



Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Corporate Parenting Plan

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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's (SFRS) Corporate Parenting Plan for 2016–19.

The purpose of the corporate parenting agenda is to provide children who are looked after with the kind of support that any good parent would give their own children. Corporate parents have the opportunity and duty to provide young people who are in or have experienced the care system support and opportunities to reach their full potential.

We know that looked after children and care-experienced young people are amongst the most vulnerable in our society, and that all too often their life chances are restricted. The SFRS believes that corporate parenting is not just a responsibility. It is a real opportunity to help improve the futures of looked after children and young people. We are committed to the vision of a Scotland where all children and young people with experience of care are understood, believed in, and given every opportunity to thrive.

Working in partnership with other corporate parents we can make a positive contribution to the lives of care-experienced children and young people beyond that which we could achieve as an individual public body.

The SFRS's Corporate Parenting Plan sets the framework within which we will work to improve the lives of Scotland's looked after children and young people.

Joint statement by Chair of Board, Pat Watters and Chief Officer, Alasdair Hay

Background

The SFRS provides a range of essential public services to all of Scotland's diverse communities. Perhaps most widely acknowledged is the critical emergency responder duties we provide attending fires, road traffic collisions, significant environmental incidents and other major incidents. A core purpose of the SFRS is to take steps through prevention and protection initiatives to stop these incidents, especially fire related events, from occurring in the first place and reduce their impact when they do happen.

Working with partner agencies the SFRS strives towards the ambitions of the Scottish Government to improve the life chances of everyone who lives in Scotland through the strategic objectives of creating a Scotland that is:

Wealthier and Fairer
Smarter
Healthier
Safer and Stronger
Greener

The SFRS currently deploys a range of initiatives that provide the opportunity to work directly with young people such as education and engagement programmes (e.g. FireSkills and school engagement), home fire safety visits, community events and outreach and the fire service heritage initiatives. There are many opportunities where we may already be indirectly affecting young people in the care system through the input we give as part of fire safety enforcement of relevant premises such as a local authority run care home for children and young people. There are multiple opportunities for the SFRS to engage with care experienced young people and potentially improve their life chances directly and indirectly.

Corporate parenting

What is a corporate parent?

A corporate parent is an organisation or individual who has special responsibilities to looked after children and care-experienced young people. 'Looked after children' are children in care provided by the state — a group that includes:

- those in residential care
- those in foster care
- those in kinship care
- those who are looked after at home with social work involvement
- people up to the age of 26 who have experience of the care system

A corporate parent is intended to carry out many of the roles a parent should. They may not be able to provide everything a loving parent can, but they should still be able to provide the best possible support and care for the children and young people.

The concept is intended to encourage people and organisations to do as much as they can to make sure children and young people feel in control of their lives and able to overcome the barriers they face.

National context

Research confirms that, generally, looked after children and young people are much more likely to face poorer life experiences ¹.

There are many reasons for a child being placed in care. It is important to recognise that each case is unique. Some young people will spend significant periods of their childhood in care, others may only be placed in care for a single short period, while others will move in and out of the care system multiple times throughout their childhood. The reasons for becoming care experienced are just as varied. A loving family may experience a short period of disruption where they feel they are unable to care appropriately for a child and in some cases a child is removed from a household where there is evidence of neglect or abuse. While the reasons for entering the care system are diverse, and some circumstances prior to being placed in care will impact significantly on the young person, the process of becoming care experienced can be disruptive in its own right even when it offers a positive outcome for a young person.

We know that some looked after young people do achieve positive outcomes. Unfortunately, however, and while looked after children are not a homogenous group, for many care-experienced young people the outcomes are much less positive, and can result in lower educational attainment, significant under achievement and life chances that are largely reduced².

Children and young people who are care experienced or who are looked after have the poorest outcomes of all children and young people in Scotland. Scottish Government figures show that in 2014:

- 50% of the adult prison population had been looked after
- 30% of looked after children become homeless
- 50% of looked after children have a mental health issue
- 85% of looked after young people leave school before the age of 16
- 4% of care leavers go on to higher education

Many think that care leavers get the same chances as all other young people to get a job or go to college, so that they can work towards their dreams. The reality is, the opportunities may be there, but these young people can't always sustain them as they are still dealing with the emotional impact of being brought up in care. They need continued support to take advantage of these opportunities.

There are many examples of how care experienced young people thrive in the care system and go on to achieve great success. Young people in care are just like all other young people — except they may also need to deal with being separated from their parents, being judged for living in a children's home, and being viewed as 'different' because their families can't look after them. It is unsurprising that, after these experiences, their outcomes in life can be much poorer than their non-care peers.

¹ Review of Research on Vulnerable Young People and Their Transitions to Independent Living, Scottish Executive Social Research, 2007 4

² These Are Our Bairns — a guide for community planning partnerships on being a good corporate parent: 'We can and must do better a guide for community planning partnerships on being a good Corporate parent', The Scottish Government, 2008

Inclusion in public life

The description above reflects that whilst there are many care experienced young people who go on to live fulfilling lives and reach their full potential there are too many who do not.

Trauma, mental ill health, stigma, frequent placement moves and chaotic living arrangements are all examples of how a looked after young person's experience of education can be a negative one. Lack of educational attainment can impact on an individual's future prospects not just in relation to employment and financial security but it can also negatively impact on their health, mental wellbeing, their ability to interact fully in public life and access public services.

The absence of consistent positive role models and support in developing basic life skills such as domestic chores can mean that many care experienced young people are moving into independent living without the necessary skills to do so safely.

Social exclusion, financial difficulties, poor mental health and chaotic lifestyles are all factors recognised by the SFRS as potentially making an individual more vulnerable from fire and other emergencies than someone who is not exposed to these factors.

Corporate Parenting Responsibilities

In 2008 the Scottish Government and local authorities confirmed their commitment to the approach to corporate parenting in *These Are Our Bairns: a guide for community planning partnerships on being a good corporate parent*. The Scottish Government is now building on this by extending corporate parenting duties to a wider group of public bodies and requiring them to plan and report on their activities.

On 1 April 2015, the SFRS joined many other public bodies in Scotland to become a national corporate parent under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

Part 9 (Corporate Parenting) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places responsibilities on the SFRS to improve the lives and futures of Scotland's looked after children and care-experienced young people. In practice, this means we must listen to the needs, fears and wishes of looked after children and care-experienced young people and be proactive and determined in our efforts to address these needs.

This places an obligation on the SFRS to work with care experienced young people, their representatives and other corporate parents to identify existing and new corporate initiatives that can be deployed to improve the life chances of this disadvantaged group. In this regard the SFRS must work with these groups to develop, publish and keep under review a Corporate Parenting Plan.

In the next section, we explain how the SFRS will continue to engage with looked after and care-experienced young people to meet its corporate parenting responsibilities.

Corporate Parenting in the SFRS

The duties under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 mean that the SFRS must:

- be alert to matters which might adversely affect the wellbeing of looked after children and young people
- assess the needs of looked after children and young people for services and support we provide
- promote the interests of looked after children and young people
- provide opportunities for looked after children and young people to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing
- take appropriate action to enable looked after children and young people access these opportunities and make use of our services and support
- take any other action we consider appropriate to improve our functions to meet the needs of looked after children and young people

Status

The SFRS embraces the obligations set out for corporate parents and will take steps to improve outcomes for looked after children and care-experienced young people.

The SFRS understands that listening to care-experienced young people is essential to be able to respond to their needs and fulfil our obligations as a corporate parent. At the heart of these plans is the commitment to responding to the specified needs of young people as expressed by them through direct engagement. We fully support the vision of the Scottish Government to make Scotland the best place in the world to grow up.

The SFRS provides a range of services to help people lead safe lives in their home, at work, in public places and in education. We also have the advantage of a well-respected corporate profile which allows us to offer positive role models to young people.

The SFRS's duties as a corporate parent require us to collaborate with other corporate parents to promote the wellbeing of care-experienced young people and enable them to achieve the best outcomes. Our Corporate Parenting Plan includes exploring partnerships with a number of other corporate parents.

An important feature of collaborative working is achieving shared strategic outcomes through local Corporate Parenting Champion Boards. These groups are organised by local authority area and may take a different name, such as Corporate Parenting Strategy Group, depending on local preference. Each local authority area may have several working groups addressing their corporate parenting responsibilities but they will have only one such group dealing with strategic issues with other corporate parents.

Governance and Responsibilities

The SFRS already has a robust framework in place to oversee compliance with its equality duties. We will use this existing framework to record and monitor our progress towards achieving the commitments set out in the SFRS's Corporate Parenting Plan.

The SFRS's Board and Strategic Leadership Team are responsible for approving the overall approach and priority placed on Corporate Parenting initiatives. In particular they have responsibility for the Corporate Parenting Plan and the Strategic Plan.

The SFRS's Diversity Manager is the lead officer with respect to the co-ordination of our response to corporate parenting responsibilities. We operate a mainstreamed approach to equality where individual Directorates and Service Delivery Areas (SDA's) have responsibility for meeting and reporting on their equality obligations and this extends to the duties identified for corporate parenting.

To support the development of the plan and its initial implementation a short-term working group was set up drawing support from Directorates and SDAs. In line with the SFRS's commitment to mainstreaming equality this working group will be replaced by inter-Directorate/area partnership working on specific initiatives identified within the plan. The need for a long-term working group will be kept under review by the Diversity Manager.

Corporate parenting obligations have been added to the SFRS's approach to equality, diversity, inclusion and human rights in the Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment process and in a number of initiatives being delivered by the SFRS such as engagement with young people.

We will reflect the national corporate parenting agenda in our corporate goals and include reference in our Strategic Plan.

We will take steps to ensure that SFRS staff and Board are aware of the needs of looked after children and care-experienced young people and understand the SFRS's corporate parenting responsibilities.

Our Corporate Parenting Plan outlines the outcomes we will work towards and the action we will take to meet our responsibilities and make a difference to the lives of Scotland's care-experienced young people. The SFRS's outcomes and associated actions are set out on pages 8 - 10. We will develop detailed action plans and incorporate initiatives into existing corporate plans as appropriate to take this work forward.

To underpin the corporate reporting framework the activities identified in the Corporate Parenting Plan will be reported as a stand-alone activity on a six-monthly basis to the Performance Improvement Forum with annual reports to the Full Board. The format of the reporting will include progress against the action plan and relevant 'case studies' that illustrate progress towards improving the experiences of cared for children and young people. SFRS Board papers are available to access on our website.

Corporate Parenting Action Plan

Corporate Parenting Plan: Outcome 1		Owner(s)	Deadline
The SFRS will ensure that the needs of looked after children and care-experienced young people are considered in its policy, planning and performance	We will:		
	1. Incorporate Corporate Parenting into the Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment process. This step will ensure that the potential impact of our corporate decisions on care experienced young people is considered and based on evidence.	Equality & Diversity Team	31/12/16
	2. Take steps to consider the needs of care-experienced young people in the development of the SFRS's revised statutory Equality Outcomes. This includes establishing a process for engaging with this community group.	Equality & Diversity Team	31/12/16
	3. Develop a process for establishing working relationships with Who Cares? Scotland, Scottish Through Care and After Care and other third sector organisations representing the views of looked after children and care-experienced young people to ensure their needs are reflected in our decision making.	Corporate Parenting Working Group	31/12/16
	4. Liaise with other corporate parents and Corporate Parent Champion Boards to share best practice in the development and implementation of the Corporate Parenting Plan.	Corporate Parenting Working Group	31/12/16
	5. Remain informed about national and local research/issues affecting young people in care and care-experienced.	Corporate Parenting Working Group	31/3/19
6. Incorporate 'care experienced' into our equality monitoring forms for relevant services.	P&P and R&R supported by Equality & Diversity Team	31/3/19	

Corporate Parenting Plan: Outcome 2			
Ensure access to our services for children and young people in care and care leavers	We will: 1. Review and improve the monitoring of our education and engagement programmes with the purpose of improving access for children and young people in the care system and the care experienced.	P&P/ POD (others as appropriate)	31/12/18
	2. Review the content and delivery methods of education and engagement programmes to ensure young people can and are enabled to participate.	P&P and POD	31/12/18
	3. Develop a method for care experienced young people to contribute to the design, content, delivery methodology and evaluation of relevant SFRS services and education programmes to ensure their needs are met.	P&P/ R&R/POD	31/12/18
Corporate Parenting Plan: Outcome 3.			
Improve access to employment and development opportunities within the SFRS	We will: 1. Consider the feasibility of including Corporate Parenting into future apprenticeship/work experience schemes	POD	31/12/18
	2. Consider the feasibility of extending positive action in recruitment initiatives to care experienced young people	POD	31/12/18
	3. Consider the feasibility of establishing a formal role model/mentoring programme for young people in care and the care experienced	POD	31/12/18
	4. Consider adopting an annual 'bring your child to work' event for young people in care	POD	31/12/18

	5. Consider development of formal work experience policy and deploy positive action measures for care experienced young people		
Corporate Parenting Plan: Outcome 4			
The life chances of young people in care and care leavers is promoted through partnership working	We will: 1. Continue to identify and further the opportunities for working with partner agencies at SDA level	SDAs	31/12/18
	2. Participate on Corporate Parenting Champion Boards	SDAs	31/12/18
Corporate Parenting Plan: Outcome 5			
SFRS staff and Board understand and are aware of the needs of looked-after children, care-experienced young people and the SFRS's corporate parenting responsibilities	We will: 1. Develop a training/development programme to outline the principles of corporate parenting, the SFRS's responsibilities, the SFRS's action plan and the experiences of young people in care.	Corporate Parenting Working Group	31/3/17
	2. Develop a communication strategy to promote the Corporate Parenting Plan	Corporate Parenting Working Group	31/12/16
	3. Include reference to corporate parenting issues in relevant training programmes	Corporate Parenting Working Group/ POD/ P&P	31/3/18
	4. Provide an intranet based resource of evidence to improve the understanding of corporate parenting issues	Corporate Parenting Working Group	31/3/17
Corporate Parenting Plan: Outcome 6			
Ensure that our Corporate Parenting responsibilities remain a corporate priority	We will: 1. Identify appropriate method for mainstreaming corporate parenting objectives into corporate reporting mechanisms	Corporate Parenting Working Group	30/6/17
	2. Review the ongoing requirement to have a stand-alone Corporate Parenting working group	Board/SLT	30/6/17
	3. Develop method for the ongoing identification of new initiatives relevant for promoting the needs of care experienced young people	Corporate Parenting Working Group	30/6/17

Contact details and further information

For further information on the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's Corporate Parenting Plan please contact:

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SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Working together for a safer Scotland

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