

# Corporate Parenting Plan 2018 – 21

# Foreword

I am proud to present Skills Development Scotland's (SDS) second Corporate Parenting Plan, incorporating our report on our first three years as a corporate parent.

Working with care experienced young people has always been a key focus for us at SDS, and we were fortunate in 2015 not to be approaching our new corporate parenting duties from a standing start. We took time in developing our first plan to listen to our people, some of whom have decades of experience supporting this group. More importantly, we took the time to listen to the care experienced young people we support – identifying from them how we could work towards being the best possible corporate parent.

It was important to take time to get it right, and so we published our first plan in October 2016. This first plan made 16 specific commitments, describing our contribution to what the Minister for Children and Young People, Maree Todd, recently described as our 'collective primary objective: to ensure our children and young people do not face additional barriers because of care experience'. We have made significant progress against most of these commitments, with eight now fully embedded across our business.

We were aware that there were some fundamental changes required, for example, earlier career information, advice and guidance (CIAG) in schools, raising aspirations and helping to build learning and career pathways, and a longer period to access CIAG support and modern apprenticeships having left school. We wanted to make

changes which acknowledge that often extra time and support is required to make a transition from school into further learning or employment.

We also needed to consider how we record and report our work with care experienced individuals, to ensure we are making a real difference.

This plan demonstrates that we have come a long way since 2015. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone at SDS, from the Board Members and Senior Executives to every single colleague delivering face-to-face support. This commitment to improving outcomes for our care experienced customers has been evident at all levels of the business, and the progress we have made to date would not have been possible otherwise.

Collaborating with other corporate parents, and building key partnerships both nationally and locally across Scotland, has also been, and will continue to be, vitally important. At SDS, partnership working is at the heart of all we do, and we know that by sharing our aims, strengths, and resources we can jointly achieve better outcomes for our children and young people. A clear example of where this is critical going forwards is the accurate and timely sharing of data between corporate parents; ensuring that young people can be proactively offered the support they need, when they need it.

Of course, there is more to do. Outcomes for care experienced young people are still consistently poorer than those without experience of care; and much can, and

must, be done to more fully understand this, and work undertaken to change it. This is why we will not become complacent.

This Plan provides details of our five new commitments for 2018-21. These will help to ensure that SDS continues to support young people with lived experience of care to achieve their full potential.

We believe the achievements and ambitions contained within this plan reflect our sincere commitment to our corporate parenting duties, and our passion for improving equality of opportunity, and outcomes, for all of Scotland's care experienced young people.

We look forward to working with you over the next three years to help make these ambitions a reality.



**Damien Yeates**  
Chief Executive Officer

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2 B Heard (Fife), CELCIS, Connecting Voices (East Ayrshire), FYI (Perth), the Glasgow Champions Board,  
MCR Pathways, Staf and Who Cares? Scotland.

# Introduction

## About Skills Development Scotland

We are Scotland's national skills body, focused on contributing to Scotland's sustainable economic growth by supporting people and businesses to develop and apply their skills.

We work with partners at national, regional and local levels to create a Scotland where:

- employers are able to recruit the right people with the right skills at the right time
- employers have high performing, highly productive, fair and equal workplaces
- people have the right skills and confidence to secure good work and progress in their careers
- there is greater equality of opportunity for all.

We do this by delivering services for individuals and employers that help them to achieve their ambitions. By building strong partnerships with providers, funders and influencers of education and training, we drive a focus on delivering the programmes that will make a real difference to Scotland's communities and economy. Investment in the right skills, at the right time and in the right place is at the heart of our approach to supporting individual achievement, as well as business and economic growth and a fairer Scotland.

## Our corporate parenting duties

Corporate parents have a responsibility to understand the lives of Scotland's looked after young people and care leavers, and to respond to their needs as any parent should.

The Statutory Guidance 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.” (Scottish Government, 2015)

Part 9 of The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 ('The Act'), which came into effect on the 1st of April 2015, makes specific provision for looked after children and care leavers, providing a legislative framework for corporate parenting. Within the Act, SDS was named as one of 24 public bodies to which corporate parenting duties apply.

The Act confers six statutory duties on the named corporate parents including SDS.

As laid out in Section 58, we 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 our approach to corporate parenting under constant review, seeking out **improvement** wherever possible.

Under sections 60 – 65 corporate parents must also publish (and keep under review) detailed corporate parenting plans and reports, collaborate with each other, follow directions and guidance, and provide relevant information to Scottish Ministers.

Our first Corporate Parenting Plan explored our understanding of these duties in more depth and how they relate to our products and services. It also explored the broader context of the challenges faced by care experienced young people and the impact this has on their learner journey outcomes. This is available to [read on our website](#).

## Definitions

The legislation defines who can be considered 'looked-after' and a 'care leaver'. Within SDS, we choose to use the term 'care experienced', by which we mean anyone who currently meets, or has met at any time previously, the criteria for 'looked after'. This includes those looked after at home, or away from home in kinship, residential, foster or secure care. Our intention is to act as corporate parent to anyone who identifies themselves within this broader 'care experienced' definition, and as such, this plan uses this term throughout.

## About this plan

Section 61 of The Act requires SDS as corporate parents, to report on its corporate parenting duties. This, SDS's second Corporate Parenting Plan, contains a formal report outlining progress against the commitments made in the 2015 – 2018 plan, as well as identifying further actions to be taken forward in 2018 – 2021.



Figure 1: Section 58 Duties

“I liked that the Careers Adviser was one on one, so you could be open about your careers choices and that it was almost always the same person you would see, therefore you could really just update them on things like job/university or college applications and interviews”

- Care experienced school pupil



# Our Corporate Parenting Plan 2015-18

## Our corporate parenting journey

In 2015, SDS was preparing the ground for adopting its corporate parenting responsibilities. Having met with the Scottish Government's policy lead, we took account of the corporate parenting statutory guidance in helping to shape thinking on how to respond to our new statutory duties. Work was already underway to brief senior leadership and local operational management teams within SDS to understand their corporate parenting responsibilities within the wider context of the Children and Young People Act (2014). Partnership work with other corporate parents was also progressing both locally and nationally.

There was much positive work to build on given our long history of delivering Career Information Advice and Guidance (CIAG) services to this customer group. We looked to harness and utilise this existing expertise from colleagues to shape the development of our first Corporate Parenting Plan, and to progress its implementation. Our first Corporate Parenting Plan was published in October 2016, but covered the full three-year period from 2015 – 18. Against some of the commitments, activity had commenced prior to publication, but this was not the case for all areas.

## Summary of performance against the 2015-18 commitment

In the following section, we provide a high-level summary of our performance as a corporate parent against each of the 16 commitments made in our 2015 – 2018 Plan; grouped by their four themes; **Embedding Corporate Parenting within SDS; Service Delivery; Partnership Working** and **Continuous Improvement**.

As well as providing a brief summary of activity, each commitment is assigned a status as follows:

### Embedded

- Commitments with this status have been achieved or sufficiently embedded across the business that they are now recognised as accepted practice.
- It is anticipated that there will be ongoing work to maintain this commitment, however, this will be taken forward as part of our 'business as usual', rather than requiring further specific commitments to be made.

### Ongoing

- Commitments with this status may have made significant progress, but remain a focus for future improvement activity.
- It is anticipated that the ongoing work from the original commitment will be taken forward in our new commitments for 2018 – 21.



“I think back when I left school and ... I said I wanted to do anything but admin. I think at that point in time it was good that SDS came back and said ‘Hey, there is this Get Ready for Work programme and I think it would be really good for you.’ They helped me apply and they helped me get in. It was to set me off on another course.”

- Care experienced post school customer

## Theme 1: Embedding Corporate Parenting Within SDS



### Introduce all-staff training on the subject of corporate parenting, with additional training opportunities offered where appropriate.

**What we said:** Introducing cross-business training will ensure that all SDS employees are aware of our duties as a corporate parent, and understand that corporate parenting is everyone's responsibility. We will also encourage appropriate operational staff to take up opportunities for further training and sharing best practice that may be available at a local level (e.g. through the local authority).

**What we did:** We worked in partnership with Who Cares? Scotland to develop online e-learning, hosted on the SDS Academy, and available to all SDS colleagues. The training includes a customised video specifically made for SDS use. The e-learning module was launched in May 2017, and involves a mixture of watching videos of care experienced young people sharing their experiences, followed by group activities and discussion over a two-hour period. There is also a further half hour of additional video content that can be completed afterwards. The training is not mandatory, but has been promoted widely through a range of internal articles and campaigns. 394 colleagues had completed the core training by 31st March 2018, 97 of whom also completed the additional content.

The training has now been added to the induction checklist suggested for all new colleagues to complete.

An additional Equality CPD module was developed for all colleagues who work in CIAG. This contained corporate parenting content and was completed by over 800 staff,

Who Cares? Scotland also delivered two face-to-face training sessions for members of our Executive and Non-Executive Boards in November 2016 and June 2017, which allowed them to meet and hear directly from a care experienced young person. Additional training available to staff included a CELCIS-led half-day training session on 'looked after at home' young people and the role of the 'Designated Manager' in schools.

In the 2017 SDS 'Your Views' employee survey, 89% of colleagues agreed 'I am aware of SDS's role as a corporate parent'. This reflects the significant progress made in raising awareness of our role as a corporate parent across the business.

**What next:** Training will remain available to all staff through the SDS Academy and we will look at ways to promote and encourage its uptake across the business. We will continue to work with partners such as CELCIS and Who Cares? Scotland to ensure our colleagues have access to the training they require to act as good corporate parents.



**“The staff that I have met at SDS are amazing, they're helpful, trustful and loyal, if I was stuck for anything I would defo know where to turn to for help”**

- Care experienced school pupil

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## Ensure looked after children and care leavers are included in all SDS Equality Impact Assessments.

**What we said:** Ensuring looked after children and care leavers are given equal regard as the 'protected characteristics' during all Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) will ensure that SDS remains alert to matters which, or which might, adversely affect their wellbeing.

**What we did:** The SDS EqIA template was updated in 2017 to include care experience as a separate 'protected characteristic' for consideration. Similar amendments have been made to other internal documents used in approval processes.

These changes require colleagues to now give equal regard to our care experienced customers as those with protected characteristics during the development of new projects and services.

**What next:** Having been changed, these templates will continue to be used to reinforce the consideration of our care experienced customers in the completion of EqIAs and the development of new projects and services within SDS. If new documents are developed, or further existing documents are identified that require changing, we will take action to uphold this commitment.

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## Create a 'Community of Practice' for all interested colleagues, which facilitates the sharing of information and best practice.

**What we said:** Creating a community of practice will utilise the existing knowledge and experiences of colleagues from across all functions of the organisation, and from across the country, and provide a platform for sharing ideas and best practice on working with care experienced young people. We anticipate inviting other corporate parents and stakeholders to share information and advice with this group.

This will also provide a network of operational staff through which important updates, changes and information can be cascaded to all staff when required.

**What we did:** The SDS Community of Practice (CoP) was initially formed when nominations were sought in November 2016 from CIAG teams across all 32 local authority area. One representative per area was identified to participate in the CoP.

Two initial Community of Practice (CoP) events were held in Glasgow and Dundee in February 2017, following the launch of the plan in October 2016. These events sought to identify and discuss good practice in working with care

experienced customers across Scotland, and potential challenges faced in supporting this group. A combined write-up of both events and the follow-up actions they identified was produced and shared internally.

Since then, a CoP email group and Yammer Board have been established for disseminating information and facilitating discussion amongst staff. CoP members have received additional training, and act as a subject expert for local colleagues to come to for information and advice.

**What next:** We are committed to maintaining the CoP and further developing its membership to include non-CIAG colleagues over the period of this 2018-21 Plan. We will increasingly look to the CoP to develop strategies and solutions to improve our service design and delivery in response to feedback received from our care experienced customers.



## Introduce work trials for care experienced young people throughout SDS

**What we said:** Our research highlighted that any work experience can have a powerful impact on the career aspirations of care experienced young people. We will seek to offer opportunities across a range of roles and locations within SDS to help broaden the experiences and horizons of care experienced young people, and open up new career possibilities to them.

**What we did:** Working with MCR Pathways in Glasgow, we developed our first interactive work taster sessions for care experienced young people. Delivered in April 2018, seven young people from secondary schools in Glasgow attended to learn more about the pathways to becoming a Work Coach and Careers Adviser. The sessions were part designed by participants from our Young Talent programme with a view to making them accessible and interesting to young people. Those attending had the chance to hear from a Trainee Careers Adviser who had originally joined SDS as a Modern Apprentice.

The pupils had the opportunity to act out a real-life Careers Adviser scenario, and learn about SDS as an organisation.

They also took part in a team building exercise which prompted them to think about skills such as leadership, problem solving, communication and decision making. Along with positive feedback from the young people, the session was also well received by mentors from MCR Pathways who also attended.

**What next:** We are now looking at how this approach could be offered in different career areas across SDS (e.g. Digital Services) as well as exploring if it can be replicated in more geographic locations. We would also like to build on this approach to offer tasters to young people who have already left school.

In addition to this, over the next three years we will look to develop a range of opportunities and pathways for care experienced young people; supporting them to understand and access employment within SDS



“The SDS staff were very engaging, they really seemed to like doing the session and the young people all really enjoyed it. On the whole, it was excellent.”

- MCR Pathways Mentor

## Theme 2: Service Delivery



### Offer and support earlier CIAG/Career Management Skills interventions in schools to all pupils; and undertake work to explore how this can best be delivered to the benefit of looked after and care experienced children.

**What we said:** Feedback from individuals, and requests from partners (including in the Care Leavers Covenant) has stressed the importance of earlier interventions with care experienced children. While all pupils will be eligible for earlier support from SDS from 2016/17, we will specifically explore what this means for care experienced young people, and how it can best be delivered to them.

**What we did:** In response to the Career Education Standard and Developing Scotland's Young Workforce we developed an enhanced CIAG service offer in schools which was rolled out nationally in August 2016. This new approach is designed to engage and inspire young people at an earlier stage in their learner journey, help them to develop Career Management Skills (CMS), support them to make informed choices, and better prepare them for the world of work. While this is expected to benefit all pupils, it should particularly benefit care experienced young people who are more likely to leave school at an earlier age.

Our CIAG service offer in maintained schools now includes provision of:

- A suite of lesson plans and resources, co-designed with teachers, to support delivery of the Career Education Standard in the classroom, from P5 upwards.

- 'ICan' digital tools, used in teacher-led sessions, to introduce pupils in P5-P7, and older pupils with additional support needs, to CMS.
- A group session for all pupils making the transition from primary to secondary school.
- The offer of individual support to all S2/S3 pupils making subject choices and their parent/carers.
- Group work activity for all S2/S3 pupils not making subject choices, on areas such as gender bias in career choice.
- Increased support for those S3 pupils identified as having greatest need, to help increase engagement in the senior phase of school (S4-S6).
- A range of group work options for pupils in the senior phase which help build CMS, including considering a range of post-school options.
- Targeted one-to-one career guidance (through a coaching approach) for senior phase pupils identified as needing more intensive support to transition into education, training or employment after school. This includes any pupils we know to be care experienced.
- One-to-one interviews for non-targeted pupils available on request.
- Access to our award winning CIAG web service, My World of Work, and support to use its tools and resources, including our MyWOW Ambassador programme.

To accompany the roll-out of this service offer, a new Standard Operating Procedure was developed specifically for working with care experienced young people in schools. This, along with a wide range of other information and advice for colleagues supporting care experienced young people, was incorporated into a new care experienced resource area on our staff intranet.

At the time of its launch, over 300 colleagues across the organisation (CIAG and non CIAG) attended online sessions to raise awareness of the content of the new intranet resources to support the new school offer, including the pages specifically on care experience.

**What next:** The content of the intranet resource for working with care experienced young people continues to be maintained and developed as required. Our service offer remains subject to continuous improvement activity, informed by policy development, such as the Learner Journey Review, and by ongoing colleague, customer and partner insight.



## Extend our targeted post-school offer to care experienced young people aged 20 – 25 inclusive.

**What we said:** Research indicates that care experienced young people are more likely to require post school support to achieve a positive outcome than their non care experienced peers; and may take longer to achieve a positive transition once they have left school. In recognition of this, we will ensure that unemployed care experienced young people aged 20 – 25 inclusive, will be entitled to the same level of CIAG support from SDS as all unemployed 15 – 19 year olds.

**What we did:** In 2017, SDS launched a new offer, 'Next Steps', to 15 – 18.5 year olds who have left school and not yet transitioned into further education, training or employment. Next Steps aims to develop and deliver a progressive and cohesive CIAG service offer which:

- Enables customers to receive the right support, at the right time and at the right level of intensity as part of their CMS development,
- Enables customers to develop their CMS, recognising improvement at each stage as they progress towards a sustainable destination,
- Extends and develops our coaching approach,

- Enables customers to receive ongoing support even after they have progressed into a positive outcome, particularly where this is of a short-term nature (e.g. a local employability programme), or for up to six months if the outcome is expected to last longer (e.g. entering Further Education). The extent and nature of this support is always discussed and agreed with the customer.

Young people accessing our Next Steps service can expect to engage with their adviser at least once a fortnight. The service offer is tailored to meet the needs and learning style of each individual and combines a range of engagements including CMS Assessments; individual career guidance using a coaching approach, group sessions, and access to online support.

In line with this commitment, eligibility for Next Steps is extended for care experienced customers up to their 26th birthday. While our original intention was that young people approaching us would receive a higher level of service, Next Steps goes further, putting the responsibility on our careers professionals to proactively contact unemployed care experienced customers aged 18 – 25.

Colleagues have been provided with specific guidance on how to follow-up with these customers.

At the time of launch, 14 road shows took place across the country with all colleagues involved in the delivery of Next Steps, to raise awareness of the new offer and its eligibility; online information sessions were offered to non-operational colleagues.

**What next:** The Next Steps service offer will be further developed in line with our organisational commitment to continuous improvement. However, the extended eligibility for care experienced young people will not be affected by this.



“If a young person is unemployed or just left college I think that is where you should step in and say ‘What do you want to do with your life?’”

- Care experienced post school customer



## Develop and implement actions designed to increase access to Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) for care experienced young people, as detailed in our MA Equality Action Plan

**What we said:** As detailed in our MA Equality Action Plan, we will seek to deliver key actions, in partnership with others; in order to improve access for care experienced young people into Modern Apprenticeships. This should result in an increase in the uptake of Modern Apprenticeships amongst care experienced young people.

**What we did:** In line with the introduction of our corporate parenting duties, in 2015/16 we began to capture and report the proportion of Modern Apprenticeship starts who were known to be care experienced. Our first Equality Action Plan for Apprenticeships, published in December 2015, highlighted increased participation from care experienced young people as a key priority. The updated plan, published in June 2017, outlined work that had taken place to help progress this, some of which is summarised here:

- We secured an increase in funding contributions to MA providers working with care experienced young people, up to their 30th birthday. This also allows care experienced young people aged 20-29 to access apprenticeship frameworks that may otherwise be restricted to 16 – 19 year olds.

- As of 2017/18, equality questions are now included in the SDS Training Provider quality framework. Providers must produce an Equality Action Plan which is monitored by SDS Skills Investment Advisers (SIAs). These two questions are mandatory and include consideration of care experience.
- Equality-related Career Professional Development (CPD), including content on care experience, has been provided to our SIAs, our Training Providers and our employers.
- We worked with Who Cares? Scotland to develop and roll out CPD for training providers, which includes content about SDS's role as a corporate parent
- We have engaged in a host of micro-projects to support participation in Modern Apprenticeships by care experienced young people. For example, we ran a joint campaign with SCVO to recruit Community Jobs Scotland leavers into MAs, and joint projects with Enable and Who Cares? Scotland to recruit care experienced people into MAs.

**What next:** For 2018-21, our focus will be on improving sustainment and achievement for care experienced young people who have started MAs, as well as continuing to support new starts. We are looking to update our customer database to better monitor and report when care experienced customers receive enhanced MA contributions.



“When you put an age limit on something, like 18, it makes people go “I need to get my life sorted before I’m 18” and then you screw your life up cause you’re rushing it, and not thinking about it. You don’t get to the place you should be, you could have been if you took more time. If you took a year, 3 years, 6 years, at least you get to where you want to be”

- Care experienced post school customer



## Actively promote and support the training, development and recruitment of care experienced young people to and by employers nationwide.

**What we said:** SDS is uniquely positioned in Scotland to promote the skills, talent and potential of care experienced young people directly to employers, and will employ a multi-faceted and cross-departmental approach to doing this. We will use a range of initiatives to encourage employers to offer learning and employment opportunities to care experienced young people.

**What we did:** As indicated in our 2015-18 plan, we have looked for opportunities across a wide range of our work to promote the training, development and recruitment of care experienced young people to employers. Some examples of this include:

- We helped CELCIS to develop a 'how to' guide for corporate parents as employers, including information on how to take on an apprentice.
- Our Apprenticeship Equality Team delivered presentations at multiple events hosted by our Employer Engagement Team, and attended 'Provider Conversations' with training providers and third sector organisations across the country.
- The Scottish Employer Recruitment Incentive (SERI), managed by SDS and delivered by local authorities, provides funding to employers creating sustainable jobs for young people. Guidance stipulates that at least 25% of supported job starts should come from targeted groups, one of which is care experience. Current figures show that to date we have achieved 50% of starts from across all targeted groups.
- Our Equality Toolkit for Employers, refreshed in 2016, includes information on inclusive recruitment and contains a specific section on supporting young people leaving care.
- Care experience was included as part of a series of postcards marketed at employers and designed to challenge stereotypes and negative perceptions.
- We delivered the Employers Equality Action Fund in 2016/17 to encourage innovative and proactive approaches to increasing diverse recruitment in MAs. One of the targeted customer groups was care experienced young people.
- During Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2018, we ran a feature in The Sun newspaper which contained a case study of an apprentice who had been concerned that employers would judge her based on her care experience, but who was now thriving in work.

**What next:** Ongoing focus in this area will be required to tackle the stereotypes, and even stigma faced by young care experienced people when progressing to the labour market. We will continue to highlight it through our commitments for 2018-21.



“Could you not help young people with discrimination in work because that does happen a lot. I got discriminated against. That really badly emotionally damages you, definitely.”

- Care experienced post school customer

## Theme 3: Partnership Working

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### **Introduce a single point of contact system for ease of co-ordinating local and national collaboration with other corporate parents and stakeholders.**

**What we said:** By creating a network of named points of contact, we can adopt a consistent approach to strengthening the partnerships that exist between SDS and other corporate parents and partners (e.g. third sector) across Scotland. This in turn will keep all partners better informed on potential issues and opportunities that may arise.

**What we did:** In summer 2017, a member of our operations staff from each local authority area, usually a Team Leader, was identified to act as the single point of contact (SPOC). The list of SPOCs was compiled and published on a newly developed Corporate Parenting section of the SDS Corporate website. We also identified and listed an SDS national contact on both the SDS and CELCIS websites.

The SPOCs are separate to the SDS Community of Practice but there is some crossover in the communication and support they receive. A series of online calls was initially carried out with SPOCs to raise awareness of why we were implementing this approach and what may be required from them.

**What next:** We will ensure that the list of SPOCs is maintained on our corporate website and continues to contain up-to-date information and contact details.

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### **Work with partners to increase awareness of, and access to, SDS's and SDS-supported opportunities.**

**What we said:** We will look to deliver targeted events and communications, in association with appropriate partners, which raise awareness of SDS and SDS-supported services, and which facilitate access to those services. This should include producing one document targeted at care experienced young people which clearly articulates what it means to have SDS as a corporate parent. Our research indicates that this document should also include a range of positive case studies from care experienced customers. This action should result in an increase in uptake of those services from care experienced young people.

**What we did:** We have undertaken a variety of work in this area, including the following:

- A leaflet has been produced for use with customers and partners explaining what it means to have SDS as a corporate parent– it has been distributed to centres, is available on our corporate website and has been well received by colleagues and partners.
- We held Equalities conferences in June 2016 and March 2017 for employers, training providers, and stakeholders to raise awareness of our services and how to access them.
- We took part in both hosting and attending a number of partnership events during National Care Leavers Week in both 2016 and 2017.

- We continue to attend various local and national events to promote SDS as a corporate parent, including taking stands at the Staf Annual Conference and the CELCIS Education Conference.
- We met with DWP Office for Scotland to discuss joint working with care experienced customers, including the potential for DWP to refer any care experienced customers aged under 26 to us for further support.
- SDS now attends the CELCIS Education Forum and the SFC care experience governance group.

**What next:** We are committed to continuing to raise awareness, particularly among other corporate parents, of the products and services we can offer to care experienced young people. We are confident that this is already happening across SDS, and will continue in 2018-21 without a specific commitment required to drive this.



## Establish formal annual partnership working agreements with social services departments in every local authority.

**What we said:** Having formal agreements with each local authority will provide a focal point for collaboration at a local level, and assist with identifying young people eligible for support. Formalising this process will ensure consistency of approach across Scotland.

**What we did:** The SPOCs in each local authority area have been responsible for initiating the conversations to progress this. Every SPOC has approached their respective local authority, although for a wide range of reasons the level of success has been varied.

A standardised template has been developed to support a consistent approach to developing agreements, similar to the template used to create SDS' Annual School Partnership Agreements. As of the beginning of 2018/19, we expect to have live agreements in place with a quarter of all local authorities, with more in the pipeline.

**What next:** We still believe that there is considerable value in establishing formal partnership agreements of this type, particularly to drive improvements in data quality. As SPOCs were not identified until 2017, there was limited, and often insufficient, time to have agreements in place with every local authority for 2018/19. We will continue to progress this work over the next three years.



## Proactively engage with other corporate parents and non-parent carers, with a view to building their capacity to meet the expectations of Parents/Carers, as set out in the Career Education Standard.

**What we said:** Our ambition with this action is that SDS will support other corporate parents and non-parent carers to meet the expectations placed on parents/carers in the Career Education Standard, by empowering individuals to have conversations with looked after children about their ambitions and options. This should enable looked after children to receive better, earlier and broader advice and support in their home environment, facilitate access to SDS services, and ultimately help them to make more informed choices about their career.

**What we did:** It was our intention that this commitment be delivered through the partnership agreements; therefore, the limited roll-out achieved in that area has affected progress against this commitment. However, some initial work at a local team level has included activities such as delivering inputs at kinship care groups. This has produced some useful learning for us, for example, that it is more effective for us to go out to residential units instead of asking their staff to come to a central location.

To support this commitment, references to parents on all SDS websites, and in our marketing materials and other communications, have been updated to use the term 'parent/carer'. This is to recognise the important role that non-parent carers can play in career choices, particularly for care experienced young people.

SDS has also joined the Staf Care Leavers into Employment Focus Group which has representatives from various local authorities, plus organisations such as Barnardo's, Fostering Network and Action for Children. We hope this will be a good way to engage with other corporate parents and potentially access a wider group of non-parent carers to support in the future.

**What next:** We will continue to look for opportunities to progress this commitment, as we further develop our partnership agreements with local authorities, and our wider relationships with corporate parents and third sector stakeholders.

We will ensure that our Parental Engagement Strategy, currently in development, also considers the needs of non-parent carers and how we can best offer them our support.

## Theme 4: Continuous Improvement

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### Conduct a comprehensive data quality review.

**What we said:** Better, more robust data will:

- help our frontline staff more easily identify care experienced customers without the need for self-disclosure.
- ensure more care experienced individuals are able to access enhanced services post-school and up to their 26th birthday.
- increase our ability to collaborate with other corporate parents and partners at a local level for the benefit of the young person.
- allow us to more accurately monitor and report on our work with this customer group.

Improving the collection, retention and management of data relating to a young person's care status or experience is an extensive and challenging task. Our ability to get this right will underpin our level of success in other areas of this plan.

**What we did:** We have devoted extensive resource to this commitment, as we recognise that it underpins our ability to effectively deliver our commitments as a corporate parent.

Fundamentally, we have focused on trying to establish:

- how robust the data on care experience is in the SDS shared data set
- what the options are to improve the quality of the information held

Work towards that has included:

- Researched data collection methods used by local authorities to understand more about the data we receive through the Data Hub.
- Working with the Scottish Government to access anonymised data to quality assure the data we hold, and identify areas for improvement.
- Assessing how we capture and record data, and whether it is fit for purpose, suggesting changes where appropriate. This includes altering data retention schedules to allow for identifying potential care experienced Next Steps customers up to the age of 26.
- Submitting business cases to SEEMiS to transfer additional information held in relation to care experience. This would be predominantly to allow for the identification and prioritisation of services for school pupils who may have experienced care prior to secondary school. This has not yet been agreed.

- Working with the Scottish Government to try to understand the size of the care experienced population in Scotland, to allow for benchmarking of performance.
- Exploring whether the duty to collaborate as corporate parents extends to data sharing.
- Looking at options for the future calculation and publication of the Annual Participation Measure by care experience status.
- Working with other data holders to identify opportunities for improvement, including through CELCIS's Care to Achieve initiative.

**What next:** While a lot has been achieved, data quality is still a key concern for us, and we anticipate it remaining so for the 2018-21 period.



**“I think social work has to be more closely linked so that you know. I mean a social worker will know a lot more about the young person than job coach or the job centre.”**

- Care experienced post school customer



## Work to ensure that the ‘voice’ of care experienced young people is heard and acted upon within SDS.

**What we said:** We want to ensure we listen directly to the ideas and opinions of care experienced young people who access our services. We will endeavour to better capture the opinions of care experienced young people within our existing feedback mechanisms, and seek assistance from partners and stakeholders where appropriate. We will incorporate this feedback into our continuous improvement activities, so that our services increasingly meet the needs of the individuals we support.

This action may also include conducting original and secondary research to provide insight into the issues that adversely affect, or might affect, the care experienced young people we support.

**What we did:** In 2015, care experience was not asked for consistently across our equality monitoring forms. Some monitoring forms asked for the information using different questions, while others did not ask at all. In 2017, we consulted on, developed and rolled-out a revised standardised monitoring question that is now used across SDS to identify care experienced customers / employees through our service delivery, recruitment, and evaluation and research activity.

Using the new question, it was possible to report our 2017 School Senior Phase survey by care experienced responses for the first time. With this information, we are able to compare the views of care experienced young people with the wider population. In future, we will also be able to report further customer survey data by care experience. We included care experience in our monitoring form for our employee survey for the first time in 2017. Of those who answered the question, roughly 1.5% of respondents identified as care experienced. This was not a sufficient enough sample size to analyse responses separately, however it did indicate that the SDS workforce has a proportion of care experienced employees comparable with the general population.

Our Evaluation and Research team updated their guidance regarding care experience to include a revised section on the need to take into consideration care experienced young people, in addition to Equality Groups. The Equality Evidence Review in our 2017-21 Equality and Diversity Mainstreaming Report is an example of how care experience is now given equal status to the protected characteristics in this regard.

Who Cares? Scotland have joined the SDS Equality Advisory Group, strengthening the consideration of care experienced people through this forum.

**What next:** Now the standardised monitoring question has been established, it will continue to be used across SDS, and support the development of an evidence base in relation to our performance as a corporate parent.

Having worked hard in the first Corporate Parenting Plan period to ensure we are able to identify and hear the voice of our care experienced customers, in the next three years we will focus on how we respond to that emerging feedback.



“I would feel if I was to miraculously change my job idea, which I’ve had since I was 14, I think I would feel comfortable going to SDS and saying ‘help!’”

- Care experienced post school customer

## Improve customer tracking and monitoring systems, and handover processes, to build a more seamless continuum of support during the customer journey.

**What we said:** This action seeks to improve the means by which we are proactive in engaging with young people as they may approach a transition point, such as completing a college course or training opportunity, moving location (from one local authority to another) or accessing a short-term intervention with a delivery partner, such as the Employability Fund.

**What we did:** Our new Next Steps service offer has introduced a focus on more proactively supporting people who go into a short-term intervention. The expectation is now that SDS colleagues will proactively remain in touch with a customer throughout a short-term intervention, such as the Employability Fund.

This reduces the risk that they will not sustain the opportunity, and also the risk that they do not re-engage with our support if that is what happens.

When a customer enters a longer-term opportunity such as a college course or employment, the adviser will remain in touch for up to six months, reinforcing that our support is still available to come back to if desired.

The shared data set now allows us to better identify when care experienced customers have returned to unemployment after time spent in work or full-time education. As a result, we can be more proactive in trying to re-engage these customers into our Next Steps offer.

The guidance for colleagues regarding supporting care experienced customers has specific detail on what to do when they move from area to area to ensure continuity of service.

**What next:** It has not always been easy for colleagues to try and re-engage care experienced customers in their twenties who may not have accessed our support since they were at school. However, the expectation that this will happen is now embedded into our service delivery and will continue to remain so.

We are also aware that, due to continuing data concerns, we may not yet have full visibility of the care experienced cohort within our customers. We will continue to monitor and improve our ability to identify changes in participation status for care experienced young people, and our ability to proactively offer support in response.

## Identify a set of KPIs for SDS in relation to care experienced young people, so that we can measure and report our year-on-year performance as a corporate parent.

**What we said:** By setting numeric as well as milestone measures, we are demonstrating our commitment to achieving concrete outcomes for the care experienced young people we support. We are not able to set the KPIs prior to the publication of this plan, as some of what can be measured / reported is reliant on the data quality exercise happening first.

**What we did:** Where possible, we have begun to monitor and report information on our performance as a corporate parent, including apprenticeship participation statistics, and Senior Phase Survey results contained within this report. However, as already mentioned, other measures we had hoped to develop, such as reporting the Annual Participation Measure by care experience, have not yet been possible.

**What next:** Our ability to report on our service to care experienced customers relies heavily on having confidence in our ability to robustly identify the full care experienced population from our customer data. As we continue to progress the data quality review, we would hope to build a broader and more robust set of outcome measures relating to our performance as a corporate parent.

# Looking towards 2021

Our initial Corporate Parenting Plan was shaped and influenced by research carried out by SDS with care experienced customers. This included focus groups and one-to-one interviews. A summary report of this research was published in October 2016 and can be accessed online [here](#). This research identified seven key factors in providing a valuable service to care experienced young people (see Figure 2). It shaped the nature of our original 16 commitments, and remains a relevant consideration as to how we develop and deliver our services.

We conduct an ongoing programme of feedback and evaluation to ensure that the voice of children and young people is included in our planning and review processes. As a result of the progress made against our 2015 – 18 commitments, we will increasingly be able to extract and track data from our care experienced customers regarding their views and experiences of our services, and suggestions for their future development.

To inform the development of this plan, we analysed available feedback and carried out a series of focus groups in early 2018 with care experienced young people across Scotland. We worked with partner organisations to identify participants for the focus groups, who provided more detailed feedback on their experiences of our products and services.

We also ran four workshops with internal colleagues to inform the development of this Plan. We held one with our Monitoring Group to assess achievement against the last plan, two with our Community of Practice to identify strengths and areas for improvement, and one with senior colleagues to identify potential actions based on the feedback of customers and colleagues.



Figure 2: Seven key factors for service delivery identified by our care experienced customers



## Research with care experienced young people

### Survey evidence

The SDS Senior Phase Survey (SPS) is used to gather feedback from school pupils in S4 -S6 on the CIAG services available to them. In 2017, for the first time, we were able to compare the results for care experienced pupils with those for all other school pupils and for those pupils receiving targeted support. A total of 3500 pupils responded to the survey and, of these, 112 identified as care experienced.

Headline results from the SPS show that care experienced pupils, who form a subset of the targeted pupils group, respond more positively than the average for all pupils (targeted and non-targeted), but not as high as the average from all targeted pupils. While our care experienced customers in school are generally positive about the careers services they receive at school and rate them highly, we have room to improve.

Open ended responses in the survey provided additional insights on what care experienced pupils like about the service that we provide in school and areas for improvement.

Positive elements of the service received in schools included:

- the quality of support
- that the advisers are friendly and approachable
- help in making career decisions
- identifying different options and routes, and
- having one to one support and a single point of contact at school.

There were fewer areas for improvement suggested. Those received included improving communication around how and when appointments are available; and providing more practical support relating to applications for jobs and courses.

**“I could go and see the careers officer whenever and if she was free she would talk to me. She was really interested on how I got on with things. It was nice to know that she could help with my career choices and help me make the best choices.”**

- Care experienced school pupil

## Focus groups

We held four focus groups in early 2018 with young people from Glasgow, Perth, Fife and East Ayrshire to gather feedback on awareness of SDS services and our role as a corporate parent. The following were the key themes to come out of the focus groups.

### Support received at school

Feedback on the support received at school was dependant on the age and school experience of the participant. Those that had left school were more likely to be negative about the support they received or have difficulty recalling any support.

By contrast, those who were still at school, or had recently left school, were more positive about contact with SDS. They were able to outline how it had benefited them, as one participant outlines when talking about his Careers Adviser:

**“She helped me figure out things about my college application and things like that. She helped quite a lot with that. And being care experienced as well. Along with the head of guidance and my guidance teacher. She helped because I had quite high needs at the time. She helped a lot with that. She helped with me trying to get a job”**

This difference in response by age would indicate that the changes to service delivery in the last three years are already having a positive impact on the service experienced, and therefore perceptions held by, our care experienced customers.

### Earlier interventions

The need for early intervention was raised by nearly all the participants. Some of the participants had left school early in S2 or S3 and therefore had not had any contact with SDS. When asked about earlier interventions participants clearly saw the benefits. As one notes:

**“I am outside of school before I am really deciding what to do. I think if I had that chance and SDS was part of my [schooling] in S1 and S2 I think it would have really helped. I think that is really important”.**

Again, our new school offer to pupils provides this early intervention, which those who participated in the focus groups may not have received. We will look to monitor and assess the impact this early intervention has on senior phase engagement and outcomes over time.

### Building relationships

As was highlighted in our 2016 research, having a good relationship with a Careers Adviser is seen as vital for our care experienced customers, in particular, the need for trust, understanding and encouragement. For some this view was based on direct experience of having a good relationship with a Careers Adviser, for older respondents it was reflecting on what the role of a Careers Adviser should be.

**“I mean you have to for young people who have a chaotic home life or whatever. You need to be there for them. And if they have like a couple of month break don't just leave them you have to be consistent with them to prove to them that you will be there for them no matter what”**

### Extended service

Consensus was that it is a good idea to have support up until age 26, recognising the extended time it can take to make transitions. However, not all were aware of the new extended offer and felt it should be better marketed to those who are care experienced, as one participant states:

**“You do see plenty of stuff about Modern Apprenticeships ... but you don't see anything about Skills Development in general, not really. Help until you are 26, things like that”.**

At the time of the focus group, our Next Steps offer was less than a year old. As detailed in Section 10, we have introduced new marketing materials for care experienced young people, and the organisations that support them, to raise awareness of the new service offer. We will continue to raise awareness and understanding going forward.

### SDS role as a corporate parent

Nearly all the participants were aware that SDS is a corporate parent. This is likely to be because the young people we talked to were members of advocacy groups for care experienced young people so had good awareness of corporate parenting.

Most of the participants understood why SDS is a corporate parent and thought SDS is fulfilling its role. Some thought we could do more to promote our services. As one participant notes:

**“I understand why SDS is a corporate parent. I just think they could maybe put themselves out there a wee bit more. Be a bit more accessible”.**

## Colleague consultation

### Consultation with the Community of Practice

The SDS Community of Practice (CoP) were all invited to meet in October/November 2017 to inform the development of our 2018-21 Plan. Two one-day sessions were held - one in Glasgow and one in Dundee, with the same content at each session. 21 of the 32 CoP members attended across the two days. Those unable to attend either session were given the opportunity to attend online meetings and submit written feedback subsequently.

CoP members were first updated on progress towards the 2015-18 plan, before taking part in small group discussions on:

- What are we (SDS) doing well at present (in relation to corporate parenting)?
- What could we do better?
- What resources would we need to do better?
- Who are the key partners we need to work with us on this?

These discussions were themed around the six duties featured in the legislation. Following the Glasgow, Dundee and online sessions, the feedback was collated and common themes identified. Key findings from the feedback are summarised on this page.

### What we do well:

- **Extension of Next Steps service offer to 26 years:** advisers appreciated the new service offer, which gives them more time to work with young people. The extended offer also enables customers to return to using our services at a later age if they wish.
- **Marketing:** advisers found the corporate parenting leaflet useful for customers, and partners. They feel it helps both groups to understand what support we can offer and promotes us as a corporate parent.
- **Community of Practice:** they feel this is a way in which they can share good practice, ask each other questions and share information on support for care experienced customers.
- **Voice of young people:** the CoP members feel strongly that young people should be involved in developing the SDS Corporate Parenting Plan. The partners who hosted focus groups for the 2018-21 plan were identified and suggested by CoP members in the first instance.
- **Resources and training:** the development of new resources such as our Care Experience intranet pages and the e-learning module, all help them feel more prepared to support care experienced customers
- **Partnership working:** there are lots of good examples of partnership working across the country, including co-location of SDS colleagues with throughcare services in Edinburgh, East Renfrewshire and Glasgow.

### Areas for improvement

- **Identification of customers:** advisers suggested we could find an easier way for colleagues to quickly identify which customers are care-experienced, allowing them to respond appropriately.
- **Data sharing/tracking:** it was felt that this could be improved, particularly in regard to identifying young people living outwith the area where they were originally looked after, or those leaving residential schools.
- **SDS employability programmes:** advisers felt that some care experienced young people need more chances to start and stop training, or longer periods of time to complete or progress, than are sometimes possible.
- **Funding:** CoP members asked whether we could offer more flexibility to existing SDS funding, such as Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), for our care experienced customers; they are less likely to have alternative means of covering expenses, such as training or transport, which could help them to enter or progress in the labour market.
- **SDS as an employer:** CoP members proposed that work tasters be extended to other teams across Scotland and that we look more broadly at options to support care experienced young people into employment within SDS.

# Our 2018 - 2021 Commitments

## Maturing our approach to corporate parenting

Over the 2015 - 18 period, our understanding and awareness of our corporate parenting duties and the needs of our care experienced customers has grown. As such, our approach to ensuring ongoing improvement in relation to these duties has matured.

In our first plan, it was important to make very specific commitments which would drive activity within SDS. However, as we enter the period covering our 2018-21 plan, we are cautious of being limited by what we would currently consider a priority. We also wish to avoid a potential situation whereby we commit to certain actions which may be completed long before the end of the Plan. Anticipating that SDS will produce a new Corporate Plan in 2020, we also want to ensure that our 2018-21 commitments can embrace any new priorities that emerge during this time frame.

Therefore, our new commitments take a thematic approach, highlighting the key priorities for us as corporate parents over the next three years. The bullets below are intended to provide examples of what this might look like in practice, rather than be exhaustive lists.

## Our five commitments

Our five thematic commitments for the period 2018 – 2021 are as follows:

### **1. Develop and promote a narrative within SDS which champions and embeds our corporate parenting activity, explaining to colleagues why it is important, and the difference it makes.**

#### **In practice, this means that we will:**

- Increase visibility of our role as a corporate parent across SDS, by expanding our Community of Practice to incorporate more teams.
- Continue to raise awareness amongst colleagues, through internal communications, about the importance of our corporate parenting role.
- Share more information internally about our successes as a corporate parent, so all colleagues can celebrate and understand their contribution.

### **2. Drive improvements in data quality across SDS and in collaboration with our partners, to support the development of a robust evidence base in relation to outcomes for care experienced young people.**

#### **In practice, this means that we will:**

- Create a performance and evaluation framework that helps colleagues and partners to understand and report the difference we are making as a corporate parent.

- Work with the Scottish Government, local authorities and other partners to drive the quality and robustness of information held on the shared data set regarding care experience.
- As data becomes more robust, develop new and better ways to measure outcomes for care experienced young people, including long-term outcomes from education and apprenticeships, and a breakdown of the Annual Participation Measure by care experience.

### **3. Develop a range of mechanisms which enable care experienced young people to access and develop careers within SDS.**

#### **In practice, this means that we will:**

- Build on our experience of delivering work tasters, by finding new and different ways for care experienced young people to experience SDS as a workplace.
- Work with key partners to advertise appropriate SDS job vacancies to care experienced young people, particularly our own MA opportunities, and to support their applications using innovative approaches.
- Develop a programme of support, including mentoring, for care experienced young people entering SDS employment, and their colleagues, to ensure a sustained training and employment experience.



**4. Ensure that our service development and delivery considers the needs of our care experienced customers, and aims to offer the best possible support to improve their learning and employment outcomes.**

**In practice, this means that we will:**

- Use the planned upgrade of our customer database to improve the ability of colleagues to more easily identify care experienced young people, to ensure the appropriate support is planned from the outset.
- Continue to embed a coaching approach to building relationships with care experienced young people through our CIAG services, utilising feedback and research to drive continuous improvement.
- Focus on care experienced young people within our service development work; making explicit the ways in which care experienced young people are included in our thinking about customer needs.
- Consider how existing SDS support, including Individual Training Accounts and exam results support, could be tailored to better meet the needs of care experienced young people.
- Review funding, and other provider incentives (e.g. commissioning criteria), for our National Training Programmes, to understand any potential barriers to participation and completion for care experienced customers, and to identify potential improvements that could be made.
- Provide guidance to learning providers with Foundation Apprenticeship contracts around supporting care experienced young people on programmes and placements.

**5. Be an advocate for the voice of care experienced young people and a catalyst for change in improving their learner journey.**

**In practice, this means that we will:**

- Continue to improve our ability to hear and understand the voice of our care experienced customers, and ensure that this feedback influences our actions.
- Positively promote our role and activity as a corporate parent to our partners, stakeholders and other employers; demonstrating our commitment to them, and encouraging them to get involved.
- Promote positive stories of care experienced young people succeeding through apprenticeships and other positive routes as part of our broader equalities campaigning.
- Ensure our senior leadership consistently speaks up for care experienced young people when discussing policy development or other decisions that might affect them; using our voice and influence, both internally and externally, to improve their outcomes.

**“I liked being able to go to my Careers Adviser with any queries or problems I may have had and trusting that by the time I left my meeting with her that I would feel more calm and we would have reached an option or two that helped my situation.”**

- Care experienced school pupil

## Monitoring and Reporting

As committed to in our first Corporate Parenting Plan, and established after its publication, we will continue to convene a monitoring group, incorporating key colleagues from across SDS. This group meets every three to six months as appropriate, holds responsibility for monitoring activity and progress made against the plan, and for compiling content for biannual updates delivered to the Executive and Non-Executive Boards of SDS. It ensures that our plan remains a live document, with an ongoing profile and prominence within SDS.

We understand that Ministers may call on us to report progress at any time and we will continue to respond to the best of our ability in these circumstances.

### Case study: Toni Durning

Cumbernauld teenager Toni Durning agreed to take part in our Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2018 communications campaign. Her case study, sharing her experiences as a care experienced Modern Apprentice, was printed in the Scottish Sun.

The 17-year-old was taken into care, along with her three brothers, at the age of five. She had a stable upbringing, thanks to loving foster parents, but she still worried that future employers would judge her on her start in life.

With the help of charity Who Cares? Scotland, Toni was pointed towards a Modern Apprenticeship (MA) opportunity in administration and IT with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). Much to her delight, she got the job.

She explained: “Due to my background, I didn’t think I’d be very successful. Before, I was very shy – I wouldn’t speak to anyone. For me to be here – I never would have thought it would be possible.”

Toni is studying towards an HNC in IT and administration at Glasgow Kelvin College while working full-time at SQA.

She said: “I’ve become a lot more mature. I can manage my money by myself, pay for things myself. The apprenticeship has made me feel confident because of all the things I have to do on a day-to-day basis. It’s making me feel like my background won’t affect any jobs that I want to go for.”

Peter McGregor, Employment Manager at Who Cares? Scotland, added: “The approach that SQA take means that talented and capable young people are being supported in a way that pushes and develops them, but with an understanding of what life is like outside of 9am and 5pm.”



**Toni Durning, IT and Administration  
Modern Apprentice**