

SQA Corporate Parenting Plan 2018–21

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Foreword

SQA is a proud corporate parent. We believe that all young people deserve the opportunity to realise their potential and achieve their ambitions, whatever their start in life. We are committed to the vision of a Scotland where all children and young people with experience of care are understood, believed in, and given every opportunity to thrive.

We know that looked-after children and care-experienced young people face many challenges, but we don't accept that their life chances should be restricted. We are optimistic that, through considered, empathic and practical change, we can help care-experienced young people enjoy the positive futures they deserve.

In this plan you will read about what we have done to fulfil our commitments, the progress we have made, and our plans to build on this over the next three years. We have listened to the needs, fears and wishes of care-experienced young people and have used what they have told us to inform our plan. Here at SQA, we are in a unique position to realise tangible change that can make a difference.

Working with other corporate parents has proved more fruitful than any of us could have hoped. It is amazing what we can achieve together.

Yours in partnership,

Janet Brown
CEO
Scottish Qualifications Authority

Welcome

Welcome to SQA's Corporate Parenting Plan for 2019–21.

Corporate parenting has been an important part of SQA's life for more than three years, yet many of the young people we want to support are still unsure about what corporate parents are, and what they can do for them.

Very simply, the idea is to encourage individuals and the organisations to which they belong to do as much as they can to help care-experienced young people feel in control of their lives, and able to overcome the barriers they face. Removing the smallest obstacles can sometimes make the biggest difference.

At SQA, we want to go one better and remove as many of these barriers as possible. It's about effecting real, practical change — not just talking about it. Take a look at our report [SQA is a proud corporate parent](#).

As SQA's corporate parenting steering group, we meet quarterly to review our progress in making real, positive differences to care-experienced young people. The steering group brings together colleagues from different business areas, but we hope to include care-experienced young people in the near future.

In this plan, we highlight some of our best ideas and our biggest achievements as corporate parents, and outline what we intend to do next. But this isn't about us, it's about you, and about an ongoing journey. Please get in touch and let us know what you think, and what we can do to help you further.

SQA Corporate Parenting Steering Group

Our promises to you

We have taken on the [Scottish Government's Corporate Parenting duties](#), thought about them carefully, and interpreted them in our own commitments to care-experienced young people. We promise you that we will:

- ◆ do our best to understand your needs and ensure those who work for us, and with us, are aware of your needs and SQA's responsibilities
- ◆ work with you to ensure that you have access to SQA services that meet your needs
- ◆ support, recognise, and celebrate your ambition and achievements
- ◆ improve opportunities for you to access Modern Apprenticeships, internships, routes to work experience, and employment with SQA
- ◆ work with other corporate parents to make sure we are all doing our best for you

We're listening to you

We attend and organise events with young people like you and listen to what you have to say; we explore ideas with other corporate parents; and we seek feedback on what we've done so far, and what we plan to do.

- ◆ [The Life Changes Trust — Young People's Champions Board](#)
- ◆ Care-experienced young people
- ◆ [Who Cares? Scotland](#)
- ◆ Other corporate parents
- ◆ Schools and colleges
- ◆ SQA's Equality & Inclusion Key Partners Group
- ◆ SQA colleagues

What have we already put in place?

We're not just *talking* about corporate parenting; we're doing everything we can to make corporate parenting what we're about. Over the past three years, we've made considerable progress and have effected real change. Did you know that in the past three years, we have:

- ◆ worked with Scottish Children's Report Administration (SCRA) and Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS) to stop children's hearings from clashing with SQA exams
- ◆ ensured that care-experienced young people can get [free, replacement SQA certificates](#)
- ◆ started incorporating relevant and appropriate situations of young people in care into our qualifications
- ◆ celebrated [Results Day](#) every August with a group of care-experienced young learners and Who Cares? Scotland
- ◆ made progress in treating 'care experience' as a protected characteristic, so that being 'inclusive' means looking after care-experienced young people too
- ◆ launched online corporate parenting training for SQA staff

What are we doing next?

We're stepping up to this next three years with redoubled vigour and optimism about the practical changes we can bring about, the positive impact these can have, and the bright futures ahead for our young people. Over the next three years, these will include:

- ◆ forging even more collaborative relationships with other corporate parents
- ◆ actively seeking the views of care-experienced young people, building on our engagement with the [Young People's Champions Boards](#), and relevant support organisations and charities
- ◆ celebrating and acknowledging the achievements of all care-experienced young people during Results Day
- ◆ making employment opportunities for care-experienced young people at SQA clear and accessible
- ◆ developing ideas on tailored training for specific SQA business areas, particularly in qualifications
- ◆ exploring ways to offer tangible support to care-experienced young learners, like returning externally assessed artwork without charge

Renewing our corporate parenting commitments

You can find all the details on what we are doing to fulfil our commitments to you [here](#) but here's a snapshot how we plan to go about transforming our corporate parenting promises in action.

Outcome 1 — SQA understands and is alert to the needs of care-experienced children and young people to inform its policy, planning and practice.

We're going to talk to Young People's Champions Boards, other corporate parents, support organisations and charities, and use what we learn, along with feedback and survey results, to make sure that all our plans, policies and promises to you are relevant and meaningful. In this way, we can build on the good work we have started: ensuring our assessments do not discriminate against care-experienced young people, avoiding children's hearing clashing with exams, and allowing care-experienced young people to receive free replacement SQA certificates.

Outcome 2 — Care-experienced children and young people benefit from access to a range of SQA services designed to meet their emotional and physical needs.

We're going to try to walk a mile in your shoes, understand where the challenges are, and find ways to make sure these don't stop you from achieving SQA qualifications. We'll use what you tell us to help us design our qualifications— particularly in the Care sector — and develop ways to assess these supportively. In this way, and along with other corporate parents, we believe we can decrease the stigma and increase the status and awareness of care-experienced children and young people. And we're going to make sure that care-experienced people receive the training and guidance to make the most of SQA qualifications.

Outcome 3 — The ambition and achievements of care-experienced young people are supported, recognised and acknowledged by SQA.

We'll demonstrate and celebrate your achievements all year round, through the publication of inspiring case studies. And on Results Day, we'll hold a special event for care-experienced learners with Who Cares? Scotland and MCR Pathways, and explore ways of celebrating the achievements of ALL care-experienced learners.

Outcome 4 — Improve engagement with those organisations who support care-experienced young people and create better awareness of the different opportunities to work with SQA.

We'll work harder with organisations that support you or that you're involved with to make sure you know about all the ways you can work with SQA, whether on one of work experience programmes, as a Modern Apprentice, an intern, or simply as one of our colleagues.

Outcome 5 — SQA employees and appointees understand and are aware of the needs of care-experienced young people and SQA's corporate parenting responsibilities.

We'll work with Who Cares? Scotland and other corporate parents to devise and keep improving training for SQA staff and appointees. In partnership with Who Cares? Scotland, MCR Pathways and other organisations, our Responsible Business team will create and promote volunteering, and mentoring opportunities for our staff. In this way,

our colleagues will learn more about their corporate parenting responsibilities, and contribute to supporting the aspirations and profile of care-experienced young people.