



Corporate Parenting Plan 2017-2019

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Foreword



I am delighted to introduce the Student Award Agency Scotland's (SAAS) Corporate Parenting Plan 2017-2019.

As an Executive Agency of the Scottish Government, SAAS is fully supportive of Scottish Ministers in their role as Corporate Parents and we embrace the values and responsibilities which corporate parenting represents.

We have a responsibility to better understand the lives of Scotland's care experienced students and deliver a student support service which is responsive to their needs. We believe that all of Scotland's young people should have equal opportunities to access and succeed in Higher Education irrespective of their background.

Our ambition is to provide a high quality, student centred service to support all of Scotland's students, enabling them to realise their aspirations and explore their potential to the fullest.

The SAAS Corporate Parenting Plan sets out our commitment to realising this ambition and the actions we will take to support positive outcomes for Scotland's care experienced students.

The SAAS Executive Team fully endorses this Corporate Parenting Plan.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'PL', with a small dot at the end.

Paul Lowe
Chief Executive
November 2017

Introduction

The Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) is an Executive Agency of the Scottish Government which provides support and advice to eligible students in full-time and part-time Higher Education. In particular, SAAS administers the student support arrangements for Scottish domiciled Higher Education students studying throughout the United Kingdom (UK), and to some out-with the UK, as well as European Union (EU) students studying in Scotland.

We work with schools, colleges and universities to provide coordinated and tailored information, advice and guidance to learners transitioning into higher education. This includes providing learners and those with responsibility for them, with clear, accurate information on both the availability of student finance and the conditions of repayment.

We are committed to making positive and lasting improvements in the outcomes for Scotland's looked after children and care leavers.

For our purposes, the term "**care experienced**", which is used throughout this document, refers to young people who are currently or were previously looked after. It includes looked after children and care leavers.

Please refer to Annex A for a full definition of the terms used in this document.

Background

Whilst the national average age for leaving home is now approximately 25 years old, the average age at which young people leave care in Scotland is 16-18 years old¹. This group of young people tend to leave home at a younger age and have more abrupt transitions to adulthood than their peers.

Statistically, a lower proportion of young people with care experience transition directly into higher education compared to those who do not have such experience. It is for this reason, that in the 2014-15 Programme for Government, the Scottish Government set out its ambition that every child, irrespective of their socioeconomic background, should have an equal chance of accessing higher education. The subsequent **Commission on Widening Access** established to advise Ministers on how to achieve their ambition, set out specific recommendations in relation to supporting care experienced students in accessing higher education.

¹ Hill, Duncan & McGhee (CELCIS 2013) Still Caring: Leaving Care in Scotland

Corporate Parenting

In April 2015, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act came into effect. The legislation is a key part of the Scottish Government's strategy for making Scotland the best place in the world to grow up. The Act established a new legal framework within which public services are to work together in support of children, young people and families in Scotland

Schedule 4 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act lists 24 different individuals, organisations and groups who are named Corporate Parents and who have a range of statutory responsibilities and duties to looked after children and care leavers. A full list of named Corporate Parents is available in Annex B.

What is Corporate Parenting?

An organisation's performance of actions necessary to uphold the rights and safeguard the wellbeing of a looked after child or care leaver, and through which physical, emotional, spiritual, social and educational development is promoted

Scottish Government Statutory Guidance - 2015

Corporate parenting duties

Part 9 of the Act sets out six statutory duties which all Corporate Parents must carry out in support of care experienced children and young people. Corporate Parents must:

- Be **alert** to matters which, or which might, adversely affect the wellbeing of an eligible young person;
- **Assess** the needs of eligible children and young people for any services or support provided;
- **Promote** the interests of eligible children and young people;
- Seek to provide eligible children and young people with **opportunities** to promote their wellbeing;

- Take appropriate action to help eligible young people:
- access opportunities to improve wellbeing and
- make use of services, and access the support, which they provide

Keep our approach to corporate parenting under constant review, seeking out improvement wherever possible.

The role of SAAS

In terms of the legislation Scottish Ministers are named as a Corporate Parent SAAS is not a corporate parent in its own right. Executive Agencies, such as SAAS, are organisations set up to perform a specific function(s) of Scottish Government. The key function of SAAS is to distribute public funds to eligible students of Higher Education on behalf of the Scottish Ministers.

With our primary function aligning with the Government's aim to see more care experienced students supported into higher education; we are embracing the values of corporate parenting by providing a service which is efficient, responsive and proportionate to the needs of our students. Additionally, we have prepared and published this Corporate Parent Plan in relation to student support for care experienced students accessing higher education.

What we are doing

Our commitment is to remove some of the practical barriers that care experienced young people face as they transition into higher education; ensuring they receive the information and support they need during their time at college or university.

Working in partnership

We have built partnerships with a number of key stakeholders and participated in activities to better understand the needs of care experienced students, which has helped shape our operational policies, practices and procedures.

In 2013, SAAS pledged its support for the Who Cares? Scotland (WCS) 'Listen-Act-Unite' campaign and have been working closely with the organisation since. WCS are a national voluntary organisation who works with care experienced young people across Scotland to support them through their care journey. We have worked with WCS on a number of activities in an effort to raise awareness of the support available to care experienced students.

We continue to work with a number of voluntarily charities and care leaver organisations such as the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS), West of Scotland Care Leavers Forum and Care Experienced, Estranged and Carers East Forum (CEECEF) to identify the barriers care experienced young people face when entering higher education. Through a variety of funding awareness and widening access events we have had the privilege of engaging with and listening to testimony from care experienced young people. This has allowed us to equip our staff with the skills and knowledge to understand the needs of this group of students and deliver a bespoke service designed to support them throughout higher education.

Financial support

In 2017 the Scottish Government introduced the new **Care Experienced Students Bursary**. The bursary, delivered by SAAS, is a non-income assessed, non-repayable award of £7,625 per academic session which replaces the current income assessed living cost loan and bursary package which is available to non-care experienced individuals.

The bursary is available to eligible undergraduate students if:

- They have ever been looked after by a Local Authority in the UK; and
- They are under 26 on the first day of the first academic year of their course (the relevant date). For most students, who start in the autumn term, the relevant date is 1 August.

Care Experienced Students may also be eligible to claim the **Care Experienced Accommodation Grant**. The accommodation grant provides financial support towards accommodation costs during the summer months up to a maximum of £105 per week.

Building a bespoke service

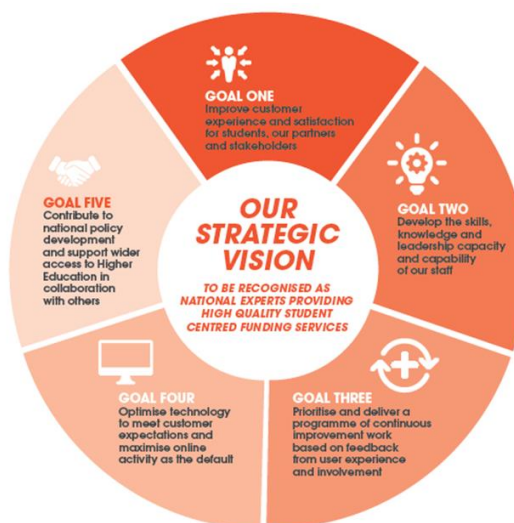
For the 2017-2018 academic year SAAS launched a new online application service. The improved service enables care experienced students to complete a bespoke application for the new Care Experienced Bursary and Accommodation Grant. The application is supported by a wide range of bespoke information and guidance, developed in partnership with key stakeholders including WCS, CELCIS and care experienced students, detailing the eligibility criteria and evidence gathering process, enabling care experienced students to apply for and receive the correct student support entitlement.

All applications for care experienced student support are reviewed by a team of specially trained caseworkers within SAAS. The case management approach to care experienced applications has ensured that accurate student support assessments are delivered first time, every time.

Our Action Plan

The SAAS Corporate Plan 2017-2020² outlines our vision to be recognised as national experts providing high quality student centred funding services. Our mission is to deliver an efficient, student centred and responsive service that provides the right advice and student support first time, every time to a diverse and vibrant student population.

The following Strategic Goals are central to realising these ambitions and the commitment we will make to uphold the values of corporate parenting:



Goal One: Our Customers

Place the customer at the centre of everything we do to deliver an excellent personalised student experience.

Goal Two: Our People

Develop a highly skilled workforce and enhance organisational capacity and capability.

Goal Three: Deliver Continuous Improvement

Improve quality, organisational efficiency, productivity and deliver best value

Goal Four: Our Systems

Develop digital solutions for the future

Goal Five: Our Partners

Building stronger strategic alliances to deliver optimum social, economic and community impact

Aligned to our Strategic Goals, we have made six commitments to support care experienced students in their learner journey.

² http://www.saas.gov.uk/_forms/corporate_plan.pdf

Corporate Parenting Plan 2017-2019

Commitment	Action	Strategic Goal(s)	Timetable	Owner
1. We will create and develop a bespoke application process which allows Care Experienced Students to access student support in an efficient, inclusive and respectful manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce bespoke online functionality allowing care experienced students to self-identify and apply for care experienced student support Develop a mechanism for Care Experienced students to feedback their experiences in accessing student support through SAAS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Customers Our Systems Deliver Continuous Improvement 	1st August 2018	Director of Policy, Engagement & Change
2. We will improve Management Information in relation to Care Experience Students in order to adapt our approach and to improve the learner journey of Care Experienced Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve our system functionality to identify types of care experience and use this to develop our outreach and policy and practise as appropriate Share statistical analysis of student uptake with relevant stakeholders such as CELSIS and Who Cares? Scotland in order to inform and improve positive outcomes for care experienced students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Customers Our Systems Our Partners Deliver Continuous Improvement 	1st August 2019	Director of Operations
3. We will actively promote and develop staff awareness on the subject of corporate parenting and Care Experienced Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and deliver training and related materials on Care Experienced student support Deliver staff awareness sessions on the concept of corporate parenting and the commitments we have made in our Corporate Parenting Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Customers Our People Deliver Continuous Improvement 	1st August 2018	Head of Policy and Customer Relations
4. We will develop new and existing partnerships with other Corporate Parents to ensure that SAAS remains alert to the needs of care experienced students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with other Corporate Parents to identify opportunities for collaborative working such as Skills Development Scotland Continue to collaborate with existing partners such as Who Care? Scotland and CELCIS to develop the services we provide for Care Experienced Students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Customers Our Systems Our Partners Deliver Continuous Improvement 	1st August 2018	Head of Stakeholder Relations
5. We will promote our products and service through a bespoke outreach programme and specialised literature targeted towards Care Experienced Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct an annual review of our care experienced funding literature and promotional materials Target student funding support and outreach services at 70% of schools with HE progression of less than 20%, or where 40% or more of students are from low income households (using SIMD data) Develop bespoke Care Experienced Guidance, Tips and Application workshops to provide practical support when applying for student funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Partners Our Customers 	1st August 2018	Customer Engagement Manager
6. We will review, develop and report on our Corporate Parenting Plan to ensure that it continues to be responsive to the needs of care Experienced Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appoint an individual role with overall responsibility of annually reviewing the SAAS Corporate Parenting Plan. Adjust our action plan to appropriately reflect the developing needs of Care Experienced Students by gathering feedback from key stakeholders Report annually on the progress of this action plan and publish this in a format which is accessible to Care Experienced Students and relevant stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Partners Our Customers Deliver Continuous Improvement 	1st August 2018	Head of Policy and Customer Relations

Annex A

Definition of Terms

Looked after child

The definition of a 'looked after child' is set out in section 17(6) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 ("the 1995 Act"), as amended by the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 ("the 2007 Act") and Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 ("the 2011 Act"). A child is 'looked after' by a local authority when he or she is:

- provided with accommodation by a local authority under section 25 of 1995 Act; or
- subject to a compulsory supervision order or an interim compulsory supervision order made by a children's hearing in respect of whom the local authority are the implementation authority (within the meaning of the 2011 Act); or
- living in Scotland and subject to an order in respect of whom a Scottish local authority has responsibilities, as a result of a transfer of an order under regulations made under section 33 of the 1995 Act or section 190 of the 2011 Act; or
- subject to a Permanence Order made after an application by the local authority under section 80 of the 2007 Act.

To assist in the provision of their care some children and young people with physical and/or mental/learning disabilities are 'looked after' by local authorities (often under a 'section 25' arrangement). These children and young people are legally 'looked after', and so covered by the duties set out in Part 9 of the Act.

The legal route by which a child became looked after has no relevance to their entitlement for corporate parenting support. If a child is 'looked after', by any of the means set out above, the duties set out in Part 9 apply.

A child or young person who has been adopted, or is secured in a placement with friends or relatives by means of a Kinship Care Order (Section 11 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995), is not 'looked after' by a local authority. However, in both cases a child may still become 'looked after' and depending on when they cease to be looked after may be considered a 'care leaver' and where this occurs, the child / young person is covered by Corporate parenting.

Care Leavers

The definition of a care leaver is set out in section 29 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, as amended by section 66 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

A young person will become a 'care leaver' if they cease to be 'looked after' on, or at any time after, their sixteenth birthday.

Care Experienced

"Care experienced" is an all-inclusive term which describes children and young people of all ages with all varieties of care experience. The term has been used to focus on the individual rather than the type of care they have experienced.

For SAAS funding purposes, this term refers to young people who are currently or were previously looked after. It includes looked after children and care leavers.

Annex B

List of Corporate Parents

Schedule 4 of the Act names 24 individuals and groups as Scotland's Corporate Parents. Corporate parenting responsibilities apply equally to the following organisations:

1. The Scottish Ministers
2. A local authority
3. The National Convener of Children's Hearings Scotland
4. Children's Hearings Scotland
5. The Principal Reporter
6. The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration
7. A health board
8. A board constituted under section 2(1)(b) of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978
9. Healthcare Improvement Scotland
10. The Scottish Qualifications Authority
11. Skills Development Scotland
12. Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (The Care Inspectorate)
13. The Scottish Social Services Council
14. The Scottish Sports Council
15. The chief constable of the Police Service of Scotland
16. The Scottish Police Authority
17. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
18. The Scottish Legal Aid Board
19. The Commissioner for Children and Young People in Scotland
20. The Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland
21. The Scottish Housing Regulator
22. Bòrd na Gàidhlig
23. Creative Scotland
24. A body which is a "post-16 education body" for purposes of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005



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www.saas.gov.uk