

Modern Apprenticeships: Opportunities for employees with a care experience

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This briefing is a source of information for employers on how to offer appropriate and supportive employment opportunities through Modern Apprenticeships to young people who are, or have been, looked after children. Modern Apprenticeships provide rich, valuable, employment opportunities for young people to develop and discover new skills, build self-esteem and confidence, gain qualifications, and experience success in employment. The briefing highlights how employing a Modern Apprentice who has experience of being in care can not only benefit the young person, but employers as well.

The briefing outlines the practicalities of employing a Modern Apprentice and answers questions you may have as an employer. Information relating the subject to corporate parenting roles and responsibilities is included, and the policy context and financial implications are discussed.

Modern Apprenticeships

Modern Apprenticeships are employment opportunities which allow individuals to gain experience and qualifications whilst earning a wage, and are seen as a key to the development of fairer and more diverse workplaces.¹ Their ethos recognises that a strong workforce is made up of individuals with different experiences and skill sets, and individuals who enter the workplace by less traditional routes have unique skills and equally valuable qualities to those who gain employment based on academic qualifications.

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) administers the Modern Apprenticeship scheme across Scotland. SDS note considerable benefits for employers and individuals in taking on Modern Apprentices, which are echoed across the sector.² Employees can 'learn while they earn', and employers can develop their workforce in a hands on way, to ensure employees have the skills to meet future work needs. By considering workforce

¹ [Skills Development Scotland \(2015\) Equalities action plan for Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland](#)

² [Skills Development Scotland \(2014\) Moving forward with Modern Apprenticeships: A guide to establishing Modern Apprenticeship programmes in the public sector](#)

development plans, it is possible for employers to use Modern Apprenticeship programmes to recruit, train and retain the staff to deliver on their particular development needs. SDS note that three quarters of employers said Modern Apprentices improved productivity, and more than 70 per cent reported an increase in staff morale as a result of having Modern Apprentices in the workplace.

“Our Modern Apprenticeship Programme future proofs our skills as well as our business”
(Standard Life – [SDS](#))

Each Modern Apprenticeship operates via a framework, which sets out the learning required to gain a nationally recognised vocational qualification. There are more than 80 different frameworks available, defined by employers through Sector Skills Councils, meaning the qualification is industry recognised, and accessible in a wide range of workplace environments. There are frameworks for areas as diverse as Business and Administration, Engineering, Information Technology (IT), Paralegal Practice, Youth Work, and Management.

While the employer is responsible for the day-to-day management, supervision and support of the Modern Apprentice, there are options for sourcing the delivery of training for the qualification. Organisations can either use support from SDS to access a suitable external approved training provider, or they can seek to become registered training centres themselves in order to sustain the ongoing recruitment and training of Modern Apprentices. Funding is available through SDS to contribute to the costs of training a Modern Apprentice.

Care experienced young people, education and employment

Modern Apprenticeships offer an alternative way for young people to access high quality learning and employment opportunities, which provide real potential for young people who are, or have been, looked after children (care experienced young people).

When children and young people become looked after by their local authority, this can be for many different reasons. Each is an individual with their own unique circumstances, strengths and needs. Many looked after children go on to experience success in their adult lives, however a host of complex factors contribute to the overall gap between their educational and post-school outcomes, and those of all children. Currently, there are approximately 15,500 looked after children and young people in Scotland, who come from a range of backgrounds, and live in a variety of circumstances. Approximately 10% live in residential homes and schools, 35% live with foster carers, 27% live in a kinship care settings, and 25% live at home with one or both of their birth parents.³ Regardless of their background, by virtue of becoming looked after, these young people have experienced significant disruption in their lives.⁴ They may have experienced disruption to their educational journey due to moves and changes of placement. Many will have experienced trauma, loss, neglect or abuse. Some may have particularly low self-esteem and confidence. Such experiences have an impact on success in school, and consequently

³ Scottish Government (2016) [Children's Social Work Statistics Scotland 2014/15](#), Edinburgh: Scottish Government

⁴ Shaw, J. and Frost, N. (2013) *Young People and the care experience: Research, policy and practice*, Sussex: Routledge

affect a young person's chances of securing high quality employment opportunities through traditional academic routes.

Critically, care experienced young people tend to leave school at an earlier age than their peers, with almost three quarters leaving school at (or before) the age of 16, compared to just over one quarter of the total population.⁵ As a result, they also tend to achieve lower levels of qualification than the total population. For example, 40% of looked after school leavers achieved one or more qualifications at SVQF level 5, compared with 84% of the total population. For those individuals looked after at home, only 8% achieved a qualification at this level. A consequence of the lower educational attainment of this group is a lower likelihood of these young people being in education, employment or training at age 21.⁶ Lower levels of formal qualifications can leave care experienced young people at a disadvantage in competition for employment opportunities, or entry level requirements for post-school courses at college or university.

Current figures show that nine months after leaving school, 73% of looked after leavers were in a 'positive destination' (further education, training or employment), compared with 92% of the total population of school leavers.⁷ The stark differences in outcomes between Scotland's care experienced young people and their peers highlight the need for innovative practices to support more vulnerable young people into sustainable positive destinations, such as Modern Apprenticeships.

Corresponding to the wide variety in the needs and strengths of young people with care experiences, Modern Apprenticeship opportunities are flexible and varied. Modern Apprenticeships are available to young people with care experiences at any time from age 16, meaning they do not have to be accessed before the young person is ready⁸. There are a range of qualifications which can be worked towards depending on the individual's skills and abilities, in a choice of SCQF levels. There is no set minimum level of qualification or experience that a young person requires to apply for a Modern Apprenticeship. This is determined by the employer. Such flexibility can level the playing field for care experienced young people, who may have fewer academic qualifications, but are by no means less suitable for the role.

"I'm actually excited, and look forward to coming to work every day" (Modern Apprentice – [SDS](#))

Being given high expectations, and being able to participate and achieve, are among key conditions which facilitate success for looked after children.⁹ By giving young people with care experience the chance to undertake a Modern Apprenticeship, employers can provide a powerful motivator for hard work, and an opportunity to experience success.

⁵ Scottish Government (2015), [Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2013/14](#), Edinburgh: Scottish Government

⁶ Connelly, G., Forrest, J., Furnivall, J., Siebelt, L., Smith, I. and Seagraves, L. (2008) [The Educational Attainment of Looked After Children – Local Authority Pilot Projects: Final Research Report](#), Edinburgh: Scottish Government

⁷ Scottish Government (2015), [Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2013/14](#), Edinburgh: Scottish Government

⁸ Scottish Government. (2013). [Staying Put Scotland: Providing care leavers with connectedness and belonging](#). Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

⁹ Happer, H., McCreadie, J., & Aldgate, J. (2006). [Celebrating success: What helps looked after children succeed](#), Edinburgh: SWIA.

Improving the futures of care experienced young people - corporate parenting and beyond

The potential offered by Modern Apprenticeships will be of particular interest to corporate parents, who have specific responsibilities to care experienced young people. Corporate parenting presents an important opportunity to improve the futures of looked after children and care leavers, and recognises the importance of all parts of the system working together to contribute to better outcomes.

Corporate parenting involves public sector organisations taking responsibility for listening to the needs, fears and wishes of looked after children and care leavers, and being proactive and determined in their collective effort to meet these. Part 9 of the [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#), places the concept of corporate parenting on a statutory footing in Scotland. Schedule 4 of the Act identifies 24 public bodies who are corporate parents.

Collectively, the duties established by Part 9 are designed to ensure that the attention and resources of corporate parents are explicitly focused on the task of safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers. Specifically, the Act states that every corporate parent must:

- Be alert to matters which, or which might, adversely affect the wellbeing of an eligible young person
- Assess the needs of eligible children and young people for any services or support provided
- Promote the interests of eligible children and young people
- Seek to provide eligible children and young people with opportunities to promote their wellbeing
- Take appropriate action to help eligible young people access those opportunities
- Keep their approach to corporate parenting under constant review, seeking out improvement wherever possible

All corporate parents have the responsibilities listed above. How each fulfil these responsibilities will look very different depending on the role and function of the organisation, however every corporate parenting organisation is also an employer. Offering opportunities for eligible young people to participate in a modern apprenticeship is one appropriate, useful and suitable step towards meeting their responsibility to provide children and young people with opportunities to promote their wellbeing.

Policy commitment to Modern Apprenticeships for care experienced young people

Corporate parenting responsibilities are complemented by the 'family firm' approach discussed in the Scottish Government framework, [Our Family Firm](#). The framework identifies the employer base as the 'corporate family' from which to build a 'family firm', offering opportunities to all looked after young people and care leavers. The concept is

extended through local relationships and networks to external employers across all sectors, including the voluntary and private sectors. As well as offering opportunities themselves, corporate parents have an important influencing role with other employers, encouraging them to offer Modern Apprenticeships to care experienced young people.

The approach aims to encourage employers to offer a broad range of support to help care experienced young people progress to a positive economic destination, and to sustain this. The framework explicitly states that this may be achieved by reserving a number of apprenticeships for which looked after young people and care leavers can apply.¹⁰

In 2014, The Scottish Government produced a youth employment strategy committed to removing barriers for young people to enter employment, based on the findings of the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce. The Commission's review revealed challenges at a systemic level in relation to past approaches to vocational education and youth employment, resulting in the development of a national programme to develop the young workforce, including an expansion of Modern Apprenticeships.

The youth employment strategy recognises the opportunity Modern Apprenticeships provide. There are action plans underway to increase the number of Modern Apprenticeships taken up each year. This is explicitly aligned to Scottish Government's recognition that care leavers experience some of the poorest educational and employment outcomes in society, and it's commitment to increase positive destinations for looked after children by 4 percentage points each year, to reach parity with the overall population by 2021.¹¹

The Scottish Care Leavers Covenant¹² also advocates the need for greater awareness of the unique employability needs of care leavers, and the benefits of holistic approaches where young people are supported with employability alongside a variety of wellbeing needs, as a route in to sustained employment. As such, employers may wish to consider the benefits of preparatory support with employability skills to ensure young people are in the best position to embark on a Modern Apprenticeship. As employers are able to set the minimum level of qualification and experience required to begin a Modern Apprenticeship, it is reasonable to request a reference from a specialist employability service who has been working with the applicant as part of the criteria. Practitioners who work in employability and support roles highlight additional benefits of continued support for the success of Modern Apprenticeships, by someone who has an existing positive working relationship with the young person.

Advantages and supports to organisations and employers

Employers have identified the open attitude and keenness to learn that their Modern Apprentices have shown, and reflected that Modern Apprentices were 'a breath of fresh air' in the organisation, where the questions they asked about routine practices could lead to very positive change.

¹⁰ Scottish Government. (2011). [Our Family Firm: A Working Framework for Community Planning Partners and Employers](#). Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

¹¹ Scottish Government (2014) [Developing the Young Workforce Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy](#), Edinburgh: Scottish Government

¹² Scottish Care Leavers Covenant (2015) <http://www.scottishcareleaverscovenant.org/covenant/>

“I would encourage any company to take on a Modern Apprentice” (National Federation of Roofing Contractors – [SDS](#))

Recruiting a Modern Apprentice also allows opportunities for existing staff to develop their skills as mentors, and gain experience of line management. Depending on the structure of the organisation, these opportunities may not otherwise often arise, and the chance to take on new responsibilities of this type can be beneficial to staff motivation and morale, and make a real difference to the experience of the young person. Success for looked after children is strongly influenced by the behaviour and attitudes of others, emphasising the importance of supportive and encouraging colleagues.¹³

There are financial incentives involved for many employers who recruit Modern Apprentices with care experience. Scotland’s Employer Recruitment Incentive (SERI) enables targeted support for unemployed young people with the greatest barriers to employment, including ‘care experienced young people’¹⁴ Employers in the private or third sector receive a total of £4000 per Modern Apprentice, and an additional £500 if they pay the living wage (stated in SERI rules for 2016/17 as £8.25 per hour, as calculated by the [Living Wage Foundation](#)). This payment is designed as a co-investment in young people, with a view to helping businesses to grow. For those in the public sector, it is likely that SDS will cover the vocational training costs of the Modern Apprentice, and that in-work support can also be accessed from a suitable employability organisation.

Dispelling some common concerns

Despite their commitment to the corporate parenting duties, many organisations share similar concerns about their abilities to offer Modern Apprenticeships to care experienced young people, including concerns that the process is complicated, unsuccessful and time consuming.

The overall outcomes for all Modern Apprenticeships are very promising: around three quarters of those recruited successfully complete their Modern Apprenticeship. 92% of Modern Apprentices who completed their programmes continued to be employed 6 months later, 70% with the same employer.¹⁵

Offering meaningful opportunities to Modern Apprentices does involve a time commitment. It is necessary for employers to set aside adequate time for mentoring, supervision, review and support of their Modern Apprentices. This can be anticipated to change over time, as the Modern Apprentice becomes more familiar with their role and develops their skills. “I get a great feeling, especially when it’s as part of a team” (Modern Apprentice - [SDS](#))

The level of flexibility around how a Modern Apprenticeship is managed allows employers to determine the complexity of the arrangements to a large extent. The employer is responsible for certain areas in every case, such as paying the Modern Apprentice at

¹³ Happer, H., McCreadie, J., & Aldgate, J. (2006). [Celebrating success: What helps looked after children succeed](#), Edinburgh: SWIA.

¹⁴ Skills Development Scotland (2016) [Scotland’s Employer Recruitment Incentive: Operating Rules for Local Authorities 2016/17](#) Glasgow: SDS.

¹⁵ Skills Development Scotland (2013) [Modern Apprenticeships Outcomes 2012, Glasgow](#): SDS.

least the minimum wage, providing line management, ensuring the work opportunities on offer allow the Modern Apprentice to demonstrate competence in areas agreed with the training provider, and verifying evidence/witnessing competence so training can be 'signed off'. However, there is no obligation to become accredited and deliver the qualification in-house, as it can be sourced from an existing training provider such as a college, usually at no expense. If employers see longer term advantages to becoming accredited in delivering the qualification themselves, this can also be arranged.

Conclusions

Employers across the country have a moral and social responsibility to do more for Scotland's care experienced young people. In addition, employers who are also corporate parents have a duty to offer opportunities to promote the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers, which could be met in part by offering Modern Apprenticeships.

Modern Apprenticeships offer young people the chance to 'earn while they learn', and come with the flexibility for employers to set criteria for application which may otherwise have excluded many young people with care experience. They recognise young people are likely to require mentoring and support as they enter the world of employment, and as such are far more accessible than employment offered through traditional routes. By supporting care experienced young people into Modern Apprenticeships, we are taking steps towards ensuring the futures these young people deserve.

Useful resources:

- [Take On A Modern Apprentice](#)¹⁶
- [NES guide to establishing Modern Apprenticeships](#)¹⁷
- [Scotland's Employer Recruitment Incentive](#)¹⁸
- Scotland's Employer Recruitment Incentive [Operating Rules for local authorities 2016/17](#)¹⁹
- Call [SDS Employer Support line](#) 0800 783 6000 or contact them online to make a web-based enquiry²⁰
- Visit '[Meet the Apprentices](#)' on SDS website to hear the stories of some Modern apprentices²¹

¹⁶ <https://www.apprenticeships.scot/take-on-an-ma/>

¹⁷ http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/media/2505006/ma_guide_final.pdf

¹⁸ <https://www.ourskillsforce.co.uk/help-with-recruitment/our-one-stop-skills-shop/scotlands-employer-recruitment-incentive/>

¹⁹ <https://www.ourskillsforce.co.uk/media/1131/master-scotlands-employer-recruitment-incentive-operating-rules-2016-17.pdf>

²⁰ <https://www.apprenticeships.scot/take-on-an-ma/employer-support-requests/>

²¹ <https://www.apprenticeships.scot/become-an-ma/meet-the-apprentices/>

Q: How can I recruit a Modern Apprentice who is looked after or is a care leaver?

Thoughtful planning can enable recruitment to be targeted towards those with care experience. The wording and layout of the job advertisement should make it clear that applications are specifically welcomed from those who have experience of being in care, whether this is/was in a residential care setting, kinship care, foster care, or being looked after at home. This should be carefully worded in an easily understandable way so it is accessible to the intended reader. There should also be a clear statement about what the criteria for application are, and young people should feel welcome to apply. The advertisement should be positive and invitational, rather than formal and intimidating.

Consideration should be given to where the role is advertised, for example can you ask local aftercare or social work teams, colleges and other corporate parents to circulate it? Can you use a variety of social media to generate maximum reach?

When planning the interview, special consideration should be given to making the experience as positive as possible for the young person. You should give plenty of information beforehand about what to expect, where to go and who to ask for. This may be the young person's first experience of an interview, and they may be extremely nervous. You should have prepared a variety of questions which will allow the young person to talk about their interests and strengths, and begin to feel at ease before answering any essential interview questions. Even if the interview does not lead to the offer of a job, it will be valuable learning experience for the young person, and you should be active in offering supportive, constructive feedback to all applicants.

Q: Can I target Modern Apprenticeship opportunities at those with care experience as a specific group of young people?

Being a looked after child or being a care leaver is not currently listed as a 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010. However, under this Act, employers and employees in the public sector, and in private or voluntary organisations carrying out work on behalf of a public sector employer, have a legal public sector equality duty in the workplace to prevent and eliminate discrimination, establish and promote equality and equal opportunities. The policy landscape recognises the barriers that young people with care experience face to accessing employment, and explicit Scottish Government targets exist to increase their participation in Modern Apprenticeships, through both SERI, and the Developing Young Workforce Youth Strategy. Such targets, taken in hand with the provisions under Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act, 2014, present an environment which recognises the positive consequences of proactively ensuring access to opportunities for these young people.

Q: Will the Modern Apprentice be employed by me?

Yes, a Modern Apprenticeship is a formal, paid job. The Modern Apprentice will have a contract and must be paid at least the minimum wage.

Q: What are my responsibilities?

As the employer, you are responsible for the day to day management, supervision and support of the Modern Apprentice. You are also responsible for paying the wages of the Modern Apprentice, and providing any additional resources they will need to do their job, as you would for any other employee (for example, protective clothing, tools and equipment).

You can either use an external approved training provider for the qualification element of the role, or you can seek to become a registered training centre yourself.

Q: What support is available to me?

In most cases, all costs associated with the qualification are covered by Scottish Government, via SDS, and those organisations who choose to become accredited and provide training can apply to SDS for funding. If you are an employer in the private or third sector recruiting a care experienced Modern Apprentice, you are also able to access additional funding through SERI.

There are many employability projects which offer comprehensive support to young people as they prepare for, undertake, and complete Modern Apprenticeships, and other work based training. It is often beneficial to develop links with local providers who can be a valuable source of advice and support to employers as well as employees as the Modern Apprenticeship progresses.

Q: I am a corporate parent. How does this relate to my legal duties?

Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act, 2014, sets out the legal duties of the 24 public bodies who are identified as corporate parents in Scotland. Corporate parenting presents an important opportunity to improve the futures of looked after children and care leavers, and recognises the importance of all parts of the system working together to contribute to better outcomes.

Collectively, the duties established by Part 9 are designed to ensure that the attention and resources of various publicly funded organisations are explicitly focused on the task of safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers. All corporate parents have the responsibility to provide opportunities designed to promote the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers, and to make these opportunities accessible. As every corporate parenting organisation is also an employer, offering opportunities for eligible young people to participate in a modern apprenticeship is an appropriate, useful and suitable step towards meeting these responsibilities. Planned activity towards this should be included in the organisation's Corporate Parenting Plan. Progress towards the aims should be monitored and evaluated in order to include in the Corporate Parenting Report.

Q: Do I need to be a corporate parent to employ a care experienced Modern Apprentice?

Absolutely not. All employers, whether from the public, private, and voluntary sector are actively encouraged to offer opportunities to individuals with care experience, regardless of their status as corporate parents in the law.

Q: How do I start?

For employers in the public sector, there is an excellent step-by-step guide produced by SDS which details the process clearly. Employers in the private and third sector can also consult this guide, and should contact the relevant local authority to establish arrangements for SERI. Dedicated contacts in each area can be accessed from <https://www.ourskillsforce.co.uk/funding-and-support/scotlands-employer-recruitment-incentive/>

You can also contact SDS by phone or through a web enquiry to discuss your needs, by calling 0800 783 6000 or visiting the website <https://www.apprenticeships.scot/take-on-an-ma/>

All quotes are published on the Modern Apprenticeships pages of SDS website. There are numerous examples of excellent work by corporate parents across the country to enable care experienced young people to participate in Modern Apprenticeships. We would like to thank Highland Council, Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership, Student Awards Agency Scotland, Skills Development Scotland, North Ayrshire Council and Aberdeen City Council for sharing examples with us to inform this document.

Our goal is simple. We want to make a difference. We are totally committed to making positive and lasting improvements in the experiences, life chances and outcomes for Scotland's looked after children and young people. Taking a multi-agency, collaborative approach towards making lasting change thinking and ways of working, with everyone whose work touches the lives of looked after children.

Improving care experiences

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