



SQA Corporate Parenting Plan

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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce SQA's Corporate Parenting Plan for 2015–18.

As a corporate parent, SQA has a legal and moral duty to provide children who are looked after with the kind of support that any good parent would give their own children to ensure that all aspects of their development are nurtured.

We know that looked after children and care-experienced young people are amongst the most vulnerable in our society, and that all too often their life chances are restricted. SQA believes that corporate parenting is not just a responsibility. It is a real opportunity to help improve the futures of looked after children and young people. 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.

A number of different corporate parents — including local authorities, health boards, the police and schools all have a critical contribution to make. SQA will work in partnership, where we can, to fulfil our responsibilities as a corporate parent.

SQA's Corporate Parenting Plan sets the framework within which we will work to improve the lives of Scotland's looked after children and young people.

Janet Brown
Chief Executive

Background

SQA helps individuals realise their potential and achieve their ambitions by providing a wide range of high quality, internationally recognised qualifications and associated services.

We work with schools, colleges, universities and training organisations to develop, deliver and accredit qualifications and assessments. Around 15,000 teaching professionals and industry specialists support SQA awarding operations annually, ensuring SQA qualifications accurately reflect learners' knowledge and skills and provide routes to jobs or further study.

SQA also awards a range of other qualifications, including customised awards, to meet the needs of individual companies and organisations. We provide advice, support, and services, such as expertise in assessment, that enable organisations to meet a range of educational, development and regulatory requirements.

Corporate parenting

What is a corporate parent?

A corporate parent is an organisation or individual who has special responsibilities to looked after children and care-experienced young people. 'Looked after children' are children in care provided by the state — a group that includes:

- ◆ those in residential care
- ◆ those in foster care
- ◆ those in kinship care
- ◆ those who are looked after at home with social work involvement

A corporate parent is intended to carry out many of the roles a parent should. They may not be able to provide everything a loving parent can, but they should still be able to provide the best possible support and care for the children and young people.

The concept is intended to encourage people and organisations to do as much as they can to make sure children and young people feel in control of their lives and able to overcome the barriers they face.

National context

Research confirms that, generally, looked after children and young people are much more likely to face poorer life experiences¹.

¹ [Review of Research on Vulnerable Young People and Their Transitions to Independent Living](#), Scottish Executive Social Research, 2007

We know that some looked after young people do achieve positive outcomes. Unfortunately, however, for most care-experienced young people, the outcomes are much less positive, and can result in lower educational attainment, significant under achievement and life chances that are largely reduced².

Children and young people who are care experienced or who are looked after have the poorest outcomes of all children and young people in Scotland. Scottish Government figures show that in 2014:

- ◆ 50% of the adult prison population had been looked after
- ◆ 30% of looked after children become homeless
- ◆ 50% of looked after children have a mental health issue
- ◆ 4% of care leavers go on to higher education

Many think that care leavers get the same chances as all other young people to get a job or go to college, so that they can work towards their dreams. The reality is, the opportunities may be there, but these young people can't always sustain them as they are still dealing with the emotional impact of being brought up in care. They need continued support to take advantage of these opportunities.

Young people in care are just like all other young people — except they also need to deal with being separated from their parents, being judged for living in a children's home, and being viewed as 'different' because their families can't look after them. It is unsurprising that, after these experiences, their outcomes in life can be much poorer than their non-care peers.

Education

Education is fundamental to all other life outcomes but the educational outcomes for looked after young people are unacceptably poor in comparison to their non-care peers. Scottish Government statistics highlight that the exclusion rates for this group are unacceptable, with 233 exclusions per 1000 for looked after young people in comparison to only 33 per 1000 for their non-care peers. Trauma, mental ill health, stigma, frequent placement moves and chaotic living arrangements are all examples of how a looked after young person's experience of education can be a negative one. With such poor experiences it is unsurprising that 85% of looked after young people leave school before the age of 16 and only 4% of looked after young people go on to study at university³.

² [These Are Our Bairns — a guide for community planning partnerships on being a good corporate parent](#): 'We can and must do better a guide for community planning partnerships on being a good Corporate parent', The Scottish Government, 2008

³ [Education outcomes for Scotland's looked after children 2012/13](#), Scottish Government, 2014

Corporate parent responsibilities

In 2008 the Scottish Government and local authorities confirmed their commitment to the approach to corporate parenting in *These Are Our Bairns: a guide for community planning partnerships on being a good corporate parent*. The Scottish Government is now building on this by extending corporate parenting duties to a wider group of public bodies and requiring them to plan and report on their activities.

On 1 April 2015, SQA joined many other public bodies in Scotland to become a national corporate parent under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

Part 9 (Corporate Parenting) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places responsibilities on SQA to improve the lives and futures of Scotland's looked after children and care-experienced young people. In practice, this means we must listen to the needs, fears and wishes of looked after children and care-experienced young people and be proactive and determined in our efforts to address these needs.

In the next section, we explain how SQA will continue to engage with looked after and care-experienced young people to meet its corporate parenting responsibilities.

Corporate parenting in SQA

The duties under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 mean that SQA 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 action appropriate to ensure looked after children and young people access 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

Status

SQA is delighted to be a national corporate parent and we are committed to improving outcomes for looked after children and care-experienced young people.

SQA is committed to making things better by listening to care-experienced young people. In March 2015, SQA pledged its support for the Who Cares? Scotland 'Listen-Act-Unite' campaign. This campaign brings together young people, members of the public, decision makers and communities, to establish how we listen to care-experienced young people; how we act on what we hear and how we unite to create better lives for them.

We have met with a number of young people to learn about their lives and ambitions and as an organisation we feel strongly that we can make a real difference. We fully support the vision of the Scottish Government to make Scotland the best place in the world to grow up.

SQA qualifications prepare people for life in general as well as for progression into further study, training or employment. We are committed to helping young people to realise their potential and to achieve their ambitions, no matter what their background, by providing a wide range of high quality, general and vocational, accessible qualifications that accurately reflect their knowledge and skills.

SQA's duties as a corporate parent require us to collaborate with other corporate parents to promote the wellbeing of care-experienced young people and enable them to achieve the best outcomes. Our Corporate Parenting Plan includes exploring partnerships with a number of other corporate parents.

Governance and responsibilities

SQA already has a robust framework in place to oversee compliance with its equality duties. We will use this existing framework to record and monitor our progress towards achieving the commitments set out in SQA's Corporate Parenting Plan.

SQA's Chief Executive is accountable for the fulfilment of SQA's equality duties, and is supported in this by SQA's Equality Steering Group.

SQA's Equality Steering Group's key responsibilities include:

- ◆ considering implications for SQA of relevant legislative developments
- ◆ approving ongoing development of SQA's Equality Framework and Strategy
- ◆ promoting and advocating increased organisational understanding of SQA's equality commitments
- ◆ ensuring consistency across the organisation in SQA's approach to delivering these commitments

Corporate parenting has now been added to the steering group's responsibilities.

Implementation of the Corporate Parenting Plan will come under the auspices of sub-groups charged with implementing SQA's Equality Action Plans covering all SQA business areas, feeding into the SQA Equality Steering Group.

SQA's Board of Management exercises its duty to ensure compliance, and governs the implementation of the Equality Framework, Strategy and action plans. SQA's Audit Committee oversees the fulfilment of our equality duties on behalf of the Board. Corporate parenting has now been added to these remits.

We will represent the national corporate parenting agenda in our corporate goals and include reference in our Corporate Plan 2016–19 onwards. SQA's Corporate Parenting Plan will sit under our Strategic Goal 5: Continue to develop SQA as a leading public body and key player in the education, skills and training landscape — which is alongside other aspects of SQA work designed to promote equality and improve life chances for vulnerable learners. SQA's Board of Management is responsible for approving the Corporate Plan.

We will ensure SQA staff and appointees are aware of the needs of looked after children and care-experienced young people and understand SQA's corporate parenting responsibilities.

Our Corporate Parenting Plan outlines the outcomes we will work towards and the action we will take to meet our responsibilities and make a difference to the lives of Scotland's care-experienced young people. SQA's outcomes and associated actions are set out on pages 8–12. We will develop detailed action plans to take this work forward.

Corporate Parenting Action Plan

Corporate Parenting Plan: Outcome 1	Owner(s)	Strategic priority	
<p>SQA understands and is alert to the needs of looked after children and care-experienced young people to inform its policy, planning and practice</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Represent the national corporate parenting agenda in our corporate goals and in our Corporate Plan 2016–19 onwards. 2 Ensure we have the systems in place to keep informed of the issues which impact on the life of looked after children and care-experienced young people. 3 Establish links with and be guided by Who Cares? Scotland and other third sector organisations representing the views of looked after children and care-experienced young people to ensure their needs are reflected in our plans. 4 Liaise with external organisations with corporate parent links to share good practice. 5 Ensure SQA’s exam timetable is sent annually to the Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration (SCRA) and Children’s Hearings Scotland (CHS) to allow children’s hearings to be organised outwith exam time. We will also engage with the SCRA to learn how they will evaluate the impact if any resulting from the SQA exam timetable being shared. 6. Investigate the barriers in issuing replacement Scottish Qualifications Certificates without charge to looked after children, and care-experienced young people. 	<p>Corporate Planning Team</p> <p>Strategic Planning & Governance</p> <p>Strategic Planning & Governance</p> <p>Equality Steering Group</p> <p>Operations Directorate/ Strategic Planning & Governance</p> <p>Operations Directorate/ Finance Directorate</p>	<p>(i) Be alert to needs of looked after children and care-experienced young people</p> <p>(ii) Assess the needs of looked after children and care-experienced young people</p> <p>(iii) Promote the interests of looked after children and care-experienced young people</p>

Corporate Parenting Plan: Outcome 2		Owner(s)	Strategic priority
<p>Looked after children benefit from access to a range of SQA services designed to meet their emotional, mental and physical needs</p>	<p>We will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Ensure the views of care-experienced young people are considered when designing qualifications to meet their care needs. We will ensure their experiences and interests contribute to the thinking and design of Care qualifications for the Care sector. Where qualifications are being developed for the Care sector, people with care experience will be invited as appropriate to contribute to the development process. This may include for example Qualification Development Teams (QDT), Qualification Support Teams (QSTs) and/or Validation Panels. This will ensure their voice is heard and that the qualification takes due account of their care needs. 2 Work in partnership with Who Cares? Scotland to ensure that care-experienced young people are prepared and trained so that they feel confident in supporting SQA's qualification development process (outlined in action 1 above) in a meaningful way. 3 Increase the status and awareness of looked after children within SQA's qualifications in child and social care, including playwork. 4 Ensure that qualifications for Children's Panel members specify that direct input from care-experienced people is mandatory in the delivery of those qualifications. This condition is a shared responsibility between SQA and Children's Hearings Scotland, collaboratively confirmed through approval and external quality assurance processes. 5 Ensure SQA Assessment Arrangements guidance materials reflect the interests and experiences of looked after children and promote relevant accessible arrangements. 6 Promote the need for accessible and appropriate assessment arrangements to all centres. 	<p>Qualifications Development Teams</p> <p>Qualifications Development</p> <p>Qualifications Development</p> <p>Qualifications Development/ Approval</p> <p>Research, Policy, Standards and Statistics</p>	<p>(i) Be alert to needs of looked after children and care-experienced young people</p> <p>(ii) Assess the needs of looked after children and care-experienced young people</p> <p>(iii) Promote the interests looked after children and care-experienced young people</p> <p>(vi) Improve function relating to looked after children and care-experienced young people</p>

	<p>7 Work with the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS) to inform guidance, share experiences, network with other corporate parents, and build relationships for possible collaboration.</p> <p>8 Explore opportunities for collaboration and partnership with other corporate parents to share good practice. Initially this will include a range of local authorities, the Scottish Funding Council, Sports Scotland, Fire & Rescue Scotland, Creative Scotland, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, the Kinship Alliance, Scottish Social Services Council and Skills Development Scotland.</p>	<p>Strategic Planning & Governance</p> <p>Qualifications Directorate/ Strategic Planning and Governance/ SQA Accreditation</p>	
Corporate Parenting Plan: Outcome 3			Strategic priority
The ambition and achievements of care-experienced young people are supported, recognised and acknowledged by SQA	<p>We will:</p> <p>1 Host an annual results day celebratory event for care-experienced young people to take part, supported by Who Cares? Scotland.</p> <p>2 Demonstrate and celebrate the success of looked after children and care-experienced young people through the publication of case studies to inspire other learners.</p>	<p>Executive Team /Events & Communications</p> <p>Qualifications Development/ Communications Team</p>	(iv) Provide opportunities for looked after children and care-experienced young people
Corporate Parenting Plan: Outcome 4			Strategic priority
Improve access to Modern Apprenticeships, internships, routes to work experience and employment within SQA	<p>We will:</p> <p>1. Investigate routes for care-experienced young people looking to undertake Modern Apprenticeships in SQA.</p> <p>2. Promote work experience and Modern Apprenticeship opportunities in SQA to care-experienced young people. This includes adopting a family-friendly approach, similar to work experience.</p>	<p>HR</p> <p>HR</p>	(iv) Provide opportunities for looked after children and care-experienced young people

	<p>3 Explore the possibility of offering internships within SQA to care-experienced people. With SQA's independent recruitment agency (Pertemps), consider ways in which they can support SQA in its corporate parenting role. This may include recruiting, supporting and employing care-experienced people for seasonal work at SQA.</p>	HR Procurement	(vi) Improve function relating to looked after children and care-experienced young people
Corporate Parenting Plan: Outcome 5			Strategic priority
SQA staff and appointees understand and are aware of the needs of looked after children, care-experienced young people and SQA's corporate parenting responsibilities	<p>We will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Review staff induction and staff development processes to ensure that adequate opportunities are provided for staff to learn about looked after children and care-experienced young people, and SQA's specific responsibilities as a corporate parent. 2 Raise awareness of the needs of care-experienced young people and SQA's corporate parenting responsibilities through the development of an online training package to be available on SQA Academy (developed in consultation with Who Cares? Scotland). 3 Include reference to looked after children and care-experienced young people at the next review of SQA's online equality awareness training. 4 Include reference to looked after children and care-experienced young people in equality training for SQA's Appointees to raise awareness of SQA's corporate parenting responsibilities. 5 Include options for volunteering to support care-experienced people and raise the profile of looked after children and care-experienced young people within SQA's Volunteering Strategy. (SQA staff are given a 21 hour allowance for volunteering.) 6 Consider mentoring opportunities — SQA's Career Ready initiative will include links to national corporate parenting. This involves 10 SQA mentors working with school children over an 18 month period 	<p>HR/OD Research, Policy, Standards and Statistics Assessment Support Materials HR/OD Appointee Management Corporate Social Responsibility Corporate Social Responsibility</p>	(v) Take action to help looked after children and care-experienced young people

	<p>(starting end of September 2015) and will also include these. children having a four week placement with SQA</p> <p>7 Engage with MCR Pathways — SQA is involved in Inspiring 500. This is a partnership between Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, The Herald and MCR Pathways which aims to register 500 mentors from businesses to support young people from looked after backgrounds.</p>	<p>Corporate Social Responsibility</p>	
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