

Corporate Parenting: A guidance document for Human Resource Departments



**WHO
CARES?**
SCOTLAND



Introduction

This guidance document has been developed to support you within your role as a Corporate Parent. It can be challenging to realise how you can fulfil your role as a loving Corporate Parent when you are not working in a front-facing role. This document will provide you with supportive guidance to empower you to fulfil your duties in practice, and be the best Corporate Parent you can be.

What is Corporate Parenting and who are Corporate Parents?

Corporate Parenting is defined within the [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#) as "the formal and local partnerships between all services responsible for working together to meet the needs of looked after children, young people and care leavers". This means that those named as Corporate Parents must take steps to uphold the rights and safeguard the wellbeing of **Care Experienced** people. In order to ensure that the most holistic scaffold of support possible surrounds Care Experienced people, Corporate Parents should work in collaboration with others in order to ensure that Care Experienced people feel loved, cared for, safe, secure, healthy, well supported and have access to opportunities - the same way any supportive parent would.

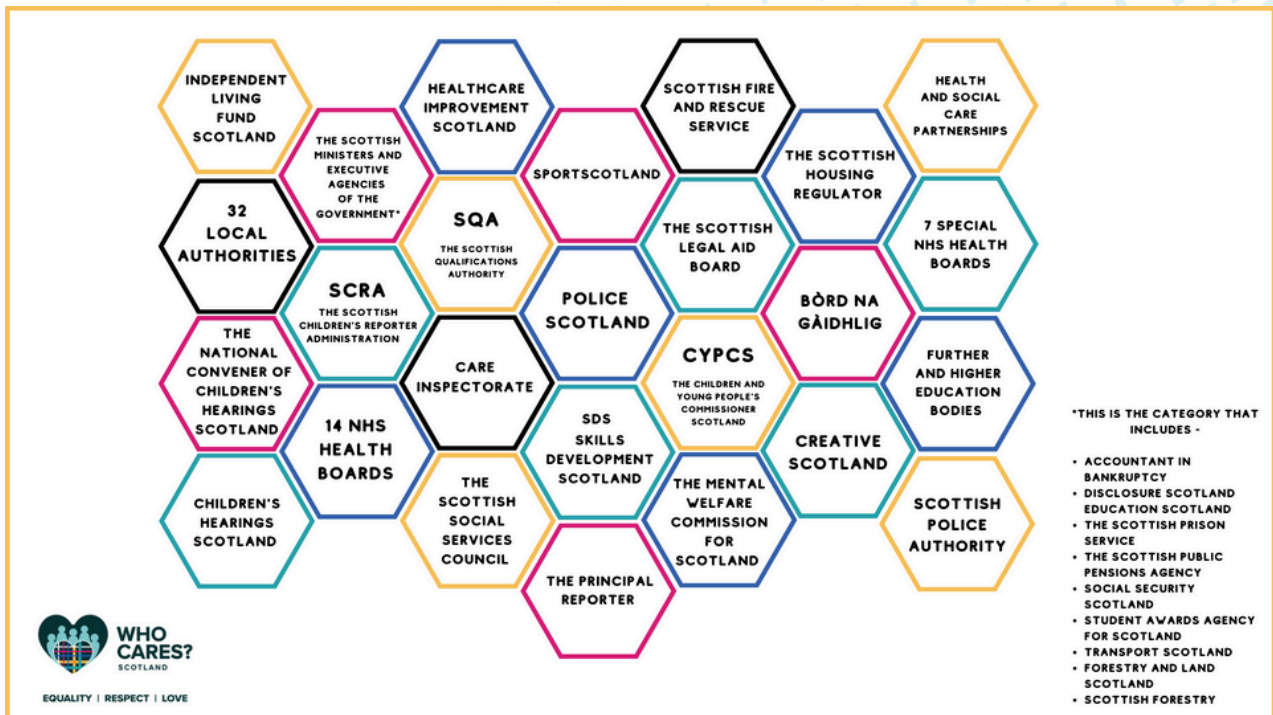
If you are employed by a named Corporate Parent, then you yourself are a Corporate Parent. No matter what your role is within your organisation, the statutory Corporate Parenting duties apply to you. Your role as a Corporate Parent provides you with an opportunity to make a real impact on the lives of Care Experienced people. Positive Corporate Parenting practice can be transformational in the lives of Care Experienced people. No matter what role you play, never underestimate the impact you can make!

Corporate: "Shared by a whole group and not just a single member."







Parenting: "The raising of children and young people and all the responsibilities and activities that are involved in it."



The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014) names 26 individuals and bodies as being Corporate Parents:



The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014) outlines six key statutory duties that should be upheld by corporate parents, these are:

-  Be **alert** to matters which, or which might, adversely affect the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers.
-  **Assess** the needs of those children and young people for services and support.
-  **Promote** the interests of those children and young people.
-  Seek to provide looked after children and care leavers with **opportunities** to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing.
-  Take action to help those children and young people to **access** opportunities and make use of the services and access support they provide.
-  Take any other action you consider appropriate for the purpose of **improving** the way in which you exercise your functions in relation to looked after children and care leavers.

Please note that although the legislation and accompanying statutory guidance set out duties to Care Experienced children, young people and adults up to the age of 26, we ask that Corporate Parents view this as a minimum requirement. Who Cares? Scotland recognises that the impact of care can be lifelong, and would encourage Corporate Parents to offer lifelong support to Care Experienced people.

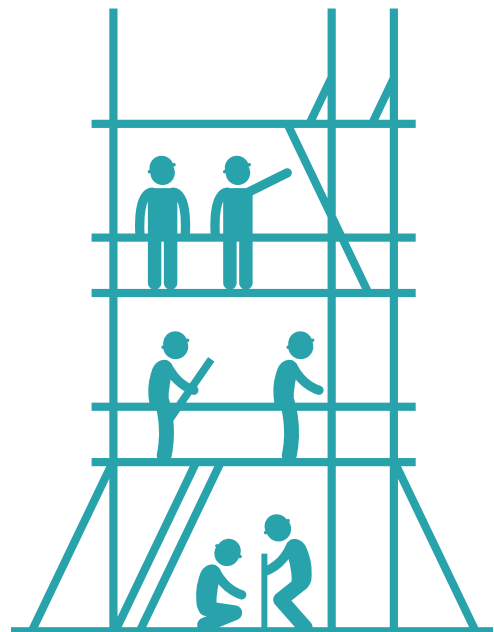
Care Experience Definition

The term 'Care Experienced' refers to anyone who is currently in care or has been for any length of time regardless of their age. This care may have been provided in many different settings such as; Kinship Care, Looked After at Home, Residential Care, Foster Care, Secure Care and Adoption.



Scaffold of Care

Every child and young person needs a strong scaffold of love, care and support to see them through to adulthood and beyond. For many people, that scaffold is provided by those closest to them - parents, siblings, pets; wider family such as grandparents, aunts and uncles and the Scaffold of Care surrounding communities, like neighbours and school friends. When a child or young person goes into care, it can feel like essential pieces of this scaffold are removed. Sometimes very suddenly and often outside of the young person's control. Of course, many new people will step in to form a new scaffold, such as social workers, carers, care workers, teachers etc. Many of whom are Corporate Parents. Our message to Corporate Parents and wider Scottish society is that it is the job of all of us to ensure Care Experienced people have a strong scaffold of support around them, for as long as they need it. Together we can support our Care Experienced communities to thrive.





Why being 'Care Aware' matters

Diversity within the workplace not only offers a wide range of perspectives and experiences within an organisation, but also creates a feeling of belonging when the workforce is reflective of wider Scottish society.

Care Experienced people can experience a great amount of adversity and instability growing up which can impact on all areas of their lives, particularly education, which can in turn reduce options in relation to employment. The adversity that Care Experienced people have overcome throughout their lives can support the development of unique skills and often a greater ability to overcome challenges and barriers than those who do not have this life experience. Ensuring that you create the conditions to attract and retain talent from the Care Experienced community is essential to ensure diversity in your workforce. In contrast, when the barriers that Care Experienced people face in relation to employment are not understood and mitigated against, it can lead to Care Experienced people being underrepresented in your workforce.

We know that when everyone gets the right support at the right time, they can thrive and succeed, which creates stronger workplace communities for everyone. When organisations utilise 'Care Aware' hiring practices, this not only creates inclusive recruitment processes, but enhances organisational culture.

When organisations remove the barriers that Care Experienced people face in their employment journey, it allows Corporate Parents to embrace the knowledge, skill, passion and diversity Care Experienced people can bring to their workforce. The following section of this guidance document provides examples of the barriers and challenges that Care Experienced people can face in relation to gaining and sustaining employment. Presented in relation to these examples will be solutions, that when implemented could have the potential to remove or mitigate against such barriers and challenges, therefore supporting Care Experienced people to thrive within employment.



Educational Attainment

Jasmine, who has a keen interest in football, is considering applying for a position as a Youth Football Coach. Jasmine holds skills and qualities that would make her a great fit for this position. Jasmine feels anxious about her application because she doesn't have the qualification needed for the role due to disruption in her education during her time in care. Jasmine is disheartened and has doubt in her mind whether or not to apply for the role.

Thanks to the organisation's promotion of the guaranteed interview scheme for Care Experienced people, Jasmine felt confident to apply for the role.

This provided Jasmine with an opportunity to highlight the skills and qualities she holds. The organisation found that Jasmine would be a great fit for the role and she was offered the position.

Application Process

Bartek wishes to take steps to progress his career and has applied for a role with a different organisation. The role he has applied for would provide him with the development opportunities he is searching for. The application process requires him to provide five previous home addresses. In order to obtain this information, Bartek would need to submit a data access request to Social Work. This was problematic for Bartek. Linking back in with services that were part of a traumatic time in his life, made him very anxious. Bartek was nervous that he would no longer be considered for the role he was applying for when the organisation realises he previously lived in a residential children's home.

Bartek's prospective employers have recently implemented more trauma informed practices in regard to the recruitment of Care Experienced people. With the help of Who Cares? Scotland, the organisation recently implemented a Care Experience tick box on their applications, therefore Bartek was able to highlight that he was Care Experienced. This enabled the organisation to engage in contextualised and 'care aware' hiring practices, which included considerations around address history.

Finance

After successfully completing the first stage of an application process, Kai has been invited to a group interview. However, Kai is hesitant to attend because of the requirement to wear formal interview clothing. Kai doesn't have suitable clothing and so he contacted the organisation and withdrew from the interview process.

The organisation asked Kai why they have decided to withdraw from this process. Asking this question, as a caring parent would, allowed them to identify available support for Kai. The organisation signposted Kai to a service which supports employability needs, and with the support provided, Kai was able to buy formal clothing and attend the group interview. Kai felt confident and prepared alongside the other candidates.

As a Corporate Parent, being alert to this barrier enabled the organisation to make changes to their interview process. There is now no longer an expectation of formal wear at interviews and they have since communicated this change throughout their application process for future applicants.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Justin recently started his first paid job, and before beginning, he felt quite anxious. The idea of having to pay his own rent and bills was overwhelming. Justin doesn't have the same strong familial support system in place that many non-Care Experienced people have. These relationships often allow non-Care Experienced people to access family support when struggles are encountered in life, including access to financial support. The pressure of not having this scaffold of support greatly impacted on Justin's mental health and in turn, affected other aspects of his life.

Justin has built organic and trusted relationships within his workplace and is fully supported in many aspects due to the organisation's 'Care Aware' hiring practices. Further to this, the organisation provides Care Experienced employees with a mentor. The relationships Justin has developed within the workplace have strengthened his scaffold of support, removing many of the anxieties he had previously. While some worries may still exist for Justin, he now feels he has a scaffold of support around him, giving him more confidence to face any adversities in life, knowing he has these loving and nurturing relationships behind him.

Geographical Location

Siobhan lives in a rural area with few job opportunities. As a result, she has had to apply for jobs in the city, but this would require long commutes, and the cost of travel is a concern, especially before she receives her first wage.

Siobhan was successful! Her new employers understood the barriers facing her as a Care Experienced person living in a rural community and were able to offer her the position on a hybrid basis. In addition to this, they have also provided support with travel costs. The support provided by the organisation was greatly appreciated by Siobhan- she felt cared for, supported and understood by the organisation. This enabled Siobhan to sustain her employment and opened further opportunities for her in her career.





Corporate Parenting in Action: Scottish Children's Reporter Administration

The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) have fully embraced their role and duties as a Corporate Parent allowing them to not only be fully alert and understanding of the lived realities of those in care, but responsive to the barriers Care Experienced people face, ensuring they work towards a lifetime of equality, respect and love for Care Experienced applicants and those whom they employ.

Since 2010, SCRA have been ringfencing their Modern Apprenticeship program for Care Experienced people. In recognition of the lifelong impact of care, Care Experienced people of all ages are eligible to apply for the program. From the beginning of the recruitment process support is offered to applicants, with initial support including an invitation for an informal chat and the provision of support with applications and interviews. Taking place within a relaxed environment, SCRA's interviews for Modern Apprenticeships have been described as being "more of a supportive discussion than an interview".

Once in post, SCRA support the learning and skills development of successful candidates. After completing the programme, Modern Apprentices are offered a full-time, two year-long traineeship within the organisation during which period they are supported to complete a Scottish Vocational Qualification and apprenticeship. Following the traineeship a full-time, permanent position within the organisation is offered.

In addition to this, they have adjusted their policies and practices in line with the Equality Act (2010) in respect of their implementation of treating Care Experience as protected characteristic. This example of Corporate Parenting in action in its widest sense highlights the transformational impact that it can have on the lives of Care Experienced people.





Best Practice Guidance

It is recommended that you consider the following practices to help you to mitigate against the challenges that your Care Experienced applicants and employees may have faced. These practices will help you on your journey as a Corporate Parent to ensure that your Care Experienced employees are supported to thrive and to succeed within your organisation.

'Care Aware' hiring practices

Adapting the recruitment process for Care Experienced people is vital in addressing the barriers to employment for this community. Traditional recruitment practices do not always guarantee a fair process for Care Experienced people. Implementing more care aware hiring practices within your organisation helps to mitigate against the barriers facing the Care Experienced community when engaging in the recruitment process for potential employment opportunities.

- **The Care Experienced 'tick box' within application forms:** Providing an opportunity for Care Experienced applicants to declare their lived experience is a vital step in care aware hiring practices. Providing as wide and inclusive a definition as possible of what it means to be Care Experienced with a full explanation as to why your organisation is asking for this information, allows for an offer of support to be made to your Care Experienced applicant. Additionally, this practice provides your organisation with the necessary information to ensure that your potential recruitment of the applicant is carried out in a trauma informed way through a Care Experienced lens.
 - **Guaranteed interview schemes:** Many organisations offer a guaranteed interview for Care Experienced applicants. These schemes help to reduce stigma and stereotypes, reduce the employability gap for Care Experienced people and help to remove barriers to employability for this community. Care Experienced applicants that may not have applied otherwise may feel encouraged to do so knowing that your organisation offers this scheme.
 - **Contextualised application screening and interviews:** This style of application screening allows your organisation to come from a place of understanding, awareness and acknowledgement of the barriers that can face a Care Experienced applicant. Utilising the information captured during the application process will allow your organisation to also provide a contextualised interview for the applicant, adjusting the interview process accordingly, again through both a trauma informed and Care Experienced lens.
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Interview adjustments

Understanding the unique challenges which face the Care Experienced community, organisations may wish to reduce the pressure and anxieties felt around the interview process itself. Many organisations openly communicate their stance of a non-formal interview dress code at the point they invite candidates to interview. Due to the implementation of the care aware hiring practices detailed above, organisations are also able to offer flexible interview arrangements and make reasonable adjustments for the Care Experienced candidate.

Access to flexible working opportunities

You may wish to consider offering the opportunity of remote working to your Care Experienced employees. This consideration creates opportunities for those individuals living outwith the local travel to work area, and those who consider themselves as having a disability. Remote working also helps to lower the financial implications for Care Experienced people in relation to travel, clothing and subsistence costs.

Care Experienced 'Employee Passport'

Many organisations have introduced 'employee passports', a personnel file detailing important information the employee wishes to share with their line manager. This can then travel with the employee around the organisation in whichever role they move to. Information around disability, health, family life and adjustments can be found within these 'employee passports'. These passports ensure that Care Experienced employees don't need to repeat conversations around the specific support they are entitled to as Care Experienced employee, and in turn having to continue to reshare their story with each new manager.

Organisational Change

Being aware of the lifelong impact that care can have on the lives of Care Experienced people will help your organisation become more mindful around the support structures you put in place for Care Experienced employees. The relationships that individuals build at work can be some of the longest and most connected relationships someone holds. For Care Experienced people, relationships formed through their employment could be even more important than for those who have a more traditional scaffold of support around them. In addition, Care Experienced people can be more affected by change due to instability experienced growing up. Therefore, it is important that you are aware of the impact that organisational change, such as changes to line management, restructure and redundancy could have for Care Experienced employees and that you manage this in an understanding, trauma-informed and supportive manner.

Regardless of the role that you fulfil within your organisation, you have an incredible opportunity to make a positive impact in the lives of Care Experienced people. By taking this guidance into consideration and implementing the practices suggested, you will ensure that your organisation is fulfilling its Corporate Parenting duties and creating the conditions to attract and support Care Experienced employees to thrive within your workplace.



The Education and Engagement Team at Who Cares? Scotland are funded by Scottish Government to provide support and guidance to named Corporate Parents. For more information or to access further guidance or support, please contact us at : corporateparenting@whocaresScotland.org



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