Local authorities have been using different approaches to listen to the views and needs of children and young people, and to track their outcomes.	In North Lanarkshire, the views and experiences expressed by children and young people via the Mind Of My Own app are regularly reported to North Lanarkshire's Corporate Parenting Group. In Orkney, the use of the Outcomes Star has been piloted to improve how practitioners work with care experienced children and young people to agree key outcomes and how to measure them.

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Adaptations to management information systems and data recording</p>	<p>Local authorities have been making changes to the data they are recording for care experienced children and young people so that their needs are better understood and more effective and tailored supports can be provided as a result.</p>	<p>In Glasgow, Independent Reviewing Officers collate information on whole families to support planning for the family as a whole, prioritising family time and keeping brothers and sisters together, where possible.</p> <p>In West Lothian, the Looked After Nurse Advanced Practitioner and the Reviewing Team Manager hold regular reviews to ensure that children were identified and notified to the Looked After Health Team.</p>
<p>Improvements in information sharing between corporate parenting partners</p>	<p>Some local authorities referred to examples of different partners (particularly between social work, health, education, housing and Police Scotland) working together to share information about care experienced children and young people.</p>	<p>Glasgow, North Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire have been working together to support reciprocal information-sharing agreements that allow tracking of the education achievements of children accommodated outside their own local authorities.</p> <p>In West Lothian, there has been work with Police Scotland to make changes to the Vulnerable Persons Database (VPD) and Inter-agency Referral Discussions (IRD) systems to include reference to whether a child is 'care experienced'. This should allow further analysis of the types of risk and harm that children who are care experienced encounter, and what the outcomes are of IRD and professional involvement.</p>

Activities	Spotlight	
CARE EXPERIENCED CHILD AND YOUNG PEOPLE POPULATION DATA DEVELOPMENTS		
<p>Developing corporate parenting datasets</p>	<p>A number of local authorities have developed multi-agency data sets to better monitor and understand the number, characteristics, needs, placement types and outcomes of care experienced children and young people.</p> <p>Indicator areas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Education statistics ● Housing, temporary accommodation and homelessness statistics ● Children's Reporter and Hearings statistics <p>Many local authorities are in the process of organising their performance reporting to align with The Promise.</p>	<p>In Falkirk, each service (external fostering, residential care, supported accommodation, short breaks and children's rights) has specific targets to meet and these are monitored quarterly.</p> <p>In Inverclyde, a partnership with Education Scotland improved the data set for care experienced children and young people in local schools; so allowing a deployment of Care Experienced Young People (CEYP) Attainment Funding for tutors for care experienced young people.</p>
<p>Engaging with the PACE programme</p>	<p>Many local authorities have worked with CELCIS as part of the Permanence and Care Excellence (PACE) programme to improve permanence planning for care experienced children and young people, and use the data and intelligence from the programme to (re)design local processes.</p>	<p>In Moray, the PACE programme led to the implementation of the two-week meeting to help focus the planning and support activities for care experienced children.</p> <p>In South Ayrshire, a specific permanency panel was set up to provide greater focus on meeting permanence timescales.</p>

Activities	Spotlight	
SERVICE LEVEL REVIEWS		
<p>Inspections, reviews and self-evaluations of services</p>	<p>Whether as an annual or one-off exercise, local authorities undertook internal auditing, quality assurance or review work to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the quality of assessment, planning, supports and services for care experienced children and young people • Identify improvements that can be made to supports and services <p>Some local authorities were looking to involve children and young people in the review of services.</p> <p>Other reviews included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting by partner organisations, e.g. annual and evaluative reports by third sector organisations into the services and programmes they deliver • Findings from Care Inspectorate-led inspections, with their Post-Inspection Action Plans and support from their Link Inspector helping to make changes to supports and services • Analysis of service complaints received, with the complaints used as a basis for action 	<p>Examples of review and self-evaluation exercises given by local authorities were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Argyll & Bute, reviews of its assessments (including Initial Health Assessments), planning, and child and young person participation • In Clackmannanshire, review of its fostering service • In Dundee, review of child chronologies • In Glasgow, review of kinship care • In Highland, review of County Lines procedures involving a review of trafficking, organised and serious crime and child protection processes • In North Ayrshire, using How Good Is Our School and How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare frameworks to assess its education provision • In North Ayrshire, reviews of quality of individual plans and ensuring the child and young person's voice is central

Activities	Spotlight	
CORPORATE PARENTING GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS		
<p>Tightening of reporting and governance arrangements</p>	<p>Local authorities have strengthened their governance arrangements so that the Corporate Parenting Board has strategic oversight of activity and responsibility for improvements.</p> <p>Reporting has been aligned from the Corporate Parenting Board to local authorities' Children's Services Partnership, Community Planning Partnership and Local Outcome Improvement Plan.</p>	<p>Edinburgh's Children's Partnership is a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary senior management group dedicated to delivering better outcomes for all of Edinburgh's children. Oversight of the Corporate Parenting Plan is included in the remit of this group to ensure partnership oversight given numerous agency members have their own dedicated Corporate Parenting Plans.</p> <p>In North Lanarkshire, the Corporate Parenting Group (now named the North Lanarkshire Promise Partnership), reports to the Improving Children's Services Group and regularly reviews its progress of the annual improvement plan, with updates provided for both single and multi-agency actions.</p>
<p>Annual Corporate Parenting reports</p>	<p>Local authorities and Corporate Parenting Boards recognised the value of producing annual corporate parenting reports as these are opportunities to review progress made over the previous year against their Corporate Parenting Plans and agree on future priorities for action.</p>	<p>In Clackmannanshire, the need to ensure better reporting, monitoring and evaluation against Corporate Parenting Plan targets was recognised and an evaluation of the 2018–2021 Plan is in progress.</p>

In Summary

Local authorities have worked hard and been creative in their approach to delivering on their corporate parenting responsibilities. A wide range of activities have been progressed across all six of the Section 58 duties and, in doing so, there are clear examples of how local authorities have involved care experienced children and young people and have collaborated with other corporate parent organisations. The different activities outlined need to continue and, in some cases, be strengthened across the early learning and childcare, education, social work, housing and other service domains that local authorities have responsibility for if the ambitions of The Promise are to be delivered on.

Chapter 5: Corporate Parenting Activities of Scotland's Universities

Introduction

In this chapter, we review the corporate parenting activities of Scotland's universities between 2018 and 2021. The chapter is based on the survey responses provided by 17 of Scotland's 19 universities.

Across Scotland's universities, the survey responses clearly show that a significant amount of activity has taken place between 2018 and 2021, with significant progress being made in relation to an increased understanding of the needs and issues of students with care experience, and a range of positive actions to better meet these needs. Alongside this, the implementation of the Care Experienced Student Bursary Award has not only provided a degree of financial incentive and security for students with care experience, but also added impetus for enhanced supports and broadened staff's understanding of some of the barriers to further and higher education faced by care experienced young people.

What is especially positive about the information received is that whilst Universities have an obvious and particular role in terms of their education function, they are demonstrating an increasing awareness of the holistic needs and issues of students from care experienced backgrounds. This is evident in the range of measures and supports that are in place, throughout a student's journey, from initial interest and application through to graduation. In addition, there is an obvious commitment to ongoing learning and improvement, for example via internal and external reviews, benchmarking against other universities, and importantly working in partnership with care experienced students directly to inform their practice and improvement journeys.

Whilst some of the activity by some institutions has been described as being delivered on a one-off basis, other activity is being embedded in systems, structures and processes, indicating that continued and ongoing focus is being maintained.

It is also important to highlight some of the additional activity and support that has been put in place as response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent public health measures. The pandemic has exacerbated and amplified many of the challenges already faced by students with care experience and therefore many of the additional measures put in place were vital to addressing the health and wellbeing of these students.

Alert

It is the duty of every corporate parent to be alert to matters which, or which might, adversely affect the wellbeing of children and young people.

We found that universities were alert to the matters and issues affecting students with care experience across a range of issues, not just in terms of academic studies. Wellbeing and emotional support, accommodation and finance, and more recently the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic were all highlighted as factors to be considered and addressed when ensuring appropriate levels of support for students with care experience.

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Dedicated Support Staff for Students with Care Experience</p>	<p>Universities have developed and demonstrated a range of activities to provide enhanced and in most cases, dedicated staffing to support students with care experience from pre-entry through to graduation. This can involve general support and advice, with enhanced understanding across the admissions, teaching and support teams, through to specific and dedicated bespoke support throughout a student's time at university.</p>	<p>Since the beginning of 2020 the University of West of Scotland have two named contacts for care experienced students and have formulated a new team - the 'WeCare' Team - with a dedicated contact email and a team who work together from pre-entry to graduation to support care experienced students.</p> <p>In September 2018 Queen Margaret University (QMU) appointed a Head of Widening Participation and Outreach as QMU's Named Point of Contact for care experienced students to provide personalised and tailored advice and support, from application to graduation and coordinates the University's Corporate Parenting duties and responsibilities.</p> <p>Glasgow Caledonian University established a Case Conference process to support care experienced students who may require support in critical instances. The process is co-ordinated by the Head of Student Wellbeing and brings together academic and support staff who work with students to put together bespoke support plans.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Training and Awareness Raising</p>	<p>Most universities identified learning and development and awareness-raising for staff as important to being alert to the needs of students with care experience. This included a range of activity from in-house sessions to collaborative approaches with external partners at both local and national level. Ongoing focus to ensure that staff and systems remain aware of the specific issues and attuned to the needs of students with care experience has been demonstrated through these activities.</p>	<p>Scotland's Rural College requires all members of their corporate parent working group to undertake the Open University module on care experienced learners, and this has been rolled out through the staff development programme. Staff also participate in appropriate networks, including Colleges Scotland, Who Cares? Scotland and CELCIS.</p> <p>At Heriot Watt University, the Hub for Success and Who Cares? Scotland have provided training for key staff within the University and training sessions and guidance has been developed for Personal Tutors to raise awareness of the challenges facing care experienced students and signpost the institutional support available.</p> <p>The University of Highlands and Islands created an online staff corporate parenting training module, which is mandatory for all staff to complete.</p> <p>Through 2018–2021 the University of St Andrews actively collaborated with the Open University in their development of module for care experienced training. This will be rolled out as essential training to staff.</p> <p>The Open University in Scotland are working with their People's Services team to adapt the Corporate Parenting in Higher Education course for a four nations context and make it available to staff across the university, including teaching staff who are employed centrally. They are also meeting with the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) with a view to sharing the course with other UK universities.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Collaboration and Liaison with Stakeholders</p> <p>Universities evidenced a range of activity to ensure that they were able to draw on support and experience of key partners in being alert to the needs and improve educational pathways to university for students with care experience. These included involvement in forums and networks at both local and national level.</p> <p>Whilst all universities evidenced partnership working and collaboration, many of these were with agencies other than statutory Corporate parents. However many gave examples of drawing on good links and relationships with local partners and national agencies to inform developments and improvements. Organisations such as CELCIS, Hub for Success, Who Cares? Scotland, Scottish Funding Council and MCR Pathways were cited as being key partners in informing an improved understanding of the issues and needs of students with care experience, as well as offering input and support to an improved understanding and application of corporate parenting duties. These are key links to maintaining a more contextual approach to meeting the holistic needs of care experienced students. Other collaborative relationships included engagement with Student Forums and, at local authorities level, Champions Boards and Virtual School Head Teachers Forum.</p> <p>Collaboration with other key statutory corporate parents (e.g. local authorities education services and social work services, including family placement teams, residential staff and throughcare and aftercare teams) was less evident and yet a more joined up approach between these services would make a real difference to many students with care experience.</p>	<p>Glasgow School of Art (GSA) Open Studio works with 120 schools across the west of Scotland and have developed specific partnerships with organisations that work directly with care experienced young people (o i.e. Become, Who Cares? Scotland and MCR Pathways to ensure that more care experienced young people are aware of the opportunities and support available to them at GSA. Disclosure and monitoring mechanisms are in place and there is evidence of increased participation by looked after children and care experienced young people in the full range of Open Studio activities.</p> <p>The University of West of Scotland maintained links and attended events from Who Cares? Scotland, Care Experienced, Estranged and Student Carers Forum, Become Charity, Stand Alone Charity, National Widening Access Group, Universities Scotland, SWAP West, SCAAP, MCR Pathways as well as local support networks.</p> <p>Heriot Watt University's involvement in networks such as the Hub for Success and CEECEF (Care experienced, Estranged and Carers East Forum) helped them to identify and understand the challenges faced by care experienced students and to share best practice with other further and higher education institutions.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Care Experienced Voice</p> <p>Being alert to the lived experience of care leavers was a recurring theme for most universities. Some were further on in their journey of listening and understanding than others but there was an explicit commitment to improving on current activity to ensure a genuine and authentic articulation of care experienced voice in shaping supports and services.</p> <p>Universities described various ways in which they have attempted to ensure appropriate and meaningful levels of participation, consultation and the incorporation and influence of care experienced voice in planning, delivering and reviewing support. Some of this was done via in-house forums and process, some of which were one-off and others set up for specific purposes. These included Corporate Parenting Steering Groups (Stirling and Glasgow Caledonia universities), Students Associations (Dundee and West of Scotland universities). Other approaches saw work in partnership with external partners such as local authorities Champions Boards, Who Cares? Scotland and MCR Pathways. This enabled engagement with potential as well as current students. There were issues highlighted in how and when to engage with care experienced students and to what end.</p> <p>Whilst some universities have well developed processes others acknowledge that they are at different stages of the journey but with commitments to make progress.</p>	<p>The Open University in Scotland's planned consultation exercise with its wider cohort of care experienced students was postponed due to the pandemic. They hope it will take place in 2021/22. The previous consultation in 2018 led to the formation of the Student Reference Group. This group informs all actions taken in relation to corporate parenting and is represented on the Steering Group.</p> <p>The University of Highlands and Islands has been a member of the local Highland CHAMPS group which brings together local agencies who work with care experienced young people to collaborate and share ideas on activities that can support this group.</p> <p>The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland consulted with their care experienced students and with Who Cares? Scotland, MCR Pathways and the Glasgow Care Forum to find out best-practice approaches to being alert and embedded these measures in their corporate parenting plan.</p> <p>The University of Highlands and Islands have found student engagement to be a challenge and are aware of the many complex reasons why these students do not wish to be involved in some of the work they do.</p>

Activities	Spotlight	
<p>Care Experienced Voice</p>	<p>Students with care experience are not a homogenous group and therefore participation must be meaningful and flexible and attempt to reflect the broad range of issues and experiences they encounter. This has been particularly evident over the last year as the impact of COVID-19 has highlighted and exacerbated many of the existing challenges, but also as new challenges, issues and needs become apparent.</p>	<p>Glasgow School of Art have not systematically engaged or consulted over the six Duties but recognise there is opportunity to develop formal processes to ensure that they have listened to, involved and included the voice and experience of children and young people and used this information to inform strategy and future action.</p> <p>The University of Strathclyde has recognised the importance of seeking out and listening to the voices and experience of young people and students during the pandemic. The Strathclyde Cares mentoring programme quickly transitioned to online/virtual support with mentors regularly checking in with their students and helping them engage with relevant support services where necessary.</p>
<p>Alert and Responding to the Impact of COVID-19</p>	<p>The backdrop of COVID-19 pandemic and its disproportionate negative impact on students with care experience has seen universities develop a range of positive and supportive responses. Many universities cited the pandemic as being a significant factor impacting on progressing improvements identified in their Corporate Parenting Plans; but they also were attuned and aware of the particular issues faced by care experienced students during these most challenging times. As such, various measures were introduced to help mitigate the range of issues affecting wellbeing and learning. This recognition of many of the structural disadvantages should form the basis of longer-term adjustments to the range and level of supports and opportunities that need to be in place.</p>	<p>In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Heriot Watt University plans to address digital exclusion, to clearly signpost financial support (including hardship funds and the University's access to learning grant of £460) as well as prioritising this group of students to access on-campus facilities during lockdown periods.</p> <p>The University of Aberdeen sought advice from key partners and stakeholders when writing guidance materials for care experienced students to take into account the unique circumstances they have found themselves in, being particularly careful to avoid unhelpful messaging (e.g. 'going home for Christmas'). Alumni and peer to peer mentoring was scaled up and plans were developed to support students, especially those who are care experienced, who remained based in Aberdeen over the winter break.</p>

Assess

It is the duty of every corporate parent to assess the needs of those children and young people for services and support it provides.

Whilst universities are primarily concerned with assessing academic potential and support needs, many demonstrated an informed understanding of the broader holistic needs and issues faced by students with care experience to enable them to successfully complete their chosen course of study. Much of this focus has been on pre-entry and admission stage although there were positive examples given of ongoing processes for assessing individual and cohort needs. Individual meetings and support processes have been identified alongside regular student surveys and ongoing engagement with other partners and stakeholders. In addition to assessing academic needs, other key matters were identified such as health and wellbeing, financial support and accommodation.

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Assessing the Needs of Individual Students with Care Experienced</p>	<p>Universities evidenced a range of broadly similar measures to ensure that individual students have their needs assessed and addressed within bespoke support arrangements. These include pre-entry identification and contact and ongoing engagement with teaching and support staff, addressing both academic support needs as well as practical and wellbeing needs.</p>	<p>The University of Dundee consulted care experienced students both informally – during conversations relating to their individual needs via Student Services supports and more formally through inclusion of care experienced students within the University's Care Experienced Working Group. They are currently in the process of creating a mechanism for 'recurring circumstances' to be taken into account, with individualised support plans in place for students. This collaborative work across the University aims to avoid repeated mitigation submission by care experienced students.</p> <p>The University of Strathclyde's Named Care Experience Adviser, alongside the Widening Access Team, has a pivotal role in assessing the needs of care experienced young people. Working collaboratively with MCR Pathways on the MCR/HE Working Group has allowed Strathclyde to work directly with MCR Pathway Mentors offering pre-entry advice and application support to young people.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Assessing the Needs of Individual Students with Care Experienced</p>		<p>The University of West of Scotland include a tick box on the enrolment form for experience of care, which can identify students that do not apply through UCAS and is another way for students to self-identify. All those that tick the box at enrolment are sent an email from the 'WeCare Team', with an offer to meet face-to-face (pre-COVID-19-19), telephone or virtually with the student to identify any needs and requirements for support.</p>
<p>Assessing the Needs of the Care Experienced Student Cohort</p>	<p>Whilst students with care experience will have their own individual journeys and bespoke support needs, universities have taken a range of measures to better understand and address the broader issues and systemic challenges which students with care experience can face as a cohort. This includes engaging with partners and stakeholders across a range of areas, including local authorities education and social work/throughcare and aftercare teams, specialist support agencies such as Hub for Success or CELCIS as well as organisations representing care experienced voice such as Who Cares? Scotland and local Champions Boards.</p>	<p>The University of Highlands and Islands Student survey launched an anonymous student survey to coincide with national Care Day which gathered feedback from this group of students to help improve the services offered to them. 41 students completed the survey, and a list of recommendations have been added to the university's Action Plan to strengthen the existing support.</p> <p>Glasgow School of Art Widening Participation and Student Support staff are active members of 'Care experienced, Estranged and Carers West Forum'. The Forum meets 4-5 times per year, and is made up of the 'named contacts', primarily for care experienced students, at each HE and FE institution in the west of Scotland. This forum is used to develop knowledge and understanding to support the needs of prospective and current care experienced students.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Assessing the Needs of the Care Experienced Student Cohort</p>		<p>Students attending Heriot Watt University who declare care experience via their UCAS form are invited over the summer period to an online meeting to support their transition to University. Students are also encouraged to invite anyone else who will be supporting them e.g. a social worker or support worker. This early meeting has helped increase levels of engagement with Student Wellbeing Services and has helped to build stronger relationships with key student support staff.</p>
<p>Data Collection, Analysis and Monitoring Improvement</p>	<p>Whilst all universities identified activity to capture and assess needs of care experienced students via individual and cohort basis, this was generally in relation to qualitative data to improve support. Several institutions have begun to take a more robust approach to assessing both needs and outcomes of their students with care experience by initiating more robust data collection and analysis approaches.</p>	<p>The University of Aberdeen careers service has commissioned an independent student interns project to explore the careers and employability needs of care experienced students. The research will investigate awareness of the levels of support which are currently available and investigate the reasons why students feel able or unable to utilise that support.</p> <p>The University of Highlands and Islands reported that in the last 2 years, the institution has begun to collect some basic data on care experienced students which will help to inform the development of its services and create a baseline. The student survey will become a yearly activity to collect qualitative data and it is hoped more quantitative data will be available in due course.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Assessing Students with Care Experience Needs Stemming From the COVID-19 Pandemic</p>	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic and the public health measures put in place have added significantly to the issues experienced by students with care experience. A number of institutions were able to demonstrate a range of activities intended to address and alleviate some of the additional stresses particularly when face-face learning, and face-face support contact was not possible.</p>	<p>The University of Glasgow reported that the Care experienced, Estranged and Student Carers West Forum arranged regular meetings of this Forum online. For care experienced students this included automatic hardship payments, the provision of computer & IT equipment as required; more regular proactive contact from the CESSC; and opportunities to have 1-2-1 online chats and/or more informal/social group drop-ins.</p> <p>Glasgow School of Art recognised that the barriers facing care experienced students during the current pandemic would be further exacerbated. Care experienced students were therefore prioritised for the Digital Inclusion Initiative and the additional COVID-19 funding available in summer and winter 2020.</p> <p>Queen Margaret University established 'QMCares' and have been able to reach and keep in contact with care experienced students throughout lockdown, assessing their ongoing support needs and ensuring members are kept informed of both academic and personal support opportunities.</p> <p>In response to the pandemic, the University of St Andrews contacted all care experienced students to assess what support they required and ensured that they had access to the events being run. In addition, they sent additional information to care experienced young people regarding financial advice and support.</p>

Promote

It is the duty of every corporate parent to promote the interests of those children and young people.

Universities have demonstrated a range of activity to promote the interests of students with care experience. This includes the direct provision of practical, emotional and academic support to those students along with a strategic raising of awareness, staff training and 'championing' function within and beyond their institutions. There is evidence that universities are promoting the interest of students with care experience both on a personalised basis within their respective institutions, taking a flexible approach to meeting individual needs, as well as promoting interests of care experienced students as a specific cohort. Some universities' actions saw the needs of care experienced students being grouped together with estranged students (young people studying without the support and approval of a family network) and student carers groups. Whilst there are undoubtedly similarities in terms of both needs and responses, it is important to recognise the specific duties and responsibilities that Universities have as statutory corporate parents.

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Promotion of personal and individualised interests</p>	<p>A range of actions have been detailed which aim to promote the interests of students with care experience. Many of these actions address some of the structural inequalities and disadvantages that care experienced students can face, including specifically financial difficulties and housing insecurity.</p> <p>Many universities have detailed the guaranteed offers and contextual admission policies they apply, acknowledging the occasional challenging and complex educational journeys many young people with care experience have to traverse.</p> <p>Many universities have also identified a range of discretionary and targeted financial supports to 'level the playing field'. These include financial supports at the outset of university life; ongoing accommodation support during their studies; and financial support to attend and participate fully in graduation ceremonies on successful completion of their studies.</p>	<p>The University of Dundee are offering any care leaver student attending the Access Summer Schools free additional preparation to ensure that when starting in September they are fully prepared and supported for life as a student.</p> <p>The University of Edinburgh have started to process applications that have been marked as care experienced on the UCAS application within a week of receipt. If applicants are verified as being care experienced, then they are changed to 'Plus Flag' and will be made a guaranteed early offer at minimum. They also make these applicants an aspirational offer at minimum if they are predicted one grade below this level.</p> <p>For academic year 20/21, the University of West of Scotland have introduced the UWS Care Experience Grant, which is a start-up grant, which allows care experienced students access to funds to help with the cost of starting University.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Promotion of the interests of care experienced students as a cohort</p>	<p>Activity in this area has included supporting to help inform and shape an improved understanding of care experienced students by enabling them to share their stories, their journeys and success. Re-framing the narrative around care experience is important both to challenge stigma but also to present a more informed and empowering understanding of the journeys of students with care experience.</p>	<p>The University of Glasgow has supported care experienced students to promote their stories through social media, and supported their involvement in such events as the launch of the Guaranteed Offer by the First Minister (at Glasgow Caledonian University in July 2019) and the StandAlone awareness-raising events held at the Scottish Parliament in February and September 2019.</p> <p>The University of Strathclyde is proactive in promoting all Care Experience celebration events through our social media channels, for example, care leavers week, The Promise, Care Day.</p> <p>Heriot Watt University is a member of the Hub for Success and CEECEF (Care experienced, Estranged and Carers East Forum) and this has helped identify and understand the challenges faced by care experienced students and to share best practice and promote collaborative working with other further and higher education institutions.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Digital Connection</p>	<p>The vital importance of digital connection has been further highlighted through the impact of COVID-19 as students struggled to access on-campus connection or IT hardware to maintain their studies. As noted elsewhere, students with care experience have been afforded priority access to IT hardware and funding to support digital connection via Wi-Fi and broadband.</p>	<p>The University of West of Scotland have given all care experienced students priority for the Digital Hardship Scheme and have notified them of this to ensure they apply if they require it.</p> <p>Glasgow Caledonian University has made dedicated resources available for care experienced students including long-term loan of a laptop to ensure that they are not affected by access to digital resources. They also have a Digital Inclusion Fund and all care experienced students are encouraged to apply for any additional resources they might need e.g. broadband time.</p> <p>Glasgow School of Art recognised that the issues of Digital Inclusion were particularly significant for this group of students. In the roll out of the Digital Inclusion Scheme during COVID-19 they were prioritised to receive laptops and relevant software for the duration of their academic programmes.</p> <p>The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland have been able to support students with funding for technical equipment to be able to better access online activity during the global COVID-19 pandemic.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Responding to COVID-19-19</p>	<p>The impact of the public health precautions and social restrictions have added existing challenges not least in terms of educational disruption, digital access, social isolation and resultant impacts on mental health and emotional wellbeing. Universities have demonstrated an informed and supportive approach.</p>	<p>During the pandemic Glasgow Caledonian University have been aware that for some students their home environment is not conducive to study, so have offered safe socially distanced study spaces in the library. This enabled students to continue their studies or undertake their assessments on campus if that was better for them.</p> <p>Scotland's Rural College offers residential accommodation to care experienced students and students with caring responsibilities based on a wellbeing assessment, carried out by a member of the support team on each campus. The residential department offers bed and breakfasts to students who are suffering personal hardship during COVID-19-19.</p>

Opportunities

It is the duty of every corporate parent to seek to provide those children and young people with opportunities to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing.

Universities described offering a range of specific and dedicated opportunities to students with care experience. Many, for example, referred to enhancing access and admission opportunities or ongoing academic support during the course of study. There was also some specific focus on the broader holistic needs of students with care experience including enhanced opportunities for housing and accommodation support and access to financial supports via additional grants and bursaries.

Addressing these matters is fundamental to helping alleviate anxieties and stresses and providing predictability and security for students who may lack the family support that other students may receive as a matter of course. In addition, broader supports and opportunities were in place in many settings including enhanced access to sports clubs, social clubs and other events both on and off campus. Several universities detailed specific activity to promote and address mental health and wellbeing ranging from informal drop-in 'Big Blethers', through staff and peer mentoring supports, to dedicated and targeted support with access to mindfulness classes and counselling. Access to named university staff as key contacts were often cited as gateways to additional support.

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Supported Transitions into Student Life</p>	<p>A number of initiatives were cited to ease transitions to university and campus life for students with care experience. Designed to help orientate students, alleviate anxieties, identify supports and assist with induction, these examples cited demonstrate positive person-centred approaches.</p>	<p>In 2019 the University of Stirling piloted a 'transition move-in' scheme. This enabled students with care experience to move into university accommodation two days before the official move-in date. In 2019, 10 students took part. The funding covered two additional nights' accommodation, two breakfasts and a dinner. Over the two days, the students received a campus tour, met with the relevant Accommodation Support and Student Support Services teams and took part in social activities.</p> <p>In August 2020, the University of West of Scotland organised a Virtual Transition Event for care experienced new students. The event provided information on support from the WeCare Team, Funding and Advice, Health and Well-Being, Academic Skills and the Students Union, including the care experienced Students Group who provided information and advice on UWS including enrolment and what to expect when you start your course.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Careers and Employability</p>	<p>Several universities have provided paid work experience opportunities to enable students to gain valuable experience, earn extra income, and, combined with dedicated careers advice, enhance future employment prospects.</p>	<p>The University of Stirling care experienced students have access to paid opportunities on their ambassador scheme and the University actively supports and encourages individuals to apply for internships.</p> <p>Glasgow Caledonian University Outreach department employs students to work on many of the Outreach activities that are run through the department. These are paid work opportunities for students. Care experienced GCU students are guaranteed an interview for these positions. GCU Careers and Employability team help care experienced young people to build their employability skills and provide a range of support including CV writing, interview practice and guidance from employers who work directly with students to help their understanding of the work place.</p> <p>The University of Edinburgh offer targeted careers and employability support through a named contact within the Careers Service.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Health and Wellbeing</p>	<p>The promotion of positive mental health and wellbeing included a range of support and opportunities: the opportunity to travel and represent their universities internationally; as well as support for anxiety, stress management and counselling. As noted elsewhere, access to sports clubs and social events were also promoted and students with care experience had priority access and funding support.</p>	<p>The University of Strathclyde prioritises care experienced students for international experiences, with care experienced students going on educational trips to Madrid, Barcelona and Los Angeles since 2018.</p> <p>The University of West of Scotland utilise Silvercloud, an online support tool to help students who are suffering from anxiety or stress. Students are made aware of this through regular communications, support from the UWS qualified counselling team, as well as the other Health and Well Being services and events and support that is available to all students.</p> <p>The Open University in Scotland provides a 24/7 online community to support students' mental health and wellbeing called Togetherall. In 19/20, the OU in Scotland received funding from the Scottish Government to provide counselling services for students. They contracted with Togetherall to provide Live Therapy. Live Therapy is an online direct therapy service providing the same number of sessions and quality of treatment as face-to-face therapy. Sessions are delivered by any combination of text, audio and webcam, based on preferences, by a team of remote UK-based accredited counsellors.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Housing and Accommodation</p>	<p>Most universities have addressed the need for students with care experience to have access to stable and affordable housing and accommodation. This can be on-campus with the availability of fully funded 'halls of residence' accommodation. Other examples included 'flat share' tenancies and rent deposit schemes.</p>	<p>In December 2018 Queen Margaret University provided a letter of support for East Lothian Council's (ELC) 'My Place' application to Life Changes Trust. My Place is an innovative housing project that aims to support care experienced young people into their first tenancy through provision of Peer Flat Mates. Through membership of the Council's Corporate Parenting Board, the Widening Participation and Outreach (WPO) team worked with ELC's Housing team and colleagues at Rock Trust to promote the Peer Flatmate opportunities. ELC have to date purchased 3 three-bed properties and two of the rooms in each property are offered to care experienced young people as their first tenancy, with the third room offered rent-free to a Peer Flatmate who acts as a positive role model for the care experienced young people. WPO helped to attract QMU students (including two with care experience) to the Peer Flatmate roles and all current properties have QMU students living with the care experienced young people as the Peer Flatmates.</p> <p>The University of Stirling care experienced students living in university accommodation are now fast tracked to be assessed for funding from the University Accommodation Enhancement Fund for either a £1,500 annual reduction for undergraduates or £1,800 annual reduction for postgraduates.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Social opportunities and connections in response to COVID-19-19</p>	<p>As detailed elsewhere, response to the public health precautions and restrictions because of COVID-19 have seen a range of measures introduced. These have included opportunities which have both been practical e.g. addressing digital access and digital issues as well emotional wellbeing by initiating and supporting access to opportunities to address social isolation.</p>	<p>In partnership with Dundee University Student Association, University staff co-hosted a Christmas lunch in 2020 for students who could not travel home for Christmas, whilst this was due to the pandemic they will be supporting such an initiative again in 2021 for any students who are on their own.</p> <p>The University of Strathclyde Widening Access team work closely with Strath Union, Strathclyde's student association, to provide and promote social events to care experienced students, such as bowling trips and movie nights (pre-pandemic), and in the wake of COVID-19-19, remote social events.</p>

Access

It is the duty of every corporate parent to take such action as it considers appropriate to help those children and young people to:

- **access opportunities;**
- **make use of services, and access support, which it provides; and**

A recurring issue relates to students with care experience identifying themselves as care experienced via UCAS or an institution's application tick box. This can be an important trigger in opening up additional targeted supports and opportunities. However, individual students may choose not to declare their care experience during the application or entry stage. Universities need to ensure that students with care experience are fully aware of all benefits of self-declaring, whilst maintaining appropriate levels of confidentiality. The primary purpose should be to ensure enhanced support and opportunities, which directly benefit them. The combination of repeat opportunities to declare throughout their period of study enables students to identify for support should their circumstances change and universities should ensure that these recurring opportunities are available. Alongside that, engaging with key partners, for example local authorities, schools and other bodies enables universities to be alert to individual needs and take account of common issues facing care experienced young people entering higher education, and ensure appropriate access to opportunities.

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Widening Access</p>	<p>Universities have continued to develop and improve on Widening Access activity with specific focus on students with care experience. This has involved a range of activity including: self-declaration tick boxes; guaranteed interviews; and dedicated follow up and offers of one-to-one support through application.</p> <p>Many described contextual admissions policies, supported offers and guaranteed admission if students with care experience meet minimum entry requirements.</p> <p>Much of this personalised and individualised support is dependent on care experience applicants and students declaring or identifying their care experience via UCAS or other process. It is crucial to ensure ensuing support is tailored and personalised to individual needs. This requires flexible, sensitive, creative and responsive approaches throughout the students' pre-entry/ admissions process and throughout their study time.</p>	<p>The University of Strathclyde introduced a care-experience declaration box, incorporated into the Registration Questionnaire which is completed by all students at the start of each academic year. This has enabled students who did not declare through UCAS or where they have applied for a course that does not come through the UCAS route to identify as care experienced in order to access additional support. They have also incorporated a means to self-identify into formal articulation college application forms for those students applying through college. The Strathclyde Pre-entry Access Course also incorporates the tick box and allows the named contact for Strathclyde to be alerted when any care experienced young person applies for Strathclyde. The incorporation of a self-declaration option on all entry routes has provided care experienced applicants the opportunity to receive one-to-one support during the application process as well as support during transition.</p> <p>At the University of Aberdeen, for degree programmes which require an interview, care experienced students are guaranteed an interview, and the 'Reach Programme' supports applicants with training sessions and mock interviews for the medicine degree.</p> <p>The University of Stirling have established procedures to arrange individual visits for applicants with care experience and their supporters to see the campus and find out about what we offer as well as individual meetings with academic colleagues in the subject area of interest.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Health and Wellbeing Supports</p>	<p>As detailed elsewhere, response to the public health precautions and restrictions because of COVID-19 have seen a range of measures introduced. These have included opportunities which have both been practical (e.g. addressing digital access and digital issues) and more emotional in nature by initiating and supporting access to opportunities to address social isolation and enhance wellbeing.</p> <p>The University of Edinburgh staff and peer mentoring schemes that have been put in place also ensures this wider distribution of activities and also actively promotes wellbeing by ensuring students have continuity of support throughout their studies and a strong network of staff to support them.</p> <p>Heriot Watt University issue regular communications inviting students to wellbeing activities. Dedicated events for widening participation student groups like Time to Talk which supports students to discuss topics like mental health and help build peer relationships.</p>
<p>Student Life</p>	<p>Universities have given examples of supporting students to access opportunities from sustaining stable year-round accommodation, additional funding support, to life-enhancing opportunities to travel and experience life and study in other countries and cultures.</p> <p>Heriot Watts University's accommodation team proactively contact care experienced students staying in halls of residence to see if they need accommodation over the summer period/for the next academic year. For those who choose to move into private accommodation the University will act as a rent guarantor.</p> <p>The University of Strathclyde care experienced students are informed of, and supported to take up, a wide range of additional opportunities. These include financial help such as access to the discretionary fund. Graduation funding ensures that care experienced students can attend their graduation and any accompanying social events and includes funding for a photography package and gown. Care experienced students have also been supported to access international opportunities. For example, care experienced students were eligible to apply for a fully funded, ten-day cultural exchange programme to the University of Southern California in Los Angeles in September 2019.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
Financial Assistance	<p>The issue of financial hardship and precariousness for young people with care experience is well-documented. A particular difficulty when it comes to financial hardship is the lack of a 'bank of mum & dad' safety net which others may take for granted. Many universities have recognised this, particularly in relation to the additional financial challenges as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many responses have ensured prioritised access to additional discretionary funds, both to cover essential living expenses as well as funds to ensure inclusion and full access to student life and the student experience.</p>	<p>Scotland's Rural College prioritises care experienced students and students with caring responsibilities when applying for financial support, including the Care experienced Bursary, Discretionary One-off Emergency funding, Monthly Discretionary funding, and the Mental Health funding. To cover COVID-19 hardship, additional funding resources have been made available to all students with care experience particularly focused for communication to ensure they are supported.</p> <p>University of Stirling have established a £500 care experienced bursary created from the relative hardship fund. Students can apply for this funding each year of their course. In addition, they have set up a £150 graduation bursary created from the hardship fund to cover gown hire and photographs, and this is provided to every care experienced student who is graduating in the current year.</p>

Improve

It is the duty of every corporate parent to take such other actions as it considers appropriate for the purposes of improving the way in which it exercises its functions in relation to those children and young people.

For the Improve duty, and with a slightly different emphasis to the wording contained in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, we asked universities how they have reviewed their performance as a corporate parent to help bring about improvements for students with care experience. Information received regarding improvement activity includes collating baseline data on numbers of applications, retention rates and successful outcomes, as well as reviewing the range of supports available to students with care experience, and the impact on the quality of student experience. Universities responded to this survey question via a combination of internal reviews of plans, reporting to external bodies, and engagement and consultation processes with students with care experience.

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Internal Reviews of Plans and Activity</p>	<p>A range of activity to monitor, inform and drive improvements across a range of areas was reported. These included processes to gauge progress and improvements around admissions and retention of students. Universities described several ways in which they review and reflect on current activity to support students during their course of study. These include reporting to internal bodies such as the Fair Access Committee or Widening Access Board.</p> <p>The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland reported on monitoring the application to matriculation (and retention) of its undergraduate students, which has enabled it to monitor student progress, make adjustments and set achievable targets to increase the number of care experienced students studying on degree programmes. These numbers have been reported through the Fair Access Committee with input from the institutional statistician and are continually monitored through the registry system.</p>
<p>Reporting to External Bodies</p>	<p>Activity includes the submission of formal reports to Scottish Funding Council based on Outcome Agreements. In addition, involvement with external partners and networks enable institutions to learn from each other and adopt and develop good practice.</p> <p>The University of Glasgow and the Open University in Scotland both highlighted how they report annually on their respective Outcome Agreements to the Scottish Funding Council. This includes performance against their targets for the recruitment and retention of care experienced students.</p> <p>Heriot Watt University works with the wider HE sector (through the Hub for Success and CEECEF) to benchmark performance and develop best practice in its approach to supporting care experienced students.</p> <p>University of Highlands and Islands involvement with Highland Champions Board provides an opportunity to learn from other local corporate parents.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Engagement and Consultation with students with care experience</p>	<p>Activity highlighted includes the use of surveys as well as the inclusion and participation of students with care experience in review groups and established mechanisms. As noted, there are challenges and issues with this activity in terms of capturing and reflecting the range of issues and support needs of students with care experience both individually and as a cohort. This area of work requires ongoing attention to ensure it is inclusive, representative and impactful and has real value and meaning for both students and universities.</p> <p>The University of Highlands and Islands launched an anonymous student survey last year which asked students for feedback on their experience of accessing services, their use of the tick box to disclose, and any support which had been implemented. A report was subsequently produced, giving an overview of the results and outlining a number of suggested recommendations which will be discussed by the Priority Groups Forum. The survey will become a yearly activity. The local Highland Champions Board group were involved in the creation of this survey to ensure the questions asked were appropriate.</p> <p>At the University of West of Scotland the 'WeCare Team' are continually reviewing performance and developing support and provision for all care experienced students based on feedback from care experienced students themselves. Feedback is being obtained on an annual basis through the care experienced Student Survey and through communications and enquiries with students on a daily basis.</p>

In Summary

Scotland's universities have demonstrated and evidenced an evolving understanding of the diverse needs of students with care experience and the range of both systemic and bespoke supports required to enable them to access, sustain and succeed in their chosen course of study. Whilst some institutions are further on in their improvement journey as corporate parents than others, the overall sector response has been heartening and positive. Progress can be consolidated with a continued focus on collaboration and shared learning, and ensuring that the voices of students with care experience are at the heart of embedding structural and cultural change.

Chapter 6: Corporate Parenting Activities of Scotland's Colleges

Introduction

In this chapter we review the corporate parenting activities of Scotland's colleges between 2018 and 2021. The chapter is based on the survey responses provided by 23 of Scotland's 29 colleges; seven of which were responses from colleges within the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) network.

The survey asked corporate parents to describe the changes colleges had made under each of the corporate parenting duties, what difference these changes had had on colleges and the services they provide, and what these changes meant for the lives of care experienced children and young people.

Through their responses colleges have highlighted the substantial effort given to supporting care experienced young people within their college communities.

Particularly notable has been the efforts taken by colleges to:

- Develop cultures and processes through which students can identify as care experienced and receive support.
- Support with transitions into college and provision of a range of supports and services in response to individual needs.
- Improve the collection and use of data to help inform early help and intervention for care experienced students who may be struggling or who are at risk of dropping out.
- Work collaboratively to support and learn from other corporate parents, as well as engaging with specialist providers, recognising the need in some instances for additional skills and resources when supporting a young person.

Whilst colleges have highlighted a range of activities specifically tailored to the needs of care experienced students, in some instances, colleges reported on activities that are available to all students, including those who are care experienced. Where possible we have sought to identify where activities reported under the duties are part of a wider provision of support and highlight where colleges have undertaken additional activity to ensure that care experienced students are aware of and able to benefit from these provisions.

Alert

It is the duty of every corporate parent to be alert to matters which, or which might, adversely affect the wellbeing of children and young people.

Colleges reported a range of activities they had undertaken to ensure that they were alert to matters which may affect a young person whilst at college, including: changes to staff training and awareness raising, college-wide awareness raising, dedicated supports for care experienced students and, partnership working.

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Staff training and awareness raising</p> <p>Since 2018 colleges have developed a range of approaches and resources to raise awareness amongst staff about the needs of care experienced students within their communities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mandatory all staff training and refresher training ● Designated roles and responsibilities across college departments and campuses ● Support from external partners in reviewing and developing training materials and resources ● Input from care experienced students at leadership meetings. <p>Across several colleges, information about corporate parenting and staff responsibilities towards care experienced students has been embedded within induction processes for new college staff.</p> <p>Colleges also described activities intended to ensure that curriculum staff and wider support staff are collectively aware of and alert to the wellbeing of care experienced students.</p>	<p>Fife College have introduced a Care Experienced Co-ordinator role to oversee all aspects of corporate parenting and to support the corporate parent plan. This post provides one point of contact for staff when they have concerns or questions they wish to discuss. This has led to increased confidence that where additional support needs or concerns are identified for a care experienced student there is a place to take this to be followed-up; as well as a consistent point of contact for care experienced students to access support through.</p> <p>Dundee and Angus College have introduced a flag system that alerts curriculum staff when a care experienced student is considering withdrawing from their course, acting as a reminder to curriculum staff that student services are involved in supporting the student. Students are reported as commenting positively about the relationship they develop with their student services workers, that this support assists them with managing their mental health and wellbeing and to remain at college.</p> <p>The UHI College network established an information session on corporate parenting as part of all staff inductions which is followed up by an online mandatory training module and online trauma training. Recognising the impact of trauma, staff have been supported to expand their knowledge and understanding of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and the impact these have on students.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>College-wide awareness raising</p> <p>In addition to raising staff awareness, colleges have also sought to increase awareness about what it means to be care experienced within their wider college communities. Examples included information sessions, events and, in a small number of colleges, designated roles within college life for care experienced students (e.g. as a Care Experienced Ambassador or a Care Experienced Officer in the Students Association).</p> <p>Colleges also highlighted that they were keen for these college-wide awareness raising activities to alert care experienced students to the supports available to them within the college and encourage them to self-disclose their care experience.</p>	<p>New College Lanarkshire have embedded Care Day within its Learner Engagement Calendar. They celebrated this across all three of their main college campuses with fun activities and by providing information about care experience and the supports available in college.</p> <p>Shetland College have run an annual awareness raising campaign with care experienced students to raise awareness and improve understanding amongst the student population. This has proved difficult throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, but their engagement team have been active on social media for national campaigns around care leavers.</p>
<p>Enhanced opportunities to disclose care experience</p> <p>To be able to identify and respond to the needs of care experienced students in their communities, colleges have taken steps to provide more opportunity for students to self-disclose their care experience at any point in their college journey.</p>	<p>West Lothian College have made changes to its application process so that it includes a clear definition of what is meant by 'care experienced'. This has led to improvements in the identification of care experienced students as well as improved opportunities for care experienced students to self-disclose.</p> <p>South Lanarkshire College have removed barriers to self-disclosure. Care experienced students can notify the college of their care experience status at any point during their learning journey through the student portal.</p> <p>The UHI College network introduced a care experienced tick box and a consent to be contacted box to their enrolment form. When a student discloses that they are care experienced, student support officer(s) get in touch with the student and offer to discuss with them the support they can access. "This has allowed us to proactively support students rather than wait for them to seek support, and ensure support is implemented in a timely manner".</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Partnership working and collaboration with partner agencies and stakeholders</p>	<p>Colleges reported that they attended local and national forums to ensure that they remained up to date with developments in policy, practice or specific needs of care experienced young people. Forums discussed included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Corporate parenting forums and strategy groups ● Community planning partnerships ● Champions Boards ● College development network 	<p>Dumfries and Galloway College attend the regional corporate parenting group to remain alert to local activities and provisions to ensure they are serving the best interests of care experienced students. They also have staff attending national working groups which focus on a range of topics to ensure that they are up to date with current best practices across the sector as well as to ensure that they are aware of the requirements and expectations of corporate parents.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Dedicated supports for care experienced students</p>	<p>Corporate parents highlighted designated materials with information targeted at care experienced students to alert them to the services and support available. Examples of materials aimed specifically at care experienced students included: leaflets, a care experienced newspaper, webpages, social media groups, designated email accounts, and drop-in services.</p> <p>Many colleges talked about using variations of a named person approach to supporting care experienced students, whereby each young person is allocated one point of contact through which they can access information, advice and support. This named person is described as having responsibilities for being alert to the needs of individual students, supporting their transitions into college, ensuring that appropriate assessments are undertaken, supporting students to access supports and to navigate any barriers they might encounter whilst at college.</p>	<p>Borders College have established their Care Aware Support Service. This service provides an opportunity for all care experienced students to access a dedicated advisor who will support them throughout their time at college, providing advice, guidance, and wellbeing support. This service is reported as invaluable to some care experienced students. Feedback from one student emphasises that they valued this support. "Thank you so much for all the support you have showing me over the duration of me being at college you have really helped me through it all".</p> <p>Dundee and Angus College student services, in partnership with the throughcare and aftercare team, run a care experienced drop-in service at two of their campuses. These meetings have worked well for both staff and students, providing accessible help to students facilitating progress on both academic and welfare issues. The drop-in sessions have also facilitated more regular contact with students who would not have wanted to attend a scheduled one-to-one meeting. Student feedback shows that they find the drop-in sessions helpful and supportive with keeping them on track with their studies.</p> <p>Fife College have set up a 'we care' email address specifically for enquiries from care experienced students so that these can be responded to promptly. In addition to this, a social media channel has been set up specifically for care experienced students allowing for information to be shared and feedback and comments sought on relevant issues arising.</p>

Assess

It is the duty of every corporate parent to assess the needs of those children and young people for services and support it provides.

Colleges spoke to the pre-entry support given to young people as they transition into the college, often done in partnership with other organisations and services. Much of the activity from 2018 to present day to support the assessment of needs of young people transitioning into college appears to have been focused on developing seamless transitions, prioritising early assessments of learning and wellbeing needs and ensuring that young people are supported to overcome issues that may become barriers to learning. Prioritisation of care experienced young people when allocating enhanced provisions of support was also a feature of some of the activity described.

Whilst some colleges discussed activities to assess the needs of care experienced young people transitioning on from college, this is an area in need of further attention.

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Assessment of learning and wellbeing needs</p>	<p>Collaborative planning to support young people transitioning into college was identified as enabling colleges to undertake early assessment of the needs of care experienced students.</p>	<p>Dundee and Angus College have introduced three meetings annually with Angus throughcare and aftercare services (the Horizon team) to support transitions planning for care experienced young people attending college. This planning approach has ensured that all relevant information is shared with the college to ensure that students' needs have been identified so that support can be put in place. It is reported that students view it as helpful when their workers talk together to resolve issues. Students have also reported that they like being introduced to college staff by their social worker and that this helps with building relationships and allows them to consider what support they might need and want at college.</p> <p>Dumfries and Galloway College allocate a designated advisor to support care experienced students. Where necessary, advisors undertake a support needs assessment. In addition to this, each curriculum team has a designated student advisor with a focus on supporting retention and attainment, working closely with students to facilitate support between advisors and curriculum staff. The college also has a team of educational support workers who work one-to-one with students on their academic performance. This combined system of support has had a positive impact on student retention and attainment amongst care experienced students with an increase from 61% retention in 2018/19 to 89% in 20/21.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
Assessment of learning and wellbeing needs	<p>Borders Young Talent Project provides mentoring support to young people in their final year of school who face additional challenges when transitioning to college. The one-to-one mentoring provides an opportunity to assess students' needs to ensure that activities promote their wellbeing, build meta skills and their resilience. Feedback from schools indicates that this approach has been successful in engaging with young people who sometimes don't take up additional support. "It can be a challenge to get the kids to take it on. [The mentor] has been great at building relationships with them. It's all about relationship building." Young people commented, "it gave me the motivation to continue" and "it was the encouragement I got from my mentor that helped me to keep going".</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Assessment of financial support</p>	<p>In the changing context of the financial entitlements of care experienced students, colleges have developed processes to assess the financial support students are eligible to access. Through income maximisation assessments, information and advice about funding options and fast-track application processes, colleges are actively addressing financial barriers to engaging in further education for care experienced students.</p>	<p>Dundee and Angus have introduced a priority flag so that care experienced bursary applications were assessed more quickly than other students. As a result, bursaries were being assessed usually within 24-48 hours of the application. Students reported appreciating the quick turnaround of their bursaries being awarded. In addition to this the college have introduced a policy that no care experienced bursary can be stopped by the curriculum team without prior contact with the student and the involvement of student services. As a result, fewer bursaries are being stopped due to low attendance unless essential. This has ensured that student's income is stable and reduced additional stresses.</p> <p>Ayrshire College offer every care experienced student an individual income maximisation assessment carried out by the student funding team, in part this is to ensure that students aren't disadvantaged by accepting the Care Experienced Bursary and that students receive the most appropriate funding package.</p>

Promote

It is the duty of every corporate parent to promote the interests of those children and young people.

Colleges have highlighted a range of activities to promote the interests of children and young people. Many colleges spoke to the work they had undertaken to promote care experienced young people as part of the college community, and to build care experienced young people's sense of belonging to this. Several colleges spoke to the role of a named person within the college to provide individualised support to young people, whilst activities co-ordinated through student's associations were often used to promote and engage with care experienced young people as a group. Promoting the range of supports and services available to potential and current students through the college was also a focus of the activities described.

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Promotion of care experienced students within the college community</p> <p>Ensuring that care experienced young people have a sense of belonging within their college community is clearly evidenced as a priority for many colleges in Scotland. Colleges have used national events, such as Care History Month and Care Experienced Week to offer a bespoke programme of events and activities aimed at care experienced students. Further to this, colleges have used these opportunities to demonstrate their commitments to care experienced students, to raise awareness within the wider college community of what it means to be care experienced and to build relationships with care experienced students.</p> <p>Outwith these annual events colleges have sought to maintain young people's sense of belonging within the college community through relationships with staff and by promoting and supporting participation of care experienced students within the student association groups and forums.</p>	<p>South Lanarkshire College, in partnership with external organisations, host events for care experienced students as part of care experienced week. During lockdown, events were hosted virtually and an informal catch-up was arranged to allow care experienced students to meet and discuss their experiences. Following the success of the event, a Microsoft Teams channel continued to be used for care experienced students to meet virtually.</p> <p>In the 2019-20 session Dundee and Angus College introduced their care experience pledge, committing to offering places at the college to care experienced young people. The intention of the pledge was to promote Dundee and Angus College as a place that believes in care experienced young people and that the college want these young people to be part of their community. This messaging was important for staff and students at the college. Dundee and Angus College have reported that their care experience pledge has contributed to increasing the number of applications from care experienced young people.</p> <p>Fife College 'show we care days' are used to raise awareness throughout the college between staff and students about what it means to be care experienced and to eliminate stigma for care experienced students.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Promotion of services and supports available within the college</p> <p>Ensuring that care experienced students are aware of the supports available to them and how to access these is an important step in ensuring that the needs of students can be responded to. Colleges highlighted the ways in which they promote the interests of care experienced students through the services and supports they offer.</p> <p>For example, actions taken to promote the wider wellbeing of care experienced students included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provision of breakfast and lunch clubs (in response to staff highlighting that care experienced students were not having breakfast at home) ● Digital inclusion, wi-fi access and support to stay safe online ● Birthday cards ● Opportunities to socialise with staff and students (e.g. film nights) ● Additional financial supports to purchase essentials for college life. <p>In response to COVID-19 colleges have adapted their provision of supports so that where possible these can continue in a virtual format. Colleges have also described diversifying their communication approaches to share information about supports available to students as a result of the pandemic (e.g. apps, text messaging, phone calls, emails, virtual notice boards, and webpages).</p>	<p>Fife College established their Corporate Parenting Champions group to create a cohort of staff on all campuses to help and support care experienced students. The Champions group includes membership of staff from across the college (inclusion, guidance, employability, registry, funding, library, HR, etc.) who help to support events and promote activities for care experienced students, raising awareness of these across faculties.</p> <p>West Lothian College have a Champions Board based within the college which they report as having had positive outcomes for staff and students, providing easy access to information for potential applicants.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Promotion of supports and services available outwith the college</p>	<p>Whilst less detail was provided about how colleges promoted young people's interests beyond the services and supports available through college, there were some examples given of colleges promoting supports outside of the college provision.</p> <p>Some of the colleges highlighted their engagement with supports for students through external service providers, who could provide an enhanced level of support, where additional support needs were identified.</p>	<p>To promote support available to its care experienced students during holiday periods a 'holiday toolkit' was created on the Inverness College website. The holiday toolkit included a wide range of external support within their locality covering areas such as foodbanks, shelters, gender-based violence support, mental health support, and health support. Counselling, wellbeing and transition teams worked collaboratively to share updates, announcements and opportunities on social media platforms including during holiday periods.</p> <p>City of Glasgow College drew on the support of Action for Children's STAY project to support with the retention of care experienced students at risk of withdrawing from their course. They work one-to-one with young people to help connect students to support both within the college and the wider community.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Promotion of alternative routes into college</p>	<p>In response to a small number of cases colleges have developed an even more bespoke and personalised approach to supporting young people to engage with college. These approaches are used to promote and respond to individual interests to help identify what learning opportunities they would be most suited to and consequently more likely to engage with and benefit from.</p>	<p>Glasgow Kelvin College have developed bespoke programmes to support their most disengaged and vulnerable students using a youth work approach, through which students learn life skills and exposure to different vocational areas. This approach has been very successful at supporting students to gain community achievement awards and National 4 and 5 qualifications. Evidence also indicates that younger care experienced students have been more engaged with learning and as a result many have moved into mainstream programmes successfully. Students have also fed back that they have felt welcomed into the college community and that they feel empowered to tell the college what they need.</p> <p>West Lothian College's partnership project with the Criminal Justice and Youth Justice team has improved the chances of young people within the system. Education as an alternative to a custodial sentence is a key aim of the project. Those who are interested are offered a preparatory course to support them to prepare for mainstream learning in the college.</p>

Opportunities

It is the duty of every corporate parent to seek to provide those children and young people with opportunities to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing.

Ensuring that care experienced young people have the opportunity to attend college and that they are supported to participate in college life was clearly a priority for activity under this duty. Once enrolled, colleges offer students access to a range of supports and services, often with priority given to care experienced young people, to help with health and wellbeing, employment, participation, finances and other areas of need.

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Mental health and wellbeing</p>	<p>Colleges have highlighted ways in which they provide opportunities to promote the mental health and wellbeing of care experienced students. The opportunities highlighted range from activities which have led to specific fast-track referral routes into intensive and personalised supports for young people who find themselves in difficult circumstances, to broader college wide activities which promote the overall wellbeing of students.</p>	<p>Dumfries and Galloway College has partnered with Togetherall to provide online resources, tools and access to counselling support for all students 24/7.</p> <p>In partnership with Action for Children, Glasgow Kelvin College have a Care Experienced Officer on campus to support care experienced students by providing practical and emotional care and support.</p> <p>Ayrshire College have embedded a wellbeing approach across the curriculum. A Mental Health Liaison Officer and Drug and Alcohol liaison Officer and Campus Police Liaison Officer are jointly funded by the college and three local health and social care partnerships and with Police Scotland. Liaison officers deliver one-to-one support as well as workshops to student groups, topics have included 'Looking After Your Mental Health', 'Drug and Alcohol Awareness', 'Staying Safe Online' and 'Understanding Healthy Relationships and Gender Based Violence'.</p> <p>Ayrshire College also have a direct referral route into CAMHS, adult support and protection teams, and local addiction services through an alcohol and drugs liaison officer. These established referral routes allow the college to access specialist services and supports for students when needed.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Finances</p>	<p>Colleges identified steps they had taken to support care experienced students to access and maximise the financial supports they were eligible for whilst at college.</p> <p>In addition, some colleges spoke to provisions they'd made to provide additional financial supports so that care experienced students could access similar experiences and opportunities as their peers.</p>	<p>Fife College have provided care experience students with a voucher to buy clothes and essentials for starting college to alleviate potential embarrassment from not having the same as peers. In partnership with Madlug, they also give all care experienced students a rucksack with essential items for their college journey.</p> <p>North East Scotland College, responded to feedback from care experienced students who highlighted challenges with financial planning by providing options on the frequency of further education bursary payments to students to encourage better budgeting. As a result most students receive weekly rather than monthly payments.</p> <p>West College Scotland highlight that the named contact support for care experienced students helps to ensure that funding is in place as quickly and smoothly as possible and that students experience a joined-up approach whereby they do not need to repeat information to access support services.</p> <p>The UHI College network introduced a Graduation Bursary to support students with graduation fees, gown hire, photographs, travel and accommodation.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Training and employability</p>	<p>Several colleges highlighted opportunities for care experienced students to gain knowledge, experiences and skills outside of those taught on their course.</p>	<p>Fife College have an employability team with a remit to support care experienced students to access opportunities within the labour market.</p> <p>Fife College have also run a project to encourage Care Experienced students to consider volunteering for the Children's Hearings Panel. This project was aimed at supporting the selection of new panel members and provides a variety of opportunities for young people to increase their knowledge and employability skills. Participating students received training, a certificate, a Saltire Award and a working wage paid in vouchers.</p> <p>West College Scotland provide opportunities for care experienced students to access placements, work experience, employment and bespoke learning and training opportunities through close partnership working with other corporate parents (e.g. colleges, universities, local authorities, Skills Development Scotland, NHS, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and SQA), third sector providers (e.g. Quarriers, Action for Children, Kibble and Who Cares? Scotland), employers and other organisations (e.g. CELCIS, National Union of Students and Focus West).</p> <p>City of Glasgow College provide care experienced students with a Named Careers Advisor through which students can access individual support to access further education, training or to prepare for the workplace.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Housing and transport</p> <p>Most of the colleges did not highlight any activities specifically linked to supporting care experienced young people with housing. Where opportunities to access support with housing were referenced these mostly referred to the possibility of providing care experienced students with access to year-round accommodation.</p> <p>Likewise, based on the survey responses, access to transport does not appear to have been an area of focus for colleges during this reporting period. Where transport was highlighted as an activity, recognition of the importance of this came in response to COVID-19-19. Yet, for some colleges, particularly those in more rural areas, ensuring young people can access transport to and from college would be another opportunity to help support care experienced students to access college.</p>	<p>The UHI College network has made available 365-day accommodation for care experienced students with their student accommodation partners to ensure that no one finds themselves without accommodation during the summer period. Accommodation is provided at a reduced rate, flexible deposit and rental payments have been introduced, and the college can act as a guarantor for any student who may not otherwise have one. For accommodation staff, training has been provided to help them better understand the needs of the students.</p> <p>Dumfries and Galloway College have worked with local transport suppliers to ensure that transport is available to all students coming to college without charge.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Extracurricular opportunities</p> <p>Colleges talked to the important role that student associations play in providing all students with opportunities to participate in college activities, promoting student wellbeing and encouraging students to participate in the range of activities available through the college.</p> <p>Some colleges talked about the partnerships they had developed with third sector providers through which colleges were able to support care experienced students to access opportunities to explore and develop new skills and interests.</p>	<p>Glasgow Kelvin College highlighted that members of their students association sit on the college Health and Wellbeing Committee. This group ensure that all students, including care experienced students have access to a range of health and wellbeing supports and activities (e.g., mental health supports and counselling, mindfulness sessions, and breakfast clubs), practical supports (e.g., with accessing IT equipment and food) and activities (e.g., competitions, charity events, volunteering, and outdoor activities). This provides reassurance to students that their wellbeing is important.</p> <p>Inverness College's Access and Transition Coordinator is a member of the local Who Cares? Scotland Opportunities Steering Group. A broad range of partner agencies attend the steering group including: Barnardo's, MusuCares, Enable Scotland, Highland Champs, Skills Development Scotland and the Calman Trust, which allows for a wide range of opportunities, activities and events, additional funding and work placement schemes, to be shared with students and staff teams.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Extracurricular opportunities</p>	<p>Dundee and Angus College participated in the Your Futures Project which gave priority access to care experienced young people. Funded by Scottish Government, the project offered intensive supports to young people who do not always engage with universal supports and services. These supports included staff with dedicated time to meet young people's needs, support to young people to identify and transition on to their next opportunity following completion of a course. A summer programme offered group and individual opportunities for care experienced young people to try different activities including drama, team building, volunteering, taster classes, and first aid skills. One young person described what participation in the Your Futures Project meant to them and the impact on their life:</p> <p><i>“Before starting the Find your Futures care course I was really struggling with life in general. My home life wasn't the best and my mental health was also in bad shape. I really hesitated in starting college but I'm so glad I did as I learned lots about myself and started to accept that a bright future was possible. Student Services guided me with action plans and were always there if I had a question, when I needed academic support or I needed to speak about my mental health. My journey has been a bit up and down since starting college but I now have my own flat and a part time job along with college. I'm happy to say I'm going onto the HNC in Social Services course which is bringing me closer to starting uni to be a social worker so I am happy with the way things are turning out.”</i></p>

Access

It is the duty of every corporate parent to take such action as it considers appropriate to help those children and young people to:

- **access opportunities;**
- **make use of services, and access support, which it provides; and**

As highlighted above, supporting young people to access college has been a priority for activity that spans across the duties. Making it easier for young people to access college and doing this in a way that ensures they feel supported and included has been part of the activity to support young people considering applying to and entering college. Designated care experienced open days, campus tours and transitions support collectively contribute to supporting young people to access college. Once enrolled in college care experienced students are then able to access bespoke services to support them through college, and to a lesser extent, colleges also referenced supports for care experienced students to access opportunities when transitioning out of college.

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Widening Access</p>	<p>Colleges have developed enhanced supports for care experienced students interested in applying to college, including designated open days, supported transitions, identified named contacts and support to access financial support.</p> <p>As part of the provision of support to access college, several colleges make guarantees for care experienced young people in the form of a guaranteed interview or in some cases a guaranteed place at college.</p>	<p>Fife College have arranged open day sessions specifically for care experienced students during the summer holidays to allow new students the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the campus and meet staff.</p> <p>The UHI College network has simplified its application process and has clear wording around declaring care experience to ensure declarations are supported at the earliest point. Contextualised admissions are then in place for all care experienced applicants to ensure a guaranteed interview and a guaranteed offer of place on the course of choice, or a suitable alternative. Applicants who are not successful in their course choice can meet with a member of the Careers and Guidance team who will explore alternative opportunities, including opportunities external to the college.</p> <p>Glasgow Kelvin College provide care experienced students access to the John Wheatley Learning Network to improve their digital inclusion skills. This network also promotes other learning opportunities within the local area that students can access through the network. Greater access to digital learning has increased care experienced young people's learning opportunities, as well as their ability to be connected.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Transitions into college</p>	<p>Supporting young people to access college has been a key area of activity.</p> <p>Colleges evidenced a large amount of activity relating to supporting young people transitioning into college, with attention to ensuring that these transitions were seamless and well supported.</p> <p>Partnership working with local agencies and organisations (i.e. social work, education, Skills Development Scotland, third sector providers, etc.) have been used to ensure that colleges have all the relevant information needed to put in place supports and address any potential barriers based on the needs of individual students.</p>	<p>City of Glasgow College have introduced a priority group referral process, to provide a responsive referral process to support students who are care experienced or who have additional support needs. Students are provided with personalised information and a referral to a named student advisor allowing for information and support to be in place prior to college starting and to provide an opportunity for care experienced students to let the college know what they need from the college.</p> <p>Staff from Ayrshire College have been attending transition meetings, care experienced review meetings and team around the child meetings across the three local authorities as part of support planning for care experienced young people. The purpose of this partnership working is to ensure that there is effective transitions support for care experienced students at all stages of their learner journey.</p> <p>The referral system between Fife High Schools, Social Work and Fife College has been facilitating sharing of information about care experienced school leavers allowing for early engagement and preparation support strategies to ensure students are given a fully supported transition into college.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Transitions into college</p>		<p>Inverness College has been operating a positive declaration environment and encourages declarations of care experience at the earliest point to enable timely and appropriate support. Wherever possible, contacts have been made with potential students whilst they are in their senior phase of high school to facilitate relationship building and discuss opportunities for a smooth transition. Prior to applying for college, care experienced students are provided with preparatory support such as help in identifying suitable routes of study, completing application forms, writing personal statements, preparing for interview and tours of the campus setting. Over the summer months, the college has also been offering a tailored programme to support transition including, familiarisation tours of the campus, support with travel plans, advice around funding and accommodation, budgeting and financial planning, and ongoing support arrangements are put in place prior to enrolment.</p>
<p>Transitions on from college</p>	<p>Whilst greater emphasis has been given to supporting young people during their transitions into college, some colleges reported on activities they had undertaken to support care experienced young people as they transitioned on from college.</p>	<p>Glasgow Clyde College have been providing pre-exit support for all care experienced students in the form of a 'moving-on' interview and careers session as well as individual support from their named person contact.</p> <p>City of Glasgow College, as part of their support for young people transitioning on from college, have been encouraging students with university offers to apply to the Robertson Trust Scholarship, which also provides ongoing mentoring support and activities to build the young people's confidence.</p>

Improve

It is the duty of every corporate parent to take such other action as it considers appropriate for the purposes of improving the way in which it exercises its functions in relation to those children and young people.

Colleges highlighted improvements in how they collect and use data to inform service improvements. Some colleges reported far greater and more routine use of key performance indicators for care experienced students within strategic planning groups, with some colleges adding additional indicators to monitor the progress of care experienced students. Colleges spoke to greater use of data to identify students at risk of dropping out or in need of additional support for learning so that help and support could be provided earlier. Understanding the views and experiences of care experienced students within their community has also been a priority area of activity with several colleges highlighting the informal and formal processes in place to gather information and feedback from students.

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Internal Reviews of Plans and Activity</p>	<p>Colleges utilised self-evaluation tools alongside data monitoring to review their corporate parenting activities and identify areas for improvement.</p> <p>Colleges also described engagement with local and national forums for corporate parenting as an opportunity to discuss and reflect on their progress with other corporate parents.</p>	<p>Borders College recently established a Corporate Parenting, Student Carers and Estranged Students Working Group as part of their activities for reviewing and developing action plans.</p> <p>Glasgow Clyde College highlighted the benefits provided by the Glasgow Colleges Corporate Parenting Forum, involving representatives from relevant partners and agencies within the city. Glasgow Clyde College identified that one of the primary benefits of this collaborative forum has been the opportunity to collectively identify any trends, and common challenges for care experienced students as well as to discuss local and national issues impacting on students and how these can be best addressed.</p> <p>Inverness College has biannual meetings with its local corporate parenting partners where it presents its engagement with care experienced students and their successes for each academic year. The college also meets quarterly with students and staff as part of a student experience committee where activities are scrutinised. The care experienced action group also meets once a month to identify areas of concern or action and report on the immediate experiences of our students. These forums help to identify areas for development and improvement over the next academic year.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Reporting to External Bodies</p>	<p>As part of the Regional Outcome Agreement and Further Education data returns to the Scottish Funding Council colleges collect and monitor data relating to care experienced key performance indicators. Colleges have reported routinely using these data as part of their ongoing monitoring of care experienced students and their needs between external reporting periods.</p>	<p>Ayrshire College's analysis of the key performance indicators collected and reported on annually to the Scottish Funding Council, shows that since 2017-18 they have increased the number of credits delivered to care experienced students as well as an increase in completion rates for care experienced students.</p> <p>Ayrshire College also highlighted that their student experience team monitored key performance indicators linked to the number of one-to-one meetings, number of safeguarding reports, number of pupil learning support plans and number of discretionary payments, for care experienced students, and reported that this information has allowed the college to continue to develop enhanced services to respond to the needs of care experienced students.</p> <p>North East Scotland College report on their key performance indicators to the Champions Board as well as their regional Corporate Parenting Strategy Group, and have used this to jointly evaluate the impact of services and supports, as well as access to education and employment.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Use of student-level data to target supports</p>	<p>Improved processes around data collection and application about identified care experienced students, has made it easier to identify students, assess their needs and adapt supports so that young people are able to sustain their engagement and be successful with their learning.</p> <p>Some colleges described using the key performance indicators required by the Scottish Funding Council and expanding on these to include additional indicators for care experienced students (e.g. frequency of one-to-one meetings, number of Safeguarding reports, number of discretionary payments, etc.) to identify students at risk of dropping out of their course or where additional learning support may be needed. Some colleges are using this data to look at trends in outcomes for this group.</p>	<p>City of Glasgow College have developed a student dashboard which allows them to track and predict success for their care experienced students by tracking attendance and predicting if a student is on course to complete their course and if needed intervene to support the student.</p> <p>City of Glasgow College have also used their data to look at trends in yearly outcomes to inform future planning. Their data has highlighted that in recent years, there has been an upward trend in the number of students declaring care experience, applying, and then enrolling on courses. Analysis of the data allowed the college to identify a downward trend in the success rates for care experienced students when compared to non-care experienced students. Further analysis was done to identify if there were clusters of students on specific courses with partial or no success, this analysis allowed for additional support to be planned both for individuals and if needed whole class support.</p> <p>Ayrshire College Business Intelligence and Information Systems Team developed a retention tool to collate and analyse student data to identify students at risk of withdrawal or non-completion. The analysis can identify characteristics of students, including if a student is known to be care experienced, allowing for prioritisation of support. This approach has facilitated greater understanding of the needs of individual care experienced students as well as facilitating more effective responses to these needs.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Engagement and Consultation with Care experienced Students</p> <p>Engaging care experienced students in feedback processes was identified by some colleges as a challenge and a focus for further development and improvement.</p> <p>Colleges described using a range of approaches, both formal and informal, to gather feedback from students to gauge opportunities for future activity and improvements. Examples of the approaches used by colleges included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Formal student feedback processes (including student satisfaction surveys) ● Care experienced focus groups organised through the student association ● Informal information and feedback through curriculum staff ● Informal feedback through named contacts ● Attendance at local champion board meetings by college representative ● Involvement in informing and developing policies for students. 	<p>Ayrshire College invited care experienced young people for the Connecting Voices Group in East Ayrshire and the Champion's Board in South Ayrshire to provide feedback on the information shared with care experienced students via information leaflets and on the college website. The feedback from young people resulted in changes to these resources to ensure they were accessible and engaging.</p> <p>At Glasgow Kelvin College, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, with the involvement of care experienced young people, have undertaken an impact assessment of college policies, procedures and practices for students to help inform their future development.</p> <p>North East College Scotland established a care experienced focus group as an opportunity for young people to give feedback and influence the provision of services and supports.</p>

In Summary

Across the Section 58 duties, most colleges evidenced a range of activities which demonstrate their commitment to ensuring that care experienced young people are supported to access, sustain and benefit from the opportunities and supports available through college. However, there were notable gaps in the provision of supports for housing, travel and transitions on from college and therefore scope for improvement in these areas. Where colleges were less able to provide evidence of their corporate parenting activity, greater focus on activity which are tailored to the needs of care experienced students was needed. Renewed focus on sustained and innovative opportunities for care experienced young people to participate in identifying, planning, developing and reviewing corporate parent activities which meet their needs, would benefit all colleges.

Chapter 7: Corporate Parenting Activities of Scotland's Health Boards and Special NHS Boards

Introduction

In this chapter we review the corporate parenting activities of Scotland's Health Boards and Special NHS Boards between 2018 and 2021. The chapter is based on the survey responses provided by 8 of Scotland's 14 Health Boards, and 4 of Scotland's 7 Special NHS Boards.¹⁴ Therefore, this review is limited by the relatively low rate of survey returns from Health corporate parents in comparison to other groups of corporate parents discussed within this report.

The information received presented a varied picture of the corporate parenting activity of Health Boards and NHS Special Boards across Scotland. Some Health Boards described thoughtful, detailed and focused work on specific health issues which they had developed and progressed alongside care experienced children and young people. Despite not working directly with children and young people, there were examples of some NHS Special Boards truly owning their corporate parenting roles and responsibilities, with particular efforts to develop high quality training resources for the NHS workforce, and to integrate a consideration of the needs of care experienced children and young people into service monitoring and review. Some corporate parents provided insightful reflections on the enablers and challenges they have experienced in their role, and an awareness of the particular health challenges that can be faced by children and young people with care experience, such as mental health and wellbeing matters.

We are mindful that the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on health services has proved significantly challenging for Health Boards and has been cited by some as having a detrimental impact upon their ability to focus on corporate parenting activity. However, a number of Health Boards and NHS Special Boards did not articulate much ownership (and at times, understanding) of the role of a corporate parent in the survey returns provided, and demonstrated little specific corporate parenting activity, over and above the provision of services which are available to all children and young people. Whilst these services may contribute to the health and wellbeing of children and young people with care experience, the purpose of corporate parenting is in recognising the need to take additional specific actions to uphold the rights and enhance the wellbeing of care experienced children and young people.

Whilst some corporate parents made efforts to capture the impact of their activities, an area for further attention for most Health Boards and NHS Special Boards is in how to measure and understand the difference their corporate parenting activities are making to the lives of children and young people, and use this information to make further improvements.

Alert

It is the duty of every corporate parent to be alert to matters which, or which might, adversely affect the wellbeing of children and young people.

Health Boards, and in most cases, NHS Special Boards described activities which contributed to meeting this duty. A focus on training and awareness raising, and on corporate parenting responsibilities in relation to children's mental health were particularly notable. Whilst some responses provided greater detail and clarity about the activities taking place, others provided limited detail and sometimes struggled to differentiate between their specific role as a corporate parent, and their universal services and support that are available to all children and young people.

¹⁴ In March 2020, NHS Health Scotland became Public Health Scotland. As both bodies provided the same survey response, for the purposes of this analysis they are treated as one corporate parent, rather than 2 separate corporate parents. Therefore there are considered to be 7 Special NHS Boards rather than 8.

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Training and awareness raising</p>	<p>A range of training and awareness raising activity was noted in survey responses.</p> <p>Some Health Boards and NHS Special Boards have introduced bespoke corporate parenting training and awareness raising sessions for staff and/or Board Members; introduced eLearning; and/or introduced changes to induction materials to highlight corporate parenting responsibilities.</p> <p>Some Health Boards highlighted training and awareness raising, both for their staff and for the wider public, about research into Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Similarly, a small number of Health Boards outlined their approach to ensuring their workforces are trauma-informed, such as through implementation of the National Trauma framework, through the screening of films, introducing Trauma Champions, and refreshing training modules.</p>	<p>NHS Grampian introduced face-to-face corporate parenting training for various groups of staff, drop-in awareness sessions with health and social care partners, and held a seminar with Directors of the Board.</p> <p>As well as providing training and learning opportunities and educational resources to key staff, and the Board and Senior Leadership Team, NHS Education for Scotland (NES) worked with Who Cares? Scotland to develop an open access Corporate Parenting eLearning module for all NHS staff.</p> <p>NHS Tayside School and Looked After Children and Young People Nurses have implemented the National Trauma Framework to increase understanding of traumatic events and the different ways individuals can be affected.</p> <p>NHS Borders include trauma-informed practice in the workforce in their induction materials, employed a Trauma Champion, and supported the screening of the Resilience film: Biology of Stress and Science of Hope.</p>
<p>Establishing groups and collaborations</p>	<p>Different approaches to staying alert to the needs of care experienced children and young people through forming groups and collaborations were noted in a small number of Health Boards. These included establishing a corporate parenting focus in a strategic planning group; holding multi-agency meetings to review the care and needs of care experienced children, and collaborating with organisations such as Who Cares? Scotland.</p>	<p>NHS Highland established a Children and Young People Strategic Planning Group, with a care experience/ corporate parenting work stream.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Being 'alert' via services for children and young people</p>	<p>NHS Tayside highlighted their implementation of the new model of Looked After Children and Young People nursing with a dedicated team to focus on care experienced children and young people (up to 26) who are particularly vulnerable with complex needs: including working in partnership with CAMHS and Complex Disabilities nurses where appropriate.</p>
<p>Using data and evidence</p>	<p>NHS Health Scotland (now Public Health Scotland) produced the Children and Young People's Profile of Health and Wellbeing Indicators, which includes indicators specifically related to care experienced children and young people. These indicators are regularly updated and incorporated into the Scottish Public Health Observatory (ScotPHO) profiles for use by public and third sector partners to plan services.</p> <p>NHS Tayside Looked After Children and Young People's nursing service has been developing work on new health and wellbeing indicators for care experienced young people and care leavers up to their 26th birthday. For example, in relation to the impact of unemployment.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Focus on mental health</p>	<p>A common theme across most survey responses was a recognition of the need to provide enhanced mental health support, to benefit care experienced children and young people. A range of ways of staying alert to this issue were noted, including links between CAMHS services and Champions Boards, focused participation activity with children and young people to inform service improvement, establishing stakeholder groups, expanding mental health service provision, and gathering the views of care experienced people who use particular mental health services.</p>	<p>NHS Grampian have made formal links between CAMHS, Corporate Parenting and Transitions, through the oversight of the CAMHS service manager. Additionally, CAMHS provided updates to Aberdeen City's Champions Board about service developments, and had established a stakeholder group to inform service improvements. Who Cares? Scotland were part of this work, noting work was paused due to the pandemic.</p> <p>Since 2019, the Mental Welfare Commission have routinely collected information about whether the individuals they are visiting in hospitals or in the community are care experienced. This has involved amending pre-visit information so services are aware prior to visits that individuals with care experience will be offered additional opportunities to meet with the Commission.</p>
<p>Being 'alert' in the context of COVID-19-19</p>	<p>By being alert to the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on vulnerable children and families, some Health Boards reported changes to their corporate parenting activities. This varied from expanding the reach of services by extending the range of multidisciplinary partners at key meetings to ensure widening areas of inequality were recognised, to focused assessment and support for care experienced children and young people's needs in the pandemic.</p>	<p>NHS Ayrshire and Arran changed the format of the meetings of the Infant, Children and Young People Transformational Change Programme Board in response to risks from COVID-19, to widen the range of multidisciplinary partners, consider a wider range of data, and ensure holistic responses were provided in response to widening inequalities affecting children.</p> <p>NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde reported that the Vulnerability Health Team implemented 'NHS Near Me' for assessment of support for care experienced children and young people's emerging needs at the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, and the successful elements of this approach are to be carried forward into a blended appointment model in the future.</p>

Assess

It is the duty of every corporate parent to assess the needs of those children and young people for services and support it provides.

All Health Boards and NHS Special Boards provided information about activities which contribute to assessing the needs of children and young people receiving their services. In the majority of cases, this extended to specific activities to assess the particular needs of care experienced children and young people, as per the corporate parenting duties. Health Boards provided a range of information about different specialist health assessments available to children and young people, and a focus on the use of a variety of data and evidence to inform services (ranging from baseline measurements and indicators, to listening the views of children and young people themselves, albeit indirectly). Whilst this is positive, limited information was provided to suggest that children's views are routinely sought in relation to the health assessments they receive.

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Providing specialist health assessments</p> <p>Understandably, given their differing roles and remits, the provision of various forms of health assessments were a common feature of the responses of Health Boards, rather than Special NHS Boards.</p> <p>Some Boards described their provision of specialist health assessments for looked after children, both initial (taking place within 4 weeks of learning that a child has become 'looked after'), and review assessments. One Health Board had introduced changes to improve the utility of the assessment itself, and several Boards described working to improve the timely completion of initial health assessments.</p> <p>One Health Board noted the role of the Looked After Children's Medical Advisor in complex cases, and/or where younger children are moving through permanence proceedings.</p> <p>Two Health Boards highlighted the development of tailored assessments for children and young people with more distinct needs: in one case for unaccompanied and asylum seeking children, and in the other to develop a more age appropriate health assessment for older care experienced people.</p>	<p>NHS Borders have embedded review health assessments for looked after children aged 5+ into the school nursing pathway, which involved developing guidance and training within universal services. This approach aimed to increase consistency and equity of approach and advanced the knowledge and skills of practitioners in universal services.</p> <p>NHS Grampian introduced measures including social workers liaising directly with GPs to increase completion of initial health assessments within 4 weeks, as well as introducing Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs) at the initial assessment to detect early those children who may require CAMHS support.</p> <p>NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde's Vulnerability Health team developed a new approach to assessing the needs of unaccompanied and asylum seeking children, supporting them using a more tailored approach to assessment to produce more accurate child's plans.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Providing specialist health assessments</p>	<p>One Health Board highlighted their intensive maternity assessment and support for care experienced expectant mothers.</p> <p>One NHS Special Board highlighted their introduction of Health Inequalities Impact Assessments across all of their programmes of work, as direct response to considering how to meet the Corporate Parenting duties.</p>	<p>In their maternity services for care experienced expectant mothers, NHS Forth Valley work collaboratively between midwives, health visiting and Family Nurses to ensure pre-birth planning, assessment and provision of support, including referrals to social work services were necessary.</p> <p>Public Health Scotland (formerly NHS Health Scotland) undertake Health Inequalities Impact Assessments in all work programmes to ensure there is no discrimination, to widen access opportunities, and to promote the interests of people with protected characteristics.</p>
<p>Role of universal services</p>	<p>Assessment of need through universal services was referred to by some Health Boards, at times with some consideration of how these meet the needs of children and young people with care experience. Universal services particularly mentioned were in relation to the universal health visiting pathway, use of the GIRFEC National Practice Model for assessment in midwifery, the use of Strength and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs) by school nurses, and assessment tools in sexual health contexts.</p>	<p>NHS Tayside noted that the GIRFEC National Practice Model and Risk Assessment Framework provide a common and standardised approach and tool for Midwives, Health Visitors, Family Nurses, School Nurses and Looked After Children's Nurses to assess information and analyse risk and need in an informed, structured and evidence-based way. These are used alongside the views of children and young people, parents and carers to inform holistic health assessments.</p> <p>NHS Highland noted the progression of work with health visitors in two areas to improve the recording of care experience in their management information systems as part of the universal health visitor pathway.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Mental health</p>	<p>A small range of activities relating to mental health assessments were noted by some Health Boards. Activities included the provision of consultations by CAMHS practitioners to multiagency professionals, and adhering to transitions guidance issued by the Scottish Government.</p> <p>One Health Board noted plans to identify and address inappropriate referrals to CAMHS, whilst another noted a planned pilot programme to monitor cases where CAMHS appointments were not attended, to identify opportunities for service improvement.</p>	<p>CAMHS in NHS Forth Valley provide multidisciplinary consultations to professionals working with children, in order to plan jointly and meet children's needs in a timely way. Similarly, NHS Tayside report the routine involvement of CAMHS clinicians in multi-agency looked after children's planning meetings.</p> <p>Following analysis of CAMHS waiting lists, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde have introduced a new neurodevelopmental pathway for children affected by autism, to ensure they are supported through non-clinical interventions rather than being inappropriately referred to CAMHS where they require non-clinical interventions.</p>

Activities	Spotlight	
<p>Using data to inform services</p>	<p>Some Health Boards described gathering a range of data to assess and understand need. In two cases, this involved developing, collating and reporting against specific indicators for child health, and interpreting and analysing the findings in relation to care experienced children and young people, including at a joint strategic level across Community Planning Partnerships.</p> <p>The role of needs assessment in developing Integrated Children's Services Plans was briefly mentioned by one Health Board.</p> <p>One NHS Special Board described measures to amend data collection processes to ensure information about individual's care experience could be captured.</p> <p>In addition to indicators and measures, one Health Board and one NHS Special Board described listening to the views and needs of care experienced people in developing their plans. On both occasions this appears to have been indirectly, one via advice from Who Cares? Scotland, and the other through local authorities partners.</p>	<p>NHS Ayrshire and Arran established a data working group to ensure the principles of the Looked After Children Data Strategy 2015 were embedded into practice, and systems are set up to provide an accurate picture of the needs of the looked after children population. This involved the establishment of baseline measures of need, and collating and reporting on indicators monthly.</p> <p>The Mental Welfare Commission amended its data collection process regarding the children and young people admitted to non-specialist wards for treatment of mental illness, to find out if they are care experienced. These findings were included in the Commission's annual young person's monitoring report.</p>
<p>Collaborating to assess</p>	<p>In some cases, the benefits of collaborating with partners to assess and understand needs were commented on. This included one example of integration with Child Protection Committees, and one of multiagency review meetings.</p>	<p>The Scottish Ambulance Service reported that integration locally and nationally with Child Protection Committees had helped the service to better understand the needs of care experienced young people in Scotland.</p>

Promote

It is the duty of every corporate parent to promote the interests of those children and young people.

All Health Boards and most NHS Special Boards articulated activities they had undertaken to promote the interests of care experienced children and young people. For Health Boards, this sometimes involved efforts to involve or incorporate the views of care experienced young people into services, or provide additional advocacy or supports to promote their interests within services. NHS Special Boards focused more on promoting employment opportunities and disseminating information to promote the interests of care experienced children and young people.

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Responding to views and experiences</p> <p>A range of activities designed to promote the interests of care experienced children and young people either through, or as a result of, paying attention to their views, needs and experiences were outlined by some Health Boards.</p> <p>Activities included involving children and young people in co-producing corporate parenting plans; attending conferences with workshops delivered by care experienced young people; attending meetings with Champion's Boards; and seeking feedback from children and their families at review meetings.</p> <p>One Health Board used their findings from local needs assessments of looked after children, and national trauma data, as the basis to inform a Board Development Day focused on corporate parenting.</p>	<p>NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde highlighted the support provided by the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) to the People Achieving Change (PAC) Champions Board to design and deliver their own research into care experienced children and young people's experiences of mental health support in Glasgow.</p> <p>NHS Western Isles highlighted taking an increased emphasis on listening to and recording the views of children in health assessment processes, as opposed to giving parents/carers views prominence.</p> <p>NHS Ayrshire and Arran used data around local need and national trauma data (including the impact if appropriate responses are not made to needs) to structure a Board development day with care experienced young people and Who Cares? Scotland. They reported this approach brought statistics to life and strengthened the commitment to improve outcomes for all care experienced people.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Providing additional services, support and advocacy</p>	<p>A number of Health Boards and NHS Special Boards undertook activities to promote the interests of care experienced children and young people by introducing particular services, or additional supports to promote their interests within existing services. This sometimes included advocacy support for children and young people, and also extended to highlighting the interests and needs of care experienced children and young people in influencing and policy work.</p>	<p>NHS Tayside have commenced improvement work to minimise disruption to CAMHS services for looked after children who moved to another Health Board area.</p> <p>NHS Grampian have piloted the delivery of developmental trauma workshops for kinship and foster carers.</p> <p>The Mental Welfare Commission described work to investigate cases where care experienced young people have had difficulty accessing secure care provision, to learn about the issues and ensure rights are upheld. Following this, they submitted evidence to the 2019 Scottish Parliament's Justice Committee Inquiry into Secure Care.</p>
<p>Employment and employability</p>	<p>One Health Board and three NHS Special Boards highlighted promoting the interests of care experienced young people through activities related to employability, work experience, Modern Apprenticeships and employment.</p>	<p>Public Health Scotland detailed their Modern Apprentice scheme, which has resulted in four care experienced staff members progressing within the organisation to become valued permanent employees.</p> <p>The Scottish Ambulance Service have worked with Who Cares? Scotland to attend job fairs and promote work opportunities.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Promoting interests through collaboration</p>	<p>Several Health Boards described utilising collaboration in their activities to promote the interests of care experienced children and young people, including at an individual level in children's care and planning, as consultants in complex cases, and, in one example, on a more systemic level.</p>	<p>NHS Forth Valley cited their partnership between pre-birth planning services for care experienced expectant mothers, and the local authorities throughcare and aftercare teams, to enable joint planning and consequently reduce the number of planning meetings.</p> <p>NHS Grampian have redesigned their CAMHS looked after children consultation service. The new Complex Case Consultation Service provides reflective space and support for professionals working with children (many of whom are care experienced) with complex mental health needs.</p> <p>NHS Forth Valley cited joint work they have undertaken with the Citizen's Advice Bureau in tackling child poverty, with a particular emphasis on care leavers.</p>
<p>Disseminating information</p>	<p>Three NHS Special Boards highlighted activity to promote the interests of care experienced children and young people by dissemination of information, both to their own staff and to partner organisations</p>	<p>The Mental Welfare Commission published good practice guidance regarding capacity and consent to treatment, following a particular case involving a care experienced young person.</p> <p>Public Health Scotland promoted opportunities to staff to become panel members, and to become involved in mentorship schemes for care experienced young people.</p> <p>NHS Education Scotland promoted the eLearning resources they have developed to other corporate parents.</p>

Opportunities

It is the duty of every corporate parent to seek to provide those children and young people with opportunities to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing.

Provision of some opportunities were described by Health Boards and NHS Special Boards to contribute to meeting this duty. Participation was a notable theme, and in some cases, meaningful opportunities to participate in service development were described. However, in others, there was limited detail offered on the opportunities provided and the impact of these. Provision of employment, work experience and Modern Apprenticeship opportunities were described by a number of Boards, and some Boards outlined social and recreational opportunities available for care experienced children and young people.

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Opportunities to be heard, and to participate in service development</p>	<p>Some Health Boards and one NHS Special Board described activities which provided care experienced children and young people to be heard, and to participate in service development in a range of different ways.</p> <p>Three Health Boards cited their involvement with or attendance at Champions Boards as a valuable means to consider the feedback and views of care experienced children and young people.</p> <p>One NHS Special Board described scoping work to develop a youth forum.</p> <p>In two Health Boards, examples were outlined of 'you said, we did' approaches to ensuring children and young people had opportunities to meaningfully influence service improvement.</p>	<p>NHS Ayrshire and Arran carried out qualitative work with children and young people about their experiences of healthcare services from their corporate parents. This directly impacted service improvement, particularly the development of a new dental pathway for care experienced children and young people, and highlighted the integral role of children's views for service development.</p> <p>"We never went to the dentist every 6 months. Mum was very forgetful and would have issues with the dentist and stuff ...I'm still petrified to go to the dentist because of the past" (voice of Care Experienced Young Person, NHS Ayrshire and Arran Health Needs Assessment 2018)</p> <p>NHS Tayside's looked after children's nurses worked with care experienced people to discuss and change services. Examples included producing a new leaflet about the service, and involving young people in the recruitment of looked after children's nurses. NHS Tayside CAMHS service also consulted with care experienced young people and carers in developing their new website.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
Social, recreational and leisure opportunities	Some Health Boards and one NHS Special Board described activity relating to opportunities for care experienced children and young people to benefit from social, recreational and leisure opportunities. This varied from opportunities to socialise with corporate parents such as on camping trips or at Christmas dinners, accessing leisure facilities, to monitoring work to ensure appropriate recreational (and other) opportunities are available in settings where they are required.	NHS Grampian, in partnership with Moray Council, developed free and reduced cost options for accessing leisure services, and evaluated the implementation of the programme. On listening to feedback from young people that they did not want to use leisure facilities on their own, additional passes are now available to friends or carers.
Collaborating to enhance opportunities	Three Health Boards made reference to collaborating with partners (such as prisons services and education staff) to enhance opportunities. It was not always clear whether this was directly linked to care experienced children and young people's opportunities, or developing collaborations which contributed to the broader corporate parenting agenda more generally.	NHS Forth Valley cited collaborations with education staff which enabled allied health professionals to influence the provision of both general and targeted services within schools, based on the needs of young people.
Employment and employability	Two Health Boards and two NHS Special Boards highlighted the development or provision of work experience, mentoring support, and employment opportunities for care experienced young people.	NHS Borders have facilitated eight care experienced Modern Apprenticeships in four years. They have provided training for their mentors, and the young people have developed skills and confidence, and had opportunities to progress to other employment within the organisation. NHS Education for Scotland have worked with the NHS Scotland Employability and Apprenticeship Network to promote and support care experienced young people to join the NHS workforce, and raise awareness of funding for apprenticeship programmes with other Boards.

Access

It is the duty of every corporate parent to take such action as it considers appropriate to help those children and young people to:

- **access opportunities;**
- **make use of services, and access support, which it provides**

All Health Boards and most NHS Special Boards provided some information about activities they had undertaken to support or improve access to their services, through specialist services, fast-track appointments and awareness raising activities. A focus on mental health services was again notable in the responses from Health Boards. Often the activities described related to services and supports which may have contributed indirectly to the corporate parenting agenda, with little reference to specific actions taken to support or improve access for care experienced children and young people in particular.

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Specialist services and extended criteria</p> <p>The majority of Health Boards and two NHS Special Boards described activities relating to accessing services. A significant amount of information given referred to different types of specialist services available to children, young people, families and carers(whether or not they are care experienced): for example substance abuse programmes; speech and language services; sexual health services; digital resources re diet, exercise, stress and wellbeing; and health visiting and family nurse partnership services.</p> <p>In a few examples, information was given about services available to all children and families, but that further efforts had been made to support care experienced children and young people to access these services.</p> <p>Three Health Boards described either additional services for care experienced children and young people, or extended criteria to ensure care experienced children and young people could access services which they otherwise would not have been eligible for.</p>	<p>NHS Forth Valley described improved access for care experienced children and young people in relation to their mental health through the Looked After Psychology Service, in partnership with Falkirk Council.</p> <p>NHS Borders have extended the Family Nurse Partnership service to all care experienced mothers up to the age of 24.</p> <p>The Scottish Ambulance Service noted activities to promote access to their services generally through different communications channels, adding further work was needed to ensure their activities also strengthen the access of care experienced children and young people.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
Fast-track services	Two Health Boards described activities to improve care experienced children and young people's access to services via fast-track/priority referrals.	<p>NHS Forth Valley fast-tracked referrals for care experienced children and young people for sexual health, paediatrics and CAMHS services, working together with the referrer to ensure detailed referral information is included.</p> <p>NHS Grampian prioritised care experienced children and young people for dental services.</p>
Mental health services	Five Health Boards described activities particularly related to children and young people's access to mental health services (both specialist services, and wellbeing programmes within schools), and improvements where young people were making a transition from child to adult mental health services. Whilst there were one or two examples of specific steps taken to support the access of care experienced children and young people to mental health services, in general this activity was focused on the whole children and young person population.	In partnership with Highland Council, NHS Highland has expanded their specialist trauma-informed CAMHS team for care experienced children and young people. Where care experienced children and young people have required admission to the Raigmore Children's Unit with distressed behaviour, there have been learning reviews across teams to improve children's experiences of hospital care going forward.
Awareness raising	One Health Board and two NHS Special Boards described awareness raising activities aimed at improving care experienced children and young people's access to services and opportunities.	<p>NHS Grampian sent letters to each local authorities corporate parenting Lead with details about visits, work experience and placements for care experienced young people.</p> <p>NHS Education for Scotland engaged with Equality and Diversity leads across NHS Scotland to consider educational resources which could contribute to raising awareness of the needs of care experienced young people.</p> <p>The Mental Welfare Commission wrote to agencies which support young people with mental health issues or learning disabilities to publicise their services which are designed to ensure people's rights are upheld, e.g. their advice line and web-based information resources.</p>

Activities	Spotlight	
<p>Access in the context of COVID-19-19</p>	<p>One Health Board described specific activity they had undertaken to support care experienced children and young people to access services in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Another Health Board described activity taken in a specialist service to which care experienced young people had extended eligibility.</p>	<p>NHS Ayrshire and Arran established a working group to respond to the needs of children and young people in residential houses during the pandemic. A bespoke pathway to respond to possible COVID-19 cases was established, which took children's needs for stability and feeling safe into account. The working group continued to meet regularly and respond to emerging issues throughout the pandemic.</p> <p>NHS Borders worked with Connecting Scotland to deliver the Family Nurse Partnership programme via video-calls when home visits were not possible.</p>

Improve

It is the duty of every corporate parent to take such other action as it considers appropriate for the purposes of improving the way in which it exercises its functions in relation to those children and young people.

We asked Health Boards and NHS Special Boards how they have reviewed their performance as a corporate parent, to help bring about improvements for care experienced children and young people. Responses gave an overarching description of internal reporting, monitoring, auditing and review processes, and on a few occasions made links to participating in the review activities of other corporate parents, for example at a Children's Services Planning level. Some reference was also made to sharing information and collaborating with other corporate parents, particularly local authorities, in reviewing performance.

Activities	Spotlight	
Internal reporting and monitoring processes.	<p>A range of activities to monitor and report on corporate parenting activity were outlined, often including reference to the Corporate Parenting Plan and the oversight of strategic leadership groups.</p> <p>Some Health Boards referred to the use of trend data to understand need, and to inform improvements to services and service design. Two Health Boards also described having a process of internal case reviews to share learning, however it was unclear whether this was specific to corporate parenting cases, or audit processes more generally.</p>	<p>NHS Western Isles described undertaking an annual audit of medical assessments offered to care experienced children and young people.</p> <p>NHS Golden Jubilee (a specialist hospital and research institute, with a focus on assisting NHS Board's to reduce waiting times) noted that they monitor the demographics of those who use their services, but numbers of care experienced children and young people are minimal, due to the service they deliver.</p> <p>The Mental Welfare Commission reported their Executive Director and their Children and Young People's group continue to regularly review the necessity for specific themed pieces of work to promote the needs of care experienced children and young people.</p>
Participating in joint corporate parenting processes	<p>In two Health Boards, some information was given about participation in the corporate parenting reporting and strategies of wider groups.</p>	<p>NHS Borders noted they contribute to the annual Scottish Borders corporate parenting report and strategy.</p> <p>NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde form part of the Glasgow HSCP whose corporate parenting activity is overseen by the Integrated Joint Board.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
Sharing information and collaborating	Some activities were noted by two Health Boards and one NHS Special Board regarding sharing information and liaising with partners (generally in local authorities) to monitor performance and seek to improve.	<p>NHS Grampian liaised with local authorities about health outcomes data on specific topics, such as waiting times for looked after children.</p> <p>NHS Highland have been working with two local authorities to improve uptake of health assessments for looked after children, and approaches to mental health assessments.</p>

In summary

The information received from the health boards presents a varied picture of corporate parenting activity by health services. Whilst some Health Boards and NHS Special Boards clearly demonstrated an understanding and ownership of their role in supporting the health and development of children and young people with care experience, this unfortunately was not necessarily common or consistent. More could be done to ensure the vital role of health services as corporate parents is fully realised.

Chapter 8: Corporate Parenting Activities of National Bodies

Introduction

In this chapter we review the corporate parenting activities of national corporate parents in Scotland between 2018 and 2021. In total, 28 corporate parents were considered as national bodies within this chapter. From those 28 national bodies, 21 returned survey responses. This chapter therefore focuses on the activity of those 21 organisations.

There is significant variance in the size, remit and focus of the national bodies. Many of them provided comprehensive, detailed and considered returns, with strong evidence of activity across all corporate parenting duties. This was particularly evident from those corporate parents whose daily work relates specifically to care experienced children and young people, who naturally have many more activities and impacts to share. For example, Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS), the Care Inspectorate or Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA). Other national bodies, such as Accountancy in Bankruptcy or Independent Living Fund Scotland are at the beginning of their corporate parenting journey. Some bodies such as Police Scotland, Creative Scotland, Disclosure Scotland, Education Scotland and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) have a wider remit but were still able to report on specific work they do to support care experienced children and young people.

For many bodies, activity centred around engaging with and listening to the voice of children and young people. Many have progressed well in this area, whereas others have more work to do to understand the needs of children and young people, as well as understand their specific role in the duties. Many national bodies do not provide direct services to children, young people and families, and as such, some of those struggled to fully understand and fulfil their role as a corporate parent.

One positive found across the majority of returns was a willingness to engage with and listen to children and young people. Another positive was evidence of collaboration between national bodies and local agencies, whether they be local authorities, education institutions or health bodies. There was a sense of many corporate parents doing their best to fulfil their responsibilities, in circumstances made more challenging by COVID-19-19. Any successes, innovation and collaboration should be celebrated; however, where possible and appropriate, constructive challenge is also provided in order to ignite ideas and creative thinking about how to make further improvements to support care experienced children and young people.

Alert

It is the duty of every corporate parent to be alert to matters which, or which might, adversely affect the wellbeing of children and young people.

Many national bodies presented a nuanced understanding of the needs of care experienced children and young people, demonstrating strong activities around awareness raising, training and corporate governance. For many, this involved collaboration with other corporate parents or partnership work with organisations such as Who Cares? Scotland or CELCIS. For funding organisations such as Creative Scotland or Sports Scotland it meant funding or commissioning other partners to carry out research or project activity which strengthens understanding of children and young people's needs. A small number of national bodies presented little or no activity, highlighting a need for greater focus in fulfilling this duty.

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Training and Awareness Raising</p>	<p>Most national bodies provided evidence of training and awareness raising to support staff to understand the needs of children and young people. This included a range of activity, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In-house training and development ● Partnership working ● Funding or commissioning other organisations or care sector partners to carry out research or information-gathering ● Training to managers and senior leaders ● Encouraging staff to volunteer with mentoring organisations ● Building understanding across staff teams of their role as corporate parents ● Incorporating information about corporate parenting responsibilities in induction materials for staff 	<p>The Care Inspectorate Corporate Parenting group worked with Who Cares? Scotland and the Care Inspectorate young inspection volunteers to develop and deliver training for staff, including all board members and senior leaders.</p> <p>Policy Scotland collaborated with Who Cares? Scotland to develop bespoke training, which is mandatory to complete for all police officers up to Inspector or equivalent. This training package provided information on their responsibilities as corporate parents, with first-hand accounts from care experienced young people. This training provided staff with insight to how care experienced people experience their service and the common perceptions of police officers. This training package has been completed by 14,400 staff across Police Scotland.</p> <p>Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB) staff have been encouraged to participate in a mentoring scheme for care experienced children and young people run by the Edinburgh based charity 'Move On', with support for staff such as time off in lieu for training provided.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
Training and Awareness Raising	<p>The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service has delivered awareness training in partnership with Who Cares? Scotland to their board, leadership team and colleagues on Corporate Parenting responsibilities and experiences of care experienced young people. This face-to-face training has been supplemented by an online resource centre providing colleagues with educational materials that can be used to influence and inform the work they deliver.</p> <p>Social Security Scotland developed an e-learning course that is mandatory for all staff to complete. The course was launched in October 2020 and has received positive feedback.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Collaboration and Liaison with Stakeholders</p> <p>Many national bodies showed strong evidence of collaboration with other corporate parents and services that support children and young people. Many of these collaborations were done with other national partners and cross-sector forums. There was also evidence of high-impact work taken place at a targeted, local level.</p> <p>Collaboration included the development, monitoring and publication of a joint corporate parenting plan or report. It also included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sharing information ● Providing advice or assistance ● Co-ordinating activities ● Sharing responsibility for action ● Funding activities jointly <p>Evidence of collaboration was demonstrated by the majority of national bodies and was, for the most part, one of the main strengths of their survey returns. Much of the collaboration was carried out with other corporate parents, including many other national bodies. For example, Children's Hearing Scotland (CHS) and the Scottish Children's Reporters Administration (SCRA) naturally working closely together, or Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and Social Security Scotland working in partnership. Some of the more innovative collaboration was carried out locally, with national bodies such as Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and SQA engaging with local Champions Boards.</p> <p>Most national bodies provided evidence of the impact that collaboration provided, describing activity that improved services for care experienced children and young people, or helped the organisations(s) to fulfil their duties as a corporate parent.</p>	<p>Disclosure Scotland described how existing relationships have been fostered with key corporate parents including Education Scotland, Police Scotland, Care Inspectorate, Skills Development Scotland (SDS), and Scottish Social Services Council. These relationships enabled Disclosure Scotland to collaborate, share contacts and best practices but also be aware of matters that may affect services for care experienced people.</p> <p>Members of SQA's Corporate Parenting Steering group participated in a number of corporate parenting forums to keep informed about the issues which impact on the life of care experienced young people, including representation on the Glasgow Corporate Parenting Forum, Scottish Funding Council Care Experienced Governance Group, Edinburgh corporate parents Group, and Midlothian Champions Board.</p> <p>Each year SQA share the exam timetable with Children Hearing's Scotland to ensure CHS can avoid Children's Hearings clashing with SQA exams. They aim to develop stronger links with SCRA to monitor and measure the impact there might be in considering the exam timetable and are keen to explore further collaboration between SQA and SCRA.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Increased participation with care experienced children and young people to better understand their needs</p>	<p>In preparing (or revising) their plan, corporate parents must consult with other corporate parents, and any other organisations and persons that they think relevant (Section 59(2)). This includes looked after children and young people and care leavers. Similar to their responses to each of the six duties, national bodies presented a mixed picture of participation here.</p> <p>Many bodies such as SCRA, CHS and the Care Inspectorate, whose services have a very direct role with care experienced children and young people, were able to demonstrate embedded participation approaches that had impact at a strategic and operational level. Other bodies such as SQA and Creative Scotland, used partnerships and networks to facilitate engagement with care experienced children and young people. This included partners such as Who Cares? Scotland, local authorities Champions Boards, CELCIS, MCR Pathways, Move On and Glasgow Life.</p>	<p>The Care Inspectorate consulted widely with care experienced young people in the development of the Health and Social Care Standards and in the review of their complaint functions. To improve accessibility for children and young people to complain about the care service they receive, a 'text to complain' service has also been launched.</p> <p>Articulate Cultural Trust (on behalf of Creative Scotland) undertook a mapping exercise of where projects were being delivered specifically for care experienced young people, finding that care experienced young people face systemic barriers to accessing creative opportunities and to progression within artform areas.</p> <p>In March 2018, the Scottish Prisons Service (SPS) updated their electronic Prisoner Record System to include a condition marker that enabled staff to identify care leavers. During initial assessments of those in custody, SPS staff would ask the relevant questions of an individual to ascertain if they are a care leaver, and if confirmed via their local authorities, the electronic system would be marked affirmatively. These changes have enabled SPS to identify care leavers via interrogation of the electronic Prisoner Records System and ensure that they are offered advice, guidance and assistance they are entitled to, including aftercare.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Increased participation with care experienced children and young people to better understand their needs</p>	<p>Other national bodies with a less direct corporate parenting role, such as Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, evidenced a real willingness to engage directly with care experienced children and young people; including having open days and fun activities for children and young people to take part in. Others used their role as a regulatory, funding or oversight body to deepen other corporate parents' understanding of care experienced children and young people's needs. Others made attempts, with mixed success, to engage care experienced children and young people through seeking feedback on their corporate parenting plans and activities. Some, however, spoke of difficulties in engaging directly with children and young people.</p> <p>Many spoke about upcoming plans around participation, or of activity that had to be curtailed due to COVID-19-19, so there should be an expectation of greater evidence of participation activity during the next reporting period.</p>	<p>SCRA worked with groups including Champions Boards, 'Our Hearing, Our Voice', Hearings-Experienced Modern Apprentices to ensure information on their website is accessible, rights-based, and child and young person friendly.</p> <p>Police Scotland have established corporate parenting champions in all 13 local policing divisions, who work closely within their community and local authorities partnerships. This has allowed Police Scotland as a national organisation to be receptive to local community needs and be alert to the needs of care experienced young people through local engagement partnerships. Examples included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Edinburgh the Youth Justice Sergeant and Young Person Liaison/Missing Person Co-ordinator have daily meetings with Residential Care Home Managers • In Dumfries and Galloway, they have introduced the role of the Link Officer, who attends all care homes on a fortnightly basis <p>The Care Inspectorate young inspection volunteers have contributed to the Care Inspectorate Corporate Parenting report, Corporate Parenting plan for 2021-2023 and to the responses noted within this survey.</p>

Assess

It is the duty of every corporate parent to assess the needs of those children and young people for services and support it provides.

Many national bodies demonstrated a strong understanding of the needs of children and young people, which was evidenced through robust frameworks of data collection, policy work or participation activity. A number of national bodies also evidenced strong participation and engagement activity with children and young people. Some of this activity is outlined in this chapter; however, additional participation activity is shown across other duty chapters, highlighting the cross-cutting benefit of this work.

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Creating opportunities to learn from children and young people</p>	<p>Many national bodies demonstrated a wide range of creative, fun and relationship-based opportunities to help develop their understanding of children and young people's needs. Some activities included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement and consultation of diverse groups of children and young people • Commissioning or partnership work with other agencies to assess the needs of children and young people • Opportunities for children and young people to contribute to national policy development • Opportunities to contribute to service improvement work 	<p>CHS consulted with young people from 'Our Hearings, Our Voice', LGBT Youth Scotland Youth Commission on Care Experience, Reach for Autism and Inverclyde Proud To Care, SCRA Modern Apprentices to inform a number of improvements to the new types of Hearings held during COVID-19.</p> <p>Social Security Scotland added specific questions to their Client Survey in order to gather data on the experience of people with care experience who have applied for and received a benefit outcome. The first Client Survey published in March 2021 included responses from over 100 people who had care experience and the findings were then used to contribute to their Equality Impact Assessment process.</p> <p>As part of development of the Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020, Disclosure Scotland created specific engagement opportunities to understand how best to meet the needs of care experienced people. This included members of Who Cares? Scotland, children in secure care, residential care and a range of other young people groups. This engagement provided invaluable feedback on proposals and helped shape the Act.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Data Collection, Analysis and Monitoring Improvement</p>	<p>National bodies demonstrated a range of innovative data collection methods and analysis frameworks in order to increase their understanding of the needs of children and young people.</p> <p>Often this this involved developing, collating and reporting against specific indicators to identify care experienced children and young people accessing their services.</p> <p>For others, this activity involved collaborating with other corporate parents to design data collection processes and systems in order to assess and better understand need. This included multiagency working as well as direct engagement with children and young people.</p> <p>For organisations such as Social Security Scotland, this activity was to help frame their planning as a relatively 'new' corporate parent.</p>	<p>SDS host the 16+ Data Hub through which information on 16 to 24-year-olds that can be shared securely between partners, including local authorities, colleges, the Scottish Funding Council, SAAS and the Department for Work and Pensions. Details include, for example, expected school leaving dates, where young people intend to go after school, whether this be into a job, Modern Apprenticeship, college or university, and information on those who are receiving career services and welfare benefits. Use of the Data Hub allows SDS to work with partners to accurately identify care experienced young people, ensuring they receive a targeted service without relying on them to continually self-disclose.</p> <p>Police Scotland collaborated with multiagency partners to test an idea for change aimed at reducing the criminalisation of care experienced children and young people. The pilot was initially tested in Dumfries & Galloway Division and was used as an opportunity to incorporate the extended adoption of the 'Not At Home' missing person protocol. The pilot changed the way in which Police would ordinarily deal with incidents involving children and young people in a residential care home setting. Protocols were put in place to respond differently to behaviours that could be considered as low-level crime and children missing or not at home. A number of positive results have been recorded from this pilot, including a 62% reduction in recorded crime of a minor nature within the care homes.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Data Collection, Analysis and Monitoring Improvement</p>	<p>Scottish Legal Aid Board's applicant research questionnaire includes a question inquiring as to the care status of the applicant, which allows them to capture data on the numbers of care experienced people accessing legal aid. It has increased knowledge about the number of care experienced applicants which will be used to inform policies and advice to government; increased staff awareness of corporate parenting; and begun to provide an evidence base for the policy making process.</p> <p>Independent Living Fund Scotland flag records of care experienced young people on their internal database to monitor how many applications they receive.</p> <p>Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment process has been amended to incorporate the assessment of the potential impact on the grounds of being care experienced and being in a position of providing care. This means that every relevant corporate decision the organisation takes is assessed for its impact on care experienced children and young people.</p>

Promote

It is the duty of every corporate parent to promote the interests of those children and young people.

Many national bodies displayed commitment and creativity to promote the interests of children and young people. For those larger bodies with a more direct role in supporting children and young people, a wealth of activity was demonstrated. For others, activity under this duty was more mixed. A small number of national bodies did not evidence any activity under this duty. Some of the most positive activity demonstrated under this duty came from national bodies who used their specific remits as funding, oversight or regulatory bodies to develop unique or innovative ways to promote the interests of children and young people.

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Promoting and encouraging opportunities for care experienced children and young people</p> <p>Some national bodies used their role as a corporate parent to encourage innovative opportunities for children and young people. Some of these opportunities were working directly alongside children and young people, whereas others were using their remit as a funding, oversight or regulatory body. Examples included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assessments and inspections ● Awareness raising events ● Thematic reviews or strategic scrutiny ● Professional guidance or support to the care sector <p>Some of the more positive activity here showed evidence of creative or innovative thinking, with corporate parents challenging themselves to create new ways of reaching children and young people. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service offering drop-in sessions for young people was one such activity. Police Scotland designed a 'pledge' of minimum standards of support from police for care experienced young people up to the age of 26.</p> <p>Other positive activity here related to the use of art and creativity in order to engage young people, but also to develop resources or service improvements.</p>	<p>The Care Inspectorate published 'My World Outdoors' in 2016, and together with the Scottish Government published 'Space to Grow' in August 2019 and 'Out to Play' in February 2020. These resources support the development of outdoor play and outdoor-based provision as part of the funded expansion of early learning and childcare. Eight care services have now evidenced outdoor-based work.</p> <p>The Care Inspectorate also published 'My Creative Journey' in 2017, which encourages creative play (art, drama, pretend play, music and song, model making, loose-parts play, storytelling and dance). Emoji characters for the SHANNARI wellbeing indicators were used as a way of bringing the indicators to life for children. Two care services have since evidenced how they are encouraging creative play in their service.</p> <p>Between 2018 and 2020 Education Scotland's inspections of schools and centres identified approximately 1900 pupils as care experienced. A sample of the key messages taken from the safeguarding self-evaluations returned by inspected establishments include how schools ensure pupils can access clubs and activities through funding such as the Pupil Equity Fund; Assessments and plans in place for care experienced children and young people such as wellbeing assessment plans, child's plans, individualised education programmes, additional support plans and risk matrices.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Promoting and encouraging opportunities for care experienced children and young people</p>	<p>Creative Scotland commissioned CELCIS to lead on one of the programme strands for UNCON 3.0 in January 2021, a creative symposium showcasing work that discussed the impact of COVID-19-19. The content produced by CELCIS showcased interviews and creative work from talented care experienced artists, sharing their work and their views on the importance of creativity to them and how creative opportunities should be supported during COVID-19-19. Their programme showcased work from organisations such as Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum (STAF), Aberlour, Children's Parliament, the Good Shepherd Centre, Children and Young People's Centre for Justice (CYCJ), The Sound Lab and Articulate.</p> <p>Scottish Fire and Rescue Service support local groups and Champions Boards through walks and keeping in contact online through watching films, playing board games and bingo, as well as arranging online drop-in sessions where young people can pop by for an informal chat.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Direct Delivery of corporate parenting training to others</p> <p>Some national bodies used their expertise to provide training and skills development to promote the interests of care experienced children and young people. Examples includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Direct training opportunities for care experienced children and young people ● Training and support to other organisations supporting children and young people 	<p>Education Scotland support the work of CELCIS's Education Forum and their Virtual Schools and Head Teachers Network often providing presentations or resources. Education Scotland also regularly share research articles, professional learning resources through their newsletter.</p> <p>Independent Living Fund Scotland (ILF) developed staff awareness on the subject of corporate parenting to make sure staff promote benefits for care experienced young people. For example, on the principles of corporate parenting, ILF Scotland's responsibilities and the ILF Scotland action plan.</p> <p>SQA's corporate induction programme now includes information about SQA's Corporate Parenting responsibilities, commitments and the services they offer to support care experienced children and young people.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Sector Support</p> <p>Some national bodies used their remit as support or oversight organisations to create resources, training or guides to improve the practice of other organisations who work with care experienced children and young people.</p> <p>Several national bodies provided examples of innovative practice or collaboration with other corporate parents or services that support care experienced children and young people, or with care experienced young people directly.</p> <p>For some, this activity is part of their daily work (for example Education Scotland providing support to the education sector) whereas others, such as Scottish Fire and Rescue Service activity, was thinking of their corporate parenting responsibilities in more creative ways.</p> <p>Activity here included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creating online and paper guides informing others of how best to promote the interests of care experienced children and young people ● Facilitation of training ● Partnership work ● Consultancy support ● Direct work with children and young people 	<p>Disclosure Scotland collaborated with Who Cares? Scotland's advocates to inform how Disclosure Scotland could better assist the young people they work with to understand disclosures. These activities have helped advocates to support care experienced people apply for a background check to help them in seeking employment, education or volunteering. These tools have helped employers to use the disclosure information that they receive to create safe and fair recruitment practices and assist individuals to disclose convictions in a confident and positive way.</p> <p>Education Scotland worked in partnership with the University of Stirling and stakeholders to encourage and embed participation throughout schools and early-years settings. The How Good is Our school? Series produced in collaboration with schools, local authorities, colleges and organisations that represent children and young people across Scotland, was designed to support educational settings to engage children and young people in self-evaluation and improvement in ways that enhance learning. Both these resources are essential toolkits for engaging with care experienced learners to ensure that their experience of school helps to inform future improvements.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Sector Support</p>	<p>Education Scotland supported the Scottish Government with data and reporting to help inform the impact of the Care Experienced Children and Young Peoples Fund's (part of the Attainment Scotland Fund). This capacity building activity has been supported by Education Scotland Attainment Advisers supporting local authorities with data and evidence around this specific group of learners.</p> <p>Scottish Fire and Rescue Service worked in partnership with Morrisons to deliver food parcels to the care experienced community, as well as collected care packages for care experienced children and young people.</p> <p>Care Inspectorate young inspection volunteers represented the organisation on the Independent Care Review Stigma working group, giving them an opportunity to share their thoughts and to speak on behalf of care experienced children and young people they work with. They helped to influence important change that will benefit many children and young people in years to come.</p> <p>Skills Development Scotland's Business Team have created a best practice guide for learning providers and employers working with care experienced customers, and their corporate website includes a section for businesses on the barriers that care experienced young people face in accessing employment.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
Sector Support	<p>Education Scotland host the National Improvement Hub, the Professional Learning and Leadership website and Parentzone, provide comprehensive information, guidance, reflection tools and professional learning that promote the interests of care experienced children and young people. The resources support practitioners and parents with their understanding around the issues that affect care experienced children and young people, and these are constantly being updated. All resources are accompanied by a suite of questions for practitioners to help them to reflect on both the challenges facing care experienced learners and how they can contribute to improving the educational outcomes and wellbeing for these learners.</p>

Opportunities

It is the duty of every corporate parent to seek to provide those children and young people with opportunities to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing.

National Bodies were asked how they had helped to bring about opportunities for care experienced children and young people. Some of the more positive examples demonstrated strong evidence of collaboration with other corporate parents, as well as a willingness to engage directly with care experienced children and young people. For many, this extended to participation work with care experienced children and young people to help bring about improvements to their own services. For others, activity centred around their response to supporting care experienced children and young people through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Skills Development Opportunities</p>	<p>Responses included a number of initiatives to provide opportunities for care experienced children and young people to learn and develop new skills.</p> <p>Some of these opportunities were vocationally skill-based, whereas others were opportunities for care experienced children and young people to engage in recreational and leisure opportunities.</p>	<p>SQA, in partnership with Who Cares? Scotland and local authorities, supported two care experienced young people to attend a seven-week residential programme at Harvard University's Summer School in 2019. Both young people achieved the full credits for the courses they were studying.</p> <p>CHS have provided opportunities for care experienced people to sit on interview panels, contribute to advisory and working groups, and provide feedback on work and publications.</p> <p>The Care Inspectorate have been running four development days each year where their young inspection volunteers take part in learning around topics they have identified are needed. For example, training around interview skills to help young inspection volunteers find out more information from young people in a care setting. Other training has included children's rights, transgender awareness, Corporate Parenting and champion's board awareness.</p> <p>During 2019, Police Scotland worked in collaboration with Scottish Fire and Rescue service to develop training and engagement programmes that were provided to young people in secure and residential care. This included sessions on drugs, violence, rights and responsibilities, fire safety and driver safety.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Art, Creativity and Play</p> <p>Innovative and creative practice that has provided care experienced children and young people to engage with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Art and creativity ● Music ● Sport ● Play ● Events ● Fundraising activity 	<p>Creative Scotland invited 20 regional and national organisations to apply for awards of between £30k and £70k to help the recovery of youth arts activity across Scotland from October 2020. From 20 successful applications, 7 projects for this fund identified care experienced young people as a priority group to work with.</p> <p>Helping to mark Year of the Young People 2018, SCRA invited care experienced children and young people to contribute to a window display, during Care Experienced Week in Glasgow. Key partners Glasgow City Council Arts in the City and Articulate Cultural Trust supported the children and young people to produce a variety of creative pieces, named 'Art in the HeART of the City'.</p> <p>Sports Scotland, as part of their Highlife Highland work, collaborated with a range of partners including Who Cares? Scotland, Cashback Highlands videography, Active Schools, and facility managers to deliver a project delivering outdoor activities for 18 care-experienced young people to reconnect through sport and outdoors activity. From a survey of participants, 90% of attendees strongly agreed that the adventure day helped them to meet new people and feel a sense of belonging.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Art, Creativity and Play</p>	<p>A Police Scotland Campus Officer for Ayrshire College worked exclusively with groups of care experienced young people for one day per week throughout January and February 2020, taking small groups off campus to experience outdoor activities such as kayaking.</p> <p>Creative Scotland commissioned Articulate Cultural Trust to host a series of four full-day consultation events with participatory artists and arts organisations who were interested or already working with care experienced young people. Short films of the 2019 sessions are shared here: www.articulatehub.com/training.</p>
<p>Mentoring, Internships and Modern Apprenticeships</p>	<p>Several bodies have created opportunities to gain paid work through mentoring or internship programmes. These provided opportunities for care experienced young people to work alongside staff, as well as enabling them to gain valuable experience, paid work and career support.</p> <p>Others provided staff with opportunities to take part in mentoring schemes for care experienced children and young people.</p> <p>SQA worked with MCR Pathways to support a group of young people from local schools to undertake work experience in SQA's Customer Contact Centre, as part of their Talent Taster programme. SQA also encouraged staff to take up mentoring opportunities with MCR Pathways. SQA also have 12 active mentors across SQA supporting Care Experienced young people.</p> <p>The Care Inspectorate has continued to invest in the young inspection volunteer programme. The scheme has 15 volunteers who go along on inspections and talk to the children and young people about their experiences. Young inspection volunteers play a vital role in working with the inspectors, making sure that the concerns of young people are understood and taken seriously.</p> <p>Social Security Scotland took part in the national internship programme for people with care experience. Who Cares? Scotland delivered learning to managers, to support those who will be managing care leavers. The two interns were successful in securing permanent employment on completion of the programme.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
Mentoring, Internships and Modern Apprenticeships	<p>SCRA run a successful Modern Apprenticeship scheme, having helped employ 13 young people over a 10-year period. This has supported them to acquire a recognised qualification (SVQ) in Business and Administration, provided pastoral care and support and offered long term employment opportunities and additional educational programmes if requested. The majority of the candidates are now full-time permanent employees in the organisation. One of the modern apprentices, Sophie, has written a blog about the experience www.mycorporateparents.co.uk/2018/01/25/blog-sophie.</p>

Access

It is the duty of every corporate parent to take such action as it considers appropriate to help those children and young people to:

access opportunities;

make use of services, and access support, which it provides

National bodies presented a mixed response to activities they had undertaken to support or improve access to their services. Many described how they provided opportunities for care experienced children and young people to take part in their organisational work. Others described how they had made attempts to make their services more accessible to children and young people. Some bodies described broader work that related to all children and young people, but which was described as having positive impacts for care experienced children and young people. Some did not respond to this question or provided little information to analyse.

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Accessing Opportunities</p>	<p>National bodies created a number of different approaches to help care experienced children and young people access opportunities.</p> <p>For some this included participation opportunities for care experienced children and young people to engage with their organisation.</p> <p>Some bodies, such as SQA, SDS, Creative Scotland and Education Scotland described how they had used their remit as oversight, funding or regulatory bodies to improve the services of others.</p>	<p>Creative Scotland Hosted the Firestarter Festival event in February 2020, Connecting Culture & Care. Delivered with Starcatchers charity, the session explored how to support care experienced young people to exercise their right to access and participate in the arts and culture and how creative approaches can be integrated into this support. The event included a practical session of some expressive arts approaches and had input from the Care Inspectorate on the role of the arts-based approaches in their work for the Stand Up for Siblings campaign.</p> <p>Skills Development Scotland's 'Next Steps' service ensures that those who do not initially make a successful transition from school to a positive destination are provided additional intensive coaching support to do so. While this support is primarily targeted at people aged 15–18, the offer is extended to 26 years for those with known care experience as part of their corporate parenting commitments. In 2018/19, 97% of senior phase pupils and 75% of Next Steps customers with known care experience received coaching guidance from SDS, with 84% and 65% respectively showing an improvement in their career management skills.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
Accessing Opportunities	<p>Skills Development Scotland worked with Scottish Government to extend enhanced contribution rates for care experienced modern apprentices up to the age of 29. This reflects the fact that care experienced young people may take longer to make sustained positive transitions, may require more attempts to do so, and therefore may require a longer period to access and sustain a suitable Modern Apprenticeship. There were 92 applications made in 2019-20 for care experienced Modern Apprentices.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>More inclusive and trauma-informed settings</p>	<p>Some national bodies provided evidence of where they have improved their own services and activities to make them more accessible to care experienced children and young people. Activity here included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development of child-friendly resources ● Support to other corporate parents and organisations who work with care experienced children and young people ● Development of materials and guides to support practitioners 	<p>CHS have produced Panel Member Profiles to try and make the Hearing experience as comfortable as possible for children and young people. These images of the panel member allow children and families to see in advance who the panel members in their Hearing are and learn something about them, therefore increasing familiarity.</p> <p>Disclosure Scotland established a programme of sessions with practitioners to support people with convictions (Turning Point, Barnardo's and Grace Chocolates). They have helped to provide education to employers, people supporting people with convictions and care experienced people to informing them about their services.</p> <p>SCRA's Hearing Rooms Improvement Programme led to approximately 10 new Hearing rooms being redesigned. These rooms have transformed the nature of the traditional Hearing format and allowed for less intimidating more inclusive environments.</p> <p>In Edinburgh, all police incidents involving children in residential care are discussed at daily managers' meetings. Training, advice and guidance has been provided to frontline police officers and care staff on the importance of not criminalising young people for behaviours which, if they happened in a child's family home, would not involve a parent calling the police. This has led to a reduction in offending.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>More inclusive and trauma-informed settings</p>		<p>Education Scotland have been supporting schools and local authorities across Scotland with professional learning and direct support. This process is affording educational establishments more confidence and skills to provide learners, including those with care experience who previously struggled to access the curriculum, more flexible options that more appropriately meet their needs. Some examples include: Flexible Learning Pathways Case Study – Sanderson High School or Attachment Theory and Practice.</p> <p>SCRA have been working with Who Cares? Scotland to make information more accessible and improve how to deal with requests for information from care experienced people. They have launched a new suite of materials to make it easier for people to understand how to make a request to SCRA to access their information.</p>
<p>Learning from Care Experienced Children and Young People</p>	<p>Some demonstrated how they had created opportunities to learn from or engage directly with care experienced children and young people.</p>	<p>Since 2018, the Care Inspectorate have met over 3,000 children and young people to learn about their experience of care and used what they have told us to inform inspection reports and support improvement.</p> <p>SCRA developed a resource pack for practitioners to use with young people on areas they were keen to hear from them about in relation to virtual hearings. Our Hearings, Our Voice, The Fostering Network, and Aberdeenshire's Young People's Campaigning Group all took part.</p>
<p>Access in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic</p>	<p>Some bodies, in particular SCRA, described their approach to responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>	<p>SCRA used a secure online platform Vscene, to hold Children's Hearings, ensuring that legal protections remained in place to consider children's needs.</p>

Improve

It is the duty of every corporate parent to take such other action as it considers appropriate for the purposes of improving the way in which it exercises its functions in relation to those children and young people.

For the Improve duty, national bodies reflected on their activities as a corporate parent to help bring about improvements for care experienced children and young people. Many national bodies spoke about ways in which they strengthened internal planning, monitoring and evaluation frameworks, to measure progress and efficiency as a corporate parent.

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Monitoring and Evaluation</p>	<p>A range of improvements to monitoring, evaluation and data capturing was evidenced. For several bodies, this was an opportunity to think critically about how their own service is accessed by care experienced children and young people, and where improvements need to be made.</p>	<p>On an annual basis, SCRA publishes a one-year Corporate Parenting Plan and an Annual Report, both of which are written for young people. These are accessible and informative online documents that tell young people what they have been working on and have achieved in the past year.</p> <p>Skills Development Scotland have introduced recording of care experience data for employees within the organisation. This is to identify if care experienced people are taking up opportunities, thus helping to refine and improve their approach, and highlighting where additional support and resources may be required. In their 2019 employee survey, 81% of colleagues who identified as care experienced agreed that SDS was a supportive employer.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Accountability</p>	<p>Some national bodies noted activity that outlined how they made themselves accountable to the care experienced children and young people they support. This was done through a number of different mediums, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● reports (paper and online) ● internal audits ● training materials ● online resources 	<p>SCRA produces an Annual Report for young people each year. This is an accessible and informative online document that tells young people what they have been working on and what progress has been made against the commitments made in their corporate parenting plan. SCRA have also committed to Our Hearings, Our Voice with progress updates against their 40 calls to actions.</p> <p>The Scottish Prison Service developed an eLearning product to support all staff to have a clearer understanding of the role of a corporate parent and their obligations to support and assist those that identify as care leavers.</p> <p>The Scottish Prison Service have designed an annual corporate parenting audit to support establishments to evidence their commitment, via reporting, of their corporate parenting responsibilities. This will provide greater confidence in their ability to identify care leavers and thereafter improve their opportunities and awareness as to refer them to their corporate parenting partners who provide services for them.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Practice Development and Improvement</p> <p>Some national bodies used their role and remit as corporate parents to challenge practice development, both internally and with other corporate parents.</p> <p>Particularly positive activity here involved some corporate parents reaching out to specialist partners (e.g. disability organisations) to help understand how to improve services for specific communities of care experienced children and young people. It is also positive to see evidence of the involvement of children and young people in many of these service improvement areas.</p> <p>Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Internal improvements to services ● Development of training materials ● Internal response and reflection on the Independent Care Review Promise ● Improvements to qualification frameworks 	<p>SCRA worked with the Scottish Government to ensure information about national advocacy services for children and young people is available in multiple formats, including a website and leaflets, all of which SCRA designed and delivered. This ensures that children and young people are increasingly aware of their rights to bring an advocacy worker to their Children's Hearing and are supported in exercising their rights during the Hearing.</p> <p>SQA made changes to their replacement Scottish Qualifications Certificate (SQC) service to remove barriers and ensure any care experienced learner (26 years and under) could make a request for a replacement certificate without charge as quickly and as easily possible. This is following awareness that care experienced learners were often not receiving their certificate after moving placements and changing address.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
<p>Practice Development and Improvement</p>	<p>Skills Development Scotland have designed and introduced a range of resources for training providers delivering their apprenticeships and other programmes, specifically focused on identifying need and supporting individuals who have a care experience background. SDS delivered workshops to providers covering recruiting care experienced young people, and advice on how to ensure the appropriate support is put in place for the young person. When asked to evaluate these workshops, 96% of participants said they would recommend the training to someone else. In written feedback, participants also highlighted they would integrate learning into their everyday working practices and share their learning with colleagues.</p> <p>SSSC have worked with Police Scotland and Social Work Scotland to create a training programme for carrying out joint investigative interviews.</p> <p>Education Scotland have established collaborative partnerships with a range of national, regional and local working groups, other corporate parents, relevant national networks and third sector organisations to engage in professional dialogue with, give advice to, and influence the priorities of other agencies.</p>

Activities	Spotlight
Practice Development and Improvement	<p>SCRA worked with REACH for Autism to produce sensory kits to be available in all Hearings rooms to support children and families with sensory needs. These tools can help children in situations of anxiety to self-regulate, focus and support participation.</p> <p>Sport Scotland host a network of over 400 managers and coordinators dedicated to developing and supporting the delivery of quality sporting opportunities. As part of these networks, they host specific sessions for teams to pass on learning for engaging young people with care-experience. This includes how they determined the young person's needs, what action they took and what they learned.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
<p>Governance</p>	<p>National bodies demonstrated changes to their business planning and corporate governance to develop a stronger internal understanding of the needs of children and young people. These activities were aimed at improving processes around monitoring and reporting of corporate parenting duties. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Incorporating corporate parenting into business planning, strategic groups or corporate objectives ● Adjusting the focus of internal working groups in areas such as equality, diversity and inclusion to also consider care experience. ● Adopting 'care experience' as a protected characteristic in their planning ● design and structure of corporate parenting groups and leadership groups. 	<p>SQA has made a commitment to care experienced young people in its Corporate Plan to ensure that as part of their operational planning, activity teams will continue to consider and meet their responsibilities.</p> <p>Sports Scotland have integrated care experience into their equality impact assessments and guidance. This ensures care-experienced young people are given the same priority as the protected characteristics within the equality legislation, when assessing their policies or programmes.</p> <p>Scottish Legal Aid Board's (SLAB) applicant research questionnaire includes a question inquiring as to the care status of the applicant. This is aimed at increasing knowledge about the number of care experienced people accessing legal aid.</p> <p>Accountancy in Bankruptcy have put in place a corporate parenting working group with a focus on more local engagement and plans to help promote the activity of other SG corporate parents.</p> <p>Skills Development Scotland has established a cross-directorate monitoring group which meets regularly to review progress against the implementation of commitments made within their Corporate Parenting Plan. This reviews progress against a range of data sources including apprenticeship participation statistics.</p>

Activities		Spotlight
Governance		The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service has a Corporate Parenting Working Group which supports the delivery of the Corporate Parenting Plan and its actions. The Group reports to the Good Governance Board and includes annual performance updates to their board. 'Care experienced' has been added to the equality monitoring process on Scottish Fire and Rescue internal system to assist in informing their policies and approach.

In Summary

With such variance in the size, remit and focus of national bodies, it is perhaps unsurprising that the survey returns demonstrate a similarly varied picture of corporate parenting activity. Whilst some with a less direct role struggled to wholly fulfil their role as a corporate parent, many others were able to evidence strong activity. Some other national bodies work alongside care experienced children and young people daily and had many positive examples to share. Whilst there are many good examples, improvements can still be made in key areas such as participation, collaboration and in promoting the interests of care experienced children and young people. Irrespective of remit, the strongest returns illustrated a willingness to engage with and listen to care experienced children and young people, think innovatively in respect to understanding their needs, and be creative in providing opportunities.

Chapter 9: Learning from 2018-21 Activities – Enablers, Challenges and Future Priorities

Introduction

In Chapters 3 to 8, we have set out the wide range of activities progressed by Scotland's corporate parents between 2018 and 2021. In presenting these activities we recognise that these do not just happen in isolation. Instead the impetus and delivery of the activities are shaped by the contexts in which staff and organisations operate. In some cases, changes in leadership, organisational factors, and national and local policy developments will have been supportive and enabling; while in others, the context will have been challenging and frustrating, with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic adding to this.

In this chapter, we aim to better understand the operating context by first highlighting the **enabling factors** reported by Scotland's corporate parents, before considering the **challenges** encountered. We finish the chapter with a forward look by setting out the **priorities** that Scotland's corporate parents stated they will progress in the 2021-2024 three-year activity cycle. All three sections are written with reference to Scotland's corporate parents as a whole, rather than breaking down the sections by different organisational type, because we found considerable overlaps in what corporate parents conveyed. However, we have also included and made clear where an enabling factor, challenge or priority is distinct for a particular organisational type.

Enabling Factors

We asked corporate parents to consider what had helped them to deliver their corporate parenting responsibilities. Noting the overlap across different corporate parents, the key factors put forward in their survey responses were:

- **The participation, drive and energy of care experienced children and young people** via a range of interactions (including Champions Boards) has improved organisations' understanding of the supports and services that matter, helped identify any gaps or weaknesses in provision, and made supports more visible to those who need it. This is a two-way process dependent on trusting relationships whereby organisations showing genuine interest in the views and experiences of care experienced children and young people, and children and young people being willing to engage with professionals.

“The contribution of our current and former (care experienced) students has been the most influential factor in advancing our corporate parenting activities. Without our learner community providing feedback, being open to share their often personal experiences and generally being magnanimous in their contributions our corporate parenting offering would not have developed as it has – nor will it continue to progress into the future at the same rate without continued learner support” (Edinburgh Napier University).

- **Strong and enthusiastic leadership and governance of corporate parenting responsibilities** that has helped to drive change and improvement, including permissions to trial new approaches, to benefit care experienced children and young people. Such leadership stemmed from the multi-agency Corporate Parenting Boards in place at a local authorities or community planning partnership area level, through to named senior leadership positions and groups within individual organisations. The role of elected members as ‘champions’ was in particular highlighted by some local authorities, and other corporate parents noted the importance of senior leaders directly engaging with care experienced children and young people as a means of stimulating new ideas and activities.

- **Having a 'live' Corporate Parenting Plan** that provides clear vision and direction on what activities are to be taken forward. While we found in Chapter 3 that a number of Plans lacked detail and were out-of-date, some corporate parents did recognise the importance of Plans remaining 'live' and reviewed on an ongoing basis to monitor progress and identify issues to respond to. The collection and analysis of data relating to care experienced children and young people was viewed as a key aspect of reviewing the effectiveness of Plans.
- **Collaborative working between organisations** to share good practice, increase understanding of and access to specialist supports and services delivered by different partners, and (above all) working together to establish seamless, joined up supports and transitions for care experienced children and young people. The emphasis here is on collaboration between organisations but it can equally apply to different teams and services within an organisation.

"Collaborative working) has not only allowed us to share best practice, but also to help make transitions from schools and colleges to university more seamless for care experienced students coming to study at Stirling" (University of Stirling).

- Taking collaboration to a more intensive, day-to-day working, **co-location of staff** between different services and multi-agency partners that enables the needs of care experienced children and young people to be more immediately assessed, understood and met.
- **Dedicated corporate parenting staff roles** (e.g. a 'Corporate Parenting Lead Officer' or 'Promise Implementation Lead') that hold responsibility for key activity and help coordinate activities across different partners. These staff were found to go 'above and beyond' in their dedication and commitment to meeting the needs of care experienced children and young people.
- **Time and space for staff learning about corporate parenting** through access to learning and development opportunities, networking and collaborating with other corporate parents, building relationships with care experienced children and young people, and the sharing of good practice.
- **The availability of sources of expertise** that has helped to stimulate and support changes at the local level for the benefit of care experienced children and young people. Organisations that were referred to included Who Cares? Scotland, Life Changes Trust (which has been instrumental in the setting up of many Champions Boards), MCR Pathways mentoring programme, CELCIS (including its delivery of the PACE programme), the Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum, and the Scottish Government.
- **The availability of external funding streams** that corporate parents and care experienced children and young people could access. These included the Scottish Government's Care Experienced Young Person Fund, the Connecting Scotland programme to support digital inclusion, and the Care Experienced Student Bursary (particularly with its removal of the upper age limit of 26 years old).
- **The impetus and permissions to do things differently** offered by, for example, the Independent Care Review, The Promise, UNCRC, Health and Social Care Standards and the Commission on Widening Access. The COVID-19 pandemic, while in many ways a challenge, was also referred to by some as an enabling factor as some staff and organisations had greater flexibility in how they met the needs of care experienced children and young people, and corporate parents are keen to retain examples of effective practice.

Challenges Faced

Across all corporate parents the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was highlighted as a significant challenge, and this is returned to later in this section. However, we begin by considering the wider (and often longstanding) challenges reported by corporate parents in their ability to progress corporate parenting activities and support care experienced children and young people. These were:

- **Differing levels of understanding and ownership of corporate parenting roles and responsibilities**, with this a greater issue for organisations who do not provide services directly to children and young people (e.g. Special NHS Boards and bodies such as the Scottish Legal Aid Board and Accountant in Bankruptcy) and organisations who engage with only a small number of care experienced children and young people (e.g. specialist colleges and universities). Some local authorities also noted that corporate parenting can have a lower profile and priority relative to child protection.
- Linked to the point above, **turnover of staff and leaders** in key corporate parenting positions, allied to organisational restructuring, impacts on the continuity of activities and the levels of expertise within organisations. The recruitment of skilled staff was also reported as being increasingly difficult and, where recruited, there is then the resource demand of training and upskilling new or inexperienced staff around corporate parenting responsibilities.
- **Lack of or out-dated Corporate Parenting Plans** which can bring delays and inactivity as staff lack direction, while monitoring progress is also difficult if measures and indicators are not agreed.
- **Managing competing demands, priorities and responsibilities within the context of limited resources**, with corporate parents noting the emergence of other priorities such as public health, mental health, digital poverty and exclusion, period poverty, inclusion of individuals at risk of discrimination, which creates challenges on how best to utilise available resources. This includes weighing up the value of the time and resource staff allocate to participating in different thematic groups.
- In addition to the emergence of other priorities, **services are increasingly responding to more complex cases and greater demand across its populations** (e.g. for mental health, financial, housing and wider supports). The increased pressures on services, which may then negatively impact on the supports available to care experienced children and young people, their families and carers as well as the wellbeing of staff.
- **Short-term funding cycles**, on top of the resource pressures referred to above, have particularly impacted on some local authorities' ability to invest in preventative services that can have a long-term impact on children, young people, families and carers. The ending of Life Changes Trust funding may also impact on the long-term sustainability of Champions Boards.
- **Non-disclosure of care experience**: children and young people have the right not to declare their care experience and can choose not to for a variety of reasons. However, this inhibits or impedes the bespoke levels of support and opportunities available to them in education, health, employability, housing, legal and financial support and more. Non-disclosure also impacts on the level and quality of information that corporate parents can use to help them inform, change and enhance their supports for care experienced children and young people.
- **Different interpretations of and access to financial support for care experienced young people**, which impacts on their ability to take up opportunities. Some local authorities counted the Care Experienced Student Bursary as 'income' and as a result reduced the financial support young people were entitled to. The need to evidence a young person's care experienced status was also highlighted as a challenge to accessing financial support.

- **Difficulties navigating and understanding the 'care system'** with its scale, complexity and range of partners impacting on some corporate parents' ability to identify meaningful activities and mechanisms for supporting care experienced children and young people.
- **Ensuring the needs of younger care experienced children are also being recognised and met**, as many corporate parents are primarily supporting and have responsibilities for young people aged 16–26 years old.

Layered on top of the challenges discussed above has been the **impact of the COVID-19 pandemic**, which was at the forefront of many of the survey responses. Impacts on corporate parenting activities ranged from:

- Restrictions on travel and meeting people from other households **affecting services' ability to engage with and support care experienced children and young people** in face-to-face and participation work. However, it is also important to add that some services continued face-to-face visits and meetings, while others maximised the opportunities that digital technologies provided. *"Keeping young people connected and engaged very quickly became a priority and we were fortunate enough to secure funding and mechanisms to reach young people through different means of technology. We also provided funds for young people to purchase data (for their mobile devices) when it was required"* (East Dunbartonshire Council).
- **The immediacy of responding to the pandemic** and adhering to changing restrictions and guidelines inhibited organisations' ability to progress longer-term, strategic developments and improvements. Some planned corporate parenting activities have consequently had to be paused.
- **Focusing on specific COVID-19 response priorities**, such as health protection and digital connectivity, to the detriment of activities related to wider health, wellbeing and relationship building with care experienced children and young people.

Two quotes from corporate parents help to illustrate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic:

"As a corporate parent our initial reaction has been to ensure the health and safety of our young people. As a result of this our relationships have been predominantly about health protection... Previous research has shown that the softer side of health and social care and relationships in general is a key component which must exist for young people in care to feel healthy and cared for. This year has undoubtedly had an impact on the way corporate parents have been able to provide this essential side of human relationships and how we recover and build on this must be considered" (NHS Ayrshire and Arran).

"We've all missed the ability to interact face-to-face with young people and to use that to build relationships; and a number of initiatives have been delayed as they require face-to-face work" (Argyll & Bute Council).

Priorities for 2021-2024

Looking forward, it was clear from the survey responses that corporate parents remain committed to delivering on their responsibilities and to bringing about improved outcomes for care experienced children and young people in 2021-2024. We found that corporate parents are keen to learn from their activities and experiences to date to bring about improvements to their understanding of, and supports and services for, care experienced children and young people. However, the connection with and learning from past activities was not always apparent, as some priority areas had limited context as to why priorities had been chosen.

The **development of Corporate Parenting Plans for 2021-2024** was widely referred to. In these Plans, we expect that many of the priorities outlined below are included but also hope that each

priority and activity has sufficient detail so that there is clarity on what is to be taken forward and how progress will be measured.

In our review of the priorities set out by Scotland's corporate parents for 2021-2024, and similar to the analysis of the enabling and challenge factors, we found that many were common to all corporate parents. These are set out below, with reference to specific groups of corporate parents where applicable.

- **Ensure corporate parenting duties and responsibilities are embedded in organisational strategic planning:**
 - Update and review organisation's own Corporate Parenting Plan to reflect changing operational context, achievements and progress made, and future priorities. For some corporate parents, this will be their first Corporate Parenting Plan.
 - Embed corporate parenting within wider organisational strategic documentation, so that corporate parenting duties and responsibilities are core to the organisation and its activities. This will help ensure that the organisation's Corporate Parenting Plan is delivered.
- **Deliver on key national policy developments:**
 - Promote and commit to the five foundations of The Promise. This includes: a review of strategic plans, services and activities to ensure their alignment with The Promise; further building of relationship-based practice; and (most relevant to local authorities) increased investment in preventative, intensive family support services to help keep children with their families.
 - Embed the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), with some corporate parents seeking to bring together the priority agenda of corporate parenting, rights and inclusion.
 - Renewed focus on and reinvigoration of Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC), noting the connections between GIRFEC, The Promise and the UNCRC.
- **Continue to collaborate with other corporate parents and related stakeholders:**
 - Co-produce or align Corporate Parenting Plans with those of other key national and local corporate parents, and explore opportunities for joint funding bids.
 - Ensure alignment of Corporate Parenting Plans with related national and local policy priorities, including mental health, digital inclusion, employability and housing policy developments and opportunities.
 - Broaden networks and links with external organisations and agencies to ensure sharing of best practice and keep developing and improving the supports available to care experienced children and young people.
- **Increase participation and inclusion of care experienced children and young people:**
 - Continue to invest in participation and advocacy activities to help ensure children's and young people's voice is truly heard in the planning and decision making relating to their individual lives.
 - Further enable care experienced children and young people to contribute to the development of services and practices designed to meet their needs, through providing supportive opportunities (e.g. via Champions Boards) where they can increasingly understand, influence and co-design services and practices. This is critical if care experienced voices and experiences are to be at the heart of refreshed Corporate Parenting Plans and strategies and policies designed to implement the objectives of The Promise.
 - Listen to and learn from care experienced children and young people about what is required in response to the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Review and improve the language used within Child's Plans and other documentation. Aberdeen City Council, for example, are adopting 'Write Right About Me' as a multi-themed approach to improving how corporate parents narrate the experiences of care experienced children and young people in documentation about their care and support.

- **Continued promotion of care experienced children and young people, and opportunities available to them:**
 - Promote opportunities and supports available to care experienced children and young people through different fora (e.g. websites, social media, podcasts, prospectus, and open days).
 - Contribute to and publicise national events, such as Care Experienced Week.
- **Investment in staff, leadership and data:**
 - Ensure strong strategic leadership around corporate parenting, including embedding the aims and activities of local Corporate Parenting Plans within other strategic and operational areas.
 - Deliver corporate parenting training that builds and reinforces staff knowledge and confidence around their responsibilities as corporate parents, which is particularly important given turnover of staff and leaders.
 - Build and embed understanding of trauma-informed and nurturing practice across staff working with care experienced children and young people.
 - Review and enhance corporate parenting-related data and aligned self-evaluation and quality assurance activity, with a particular focus on understanding the effectiveness of existing services (including establishing measurable corporate parenting 'outcomes') and a dynamic sense of future need.

The priorities above largely refer to improvements to internal organisational practices and governance, but corporate parents also referred to a wide range of **improvements to the supports and services for care experienced children and young people**. These are outlined in Figure 1 below, noting some activities will be more specific to some groups of corporate parents than others.

Figure 1: 2021-2024 Priorities – Enhanced Supports for Care Experienced Children and Young People

<p>Local, family-based placements: Invest in and increase the number of sustainable local, family-based placements for care experienced children and young people, with focus on recruiting new foster carers; providing holistic supports for foster and kinship carers; and keeping children with brothers and/or sisters together where appropriate</p>	<p>Health assessments: Improvement work to reduce timescales between notification of a change in a child's care circumstances and receiving a health assessment, and (in some cases) to improve the service model for health assessments to ensure better engagement with children and their families and carers</p>	<p>Clinical services: Development or improvements that would particularly benefit care experienced children and young people, such as psychological support for expectant/new mothers; shortening CAMHS waiting times; recruiting more school nurses; and trauma-informed training for staff</p>
<p>Digital inclusion: Enhance digital access (data, devices and digital literacy) for care experienced young people so that they are not disadvantaged or disconnected compared to their peers</p>	<p>Mental and physical health: Attend to and meet the mental health and emotional wellbeing needs of care experienced children and young people, while also promoting the benefits of good physical health</p>	<p>Mentoring: Commit to and increase mentors for care experienced children and young people. Some colleges and universities referred to connecting care experienced students with prospective applicants and alumni to offer peer mentors and role models</p>

<p>Additional Support for Learning: Invest in and provide bespoke, relationship-based learning supports for care experienced children and young people to deliver on 'Getting It Right for Every Learner'</p>	<p>Increase vocational, life and employability skills: Invest in work and wider 'Developing the Young Workforce' experience opportunities, and CV writing and job seeking skills, thus connecting with the Scottish Government's Youth Guarantee commitment</p>	<p>Employment opportunities and career pathways: Increase availability of work experience and traineeship opportunities; guaranteed interview schemes; financial support for interview clothing; and Modern Apprenticeship and other employment opportunities</p>
<p>Summer financial support: Enable care experienced students to financially manage over the summer months, either by providing financial supports during summer, or support to prepare for and manage no real-time funding over the summer months</p>	<p>Housing: Continue to invest in and increase the housing options available for young people leaving care to support their transition to independent living</p>	<p>Transitions into adulthood: Ensure supported transitions for care experienced young people into adulthood and, where appropriate, into adult services</p>

In Summary

Throughout this report we have provided examples of how Scotland's corporate parents have delivered meaningful and impactful activities across all six Section 58 duties. That they have done so is testament to key enabling factors both internal to organisations (e.g. high quality leadership and staffing) and external or multi-agency in nature through commitment to collaborative working. At the same time, corporate parents have identified a number of challenges that have inhibited the scale and impact of their activities, the majority of which were identified in the previous 2015-2018 review. Taking action on these challenges will be crucial if corporate parents are to work together with care experienced children and young people to deliver on their priorities for 2021-2024 and the vision set out by The Promise.

Chapter 10: Impact of Corporate Parenting Activities in Scotland

Introduction

In Chapters 3 to 8, we have set out the wide range of activities advanced by Scotland's national and local corporate parents between 2018 and 2021. Throughout, we have widely referred to the impacts of the activities in terms of their improvements to practices, support, opportunities and services for care experienced children and young people. Such impacts include:

- **Empowering care experienced children and young people** through their participation on Corporate Parenting Boards, leading different research and surveys, and their voices being increasingly sought and heard.
- **Greater awareness and understanding of care experience** among multi-agency partners and staff, including as a focus within Children's Services Planning. Awareness raising, training, collaboration activity, multi-agency corporate parenting meetings, and greater participation of care experienced children and young people have all helped to increase staff understanding of:
 - The experiences and needs, including emerging trends, of care experienced children and young people.
 - Their duties and responsibilities as corporate parents.
- **Changes made in the language and terminologies relating to care experienced children and young people**, so that they are more strengths-based and child-centred. The focus has shifted to concepts such as relationships, nurture, love and belonging; while the use of terms such as 'LAC' or 'case' to refer to children and families is reducing.
- **More inclusive, child-friendly meetings** that enable the participation of care experienced children and young people. Examples include:
 - Meeting children and young people in advance of key decision making meetings to explain how the meetings work.
 - Providing advocacy support to children and young people to help ensure their voices are heard.
 - Adapting meetings so that they are less formal and professional in nature.
- **Embedding of strengths-based practice** within services, with a number of organisations, for example, embedding trauma-informed, nurture and Signs of Safety approaches to support.
- **Increased attention to and investment in local, family-based placements** leading to:
 - More foster and kinship carers, which in turn increases the number of foster and kinship placements available.
 - More brothers and sisters being able to live and be cared for together.
 - More care experienced children and young people living in (and returning to) their local communities.
- **Enhanced supports and opportunities for care experienced children and young people** through increased collaboration and dedicated corporate parenting roles and supports across Children's Services Planning Partners in social work, health, education, housing, financial, employability, third sector and other service domains.
- **Stronger relationships and understanding between senior staff and care experienced children and young people** through their involvement on Champions Boards and Corporate Parenting Boards.

In this chapter, we move beyond the improvements to practices, support, opportunities and services outlined above to consider how corporate parents have been measuring the impact of their activities on the lives and outcomes of care experienced children and young people. The chapter therefore does two things:

- Provides **examples of the measures and indicators contained in the Corporate Parenting Plans and the surveys of corporate parents** to show how corporate parents have been monitoring the impact of their activities. As East Ayrshire Council set out in their survey response, these measures and indicators often span a 'mixed approach of quantitative and qualitative: output measures; outcome measures; perception measures; individual testimonies; small tests of change; project specific outcomes; surveys and audits'.
- Where available, presents a series of **national indicators to demonstrate the impact that Scotland's corporate parents** as a collective have had on care experienced children and young people.

In presenting the national indicators, we have used a **Red-Amber-Green** grading to show how performance across each indicator has changed from 2017 to 2020. Encouragingly we can see that many indicators are graded 'green' to reflect positive progress. However, we also recognise that the impacts presented in this chapter reflect the progress made up to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. To illustrate this, we refer to the number of Modern Apprenticeship starts by care experienced young people which had progressively increased from 328 starts in 2016/17 to 476 starts in 2019-20. However, with the proportion of care experienced starts to total Modern Apprenticeship starts unchanged, the number of starts fell to 312 in 2020/21 due to the wider labour market downturn.

A further aim behind this chapter is that the national and local indicators presented offer the basis for a more consistent approach to measuring corporate parenting outcomes and impact across Scotland's corporate parents. We found, for example, over 200 different corporate parenting-related indicators being collected across Scotland's corporate parents with little consistency in indicators beyond the national statistical reporting requirements to (e.g.) the Scottish Government or Scottish Funding Council. It was also unclear how some corporate parents are analysing and using the data they collect to inform future improvement activity, although the activities highlighted under the 'Improve' duty shows that some corporate parents are systematically reviewing and using their data.

Beginning with the care experienced child and young person population, each section then takes the same structure of presenting examples of the indicators being used by corporate parents, followed by an analysis of the available national data under each theme.

Care Experienced Child and Young Person Population

Many corporate parents sought to understand the demographic and current circumstances of the care experienced children and young people they support. Indicators included the number of looked after children, their placement type, and the number in receipt of aftercare services.

Examples of Indicators used by corporate parents	
Looked after children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number / % of looked after children by placement type • Number of children and young people who are placed in accommodation outside their local area
Care leavers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average age of looked after young people leaving care • % of care leavers in continuing care arrangements • % of care leavers accessing support up until age of 26 • % of young people in receipt of aftercare services with a Pathway Plan • % of disengaged young people returning to service for support • % of care leavers who are part of a network which provides ongoing practical help and emotional support after leaving care • % of young people in receipt of aftercare services who are in education, training and employment

Where these indicators are available at a Scotland level, Figure 2 first shows the number of looked after children is on a downward trend and that there is a shift in the balance of placements towards greater use of kinship care. These trends reflect the increased attention to and investment in local, family-based placements, as well as the wider trend of investing in intensive, preventative family support services.

Figure 2: Number of Looked After Children by Placement Type, Scotland

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of Looked After Children	14,897	14,554	14,262	14,458
% at home with parents	25%	26%	25%	25%
% in kinship care	28%	28%	29%	31%
% in foster care	35%	34%	34%	33%
% in residential care	10%	10%	10%	10%

Source: Scottish Government Children's Social Work Statistics 2019-20

For young people leaving or having left care, Figure 3 shows positive trends of the number of young people eligible for and in receipt of aftercare services, their uptake of support, their employability status, and the number in continuing care all increasing. These trends are likely to reflect greater promotion of continuing care, increased resource and attention to throughcare and aftercare services, greater collaboration with post-16 services and providers, and improving data recording of young people leaving care.

Figure 3: Young People Leaving Care, Scotland

	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change 2017-20
Number of young people eligible for and in receipt of aftercare services	N/A	3,777	3,710	4,129	
% of young people eligible for and in receipt of aftercare services	N/A	55%	57%	57%	
% of young people eligible for aftercare services in employment, education or training (where information on economic activity is available)	N/A	51%	52%	54%	
Number of children in continuing care	N/A	208	286	306	

Source: Scottish Government Children's Social Work Statistics 2019-20

Care and Pathway Planning for Children and Young People

Most applicable to local authorities, a number of indicators or measures were being used to help assess care and pathway planning, and the quality of these plans and processes. These included measures around frequency of reviews, participation of children, young people, families and carers in planning, and stability of placements and professionals providing support.

Examples of Indicators used by corporate parents	
Child's Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of looked after children child's plans reviewed every 6 months by their Team Around the Child • % of looked after children child's plans with SMART targets and an identified educational outcome • Number of Child's (Pathways) Plans that include child/young person's views and active participation • % of parents involved in their children's care plans • % of looked after children who: have contact with their parents and siblings in line with their care plan; and are satisfied with the contact they have with their parents and siblings
Placements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of looked after and accommodated children with three or fewer placements • Average time taken from point of accommodation of a child to permanent placement decision
Looked After Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of Looked After Children reviews completed within statutory timescales • % of children where positive progress can be evidenced at the 6-month Looked After Child Review
Support from professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of care experienced young people who are clear about their: named person; lead professional; social worker; reasons for change in any of these; who to contact in the absence of these • Number and reasons for changes in care experienced children and young people's social worker

The nationally available indicators related to Care and Pathway Plans for care experienced children and young people show broadly positive trends with the percentage of looked after children with a current Care Plan consistently high and the percentage of young people leaving care with a Pathway Plan increasing, although the percentage with a Pathway Coordinator has fluctuated. The percentage of looked after children with three or more placements has fallen slightly.

Figure 4: Looked After Children with Care Plan; Number of Placements; and Young People with Pathway Plan and Pathway Coordinator, Scotland

	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change 2017-20
% of Looked After Children with current Care Plan	95%	97%	94%	96%	
% of Looked After Children with 3 or more placements in past year	5%	5%	5%	4%	
% of young people leaving care with a Pathway Plan	73%	73%	71%	79%	
% of young people leaving care with a Pathway Coordinator	75%	68%	60%	70%	

Source: Scottish Government Children's Social Work Statistics 2019-20

Early Years

By different age groups, there were few measures relating to care experienced children of pre-school age. Some local authorities had measures relating to 2 year olds' attendance and uptake of early learning and childcare and family centres, but overall, both at the national and local level, data relating to this age group is a notable gap, particularly given that 37% of looked after children in Scotland are aged 4 or under.

Examples of Indicators used by corporate parents	
Early Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of eligible looked after children 2 year olds attending an early learning and childcare place • % of eligible looked after children 2 year olds attending a family centre

Schools

Compared to early years children, there is greater data collection for school age care experienced children. Corporate parents provided examples of indicators relating to school attendance and exclusions, attainment, and wider supports such as Individual Education Plans, Co-ordinated Support Plans, and participating in school Champions Boards.

Measures around staff awareness and understanding of care experience were also being used. Such measures were found across schools, colleges, universities and other services, which reflects the level of training activity within the 'Alert' duty.

Examples of Indicators used by corporate parents	
Care experienced pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % school attendance of looked after children • Number of care experienced children and young people attending school on a part time basis • % of care experienced children and young people with an Individual Education Plan and Co-ordinated Support Plan • School exclusions per 100,000 looked after children • % of looked after children achieving Curriculum for Excellence levels in literacy and numeracy • % of looked after children remaining in school beyond their school leaving age • % of looked after school leavers achieving SCQF Level 5 or better qualifications
Staff and resourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of schools with active Champions Board • % of schools having a designated corporate parenting lead • % of newly qualified teachers taking part in a learning and development session focused on the needs of care experienced children within the induction programme • % of schools with key staff trained in nurture principles
Post-School Destinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of care experienced young people in a positive post-school destination • % of care experienced young people sustaining a positive post-school destination

The nationally available indicators focus on older children (specifically school leavers) rather than the full school pupil cohort. For example, attendance and Curriculum for Excellence attainment data for care experienced pupils of all ages is not collected or published at a national level. The educational outcomes data do, however, show positive trends with attainment and positive destinations on leaving school all increasing.

Figure 5: Educational Outcomes of Looked After Children, Scotland

	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change 2017-20
% of looked after school leavers with 1 or more qualification at SCQF Level 5 or above	36%	36%	35%	38%	
% of looked after school leavers in a positive destination (3 months after leaving school)	77%	80%	81%	80%	
% of looked after school leavers in a positive destination (9 months after leaving school)	72%	73%	71%	75%	

Source: Scottish Government Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2019-20

Colleges and Universities

Half (49%) of care experienced young people enter further education on leaving school, and a further 7% directly enter university on leaving school (noting that more care experienced young people will later go on to higher education following college studies). With such high numbers of care experienced young people starting college and university courses, it is encouraging that attention is being paid to understanding the experience and outcomes of care experienced students. Examples of indicators used by colleges and universities are set out below and span from applications through to student experiences.

Examples of Indicators used by corporate parents	
Applications and transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of care experienced applicants • Number of pre-course/college/university meetings to relieve anxiety about coming to college/university • % uptake of applications/course starts by care experienced young people
Student numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of care experienced students • Number of full-time and part-time care experienced students • Number of credits studied per care experienced student
Course completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number / % of care experienced students withdrawing early from their course • Number / % of care experienced students completing their course
Destinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number / % of care experienced HNC or HND students articulating to degree level courses • Destinations of care experienced students
Student experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness among care experienced students of services and support available to them • Number of care experienced students engaging with support services (e.g. learning, careers and employability supports) • Feedback from care experienced students of their college or university experience
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff awareness of challenges facing care experienced students • Staff knowledge of actions that can be taken to support care experienced students

At the national level, the Scottish Funding Council requires colleges to report on care experienced students and the data presented in Figure 6 all show positive trends. The increase in the number of care experienced students is particularly striking and is testament to enabling young people to more easily and openly self-declaring their care experience background and the transitional supports put in place by colleges.

Figure 6: Care Experienced Students – Enrolments on college courses of more than 160 hours, and full and partial success rates, Scotland

	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change 2017-20
Number of care experienced student course starts	2,096	2,477	4,152	7,370	
% of care experienced students fully completing course	57%	55%	59%	60%	
% of care experienced students partially completing course	13%	13%	15%	18%	

Source: Scottish Funding Council College Performance Indicators

Universities are also required to report on care experienced students and the numbers of care experienced students have similarly increased. Ease of self-declaration, Widening Access activities and articulation from further to higher education will be contributory factors here. Retention rates from first to second year of study have been largely stable at 87% of care experienced students.

Figure 7: Care Experienced Students – Number in Full-time First Degree Courses at University and All Undergraduate Higher Education (universities and colleges), Scotland

	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change 2017-20
Number of care experienced entrants in full-time first degree courses	170	255	320	370	
Number of undergraduate Higher Education care experienced students	525	680	1,045	1,470	
Retention rate of care experienced students (full-time first degree entrants returned to study in year 2)	87%	87%	93%	87%	

Source: Scottish Funding Council (2021) Report on Widening Access 2019-20

Employability

In relation to assessing employability, there are overlaps with the post-school, college and university destinations statistics but examples of other measures used by corporate parents include not in employment, education or training (NEET) levels and the number of work experience and employment opportunities provided locally.

Examples of Indicators used by corporate parents	
In Education, Employment or Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of care experienced young not in employment, education or training • Number of care experienced young people in receipt of benefits
Employability opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of work experience opportunities for care experienced young people • Number of care experienced young people accessing placement via Our Family Firm • Number of local employers providing opportunities to care experienced young people and care leavers

Skills Development Scotland publish data on the number of care experienced young people starting Modern Apprenticeships, their level of study, and their achievement rates have all increased between 2017 and 2020.

Figure 8: Modern Apprenticeship Starts, Scotland

	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change 2017-20
Number of Modern Apprenticeship starts self-identified as care experienced	328	429	415	476	
% of care experienced Modern Apprenticeship starts at SCQF Level 6 or above	N/A	N/A	69%	73%	
Modern Apprenticeship achievement rate of care experienced starts	58%	58%	59%	64%	

Source: Skills Development Scotland Modern Apprenticeship Statistics

Other Themes: Health, Housing, Youth Justice, Sport, Leisure and Transport, Voice and Participation, and Carers and Establishments

Across the Corporate Parenting Plans and Survey Responses, there were a wide range of other indicators being collected. Examples of these are presented below under different themes, noting they contain a mix of child's planning, service quality, participation, staffing, and outcome measures.

Examples of Indicators used by corporate parents	
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of care experienced children and young people registered with a GP and Dentist • Number / % of health and mental health assessments undertaken within 4 weeks of becoming accommodated • % of completed looked after children health assessments with a health plan in place to meet identified health needs • % of care experienced children and young people referred to CAMHS following their mental health assessment • % of care experienced children and young people seen by CAMHS within the national standard of 18 weeks • % of eligible looked after young people receiving support from the throughcare and aftercare nurse
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of care leavers accessing housing support services • % of care leavers securing a tenancy • % of care leavers sustaining a tenancy • % of care leavers exempt from Council Tax • % of young people eligible for an aftercare service experiencing one or more episodes of homelessness
Youth justice and missing episodes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of care leavers identified in the Justice system • % of care experienced young people who become involved with the Criminal and Youth Justice Service within 12 months of ceasing to be looked after • Number of young people engaged in activity programmes aimed at diverting away from offending behaviour • Number of care experienced children and young people appropriately diverted from the adult Criminal Justice System • Number of Looked After Children who are reported missing to Police Scotland
Sport, Leisure and Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of care experienced children and young people offered local sport and leisure membership • % of care experienced children and young people taking up local sport and leisure membership • Number of care experienced young people using leisure facilities • % of care experienced children and young people who said they exercised, played sport or did activities at least 2 times a week • Number of care experienced young people using public transport

Examples of Indicators used by corporate parents	
Voice and Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of care experienced children and young people who: are satisfied with the service they receive; say they feel safe where they live; and participate in their review • % of care experienced young people who report feeling services are responsive to their needs • % of care experienced children and young people who report they feel safer as a result of intervention or support • Number of care experienced children and young people with advocacy support • % of care experienced children who have used the Who Cares? Scotland service • % of care experienced children and young people using Viewpoint as a mechanism to provide feedback • Number of care experienced young people participating in events • Number of care experienced young people who have participated in the Champions Board per year • % of care experienced young people who are registered to vote
Carers and establishments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new foster carers • Number of foster carers leaving the service • % of designated people reporting confidence in being able to offer advice and guidance • % of foster carers with access to training and development in nurture principles • Number of residential care home workers who are aware of the Police Scotland Protocol in relation to responses to care-experienced young people • Fostering care inspection reports judged 'good' or better • Residential care inspection reports judged 'good' or better

Across the different indicators outlined above, there were very few for which national data is published. As Figure 9 shows, those available focus on care leavers' interaction with homeless and criminal justice services.

Figure 9: Young People Eligible for Aftercare Services Known to be Homeless or in Custody, Scotland

	2017	2018	2019	2020	Change 2017-20
Number of young people eligible for aftercare services known to be homeless	N/A	145	126	106	
Number of young people eligible for aftercare services known to be in custody	N/A	73	83	77	

Source: Scottish Government Children's Social Work Statistics 2019-20

In Summary

In this chapter we have set out how corporate parents are measuring the impact of their activities and, where available, used the corresponding national indicators to evidence improved outcomes for care experienced children and young people. Importantly, and reflecting the range of activities taken forward by corporate parents, the national data presented in Figures 1 to 9 point towards improving outcomes. However, and not presented here, **significant gaps continue to exist between the outcomes of care experienced children and young people and those of their peers**. Continued attention and investment to corporate parenting activities are therefore needed to continue to close the gap with their peers.

In relation to measurement of impact, we have identified gaps in measures (particularly at the national level) for younger children, and in the domains of health and housing. We also found that there is little consistency in what measures are being collected and used across Scotland's corporate parents. A **future priority**, therefore, might be for corporate parents to collaborate on a more consistent and streamlined set of local and national indicators, ideally allowing comparison with the wider children and young people population to understand whether the gap with their peers is closing.

A Children, Young People and Families (CYPF) Outcomes Framework is currently being developed by the Scottish Government in collaboration with stakeholders. A Core Wellbeing Indicator set will form part of this framework, and aims to provide an overview of wellbeing at both a whole population level, and at a local level. This will support consistency across different reporting requirements in Scotland, including on Children's Services Plans, highlight what progress is being made in 'closing the wellbeing gap,' and identify if further action is needed to improve outcomes for children and young people with specific wellbeing needs, such as care experience. It may be the case that this work could provide an opportunity for alignment with Corporate Parenting data collection and analysis and this is something that can be considered in the next phase of planning.

Chapter 11: Overarching Messages and Recommendations

This review of Corporate Parenting Plans, activity, and data between 2018 – 2021 identifies enablers, challenges, common themes and specific examples of activities under the corporate parenting duties. In this concluding chapter we highlight the overarching messages and themes emerging from this review of corporate parenting activity and provide recommendations for the future development of corporate parenting in Scotland. The intention of commissioning and analysing corporate parents' reports and survey returns, and compiling the report in this way, is to share a rich resource of material for corporate parents to use to consider their activities, explore potential ideas and identify ways to strengthen and improve approaches for our children and young people with care experience and their families and carers.

Overarching messages

- Our review identified that the design, structure, and content of Corporate Parenting Plans varied significantly. The Statutory guidance on Part 9 (Corporate Parenting) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014¹⁵ acknowledges that corporate parents' different scope and remit means that Corporate Parent Plans are likely to vary, however, further **support to corporate parents in developing their Plans and, above all, to help understand who the intended audiences are for Corporate Parent Plans** (e.g. care experienced children and young people as a key audience as well as national and/or local partner agencies and internal staff) could bring focus to the scope of these across corporate parents.
- Ensuring that **Corporate Parent Plans are 'live' documents**, and responsive to the context and needs of care experienced children and young people over time was identified as an enabling factor.
- The overwhelming focus of Corporate Parent Plans and activities reported for this review were aimed at adolescents and young people, with emphasis on young people transitioning from school into further or higher education, employment or moving into independent living, and less so on infants and primary school age children; based on this there is a **gap in corporate parent planning, activity and data relating to children and in particular under 5's**.
- Participation of children and young people was acknowledged as an enabler, a challenge and a priority within the survey returns. It was evident that where corporate parents were able to effectively support the participation of children and young people in corporate parenting planning, this enriched the activity and actions of corporate parents. However, this engagement was a challenge for many corporate parents and greater focus should be given to the **participation of children and young people within the development of corporate parent action plans and activity**. This needs to be carefully planned across corporate parents to ensure that it is meaningful and has purpose as there is the potential for the same children and young people to be engaged on numerous occasions, while the voices of other children and young people are not being heard.
- **Recognition and understanding of diversity** between care experienced children and young people (i.e. intersectional identities and needs based on race, disability, sexuality, gender identity; as well as young people who are, young carers, young offenders, unaccompanied children and young people etc.) and the incorporation of this within Corporate Parent Plans and activities was lacking.

15 Scottish Government, (2015). Statutory guidance on Part 9 (Corporate Parenting) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/statutory-guidance-part-9-corporate-parenting-children-young-people-scotland/>

- The limited returns by Health Boards and Special NHS Health Boards has resulted in an **underrepresentation of health services** within this review when compared to other groups of corporate parents; particularly within our analysis of Corporate Parenting Plans. This information is important to understand exactly how children and young people with care experience are being supported with their physical and mental health needs.
- Whilst most corporate parents identified staff learning and awareness raising as a key component of activity over this review period, few corporate parents talked to **multiple and sustained opportunities to learn about and engage with their organisational responsibilities and duties as corporate parents**. This is critical given that corporate parents referred to the impact of staff turnover with regards to continuity and understanding of corporate parenting roles, responsibilities, and activities.
- Whilst many corporate parents referenced collaboration with national support organisations (e.g. CELCIS and Who Cares? Scotland), or through national and local corporate parenting forums, **evidence of collaboration between corporate parents varied**. In some local areas, there was evidence of on-the-ground joined up working between different corporate parents (e.g. schools, mental health services, colleges and universities) to provide seamless and supportive transitions for care experienced children and young people; yet in other areas, activity appeared disjointed. Less evidence was provided of national and local corporate parenting forums translating into collaborative working at a strategic level to collectively respond to the needs of care experienced children and young people. In particular, there was limited evidence of collaboration (and thus maximisation of resource) between corporate parents with routine interaction with children and young people and those with fewer or less routine interaction with care experienced children and young people.
- Through acknowledgement of the **UNCRC, The Promise and GIRFEC**, several corporate parents identified within their priorities for the next review period a recognition of the national direction for services which support the wellbeing and uphold the rights of care experienced children and young people.
- Our review of corporate parent plans highlighted that a number of corporate parents had not identified **clear timeframes and measurements for planned activity**. This led to challenges for being able to measure and articulate the impact of the activity undertaken, either at a service level or for each individual child and young person. Ensuring that corporate parents have milestones in place for meeting the priorities identified for the upcoming review period and that they have planned measurements for identifying progress relating to their activity would address this.

Conclusions, actions and next steps

The three-years to the next reporting date for Corporate Parenting coincide with the timescales set out in the Plan 2021-24 published by The Promise Scotland. Corporate parents should by now have a clear focus on working together, and ensuring that new policies, practice and participation approaches underpin the delivery of the priorities set out in The Plan, specifically in relation to: A Good Childhood, Whole Family Support, Supporting the Workforce, Planning, and Building Capacity. While some corporate parents are more central to the delivery of these priorities, all corporate parents have a contribution to make, including to how we work together to support change systems and infrastructure. One of the foundations outlined for this work is Voice, or listening to, and meaningfully and appropriately involving children and young people in decision making about their care. Listening to the needs, fears, wishes and experiences of children and young people with care experience is core to the corporate parenting role and must also continue to drive the activities and priorities of corporate parents.

As we move to the next phase of corporate parenting in Scotland, our conclusions and key actions which we would encourage corporate parents to focus on include:

- The national commitments aimed at improving outcomes for care-experienced children and young people and their families. These include The Promise and the priorities identified in the Plan 2021-24 and Change Programme ONE, UNCRC incorporation, and continuing to embed the Getting it right for every child approach across their activities, services and support.
- The maintenance of Corporate Parent Plans as 'live' documents
- Increased planning, activity and measurement of activity relating to infants and children
- Increased recognition, understanding and attention to diversity between children and young people within planning and activities
- Support to corporate parents to collaborate and plan for the participation of children and young people within corporate parent planning and the development of actions plans and priorities
- Continued focus on developing knowledge and understanding of corporate parent responsibilities across staff at all system levels
- Increased collaboration between corporate parents in the development and delivery of actions and the maximisation of opportunities and resources for children and young people. Children's Services Partnerships have the potential for a stronger role in supporting collaboration, planning and delivery of actions by corporate parents, particularly those partners who could develop their approaches further.
- A full set of returns from Health Boards and Special NHS Boards in responding to their role as corporate parents is necessary, building on the positive examples found within this review, in order to demonstrate their understanding of the needs of children and young people with care experience and the important role that health services can play in assessing and meeting those needs.

The Scottish Government, and other national bodies have an important role to play in supporting corporate parents to understand and respond to the implications of The Promise, UNCRC incorporation and other significant policy changes. The Promise Scotland are in place to provide the oversight and direction and have already begun this process via a route map outlined in The Plan 21-24 to guide the change needed to deliver The Promise. Change Programme ONE and its future updates will help corporate parents to identify who is doing what to drive those changes forward and where the gaps are in terms of what still needs to be done, which should assist corporate parents in identifying their own priorities to support the implementation of The Promise. Above all, it is the views, experiences and asks of children and young people with care experience that must help guide corporate parents in the development of their Corporate Parent Plans and future activities.

Further information and contacts

We would like to thank corporate parents for their time in completing the corporate parenting survey which informed the development of this report. We would also like to extend our thanks to the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection (CELCIS) for their support in providing analytical assistance and to Who Cares? Scotland for the continued learning and development support provided to corporate parents throughout this reporting period.

If you would like to make contact with a corporate parent or request further information about this report, please contact Looked After Children@gov.scot.



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This publication is available at www.gov.scot

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-80201-693-2 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, November 2021

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS903626 (11/21)

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