

**CORPORATE
PARENTING
SCOTLAND PLAN
2020-21**



The Open
University

SCOTLAND

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INTRODUCTION

An overview of the OU in Scotland's approach to corporate parenting and the aims of this plan

PROUD CORPORATE PARENTS

The Open University is Scotland's 'widening access university', offering flexible higher education to people from the widest possible range of backgrounds.

Our commitment to supporting our care-experienced students is part of our ethos and purpose.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 makes the OU in Scotland a corporate parent.

A FOUR NATIONS APPROACH

While the legislation only applies to Scotland, we are taking a four nations approach.

We are working with colleagues across the university to improve outcomes for all our care-experienced students.

Care-experienced students are a target group in the university's Access and Participation Plan, as well as the OU in Scotland's Access, Participation and Success Plan.

OUR CP STEERING GROUP

We have formed a Corporate Parenting steering group with a remit to collaborate, plan, review and report on OU-wide activities relating to care-experienced students.

The group comprises staff from across the University, as well as care-experienced students from our Student Reference Group and OU Students Association representatives.

The group meets at least twice per year to review progress on the Corporate Parenting Action Plan.

The Corporate Parenting Plan aims to:



Ensure delivery of the University's Corporate Parenting obligations in Scotland;



Support the University's Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council in relation to care-experienced students;



Align with the Open University's Access, Participation and Success Strategy 2020-2025;



Improve outcomes for our care-experienced students.

WHAT IS CARE EXPERIENCE?

The term **care-experienced** refers to anyone who has been or is currently in care or from a looked-after background **at any stage in their life**, no matter how short, including adopted children who were previously looked-after.

Scottish Funding Council, National Ambition for Care-experienced Students, 2020



Care-experienced students (including OUiS students) from Scottish universities at an event with the First Minister, July 2019. Photo courtesy of Universities Scotland.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

We are committed to working in partnership with care-experienced students, the OU students association, colleagues across OUiS and the four nations, and with external partners.

STUDENTS

Care-experienced students reference group – set up so OUiS students could contribute to the Corporate Parenting Plan and the CP Steering Group, and inform engagement with care-experienced students in Scotland.

OU COLLEAGUES

Care-experienced and carers task and finish group – set up by the APS team in Milton Keynes to coordinate action on these target groups in line with the Access and Participation Plan.

EXTERNAL PARTNERS

Care experience, estranged and carers East Forum (CEECEF) and West Forum – a collaboration of universities, colleges and other partners to share practice and improve outcomes for these student groups.

Hub for Success project, Edinburgh – a collaboration between Edinburgh-based institutions to widen access to education for care-experience people.

Who Cares? Scotland – a national third sector organisation advocating for the rights of care-experienced people.

OUR STUDENTS

What the data tells us about our care-experienced students

DECLARATION OF CARE EXPERIENCE

Undergraduate entrants declaring care experience comprise **0.7%** of the student population (2019/20).

We acknowledge that the data profile we have may not capture all our care-experienced students and the majority of our students do not make any declaration.

We are aware that students may prefer not to be identified and risk perceived stigma, so figures may under-represent the actual number of those with care experience. We are also aware that there may be some erroneous declarations.

Unlike other Scottish universities, our students do not have access to the care experience bursary as they are part-time, so there is less incentive to declare their status.

Improving the accuracy of our data capture is one of the intended outcomes of this Plan.

ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN 2020-25

The APP sets out internal University targets for access and participation, including:

All students will declare whether they have experience of being in care or not by 2025

OUR CARE-EXPERIENCED STUDENTS

The OUiS recognises the impact of care experience through compulsory education and beyond and is committed to improving outcomes for all our care-experienced students.

Unlike other post-16 education institutions in Scotland, **the majority of OUiS students are older than 26.**

The age profile of OUiS students identifying as care-experienced ranges from 17 to 70+ and are most likely to belong to the 26-35 age group, **suggesting a pattern of return to study as adult learners.**

We know that students declaring a care background are less likely than others to complete their course and, for those who do complete, to achieve good passes.

It should be noted that **disadvantage is often intersectional**, and students with care experience may also share a number of widening access characteristics.

An analysis of data on care-experienced OUiS students in 2017/18 revealed that they are more likely than other OUiS students to:

- enter the OUiS without HE-entry level qualifications
- declare a disability
- declare caring responsibilities
- live in an area of multiple deprivation
- be unemployed
- be unable to work due to disability or ill-health
- pay for their module using a part-time fee grant (i.e. have a personal income below £25,000)

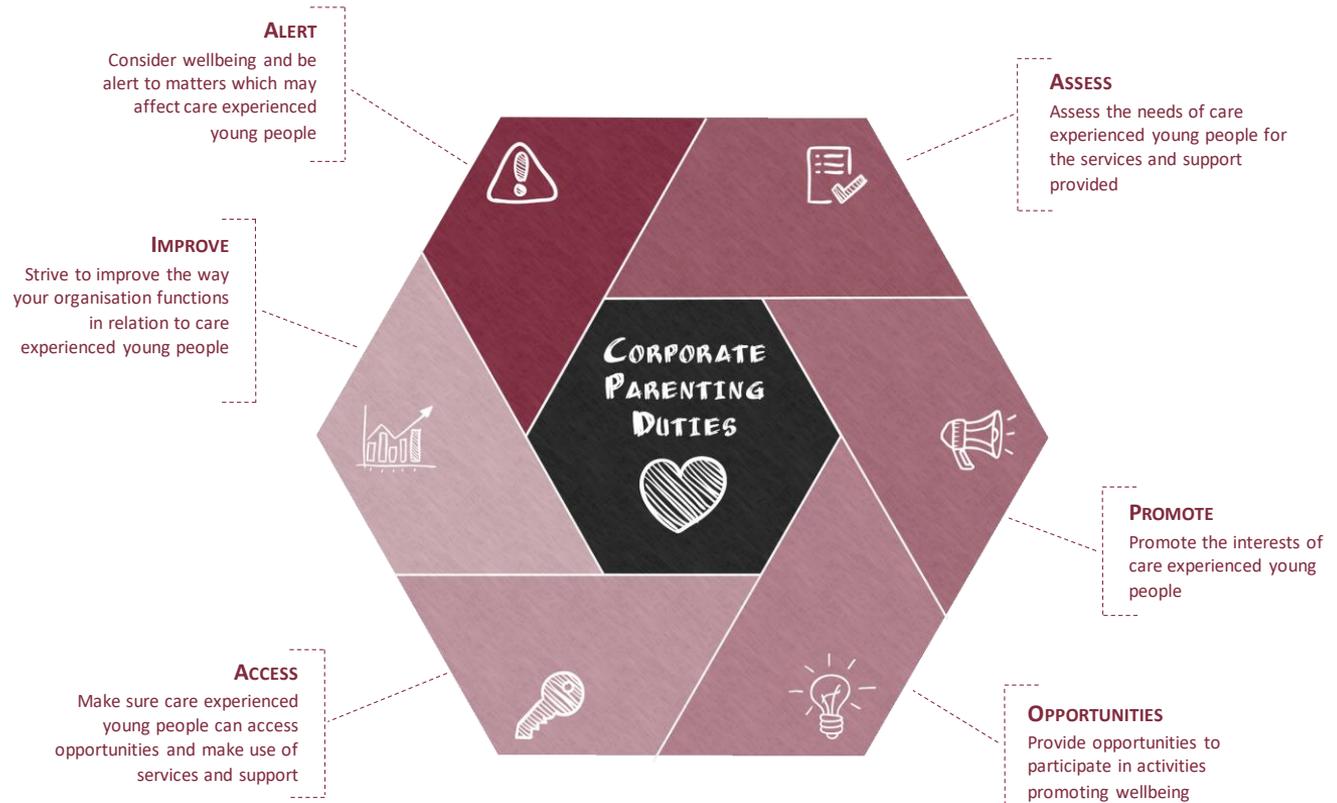
LEGISLATION, STRATEGIES AND DRIVERS

Overview of the key strategies and drivers informing
our Corporate Parenting Plan

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (part 9) **places statutory 'corporate parenting' responsibilities on all post-16 education bodies, including The Open University in Scotland.**

Six corporate parenting duties are outlined in Section 58 of the Act:

- **Be alert**
- **Assess needs**
- **Promote interests**
- **Provide opportunities**
- **Take action to support access**
- **Take action to improve**



CORPORATE PARENTING AND THE OU

The Open University is committed to ensuring we meet our Corporate Parenting obligations. In particular, we will focus on **improving outcomes for care-experienced students through promoting and providing support** and ensuring that support is appropriate and timely. We will also engage meaningfully with care-experienced students and representative bodies.

As the only university in the UK that is dedicated to distance learning, **the experiences, challenges and successes of our care-experienced students may differ from those of a traditional 'brick' institution** and we will ensure the support we offer recognises and responds to our students' particular experience.

WIDENING ACCESS

Currently, **only 5% of Scottish school leavers with care experience go directly to university** (Scottish Govt, 2020). We recognise that it may take care-experienced people longer to make the journey into higher education, and **our care-experienced students are likely to be mature learners**.

Our widening access activities **seek to raise awareness of the OU as a positive destination for care-experienced people of all ages**, particularly those who may not have school-leaving qualifications, and to ensure that prospective students have the information, resources and support to develop their confidence and study skills, and choose the course and level of study that is right for them.

NATIONAL AMBITION FOR CARE-EXPERIENCED STUDENTS

In January 2020, the **Scottish Funding Council** announced a National Ambition. By 2030 there should be no difference in outcomes between students with care experience and those without. The OU in Scotland supports this Ambition and will work with SFC to:



Increase the numbers of care-experienced students so they are fairly represented at college and university. That means 1.4% of OUIS students should be care-experienced.



Increase the proportion of care-experienced articulating students from college to degree level courses.



Work towards equality of outcomes with regards to retention and outcomes.



Monitor, evaluate and report on intake, progression, retention and success of care-experienced students at college and university.



Create opportunities for Corporate Parents to connect and network with so that they can learn from each other.

OU STRATEGIES AND DRIVERS



Additional drivers include (but are not limited to): **Equality Scheme and Objectives (2018-22)**, **Student and Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2020-23)**, **Student Voice Action Plan (2020-21)**.

OUTCOME AGREEMENT 2020/23

A Scottish Government priority is to ensure **Access to education for people from the widest range of backgrounds**. The SFC Outcome Agreement sets out key priorities and targets across a range of measures, in line with the recommendations of the Commission on Widening Access (CoWA). The following measures relate to students with care experience.

Measure 4: Recruitment of groups with protected characteristics

The number and proportion of UG entrants resident in Scotland with a protected characteristic or experience of care. (Gender, Age, Ethnicity, Disability, Care Leavers)

Measure 5: Retention of groups with protected characteristics

The number and proportion of UG degree entrants resident in Scotland from different characteristic groups starting a module in academic year 1 who return to start a module in the following academic year. (Deprivation, Gender, Age, Ethnicity, Disability, Care leavers, Articulation)

PROGRESS TO DATE

What we have achieved since the Corporate Parenting Plan was adopted in 2018

OU in SCOTLAND

The **Corporate Parenting steering group** met for the first time in September 2018 and has met twice yearly since. (58.1a, 58.1f)

The **Student Reference Group** was set up in 2019 and we have students attending each CP steering group. (58.1a)

Care-experienced students are now a target group in the OUiS **Access, Participation and Success Plan**. (58.1b)

OPEN UNIVERSITY

Care-experienced students are now a target group in the university's **Access and Participation Plan**. (58.1b)

A **Care Experience and Carers Task and Finish Group** has been set up to implement actions to support targets in the AP Plan. (58.1a, 58.1f)

A **cash bursary** for care-experienced students is planned for the 21B presentation. (58.1d)

EXTERNAL

In partnership with Who Cares? Scotland, universities, colleges, the Hub for Success, and the Scottish Funding Council, we have developed an online course on **Corporate Parenting in Higher Education**. (58.1c/e/f, 60)

This is intended to raise staff awareness of care experience and its impact on access to HE. It encourages staff to reflect on their role in improving outcomes for CE students.

It will be rolled out across the HE sector and it is being adapted for colleges by the College Development Network.

Note: the numbers refer to progress against the Corporate Parenting duties and associated actions outlined in the Action Plan section.

MONITORING AND REPORTING

The steering group will meet at least twice a year and will **review the plan annually**. In compliance with Part 9 of the Act it will:

- 61 Report on fulfilment of corporate parenting duties**
- 62 Provide Scottish Ministers with information on fulfilment of corporate parenting duties**
- 63 Have regard to any guidance about corporate parenting issued by the Scottish Ministers**
- 64 Comply with relevant direction issued by the Scottish Ministers**

Next report date: March 2021

We will also report on outcomes for our care-experienced students in line with our **Outcome Agreement** with the Scottish Funding Council.

Our steering group will engage with students and external organisations to ensure expert advice and support as we continue to develop and enhance our role as a corporate parent.

ACTION PLAN

The actions we will take to improve outcomes for our care-experienced students

OUR CORPORATE PARENTING ACTION PLAN

58.1 (a) To be alert to matters which may adversely affect wellbeing of care-experienced students

ACTION	REVIEW	STATUS	OUTCOME
Care-experienced students will participate in the Student Reference Group. The group will inform our Corporate Parenting and engagement with care-experienced students.	To meet at least twice per year.	Ongoing	Student voice is central to our Corporate Parenting.
Identify and compile case studies of care-experienced student journeys with the OU.	Review March 2021	Ongoing	A better understanding of who our care-experienced students are and their challenges / successes.

OUR CORPORATE PARENTING ACTION PLAN

58.1 (b) To assess needs of care-experienced students and the support we provide

ACTION	REVIEW	STATUS	OUTCOME
Regularly review student data in order to improve our understanding of OU students declaring care experience.	To be updated every two years.	Next review December 2020.	A better understanding of who our care-experienced students are, their challenges, experiences and successes.
Review how care experienced students can identify their status at various points of their learning journey.	Review March 2021.	Ongoing.	More students declaring care experience.
Review what support is triggered when a student discloses their care experience and that declaration is added to their profile.	Review September 2020.	Ongoing.	Timely and appropriate support for care-experienced students.
Named contact to take lead on providing advice and guidance to applicants and prospective applicants via telephone, email and other contact with Student Support Services.	Review September 2020.	Ongoing.	Timely and appropriate guidance for care-experienced applicants. Students choosing the best course for them.

OUR CORPORATE PARENTING ACTION PLAN

58.1 (c) To promote the interests of care experienced students

ACTION	REVIEW	STATUS	OUTCOME
Staff awareness and training in relation to care-experienced students for all student support and teaching staff as part of induction and staff development.	Review September 2020.	Ongoing.	Staff are confident in providing appropriate and timely support and information to care-experienced students and applicants.
Be alert to and contribute to sector developments in relation to care-experienced students.	Review September 2020	Ongoing.	Best practice in relation to care-experienced students is embedded across the university.
Work towards National Ambition to have 1.4% care-experienced students in OUIs by 2030 through improved declaration rates and outreach activity with the care-experienced community.	Review September 2021	Ongoing.	More students declaring care experience. Care-experienced people and partners are aware that The Open University is a positive option for them.

OUR CORPORATE PARENTING ACTION PLAN

58.1 (d) To provide opportunities to participate in activities

ACTION	REVIEW	STATUS	OUTCOME
Explore the development of activities and possible peer support networks for care experienced students.	Review September 2020.	Ongoing.	Timely and appropriate support for care-experienced students. Care-experienced students feel supported to succeed.
Develop opportunities for care-experienced students accessing the Careers and Employment Service.	Review September 2020.	Ongoing.	Care-experienced students are supported to progress to employment.
Work in partnership with colleges to ensure articulation and progression routes from College to Open University study.	Review March 2021.	Ongoing.	More care-experienced students articulating from college.

OUR CORPORATE PARENTING ACTION PLAN

58.1 (e) To take action to support access to opportunities, services and support provided

ACTION	REVIEW	STATUS	OUTCOME
Engage with local authorities, third sector organisations, Champions Boards, and others as part of our widening access and outreach activities.	Review September 2020.	Ongoing.	Care-experienced people and partners are aware that The Open University is a positive option for them.
Ensure information for care experienced applicants and students is available and accessible on the OUiS website and other relevant sources.	Review September 2020.	Ongoing.	Timely and relevant information on study options and available support for care-experienced students.
Make proactive contact with students who declare care-experience to offer tailored support if required.	Review September 2020.	Planned.	Care-experienced students are supported to succeed.

OUR CORPORATE PARENTING ACTION PLAN

58.1 (f) To take action to improve as a Corporate Parent

ACTION	REVIEW	STATUS	OUTCOME
Stay alert to developments in policy and best practice in relation to care-experienced students and incorporate these into the review process.	Review March 2021.	Ongoing.	Best practice in relation to care-experienced students is embedded across the university.
Respond to and address issues identified through engagement with care-experienced students.	Review September 2020.	Ongoing.	The corporate parenting plan reflects the particular needs of OU students with care experience.
Engage with colleagues across the University to enable sharing of good practice, ideas and resources in relation to Corporate Parenting.	Review September 2020.	Ongoing.	Best practice in relation to care-experienced students is embedded across the university.
Develop and maintain partnerships with other universities to share practice, ideas and resources.	Review March 2021.	Ongoing.	Best practice in relation to care-experienced students is embedded across the HE sector.

OUR CORPORATE PARENTING ACTION PLAN

60 To collaborate

ACTION	REVIEW	STATUS	OUTCOME
<p>Continue to collaborate with local, regional and national partners as part of the Care Experienced, Estranged and Carers East Forum (CEECEF), the Hub for Success (Edinburgh), and Who Cares? Scotland.</p>	<p>Review September 2020.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>The Open University is a key partner in initiatives to improve educational outcomes of care-experienced people in Scotland.</p>
<p>Continue to collaborate with college partners on articulation routes.</p>	<p>Review March 2021.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>	

This review of the Corporate Parenting Plan was approved by the OUiS Corporate Parenting Steering Group on 23 March 2020.



Susan Stewart
Director, The OU in Scotland
22 September 2020