

Corporate Parenting Plan 2015-2018

September 2016



Foreword

Corporate Parenting is as great a privilege as it is a responsibility. As corporate parents, we must ensure that the ways in which we work, alone and in partnership, enhance the wellbeing and outcomes achieved by the care experienced young people we support.

We have dedicated significant time, thought and effort to the development of our first Corporate Parenting Plan and we acknowledge the challenge and importance of the task ahead. The plan outlines 16 core commitments which we believe will drive genuine change within our organisation and ultimately support care experienced young people make and sustain a successful transition from school into training, education or employment.

As we lay out our plans to 2018, it is important to recognise the progress we've already made; this plan captures existing good practice, and to highlight that our positive collaboration with partners gives us a strong platform to delivery jointly for these young people.

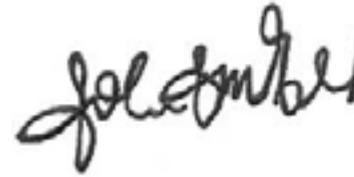
We already employ skilled and experienced colleagues, many of whom have extensive knowledge and experience of supporting looked after children and care leavers. Their contribution to the development of this plan was crucial, and their involvement, alongside the important contribution we believe everyone in SDS can make, will continue to be key as we work to deliver our plan commitments. As this plan covers the period 2015-2018, we are delighted to be able to say that some of our commitments are already being implemented, with more actions currently in development.

Partnership working is at the heart of our approach. During the development of this plan we consulted with a number of other corporate parents and external partners and have used their feedback to shape our plan commitments highlighting the areas where we know we are interdependent on others to deliver and achieve success. In particular, we will be looking to establish and develop closer working partnerships with social services departments across the country. Alongside this we look forward to developing and strengthening new partner relationships and enhancing existing relationships as we work towards delivering this plan and beyond.

Finally but most importantly, we wanted to ensure that our plan was going to meet the needs of our care experienced customers. A series of research interviews and focus groups with our care experienced customers helped define and shape our plan

commitments and we recognise the importance of continued engagement with these young people and their carers as the plan develops and grows.

This Plan sets out a challenging agenda for change between now and 2018, and is very much intended to secure a firm platform from which we, in partnership, can build on in the future. We are aspiring to do the very best we can for our care experienced customers by improving our services and embedding corporate parenting within SDS and are very much looking forward to working with partners old and new to achieve this.



John F McClelland CBE
Chair



Damien Yeates
Chief Executive

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Summary

About Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and this plan

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.

SDS has always worked with looked after children and care leavers, and some of our operational staff have many years of experience supporting this group. As such, we were keen to capture and reflect good practice already in place within the organisation, and build on this, rather than assuming a 'start from scratch'.

The SDS Corporate Parenting Plan for 2015 - 2018 is shaped by extensive consultation and research, and recognises our existing good practice as well as identifying our key areas for improvement.

Our Duties as a Corporate Parents

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 bodies¹ to which corporate parenting duties apply.

The Act confers six new statutory duties on the named Corporate Parents including SDS. As laid out in Section 58, we must:

1. See appendix 1 for full list of Corporate Parents

Our Duties as a Corporate Parents Cont.

- 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.

Outcomes for Care Experienced Young People

Care experienced young people often have difficult lives, and have to start living independently much earlier than their peers. The data² shows that having a background of being in care is likely to lead to poorer educational and employment outcomes.

For care experienced young people who have not made an initial successful transition from school into training, education or employment, SDS has a particular role and responsibility as corporate parent to offer the support, guidance and opportunities necessary to help them reach their full potential. Supporting these young people is therefore, a core function of our post-school targeted service.

Existing Practice

During our internal consultation exercise we invited colleagues to identify examples of existing good practice as well as areas for improvement. This feedback, along with insights from our customer research, is summarised below according to the six duties laid out in Section 58 of the Act.

2. The Scottish Government (2016), Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2014/15, <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00501939.pdf>

Alert and Assess

Our research showed that having advisers who understand the needs and situations of the individual was important, and the young people we spoke to often felt that this was the case with the SDS colleagues they had worked with.

Colleagues identified key strengths of SDS' service provision under these duties as: our information sharing with Local Authorities through the Data Hub; our coaching approach to delivering CIAG; the existence of frontline staff with enhanced knowledge and experience; collaboration with other corporate parents and partners, and our internal mechanisms for information sharing.

Opportunities and Access

The young people we spoke to during our research had clear aspirations for their future. While they acknowledged that they may be starting their pathways with a disadvantage, (e.g. lacking the necessary qualifications), they told us that it is important to them to have a chance to achieve their goals, even if it is likely to take them longer to do so than others. A number of the young people felt that SDS had been instrumental in helping them with this and they had now taken up positive destinations, such as a Modern Apprenticeship.

Colleagues identified key strengths of SDS under these duties included: the range of targeted opportunities that care-experienced young people can access through our national training programmes and post-school services; our multifaceted approach to engaging with care experienced young people; and our ability to continue to provide support throughout an individual's career.

Promote and Improve

Staff highlighted that they promote the wellbeing of care experienced young people through the very nature of their work, and numerous examples were given of where operational colleagues had acted as an advocate for an individual in a particular circumstance. It was felt that, on a one-to-one service delivery basis, SDS staff are highly committed to their care experienced customers, and will often go 'above and beyond' in order to promote the wellbeing of the young people they support.

It was felt that the 'voice' of young care experienced people was deemed important within the organisation, and that some steps had been taken to start to capture this better. Partnership working was recognised as key in this respect. It was also noted that SDS has a strong commitment to continuous improvement across the organisation.

Looking Ahead

Our research identified key messages for SDS relating to our service delivery. The young people we spoke to felt that our services should be:

- Endorsed and recommended by previous care experienced clients.
- Delivered early in secondary school to give individuals something to work towards and motivation to achieve.
- Built on strong relationships that are based on genuinely caring about the individual and their needs.
- Consistent and resilient; sticking with the young person when they struggle to engage, and being there for them when they come back.
- Focused on the long term, helping young people to see the smaller steps that could make up their personal pathway.
- Based on an understanding of the young person's life and needs.
- Aspirational; encouraging and supporting the young person to pursue and achieve their goals.

The colleagues we consulted with felt SDS should:

- Improve the robustness and quality of the data held on care experienced customers.
- Engage better with looked after children and care leavers not currently using our services.
- Develop greater staff competence, confidence and clarity in relation to our work with care experienced customers.
- Further strengthen and facilitate partnerships at a local and national level
- Support care experienced young people as an employer, as well as a provider of services.
- Encourage use of a variety of different approaches to help care experienced young people achieve positive outcomes.
- Strengthen our processes for supporting care experienced young people facing transitions.
- Consider how our opportunities can be made more accessible to care experienced young people.
- Baseline, and then monitor, participation and attainment in our programmes
- Engage with, and build the capacity of, corporate parents and other non-parent carers.
- Ensure that the 'voice' of care experienced young people is better captured and heard

- Make better use of our marketing and communications to promote the successes of care experienced young people.

Our Corporate Parenting Commitments

In response to the findings of our extensive consultation and research, we identified 16 actions to prioritise between 2015 and 2018. These are grouped into four categories:

- **Embedding Corporate Parenting within SDS**
- **Service Delivery**
- **Partnership Working**
- **Continuous Improvement.**

These actions are detailed in the tables found on pages 14 to 16 of this Plan.

Monitoring and Reporting

SDS will establish a cross-business steering group, incorporating the business leads for each of the listed actions and other key colleagues. It will convene every six months, and hold responsibility for monitoring activity and progress made against the plan, as well as meeting reporting requirements. This group will ensure that our plan remains a live document, with an ongoing profile and prominence within SDS.

Introduction

About Skills Development Scotland (SDS)

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 Ambition for Individuals

SDS' 2015-2020 ambition for individuals, articulated as our third Corporate Goal, is that 'People have the right skills and confidence to secure good work, progress in their careers and achieve their full potential'. We aim to achieve this by delivering a diverse range of services that help people build the skills to manage their career throughout their lifetime. This empowers them to:

- Choose the right pathway through education and into work;
- Acquire essential career management, employability and work-based skills;
- Take advantage of opportunities available to them within our economy and its employers;
- Anticipate and plan ahead throughout their career.

Targeted delivery of this support, to those who need it most, also contributes towards achieving our fourth Corporate Goal of 'Increased Equality of Opportunity for All'. Achievement of our goals is underpinned by four corporate values that drive our work:

- We put the needs of our customers at the heart of all we do.
- We demonstrate self-motivation, personal responsibility and respect.
- We continually improve to achieve excellence.
- We make use of our combined strengths and expertise to deliver the best outcomes.

This plan is, therefore, set within the broader context of our commitments to support individuals to fulfil their potential, to achieve equality of opportunity for all, and to uphold our corporate values through our work.

About This Plan

SDS has always worked with looked after children and care leavers, and some of our operational staff have many years of experience supporting this group. As such, we were keen to capture and reflect good practice already in place within the organisation, and build on this, rather than assuming a 'start from scratch'.

CELCIS (Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland) hosted an initial workshop for SDS in July 2015 which focused on the statutory guidance and how we might approach being a corporate parent.

Between October and November 2015 we ran a series of five regional workshops across Scotland with our Operations Staff to capture experiences, opinions and ideas to help develop our Corporate Parenting actions. This was supplemented with a cross-departmental workshop for our corporate 'enabling' services held in December 2015, and later an external consultation with other Corporate Parents and stakeholders held in March 2016.

During the same period, 12 one-to-one research interviews and two focus groups were held with care experienced young people who currently, or previously, had used SDS services. This was complemented by appropriate desk-based research and evidence review.

The SDS Corporate Parenting Plan for 2015 - 2018 is shaped by this extensive consultation and research, and recognises our existing good practice as well as identifying our key areas for improvement.

Context

What is Corporate Planning?

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 on Corporate Parenting defines it 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)

Between 2006 and 2008, a range of publications and resources drew attention to the needs of looked after children; *Extraordinary Lives* (2006), *Looked After Children and Young People: We Can and Must do Better* (2007) and *These are our Bairsns* (2008). Each highlighted the importance of corporate parenting in order to improve the experiences and outcomes of looked after children. At this time, the term 'corporate parenting' largely referred to local authorities, although other public bodies were encouraged to align their practices with these policies.

Looked after children and care leavers have always been a priority group for SDS in the delivery of both our Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) services to school and post-school customers, and our National Training Programmes (NTPs) across Scotland. Our service delivery to these young people has previously been shaped by a range of legislative, strategic and policy drivers such as the Support and Assistance of Young People Leaving Care (Scotland) Regulations 2003, the ASL Act 2004 (Amended 2009), Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and, more recently, Developing the Young Workforce – Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy.

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. This new law widened the reach of corporate parenting and strengthened the delivery of existing policy in relation to looked after children and care leavers. Within the Act, SDS was named as one of 24 public bodies³ to which corporate parenting duties apply.

3. See Appendix 1 for a full list of Corporate Parents

"Second best is not good enough for Scotland's Looked After Children and young people"

We Can and Must Do Better (2007)

"The single most important thing that will improve the future of Scotland's Looked After Children is for local authorities to focus on and improve their corporate parenting skills"

Extraordinary Lives (2006)

"Corporate parenting is not only a responsibility but a real opportunity to improve the futures of Looked After Children and young people"

These are our Bairsns (2008)

Our Duties as a Corporate Parent

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 on Corporate Parenting defines it as:

The Act confers six new statutory duties on the named Corporate Parents including SDS. As laid out in Section 58⁴, 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.



4. Diagram source. Kennedy, L (2015) Corporate Parenting: Enabling implementation of Part 9, Centre for Excellence for Looked after Children in Scotland, https://www.celcis.org/files/8014/4829/6138/Corporate_Parenting-Enabling

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.

Wellbeing

As is evident in the duties above, corporate parenting is often framed in the context of the wellbeing of the child or young person in care. For the purposes of fulfilling our duties as a corporate parent, we understand wellbeing in the context of the SHANARRI indicators⁵, as defined in part 18 (Section 96) of the 2014 Act. Within this framework, we recognise SDS has a particular role to play in supporting and developing the 'Achieving', 'Respected', 'Responsible' and 'Included' indicators of wellbeing in a young individual.

Defining Eligibility: 'Looked After', 'Care Leaver' and 'Care Experienced'

The terms 'looked after' and 'care leaver' are legally defined as follows:

"A child or young person is considered to be 'looked after' if they fall into one of the categories set out in Section 17(6) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, as amended by Schedule 2 of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007. These categories are:

- Subject to a Supervision Requirement set by a Children's Hearing (including those on Home Supervision Requirements ('looked after at home')).
- Accommodated by a local authority under Section 25 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 (otherwise known as a 'voluntary agreement').
- Subject to a Permanence Order granted by a court.
- Subject to an order, authorisation or warrant made by the relevant authorities under chapters 2, 3 or 4 of Part II of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995."

Children and Young People Act (Scotland) 2014:

"From April 2015 any young person who ceases to be looked after on or after their 16th birthday will be classified as a 'care leaver'. (The current definition restricts the category of 'care leaver' to young people who ceased to be looked after beyond their minimum school leaving age.) All looked after children can become 'care leavers', including young people who were classified as 'looked after at home' and in formal kinship care."

5. See Appendix 2 for more information on wellbeing and SHANARRI

The types of accommodation in which young people may have been looked after are classified as being either ‘in the community’ or ‘residential accommodation’, and include:

In the community;

- at home with parents
- with friends/relatives (‘kinship care’)
- with prospective adopters
- with foster carers provided or purchased by the local authority

Residential accommodation;

- in a local authority home
- in a voluntary home
- in a residential school
- in secure accommodation

In line with good practice, SDS will use the term ‘care experienced’ in reference to the young people we support who are, or have been, looked after. This includes those currently looked after (according to the definition above), those who have been looked after at some point in their lives, and care leavers. Where possible, we will aim to act out our responsibilities as a corporate parent to this wider group of all care experienced young people, rather than just those who meet the legal definitions of ‘looked after’ or ‘care leaver’; while recognising we have a legal responsibility to be able to report formally on the latter.

Transitions and Outcomes for Care Experienced Young People

Care experienced young people often have difficult lives, and have to start living independently much earlier than their peers. The data shows that having a background of being in care is likely to lead to poorer social, educational and employment outcomes. The Scottish Care Leavers Covenant, published in October 2015, identified ‘Education and Training’ and ‘Employment’ as two of the six key policy areas⁶ which affect a successful transition into adulthood for care experienced young people. Within these two ‘pillars’ it identified a specific role for SDS in supporting care experienced young people to make positive transitions.

6. See Figure 1. The Scottish Care Leaver’s Covenant can be found at: [http://www.scottishcareleaverscove-](http://www.scottishcareleaverscovenant.org/)
[nant.org/](http://www.scottishcareleaverscovenant.org/)

Scottish Care Leavers Covenant Key Themes

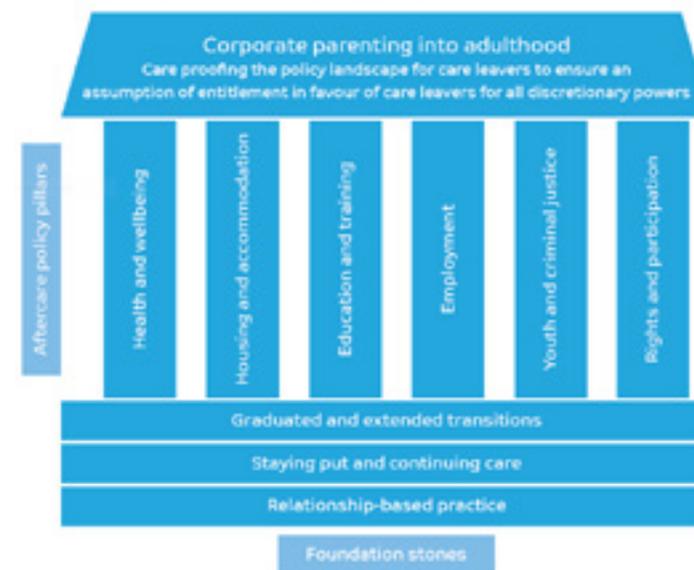


Figure 1: Source - Care Leaver’s Covenant (2015)

In relation to education and employment, SDS’ secondary research tells us that:

- Looked after young people are more likely to leave school younger, aged 16 years or under, than all school leavers.
- They tend to leave school with fewer qualifications which may be due, at least in part, to leaving school at a young age.
- Looked after young people are less likely to secure and maintain a positive destination than all school leavers – In 2014/15 just under a third (31%) of those looked after for the full year did not have a positive destination 9 months after school⁷.
- The proportion of looked after young people who go into Higher Education is low compared to all school leavers; just 4% of those who had been in care for the full year in 2014/15 entered Higher Education, compared to 37% of all school

7. The Scottish Government (2016), Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2014/15, <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00501939.pdf>

Our Duties as a Corporate Parent Cont.

leavers⁸.

- Some risk factors associated with the poorest outcomes for looked after young people are:
 - disruption within their care placement, specifically being looked after part of the year rather than for the full year and / or having multiple care placements across the year.
 - disruption to school placements.
 - being looked after at home, rather than away from home.

For care experienced young people who have not made an initial successful transition from school into training, education or employment, SDS has a particular role and responsibility as corporate parent to offer the support, guidance and opportunities necessary to help them reach their full potential. Supporting these young people is therefore, a core function of our post-school targeted service.

8. The Scottish Government (2016), Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2014/15, <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00501939.pdf>

Existing Practice

During each of our internal workshops we invited colleagues to identify examples of existing good practice as well as areas for improvement. This feedback, along with insights from our customer research, is summarised below according to the six duties laid out in Section 58 of the Act.

Alert and Assess

For care experienced young people who have not made an initial successful transition from school into training, education or employment, SDS has a particular role and responsibility

Our research showed that having advisers who understand the needs and situations of the individual was important, and the young people we spoke to often felt that this was the case with the SDS colleagues they had worked with.

“The lady [SDS adviser] was really, she like, she knew exactly. She understood everything I said and what struggles I had and she knew what I needed help for and she just like took it all in and she showed me different bits of support she could support me on” – Care experienced research participant

Colleagues identified a key strength of SDS’ service provision in schools as our information sharing with Local Authorities through the Data Hub. This supports our advisers to identify which school pupils are currently looked after. This information is then verified with the schools so advisers are alert to any relevant issues, and can agree the level of enhanced service the pupil should receive.

Our coaching approach to delivering CIAG was highlighted by internal feedback as offering the ability to identify the most appropriate support for a young person; as well as allowing the time and flexibility to adjust how it is delivered to best meet the individuals’ needs.

At a local level, it was identified that most areas have individual staff members with enhanced expertise in working with care experienced young people. This knowledge and experience is often used for the wider benefit of staff and customers, although not always in a formalised or consistent manner. It was also noted that SDS has a network of ‘Equality Champions’ within local operations who have responsibility for being a first point of contact for colleagues seeking information and support on equality matters at a local level, including issues relating to working with care experienced customers.

Collaboration with other corporate parents and relevant stakeholders was also seen as a key strength, at both a national and local level. Examples given ranged from having a representative from staff on our Equality Advisory Group, to regular joint case-conferencing in Glasgow between SDS, the Council-led Care Leavers Employability Service (CLES) and Action for Children.

It was noted that we have good internal mechanisms for being alert to changes in policy and law with relation to working with looked after children and care leavers, and systems in place to disseminate that information to appropriate staff, at both senior management and operational levels.

Opportunities and Access

The young people we spoke to during our research had clear aspirations for their future. While they acknowledged that they may be starting their pathways with a disadvantage, (e.g. lacking the necessary qualifications), they told us that it is important to them to have a chance to achieve their goals, even if it is likely to take them longer to do so than others. A number of the young people felt that SDS had been instrumental in helping them with this and they had now taken up positive destinations, such as a Modern Apprenticeship.

“[SDS adviser] gave me the stages and what you would move onto, step by step. I liked this. There was a plan and a progression and you were working towards something” – Care experienced research participant

Through our internal consultation, colleagues were keen to highlight the range of targeted opportunities that care-experienced young people can access through our national training programmes and post-school services. These include:

- Employability Fund (EF) – which includes provision from care-specialist providers
- Scottish Employer Recruitment Incentive – (SERI)
- Third Sector Fund – which includes provision from care-specialist providers
- Open Doors – (in work support, accessible by care leavers employed through other programmes)
- Community Jobs Scotland (CJS) – delivered by the third sector on behalf of Scottish Government, with referrals made by SDS advisers.

SDS as an employer also offers apprenticeship, internship and traineeship opportunities to young people through our “Young Talent” programme.

Work has been underway since 2015 to improve access to opportunities on the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) programme through a new Equalities Action Plan. This plan sets out provision to improve access to apprenticeships for young people who are care experienced. Initiatives include building capacity amongst our training providers to work with care experienced young people through offering bespoke training; and funding an Equalities Challenge Fund and Employer’s Challenge Fund, both of which incorporate care-specific projects.

Access to these opportunities is provided through our adviser support, most often on a one-to-one and personalised basis, depending on the needs of the individual. This work is supplemented through good partnership working and information sharing with other corporate parents and relevant agencies. Colleagues felt that SDS employs a multifaceted approach to engaging with care experienced young people, which increases the likelihood of them being able to go on to benefit from the opportunities we can offer.

While our work with individuals is most intensive with school pupils and targeted post-school customers, we deliver an all-age service. Our research indicated that care experienced young people would think favourably of returning to us for assistance at an older age if required. We continue to offer opportunities to our customers beyond school, and can support an individual to access opportunities, such as training and employment, throughout their career.

Promote and Improve

SDS operational staff promote the wellbeing of care experienced young people through the very nature of their work, with particular emphasis on the ‘Achieving’, ‘Respected’, ‘Responsible’ and ‘Included’ wellbeing indicators.

Internal feedback offered numerous examples of where operational colleagues had acted as an advocate for an individual in a particular circumstance. It was felt that, on a one-to-one service delivery basis, SDS staff are highly committed to their care experienced customers, and will often go ‘above and beyond’ in order to promote the wellbeing of the young people they support.

It was felt that the ‘voice’ of young care experienced people was deemed important within the organisation, and that some steps had been taken to start to capture this better. Partnership working was recognised as key in this respect, both in order to be

Promote and Improve Cont.

better. Partnership working was recognised as key in this respect, both in order to be able to talk to affected young people directly through our research, but also to help understand trends and patterns of opinion across the country.

SDS has a strong commitment to continuous improvement and uses a Business Excellence Framework across the organisation to identify and implement improvement actions to be taken forwards.

Looking Ahead

Our research⁹ identified seven key factors in providing a valuable service to care experienced young people. The young people we spoke to told us we should: The SDS staff we consulted with were also given the opportunity to highlight what they felt were the key areas for us to focus on improving as a corporate parent. These are summarised in the diagram on the left-hand side of this page.



9. SDS Evaluation and Research Team <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/42415/sds-ciaq-services-and-post-school-transitions-views-of-care-experienced-young-people-summary-report-october-2016.pdf>

Alert and Assess

- Improve the robustness and quality of the data held on care experienced customers, with a particular emphasis on identifying care status and experience in post-school customers aged 15 - 25.
- Engage better with looked after children and care leavers not currently using our services.
- Develop greater staff competence, confidence and clarity in relation to our work with care experienced customers, including a need for consistent definitions of the customer group.
- Further strengthen and facilitate partnerships at a local and national level for the benefit of care experienced customers.
- Support care experienced young people as an employer, as well as a provider of services.

Opportunities and Access

- Encourage use of a variety of different approaches to help care experienced young people achieve positive outcomes – for example, earlier intervention in CIAG and promoting work-based learning as an alternative to more traditional learning pathways.
- Strengthen our processes for supporting care experienced young people facing transitions, to ensure a continuum of support throughout our customer journey.
- Consider how our opportunities can be made more accessible to care experienced young people, including wider barriers to participation such as location and transport, and the flexibility of the programmes being accessed.
- Baseline, and then monitor, participation and attainment in our programmes, including MAs, from care experienced young people, with a view to addressing any participation and/or achievement gaps identified.
- Engage with, and build the capacity of, corporate parents and other non-parent carers, so that they can better support care experienced young people to understand, consider and access the range of opportunities available to them.

Promote and Improve

- Ensure that the 'voice' of care experienced young people is better captured and heard through our existing insight, feedback, research and evaluation work.
- Make better use of our marketing and communications to promote the successes of care experienced young people – both to other care experienced young people to raise aspirations and self-esteem, and to employers in order to 'myth-bust' and de-stigmatise care experienced young people as potential

trainees, apprentices and employees.

The actions outlined in this plan have been formulated to address the areas for development outlined by staff above; and to support SDS staff to deliver our services in line with the asks of care experienced young people who took part in our research.

In response to the findings of our extensive consultation and research, we have identified the following actions to prioritise between 2015 and 2018.

Our Corporate Parenting Commitments

Embedding Corporate Parenting within SDS				
Action	Outcomes	Interdependencies	Duty/Duties	Owner(s)
1. Introduce all-staff training on the subject of Corporate Parenting, with additional training opportunities offered where appropriate.	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).	- Who Cares? Scotland	Alert & Assess	- HR (OD) (Lead) - CIAG
2. Ensure looked after children and care leavers are included in all SDS Equality Impact Assessments.	Ensuring looked after children and care leavers are given equal regard as the 'protected characteristics' during all Equality Impact Assessments will ensure that SDS remains alert to matters which, or which might, adversely affect their wellbeing.	- None	Alert & Assess	- HR (Equalities) (Lead) - Service Owners
3. Create a 'Community of Practice' for all interested colleagues, which facilitates the sharing of information and best practice.	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 when required.	- None	Alert, Assess & Improve	- CIAG (Lead) - NTPs
4. Introduce work trials for care experienced young people throughout SDS.	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.	- Other Corporate Parents (e.g. make referrals) - Who Cares? Scotland	Opportunities & Collaborate	- HR (Young Talent) - NTPs

Service Delivery

Action	Outcomes	Interdependencies	Duty/Duties	Owner(s)
5. Offer and support earlier CIAG/CMS 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.	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.	- Schools / Local Authorities	Opportunities & Collaborate	- CIAG
6. Extend our targeted post-school offer to care experienced young people aged 20 – 25 inclusive.	Research indicates that care experienced young people are more likely to require post school support to achieve a positive outcome than all school leavers; 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.	- None	Alert, Assess, Promote, Opportunities & Access.	- CIAG
7. Develop and implement actions designed to increase access to Modern Apprenticeships for care experienced young people, as detailed in our MA Equality Action Plan.	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.	- Training providers, - Employers, - Partners (e.g. third sector)	Opportunities & Access	- NTPs - Other SDS teams as highlighted in the MA Action Plan.
8. Actively promote and support the training, development and recruitment of care experienced young people to and by employers nationwide.	This action was identified as being of highest priority by our external consultation group. 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.	- Partners - Employers	Promote	- Digital Services - CIAG (Lead)

Partnership Working

Action	Outcomes	Interdependencies	Duty/Duties	Owner(s)
9. Introduce a single point of contact system for ease of co-ordinating local and national collaboration with other corporate parents and stakeholders.	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.	- None	Alert, Assess & Collaborate	- CIAG - NTPs
10. Work with partners to increase awareness of, and access to, SDS' and SDS-supported opportunities.	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 having SDS as a corporate parent means. 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.	- Corporate Parents and other specialist partners - Individuals	Opportunities, Access & Collaborate	- Marketing (Lead) - CIAG - NTPs
11. Establish formal annual partnership working agreements with Social Services departments in every Local Authority.	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.	- Local Authorities	Alert, Assess & Collaborate	- CIAG
12. Proactively engage with other Corporate Parents and carers, with a view to building their capacity to meet the expectations of Parents/Carers as set out in the Career Education Standard. See references for the Career Education Standard	Our ambition with this action is that SDS will support other corporate parents and non-parent carers to meet the expectations placed on parent/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.	- Corporate Parents and other Carer Networks, Organisations and Groups.	Access & Collaborate	- CIAG (Lead) - Digital Services

Continuous Improvement

Action	Outcomes	Interdependencies	Duty/Duties	Owner(s)
13. Conduct a comprehensive data quality review.	<p>Better, more robust data will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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. <p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local Authorities - Individuals 	Alert, Assess, Improve & Collaborate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SPP (Lead) - Business Support - CIAG
14. Work to ensure that the 'voice' of care experienced young people is heard and acted upon within SDS.	<p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individuals - Partners 	Assess, Promote, Improve & Collaborate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CIAG - NTPs - E&R - SD&I
15. Improve customer tracking and monitoring systems, and handover processes, to build a more seamless continuum of support during the customer journey.	<p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training providers - Colleges 	Opportunities & Collaborate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -CIAG (Lead) -SPP
16. 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.	<p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TBC 	Improve & Report Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -SPP (Lead) -CIAG -NTPs

Monitoring and Reporting

Section 61 of The Act requires SDS as corporate parents, to report on our corporate parenting duties. We will produce our first full Corporate Parenting Report in 2018, which outlines progress against the commitments made in this plan, as well as outlining further actions to be taken forward in 2018 – 2021.

As identified in commitment 16, we will move towards establishing, and publishing, a set of corporate KPIs which relate to our work with care experienced young people. Once established, these will be reported on an annual basis, in addition to our formal Reports, so we can demonstrate the real difference made to care experienced young people as a result of our actions.

SDS will establish a cross-business steering group, incorporating the business leads for each of the listed actions and other key colleagues. It will convene every six months, and hold responsibility for monitoring activity and progress made against the plan, as well as meeting reporting requirements. This group will ensure 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 will be happy to co-operate to the best of our ability in those circumstances.

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Appendix 1: Scotland's Corporate Parents

There are 24 individual and groups of Corporate Parents listed in Schedule 4 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act. The corporate parenting duties apply to all of these organisations equally. They are:

1. The Scottish Ministers
2. A local authority
3. The National Convener of Children's Hearings Scotland
4. Children's Hearings Scotland
5. The Principal Reporter
6. The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration
7. A health board
8. A board constituted under section 2(1)(b) of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978
9. Healthcare Improvement Scotland
10. The Scottish Qualifications Authority
11. Skills Development Scotland
12. Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (The Care Inspectorate)
13. The Scottish Social Services Council
14. The Scottish Sports Council
15. The chief constable of the Police Service of Scotland
16. The Scottish Police Authority
17. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
18. The Scottish Legal Aid Board
19. The Commissioner for Children and Young People in Scotland
20. The Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland
21. The Scottish Housing Regulator
22. Bòrd na Gàidhlig
23. Creative Scotland
24. A body which is a "post-16 education body" for the purposes of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005

Appendix 2: Wellbeing and SHANARRI

In part 18 (Section 96) of the 2014 Act the Scottish Government defines the wellbeing of a child or young person as the extent to which they meet eight indicators – known by their initials as the SHANARRI indicators.

The diagram below lists each indicator and summarises what it represents.

The work of SDS with children and young people contributes most to the 'Achieving', 'Respected', 'Responsible' and 'Included' indicators.



Image Source - <http://www.girfecinlanarkshire.co.uk/2011/06/suite-of-graphic-images/>