

Corporate Parenting Plan progress report – June 2018

The University of Edinburgh produced its first Corporate Parenting Plan in 2015 and is now producing this report, in line with Scottish Government requirements, on progress with implementation of its plan and its associated duties.

Background and context

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, (“the Act”) came into effect on the 1st of April 2015. Part 9 of the 2014 Act names 24 public bodies and groups of bodies, including universities, as corporate parents. Under the Act, the University, as a designated corporate parent, has certain duties to deliver with regard to care experienced people and a responsibility to promote the wellbeing of care experienced people.

Section 58 of the Act confirms that it is the duty of every corporate parent, in so far as consistent with the proper exercise of its other functions, to:

- (a) be alert to matters which, or which might, adversely affect the wellbeing of children and young people to whom this Part applies,
- (b) assess the needs of those children and young people for services and support it provides,
- (c) promote the interests of those children and young people,
- (d) seek to provide those children and young people with opportunities to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing,
- (e) take such action as it considers appropriate to help those children and young people:
 - (i) to access opportunities it provides in pursuance of paragraph (d), and
 - (ii) to make use of services, and access support, which it provides, and
- (f) take such other action as it considers appropriate for the purposes of improving the way in which it exercises its functions in relation to those children and young people.

Widening participation and outreach

Partnerships

Summary of key actions in the 2015-18 plan

- Working with the newly-formed Care-Experienced and Carers East Forum, 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.

Over the two year period since its corporate parenting plan was published, the University of Edinburgh has developed its partnership working with further and higher education institutions and care-experience support bodies to improve the services available to anyone from a care background who is seeking to move on to tertiary education. As a founding member of the Care-Experienced, Estranged and Carers East Forum (CEECEF), the University helped to plan and deliver an event for care-experienced young people and their carers and support staff. Your Dynamic Future was held in July 2017 at Edinburgh Napier University and Edinburgh College campuses.

The University is a partner and funder in the development of a new care-experienced hub which will provide a physical drop-in centre for care-experienced children and young people in Edinburgh. The hub will offer a one-stop shop with information, advice and guidance for the young people, their carers and support staff to enable them to access appropriate educational opportunities, and associated support services.

The widening participation team have also made links with Edinburgh City Council and will be attending their care-experienced practitioners' group to help identify the information advisors require to be able to help care-experienced young people who are hoping to go on to higher education.

Access to outreach activities

Summary of key actions in the 2015-18 plan

- Improve identification of looked after children and care leavers engaged with widening participation programmes by including adding an "in care" question, modelled on the UCAS application form, on WP registration forms
- Introduce a formal commitment to accept looked after children and care leavers onto WP programmes and activities where they are not automatically eligible, providing there is space and funding available.
- Introduce a process for care-experienced young people to apply for travel expenses in advance of an activity, if required
- Investigate and adopt additional ways to promote the University's single point of contact to care-experienced young people

The University has reviewed access to its widening participation outreach activity to ensure that care-experienced children and young people will not face any barriers in accessing the opportunities available. An "in care" question has been added to widening participation enrolment forms to improve identification, and the University has introduced an expanded "single point of contact" role in the widening participation team to ensure that anyone who has ticked this box has access to any support they may need. Care-experienced children and young people are contacted proactively to offer help with travel costs, and to arrange any other support they may need to fully participating in the programme, and a commitment has been made to ensure that care-experienced young people will always be eligible to take part in activities even if, for example, they do not attend the target school.

Application and Admissions

Summary of key actions in the 2015-18 plan

- Review communications with care-experienced offer holders
- provide information 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. SRA
- in partnership with other HEIs, provide awareness raising training for those who advise looked after children and care leavers to help them better understand student funding in Scotland and in England, and to improve the advice given to young people. SRA

The “single point of contact” role in the widening participation team has been expanded, allowing the University to take a more proactive approach in engaging with those who have had a care experience through the whole student lifecycle from outreach, application and transition stages, and helping the student access appropriate student support services at the University.

Admissions policies have been reviewed, and the definition of a care leaver has been expanded to include all those with a care experience, to ensure all those who need support in admissions will receive it. Care experience has been included as a Context Plus category within the contextual admissions policy ensuring that those who are care-experienced will receive a contextual offer. The separate Care Leavers admissions policy has therefore been discontinued. Verification has been simplified, with applicants now asked simply to confirm their care status through the single point of contact in the widening participation team. This ensures that tailored communications can be sent, offering appropriate support.

While these changes have not been in place long enough to fully measure their impact, it is notable that the number of offers made to verified care-experienced students has increased from 15 in 2017 to 31, to date, in 2018.

Transition

Summary of key actions in the 2015-18 plan

- consider whether an alternative application process is required for verified care leavers who have not taken a student loan through SASS or SLC for the Scotland
- ensure that information about the University of Edinburgh accommodation guarantee is available to care-experienced young people before they apply to the University, and during transition

The communications sent to care-experienced offer holders have been reviewed to be more friendly and welcoming, and the timeline of communications is under review to ensure that information on applying for finance, accommodation, and other pre-arrival support is available at the most appropriate time. In addition, the widening participation team is exploring the possibility of holding a session at post-offer visits specifically for care-experienced students, or providing an opportunity for them to meet with the team member who will be their single point of contact, to give the University a human face.

While the University has other mechanisms to provide information, the widening participation team’s single point of contact proactively provides tailored information for care-experienced applicants on scholarships available to them and whether any application is required, and on accommodation including information on the 365 day accommodation guarantee. Discussions are underway with the EUSA welfare team about providing a drop-in at Open Days for care-experienced students and student carers.

Outcomes

The core measure of our success as a corporate parent is the number of care-experienced students who apply to and subsequently enrol at the University. Data from the last five years show:

- A positive trend in the number of applications, which is a key indicator of success in outreach
- A consistent (c 31% average) conversion rate from application to offer (ie the proportion of care-experienced applicants who, having applied are offered a place to study at the University), in line with our contextual admissions policy
- A c9% average conversion from offer to enrolment (ie the proportion of care-experienced applicants who are offered a place to study and go on to enrol), which has fluctuated from year to year (between 4% and 12%) albeit with very small numbers involved overall, such fluctuations are not unusual.

UoE Applications from care experienced students

Academic year	Been in care?	Applications	Offers	UF (Entrants)
2013/4	Yes	94	28	8
2014/5	Yes	134	41	17
2015/6	Yes	115	37	14
2016/7	Yes	156	49	7
2017/8	Yes	180	58	15
		840		

Next steps & Communication

The University's initial Corporate Parenting Strategy (2015-18) is now coming to the end of its three year period and must be revised in order to better support our students. While the University has made good progress in reviewing and enhancing its work with care leavers in outreach, applications and admission, more work in this area is likely to be needed and more work is also needed to address the ambitions set out in our 2015-18 plan to:

- Increase outreach work with care-experienced young people
- Support applications and transition into HE for care-experienced young people
- Extend our on-programme support for these students
- Continue to develop and grow relevant networks, including care-experienced alumni

Therefore, a working group for the University of Edinburgh's Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan has been established. The aims of this working group are to:

- Discuss the enhanced support we can provide to our Care Experienced students.
- Formally outline this support, and our commitment to Care Experienced students, in the revised Corporate Parenting Strategy and associated actions / targets.
- Coordinate the implementation of this support.