Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Corporate Parenting Plan 2024-27

Dignity,
fairness,
respect.

1. About Social Security Scotland

Social Security Scotland is an Executive Agency of the Scottish Government, set up in 2018. It is responsible for managing the benefits that are devolved to Scotland, to make sure the people who need them are treated fairly and paid on time.

Social Security Scotland manages both disability and low-income benefits, examples include Best Start Grant, Job Start Payment, Child Disability Payment and Adult Disability Payment. Schedule 4 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 gives public bodies a number of formal duties as a corporate parent. These duties do not formally apply to Social Security Scotland as yet but we are working to respond fully to the responsibilities and duties as laid out in the Act and supporting guidance even before these become a legal obligation. Corporate parenting refers to all of the things we do as an organisation to uphold the rights and secure the wellbeing of a looked after child or care leaver and the ways in which we can support their physical, emotional, spiritual, social and educational development.

2. What do we mean by Care Experienced?

Care experienced is a term used to refer to people who are currently in -or have previously been in - the care of the local authority at any point in their lives. This includes residential care, being looked after at home under a compulsory supervision order, being fostered or through formal or informal kinship care, or being fostered prior to adoption. While most provisions for care-experienced people end at 26, Social Security Scotland considers that the impact of care experience can be life-long and therefore considered for people of all ages. On this basis, Social Security Scotland has adopted care experienced as a protected characteristic alongside the existing protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010. This ensures that any potential or actual impact on care-experienced people, either clients or colleagues, is fully taken into account when introducing new or revised products, policies, processes or services.

3. What are the organisation's duties and responsibilities?

In 2020, the Independent Care Review engaged with over 5,000 young people and their families who fed back that they did not feel loved, safe or respected.

In response, Scotland made a promise (**'**The Promise') to children and young people in Scotland that things would change so that they could grow up loved, safe and respected, to achieve their full potential. All public bodies have their part to play and this plan reflects how we intend to deliver on The Promise.

Social Security Scotland will use the 6 duties to care-experienced people, as set out in the Children and Young People's Act, as a framework to understand and guide our work to

fulfil our responsibilities to children and young people under the Promise. These duties are:

Alert - Be alert to matters that might adversely affect the wellbeing care experienced young people.

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

Promote - Promote the interests of care experienced young people.

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

Access - Take action to help care experienced young people access the opportunities we provide.

Improve - Keep our approach to Corporate Parenting under constant review, seeking to improve wherever possible.

To support the delivery of this plan we have a nominated sponsor: the Deputy Director for Organisational Strategy and Performance.

4. How we have worked with stakeholders to develop the plan

The plan draws on

- Feedback from Who Cares? Scotland on an initial draft of our plan
- Feedback from care experienced colleagues who are part of our Corporate Parenting Champions Group
- The 2024-30 Promise Plan, so that we are aligned to the commitments contained within the plan.

5. Highlights of Social Security Scotland's corporate parenting work between 2021-2024

Highlights are summarised by the 6 corporate parenting duties.

Alert

- Within our internal equalities network there is a method for care-experienced individuals to collectively feed into our champions group
- The organisation has established care experience as a protected characteristic so that when creating or amending policies and services for both clients and colleagues we are alert to the needs of care-experienced people.

- We have worked with a range of other corporate parents within Who Cares? Scotland's network to improve our offer and remain alert to matters important to our service to care-experienced people.

Assess

- We have changed out employee passport criteria to explicitly include the potential need for support for care experienced people. This leads the line manager to have a sensitive discussion on the impact for the employee at work and how we can support them. If the individual moves line manager, they then don't need to set this out again. This allows the organisation to assess whether the support available adequately meets the needs of our care experienced colleagues.
- Our client survey now allows respondents to identify that they are care experience when evaluating their experience with engaging with our service. We are then able to assess whether our care-experienced clients have an equal level of service or whether improvements need to be made
- Members of the corporate parenting working group contribute to Equality Impact Assessments to ensure that the needs of care-experienced people are represented.

Promote

- We have developed mandatory learning materials to help colleagues understand our role as a corporate parent and support the needs of care-experienced people in their role and wider lives. The champions group regularly attends team meetings and hold drop-in sessions to speak to teams on our role as corporate parents.
- We run regular awareness sessions and use line manager cascades, organisation-wide newsletters, electronic signage, social media and headline news articles to promote awareness of our responsibilities
- We recently held our first line managers session in conjunction with Who Cares? Scotland
- We have introduced master classes with our health and social care colleagues that focus on the impacts of care experience, supporting conversations and recognising trauma. We are working towards being a fully trauma-informed organisation.

Opportunities

- We ran a care-experienced intern recruitment advertised through Who Cares? Scotland and recently offered a fixed term placement with industry training to a young person. This individual is now a fully qualified software engineer. Recognising the barriers to full-time training and education we offered a full-time salary during the training period with the external organisation. For those unsuccessful in the recruitment, we offered short-term employability mentoring to enhance their chances at future recruitment.
- We have had care-experienced people join our organisation through the civil service care-experienced intern scheme. In some cases, our interns have then been successful in gaining permanent employment with us.

Access

- We have run a work experience taster day, hosting a group of care experienced school pupils.
- We recognise the disadvantages care-experienced people encounter and the need to work with third sector organisations, so we have introduced and promoted

mentoring young people through MCR (Motivation, Commitment and Resilience) Pathways, using dedicated colleague volunteering hours.

Improve

- We have completed evaluation work on our plan from 2021-2024 and have drawn on this to inform our planning for 2024-2027
- Through the Who Cares? Scotland corporate parents' network we will learn from other organisations' good practice and lessons learned

6. Planned Outcomes

Social Security Scotland has worked to align outcomes for this planning period with the priorities and fundamentals of the Promise Plan 2024-30.

We have, within out People Strategy, committed to invest in the future workforce by offering targeted employability opportunities such as work experience, internships, and placements.

When doing this, we will focus on positively impacting the diverse communities we serve, collaborating with external organisations, networks and groups,
to inform how we do this.

We have made strong progress on the plan for 2021-24 but we recognise the need to build on the good work already completed, to further improve the experience for our care experienced clients and colleagues. We have -

- Increased knowledge by other agencies of Social Security Scotland's offer
- Increased internal knowledge and understanding of care experience
- Increased input from internal and external stakeholders for feedback to review current experience and inform planned corporate parenting action.
- Continued work with partner organisations to provide support with employment readiness opportunities within Social Security Scotland.

These are initial planned outcomes but would include the ability to flex based on being alert to ongoing feedback from our care experienced community.

Responsibility	Actions
Alert	Work with other corporate parents and Who Cares? Scotland to understand best practice and current issues. From lived experience evidence and data sources, gain insight into the needs of our clients and colleagues to inform detailed action plans.
Assess	Work with our social and user research teams to understand the experience care experienced clients have with Social Security Scotland.

	Draw on internal and external stakeholder input to identify areas for improvement and potential approaches Ensure appropriate signposting in place for care experienced people.
Promote	Work to increase colleague awareness of their responsibilities as corporate parents. Work to increase colleague awareness of the needs of care experienced clients and colleagues.
Opportunities	Continue to work with partner organisations to provide support with employment readiness opportunities within Social Security Scotland. Promote opportunities with organisations supporting care experienced people through our colleagues' volunteering time
Access	Ensure appropriate signposting is in place for care experienced people, both internally and externally. Work to increase awareness of Social Security Scotland's benefits with those who support care experienced people.
Improve	Fulfil planning and reporting requirements to meet the Statutory Guidance for Corporate Parents

7. Monitoring Progress

Progress will be monitored annually through the client survey, people survey, the internal equalities network, and stakeholder feedback. Success will also be measured through completion of training and attendance at awareness raising sessions. Reporting will be carried out annually to the internal senior sponsor and People and Place Forum. Our People and Place forum will be the governance group to approve individual actions within the plan.

8. Glossary of terms

Additional Support Needs
The term used in Scotland for children who require extra help in their education.

Adopted individuals
Adoption is the legal process by which a child or a group of siblings who cannot be brought up within their birth family become full, permanent and legal members of their new family. Adopters become the child's legal parents with the same rights and responsibilities as if the child was born to them. [5]

Adoption
A legal process that replaces a child's birth parents with new adoptive parents. Most adopted children will have been previously looked after by a local authority.

Aftercare
Support provided to care leavers to prepare them for independent living.

Care Experienced People
The term “care experienced” holds special meaning for many individuals who identify with it. It offers a broader and more inclusive understanding of care experience compared to traditional legal terms like “looked after” or “LAC” (Looked After Children).

Definition: Care experienced refers to anyone who has been or is currently in care at any stage in their life, regardless of the duration or type of care received. This can include experiences with:

- Foster care
- Kinship care
- Residential care
- Secure care
- Adoption

Significance: The term recognises that the impact of being in care can extend far beyond the period of legal care status, potentially affecting individuals throughout their lives. For many who identify as care experienced, the term combines:

- A description of their upbringing or life situation
- Recognition that this experience may entitle them to additional support and protection under law
- An understanding of their personal identity

Important considerations:

- Not everyone who could be described as care experienced will choose to identify with this term.
- Some may find it stigmatising or prefer not to be labelled based on their care history.

Usage: The Promise Scotland uses “care experienced” in a broad and inclusive way, acknowledging the meaning that many young people attach to it. However, it’s recognised that language and terminology in this area continue to evolve as part of ongoing efforts to reduce stigma and empower individuals with care experience.

Care Leaver
A young person who was looked after on or after their 16th birthday and is now under 26.

Champions Boards
Champions Boards are groups of care experienced people set up in each Local Authority who work with members of the council and other Corporate Parents to advocate for positive changes in the care system and in their local area.

Children's Rights
The human rights of children, as defined by the UNCRC.

Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
Legislation that sets out the responsibilities of corporate parents in Scotland.

Compulsory Supervision Order
A legal order made by a Children's Hearing or Sheriff, that may involve the child living at home or away from home.

Continuing Care
The right for young people born after 1 April 1999, aged 16-18, who were looked after away from home, to remain in their care placement.

Corporate Parenting
The collective responsibility of local councils, elected members, staff, and partner agencies to provide the best possible care and safeguarding for looked-after children and young people.

Corporate Parenting Champions
An internal working group dedicated to promoting and implementing corporate parenting responsibilities within an organisation.

Corporate Parenting Network
A collaborative network of organisations sharing best practices in fulfilling corporate parenting duties. This network meets several times per year

Foster care
When a child cannot be cared for by their birth parents, or by kinship carers (extended family or close friends), they can be cared for by an approved foster family. [2]

Kinship care
Kinship care is when a child is looked after by their extended family or close friends if they cannot remain with their birth parents [6]

Looked after children
Looked after children are those in the care of their local authority. This can include children living with foster parents, in residential care homes, or with their parents under the supervision of social services. The term applies to a range of situations where children are cared for by the state, either through voluntary agreement with their parents or as a result of a court order [7].

Looked after at home
Sometimes referred to as "Looked after at home, under the supervision of social services", this is a specific category of looked after children. A child becomes looked after at home when the Children's Hearings system imposes a supervision requirement with no condition of residence. This typically occurs in 2 main instances:
A child looked after at home continues to live at their normal residence (usually the family

home) but receives regular visits from social workers. These visits ensure that the objectives of the home supervision order are being met [7].

As a starting point for planned intervention, where the balance of risk indicates that it's not essential to remove the child from their parents' care, but the situation requires monitoring.

When children are returning home after being looked after away from home, and some risks still remain. In this case, home supervision aims to help reunite the family.

MCR Pathways
A mentoring programme supporting young people, particularly those with care experience, in education and career opportunities.

Plan 24-30
A strategic plan developed as part of The Promise initiative, outlining actions to improve outcomes for care-experienced individuals by 2030.

Residential care
Residential care homes offer young people, usually of secondary school age, a safe place to live together with other children away from home. They provide accommodation, support and, in some cases, education (though in most cases, the child is educated at a school nearby) [3]

Secure care
Secure accommodation is a form of residential care that restricts the freedom of children under the age of 18. It is for the small number of children who may be a significant risk to themselves, or others in the community. Their needs and risks can only be managed in secure care's controlled settings.
Secure care aims to provide intensive support and safe boundaries to help these highly vulnerable children re-engage and move forward positively in their communities. [4]

Supported Care
Care that aims to help young people learn practical skills for adult life, often involving staying with supported carers.

The Independent Care Review
A root-and-branch review of the care system in Scotland that led to The Promise.

The Promise
The main report of Scotland's independent care review, published in 2020, outlining what Scotland must do to ensure care experienced children are loved, safe, and respected.

Trauma-informed Practice
An approach that recognises the impact of trauma on individuals and seeks to avoid re-traumatisation.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
An international human rights treaty covering all aspects of children's lives.

Who Cares? Scotland
A national independent advocacy organisation for care-experienced people in Scotland.

References

[1] https://thepromise.scot/what-is-the-promise/care-experienced-people
[2] https://www.gov.scot/policies/looked-after-children/foster-care/
[3] https://www.gov.scot/policies/looked-after-children/residential-care/
[4] https://www.gov.scot/policies/youth-justice/secure-care/
[5] https://www.adoptionuk.org/about-modern-adoption
[6] https://www.gov.scot/policies/looked-after-children/kinship-care/
[7] https://www.gov.scot/policies/looked-after-children/

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