

**Scottish Fire and
Rescue Service Draft
Corporate Parenting Plan
2023 - 2026**

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Introduction

I am pleased to present our Draft Corporate Parenting Plan 2023 to 2026. The Scottish Fire & Rescue Service (SFRS) see our corporate parenting duties not only as a responsibility but an opportunity to have a positive impact and improve the life chances for care experienced people. We recognise that care experienced individuals should be at the heart of our commitment as corporate parents. Therefore, to shape this plan, we have consulted with care experienced people and organisations who represent those who are care experienced.

This plan reflects 'The Promise', the long-term change programme for the improvement of Scotland's care system spanning 10 years (2021- 2030). We will continue to align with The Promise by operating from the perspective of what matters to children and families, listening, mitigating the impacts of poverty, embedding destigmatising language and practices and upholding children's rights.

Our last plan was published in January 2020 and our actions and the direction of our work was very much influenced by Covid. The needs and challenges for care experienced individuals differed during this time, with many facing further inequalities. The Service tried to be as innovative and flexible as possible in how we delivered our corporate parenting role and it is our intention to carry this innovative thinking into this plan.

This Corporate Parenting Plan showcases our commitment in helping people with lived experience of care to fulfil their potential. We will harness the enthusiasm and commitment within SFRS to continue to improve life outcomes through our employment, service delivery, decision making and governance practices.

Joint statement by Chair of Board, Kirsty Darwent and Interim Chief Officer Ross Haggart

Care Experienced and Corporate Parenting

What does care experienced mean?

The term “care experienced” refers to anyone who has been or is currently in care. This care may have been provided in many different settings, such as kinship care, looked after at home (with the help of social work), residential care, foster care, adoption and secure care.

It should be noted that although the law defines children and young people as ‘looked after children’, ‘care experienced’ is the preferred terminology and is what will be used in this report (Source: Who cares? Scotland 1000 Voices).

What is Corporate Parenting?

Corporate Parents are the public bodies named in law as having responsibilities to young people who are looked after and care experienced. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 says that 24 public bodies, including the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, have a responsibility to understand the lives of Scotland’s looked after young people and respond to their needs as any parent should.

SFRS recognises that those who are care experienced may leave care but this does not mean that care leaves them – the impact can be lifelong. Therefore, we are committed to acting as a corporate parent to anyone who has care experience regardless of their age.

Corporate parenting encourages people and organisations to do as much as they can to make sure children and young people feel in control of their lives and are able to overcome the barriers they face.

Corporate Parenting Duties

On 1 April 2015, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service joined many other public bodies and organisations in Scotland to become a corporate parent under Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. This places responsibilities on us to improve the lives and futures of Scotland’s care experienced young people. The duties under the 2014 Act mean that we must:

- Be alert to matters which might adversely affect the wellbeing of looked after children and young people
- Assess the needs of looked after children and young people for services and support we provide
- Promote the interests of looked after children and young people
- Provide opportunities for looked after children and young people to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing
- Take appropriate action to enable looked after children and young people access to these opportunities and make use of our services and support
- Take any other action we consider appropriate to improve our functions to meet the needs of looked after children and young people

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service embrace these obligations. We provide a range of services to help people lead safe lives in their home, at work, in public places and in education.

We also have the advantage of a well-respected and trusted corporate profile which allows us to offer positive role models to young people. In this regard, we understand that these duties are not only the responsibility of one department but for SFRS to be successful, the whole organisation needs to play its part.

National Context

The latest figures show that 13,255 children in Scotland are currently in care (Scottish Government 2022). This includes young people in foster care, kinship care, those who are looked after at home, residential care, and secure care or with prospective adopters.

While there currently may be less than 2% of children in Scotland in care, thousands more people have previous care experience, having spent time in the care system in the past.

We understand that many care experienced children and young people have complex needs. Those with care experience are more likely to experience trauma, chaotic living arrangements, loss and instability.

Outcomes for care experienced young people are still consistently poorer than for their peers without experience of care. They are at risk of high levels of poverty, homelessness, poor mental health and low educational attainment. They may need extra help, and this has been at the forefront of the new Corporate Parenting Plan.

Evidence suggests that:

- Around 40% of young people in custody report that they have been in care.
- 22% of school leavers who were looked after within the year were classed as unemployed, compared to 7% of their non-care experienced peers.
- Care Experienced school leavers are more likely to leave school with no passes at SCQF 3 or better, with 13% of school leavers looked after within the last year being recorded with no passes, compared to 2% of all school leavers.
- Care Experienced students have lower rates of completing courses compared to all students at university and college.

Source: "Outcomes for care experienced young people", WhoCares? Scotland

In Line with SFRS Long-Term Vision

To deliver the SFRS Long-Term Vision, there are eight overarching priorities for the Service under the four principles of:

- Progressive
- People Centred
- Inclusive
- Connected

Our Corporate Parenting Plan 2023-2026, directly relates to these principles as detailed below.

Progressive

Prevention will be at the heart of our service delivery model as it evolves to meet Scotland's changing needs.

We will be innovative in our use of technology, data and information to change how we work.

The SFRS are aware that to deliver a successful Corporate Parenting Plan, we need to work with care experienced individuals and listen to their journey. We need to ensure that corporate parenting isn't just seen as the role of one individual or department but that we work across all departments and functions within the SFRS to meet our corporate parenting responsibilities.

We will be more efficient, ensuring our resources are redirected to corporate parenting priority areas and are aligned to current and existing risks.

Research shows that digital access is a key rights and inequality issue for care experienced individuals which was amplified during the pandemic. The SFRS will explore solutions to improving digital inclusion for care experienced individuals in this Corporate Parenting Plan.

People Centred

We will be an organisation that works in agile and smart ways to support our staff to achieve a positive work/life balance.

We will invest in developing our leaders and train our staff to the highest standards.

In its simplest form agile working is about being innovative, informal, and flexible in the way we work and how we organise ourselves. We are committed to working in more agile ways so that staff can build work patterns around their family and personal lives. For employees who have caring responsibilities as a Foster Carer or Kinship Carer it can help promote and support a positive work life balance.

The SFRS will ensure that our employees have the adequate training, support and knowledge to deliver on our Corporate Parenting Plan. We will continue to update our corporate parenting learning resource area and work with partners to share learning experiences.

Inclusive

Partnership working will be at the core of how we work.

We will value difference of views, experiences and backgrounds within and out with our organisation.

Our Corporate Parenting Plan can't be achieved working in isolation. We need to continuously identify and pursue opportunities to work with external partners and the community. We need to effectively 'co-parent' in promoting the wellbeing of care experienced people to enable them to achieve the best outcomes.

We will engage with care experienced individuals, organisations and co-parents to allow us to see the bigger picture and how we can play a role in this.

We will embrace inclusiveness and difference. We will reflect the characteristics and makeup of our communities and put their needs at the heart of what we do.

Care Experienced individuals are not a homogenous group with the same backgrounds or needs. We will engage with care experienced individuals so that we can understand and meet these needs, which includes considering intersectionality.

Connected

We will be driven by a deeper understanding of the needs of our communities.

We will be a more environmentally sustainable organisation.

We will work with care experienced individuals and organisations to develop an understanding of their needs and how we can contribute more to enriching their lives.

We are committed to working alongside our stakeholders and partners in pursuit of our shared prevention agenda to help increase the life opportunities of care experienced individuals in Scotland.

We will drive the message that it is not only a responsibility but an opportunity to have a positive impact and improve the life chances for care experienced people.

Corporate Parenting and Children's Rights

Children's rights are unique in that many of them, although designed for the safety and protection of children, have to be provided for by adults.

As a public-sector organisation, the SFRS have a role to play in supporting the Scottish Government to integrate children's rights and welfare into policy and practice. As a result, you will see throughout our Corporate Parenting Plan, how we will adopt a rights-based approach contributing to upholding and respecting the rights of all children.

The Promise highlights that, 'Scotland must implement the rights of the child in a way that does not reinforce a focus on policy, process and procedure but supports the ability of children and those around them to connect and develop relationships and cultures that uphold their rights as a matter of course'.

We will aim to ensure that everything we do both at a corporate and local level is grounded on respecting rights, is inclusive and supportive.

The SFRS now ensures that the needs of care experienced people are considered in its policy, planning and performance through our Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment process. This process includes considering children's rights as laid out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This will continue throughout this new Corporate Parenting Plan.

Corporate Parenting Plan Draft Outcomes 2023-2026

Our draft Corporate Parenting Plan for the years 2023 – 2026 takes a thematic approach and highlights our key outcomes as a corporate parent throughout that time. Our 6 outcomes consider both our statutory responsibilities and the priorities identified through our internal and external engagement.

Our draft outcomes are introduced in the section below, with indicative examples of what our activity may look like in practice and will be reflected in the supporting action plan. However, this is not an exhaustive list of forthcoming activity as we will endeavour to respond to any challenges and opportunities that arise in a timely manner.

Outcome 1: SFRS will build relationships with organisations representing those who are care experienced. We will listen to the **voice** of care experienced individuals and reflect this at all levels of our decision making.

- This outcome aligns UNCRC articles 3 (best interest of the child), and 12 (respect for the views of the child)

We will...

- ➔ Scope where our policies can better support those who are care experienced
- ➔ Identify opportunities for care experienced individuals to co-design policy, practice and/or projects within SFRS
- ➔ Continue to use our Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment process to evaluate the impact of our policy and practice on care experienced individuals.
- ➔ Explore opportunities to develop trauma-informed practice to inform the development of our services
- ➔ Scope how to best utilise existing forums such as the SFRS Young Person's Forum, our Youth Voice Structure and our Employee Networks to inform SFRS activity and decision making
- ➔ Ensure our future vision includes the voice and needs of care experienced people
- ➔ Scope our current relationships with organisations who represent those who are care experienced and build on these links

Outcome 2: Ensure our services are **accessible** to all care experienced individuals, including care leavers. Where a lack of accessibility has been identified then we will implement the changes needed.

- This outcome relates to UNCRC articles 12 (respect for the views of the child), 39 (recovery from trauma and reintegration)

We will...

- ➔ Engage with care experienced individuals to identify if they are aware of the services offered by SFRS and what accessibility to these services looks like for them
- ➔ Explore how we can support the digital inclusion of care experienced individuals
- ➔ Keep up to date and informed of the issues that may impact on care experienced individuals and use this knowledge to advise our policy and planning
- ➔ Develop an over-arching Communications Strategy to promote our Corporate Parenting Plan and its actions both internally and externally

Outcome 3: Consult with **care experienced employees at SFRS** to identify what can be done to build better formal and informal support mechanisms within the organisation.

- This outcome relates to UNCRC articles 6 (life, survival and development), 12 (respect for the views of the child), and 39 (recovery from trauma and reintegration)

We will...

- ➔ Consult with our care experienced employees to avoid making assumptions about what they need
- ➔ Recognise those with care experience as experts whilst being mindful of their workloads and our asks of them
- ➔ Be mindful of confidentiality throughout our consultation and engagement with our care experienced employees
- ➔ Develop an overview of the support available to care experienced employees

Outcome 4: We will work in **partnership** with other corporate parents and external organisations to improve opportunities for those who are care experienced to develop skills, experience and confidence to achieve their personal, employment and career ambitions.

- This outcome relates to UNCRC articles 3 (best interest of the child), 6 (life, survival and development), 28 (right to education) and 29 (goals of education)

We will...

- ➔ Collaborate with other Corporate Parents to take a joined-up approach to increase the life chances of care experienced people
- ➔ Continue to engage with local Corporate Parenting networks to share learning and embed local partnerships
- ➔ Continue and expand on our partnership work with MCR Pathways
- ➔ Review our Youth Employment Strategy and prevention & protection initiatives to see how they might be utilised to offer opportunities to care experienced people
- ➔ Identify what initiatives we can offer to care experienced young people and advertise this nationally through organisations working with those who are care experienced
- ➔ Scope the creation of leaflets for firefighters to hand out to residential homes to highlight what we can offer
- ➔ Revise protocols for local areas across the service as to how to engage with local corporate parenting initiatives
- ➔ Implement a Guaranteed Interview Scheme for care experienced individuals

Outcome 5: SFRS colleagues, volunteers and board members are aware of their role as a corporate parent and understand how to be a **good corporate parent** in practice

- This outcome relates to UNCRC article 3 (best interests of the child)

We will...

- ➔ Create a centralised intranet page to show what volunteering opportunities are available to staff which contribute to our corporate parenting responsibilities
- ➔ Review and refresh our training and courses to ensure they are up to date and fit for purpose. We will review what support and training is available to employees whose role includes engaging with care experienced young people

- ➔ Introduce an e-learning module on the basics of corporate parenting and make this available to all staff
- ➔ Deliver an in person re-fresher training course for senior leaders and board members on corporate parenting
- ➔ Explore the possibility of a care experienced young person mentoring a member of our senior leadership team to enable the exchange of skills, knowledge and understanding
- ➔ Share case studies of good corporate parenting practice across the service

Outcome 6: we will develop **measures** to determine if our interventions have been successful and track our progress.

- This outcome relates to UNCRC article 3 (best interests of the child)

We will...

- ➔ Explore how we utilise current business intelligence and service delivery data to inform decision making and the evaluation of actions within our Corporate Parenting Plan
- ➔ Identify and introduce indicators of success of our Corporate Parenting Plan
- ➔ Scope what existing systems may be used to record relevant measures
- ➔ Implement a standardised approach to measuring the engagement with and success of corporate parenting initiatives
- ➔ Capture, promote and evaluate the data collected to inform future decisions

Governance

The SFRS's Board and Strategic Leadership Team are responsible for approving the overall approach and priority placed on corporate parenting initiatives. They have responsibility for the Corporate Parenting Plan and the Strategic Plan.

The Equality and Diversity Manager is the lead officer with respect to the co-ordination of our response to corporate parenting responsibilities. We operate a mainstreamed approach to equality where individual Directorates and Service Delivery Areas (SDA's) have responsibility for meeting and reporting on their equality obligations and this extends to the duties identified for corporate parenting. Being a Corporate Parent directly links to our Equality Outcome 6, 'SFRS will support Scotland's young people reach their full potential'.

The Plan will consider expanding the core membership of the Corporate Parenting Working Group to involve other key internal functions. The group will continue to play a vital part in identifying interdependencies and developing the actions within the Plan, implementing these actions, and promoting the role of the members as key contacts within the Service. To underpin the corporate reporting framework the activities identified in the Corporate Parenting Plan will be reported every 6 months to the Corporate Assurance Board with annual reports to the Strategic Leadership Team and Full Board. The format of the reporting will include progress against the action plan and relevant 'case studies' that illustrate progress towards improving the life opportunities for care experienced people. SFRS Board papers are available for access on our website.