
Report To:	Health and Social Care Committee	Date:	22nd October 2015
Report By:	Brian Moore Chief Officer Inverclyde Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP)	Report No:	SW/23/2015/SMcA
Contact Officer:	Sharon McAlees Head of Service Inverclyde Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP)	Contact No:	01475 715282
Subject:	CORPORATE PARENTING		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Health and Social Care Committee of proposals to fulfil Inverclyde's corporate parenting duties and powers contained within Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 became law in 2014 and introduced a number of changes to how children and young people are cared for. Some of these changes have already come into force including Part 9 (Corporate Parenting). These changes will impact on how Inverclyde works collaboratively with other publicly funded bodies to support looked after children and care leavers and improve outcomes.
- 2.2 All corporate parents are required to prepare and publish plans which detail how they will fulfil their duties under Section 58 of the Children and Young People Act 2015.
- 2.3 A draft Corporate Parenting Plan and Strategy will be launched in December 2015 this will be in conjunction with a Corporate Parenting event targeted at key decision makers and community planning partners. This event will allow the opportunity to further consult and consider the key themes of the Corporate Parenting Plan and its delivery.
- 2.4 A Children's Champions Board will be established as outlined below:
- The Champions Board will operate on a similar basis to the previous Inverclyde Children's Champion Scheme, however it is proposed that the remit is extended to include all looked after children and accommodated children, looked after at home/ kinship care and care leavers.
 - Children's participation is an essential part of the process and opportunities would be provided to involve children, young people, parents and carers in contributing to service planning and delivery.
 - The Champions Board will sit within a clear framework of leadership and governance.
 - The governance framework will incorporate clear communication and reporting mechanisms which would allow measurement of outcomes for children and the impact of the role and remit of the Board members on service improvement.

- It is envisaged that the Champions Board membership will include the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive of the Council, the Chief Social Work Officer and other community planning partners who are identified as corporate parents within the Act.
- In recognition of the cross cutting issues that impact on the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers consideration should be given to recruiting Champions from the range of Community Planning Partner services.
- A programme of recruitment, training and support of Board members is initiated.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the Health and Social Care Committee acknowledge and note the new duties and powers on local authorities and other corporate parents as legislated within the Children and Young People Act 2014.
- 3.2 That the Health and Social Care Committee acknowledge and agree the proposals to ensure Inverclyde fulfils its corporate parenting responsibilities :
 - A Corporate Parenting Plan is developed to include key themes that reduce the barriers faced by looked after children and care leavers
 - A Champions Board be established as a mechanism to deliver the desired outcomes
 - A Corporate Parenting Event will be held on 16th December 2015 to which key policy implementers and decision makers will be invited.

Brian Moore
Chief Officer
Inverclyde HSCP

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 became law in 2014 and introduced a number of changes to how children and young people are cared for. Some of these changes have already come into force including Part 9 Corporate Parenting. These changes will impact on how Inverclyde works together to support our looked after children and care leavers and how we measure success.
- 4.2 The Act is an integral element of the Scottish Government's strategy to make Scotland the best place in the world to grow up. The changes in legislation shift public services towards early years and towards early intervention. This in conjunction with the introduction of Continuing Care and extension of After Care, draws attention to the whole child and their journey through care and beyond.
- 4.3 Part 9 of the Act makes looked after children a priority not only for Inverclyde local authority but for a range of publicly funded bodies who can influence a range of factors that impact on wellbeing by naming them Corporate Parents. The organisations named represent key areas of a young person's world from health and education to creative arts, transport and housing. Addressing issues important to the wellbeing of looked after children, such as poverty, education, poor health and social exclusion, will require joined up thinking and resourcing.
- 4.4 All corporate parents are now required to prepare and publish plans which detail how they will fulfil their duties under Sec 58 of the Act. Meeting these duties mean that we.
- **Are Alert-** have systems in place to ensure we stay informed of issues which could have a negative impact on looked after children and care leavers.
 - **Assess-** we ensure services are relevant and accessible by assessing and responding to need.
 - **Promote-** we perform actions which may advantage or benefit looked after children and care leavers.
 - **Provide Opportunities-** we identify opportunities relevant to our looked after children and care leavers and seek to understand how they can be supported to participate in them.
 - **Ensure Access-** we help our looked after children and care leavers to overcome barriers so that they can benefit from opportunities and services.
 - **Strive to improve-** we review our performance as corporate parents and take action to improve where opportunities are identified.

The policy intention behind corporate parenting is to improve the lives and outcomes of our looked after children and care leavers. The Act provides a renewed opportunity to close the gap between policy and practice and close the outcomes gap for care leavers into adulthood.

- 4.5 Part 9 of the Act outlines a duty for corporate parents to collaborate emphasising that safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of looked after children cannot be done in isolation. In Inverclyde we view collaboration as a beneficial process through which we can increase the chances of achieving a shared objective for our looked after children and care leavers.
- 4.6 The key policy themes of Inverclyde's Corporate Parenting Plan will include :
- Health and Wellbeing
 - Education and Training
 - Rights and Participation
 - Housing and Accommodation
 - Employment
 - Youth and Criminal Justice

Each of these themes and related actions provide the cumulative impact of embedding change and improving wellbeing outcomes for looked after children and care leavers

- 4.7 In 2007 Inverclyde Council implemented the Children's Champion Scheme, the aim of which was to contribute to the Council's Corporate Parenting responsibilities.
- 4.8 In June 2010 the Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care in conjunction with Strathclyde University published an evaluation of the scheme. The research concluded that the Children's Champion Scheme had a positive impact on service delivery across Inverclyde having an important role in outcomes such as the re-provisioning of our residential units, recruitment of designated staff across services to address health and educational needs of looked after children and generally increasing awareness of the needs of looked after children across Council services.

5.0 PROPOSALS

- 5.1 It is proposed that a Children's Champions Board is re- launched across Inverclyde as a means of ensuring we meet our corporate parenting responsibilities. The Champions Board will operate similarly to the previous scheme however the remit will be extended to include all looked after and accommodated children, children looked after at home or in kinship care and young people eligible for continuing care and after care.
- 5.2 It is envisaged that the Champions Board membership will include the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive of the Council, the Chief Social Work Officer and other Corporate Parent nominees. This board would constitute the key governance structure, would meet quarterly and would request reports on the progress of each key theme in delivering the Corporate Parenting Strategy. (nb: progress should not be in respect of individual children, but rather how each Champion has assisted in the development of improving service area responses to improving outcomes for looked after children and care leavers).
- 5.3 The Champions Board would sit within a clear framework of leadership and governance that promotes the reduction in the barriers experienced by looked after children and care leavers and improves outcomes across Inverclyde.
- 5.4 The governance framework would incorporate clear communication and reporting mechanisms which would allow measurement of outcomes for children and the impact of the role and remit of the Board members on service improvement. The Board would require a sophisticated level of management information including qualitative and quantitative data associated with outcomes and experience of children and young people of services.
- 5.5 In recognition of the cross cutting issues that impact on the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers and the pivotal role of the Inverclyde Alliance in planning services for children, consideration should as noted above be given to recruiting Champions from the range of Community Planning Partner services. Champions would be recruited at a Head of Service, Head Teacher or equivalent level.
- 5.6 A programme of recruitment, training and support of Board members is initiated. This would take account of the professional and emotional demands on the role.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

FINANCE

6.1 Financial Implications:

Any costs associated with this report will be contained within existing budgets.

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report £000	Virement From	Other Comments

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact £000	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments

LEGAL

- 6.2 This report seeks to outline how Inverclyde can carry out its duties and powers defined in by Part 9 (Corporate Parenting) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

HUMAN RESOURCES

- 6.3 There are/are no human resources issues within this report.

EQUALITIES

- 6.4 There are/are no equality issues within this report.

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES (see attached appendix) The change in legislation seeks to reduce inequalities and barriers experienced by looked after children and care leavers
	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

REPOPULATION

- 6.5 There are/are no repopulation issues within this report.

7.0 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 This report has been prepared by the Chief Officer, Inverclyde Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) after due consultation with Children and Families Services .

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

Corporate Parenting in Inverclyde: Setting the Context

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

The Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 became law on the 27th of March, 2014. It introduces a number of changes to how children and young people in Scotland are to be cared for. Some of these changes have already come into force, including Part 9 (Corporate Parenting), and the remainder will do so over the next two to three years. These changes will have a significant impact on how Inverclyde work to support out looked after children and care leavers, what we focus on and how we measure success.

The Act is an integral element of the Scottish Government's strategy for making Scotland the best place in the world to grow up. The changes introduced facilitate a shift in public services towards the early years of a child's life, and towards early intervention whenever a family or young person needs help. With a focus on children at risk of becoming looked after through to the introduction of Continuing Care and the extension of those eligible to After Care, the Act draws attention to the whole child, and their entire journey through care and beyond. This is critical for us at Inverclyde, and from experience we know that efforts to ensure equality of opportunity for our looked after children and care leavers can be seriously undermined if they experience early and ongoing disadvantage in terms of their physical, psychological, emotional and social well-being.

From the perspective of our looked after children and care leavers, the Act introduces a number of important changes, including:

- 600 hours of free early learning and child care for all two year olds who are looked after or secured with friends or relatives through a Kinship Care Order (Part 6, sections 47 and 48).
- Corporate parenting duties for certain individuals and organisations (Part 9)
- Extended eligibility for 'Aftercare' assistance up to the age of 25; a new duty on local authorities to report on the death of a young person in receipt of 'Aftercare' services (Part 10)
- Introduction of Continuing Care, providing certain care leavers with the opportunity to continue with the accommodation and assistance they were provided with immediately before they ceased to be looked after (Part 11)
- Support for children at risk of becoming looked after (Part 12)
- Assistance for applicants and holders of a Kinship Care Order (Part 13)
- Use of Scotland's Adoption Register made a duty for all adoption agencies (Part 14)

Under Part 9 (Corporate Parenting) the Act makes looked after children a priority, not only for Inverclyde and other local authorities, but for a host of publicly funded bodies who can influence a wide array of factors that impact on their wellbeing by naming them as Corporate Parents too. The organisations listed as Corporate Parents represent key areas of a young person's world, from healthcare and education, to sports and the creative arts, to transport, housing and youth justice. We know that tackling issues important to looked after children and young people, such as poverty, early school leaving, poor health and exclusion needs a combined effort. We also know addressing these issues decisively requires joined-up thinking and clever resourcing.

As corporate parents, we now have legislative duties to looked after children and care leavers; we must be alert to their needs with regard to the services we offer, we must assess their needs and promoting their interests, we must offer relevant opportunities, we must ensure services are accessible, and we must strive to improve as a Corporate Parent. This means that the needs of looked after children and young people must be taken into consideration as we plan and deliver all of our services. There is also a duty on all corporate parents to collaborate with each other when doing so would be in the best interests of a looked after child or care leaver. At Inverclyde we have a good history of engaging well with our looked after population, and a track record of successful collaborations, this new Act can be used as a lever to build on this strong foundation and make lasting changes in the lives of some of our most vulnerable young people.

Meeting our Corporate Parenting duties and responsibilities

Scottish Government Guidanceⁱ describes 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” (Updated Guidance – August 2016)

All corporate parents are now required to prepare and publish plans which detail how they will fulfil their duties under Section 58 of the Act. Meeting these duties will mean that we:

- **Are Alert:** We should have systems in place to stay informed of issues which could have a negative impact on an individual child/young person and our entire population of looked after children and care leavers
- **Assess:** We ensure our services are relevant and accessible to the widest possible group by assessing and responding to their needs
- **Promote:** We perform actions which may advantage or benefit looked after children and care leavers
- **Provide Opportunities:** We identify opportunities relevant to our looked after children and care leavers and seek to understand they leavers could be supported to participate in them

- **Ensure Access:** We help our looked after children and care leavers to overcome barriers so that they can benefit from the opportunities, services and support we (and other corporate parents) provide
- **Strive to Improve:** We review our performance as corporate parents and take action to improve where opportunities are identified

The policy intention behind corporate parenting is to improve the lives and outcomes of our looked after children and care leavers. Statutory guidance to accompany Part 9 recommends that, as Corporate Parents, we should consider our contribution towards ensuring that our looked after children and care leavers:

- Are active **participants** in shaping services.
- Are living in **safe, secure, stable and nurturing homes**
- Are enabled to develop or maintain **positive relationships** with their family, friends, professionals and other trusted adults.
- Have **positive educational outcomes**
- Are **valued** as individuals, and the support they receive addresses their strengths as well as their needs throughout their experience in care and beyond.
- Benefit from early identification of **physical or mental health** concerns and timely responses to these
- **Increasingly represented** in education, training and employment
- **Less represented** in the youth and criminal justice systems

Part 10 (Aftercare) of the Act increases the upper age from the 21st to the 26th birthday by which care leavers can request and receive ongoing advice, guidance and assistance. In doing so the legislation acknowledges that for many care-experienced young people, ongoing positive support is vital and necessary to ensure they have the opportunities to make positive sustained transitions into adulthood.

Part 11 (Continuing Care) describes a new duty on local authorities to provide care leavers whose final placement was 'away from home' with a continuation of the kinds of support they received prior to their ceasing to be looked after (including accommodation in a 'looked after' placement). The aim of this provision is to provide our looked after children with a more graduated transition out of care.

The 2014 Act provides a real and renewed opportunity to close the gap between policy and practice and close the outcomes gap for care leavers into adulthood. However, to do this requires extensive and sustained activity with a focus on leading and embedding the changes required.ⁱⁱ

Evidence from research combined with national statistics indicates that there is a real and urgent need to improve the outcomes gap for looked after children and care leavers in Inverclyde, and nationally.

For example:

Education:

- In the 2013/2014 academic year 74% of looked after school leavers were aged 16 and under, compared to 27% of all school leavers. Leaving school at a younger age is associated with a range of negative outcomes, including unemployment and social exclusion. We need to ensure that our looked after children and care leavers receive a quality education that meets their needs.
- In the 2012/2013 academic year there were 33 cases of exclusion per 1000 students. However, among students looked after for the whole year there were 233 cases of exclusions and among students looked after for part of the year there were 350 exclusions. These levels are not acceptable, and probably under-represent the exclusion faced by our students (many of whom are on part-time timetables and are, in effect, excluded from education).
- A study by the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) found that only 68% of plans reviewed contained a reference to the child's education and less than half included specified actions. Plans were more likely to identify problems than talents and none of the children described as talented had plans to support their abilities. Few plans recorded the child's views or aspirations and only six per cent of plans contained actions to support the child's ambitions. Less than a quarter had educational goals beyond the current school year (Henderson & Whitehead, 2013).
- Children may be placed outside their home local authority area, either in residential schools or in foster placements and attending local schools. These children are at risk of disrupted education and a restricted curriculum (Thomson, 2007).
- Looked after children are assumed in law to have additional support needs unless a local authority deems that they do not require additional support in order to benefit from school education (Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009). In addition, education authorities must consider whether each looked after child or young person for whose school education they are responsible requires a 'co-ordinated support plan' (see Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice).

Health and Wellbeing:

- A range of poor health-related outcomes have been noted in the 'looked after' population. The 2006 Social work inspection agency research (*The Health of Looked After and Accommodated Children and Young People in Scotland*) suggested that 75% were smokers, 50% drank alcohol once a week, one third had tried drugs in care while two thirds had tried drugs before coming into care, lack of knowledge around sexual health behaviours, 14% have emotional disorders compared to 4% in the general population, 35% have conduct disorders compared to 6%, 8% have hyperkinetic disorders compared to 1%, half had not visited a dentist in the past year. Self-harm has also been identified as a significant issue.
- The Centre for Social Justice (2014) found that 55% of the care leavers in their sample reported finding it either very or quite difficult to stay in touch with former carers and their birth family.
- The Office for the Children's Rights Director (2012) found that 14% of the care leavers they surveyed felt there was just one person they could inform if they were harmed, while a further 11% of respondents were either uncertain of who they could tell or felt that there was no one they could tell if they were harmed.
- Duncalf (2010) accessed 310 care leavers aged 17 – 78 from across the UK and identified 'feeling alone or abandoned' as being one of the top five negative experiences of leaving care.
- Ridley and McCluskey (2003) found that that many young care leavers felt that leaving care had a negative impact on their health, particularly as they did not have enough money to eat well and were depressed as a result of isolation.

Inverclyde Corporate Parents: Working Together to Support Our Children and Young People

Part 9 (Corporate Parenting) 2014 Act outlines a duty for corporate parents to collaborate with one another when doing so would safeguard or promote the wellbeing of a looked after child or care leaver (section 60). As evidenced by the wide array of different Corporate Parents included in schedule 4 of the Act, it is recognised that in addition to local authorities, many organisations and agencies have important roles to play in securing the wellbeing of looked after children, young people and care leavers.

The inclusion in Part 9 of the duty to collaborate reflects the reality that safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers (or, in other words, improving their lives) cannot be done by working in isolation. If we want to improve outcomes for children and families we must join forces with other corporate parents, and pool resources, in co-ordinated and collective effort. We already work with many corporate parents in relevant collaborations.

In Inverclyde we see collaboration as a mutually beneficial process, through which we can increase the chances, and / or reduce the cost, of achieving a shared objective for our looked after children and care leavers.

When collaborating with partners, we intend to follow the following steps to ensure we develop (or continue) purposeful and successful collaborative working practice:

1. Assess the need for partnership – We identify an objective, the achievement of which requires the resources / expertise / input of one or more other corporate parents
 - a. Identify relevant partners – We identify relevant partners, and summarise what they hope those partners will bring (to the collective endeavour).
 - b. We identify and record the potential benefits for each corporate parent potentially involved in the collaboration.
 - c. We approach the other corporate parents identified at stage 1a. and present our case for joining forces / collaboration.
2. Build the partnership
 - a. We identify common interests and shared goals – partners in the collaboration consider their areas of shared interest and work together to develop shared goals for the collaboration. At this stage each corporate parent should be confident that their role in the collaboration fits with their primary function and remit.
 - b. We clarify roles – each partner in the collaboration should have a clear idea of what their role in the collaboration is, what resources they are expected to bring and their area of influence
 - c. We construct relationships – agree on any ground rules and governance mechanisms. Open, frank and frequent discussion nurtures trust and mitigates the fear of exploitation. This can also be achieved by ensuring there is a shared understanding of the purpose of the collaboration, by dividing the workload fairly, by sharing credit for achievements, by addressing power imbalances and cultivating a clear sense of leadership.
3. Manage negotiations and social relations:
 - a. We achieving agreement using problem-solving techniques (such as brainstorming) to reach agreement on relevant issues.
 - b. Implementation – Each partner completes the actions they agreed to.
 - c. Delivery – the partners work together successfully to deliver on the endeavour.
4. Evaluate the partnership (process and impact):
 - a. We feedback and learn – we view the collaboration as an iterative process, with ongoing feedback and evaluation. Troubleshooting can happen in a timely fashion and the impact of the collaboration can be assessed.
 - b. Termination if appropriate – if the collaboration was for a short term project or one off event, it can come to a close once the desired outcome has been achieved.

Draft (Sample) Best Practice Actions (*SCLC/AfC Extract)

Health and Wellbeing

The health and wellbeing needs of the population of looked after young people in Scotland have been identified as a priority by the Directors of Public Health in Scotland. This is due to the vulnerability of the group, their likely poor health outcomes and the lack of a consistent system to assess need and monitor progress.

Many of the pre-care and in-care experiences of looked after young people can be considered as Adverse Childhood Events,ⁱⁱⁱ and are very likely to continue to have a serious detrimental effect on their physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing well into adulthood and in some cases throughout their lives.

Mental health and emotional wellbeing issues are substantially higher among looked after young people than the non-looked after population. Reports continue to highlight that looked after young people experience 'significantly poorer mental health than the most disadvantaged children outside the care system.'^{iv} In addition to this, rates of suicide and self-harm are higher than that of the general population, often linked to earlier adverse life events and difficulties around attachment, loss, and the subsequent impact of care interventions.^v

The Scottish Government have issued a number of policy and guidance documents such as the guidance on health assessments for looked after children in Scotland^{vi} which aim to improve health and social outcomes for looked after young people and care leavers^{vii} setting out the minimum standardised elements of a health care pathway which Health Boards are expected to implement in collaboration with local authorities and other organisations^{viii}.

In terms of the health needs of care leavers, previous commitments were clarified & strengthened by the Leaving Care (Scotland) Regulations and Guidance 2004^{ix} which stated that health matters should be incorporated into a young person's Pathway Assessment & Plan, including the young person's views on their health needs.

Key Actions:

- 1. Corporate Parents ensure robust and consistent support for care leavers in accessing universal, preventative and early intervention services relating to their health & wellbeing.**
 - Corporate parents and third sector providers collaborate to ensure that care leavers are able to access counselling, mentoring and other community-based services aimed at promoting improved emotional wellbeing.

- Corporate parents work together to remove barriers and increase supported access to cultural, artistic and other recreational opportunities for care leavers, building on strengths and interests.
- Corporate parents collaborate to ensure that care leavers are enabled and encouraged to have the knowledge, skills and confidence to promote their own health and wellbeing.
- Social care and health providers develop accessible supports that assist in building capacity and resilience and reduce the numbers of care leavers needing to access specialist hospital based services and/or moving into crisis.
- All staff involved in providing services to children and young people to undergo appropriate learning on child development and the impact of attachment and trauma with this training to be refreshed every 3 years.

2. Corporate parents ensure that care leavers be given priority access to specialist services and improved access to adult mental health services.

- Priority access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for assessment and access to appropriate services for care leavers as required avoiding the use of waiting lists and lengthy referral processes.
- Clear access to advice & consultation with adult mental health professionals for those involved in supporting care leavers with complex and/or challenging mental health, emotional and behavioural issues.
- Joint working arrangements between CAMHS and adult services are developed for example, for CAMHS to continue to provide a service where there is an existing relationship in place until the young person is ready to move to adult services.
- Clear bridging arrangements are developed between children and adult services to enable improved transfer of services for care leavers with disabilities and /or complex needs.
- Adult services models of intervention take account of care leavers' levels of development and functioning and ensure that access, to services and interventions are appropriately pitched.
- Thresholds for support and accessing services are flexible and reflect the individual circumstances of care leavers based on need rather than age.
- Specialist services are responsive towards care leavers' individual and collective issues and needs, particularly:
 - Priority access to specialist support and advice around self-harm and suicide risks.
 - Substance misuse services appropriate to the individual circumstances and level of functioning of care leavers.
 - Priority access to sexual health clinics, including emergency appointments.
 - Targeted support for care leavers who become young parents.

3. Take action to reduce social exclusion and isolation which impact on mental and physical health and emotional wellbeing by:

- Providing free or discounted access to leisure facilities available to all care leavers up to age 21 and, where required, up to age 26.
- Providing free or discounted access to public transport to be made available to care leavers up to age 21 and, where required, up to age 26.

4. Each local authority and health board has a named contact with specific responsibility for care leavers' health and for promoting and coordinating actions to reduce health inequalities, these being made explicit within Corporate Parenting Plans.

- Dedicated Throughcare and Aftercare Nurse provision is in place for all care leavers.
- Consistent application of national mental health indicators for children & young people to care leaver cohort^x.
- Consistent and effective systems to gather information about care leavers and monitor their access to, and the effectiveness of, interventions intended to support improved physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing.
- Establish clear, consistent working arrangements across and between local authorities and health board boundaries for those young people who are placed out with their home authority, or who return to their home authority on leaving care.

Anticipated Outcomes

- Reduction in care leavers' experiences of isolation.
- Encourage and support engagement with health services.
- Improve opportunities for young people to access and participate in activities to promote their wellbeing without adversely impacting on their finances, particularly in more rural areas.
- Proactive engagement with services reduces the likelihood and need for crisis responses.
- Improved communication and collaboration between key corporate parenting agencies enabling service to be delivered more effectively and efficiently.

Housing and Accommodation

Young people leaving care are particularly likely to become homeless and experience housing instability due to their vulnerability and more limited economic and social resources.^{xi} Safe, settled and sustainable accommodation is a crucial foundation for achieving positive outcomes for care leavers.

Research demonstrates that care leavers are at their most vulnerable during the transition period towards independence.^{xii} Care leavers describe the significant challenges they face, with pressing financial worries, lack of family and friend support networks and stress over employment and education all underpinned by problems with unsuitable and unstable accommodation. In Scotland care leavers also move on to live more independently at a much younger age than the rest of the population, when they are least equipped to do this successfully. Leaving care at a later stage increases young people's chances of a successful transition to adulthood, including being in safe and settled accommodation, improved health and wellbeing, achieving better educational outcomes, increased employability prospects and economic stability, improved health and well-being.^{xiii}

In Scotland the *Staying Put Scotland Guidance (2013)* and *Housing Options Protocols Guidance (2013)* have been produced to inform and share best practice and bring consistency to the options and supports available to care leavers. Policy and legislation recognises and highlights the fundamental importance of safe, secure and sustainable accommodation to supporting care leavers attain and achieve.

In no circumstances should young people leave the care of a local authority without alternative accommodation appropriate to the assessed needs of the young person being in place.^{xiv}

Key actions:

- 1. The full and meaningful implementation of Staying Put and Continuing Care for all Looked after young people and care leavers should be a primary focus for all corporate parents.**
 - Encourage, enable and empower looked after young people and care leavers to remain in a positive care placement until they are ready to move on.
 - Local actions to develop and support this should be explicit within Corporate Parenting Plans.
 - Actively promote and facilitate extended & graduated transitions. Young people are given the opportunity and support to prepare for greater levels of independence while remaining in their supportive care setting. This enables care leavers move on from their care placement in a gradual and phased manner over a period of time and have opportunities to test out their abilities to live more independently with on-going support.
 - Actively support and facilitate care leavers to maintain positive supportive relationships and keep in touch with their carers when they leave and, if possible and necessary, to return to placement.

- 2. Fully implement the Housing Options Protocols for Care Leavers Guidance to comprehensively address the housing and accommodation needs of all care leavers.**
 - Local Authorities collaborate with Registered Social Landlords to provide a range of appropriate, suitable good quality accommodation for care leavers.

- Develop and maintain a range of accommodation options which meet the needs and wishes of care leavers including:
 - Supported Carers: converting foster care placement to supported carers placements becomes established practice where appropriate and supported carer placements are made available to those young people who are not yet ready to transition to greater independence.
 - High quality residential supported accommodation settings.
 - Individual community based supported flats with 'living nearby' support.
 - Access to good quality mainstream tenancies with appropriate levels of person-centred support.
 - Accommodation that is suitable to the needs of care leavers who are also parents, taking into account their individual circumstances and support needs.

All young people encounter difficulties and make mistakes – it's called 'growing up' or 'learning from experience' - and care leavers (often lacking skills and support networks) are more likely than most to encounter difficulties with their accommodation.

- 3. Corporate parents take action to ensure that care leavers do not have to make a "homeless application" in order to access suitable accommodation/housing.**
 - End the use of the homeless route to access accommodation for care leavers. This is not appropriate and fails to allow for a proper planning process and fails to provide adequate support.
 - Where care leavers are at risk of homelessness after a period of being outwith care/support of the Local Authority, they must be recognised as a vulnerable group and be supported as such.
 - Care leavers up to the age of 26 are recognised by corporate parents as potentially vulnerable and have access to support even after a prolonged gap in contact/support with care services.
- 4. End the use of 'bed and breakfast' and 'adult hostels' as accommodation options for vulnerable care leavers.^{xv}**
 - The stress of unstable, [unsuitable accommodation](#) (such as B&B's and homeless hostels) can impact on physical and mental health, creating, exacerbating and compounding pre-existing vulnerability and disadvantage.
 - In allocating accommodation to homeless households, local authorities in Scotland must already give proper consideration to the suitability of B&B and hostel accommodation to certain vulnerable groups, including families with children.
 - Care leavers should be accorded the same status as other vulnerable groups when considering these particular accommodation options.

5. Multi-agency transitions forum: Local Authorities develop and operate a multi-agency planning and support forum around housing and accommodation support needs for care leavers involving the active participation of all relevant corporate parents.

- Multi-agency forums have proved to be effective in allocating appropriate housing and support, in implementing creative packages of support, in overcoming problems and issues and in tracking progress of care leavers in moving on.
- Joint Planning and multi-agency and partnership working is at the heart of all planning with the “one child – one plan - one care journey” principle being continued into adulthood.
- Pathways and support plans reflect the key roles and responsibilities of agencies and partners in meeting the young person’s needs through a phased transition into adulthood.
- The **process reflects the dynamic and changing nature of young people’s needs and circumstances** as they progress on their journey to adulthood and interdependence.
- To achieve this **relationship-based practice** for young people leaving care is crucial in maintaining previous supportive relationships and ensuring there is continuity and co-ordination in providing housing support.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Continuing support services allows corporate parents to offer something equivalent to a ‘family safety net’ for care leavers.
- Ensures that that the young person remains at the centre of planning and support arrangements.
- Encourages partners to continue to work together with and on behalf of the young person for as long as is needed after the transition has been made - reinforcing that accessing accommodation on a one-off basis for a care leaver does not in itself constitute a discharge of duty towards young people - corporate parents must repeatedly do what they can to make positive outcomes achievable.
- Care leavers do not have to go through the formal adult homelessness route and can expect to receive housing options and support tailored to their needs as a vulnerable group.
- Reduction in the risk - and costs - of repeated accommodation breakdown and homelessness.
- Enables sustained engagement in education, training or employment.

Education and Training

The educational outcomes for looked after young people and care leavers are, in general, poor in comparison to those of the majority of young people in Scotland. Trauma, attachment issues, mental ill health, stigma, frequent placement moves and the multiple transitions and the chaotic living arrangements that many care leavers experience are contributory factors leading to disrupted schooling and negative experiences of education. With such poor experiences it is unsurprising that [Scottish Government statistics](#)^{xvi} highlight that 74% of looked after young people leave school before the age of 16 and only a small percentage, in comparison to the national average, go on to study at university.

While the educational outcomes for looked after young people are improving, as are their prospects of progressing to further and higher education, there is still a long way to go to close the attainment gap that exists between them and their peers.

[Additional Support for Learning \(ASL\) legislation](#)^{xvii} states that looked after young people should be automatically considered to have additional support needs, unless assessed as otherwise. Those with additional support needs who require significant support from more than one agency should have a [Coordinated Support Plan](#) (CSP) to identify need and allocate support.

The reality is that this legislation is failing looked after young people. In 2015 it was reported by Govan Law Centre that less than half of looked after young people with additional support needs had a coordinated support plan. Considering the multiple and complex barriers that looked after young people experience in education, this proportion is surprisingly low.

It is important to recognise and harness the full range of care leavers skills and aptitudes and to enable them to build on their strengths. It is also important to recognise that failing to achieve qualifications in school is not the end point in terms of academic or vocational progression and care leavers should be supported in their aspirations and goals regardless of the length of the journey.

Key Actions

1. Improved & Strengthened Links between Schools, SDS, Social Work and tertiary education providers.

- Access to early and effective careers advice for looked after young people provided by schools and Skills Development Scotland starting before the end of 3rd Year and continuing for as long as is necessary.
- Information sharing between schools, social work, Skills Development Scotland, Department for Work and Pensions and further education providers to ensure continuity of support and joint working post school, fully utilising the 16+ Learning Choices Data Hub.

- 2. Consistent and extensive use of ASL legislation to ensure that looked after young people have Coordinated Support Plans in place where required.**
 - Educational outcomes to feature prominently in all integrated plans for looked after young people and care leavers in senior school phase and college.
 - Extension of all Additional Support for Learning Services to all care leavers.
 - Real term increases in spending on Additional Support for Learning Services.

- 3. Further and Higher Education (FE and HE) providers develop and offer effective, consistent and equitable care leavers' support across all areas of Scotland.**
 - A dedicated student support professional is identified for all care leavers accessing further and higher education.
 - Range of financial, accommodation, mentoring and emotional support to be consistent across all providers.
 - Corporate parents, FE and HE providers and supporting agencies act to raise awareness of the range of supports available to support care leavers and collaborate in encouraging looked young people and care leavers to declare their status and access this support.
 - FE & HE providers use protected characteristics provision creatively to widen access and provide support for care leavers.

- 4. Throughcare and Aftercare services and FE and HE providers establish proactive and effective communication links.**
 - Collaborate over financial and accommodation support, including non-term time accommodation and help with transport costs.
 - Identify and share information - with care leaver's consent - regarding potential problems and offer proactive support to prevent care leavers dropping out of college or university.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Care leavers experience a more positive transition from school to post-school provision.
- Increased effectiveness and continuity of careers advice and more accurate assessment and advice around post-school destinations.
- Increase in the number of care leavers successfully completing college and university courses with resultant benefits for employability.
- Care leavers feel more supported and less isolated and are empowered to form trusting relationships.
- Care leavers have wider range of options in accessing learning institutions that are local to them, or that suit their ambitions, without compromising on support needs.

- Care leavers are better prepared to apply and be accepted for institutions that they may otherwise see as beyond them.
- Collaborative working clarifies roles and responsibilities and problems are detected early with strategies and contacts in place to resolve them.

Employment

Access to the employment market can be more challenging for care leavers and they should be regarded as a high priority group who need additional support to gain and sustain employment.

While [recent reports](#)^{xviii} have shown an increase on previous years in the number of care leavers in positive destinations 9 months after leaving school it still falls short in comparison to the rest of the population.

The [Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce report](#)^{xix} published in 2014 was clear that **current employability support for care leavers is not fit for purpose**. The report makes key suggestions including: 'in partnership with the third sector, the Scottish Government should consider developing a programme which offers supported employment opportunities lasting up to a year for care leavers.' This has been reflected in [Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy](#).^{xx}

Further to this, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, makes particular reference to the need for better provision for young people in care and care leavers that *lasts longer*. These key policy developments highlight the need for an innovative Scottish employability service providing a supported and stable gateway to the world of work for looked after young people.

There needs to be greater awareness of the unique employability needs of care leavers, recognising that traditional training and education platforms as an isolated response are not enough. Instead an holistic approach is required which encompasses health and wellbeing, housing and financial support and acts as a route to meaningful work or apprenticeships.

Given the acknowledged need to develop Scotland's young workforce and to prevent future skills shortages, there is a need to make explicit links between social inclusion and economic development. There are real opportunities here to create a more joined up solution for care leavers and employers.

Key Actions

1. **Develop an integrated national vocational training and progression pathway for care leavers.**
 - Develop a new employment brokering facility to match job-ready care leavers with entry level career opportunities and Modern Apprenticeships.

- Aligned to and building on the work of the [Open Doors Consortium](#), develop a new flexible (holistic) support fund to help overcome barriers experienced by care leavers seeking to enter employment for the first time.
 - Targeted financial support to help care leavers to secure and sustain employment. This can encompass work related needs, on the job training, support with travel and support with housing costs in the early weeks of employment. This will have a clear focus on helping the young person sustain employment.
 - Ensure effective alignment of funds to support care leavers at each stage of the [Employability in Scotland strategic skills pipeline](#) ^{xxi}.
- 2. Reduce any real or perceived barriers to accessing Modern Apprenticeships to ensure opportunities are aligned to care leavers' needs.**
- Subject to spending review, ensure that care leavers can access Modern Apprenticeships up to the age of 30, at the highest level of public funding available.
 - Scope out and harness the potential for using [Foundation Apprenticeships](#) as a way into employment with training for care leavers.
- 3. Implement a full systemic approach to information sharing and joint working across education services, social work and throughcare teams, Skills Development Scotland, Department for Work and Pensions and specialist providers.**
- Agencies communicate and collaborate to ensure that care leavers are supported throughout difficult transition period from education to employment.
 - Where personal information is concerned this should be subject to obtaining informed consent.
- 4. Maximise the positive use of the 'care leavers marker' by Jobcentre Plus staff.**
- Ensure that self-declaration of care leaver status is matched by tangible benefits including additional support as vulnerable claimants.
 - DWP allow and actively promote advocacy and support for care leavers in attending key interviews and interactions with the agency.
- 5. Develop and enhance supportive environments for the most vulnerable care leavers as a first step in to the world of work.**
- Build on existing good practice e.g. Community Jobs Scotland brokering, securing and supporting jobs in the third sector for young people.
 - Corporate parents have a dedicated '[Family Firm](#)'^{xxii} policy with ring-fenced opportunities, guaranteed interviews and person-centred support for care leavers.

- Private sector employers who receive public funds or are commissioned by corporate parents to deliver services should be given a more specific remit to offer targeted employment opportunities for care leavers.
- Programmes that provide flexible and sustained support, including pre-employment, employment and post-employment support.
- Partner agencies enabled to signpost and/or provide non-work related support to care leavers.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Increased participation by care leavers in support that is available to help them in to work, using a clear pathway of relevant support to secure sustained meaningful employment.
- Increased numbers of care leavers accessing and successfully completing Modern Apprenticeships.
- Reduced instances of care leavers being sanctioned by DWP and increased numbers of young people receiving support as vulnerable claimants.
- Increase in the number of care leavers securing employment.
- Skills Development Scotland reporting an increase in the numbers of care leavers securing and successfully completing Modern Apprenticeships.
- Employers play a more proactive role in recruiting care leavers.

Youth and Criminal Justice

Research consistently highlights that care leavers are overrepresented in the criminal justice system. This is most evident in [prison statistics](#)^{xxiii}, with a third of young offenders and a quarter of male adult prisoners in 2013 having been in care with 17% having been in care at age 16.

Factors associated with offending behaviour and desistance, have clear links to the other key actions outlined in the Covenant and Agenda for Change. These include the importance of meeting care leavers education, training and employment, housing, and health needs.

All youth and criminal justice agencies have responsibilities in addressing the overrepresentation of care leavers in these systems and we would encourage agencies including Children's Hearings Scotland; Scottish Children's Reporters Administration; Police Scotland; local authorities; Conventions of Scottish Local Authorities Social Work Scotland; Scottish Prison Service; Scottish Court Service; Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service; and the judiciary to endorse the Covenant and deliver on the key actions below.

Key Actions:

- 1. Identification of care leavers at the outset of their involvement with each youth and criminal justice agency to enable more appropriate responses.**
 - All individuals aged under 26 are asked a standardised, understandable question to ascertain whether they are a care leaver, the response to which is then recorded.
 - Contact other agencies that the individual reports holds this information, with their consent and as per information sharing protocols.

- 2. On identification, corporate parents and youth and criminal justice agencies will ensure that care leavers will receive:**
 - Contact will be made with relevant agencies who can meet their immediate and longer-term needs and/or who may have corporate parenting duties.
 - An holistic assessment of their needs for services and supports and an individualised plan created by the local authority in partnership detailing how entitlements will be met.
 - Ensure that any existing plans must take account of the individual's entitlements **as a care leaver**.
 - Be offered advocacy support.
 - An assertive outreach approach to offering support.

- 3. Criminal Justice interventions take into account the individual needs and circumstances of care leavers and offer:**
 - A [Whole System Approach](#) to working with care leavers including: timely and joined up interventions; maximising the use of diversion from statutory measures; court support; and transition/reintegration support.
 - A long-term relational approach to support engagement and consideration of which services are most appropriate to support care leavers.
 - Additional support to comply with interventions and during transitions/reintegration.
 - Creative use of interventions, including individual and group work supports.

- 4. Learning and development opportunities are available to the whole workforce, including decision makers, focusing on:**
 - The experiences of care leavers and impact of such experiences.
 - Corporate parenting responsibilities and actions.
 - Legislation, definitions and entitlements of care leavers, agencies responsibilities, and available services and how these can be accessed.
 - The youth and criminal justice systems.

5. Relevant Criminal Justice services should have clear corporate parenting statements of intent which should:

- Detail how they intend to fulfil their corporate parenting responsibilities.
- Be included as part of corporate parenting plans.

6. Measures taken through the Children Hearing's System (CHS) can impact on care leaver's futures. Priorities should include:

- Continuing to support 16-17 year olds on Compulsory Supervision Orders (CSOs).
- Dealing with cases in the CHS rather than court where appropriate.
- Ensuring young people subject to CSO's can access appropriate adult services.
- Planning transitions from the CHS and ensuring support plans are in place.
- Limit the carry-over of criminal records from CHS and informing when this is the case.

Anticipated outcomes:

- Improved identification and monitoring of the numbers of care leavers in youth and criminal justice systems towards the aim of reducing this overrepresentation.
- Care leavers will see benefits in self-identification.
- Improved information sharing and inclusion of young people in this.
- Greater consistency of assessment, planning and access to supports/entitlements.
- Interventions are more effective, with fewer unsuccessfully completed measures.
- Holistic recognition of the experiences of individuals to support culture change.
- Clarity on what care leavers can expect from services that can be held accountable.
- Young people in transition from the Children's Hearing System S will be more appropriately supported.
- Most "convictions" incurred in childhood will not be carried into adulthood, which should increase inclusion in pro-social opportunities and employment.

Rights and Participation

Young People have a right to participate in decisions that affect them.

[Article 12 of the UNCRC](#) specifically details that young people have the 'right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them in accordance with their age and maturity.

These rights are central to the provisions of the [Children \(Scotland\) Act 1995](#) which defines eligibility for Throughcare and Aftercare support and services for those young people preparing to leave care and who become care leavers. These supports and services are further clarified and strengthened by the Supporting Young People Leaving Care in Scotland Regulations (2004), including details of financial and other supports that care leavers would require in making the transition to adult life.

The philosophy enshrined within GIRFEC very much puts the child at the centre and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 defines the responsibility corporate parents have towards care leavers. The Act highlights the need for corporate parents to be alert to matters affecting children and young people and emphasises the importance of engaging in regular dialogue with individuals and groups whom they have a duty towards. Part 1 of the 2014 Act links this legislation specifically to the UNCRC and part 2 strengthens the role of the Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People in investigating and upholding children and young people's rights.

Rights and entitlements that are defined within policy and legislation are not always reflected in practice. Care leavers are particularly vulnerable to having their rights overlooked and the process of moving on from placement and leaving school, often within a short time-frame, tends to mean they lose access to support networks and can quickly become isolated and disempowered. Attempts to engage care leavers in participation, although well intentioned, can often come across as tokenistic and lacking in efficacy, with participants not clear whether their efforts have really made a difference.

The development of Champions Boards, bringing young people alongside Elected Members and senior managers at a local level, is a welcome one and represents real potential to achieve lasting change in acknowledging and responding to the needs of this vulnerable group.

The issue of rights and entitlements for care leavers continues to be characterised by a lack of clarity and transparency, lack of information and discretionary decisions that vary from one area to the next. Adopting a rights-based rather than deficit-based approach to support reflects the spirit of policies as they affect care leavers engendering much needed change and improvement of outcomes.

Key Actions:

- 1. All corporate parents have participation processes in place that is specifically aimed at care leavers.**
 - Arrangements are in place for meaningful and regular engagement with care leavers using existing forums or, where necessary, developing new ones e.g. Champions Boards.
 - Care leavers are given specific opportunities to influence & shape services and policies at a local and national level, including receiving feedback on their ideas and contribution.

- 2. Clear accessible information on the choices and options open to looked after young people preparing for or leaving care to be made available and can be accessed in written and web-based form.**
 - Information is available well in advance of preparations to move, from the age of 14 and onwards as appropriate.
 - Information on care leavers rights and entitlements is readily available, particularly around the issue of staying put and extended aftercare support.
 - Information is available to those care leavers who don't currently access support, informing them that they can request further support, up to the age of 26.
 - Services keep in touch with care leavers, throughout their leaving care journey into adulthood, not just respond at times of crisis.

- 3. A rights-based approach to support and services for care leavers is adopted to take full advantage of enabling legislation and policy.**
 - Rights of care leavers are proactively implemented and protected throughout their entire care-leaving journey, not just when they first leave care or at times of crisis.
 - Harder to reach groups of care leavers are given access to independent advocacy and more consistent use made of existing supporting person or persons in planning and implementing supports and upholding care leaver's rights.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Corporate parents can evidence activity and progress in reporting cycle.
- Corporate parents are more responsive to local need and gaps in provision.
- Local and national policy and practice is more reflective of care leavers needs and priorities, leading to more meaningful and sustained engagement and dialogue.
- Care leavers are better informed and prepared and more aware of the options available to them when ceasing to become looked after.
- Care leavers are more likely to remain in placement for longer and to undertake more graduated transition to independent living, leading to better outcomes.
- Care leavers are more likely to come back to request support, leading to continuity of support and relationships, preventing more serious crisis and breakdown, with resulting costs to adult services.
- Improved consistency of equitable support and equality of opportunity for care leavers that do not consistently access help.

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