

Corporate Parenting Plans: Best Practice Guidance Document

Introduction

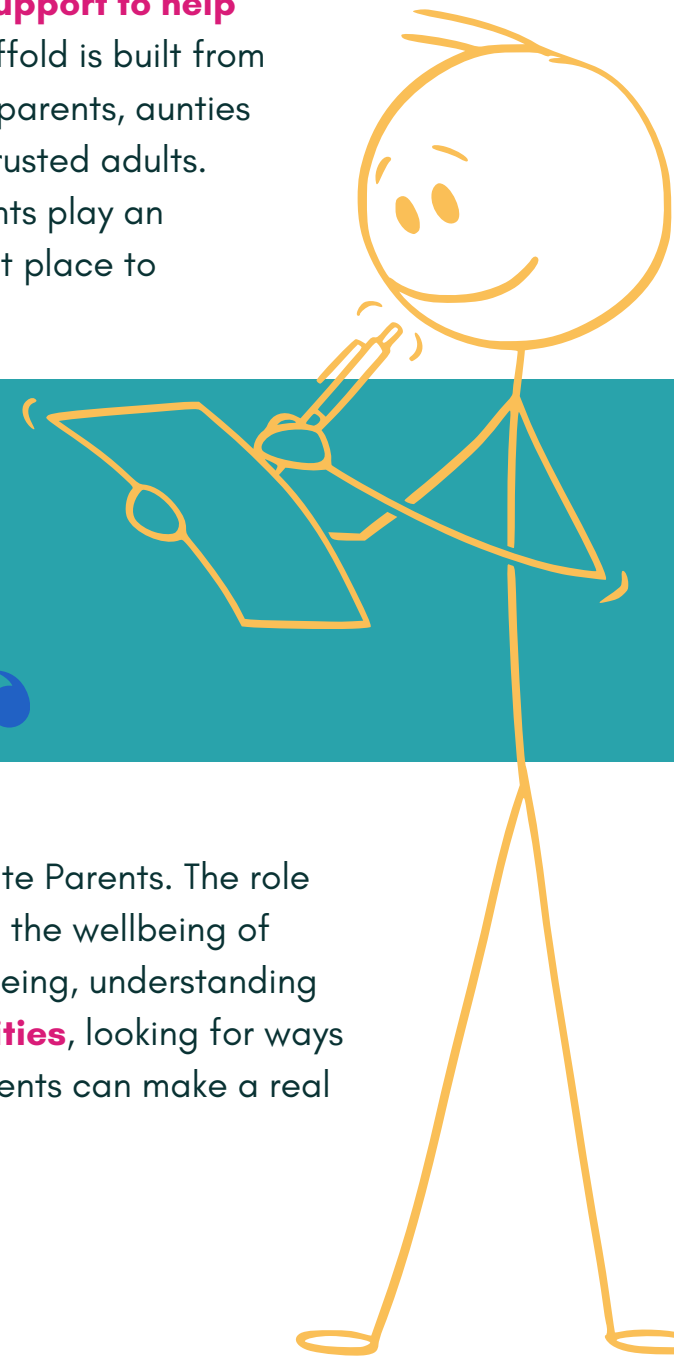
Every child, young person, and adult needs a strong scaffold of love, care, and support to help them flourish and step confidently into adulthood and beyond. For many, that scaffold is built from the people closest to them – parents, brothers and sisters, pets, wider family like grandparents, aunts and uncles, and strengthened by their communities of neighbours, school friends and trusted adults. These connections hold us steady, particularly during life's challenges. Corporate Parents play an important part in that [scaffold of support](#), and your Corporate Parenting plan is a great place to showcase this.

“ Under section 59 a corporate parent must prepare, keep under review, and publish a Corporate Parenting Plan. This plan must set out how the corporate parent proposes to fulfil its corporate parenting responsibilities (as set out in section 58 of the Act).

Statutory Guidance Section 59:109

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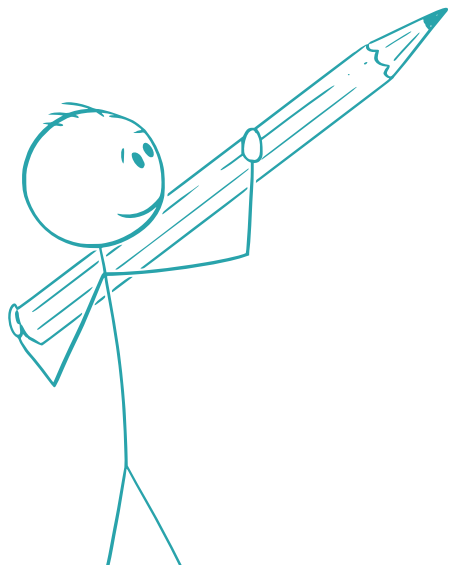
[The Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#) places a set of duties on Corporate Parents. The role of a Corporate Parent and the duties that come with that role are intended to improve the wellbeing of Care Experienced people in Scotland. By being **alert** to matters that can impact wellbeing, 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 Care Experienced people.



This is your opportunity to tell the Care Experienced community how your organisation is committed to helping them to thrive and achieve their goals. You can demonstrate your passion to be the best Corporate Parents you can be by writing a positive and inspiring plan.

Your Corporate Parenting plan may be accessed by a wide range of people, from Scottish Government officials to Care Experienced individuals wishing to access your service or understand the support that you may provide to them.

Your Corporate Parenting plan allows you to **show you understand the statutory duties and the responsibilities** placed upon your organisation. It also serves as a tool to hold you accountable as you work towards delivering the actions that you have determined will help you uphold the duties.





Content and Structure

Much of the advice in this guidance document has been drawn from [the Statutory guidance on Part 9 \(Corporate Parenting\) of the Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#), which is a great resource for you on all aspects of Corporate Parenting. The Statutory Guidance doesn't provide a specific structure for your Corporate Parenting plan, but it does state *'This plan must set out how the corporate parent proposes to fulfil its corporate parenting responsibilities (as set out in section 58 of the Act).'*

[Statutory Guidance Section 59:101](#)

Therefore, in your plan you must explain how your organisation will perform your Corporate Parenting duties. You may tie this into any visions or values your organisation holds, but you must show how those values will ensure you uphold your duties.

Your Corporate Parenting plan must explain explicitly how you will:



Assess the needs of Care Experienced people for the services and support you provide.



Be alert to matters which, or which might, adversely affect the wellbeing of Care Experienced people



Promote the interests of Care Experienced people.



Provide Care Experienced people with opportunities to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing.



Take action to help Care Experienced people, (a) access the opportunities you're providing and (b) make use of services, and access support, available.



Take any other action you consider appropriate to improve the way you work with Care Experienced people.



It is recommended that all Corporate Parents set clear objectives for the duration of the plan, on which their performance will be measured. In respect of the opportunities, services and supports which may be provided, Corporate Parents should pay close attention to the quality of what they are providing, not just the volume and range. This will involve seeking and analysing feedback from children and young people who participated in activities or accessed services



Statutory Guidance Section 59:109

When creating your Corporate Parenting plan, it is important that you have an intersectional approach. You must consider how you fulfil your statutory duties in respect to:

- **Different ages, and stages of development, of Care Experienced people;**
- **The different genders;**
- **The different forms of care in which Care Experienced people live in;**
- **Disabled Care Experienced people**
- **Different cultural and religious backgrounds**
- **Different geographical contexts in which Care Experienced people live (e.g. urban/rural)**

Statutory Guidance Section 59:111

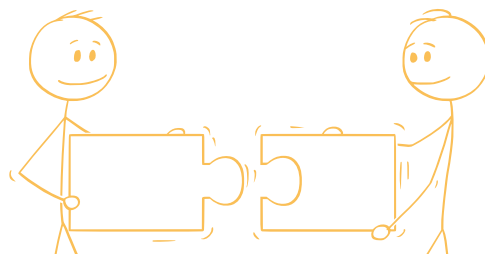
It is important that Corporate Parents understand their responsibility to keep The Promise by 2030 and consider how they will ensure this commitment is fully achieved. [The Promise Oversight Board](#) have also stated that they expect all Corporate Parents to outline in their Corporate Parenting plan how they will contribute to keeping The Promise. This should therefore be a key consideration when developing your Corporate Parenting plan. However, **your plan must remain firmly grounded in the Corporate Parenting duties** outlined in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

By fulfilling your statutory duties as a Corporate Parent, you are making a vital contribution to ensuring that The Promise is kept by 2030.



Collaboration

Corporate Parenting is an important responsibility, but one that can feel challenging when resources are stretched. However, you are not alone in this journey! The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 names 26 organisations as Corporate Parents. These organisations span a variety of services, and each organisation will uphold the statutory duties in different ways. Corporate Parents have a duty to collaborate with each other to ensure a holistic and robust scaffold of support around Care Experienced people. This collaboration provides an **excellent opportunity to learn and grow** from each other, sharing best practices to support Care Experienced people to thrive.



The Collaborative Corporate Parenting Network provides a space for **Corporate Parents to connect, share practice and collaborate**. Facilitated by the Education and Engagement team, the network is currently comprised of representatives from 65 Corporate Parenting bodies (both national and local), and we are always ready to welcome new members to join the network. Meetings are usually held online, with an agenda consisting of updates for the sector, presentations from Corporate Parenting members and CPD opportunities.

If you would like to join the network, please contact:

corporateparenting@whocaresscotland.org



It is also recommended that corporate parenting plans include details of any planned collaboration between corporate parents. Corporate Parents are under a duty to collaborate with each other, in so far as it is reasonably practical, when exercising their corporate parenting duties; this includes, if appropriate, the development of a joint-corporate parenting plan

Language

Language and framing are two key elements of your plan. It is important that you take an individualised approach when working with Care Experienced people, to ensure you are using the language that the community prefers.

Care Experienced people have told us that they do not like the legislative terms 'looked after' and 'care leaver', instead preferring the term '**Care Experienced**' as they feel this is less stigmatising and more representative of the whole community. We would recommend having a wide and inclusive definition of 'care experience' which encompasses the widest range of the community, such as the definition that Who Cares? Scotland uses –

'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 can be in a range of settings: looked after at home, foster care, informal and formal kinship care, residential care, secure care and adoption.'

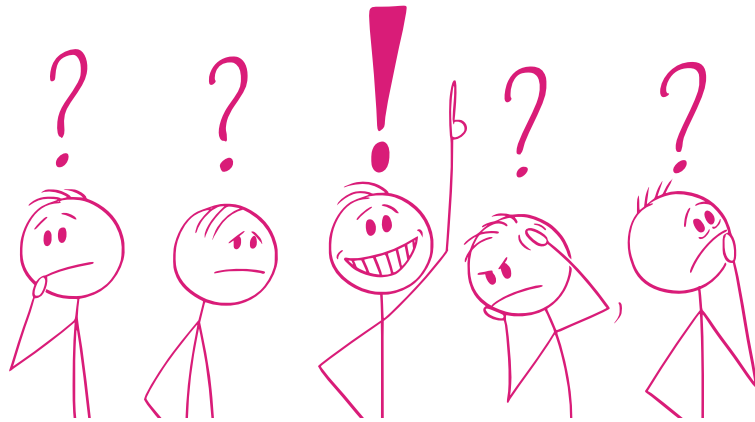
Furthermore, we would always recommend capitalising "Care Experienced" to give the term its proper noun status.

You should also avoid using 'system language', as outlined in The Promise. Instead, your Corporate Parenting plan should be **warm and loving** – this is your chance to show your commitment to the Care Experienced community and showcase how you are going to be the best Corporate Parent possible! Your plan should also be inclusive, and accessible. It is important to keep this in mind when writing your plan and limit your use of jargon, keeping language simple to ensure those outwith your organisation will understand your commitments as a Corporate Parent.



Data

Some Corporate Parents choose to include statistics such as the number of 'looked after' children and young people in Scotland. Whilst statistics can be useful to help provide context to your organisation's work and responsibilities, we would suggest carefully considering what data you choose to include, and if it is truly needed. Rather than including statistics, it would be better to acknowledge the barriers and challenges that Care Experienced people can face, and the individualised support they may require as a result.



If you do include statistics, you should be conscious of how you present these. Research shows that when statistics are presented without context, individuals will rely on mental shortcuts to explain them, often leading to stigma. **We recommend that you use data and statistics to strengthen your story, rather than to tell it.**

We would encourage you to refer to [Each and Every Child](#) for guidance on framing language and statistics in your plan – they have a free training event called [‘Introduction to Framing Care and Care Experience’](#) which may be useful for staff involved in creating the plan to attend. They also have a [toolkit](#) which can be helpful too.



Lifelong impact of Care

As Corporate Parents, it is important that you **recognise the lifelong impact of care and commit to being a loving parent** to the Care Experienced community for as long as you can.

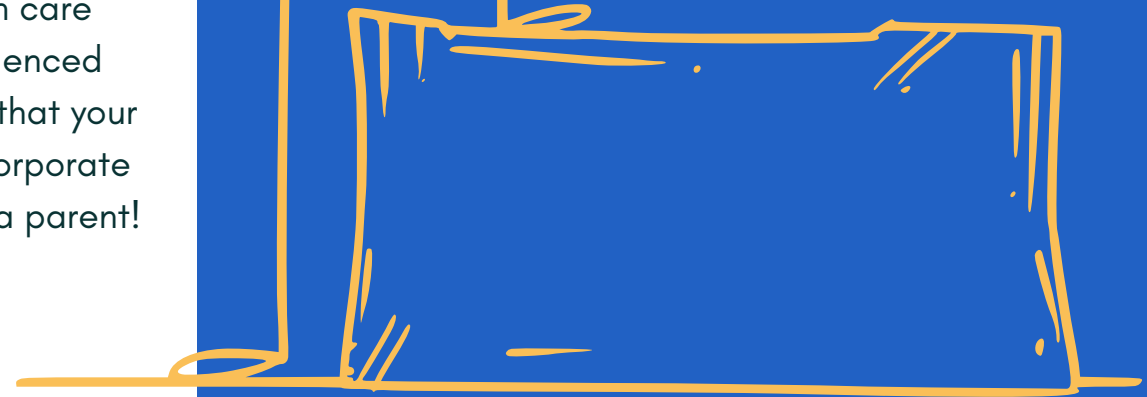
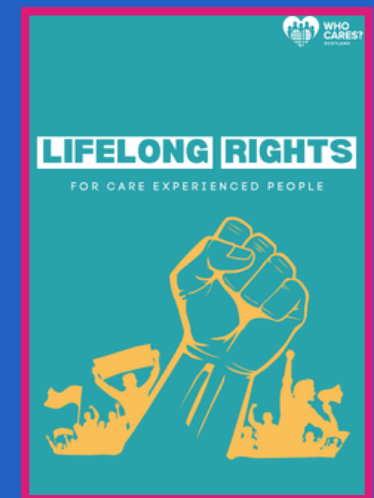
“Care experience doesn't ever really leave you.”

Care Experienced person
Who Cares? Scotland Summer of Participation
2023

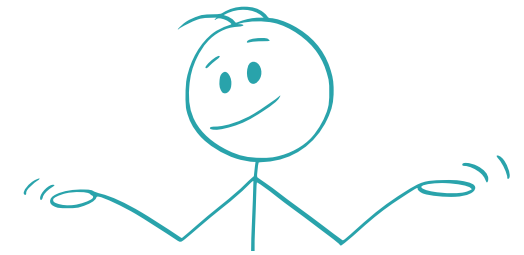
Whilst the Corporate Parenting duties outlined in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 are only applicable to those up to the age of 26, Who Cares? Scotland strongly encourages Corporate Parents to **offer support to all Care Experienced people, regardless of age**, just as good parents would. You should strive to remove any age limits on the support you offer to Care Experienced people. Furthermore, we would recommend moving away from the terms 'children' and 'young people', and instead use 'Care Experienced people', or 'individuals with care experience' where possible, to be inclusive of Care Experienced people of all ages. You may wish to highlight in your plan that your organisation is committed to being a loving and caring Corporate Parent who recognises the lifelong commitment of being a parent!



You can read more about Who Cares? Scotland's campaign for **Lifelong Rights for Care Experienced People** [on our website](#). Click the image below to view our report:



Voice



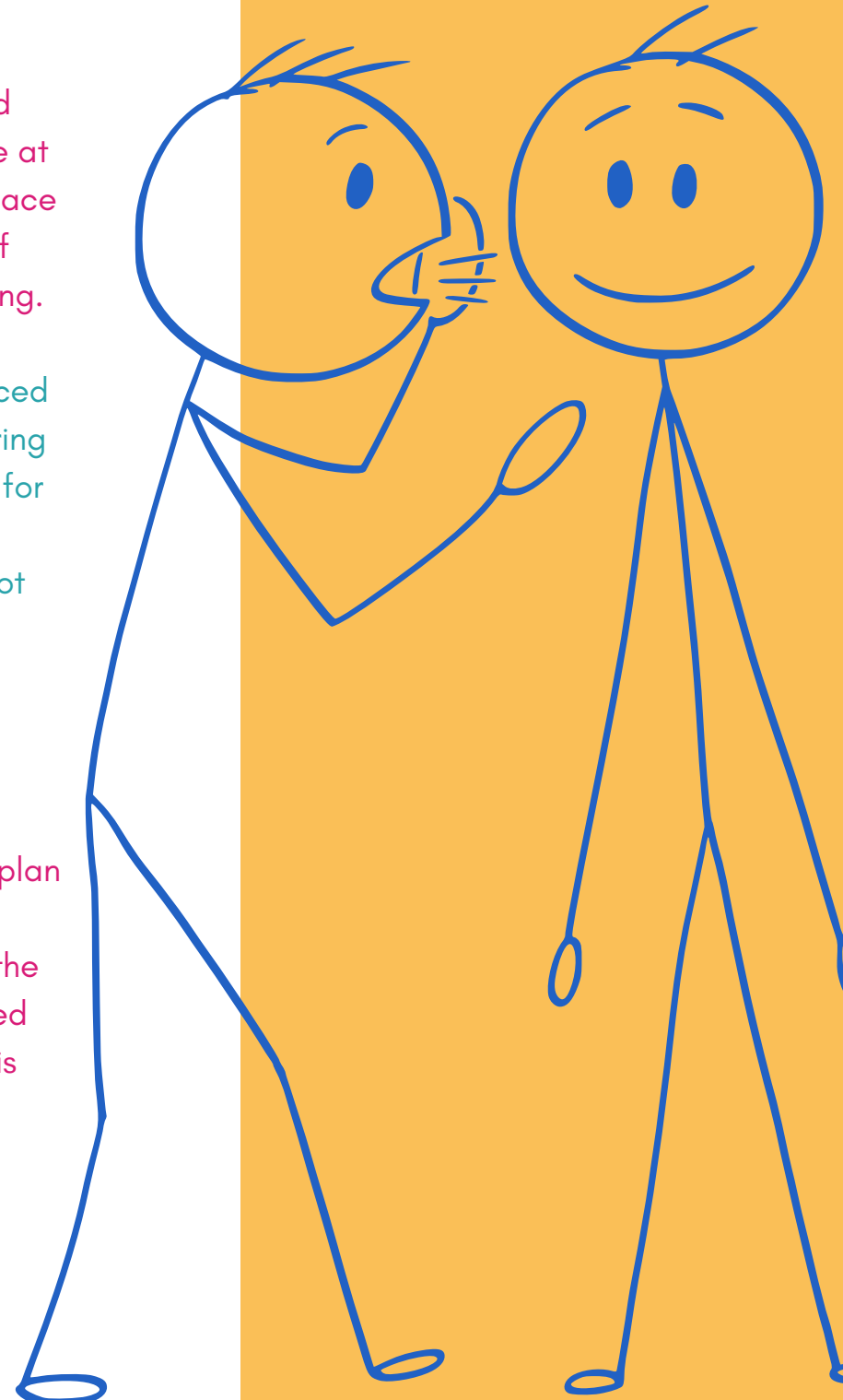
Listening to the voices of the Care Experienced community is an essential element of your Corporate Parenting journey, and it is important that Care Experienced voice underpins your entire Corporate Parenting plan at its different stages. Your plan also needs to outline how you engaged with the community at different stages of your plan development processes.

You can capture the voice of the Care Experienced community in many ways and the real joy in doing so is developing a deeper understanding of how you can be the best Corporate Parent you can be to the Care Experienced community.

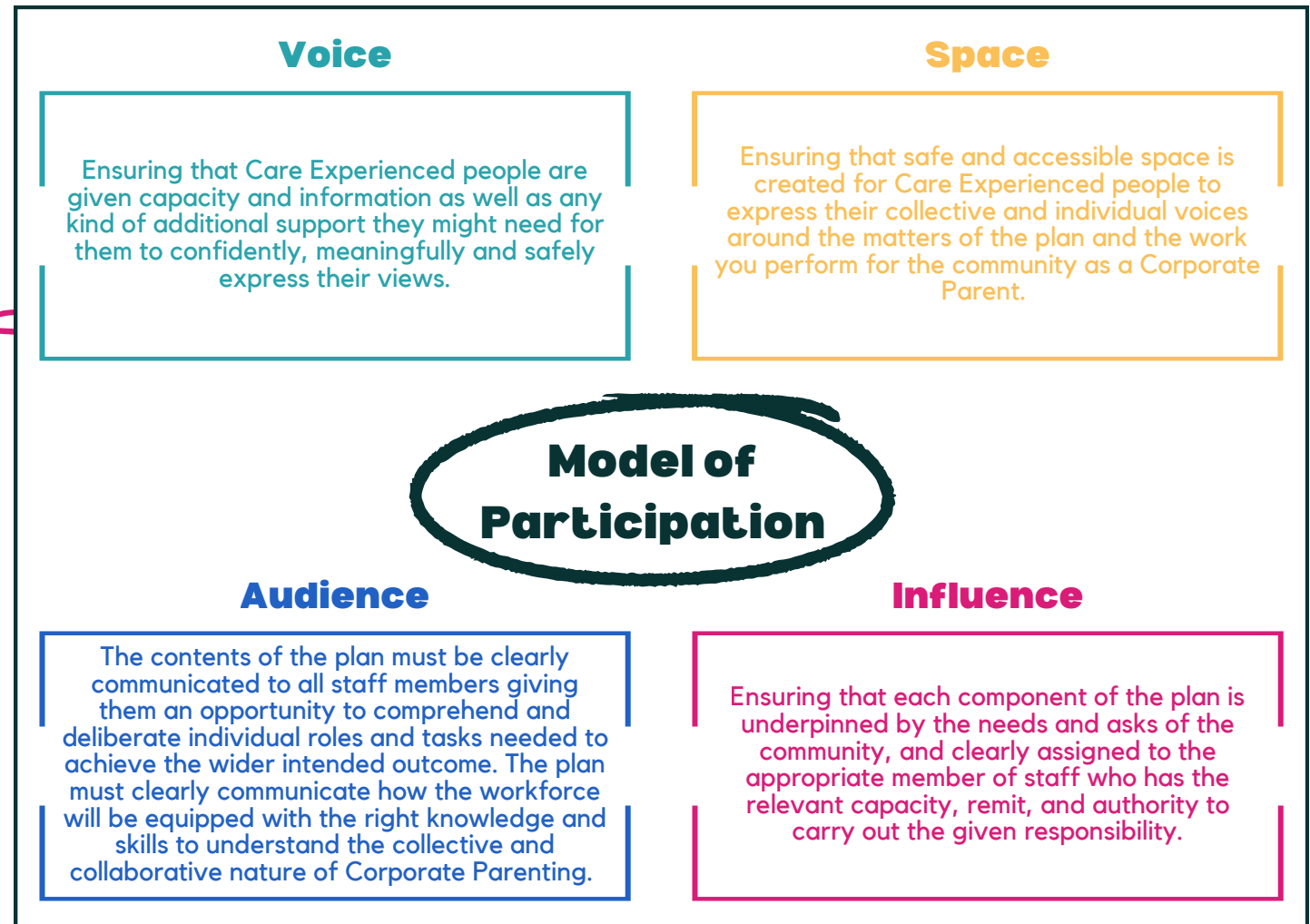
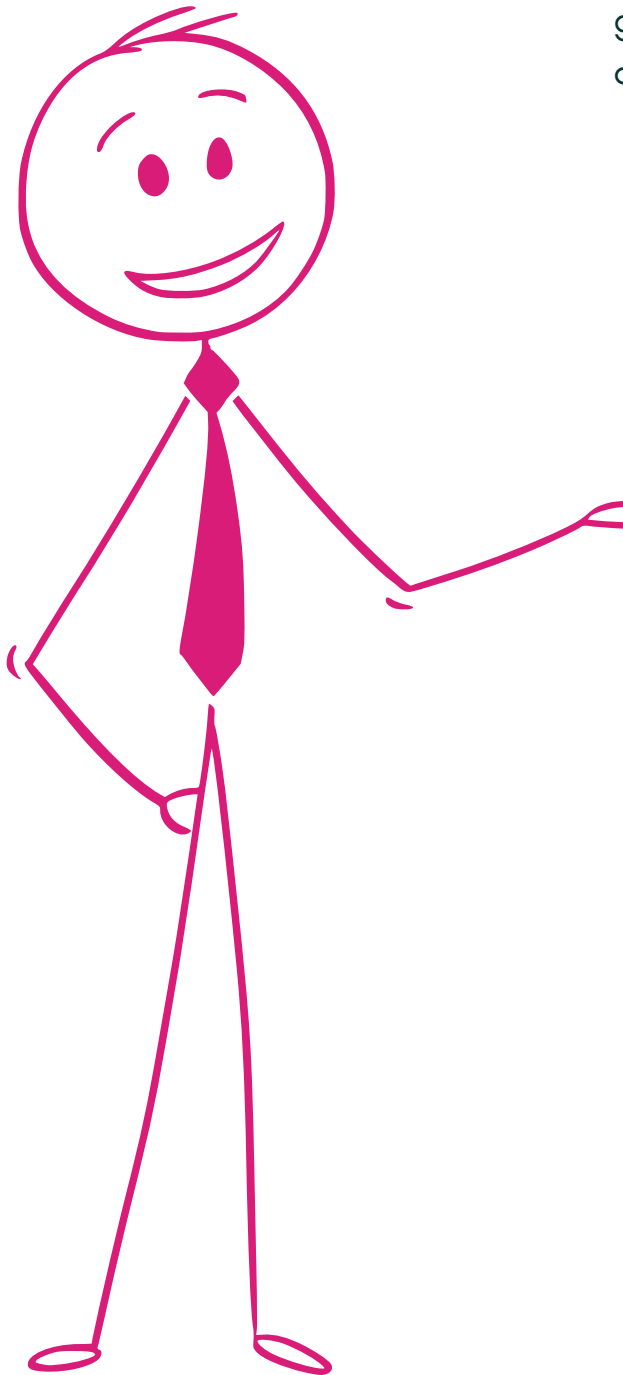
When considering how you plan to include the voice of Care Experienced people in your plan, you must consider the following:

- Firstly, consider the sample of the community you are engaging with. The cohort of Care Experienced people you engage with should be representative of the entire Care Experienced community. If you are engaging only with a relatively small group of individuals, it is important that you are mindful and transparent that the voice you capture will not be fully illustrative of the community as a whole.
- Considering what data and voice is already available on the themes you are exploring will avoid duplication in both your efforts and those of the Care Experienced community. We hear often from Care Experienced people that consultation fatigue has a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing. Ensuring you acknowledge this impact and proactively support the community to avoid this is an essential step when including lived experience to inform your work. Using existing evidence and exploring ongoing work or research related to your theme or topic can avoid duplication and lessen the pressures placed on Care Experienced people, reducing the fatigue routinely felt.

- Consider the structures that already exist within your organisation and how you can increase the representation of Care Experienced people at all levels within your organisation. This is not only important for workplace diversity but it also naturally allows for the meaningful participation of the community in your organisation's strategic and operational planning.
- As a Corporate Parent, you have a duty of care to the Care Experienced community. Ensuring their wellbeing throughout the process of capturing their voice is another important consideration. When creating spaces for participation, you must ensure that the process is as organic and relationship-based as possible. The journey of capturing voice must not be transactional or tokenistic, ensuring that you are closing feedback loops. Engagement and participation with the Care Experienced community must always be rooted in trauma-informed principles and practices, ensuring their wellbeing and safety throughout.
- Care Experienced voices should be given due regard throughout the plan with accountability in terms of timeline and individual responsibilities attached to each ask. If you are not able to address specific asks of the community within the timeframe of the plan, this must also be reflected honestly in the plan documenting specific commitment to progress this within the long-term perspective.



To ensure that your plan engagement utilises a rights-based approach and is fully grounded in the voices of Care Experienced people, the **Lundy model of participation** can be utilised checking the plan against four main components:



Design and Accessibility

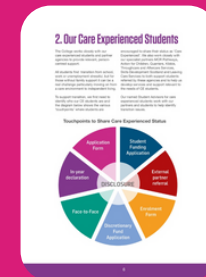
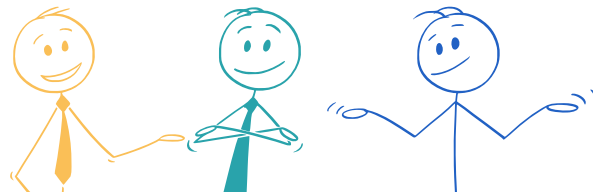


A strong design is a key element of an **engaging and accessible Corporate Parenting plan**. A beautiful cover will entice people to read your plan, and good design will keep them reading.

You should try to avoid large blocks of text, considering if you can summarise key points, utilise bullet points, or present information in an infographic to ensure it is easier to digest. You must consider how complex information can be broken down and presented so it can be easily understood.

Don't be afraid to have a little fun when designing your plan - this is your chance to declare your commitment to Care Experienced people, and you can show this in your design!

You should write and design your plan to be accessible to all, rather than creating multiple versions. The [statutory guidance](#) states - *'This plan must then be published in a document which is easily accessible to both the eligible population and general public. Accessibility relates to both the availability of the document (i.e. published online), and its format and language.'*



Publication

After publishing your Corporate Parenting plan, you should ensure it is **publicly available and easy to find** on your website. We would encourage you to include 'Corporate Parenting Plan' somewhere within the title of the document to make it searchable on your website and generic search engines. You should place it strategically on your website, not buried away deep in a chain of menus and pages. We would recommend having a dedicated space on your website detailing your role as a Corporate Parent, and the support you offer to Care Experienced people.

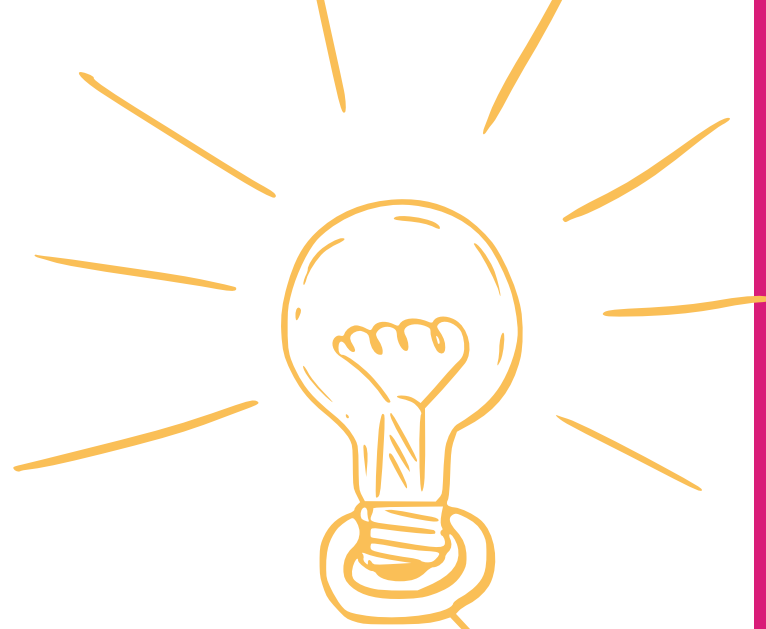
You should also consider how you will promote your Corporate Parenting plan, e.g. on your social media. This is a great opportunity to raise awareness of your Corporate Parenting duties, and the support that you can offer to Care Experienced people.



Reviewing and updating your plan:

Remember that your Corporate Parenting plan is a **live document** – if things change, you don't have to wait until your next plan before sharing these updates. The Statutory Guidance outlines that you must regularly review your plan to ensure it is being delivered, and identify ways of improving how you are exercising your Corporate Parenting duties.

The Statutory Guidance also recommends that Corporate Parents produce **a report on the progress of their plan every three years**. This should be a reflective report focussing on what actions you have managed to achieve, and highlighting any actions you have not completed, and why. **Your report should be published as a distinct document to your new plan**, to ensure that your plan is kept as short and accessible as possible, but you may wish to publish them at the same time.



Conclusion

Your Corporate Parenting plan provides you with an **opportunity to shout about your commitment to the Care Experienced community**. Whether it's Care Experienced people, Scottish Government officials, fellow Corporate Parents or partner organisations reading your plan, you have the chance to showcase the work that you are doing to support Care Experienced people and how you are upholding your Corporate Parenting duties!

Ultimately, your plan is for the Care Experienced community and therefore it should emphasise the action you will take to fulfil your duties as a committed, warm, passionate, and above all loving Corporate Parent. Your plan should be a warm document, and your love for the Care Experienced community should shine throughout.



We are here to support you!

[Who Cares? Scotland](#) is funded by Scottish Government to provide a wide range of support to Corporate Parents. This includes providing feedback on draft Corporate Parenting Plans to identify areas that can be improved or strengths that can be built upon before publication.

We have also created a [self-assessment tool](#) which may help you identify your organisation's current strengths, and areas for improvement, before writing your new plan.

Please contact us to request plan feedback at: corporateparenting@whocaresScotland.org

