



Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Corporate Parenting Plan

Our commitment to young people
with care experience

2019 – 2021



Dignity,
fairness,
respect.



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About Social Security Scotland

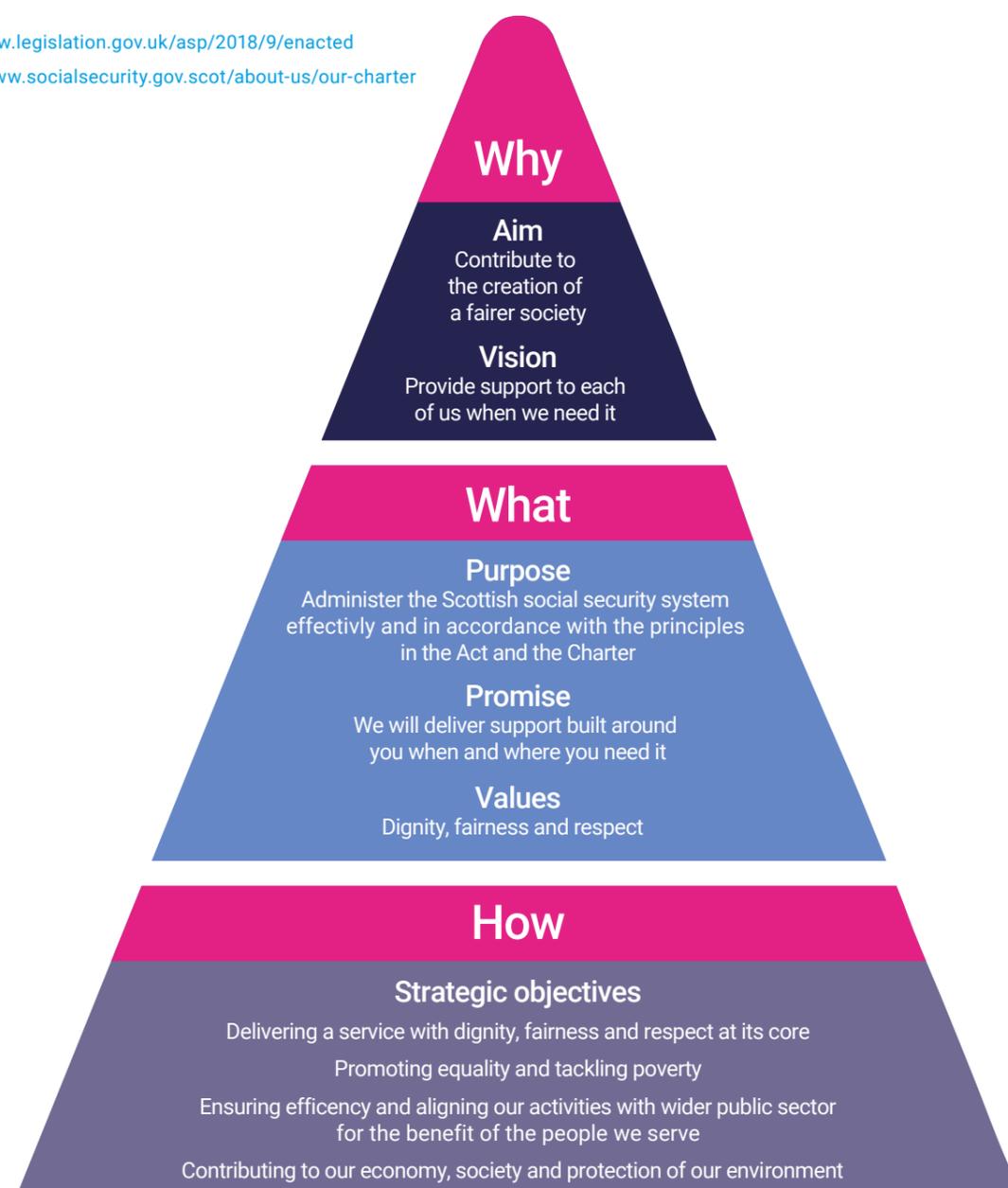
What We Do

Social Security Scotland is an Executive Agency of the Scottish Government. We are a new public service that will administer benefits on behalf of the Scottish Government. This will include benefits that were previously delivered by the UK Government and a number of new benefits created by the Scottish Government. It is Social Security Scotland's responsibility to ensure that these benefits are managed efficiently, correctly and fairly.

How we administer these benefits is directed by the Principles in the Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018¹ and Our Charter². The graphic below illustrates why we are doing this, what we aim to achieve, and how we plan to do so.

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2018/9/enacted>

² <https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/about-us/our-charter>



Our Principles

As outlined in Our Charter, we are determined to do things differently and deliver these benefits in a more positive and supportive way – placing dignity, fairness and respect at the heart of all we do. This approach is underpinned by the following eight Principles:

- 1 social security is an investment in the people of Scotland,
- 2 social security is itself a human right and essential to the realisation of other human rights,
- 3 the delivery of social security is a public service,
- 4 respect for the dignity of individuals is to be at the heart of the Scottish social security system,
- 5 the Scottish social security system is to contribute to reducing poverty in Scotland,
- 6 the Scottish social security system is to be designed with the people of Scotland on the basis of evidence,
- 7 opportunities are to be sought to continuously improve the Scottish social security system in ways which –
 - a. put the needs of those who require assistance first, and
 - b. advance equality and non-discrimination,
- 8 the Scottish social security system is to be efficient and deliver value for money.

We exist to administer the newly devolved social security powers and we are focused on taking a rights-based approach while doing so. Social security is a human right – it is an investment in ourselves and each other, it is an investment in the people of Scotland, and it is designed to ensure that people can play a full and active part in society – which will make a positive difference in all our lives.

'How' we do our work is just as important as 'what' we do. With that in mind, the Scottish Government is designing the services that we will deliver in partnership with the people who will use them. We will continue this approach, encouraging feedback. We are committed to listening, learning and improving to deliver the best service possible.



Our Strategic Objectives

Our Strategic Objectives are aligned with the Scottish Government National Performance Framework – a series of National outcomes that describes the Scotland we want to be. Specifically, our rights-based approach supports progress of the human rights outcome. If we fulfil our strategic objectives, we will help to build a fairer Scotland and a service that redefines the way in which people engage with social security.

Dignity, fairness and respect

Delivering a service with dignity, fairness and respect at its core.

If we succeed, people applying for or in receipt of our benefits will be treated with dignity, fairness and respect. We are committed to supporting people throughout the application assessment process to ensure that their experience is positive and that they receive help and advice when claiming benefits they are entitled to.

Equality and tackling poverty

Promoting equality and tackling poverty.

If we succeed, our benefit payments will target the right people, which will contribute towards a reduction in poverty and inequality. This will help to make a positive difference in client's lives, as it will increase an individual's sense of control and empowerment, giving them an increased sense of confidence and security.

Efficiency and alignment

Ensuring efficiency and aligning our activities with wider public sector for the benefit of the people we serve.

If we succeed in meeting this objective, we will be an easily accessible, user friendly service. In doing so, we will align ourselves as effectively as possible with other services and ensure everyone gets the support they need.

Economy, society and environment

Contributing to our economy, society and protection of our environment.

If we succeed in meeting this objective, we will change the interpretation and stigma surrounding the receipt of benefits and help people to see Scottish benefits as an investment in the people of Scotland. We will help to alleviate pressure on other public and third sector services, enabling them to function better.

Context

Corporate Parenting

In April 2015, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act came into effect.³ This legislation outlines the Scottish Government’s commitment to making Scotland the best place in the world to grow up. The Act established a new legal framework within which public services work together in support of children, young people and families in Scotland.

Part 9 of this Act makes specific provision for care experienced children and young people. The Act sets out the duties and responsibilities of corporate parents in Scotland, and defines corporate parenting as

“ an organisation’s performance of actions necessary to uphold the rights and safeguard the wellbeing of a looked after child or care leaver, and through which physical, emotional, spiritual, social and educational development is promoted. ”

As a Corporate Parent, we have statutory duties to:

- 1 Be alert to matters which, or which might, adversely affect the wellbeing of looked after children, young people and care leavers.
- 2 Assess the needs of eligible children and young people for the services or support we provide.
- 3 Promote the interests of eligible children and young people.
- 4 Provide eligible children and young people with opportunities to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing.
- 5 Take action to help eligible children and young people
 - access opportunities to improve wellbeing
 - make use of services and support available.
6. Keep our approach to Corporate Parenting under constant review, seeking to improve wherever possible.



alert



assess



promote



opportunities



access



improve

Together, these duties enable Corporate Parents to act in a way that upholds the rights and safeguards the wellbeing of care experienced young people. To recognise and focus on this, we have structured our action plan around these six statutory duties.

Defining Eligibility

Throughout our plan, we will be using the term ‘care experienced’. What we mean by this is anyone who currently is or who has ever been ‘looked after’. This is an inclusive term and includes those who are currently looked after, those who have been looked after at some point in their lives, and care leavers, be it looked after at home or away from home in kinship care, residential, foster or secure care.

Though we recognise that we have a statutory responsibility to report formally within the limits of the legally defined terms. Wherever possible, we will uphold our responsibilities as a corporate parent to this wider group of all care experienced young people, rather than limiting it to just those who meet the legal definitions of ‘looked after’ or ‘care leaver.’

Outcomes of Care

Experienced Young People

While it is recognised that many care experienced young people achieve positive life outcomes it is also true that, despite the far-reaching framework of policy and legislation, many care experienced children and young people still face poor personal outcomes. Evidence suggests that:

- in Scotland, one third of young offenders identified as having been in care at some point in their lives;⁴
- 45% of five to seventeen year olds living in care have been diagnosed as having a mental health disorder;⁵
- 73% of looked after young people leave school at the earliest opportunity;⁶
- nine months after leaving school, 76% of care experienced young people were in a positive destination, compared to 93% of all school leavers.⁷
- 40% of all care leavers of 19, 20 and 21 years of age (in 2016) were not in employment, education or training compared to 14% of all 19, 20 and 21 year olds⁸

³ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2014/8/contents/enacted>

⁴ Scottish Prison Service. 2016. Prisoner’s Survey 2015 – Young People in Custody. SPS: Edinburgh.

⁵ Office of National Statistics. 2004. The mental health of young people looked after by local authorities in Scotland. HMS; London.

⁶ Scottish Government. 2016. Education Outcomes for Scotland’s Looked After Children, 2014/15. <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/06/6439> Edinburgh

⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/education-outcomes-looked-children-2017-18/pages/2/>

⁸ <http://spectrafirst.com/identity-cms/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/CLC-INTRO-LEAFLET-BRANDED-ALTERNATIVE-LOW.pdf> p.4



All of this evidence points towards the fact that many care experienced young people don't get the same chances that are afforded to other young people. Even when they do, they are often unable to take advantage of these opportunities due to their circumstances, or they cannot sustain them because of the emotional impact of their past experiences.

In general, young people face a number of financial barriers as they transition from family life into independent living arrangements. It has become increasingly common for young people to rely on family support to ease them through this transition, offering a safety net for difficult situations. Young people leaving care can often lack this support network and, as a result of this, are more at risk of falling into debt and financial difficulty.

A study by The Centre for Social Justice found that 57% of care leavers they spoke to identified money management and avoiding debt as a difficulty when leaving care.⁹ This can be intensified by insufficient or inconsistent support and a lack of knowledge regarding bills and financial management. As a result of this, care experienced young people may quickly fall into debt which then has knock on effects, such as preventing them from entering into further education or apprenticeships which have a short-term cost but offer the potential to lead to better long-term outcomes.

Due to these factors, care experienced young people are more likely to engage with Social Security Scotland and the wider benefit system. The Centre for Social Justice notes that there is an enduring cultural belief that leaving care means

a transfer to the benefits system – 70% of care leavers they spoke to told them that they received help from their local authority with claiming benefits when leaving care, while only 36% received help finding a job.¹⁰

It can often be the case that these systems do not work for care experienced young people as intended and there is a significant risk that they can be found wanting at a time when they need support the most. Many young people and care leavers are unaware of the procedures and rules surrounding how to claim benefits, which makes them more susceptible to benefit sanctions and support being removed. According to one report, care leavers are three times more likely to have had a benefit sanction compared to the general working age population.¹¹ That figure is only indicative of care leavers who have self-declared, so it is likely that the actual figure is even more severe.

Negative experiences can have a lasting effect on a care experienced young person's engagement with the social security

system, as evidenced in The Children's Society Report 'The Cost of Being Care Free.' It presents evidence that care experienced young people are less likely to challenge their sanction compared to a member of the general population.¹²

We recognise that support, guidance and communication is crucial for the services we offer to care experienced young people, and the people of Scotland as a whole. This recognition is reflected in the corporate parenting objectives within our action plan.

Though there is a wider movement towards ending the presumption that leaving care means entering the benefit system, we want all interactions with our system to be flexible and supportive so that care experienced young people receive benefits they are entitled to. We hope to break down the stigma surrounding engagement with social security and work towards safeguarding care experienced young people with our system, whilst also providing opportunities to further their wellbeing.

⁹ https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/CSJ_Care_Report_28.01.14_web.pdf p.6

¹⁰ https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/CSJ_Care_Report_28.01.14_web.pdf p.36

¹¹ https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/pcr073_care-leavers-financial-exclusion-final.pdf p.19

¹² The Children's Society, *The Cost of Being Care Free: The Impact of Poor Financial Education and Removal of Support on Care Leavers*, p.21



Our plan

Development

Our action plan is centred around the six statutory duties listed in the Children and Young Peoples (Scotland) Act 2014.

Our commitment is to remove the practical barriers that care experienced young people face when engaging with our services, and to ensure that they receive the information and support they need, while being treated with dignity, fairness and respect throughout this process. We also want to provide care experienced young people with opportunities, and we will give our people training to increase awareness of the issues that care experienced people may face.

To meet the statutory duties and the actions set out in our action plan, it is essential for us to embrace our Corporate Parenting

Plan and to recognise it as a positive improvement, embedding it in our culture, decision making and way of working as we continue to grow. We recognise that it is the duty for all at Social Security Scotland to take on this responsibility.

We see our action plan as more than just an obligation to meet our statutory duty, but as an opportunity to improve the future and outcomes for care experienced young people.

Working in Partnership

Throughout the development of our plan, we have built relationships with a number of key stakeholders and, through this and other engagement, have gained a more comprehensive understanding of the needs of care experienced young people.

We fully commit to furthering these relationships, building new ones and continuing to engage with stakeholders and individuals with lived experience to hear their voice.

As this engagement continues, we intend to consistently review and report on the actions identified and feed this back into our Corporate Parenting Plan as it continues to develop throughout time.

Review and Improve

We recognise that meeting our corporate parenting duties is not a process with a clear end date and we believe that the actions set out our plan will allow these duties to become embedded in our delivery approach and culture.

We are committed to consistently monitoring our plan and identifying new actions that would add value and provide opportunities to further the wellbeing of care experienced individuals.

Internally, we will set up a network of 'Champions' that will sit within each business area. This will help to increase awareness of Corporate Parenting throughout Social Security Scotland and assist us in identifying barriers, updating existing actions, and identifying potential new actions in different business areas. This will be fed back during our six monthly review.

Action Plan 2019–21

Corporate Parenting Responsibilities: Alert, Assess, Promote, Opportunities, Access, Collaborate and Improve

<p>Be alert to matters which might adversely affect the wellbeing of care experienced young people.</p>	Objective	Activities to be taken
	<p>1 Attend national and local Corporate Parenting Events and seek out opportunities to keep up to date with the issues impacting care experienced young people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify and keep up to date with national Corporate Parenting Events ● Ensure that internal Social Security Corporate Parenting ‘Champions’ are aware of events so that a representative may attend.
	<p>2 Work with partners and other Corporate Parents to design and deliver various different types of training to all staff and Non-Executive members. This will include induction sessions, eLearning and optional events.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Build a robust and sustainable programme of training by including Corporate Parenting awareness in staff induction, a mandatory eLearning module and by liaising with Third Sector organisations and Advocacy groups to offer optional ‘Impact Events’ ● Develop a tiered system of training with different ‘levels’ which considers the needs of staff and identifies business areas where staff will require a greater understanding of Corporate Parenting ● Develop our eLearning package in partnership with Third Sector Organisations (Who Cares? and CELSIS) which will be mandatory for all staff to complete.

Be alert to matters which might adversely affect the wellbeing of care experienced young people cont.

3 Have a Corporate Parenting Champion in each unit that collates feedback and ideas from staff on how to develop our approach and feeds this back into a six monthly forum.

- Promote Corporate Parenting and increase awareness internally through the Strategic Communications Team. Explain the need for ‘Corporate Parenting Champions’ and clearly outline their responsibilities
- Seek volunteers from the Corporate Parenting Working Group, which has been established to help create our action plan, to be Corporate Parenting Champions, given their existing knowledge in this area
- Scope possibility of having a ‘Corporate Parenting Champion’ list on the Social Security staff intranet so staff in all areas know who the Champion is in their unit/area.

4 Scope opportunities to collate data on the number of Social Security Scotland clients and applicants that are care experienced young people through self-declaration.

- Scope the possibility of including a question on care experience in our “All Clients” survey
- Scope the possibility of including a question on care experience in People Survey
- Scope other data collecting opportunities, and the possibility of including a question on care experience in our Equalities Survey for launch of Wave 2 benefits.

5 Scope opportunities for Experience Panel members to contribute evidence.

- Use the ‘Seldom Heard’ project to hear voices and gather data on people with care experience and foster carers
- Use reporting, guidance and data that comes out of the ‘Seldom Heard’ project to feed into our Corporate Parenting plan as we continue to review.

6 Develop and promote to colleagues a resource for sharing literature and evidence on the needs and views of care experienced young people.

- Scope the possibility of having a section on the Social Security Scotland Intranet page for Corporate Parenting to share resources and increase awareness.

Assess the needs of care experienced young people for the services and support we provide

Objective

1 Through the implementation of our Local Delivery Service, we will identify opportunities to support care experienced young people in their application for benefits and increase our knowledge base of issues which they face.

2 Liaise and work with the Scottish Government Social Security Programme in order to ensure that we are identifying the needs of care experienced young people and incorporating their input into the design of new benefit services.

3 Review emerging policy and guidance for and concerning looked after children and young people and care leavers, and adopt its principles where appropriate.

Activities to be taken

- Where applicable, we will collaborate with Local Authorities and complement existing actions in this area which are already being undertaken as part of their own Corporate Parenting responsibilities
- As Local Delivery continue to develop and design outreach services, we will ensure that the needs of care experienced young people are considered as part of this process through engagement with Third Sector Organisations and Advocacy groups. We will use feedback from this to influence and shape our pre-claim guidance process
- In instances where we are unable to help or offer advice, we will signpost to care experienced young people to the correct organisation or service which they require.

- Share data we gather, barriers we identify and feedback we receive through other Corporate Parenting actions with the Social Security Programme
- Make sure care experienced young people are included when user stories are being considered and that these are incorporated.

- Monitor and action upcoming legislation and reports.

Promote the interests of care experienced young people

Objective

1 Endorse the principles of the Care Leavers Covenant and ensure we are in a position to sign the document to demonstrate our responsibility as a Corporate Parent.

2 Actively promote our recruitment opportunities to care experienced young people through specific workshops and roadshows.

3 We will seek to promote 'care experience' as a protected characteristic.

Activities to be taken

- Review the Covenant fully to map out the impact for Social Security Scotland
- Sign Covenant and publish on our website.

- Take a more direct approach to make sure that we are engaging with care experienced young people, Third Sector Organisations and Advocacy groups as part of our ongoing engagement and recruitment strategies
- Use established communication channels that young people engage with to promote recruitment opportunities
- Continue to collaborate with local council employability teams and seek other partnerships to promote opportunities to care experienced young people.

- Scope possibility of including 'Looked After Children' and 'Care Leavers' as a protected characteristic within the Social Security Scotland Equality Impact Assessment processes
- Scope possibility of utilising existing structures and processes in place for equality and diversity and extending these to incorporate 'care experience.'

Provide care experienced young people opportunities to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing.

Objective

- 1 Work with third sector organisations to identify job shadowing opportunities for care experienced young people so that they can learn about Social Security Scotland and the Civil Service, more generally.
- 2 Identify opportunities for staff to participate in a mentoring programme with looked after children and care leavers .

Activities to be taken

- Incorporate into the wider ongoing considerations regarding work experience opportunities we will offer
 - Assess what is the most appropriate form for these opportunities to take and would offer the most value. Stay conscious of implications on benefits and other factors
 - Ensure specific consideration is given to care experienced young people.
-
- Liaise with third sector organisations to identify where there are existing opportunities in this area. If so, utilise and compliment services which have already been established and are available
 - Cascade information via Internal Communications to team leaders, encouraging staff uptake and participation.



<p>To help care experienced young people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access the opportunities we provide. • Make use of services and support available. 	Objective	Activities to be taken
	<p>1 Engage with care experienced young people to discuss how we can improve our services and the opportunities we can provide.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope the opportunity for targeted recruitment of looked after children and care leavers for Experience Panels • Continue to engage with Support Services and Advocacy Groups • Attend Champion Boards.
	<p>2 As part of the ongoing review of our recruitment processes, ensure information about recruitment is made available through young person friendly channels and that support is available for the application process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through engagement with care experienced young people, practitioners and support groups, consider the development of bespoke guidance and workshops to support application • Utilise the use of partnerships with other organisations who already have a strong presence and communication channels with young people, particularly those with care experience.



<h2>Collaborate with other Corporate Parents.</h2>	Objective	Activities to be taken
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Actively engage with the Independent Care Review. 2 Through our engagement strategy, strengthen our relationships with Who Cares? Scotland, STAF and CELSIS and seek to identify new collaborative opportunities, so as to develop and improve our service to care experienced young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue to engage with representatives from the Independent Care Review to inform our plan and actions in this area and to develop best practice. ● Actively engage with Who Cares? Scotland, STAF and CELSIS Review to inform our plan and actions in this area and to develop best practice.
<h2>Other actions we will take to improve the way we engage and work with care experienced young people.</h2>	Objective	Activities to be taken
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Identify a set of KPIs specific to care experienced young people so that we can measure and report our year-on-year performance as a Corporate Parent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scope how we can identify a set of KPI's we can use to measure and report on our year-on-year performance as a Corporate Parent and feed this into continuous improvement.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Build in a 6 month review of our Corporate Parenting Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review the implementation of all of our actions, reflect on this and feed it into continuous improvement ● Update and add new actions as identified and as appropriate.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Formally report on progress every year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Formally review and report on progress each year while we continue to grow and undertaking a larger more comprehensive review/report in March 2021 ● Corporate parenting actions to be updated on our website and comments will be invited from representative groups and advocacy organisations, and care experienced young people and care leavers. 	



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