University of Dundee Corporate Parent Report 2018

Background

In April 2015 Part 9 of The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 came into effect. As a consequence of this act the University of Dundee, as a post 16 education body for the purposes of Higher Education (Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005), became a Corporate Parent.

Definitions

Corporate Parenting: An organisation’s performance of actions necessary to uphold the rights and safeguard the wellbeing of a looked after child or care experienced, and through which physical, emotional, spiritual, social and educational development is promoted. Looked after child: a child or young person who is looked after by a local authority, whether at home or away from home, including a young person in continuing care after the age of 16.

Corporate parent: An organisation or person in power who has special responsibilities to care experienced and looked after children and young people, a group that includes:

• Those in residential care
• Those in foster care
• Those in kinship care, who live with a family member other than a parent
• Those who are looked after at home with social work involvement

Care experienced / Care Leaver: A person aged 25 or under who ceased to be looked after by a local authority on, or at any time after, their sixteenth birthday.

At present, many looked after children and care leavers experience some of the poorest personal outcomes of any group in Scotland. Low levels of educational engagement and achievement feed into high levels of poverty, homelessness and poor mental health. Barriers to education which care experienced young people face include lack of funding, disrupted schooling, an unstable home environment, and accessing further and higher education at a later age than their non-looked after peers.

The University of Dundee is fully committed to supporting young people who have had experience of care and to fulfilling its Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

The University of Dundee Corporate Parenting requirements are as follows:

• Prepare a plan for how it proposes to exercise the above responsibilities and keep this plan under review.
• In so far as reasonably practicable, collaborate (with each other) when exercising the above responsibilities.
• Report on how it has exercised its Corporate Parenting responsibilities, its planning and collaborating function
• Be prepared to provide information to Scottish Ministers on how it has exercised its Corporate Parenting responsibilities, if requested.
• Have regard to any guidance about Corporate Parenting issues or any direction issued by the Scottish Ministers in relation to Corporate Parenting responsibilities requirements.

The University of Dundee’s Corporate Parenting duties:

Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 has put the concept and policy of ‘corporate parenting’ onto a statutory basis in Scotland with all post-16 education bodies included in the list of Corporate Parents. As such, the University has a responsibility to be systematic and proactive in its efforts to meet the needs of looked after children and care leavers. Specifically, it must:

• 58 1(a) Be alert to matters which adversely affect the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers;
• 58 1(b) Assess the needs of those children and young people for the services and support they provide;
• 58 1(c) Promote the interests of those children and young people
• 58 1(d) Seek to provide opportunities which will promote the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers;
• 58 1(e) Take action to help those children and young people access such opportunities and make use of the services and support provided;
• 58 1 (f) Take action to improve as a corporate parent;
• 59 Prepare publish and keep plan under review;
• 60 Collaborate with other corporate parents;
• 61 Report on fulfilment of corporate parenting duties;
• 62 Provide Scottish Ministers with information on fulfilment of corporate parenting duties;
• 63 Have regard to any guidance about corporate parenting duties.

In compliance with Section 59 of Part 9 of The Children’s and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 the University’s has written a Corporate Parenting Action Plan which is available here: https://www.dundee.ac.uk/student-services/student-community/careexperiencedstudents/

University of Dundee support for looked after children and care leavers

As a Corporate Parent, the University is required to uphold the rights and safeguard the wellbeing of a looked after child or care leaver. The legislation defines wellbeing in terms of the eight SHANARRI indicators which are:
- **Safe**: protected from abuse, neglect or harm
- **Healthy**: having the best possible standards of physical and mental health, supported to make healthy and safe choices.
- **Achieving**: accomplishing goals and boosting skills, confidence and self-esteem
- **Nurtured**: having a nurturing and stimulating place to live and grow
- **Active**: having opportunities to take part in activities
- **Respected**: being given a voice, being listened to, and being involved in the decisions which affect their wellbeing
- **Responsible**: taking an active role within their home, school and community
- **Included**: being a full member of the communities in which they live and learn, receiving help and guidance to overcome inequalities.

While each indicator is separately defined, in practice they are connected and overlapping. Taken together the eight indicators offer a holistic view of each child or young person, identifying strengths as well as barriers to growth and development. These indicators provide a mechanism by which the University can assess its performance as a corporate parent.

**University of Dundee Corporate Parenting Policy**

The University's Corporate Parenting Policy is available [here](#).

This report is an overview of how University of Dundee has worked on fulfilling its Corporate Parenting Duties during the period April 2015 - March 2018.

1. **Improve information and communications for care leavers**
   (SHANARRI indicators: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included)

   The working group recognised the need to improve communications which were directed at care leavers including those living in the community, potential applicants and current students. A dedicated [website](#) has been created and additional information was added to our [widening access webpages](#). A leaflet was produced which could be used within the university, in schools/ FE settings and also at visit days or other events. This information has also been shared with local social workers. A banner stand was also created and is used continuously within the University’s [Enquiry Centre](#) during semester and is also placed at matriculation. All these communications improvements were completed by September 2015.

   The University has a single point of contact for care-experienced young people. Contact details are provided on the University [website](#) and in the University’s Care Leaver leaflet. Contact details are also published widely by care leaver support organisations such as the Who Cares? Trust, in publications and on the Propel website: [www.propel.org.uk](http://www.propel.org.uk).
Outreach projects
Looked after children and care leavers are recognised as a priority group for Widening Access and outreach initiatives (see the Widening Access webpages) and we are actively encouraging applications from care leaver students. Care experience is also an eligibility criteria for our summer school courses, and we are offering free additional preparation for entry. However, many looked after children may not have considered higher education as a possibility, and the University of Dundee, working with college and university partners, are exploring ways to work with local organisations. The University’s Transitions Officer also acts as a support link for students moving from local FE colleges to the University, providing continuity of support and encouragement to aspire to higher level courses.

The named contact can help advise prospective students as early as S3 e.g. with education planning, or their application to University of Dundee. The University has a single point of contact for care-experienced young people. Contact details are provided on the University website and in the University’s Care Leaver leaflet. Contact details are also published widely by care leaver support organisations such as the Who Cares? Trust, in publications and on the Propel website: www.propel.org.uk. Work has been done with the Care-Experienced, Estranged and Carers East Forum (CEECEF), to explore opportunities to engage looked after children in local authority or voluntary sector care, to introduce the idea of further and higher education through early intervention.

Helping with travel to visit the University: The University covers travel expenses for young people participating in many widening participation activities. In general, expenses are claimed back after the event. When required, it may be possible for the University to fund travel expenses in advance for care-experienced young people.

Informal enquiries from care leavers: Support during the application process has improved with a notable increase in informal enquiries directly being made to the dedicated Care Experienced Student Support Contact (one of the Student Support Advisors, Student Services). These are particularly from other corporate parents on behalf of prospective students. The new information leaflets and website information have helped Care Leaver students to make more approaches to the Access and Participation Manager by both email and phone in order to talk through the application process.
3. Support care experienced young people during application process
   (SHANARRI indicators: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included)

**Planned approach to support:** Care leaver contacts who have notified their status to the admissions team and/or the Access and Participation Manager have additionally been put in contact with the dedicated care leaver contact within Student Services so that a planned approach for their support can be initiated prior to arrival, and any concerns about finance or accommodation can be sorted out at the earliest opportunity. Meetings prior to arrival have happened and engagement with social workers, schools or youth workers who are advocating for the young person has also been happening regularly since the summer of 2015. The University’s Transitions Officer also acts as a support link for students moving from local FE colleges to the University, providing continuity of support and a bridge between FE level study and HE level study. The University ensures that information is provided on all available sources of funding to care-experienced young people and their advisors prior to application, and also to care-experienced offer holders, to ensure that they are aware of the funding streams available to them.

**Identifying our care leaver applicants:** Prior to the addition of a tick box on the UCAS form, the University wanted to ensure that it connected with as many as possible of the applicant care leavers, therefore included at the bottom of all communications (emails) sent from the Admissions team there is an opportunity to disclose care leaver status by emailing wecare@dundee.ac.uk which sends emails directly to the Access and Participation Manager. We are continuing to have this included on all outgoing communications to applicants as we are aware that not all will disclose their status on the UCAS form and we are encouraging disclosure as a positive step which is beneficial to the young person. Information about a young person’s care status is generally provided by the individual’s school, guidance teacher, social worker or occasionally youth worker, although it is possible that some care-experienced young people disclose when taking part in Widening Access activities. Every undergraduate applicant who has ticked the “in care” box on the UCAS application form is given information about accommodation, bursaries, specialist support services such as the Student Disability Service, and offered help in accessing any other support they need by being referred to the dedicated Care Leaver Contact within Student Services. Similarly those who contact via the wecare@dundee.ac.uk email address.

**Widening Access and Care Leavers:** Summer School: any care leaver student attending DUAL or online (OSS) summer programmes are offered free additional preparation to ensure that when starting in September they are fully prepared and supported for life as a student. They also have access to the dedicated care leaver support advisor/ or other Student Support during Summer School as required. Care leavers also are helped to access courses through our **Contextualised admission process**. Applicants who are confirmed as care leavers are supported during this process. Applicants who have ticked the “in care” box but who are not verified as care leavers under the terms of the policy are still provided with advice, assistance and support through the single point of contact system.
4. Arrival and transition support of care experienced students
   (SHANARRI indicators: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included)

**Contact prior to arrival and on arrival:** Many of the care leaver students arriving to the University have had contact with us prior to coming, this allows us to plan their support and ensure that they are welcomed and given any support they need from the beginning. We do still have some care leaver students who arrive without disclosing their status, or who have not responded to communications from the dedicated care leaver support on arrival which offer support.

**Needs assessment:** All care leaver students are offered an opportunity to come and speak to the dedicated care leaver support in order to ensure that all identified needs are met, this includes liaison with other corporate parents, especially local authority social work departments. This contact also ensures that all identified care leavers starting at the University are aware of the support available to them even if they have not made contact prior to arrival.

**Peer Mentoring:** All care leavers are offered a peer mentor/buddy (Peer Connector) from the University's well established welcoming, buddying and mentoring project Peer Connections. These mentors are experienced students who are trained and managed by Student Services. They can give help with settling in as well as any ongoing support required during the students' first year within University. It is hoped that in future years some of our care leaver students can be encouraged to join the scheme and offer peer support to other care leaver students.

**Accommodation:** Any student who requires accommodation within the University Residences is given priority for this for their first year at the University and also with any continuing accommodation they may require within residences, including over the summer vacation period. Their allocation of accommodation is managed to ensure as little disruption as possible for the student but this also depends on the preferred choice of University residence. Accommodation for 365 days of the year is offered if required, alternative lengths of contract are also available, ensuring that care leavers do not have to worry about where they will live during their studies. If the student seeks to have private accommodation there support is given to help them with this and that may also involve engagement from other corporate parents.
5. On-going Support of Care Experienced Students – Post Matriculation

(SHANARRI indicators: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included)

**Maintaining contact:** The dedicated Care Experienced Student Support Contact (Student Support Advisor) contacts the care leaver students at regular intervals to enquire how they are getting on, face to face meetings are arranged as required and these students are encouraged to make use of other support services available to them in the University. These include:

**Student support:** In addition to the dedicated Care Experienced Student Support Contact (Student Support Advisor), there are further people within the Student Services team whose role is to support undergraduate and postgraduate students. They can provide a range of practical support particularly in relation to issues surrounding a student’s degree programme, and can also signpost students into other sources of help if required. This support is available to all students including care leavers and is available through our Enquiry Centre. These include The Counselling Service which provides short term, one-to-one counselling to matriculated students. It also offers self-help resources which students can download from the website, as well as running occasional workshops and to help students develop coping strategies and resilience. Students can refer themselves to the Student Counselling Service. The Counselling Service is available to all students, including care leavers. Disability Services contacts all offer holders who have disclosed that they have a disability before they matriculate, to ensure that any special arrangements they require are in place before they arrive. Students can also register for support at a later date if required. There is no obligation for students to register but they are encouraged to do so if this will support them in their studies. Residences Support – the University has a dedicated Student Support Advisor for university residences who works closely with the dedicated Student Support Advisor for care leavers. Student Support Assistants live in University accommodation, working with residents there. They assist all the students in their accommodation to develop independent living skills and a responsible approach to shared living, and they may sometimes be the first person that a student who is struggling may approach. Once the online training is available this should be included as part of their training so that they are aware of care leaver students. Residence Life within the university residences engages students living in University accommodation with a range of social events throughout the year. The Academic Skills Centre offers support to students in relation to their academic and study skills, care leaver students are encouraged to attend their Gateway to University Study sessions which are held during welcome week in September. They also provide daily drop in sessions and also individual academic skills tutoring sessions as well as online study skill toolkits. The University Chaplaincy is open to students with or without faith and provides ongoing spiritual support to care leaver students as required. Peer mentoring through Peer Connections can also be offered to students at any stage in their university career if it is felt to be of help to them. Student Funding support is also available– see financial support section below. As with other students care leaver students are encouraged to make use of our online toolkits LIVE Smart and LEARN Smart, these resources are aimed at helping students with making the transition to university life and helping them to gain the skills and knowledge needed for independent living and study as well as personal development and self-help. They also provide ongoing support information and skills.
Currently we do not ask directly whether applicants to postgraduate degrees have a background in local authority care but they may disclose this to us after getting the communications from admissions which has the prompt to email wecare@dundee.ac.uk. We are however dependent on the student disclosing, as the definition of a care leaver in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 includes people aged under 26, it is likely that there will be postgraduate students to whom the University has corporate parenting responsibilities that we may be unaware of; unless they disclose to us based on the communications they have received. Student Support provided by the University is available to undergraduate and postgraduate students including care leavers. However, identification of postgraduate care leavers would allow the University to consult with them about the support package available.

The possibility of offering care leaver students free gym membership (Institute of Sport and Exercise) was investigated but was not able to be supported financially by them. It has been possible to offer some assistance through the Healthy Body/ Healthy Mind initiative within the University or through the Principal’s Challenge Fund instead as required.

6. Financial Support
   (SHANARRI indicators: Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included)

Bursary and Other Considerations: There has been development in the thinking around the financial support provided to our care leaver students over the past 3 years. Initial considerations to give these students a fixed bursary have now developed into a more bespoke support package being offered, as it has been realised that there are many differing scenarios with care leavers which may depend on the support being made available from other corporate parents e.g. social work departments. Working together, for instance, with social work departments, a better understanding has been developed of what a care leavers’ financial needs are when engaging with University level study. For instance, it was discovered that some care leavers were being discouraged from accessing all available funding they could get from SAAS, as there was concern about encouraging debt. Also some students were being discouraged from working as this would mean having financial support withdrawn from them to the value of any earnings. To ensure that care leaver students are able to fully participate in student life, joining in with activities and also able to take on some part time work if they wish to so, discussions were initiated with social work teams locally and with individual social workers. This allowed our Student Funding Officer to help our corporate parenting partners to develop a greater understanding of the financial requirements overall, ensuring our care leaver students are not disadvantaged by their situation. We have also been able to assist with one-off support for items such as replacing laptop computers which are essential student kit. We have encouraged care leaver students to take up part time work if this is not over burdening them, as this allows them to start developing their transferable skills, enhances their overall employability and work readiness on graduation. The University ensures that information is provided on all available sources of funding to care-experienced young people and their advisors prior to application, and also to care-experienced offer holders, to ensure that they are aware of the funding streams available to them.
**Budgeting Sessions:** All care leaver students are offered the opportunity to have individual budget management coaching sessions with the University’s Student Funding Officer to help them develop their budgeting and money management skills.

**Discretionary funding:** Discretionary funds are available to UK students, including care leavers, who face financial hardship during their studies at the University of Dundee. The Student Funding Officer works closely with the dedicated Care Experienced Student Support Contact (Student Support Advisor) to ensure that care leaver students are not suffering due to financial hardship.

7. **Training**

(SHANARRI indicators: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included)

Awareness raising amongst staff within the University was required at an early stage to ensure that as many staff as possible were aware of the Corporate Parenting requirements and were alert to the needs of care leaver students. The Student Support Advisor / Dedicated Care Leaver contact attended the launch event in Glasgow for Corporate Parenting in HE which was run by Who Cares? Scotland and also shortly after events in Dundee with other local corporate parents and in Edinburgh with other HE institutions and the University of Dundee Director of Student Services. Senior management and Academic School Deans attended Level 2 training provided by Who Cares? Scotland.

Initially awareness information was distributed to other staff within the University including Admissions, Student Services and Academic Departments. Staff were encouraged to participate in the online level 1 awareness training provided by Who Cares? Scotland. As the University was, at the same time, restructuring it proved quite challenging to get staff to engage with the training and rollout was delayed for some. Many staff within Admissions completed the training and almost all Student Services staff (including all front facing staff), however the roll out of the online training to other staff within academic departments was not achieved as the online training was suddenly withdrawn and it was some time before new resources became available on the new Who Cares? Scotland webpages. Unfortunately this meant that training stalled and we are unable to get the information about who completed the training from Who Cares? Scotland as they changed website provider. Further guidance about which aspects on the webpage would be most appropriate to replace the Level 1 training, was asked for via the CEECEF meetings, which have included representatives from Who Cares? Scotland but this has not been forthcoming. The University recognises this as one of the aspects relating to its Corporate Parenting duties that it needs to address, so it is planned that some in-house online training be developed along with resources for academic tutors / pastoral support staff/student facing staff within academic schools to ensure that there is greater awareness of the needs/ potential needs of care leavers and the University’s responsibilities for Corporate Parenting. This is recognised as a priority in our plan.
8. Partnership Working
   (SHANARRI indicators: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Included)

**Corporate Parenting Working Group:** This group acts as a steering group for the development of Corporate Parenting within University of Dundee. The group was originally convened by the Director of Student Services in May 2015 in response to the new Corporate Parenting duty. Membership of the group includes: Director of Student Services, Director of Student Admissions, Access and Participation Manager (Care Leaver Student Contact), Student Funding Officer, Student Support Advisor (Campus/ Care Experienced Student Support Contact) and President of Dundee University Student Association. The Student Support Advisor (Campus) has been tasked with the overall project development and other work in relation to Corporate Parenting on behalf of the University by the Director of Student Services. The group has been instrumental to creating the original draft action plan and members have had input over the last three years to implement and review the action plan. The working group will meet again in August 2018 to review the current plan and to look at further planning for the next 3 years. It is hoped that some care leaver students may wish to join the working group to ensure that the University is meeting the needs and including the voice of care leaver students in the planning process.

**Scottish Care leaver Covenant:** The Principal/ Vice Chancellor of the University signed the Scottish Care Leavers Covenant in October 2015. At that time the Principal stated how the University’s commitment to upholding and promoting its principles, within and across the University’s remits and responsibilities. Fully supporting and implementing actions in the Agenda for Change to close the gap and realise our ambitions and aspirations for care leavers. The Covenant aligns well with the University’s own core purpose, principles, vision and community aspirations outlined in the current University Strategy.

**Links to External Organisations/ other Corporate Parents**

Work has been done with the Care-Experienced, Estranged and Carers East Forum (CEECEF), to explore opportunities to engage looked after children in local authority or voluntary sector care, to introduce the idea of further and higher education through early intervention also discussion of common issues and sharing of good practice in relation to care leavers and corporate parenting the Student Support Advisor (Care Experienced Student Support Contact) has regularly attended meetings.

A discussion meeting was held with the University’s Student Funding Officer, Student Support Advisor (Care Experienced Student Support Contact) and the local Social Work Through-care team from Dundee City Council. This was a useful meeting to understand the perspectives of both corporate parents, understanding the requirements for financial support and look at ways to work more closely to benefit care leavers.
Data Sharing

It was originally thought that data sharing protocols could be arranged with local authorities, in particular Dundee City, but it soon became apparent that data sharing would be happening between the University and a much wider range of corporate parents and many more local authorities as young people understandably do not have their care handed over to Dundee City but remain in contact with the local authority from their home area. Combined with the new data protection legislation this has meant that any data sharing has been carried out on a case by case basis between corporate parents with the consent of the young person. Opinion from other Corporate Parents at the CEECEF meetings was sought about how other institutions are handling the situation and this seems to be the consensus approach being employed at present.

9. Other Actions in Relation to Corporate Parenting Duties

(ShANARRI indicators: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Included)

The Student Support Advisor (Care Experienced Student Support Contact) has encouraged care leaver students to enhance their employability where possible by encouraging them to participate in employability enhancement activities including volunteering, part time employment, involvement with the Centre of Entrepreneurship activities, Dundee Plus award, internships or placements via the University’s JobShop. Careers staff have been supporting this where possible as they would with any student.

The following are actions for the future: To put forward for inclusion “Care Leaver” or “Care Experienced” to be a ‘protected characteristic’ within the University’s Dignity at Work and Study policy revision which is currently in progress. To develop a systems for tracking students with declared care leaver status to determine outcomes in comparison to other students – numbers of care leavers are relatively low so any method would have to take this into consideration when making an analysis,

The University understands that its corporate parenting duties extend beyond the care-experienced students. There may be care leavers who are currently employed by the University but these have not been identified, monitored or tracked. In addition, the University recognises that young people with a background in care may benefit from work experience or employment with a corporate parent. The University intends to work in partnership with local authorities and Skills Development Scotland to help develop a plan to support looked after children and care leavers as an employer and to promote opportunities for work and training at the University to looked-after children and care leavers.

Student Services
University of Dundee
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