



corporate
PARENTING



The Seven Elements of a Good Corporate Parenting Plan

Prepared by Who Cares? Scotland



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A. Introduction

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (the 2014 Act) places a new set of duties on a range of public bodies now known as “corporate parents”. The new role of corporate parent and the duties that come with that role have created some exciting opportunities to improve the wellbeing of care experienced young people in Scotland. By understanding and assessing their needs, promoting their interests, providing meaningful opportunities, looking for ways to overcome barriers to accessing services and continually improving, corporate parents can make a real difference in the lives of our young people.

These duties are far reaching and, for some corporate parents, may involve work in areas they are unfamiliar with. However, there is an expectation (and indeed a duty) to **collaborate** with other corporate parents, so this is not an issue that any corporate parent is required to tackle single-handedly.

The 2014 Act includes a requirement to publish a **plan** setting out how the corporate parent intends to fulfil its duties. In our role supporting corporate parents, Who Cares? Scotland provides feedback on draft corporate parenting plans to identify areas that can be improved or strengths that can be built upon. Through this experience, we have reviewed a wide range of plans and have put together this document to provide some general guidance on what a good corporate parenting plan looks like.

We recommend this document is read in conjunction with our guide: **Corporate Parenting Duties – An Overview**, which can be found on our website.

Please read the full advice below, but in summary the 7 elements of a good corporate parenting plan are:

1. A **presentation** that is easy to follow and can be read and understood by all audiences, but particularly by care experienced young people.
2. An explanation of the **context** that shows why the role of corporate parent is so important and demonstrates an understanding of the corporate parenting duties.
3. Meaningful **engagement** with care experienced young people; both at the drafting and reviewing stage of the plan and on an ongoing basis
4. A demonstration that senior management will be **responsible** for leading on the implementation of the plan.
5. Evidence that staff are being **trained** on the issues which affect care experienced young people and on the organisation’s role as a corporate parent.
6. Clear and specific **outcomes** with deadlines – as opposed to vague aspirations or commitments with insufficient detail – that directly reference how the organisation will meet its statutory duties. (See Corporate Parenting Duties – An Overview)
7. Actions that will be undertaken in **collaboration** with other corporate parents.



B. The 7 elements

1. PRESENTATION

The plan should be presented in a **clear, focused** and **accessible** manner with consistent use of appropriate terminology. It is recommended that the term “care experienced young people” is used throughout, excepting situations in which it is necessary to draw a distinction between formally looked after young people and care leavers. Although this is not the statutory term, it is all inclusive, and is a universally accepted expression that Who Cares? Scotland (WC?S) uses in all reports. Young people tell us that they prefer being referred to as “care experienced” as it covers children and young people of all ages with all varieties of care experience, and shifts the emphasis from the provider to the subject of care.

The plan should be as accessible as possible to young people. The format of the plan is not prescribed, so corporate parents are free to develop a **young person-friendly plan** or a young person-friendly version of an existing plan. Such a plan could use a range of media as appropriate.

2. CONTEXT

It is not possible to be a good corporate parent without an appreciation of the ‘why’ of corporate parenting in addition to the ‘what’ and ‘how’. As such, a good corporate parenting plan should illustrate a strong grasp of the **motivation** for and **spirit** of the 2014 Act.

The plan should discuss the legislative and policy context, demonstrating a clear grasp of the **nature, extent** and **gravity** of the corporate parenting duties set out in the 2014 Act. For more information on the duties themselves, we recommend this document is read in conjunction with our guide **Corporate Parenting Duties – An Overview**, which can be found on our website.

The relevant population should be precisely defined, with accurate, appropriate and up-to-date statistics being deployed to illustrate the size of the population, the placement types in which care experienced young people are accommodated and the **outcomes** experienced by our young people.

The needs of care experienced young people must be addressed **directly** and **specifically**. It would be entirely insufficient to reference only activities undertaken in respect of young people generally or a broader category of disadvantaged or vulnerable young people. While existing opportunities may of course be relevant to care experienced young people, a corporate parenting plan must explain how the wellbeing of this specific group will be given special attention.

3. ENGAGEMENT WITH CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE

Corporate parents are under a duty, where appropriate, to consult care experienced young people, corporate parents and any other “appropriate persons” before preparing or revising their corporate parenting plan.

As such, it is recommended that corporate parents produce their plan through **consultation** or (ideally) **co-production** with care experienced young people.





Furthermore, **listening to care experienced young people** will be necessary for the effective fulfilment of all the corporate parenting duties. Consultation is an important part of the listening process, but this should also include opportunities for regular dialogue.

A good plan will include the outcomes of recent consultations with young people, and make it clear how this consultation work informed present strategy. The methods of engagement that were used to develop the plan itself should be set out and the plan should also outline the ongoing mechanisms which are in place, or being developed, to ensure **regular and meaningful dialogue** with care experienced young people.

As far as possible, engagement should take into account all age groups and stages of development, genders, placement types, disabilities, different cultural and religious backgrounds and geographical contexts.

4. RESPONSIBILITY

The statutory guidance makes clear that corporate parenting responsibilities cannot be delegated to an individual or team, but must instead be fulfilled by the entire organisation and **led by senior management** across all departments. The activity of senior management should be scrutinised by independent board members and others involved in governance.

A good corporate parenting plan will demonstrate how corporate parenting will be integrated into the **day-to-day work** of the organisation. The plan will make it clear that overall responsibility lies with senior management, with projects and initiatives clearly assigned to individual employees or teams. The process for reviewing and reporting on the plan (which must, at a minimum, be completed every three years) should also be clearly defined. Ideally, beyond the formal process of review and reporting, progress against the plan should be regularly appraised to ensure that it remains a **live document** so that the plan and its implementation can be updated as and when required.

5. TRAINING

The statutory guidance emphasises that staff at all levels must **understand their duties** and be supported and enabled to fulfil them. Corporate parents should provide staff with “adequate opportunities” to learn about the care experienced population and the organisation’s corporate parenting duties. A good corporate parenting plan will include commitments to providing **training for all employees**, with staff participation and outcomes being properly recorded and reported upon. Ideally such training should be **mandatory** for all staff.

6. OUTCOMES

Plans should include specific intended outcomes, with precise **timescales**. Outcomes should be **measurable** with relevant performance indicators. It should be clear what would represent the “completion” of and success for specific activities, to allow meaningful appraisal of progress and robust evidence for reporting to the Scottish Government.

The statutory guidance makes clear that corporate parenting reports must be based on **data** and **analysis**, rather than merely “narrative descriptions of activity”. It is of course entirely legitimate for early plans to concentrate on “mapping the baseline” in the absence of suitable



data sets, provided there is subsequently a meaningful attempt to measure impact against this established baseline.

Where the plan makes reference to a large number of ongoing projects and initiatives, care should be taken both to explain the nature and significance of each and how all of these actions hang together as a **coherent strategy**. In respect of projects with long timescales, it is recommended that a number of specific shorter-term intermediate goals are included.

A good plan will marry specific, short to medium term achievable outcomes with longer-term, more speculative goals which illustrate ambition and identify the direction of travel.

These actions should include the provision of high-quality concrete opportunities which will help care experienced young people become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to their communities.

The statutory guidance strongly emphasises the role of corporate parents as employers with the power to offer opportunities for work experience, training or employment. Corporate parents should consider whether specific opportunities can be created for care experienced young people and how existing opportunities can be promoted among and made accessible to this population.

7. COLLABORATE

Corporate parents do not have to meet their duties on their own. In fact, all corporate parents are under a duty to collaborate with each other where this will safeguard or promote the wellbeing of care experienced young people.

Collaboration could involve publishing a joint corporate parenting plan. It could also involve:

- Sharing information
- Providing advice or assistance
- Coordinating activities
- Sharing responsibility for action
- Funding activities jointly

Collaboration should go beyond membership of working groups and be embraced as an opportunity to increase and diversify the **high-quality opportunities** available to care experienced young people while avoiding the duplication of labour.

As such, a good corporate parenting plan will demonstrate that serious thought has been given to the organisation's remit, strengths, and weaknesses as a corporate parent. Some corporate parents may, for instance, be well placed to identify and generalise best practice within a given sector or discipline, while others may be able to play a crucial role in establishing or hosting a shared online resource or in providing free public transportation to activities arranged by other corporate parents. On the other hand, where corporate parents do not directly deliver services to young people, engagement with young people could be approached through collaboration with other corporate parents.





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In any event, a good corporate parenting plan will show that potential opportunities for collaboration with other corporate parents have been **thoroughly explored** and details of planned (or potential) collaborations will be included as specific action points.

