



University of Edinburgh Corporate Parenting Plan 2018-21 – Progress report

Background and context

The University of Edinburgh is committed to widening access to higher education. The University's Strategy 2030 outlines the institution's values and commitment to widening participation in Scotland. The Widening Participation Strategy (2018) makes explicit the University's role to ensure that students from a wide range of diverse backgrounds have the opportunity to study at Edinburgh, thrive here, and feel a sense of belonging.

This Progress report summarizes the progress made in 2018-2021; the duration of the University's current Corporate Parenting Plan (https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/corporate_parenting_strategy_2018-21.pdf)

Under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, the University of Edinburgh is a Corporate Parent. Responsibility for corporate parenting lies with the whole organisation and not any one individual. As a Corporate Parent, the University has the following legislative duties:

- Be alert to matters which could affect a care-experienced person's wellbeing
- Assess the needs of care-experienced people for services and support
- Promote the interests of care-experienced people
- Seek to provide opportunities that promote care-experienced people's wellbeing
- Take action to help care-experienced people access opportunities
- Take any other action appropriate to improve support to care-experienced people

The University is committed to supporting care-experienced people to study at the University of Edinburgh, to make the most of their time as students, and to progress into the graduate labour market.

Progress report

- 1. Outreach:** *We will work closely with local partners and other corporate parents in Scotland to help care-experienced people of all ages access higher education, in particular through development and funding of the partnership project the Hub for SUCCESS.*

In the last 3 years we have worked closely with the Hub for Success to develop this collaboration to best support care experienced people in Edinburgh. We are currently developing a schools outreach strand with the Hub partners which will allow us to



engage with care experienced young people from primary school upwards over the coming years.

Our named contact works closely with local authorities to support any care experienced student at the University of Edinburgh – we have particularly strong connections with our most local partners and we have boosted that through our founding partnership in the Hub for Success <https://hubforsuccess.org/> Working with the Hub and its partners means we have been able to follow a collective approach in the city and work together as regional corporate parents in effect. We have been able to support a student meaningfully through school, college, university and beyond and can pool our resources to support their success.

Prior to the COVID pandemic we had been offering care experienced applicants the opportunity to visit our campus and have 121s with our named contact or other relevant staff contacts – either connected to open days and offer holder events or bespoke. We have ceased those in person visits at present, but still regularly offer and hold video or phone calls for care experienced students interested in applying to the University of Edinburgh. We host monthly online offer holder events for students flagged within our widening access offers (as care experienced applicants are) and also for the last 2 years we have collaborated with other HE partners in Edinburgh on joint offer holder and transition events for care experienced offer holders.

- 2. Application:** *To enhance our support of care-experienced people throughout the application process, we will work with our Legal Services and partnership organisations to produce new data sharing agreements and limit the need for repeated self-declaration of care-experienced people.*

We have **targeted communications** with care-experienced applicants to support them through the application process and through their transition into the University.

Care-experienced applicants are **guaranteed an offer at the minimum entry requirements** for the course to which they have applied, where possible.

In the last few years we have refined our systems for processing applications from care experienced students. We now aim to start processing applications that have been marked as care experienced on the UCAS application within a week of receipt. Applicants that have marked on their application that they have care experience are now sent a clearance check asking them to provide details of this. If they are subsequently verified by the WP team as being care experienced, then they are changed to 'Plus Flag' and will be made a guaranteed early offer at minimum. We will also make these applicants an aspirational offer at minimum if they are predicted one grade below this level.

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/undergraduate/access-edinburgh/widening-access-offers>



We have seen a gradual increase in care experienced applicants over the past few years and this year we saw twice the number of care experienced applicants compared to last year. We hope this indicates that care experienced learners see us as a positive choice and an institution that seeks to understand their experience and ensure we put support in place at every stage in the student journey.

A key advantage or benefit that we have implemented in the last admissions cycle has been to incorporate a broader definition of care experience within our work. We now use the Universities Scotland sector agreed definition to ensure that there is consistency for students across the Scottish HE sector and to create benefit for a larger group of learners. See here for more details:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/undergraduate/access-edinburgh/carers-care-experience/care-experienced>

- 3. Transition:** *We will develop targeted communications with care-experienced applicants so they feel supported and prepared throughout their transition into the University.*

A member of the **Edinburgh Cares team** meets with all new care-experienced students during their first few weeks at the University to support their transition and identify any particular needs.

We have seen an increase in the number of students enrolling on our BSc Social Work programmes who have non-traditional academic profiles. Often coming to university later in life, typically through FE Colleges. A large proportion are students with care experience. We noticed that these students occasionally struggled with the shift in academic standards, and this year we have been developing a new learning and study skills course to be offered to all our first year students to help with this transition. We hope that care experienced students, and other students will benefit from this additional on-programme support.

All care experienced students are offered a **staff mentor**. The Edinburgh Cares Staff Mentoring programme launched in September 2019, pairing new care experienced students with a trained member of staff at the University. The project was recognised by the Scottish Mentoring Network as 'Most Promising New Project' and 'Project of the Year' at their 2019 awards ceremony.

- 4. On-programme support:** *We will work across University colleagues and external agencies to develop a clear care and referral pathway to support the mental health and wellbeing of our care-experienced students. We will develop a bespoke suite of careers support interventions to enhance employability and promote successful transitions into the graduate labour market.*



Out of hours/closure period support

In 2020-21 we put in place a contact centre for students to access during closure periods and during this time we offered proactive calls to any care experienced student who opted in. Our staff mentors and named contact emphasised this as an option to ensure that care experienced students who may often find they are in the minority in terms of those staying in halls or in accommodation are not isolated and know how to access support or community. In addition proactive calls are also carried out by accommodation staff for all students living on campus. 24/7, 365 days a year support is available via the Residence Life team and Community Support (Security) team

Proactive approach to supporting mental health

We have increased the focus on raising awareness of mental health support available for all students, indirectly therefore meeting a specific objective for care experienced students. All students can currently access trained mental health mentors and we have proactively promoted this with our care experienced students. Alongside self-help tools we also have enhanced our counselling offer ensuring that students can access swift support as needed.

We have also implemented College wide processes for enhanced support for students of concern including those on repeat years thereby ensuring the student support ecosystem is more likely to provide enhanced support to any care experienced student who is struggling.

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing>

Within our student accommodation an assigned Resident Assistant, Wardens and a trained team of professional staff are able to provide advice, support and guidance to students as well as a specifically trained Mental Health Coordinator. Within student accommodation there are also virtual and in-person events and activities spreading across a range of categories across the Wellness Wheel specifically; community building, academic success, emotional, social, spiritual, cultural, physical, occupational, financial and environmental wellness.

Digital disadvantage: recognizing the recent impact of the COVID pandemic on care experienced people and the potential for loss of earnings/heightened inequalities we have prioritized our care experienced students for access to lap tops and/or other IT equipment/access to network support.

Financial support

Following a review and evaluation of our financial support schemes (including hardship funding applications and scholarships) and building on insight and student feedback we assessed that there was a need to increase and embed the level of financial support for care experienced people at the University of Edinburgh. As such



in 2019 we launched a new scholarship scheme, a £5000 a year award for UK-domiciled care experienced students at the University of Edinburgh; <https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-funding/undergraduate/uk-eu/access-awards/access-edinburgh>. Recognizing that care experienced young people often have to disclose their life experience in order to access support we have worked hard to reduce the need for students repeat self-declaration when accessing financial support.

Care experienced students are also now prioritised for the Participation Grant – a financial award to subsidise the cost of joining sports or student societies; <https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-recruitment/widening-participation/projects/current-students-university-of-edinburgh/activities-sports-participation-grant>

Training for staff and continuity of support

We have raised awareness of the needs of Care Experienced students amongst Senior Tutor and Student Support officer networks, ensuring schools able to access reports and data to support Personal Tutor allocation and through Quality Assurance processes we can monitor outcomes, retention and progression.

We have implemented regular corporate parenting training for our staff who support students as well as developing toolkits for staff supporting care experienced students. We have also incorporated the Open University Corporate Parenting module within our professional framework for staff and we regularly promote this opportunity; this year we did this as part of Care Day (<https://twitter.com/EdinUniStaff/status/1362724305214337025>).

We offer **targeted careers & employability support** through a named contact within the Careers Service. Students are given priority access on extra- and co-curricular opportunities such as the Insights programme, which links students with Edinburgh alumni for a shadowing experience. <https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/careers/insights>

- 5. Implementation:** *This Action Plan will be overseen by a cross-institutional implementation group which will proactively promote best practice and represent the voice of care-experienced people on campus.*

A key component of the planning and development of our Corporate Parenting Plan for 2018-21 was ensuring that the priorities were shaped by care experienced students at our University. We followed an extensive consultation process with students via working groups, surveys and one-to-one interviews in order to finally establish and agree our plan. These strong collaborative relationships continued for some time to come and students who participated in these groups have continued to influence the work.



Edinburgh Cares Committee

As part of our 2018-21 Corporate Parenting Plan we established a formal committee of staff to oversee the implementation and governance of this plan. This group has also taken on a wider role in terms of gaining a collective understanding of the needs of care experienced people at the University of Edinburgh and ensuring that no students fall between the gaps of our support and care services. This group regularly assesses the needs of our care experienced learners by sharing good practice and insight.

In 2018 we built on the progress within our published progress report to review our performance. We segmented the actions within our Corporate Parenting Plan into two sub groups – pre and post entry and we invited colleagues from beyond the Edinburgh Cares committee to contribute and collaborate on the work. The Edinburgh Cares committee regularly reviews performance and assessed the work within the action plan at every meeting.

We plan now to do a further consultation with our care experienced students to initially reflect on our past experience and then focus on the next three years and what we want to achieve. In future plans we intend to create a more regular and automated reporting process/mechanisms.

Further information can also be found in the University of Edinburgh Strategy 2030: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/about/strategy-2030> and the University of Edinburgh Widening Participation Strategy: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-recruitment/widening-participation/strategy>

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