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Comhairle Maoineachaidh na-h Alba

# SFC PUBLICATION



**SFC's National Ambition for Care-Experienced Students**  
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Summary: This document sets out SFC's National Ambition for Care-Experienced Students for the college and university sectors, outlining our commitment to equal outcomes for care-experienced students and their peers by 2030.

FAO: Principals / Chairs / Finance Directors / Board Secretaries of Scotland's colleges and universities

Further information: **Contact:** Nick Stansfeld  
**Job title:** Policy/Analysis Officer  
**Department:** Access, Skills and Outcome Agreements  
**Tel:** 0131 313 6539  
**Email:** [nstansfeld@sfc.ac.uk](mailto:nstansfeld@sfc.ac.uk)

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# SFC's National Ambition for Care-Experienced Students

## Foreword from Karen Watt, CEO



I am delighted to introduce the Scottish Funding Council's National Ambition for Care-Experienced Students.

We support the vision of the Scottish Government to make Scotland the best place in the world to grow up. This means that children grow up loved, safe and respected so that they realise their full potential, and that they are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society.

We believe that all of Scotland's young people should have equal opportunities to access and succeed in further and higher education irrespective of their background.

Care-experienced young people and adults include some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society. We have a responsibility to better understand the lives of Scotland's care-experienced students.

We first published our National Ambition for Care-Experienced Students in September 2015. This revised National Ambition sets targets for the next three years until 2022-23.

During this period we want to ensure that care-experienced students, no matter their age, are fairly represented at college and university. However, the emphasis of our ambition is to reduce the gap in outcomes

between care-experienced students and their peers.

Last year we asked CELCIS to survey care-experienced students in Scotland's colleges and universities as we wanted to broaden and deepen our understanding of the barriers and enablers they encounter in applying to, attending and remaining in further or higher education.

We welcomed the publication of CELCIS's findings '[Being a student with care experience is very daunting](#)' in June 2019. We endorse its recommendations and this commitment alongside our National Ambition demonstrates SFC's pledge to achieve equal outcomes for care-experienced students.

On behalf of SFC I commend this National Ambition for Care-Experienced Students and look forward to working with our colleges, universities and other corporate parents to achieve the targets and to bring impactful, sustainable and positive change.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "KWatt". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**Karen Watt**  
Chief Executive

## Introduction

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) invests over £1.8 billion each year in Scotland's colleges and universities for teaching and learning, research and other activities in support of Scottish Government priorities and its purpose of “...creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all to flourish, through increasing sustainable growth.”

By investing in our colleges and universities we are helping to make Scotland the best place in the world to learn, to educate, to research, and to innovate so that all of our nation can flourish.

We work with colleges and universities and our other partners to create a more equal society by widening access to learning for young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds and communities which are under-represented. We use the [Outcome Agreement](#) process to drive forward excellence and equity in all Scottish colleges and universities.

We ask our colleges and universities to treat care-experience as a Protected Characteristic, together with others like gender, age and ethnicity, under the Equality Act 2010. This means that care-experience is a Key Performance Indicator so institutions must report on the intake and outcomes of their care-experienced students through their Outcome Agreement.

SFC defines ‘Care-experienced’ as anyone who has been or is currently in care or from a looked-after background at any stage of their life, no matter how short, including adopted children who were previously looked-after. This care may have been provided in one of many different settings, such as in residential care, foster care, kinship care<sup>1</sup> or through

being looked-after at home with a supervision requirement.

This definition for data collection purposes is wider than the legal definitions of ‘looked-after’ and ‘care leaver’. This is because we want our data to capture all age groups, all nationalities, and all those who have been in care or looked-after during their childhood even if it was for a short period of time.

We have a Care-Experienced Governance Group (CEGG) whose purpose is to hold SFC to account and help us achieve our ambitions. CEGG includes representatives from the college and university sector, care-experienced students and other partners including corporate parents and third sector organisations. The full membership is shown in Annex B.

CEGG has fully approved these ambitions.

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<sup>1</sup> Kinship care is when a child is looked-after by their extended family or close friends if they cannot remain with

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their birth parents. This would involve some sort of involvement by the local authority (as opposed to private family arrangements).



## Key drivers and strategic alignment

The SFC mission is to create and sustain a world-leading system of tertiary education, research and innovation that changes lives for the better, enriches society, and supports sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

Our Strategic Framework 2019-2022 'Leading, Inspiring, Investing' outlines our commitment to create a genuinely level playing field and ensure that Scotland is at the cutting edge of making further and higher education accessible to all, regardless of background or start in life. We are fully committed to pushing for widening participation and to supporting measures to help students stay with their studies when they find it tough going.

It is within this context that SFC is proud to publish this National Ambition outlining the support available to care-experienced students. This document supports our colleges and universities in their corporate parenting responsibilities, updates our national ambition targets, and provides us the opportunity to demonstrate a commitment to help improve the futures of care-experienced students in Scotland.

## Background

The [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#) introduced corporate parenting duties to groups of public bodies including all colleges and universities. This required all institutions: to publish a corporate parenting plan outlining the steps taken to support care-experienced students to transition into and proceed successfully through college or university; to regularly review the plans; to report at least once every three years on their performance; and, on request, to provide information on activities to Scottish Ministers.

The Act places responsibilities on corporate parents, including the staff at the institutions, to improve the lives and futures of Scotland's looked-after children and care leavers from birth up to the age of 26. Three elements of corporate parenting as set out by The Scottish Government are:

- Protecting the rights and safeguarding the wellbeing of these children and young people, placing a duty on all other agencies to cooperate with each other including councils in fulfilling that duty.
- Coordinating the activities of the many different professionals and carers who are involved in a child or young person's life, and taking a strategic, child-centred approach to service delivery.
- Shifting the emphasis from 'corporate' to 'parenting', taking all actions necessary to promote and support the physical, emotional, social and cognitive development of a child from infancy to adulthood.

## Who are our Care-Experienced Young People?

Care-experienced children and young people are those who are or have been looked-after by their local authority due to concerns about their wellbeing or protection, including parents being unable to provide appropriate care.

There are an estimated 14,738 children and young people who were looked-after in Scotland on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2018. This figure represents 14 in 1,000 children under 18 years that were looked-after in 2017-18, or 1.4%. ([Scottish Government, 2019](#)).

Young people in care live in many different placement types or care settings:

- Foster care (living with another family): 34%
- Kinship care (with friends or relatives): 28%
- Looked-after at home (living with birth parents but with social work involvement under a supervision order): 26%
- Residential care (living in a children's unit/house/secure): 10%
- With prospective adopters: 1%

## Care-Experience and Educational Attainment

Many individual children and young people with care-experience do well in school and have positive experiences of education. However, when taken as a whole group educational outcome indicators show that the gap between looked-after children's attainment and achievement in school, and that of all children, remains unacceptably large. The [Scottish Government 2019](#) data indicates:

- 44% of looked-after children<sup>2</sup> left school at age 16 or earlier compared with 11% of all school leavers leaving school aged 16 or younger in 2017-18.
- 39% of looked-after children have one or more qualifications at National 5 (SCQF level 5), compared with 86% of all pupils.
- Only 12% of school leavers who were looked-after left school in 2017-18 with a Higher (SCQF 6) level qualification, compared with 62% of their peers.
- Only 76% of looked-after children (full year) and 69% (part year) progress to 'positive follow up destinations' nine months after leaving school (including employment or further or higher education) compared with 93% of all pupils.

Educational attainment is strongly linked to health and economic outcomes, such that, the disadvantage faced by care-experienced young people in receiving a disrupted education can profoundly shape their adult lives.

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<sup>2</sup> A looked-after child is defined as a child who has been in the care of their local authority for more than 24 hours. Scotland's definition also includes children under a supervision requirement order which means many of the looked-after children in Scotland are still living at home, but with regular contact from social services. The data refers to children who were looked-after for the full year.



### ***Access to college and university***

Colleges are very important access routes for those with care-experience especially as the average school leaving age of care-experienced young people is considerably lower compared to their peers. Scottish Government data shows that nine months after leaving school 38% of looked-after children were in further education (FE) which is higher than the percentage for all school leavers at 23%. However only 4% of children who have been in care for a full year are in higher education (HE) after leaving school compared with 39% of all school leavers. ([Scottish Government, 2019](#))

Although the proportion of looked-after school leavers who are in HE nine months after leaving school is low (4%) we are beginning to understand more about the extra time and support required for some learners with care-experience to make the transition to HE through alternative pathways, such as through college. This underlines the importance of supporting care-experienced young people through this crucial transition period, enabling them to sustain their studies and to achieve the same goals as their peers within a timeframe appropriate to them.

### ***Access to employment***

Scottish Government data shows that having a background in care is likely to lead to poorer employment outcomes. Nine months after leaving school, around 21% of looked-after young people who were in care for the full year are classed as unemployed, compared to 6% of all school leavers. For those in care for part of the year the unemployment figure is 29%. ([Scottish Government, 2019](#))

The SFC College Leaver Destination (CLD) 2017-18 survey shows that 93.5% of full-time care-experienced successful qualifiers went onto positive destinations 3-6 months after qualifying/leaving college, compared to 95.4% of all college leavers. Further research shows that for those studying SCQF levels 1-6, care-experienced leavers are more likely to continue their studies (80.8%) than the national figure (74.4%) and less likely to move into employment (12.6%) compared to their peers (20.9%).

The most positive story for care-experienced leavers involves those qualifying from courses at SCQF level 7+ (HE level). Care-experienced leavers are more likely to find positive destinations (97.2% versus 95.9%) after leaving college, with 75.2% continuing their studies and 22.1% moving into employment.

Over this next cycle SFC will continue to use its influence to work with our strategic partners to encourage employers to offer learning and employment opportunities to care-experienced young people.

## What is the gap?

Table 1 shows the gap between college success and university retention for care-experienced students compared to students who are not care-experienced over the last three years of reported data.

At all levels, care-experienced students have lower success rates. In 2017-18 there is a difference of 6.0 percentage points for retention at university, and the largest gap is in successful completion of full-time FE courses at college where the gap is 15.6 percentage points.

Table 1: College Successful Completion and University Retention Gap for Care-Experienced Students compared with non-Care-Experienced Students, 2015-16 to 2017-18

	<b>2015-16 Gap</b>	<b>2016-17 Gap</b>	<b>2017-18 Gap</b>
<b>Successful Completion Full-time FE</b>	-13.0%	-13.1%	-15.6%
<b>Successful Completion Full-time HE</b>	-7.6%	-6.3%	-10.5%
<b>Retention - Full-time Undergraduate Entrants</b>	-6.4%	-7.4%	-6.0%

Source: [SFC Report on Widening Access, 2015-16 to 2017-18](#)

While this table shows the gap is proving stubborn to move, this could be due to the increased opportunities for data gathering which although imperfect have improved with more and more students self-disclosing their care-experience. Colleges and universities are creating safer environments for care-experienced students to disclose their care identity. They have been raising awareness, promoting the interests of care-experienced people, and making their support more visible. Because of this the numbers of care-experienced students have increased significantly as Tables 2 and 3 show on page 14. Given the marked progress in identifying care-experienced students, our focus must now be on closing the gap in education outcomes.

## How is SFC supporting those who are care-experienced?

SFC is not legally defined as a corporate parent but we are committed to supporting care-experienced young people and adults through their educational journey. We show this primarily through our National Ambition for the college and university sectors which is our equivalent of a corporate parenting plan.

By asking our colleges and universities to include care-experience alongside other Protected Characteristics like age, gender and ethnicity they are required to set targets for care-experienced intake and successful completion rates (colleges) and retention (universities). These are captured in their [Outcome Agreements](#).

SFC provides support to care-experienced young people through:

- Strategic projects.
- School engagement.
- Implementation of the recommendations from the Commission on Widening Access (COWA).
- Care-Experienced Student Bursary.

For fuller details of SFC support see [Annex A](#).

We have set up a [Care-Experienced Governance Group](#) (CEGG) which holds SFC to account for the targets set out in the National Ambition and co-ordinates our work to support and improve the outcomes of care-experienced students.

SFC has also signed the Scottish Government funded Who Cares? Scotland '[Pledge to Listen](#)' campaign to end the stigma associated with being in care and the [Scottish Care Leavers Covenant](#), the bold and committed promise to young people who have experience of the care system that they matter.

We were also one of the original Pioneering Partners with MCR Pathways, the school-based programme which focuses on relationship-based mentoring in a school setting to help radically improve outcomes. Their vision is that all disadvantaged Scottish young people get the same education outcomes, career opportunities and life chances as any other.

## **National ambition**

Our vision: Equal outcomes between care-experienced students and their peers by 2030.

In delivering the National Ambition, SFC aims to:

- Ensure the numbers of care-experienced students are fairly represented at college and university.
- Support colleges and universities to secure equality of outcomes in college successful completions and university retention.
- Monitor, evaluate and report on numbers, progression, retention and success of care-experienced students at college and university to our Governance Group.
- Create opportunities for corporate parents to connect and network so that they can learn from each other.

## ***Outcomes***

In delivering the National Ambition, SFC seeks to:

- Enable more students from care-experienced backgrounds to realise their full academic potential by encouraging our institutions to provide targeted and tailored support from pre-application entry to post-graduation.
- Further embed HEIs' admissions policies and contextual offers to ensure they follow through their commitment to offer undergraduate places to care-experienced applicants who meet minimum entry requirements.
- Continue to contribute in the sector's discussions on widening access of care-experienced learners of all ages through attendance at events and forums.
- Encourage employers, including our colleges and universities, to offer learning and employment opportunities to care-experienced young people and adults.

The vision of equal outcomes by 2030 ties into other challenging Scottish Government and SFC access targets which require transformation, for example students from the 20% most deprived backgrounds should represent 20% of entrants to higher education.

To achieve our care-experienced vision SFC will focus our ambitions over the medium term up to AY 2022-23 with milestones set in the intervening years. The ambitions focus on four areas and are displayed in two ways, once chronologically and once as a set of overall ambitions by academic year. We will review and update these ambitions towards the end of period.

### ***Intake of care-experienced students***

We rely on students to self-declare their care-experienced background. If a student has not ticked the care-experienced box at enrolment but is in receipt of the [Care-Experienced Bursary](#), we ask that the record for FE students is updated with the agreement from the student. This is because we have a duty of care to support them during their studies and a duty to monitor the impact of FE student support funds.

In 2017-18 SFC data shows there to be 4,060 individual care-experienced students at college, representing 1.6% of total headcount as indicated in Table 2. This included 410 students studying at HE level, a rise of 125 students from the previous year. Please note these figures include those studying at full-time and part-time level.

Table 2: Care-Experienced Headcount and Proportion of overall student Headcount at Scotland's Colleges 2015-16 to 2017-18 by Level of study

	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Further education</b>	1,700	0.9%	2,570	1.3%	3,650	1.7%
<b>Higher education</b>	235	0.5%	285	0.6%	410	0.8%
<b>Total</b>	1,935	0.8%	2,855	1.2%	4,060	1.6%

\* Source: Further Education Statistics (FES) data

\* Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5

Further analysis of the data shows that in 2017-18, the proportion of care-experienced students on FE courses studying full-time was 41%, whilst on HE courses, the proportion studying full-time was 89%.

In the university sector there were 360 care-experienced Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants in 2017-18, representing 0.9% of the total, a rise of 95 students from the previous year.

Table 3: Scottish-Domiciled Care-Experienced Undergraduate Entrants and Proportion of total Scottish Domiciled Undergraduate Entrants at University 2015-16 to 2017-18

	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Total</b>	230	0.6%	265	0.7%	360	0.9%

\* Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data

\* Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5

\* Includes Open University in Scotland

Of the 360 university Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants flagged as care-experienced, 128 entrants came via college from an HNC or HND course. This accounted for 35.5% of this group which shows the value of the articulation pathway.

### *Ambition 1: Intake of care-experienced students*

As Table 2 showed in 2017-18 the proportion of care-experienced students by headcount in the college sector is 1.6%.

Scottish Government data confirms that 1.4% of children under the age of 18 are from a looked-after background in 2017-18. Our data highlights that colleges are a very important access route for those with care-experience and this is mirrored with the data that there is a higher proportion of care-experienced young people starting a FE course at college than the wider population.

With this in view, the higher percentage of 1.6% (the current proportion of students from a care-experienced background) would seem to be a fair representation. A higher proportion would of course be desirable given the stark differences in educational outcomes for care-experienced school pupils and we would be keen to see an increase in care-experienced students studying at HE level at college, with particular focus on the growth of the articulation pathway; further detail is provided in Ambition 4.

At Scottish universities the proportion of Scottish-domiciled care-experienced undergraduate entrants was 0.9% in 2017-18. We would like this level to increase to a proportion of 1.4% by 2022-23 which represents a 0.1 percentage point rise each AY. We think this is possible due to the increased focus and support for care-experienced students, for example through contextualised admissions.

Our ambitions are:

- To maintain the current level of care-experienced students in the college sector so that they represent 1.6% of total student population by headcount.
- To increase the number of Scottish domiciled care-experienced undergraduate entrants to 1.4% by 2022-23.

### *Ambition 2: College successful completions*

The successful completion gap between full-time care-experienced students and non-care-experienced was 15.6 percentage points at FE level and 10.5 percentage points at HE level in 2017-18.

Our ambitions are:

- To reduce the gap of the successful completion rate of full-time FE care-experienced students from 15.6 percentage points in 2017-18 to 10 percentage points in 2022-23. We recognise 10 percentage points is still a significant gap and we will continue to support institutions to reach the goal of parity by 2030.
- To reduce the gap of the successful completion rate of full-time HE care-experienced students from 10.5 percentage points in 2017-18 to 6 percentage points by 2022-23.

### *Ambition 3: University retention*

Retention is based on the proportion of full-time Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants who return to university for their second year of study. This is when undergraduate students are more likely to drop out than at any other point of their studies. In 2017-18 the gap in the retention between Scottish domiciled care-experienced students and non-care-experienced students was 6.0 percentage points.

Our ambition is:

- To reduce the gap that progress to year 2 of their course from 6.0 percentage points in 2017-18 to 3.5 percentage points by 2022-23.

### *Ambition 4: Articulation*

Articulation is recognition of prior learning at HE level and receiving credit for this learning to optimise learner journeys. SFC defines articulation as ‘a student gaining entry into second year of a degree with an HNC gained at college, or into third year with an HND gained at college’<sup>3</sup>.

The SFC statistical report [Articulation from Scottish Colleges to Scottish Universities 2017-18](#) evidenced that articulation makes a significant contribution to fairer access with more than 40% of people going to university from Scotland’s most disadvantaged backgrounds entering via an HNC or HND college course. The report also shows that it could be an important route for care-experienced students.

Table 4 shows that 1.3% of Scottish-domiciled HN students progressing to university were from a care-experienced background in 2017-18. It also shows the proportion of students that articulate with Advanced Standing<sup>4</sup> (AS) who are care-experienced. It indicates that care-experienced articulating students have always been under-represented in their likelihood of being accredited for prior learning from their HNC or HND college course with AS. For example in 2017-18 the care-experienced cohort represented 1.3% of the overall population but only 1.1% of AS; if both proportions were the same then the care-experienced cohort would be fairly represented.

Table 4: Scottish-Domiciled Care-Experienced student movement from College to University 2015-16 to 2017-18

Year	Proportion of HN students progressing to University that are Care-Experienced	Proportion of students articulating with Advanced Standing that are Care-Experienced
2015-16	0.7%	0.6%
2016-17	1.0%	0.7%
2017-18	1.3%	1.1%

<sup>3</sup> This is the definition used in College and HEI Outcome Agreements

<sup>4</sup> Advanced Standing is where a student receives full credit for prior HE study i.e. gains entry into second year of a degree with HNC, or into third year with HND gained at college.

Our articulation ambitions will focus on the proportion of the care-experienced students, and for parity with those articulating with Advanced Standing.

Our ambitions are:

- To increase the proportion of Scottish-domiciled HN students progressing to university that are care-experienced from 1.3% in 2017-18 to 1.8% by 2022-23. This represents a 0.1 percentage point increase each year. We think this is achievable, higher than the 1.4% overall proportion of care-experienced young people, and a fair representation because we recognise the value of this pathway for this group of students. We are also aware institutions are specifically targeting care-experienced students.
- To increase the proportion of care-experienced students among Scottish-domiciled students gaining Advanced Standing so it is equal to the proportion of care-experienced students among all articulating Scottish-domiciled students progressing to university by 2022-23.





### *Ambitions by Academic Year*

Our ambitions for the college and university sector are purposely ambitious as our vision ultimately is equal outcomes between care-experienced and their peers. We recognise some ambitions could be challenging but we are confident they are achievable.

In 2020-21 our ambition for care-experienced students is to:

- Maintain the 1.6% proportion by headcount in the college sector.
- Increase the proportion of Scottish-domiciled (SD) undergraduate entrants in the university sector from 0.9% in 2017-18 to 1.2%.
- Reduce the gap of full-time (FT) FE successful completions from 15.6 percentage points in 2017-18 to 12 percentage points.
- Reduce the gap of FT HE successful completions from 10.5 percentage points in 2017-18 to 8 percentage points.
- Reduce the retention rate gap of SD undergraduate entrants in the university sector from 6.0 in 2017-18 to 4.5 percentage points.
- Increase the proportion of the articulating group from 1.3% in 2017-18 to 1.6%.
- Reduce the gap so that the proportion of SD students articulating with Advanced Standing is within 0.1 percentage points of the overall proportion of SD care-experienced articulating students.

In 2021-22 our ambition for care-experienced students is to:

- Maintain the 1.6% proportion by headcount in the college sector.
- Increase the proportion of SD undergraduate entrants in the university sector from 0.9% in 2017-18 to 1.3%.
- Reduce the gap of FT FE successful completions to 11 percentage points.
- Reduce the gap of FT HE successful completions to 7 percentage points.
- Reduce the retention gap of SD undergraduate university entrants to 4 percentage points.
- Increase the proportion of the articulating group to 1.7%.
- Reduce the gap so that the proportion of SD students articulating with Advanced Standing is within at 0.05 percentage points of the overall proportion of SD care-experienced articulating students.

In 2022-23 our ambition for care-experienced students is to:

- Maintain the 1.6% proportion by headcount in the college sector.
- Increase the proportion of SD undergraduate entrants in the university sector from 0.9% in 2017-18 to 1.4%.
- Reduce the gap of FT FE successful completions to 10 percentage points.
- Reduce the gap of FT HE successful completions to 6 percentage points.
- Reduce the retention gap of SD undergraduate university entrants to 3.5 percentage points.
- Increase the proportion of the articulating group to 1.8%.
- Have equal proportions between those SD students articulating with Advanced Standing and with the overall SD care-experienced articulating subgroup.

## **Monitoring and reporting**

We will monitor the targets set in our National Ambition through Outcome Agreements.

The Care-Experienced Governance Group (CEGG) will hold SFC to account for the targets set out in the National Ambition and will help SFC to achieve these ambitions.

The CEGG's remit includes:

- Sharing knowledge, expertise, views and ideas.
- Identifying any gaps in the support required to achieve our ambitions.
- Considering how we (and any others not represented on the group) can contribute and work together to achieve the national ambition.
- Prioritising any areas requiring additional support or work.

CEGG is not a decision making body, but makes recommendations for consideration by the relevant SFC committees, SFC Council Board and/or SFC Strategic Funding Group. Progress on the National Ambition will be reported to our Access and Inclusion Committee.

SFC will provide CEGG with statistical reports on care-experience intake and outcomes and will publish high level information on care-experienced students in our annual Report on Widening Access.

We will also monitor level of study, age, gender balance, ethnicity, disability, subject area, SIMD quintile, and college leaver destinations of care-experienced students. This data will be reported annually to CEGG usually at its June meeting.

The CEGG representatives can be found in [Annex B](#).

## SFC support to care-experienced children, young people and adults

### Strategic projects

SFC Strategic Project	Planned Outcomes	Evidence/Performance Indicators
<p><b>Who Cares? Scotland project 2015-18.</b></p> <p>Awareness, greater understanding, and responsibilities from 2014 Children and Young People (Scotland) Act.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increased numbers of care-experienced students with improved outcomes in Scotland’s colleges and universities.</li> <li>● All colleges and universities to understand their corporate parenting responsibilities.</li> <li>● Through corporate parenting, barriers of self-declaration are reduced and benefits are promoted at institutions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The numbers of care-experienced students have exceeded targets in original National Ambition.</li> <li>● All colleges and universities have been offered training and support on corporate parenting responsibilities.</li> <li>● All institutions have a published Corporate Parenting Plan.</li> <li>● All institutions have published a report, at least once every three years, including information about standards of performance, and the outcomes achieved.</li> <li>● Care-experienced treated as a Protected Characteristic at institutions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Who Cares? Scotland project 2018-20</b></p> <p>Outcomes focussed: Retention, attainment, positive destinations, and change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Care-experienced students are better supported throughout their learning journey at college and university.</li> <li>● Reduced numbers of care-experienced students repeating SCQF levels unnecessarily.</li> <li>● Care-experienced students have better understanding of, and access to, work opportunities following their FE / HE achievement.</li> <li>● National policy and practice affecting care-experienced learning journeys will be shaped by their experiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increased knowledge by careers services and named contacts at institutions.</li> <li>● Increase in number of care-experienced successfully completing at college, and increase in the retention of care-experienced at HEIs.</li> <li>● Transitions made by care-experienced learners, through SCQF levels to be understood and supported by institutions.</li> <li>● Increased understanding of articulation pathways by care-experienced learners.</li> <li>● Care-experienced learners will have increased understanding and access to employment options upon graduation.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP)</b></p> <p>In partnership with colleges and HEIs to provide routes into HE for adults and people who have been out of education, with few or no qualifications, or whose qualifications are out-of-date.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SWAP Access Programmes are one year full-time courses at colleges across Scotland.</li> <li>• Successful completion of a SWAP Access Programme can lead to a guaranteed place on a Higher National or degree course at a college or university.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For details of current SWAP programmes running at different colleges, please see:</li> <li>• SWAP East of Scotland (<a href="#">SWAP East programmes</a>).</li> <li>• SWAP West of Scotland (<a href="#">SWAP West programmes</a>).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Propel website</b></p> <p>Targeted information and details of contacts for care-experienced applicants to Scottish colleges and universities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prospective care-experienced students are more aware of the support and advice available at college and HEIs.</li> <li>• Professionals who support young people with care-experience are more aware of the support and advice available at college and HEIs.</li> <li>• A deeper understanding of the needs of care-experienced students and the provision that best suits them is shared effectively across the education and care sectors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased intake of care-experienced students at colleges and HEIs.</li> <li>• Increase in care-experienced students accessing the support to which they are entitled at college and HEIs.</li> <li>• Greater understanding across the care and education sectors and at local and national government level of how best to meet the needs of care-experienced students at college and HEIs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>SFC commissioned CELCIS to survey Care-Experienced Students at College and University in 2018-19</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced understanding of care-experienced students' learner journey.</li> <li>• Improved approaches in colleges and universities and in other stakeholders, and improved outcomes for care-experienced students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The findings were published in June 2019 titled '<a href="#">Being a student with care experience is very daunting</a>'.</li> <li>• The report will inform institutional corporate parenting plans and the independent Care Review.</li> </ul>
<p><b>NUS Scotland funding to develop College Students' Associations (SAs)</b></p> <p><b>Sparqs funding to ensure students engage at all levels in enhancing the learning experience</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well governed, sustainable and reflective college SAs.</li> <li>• SAs to make positive contributions on SFC and SG priority policy areas for example in widening access.</li> <li>• Effective student structures to build a more diverse and stronger community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual support visits with all institutions in Scotland.</li> <li>• Student engagement and input into their learning and in policy areas which impact the learner journey.</li> <li>• Students able to engage with agencies and decision-making processes across the sector.</li> </ul>

## School engagement

SFC funds a range of programmes in schools to encourage, improve and raise aspiration and attainment in order for pupils to achieve the necessary qualifications to secure their destination of choice. Care-experienced young people are targeted on a number of these programmes.

School engagement	Priority Outputs
<p><b>Schools for Higher Education (SHEP)</b> Regional collaboration between schools, colleges and universities to increase progression to HE in both colleges and universities.</p> <p>The focus is on school pupils S3 to S6.</p>	<p>The programme works with schools in each region where fewer than 22% of pupils progress to HE. It targets pupils who have the potential to achieve entry to Higher Education, but may have barriers which put them at risk of not achieving this. In so doing, the SHEP programmes also aim to raise the progression to HE within schools with traditionally low levels of student numbers progressing into Higher Education.</p> <p>Further information can be found at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">North programme</a> (Aspire North)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Fife and Tayside programme</a> (LIFT Off)</li> <li>• <a href="#">South East programme</a> (LEAPS)</li> <li>• <a href="#">West programme</a> (FOCUS West).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Access to High Demand Professions (AHDP)</b> This programme focuses on identifying schools with low or below-average progression to HE, and supporting pupils with SIMD20/40 backgrounds. The key aim is to improve the progression rate into high demand professional degree courses.</p> <p>For individual institutions, engagement is about encouraging, improving and raising aspiration for pupils to apply to and attend their institution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved progression rates through working with the school and key pupils to raise awareness and aspiration, build confidence and relationships, run workshops and open days, operate summer schools and continued access to professionals.</li> </ul> <p>The programme has two branches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• REACH: access to Medicine, Law, Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine, Economics, Accounting &amp; Finance, Education and Engineering.</li> <li>• ACES: access to Art, Design and Architecture.</li> </ul>
<p><b>MCR Pathways</b> School based mentoring programme to help radically improve outcomes of disadvantaged young people, including care-experienced.</p> <p>SFC was a pioneering partner. Our staff have been mentors on the programme.</p> <p>Dr Iain MacRitchie, Founder, sits on SFC's Access and Inclusion Committee.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The programme is now based in all 30 secondary schools in Glasgow and six other local authorities are piloting the programme.</li> <li>• SFC is supportive of their plans to expand to 100 schools within the next three years.</li> <li>• Previously only 48% Glaswegian pupils with care-experience went to a positive destination (college, university or employment). This figure is now at 86% of mentored CE pupils (<a href="#">MCR Pathways Impact Report 2018</a>).</li> </ul>

## ***Commission on Widening Access***

The Commission on Widening Access (CoWA) published their final report '[A Blueprint for Fairness](#)' in March 2016. CoWA set out a clear national strategy to deliver the First Minister's vision of equal access that, by 2030, a child born in Scotland's most deprived communities has the same chance of going to university as a child born in a least deprived community, by the time they leaves school. This includes learners from a socio-economically disadvantaged background and those with care-experience.

The blueprint has 34 recommendations. The Scottish Government has accepted the recommendations in full and is overseeing implementation through the National Access Delivery Group, chaired by the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science.

### ***School Engagement Framework***

CoWA Recommendation 4: "Universities, colleges, local authorities, schools, SFC-funded access programmes and early years providers should work together to deliver a coordinated approach to access which removes duplication and provides a coherent and comprehensive offer to learners."

This recommendation seeks to look at how all access programmes from early years to degree provision are offered and operated together. For the relevant funded programmes, SFC is developing a School Engagement Framework which aims to support pupils into their best destinations at that point in their learner journey – Modern Apprenticeships, college, university, or employment – and provide them with information, advice and guidance to support them further through collaborative regional groups as part of a national programme. The groups will look into all existing school engagement work in their local area to create a less cluttered and more understandable approach to post-school options, and that works alongside other offers and opportunities.

### ***Guaranteed offer***

CoWA Recommendation 21: "... those with care-experience, who meet the access threshold, should be entitled to the offer of a place at a Scottish university. Entitlement should also apply to those with a care-experience who have had to take a break from higher education and wish to return."

Scottish HEIs have now developed clear and consistent core of indicators in their contextualised admission policy. Every HEI has set and published the minimum entry requirements for their courses in 2019 for entrants starting in AY 2020-21. The minimum requirements will reflect the best evidence on the level of achievement necessary for successful completion of the course. HEI's use the SFC definition for care-experienced in their admissions policy.

## *Articulation*

There are three CoWA recommendations (Recommendations 8, 9 and 10) on articulation: on more demanding articulation targets; on the expansion to ensure it continues to support disadvantaged learners; and the exploration of more efficient, flexible and a broader range of pathways available to learners.

SFC, through Outcome Agreements, asks colleges (Measure 7) and universities (Measure 1) to set targets for the intake and proportion of students articulating from college to degree level courses with Advanced Standing at university.

SFC has been developing the National Articulation Database (NAD) with the first published report<sup>5</sup> in April 2019. The publication reports on the articulation of college HNC/HND students and their movement to Scottish HE institutions. The key focus is on Advanced Standing, where a student receives full credit for prior HE study i.e. gains entry into second year of a degree with HNC, or into third year with HND gained at college.

## *Care-Experienced Student Bursary*

The SFC provides student support funding for students studying full-time on [further education courses](#) at college. The Students Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) distributes funding to students on [higher education courses](#) at college and university.

The Care-Experienced Student Bursary is a non-repayable bursary for learners with care-experience. It was introduced following on from recommendations for care-experienced learners in the CoWA report in AY 2017-18. It was introduced as a non-income assessed, non-repayable grant of £7,625 and was made available to both new and continuing eligible students in higher education. At that time, care-experienced students in further education were awarded the maximum FE bursary level of £4,185.

The bursary was increased to £8,100 per year and extended to students in FE from AY 2018-19, in response to findings from the independent review of FE and HE student support. From AY 2020-21 the bursary will be paid to all students from a care-experienced background, regardless of age. The removal of the age 26 cap was announced in the Scottish Government's [Programme of Government](#).

In SFC's guidance on student support funding we clarify that colleges are not expected to operate a "100% attendance" requirement and emphasise the flexibilities that exist within SFC's attendance conditions. Specifically colleges should take into account students' wider circumstances and, as long as students are engaging in their learning, the college should allocate funding.

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<sup>5</sup> [Articulation from Scottish Colleges to Scottish Universities 2017-18](#)



## **SFC's Care-Experienced Governance Group**

There are care-experienced students and nominated representatives from the college and the university sector who sit on SFC's Care-Experienced Governance Group.

There are also representatives from the following stakeholders:

- Children and Families Directorate, Scottish Government.
- SAAS.
- Who Cares? Scotland.
- CELCIS.
- College Development Scotland.
- Universities Scotland.
- Care-Experienced, Estranged and Carers East Forum (CEECEF).
- Care-Experienced, Estranged & Student Carers West Forum (CEESCW).
- North Forum.
- Skills Development Scotland.
- SQA.
- Social Work Scotland.
- Become Charity.
- MCR Pathways.
- Action for Children.
- Independent Care Review.
- The HUB for SUCCESS.