



**UHI | INVERNESS**

# Corporate Parenting Plan

2023-2026

[inverness.uhi.ac.uk](http://inverness.uhi.ac.uk)

**We are one of the largest partners of the University of the Highlands and Islands, a partnership of regional colleges and research institutions comprising Scotland's newest university.**

**UHI Inverness is at the heart of the community. Working closely with businesses and stakeholders, our curriculum and research capacity is designed to meet the ever-evolving needs of industry and support the strengths and ambitions of the region.**

As the leading tertiary education provider, we deliver both further and higher education courses which offer flexibility and choice to study a wide range of subjects from access level right through to PhD. We adopt a personalised approach to help our learners discover the pathway which is right for them, and provide a combination of qualification, job-ready skills, support, and guidance to help our learners experience success in their studies and beyond into the workplace. **(Home - The Promise 1.)**

UHI Inverness has locations at Inverness and Balloch Campus and represents a growing hub for research, innovation and enterprise set within a 215-acre site. UHI Inverness is honoured to be a Corporate Parent and acknowledges this as a great privilege with significant responsibilities. We have made a firm commitment to continue the positive and successful work that has been carried out to date and will remain steadfast in striving for excellence as we work to ensure our institution is safe, accessible, and inclusive for all learners.

We endorse the commitment made in The Promise **(Home - The Promise 1.)** and dedicate our endeavours to ensure that individuals who have lived care experience will have the opportunity to

**'grow up loved, safe and respected'.**

We recognise our setting as a vital access route in providing opportunities for further learning and employment for learners with care experience who are leaving school and are aligned to meeting the ambitious targets set by The Scottish Funding Council for all care experienced learners to achieve equal outcomes to their peers by 2030.

**(SFC's National Ambition for Care-Experienced Learners Issue Date: 13 January 2020 Reference: SFC/CP/01/2020 2.**



## Our Corporate Parenting Duty

Our care experienced learners have unique experiences which may include social work intervention from before birth, being adopted, fostered, living in kinship care, or having supervision orders. They have also experienced different levels of support and engagement from their local authorities and social workers, through care / after care teams, third sector and wider governmental agencies.

Whilst we fully appreciate the lifelong impact that care-experience can have, we also recognise an increasing number of learners who also experience significant childhood challenges which place them on the periphery of care or result in estrangement from their family. In both instances learners report having experiences and perspectives which are similar to our care-experienced learners in terms of living with trauma, feeling isolated, and struggling to navigate the transition from school into further or higher education and then navigating 'student life' and beyond.

Estranged learners or those with extra consideration needs may not have experienced the same support or intervention from statutory services, and often require a broad range of support. We also recognise the strength and resilience of these learner groups and acknowledge the shared sense of determination each possesses to direct their own future success.

Whilst corporate parenting is a legislative responsibility to our care-experienced applicants and learners it can be argued that it is a moral issue to extend the same level of care and support to our estranged and extra consideration applicants and learners.

The inclusion of estranged and extra consideration learners in this corporate parenting plan does not detract from the unique sets of circumstances that children, young people and adults with care experience navigate. However, we wish to enable an understanding of how current and future provision at UHI Inverness can meet the unique and shared needs of each group at every stage of the student journey.

## Intersectionality and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion

We recognise and value the unique lived experiences of each of our learners and acknowledge that amongst our learners who identify as care-experienced or estranged there may be those who require additional consideration and support due to the intersectionality they experience.

Intersectionality relates to the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and identity, and can also include learners who identify as having a learning difference or disability, mental health condition or physical health issue, which increases the opportunity for discrimination and disadvantage.

By acknowledging that intersectionality exists we can grow our understanding of the challenges faced by our learners and be better equipped to holistically support their needs of our learners and create an environment where every learner is provided with an equal opportunity to thrive.



## Our Vision



### Ambitious

**In ensuring our learners receive the right help, support, and guidance to help them reach their potential and meet the goals they set for themselves**



### Bold

**In setting aspirational targets for change, both within our organisation and in collaboration with our corporate parenting partners**



### Creative

**In designing innovative programmes and approaches to increase the aspirations and opportunities to engage with learning beyond statutory education**

## Our Guiding Principle

At UHI Inverness we have created a culture of compassion and care which is founded on research of the developmental process, the impact of trauma and early adverse childhood experiences and which informs our approach to teaching and learning and is the foundation of our professional service delivery.

We take a rights-based approach to ensure our practice is established on principles of non-discrimination, equality, accountability, transparency, participation, and empowerment.

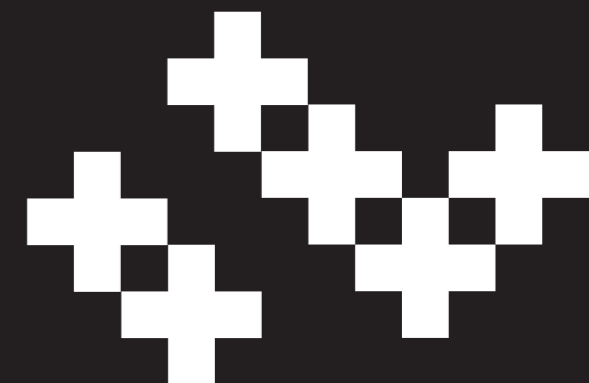
We place the needs of our care experienced, estranged learners and extra consideration learners at the heart of our strategic planning and encourage learners to actively contribute and inform this process.

We promote an inclusive and accepting environment where all learners feel heard, valued, and safe, and support them through the entirety of their student journey, from initial enquiry and beyond graduation with sustained and supportive relationships which are 'nurturing, patient, kind, compassionate, trusting and respectful' <sup>3</sup>.

We recognise that learners with care experience, estrangement and who require extra consideration are experts in recognising their own needs and are capable of directing support which is meaningful to them.

We understand the impact that retelling a personal history can have on our learners. We take a 'one-person, one-story approach' which enables a key person to coordinate services and organise support once information has been shared and avoids the re-traumatisation of individuals.

We strive for excellence in demonstrating leadership in our commitment to being corporate parents amongst our partners, shareholders and within our community.



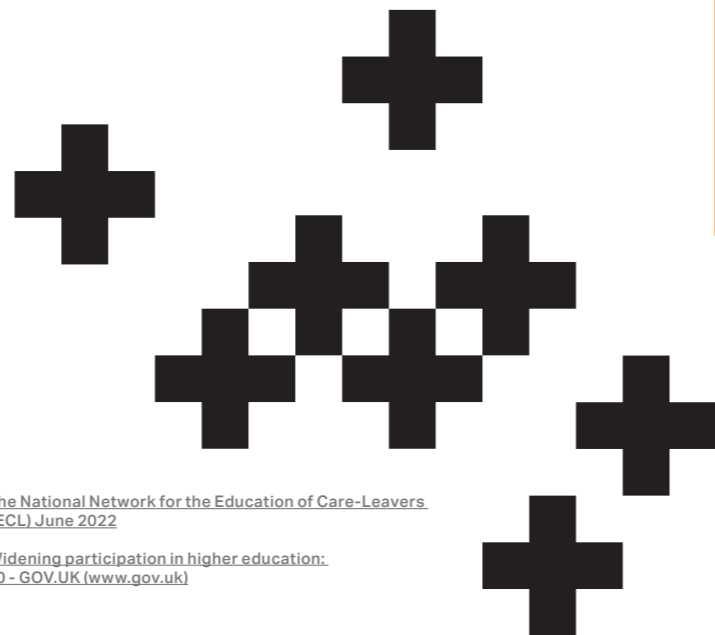
<sup>3</sup>. The Care Review (2020)

## National Outcomes

Using the Scottish data, we know that care experienced young people are:

- + Considerably less likely to attain at the higher levels of statutory education where the gaps widen. 38% of school leavers 'looked after' within the last year of school left with one or more qualifications at SCQF level 5 or better, in comparison to 88% of all school leavers.
- + Less likely to go on to a 'positive initial destination'. 86% of young people 'looked after' within the last year of school went on to a positive destination after leaving school in 2020/21, compared with 95% of all school leavers. This drops to 67% for those progressing to college, university, or employment in sharp contrast to 91% for all school leavers.<sup>4</sup>
- + More likely to achieve lower success on full time FE courses compared to their peers.
- + Currently represent just 13% of care leavers who enter HE by their 19th birthday, compared to 45% of the wider population.
- + One of the most under-represented groups within higher education<sup>5</sup>

Such poor educational outcomes also correlate to other socioeconomic issues experienced by this learner group including higher unemployment, homelessness, criminalisation, and poor health.



4. [The National Network for the Education of Care-Leavers \(NNECL\) June 2022](#)

5. [Widening participation in higher education: 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

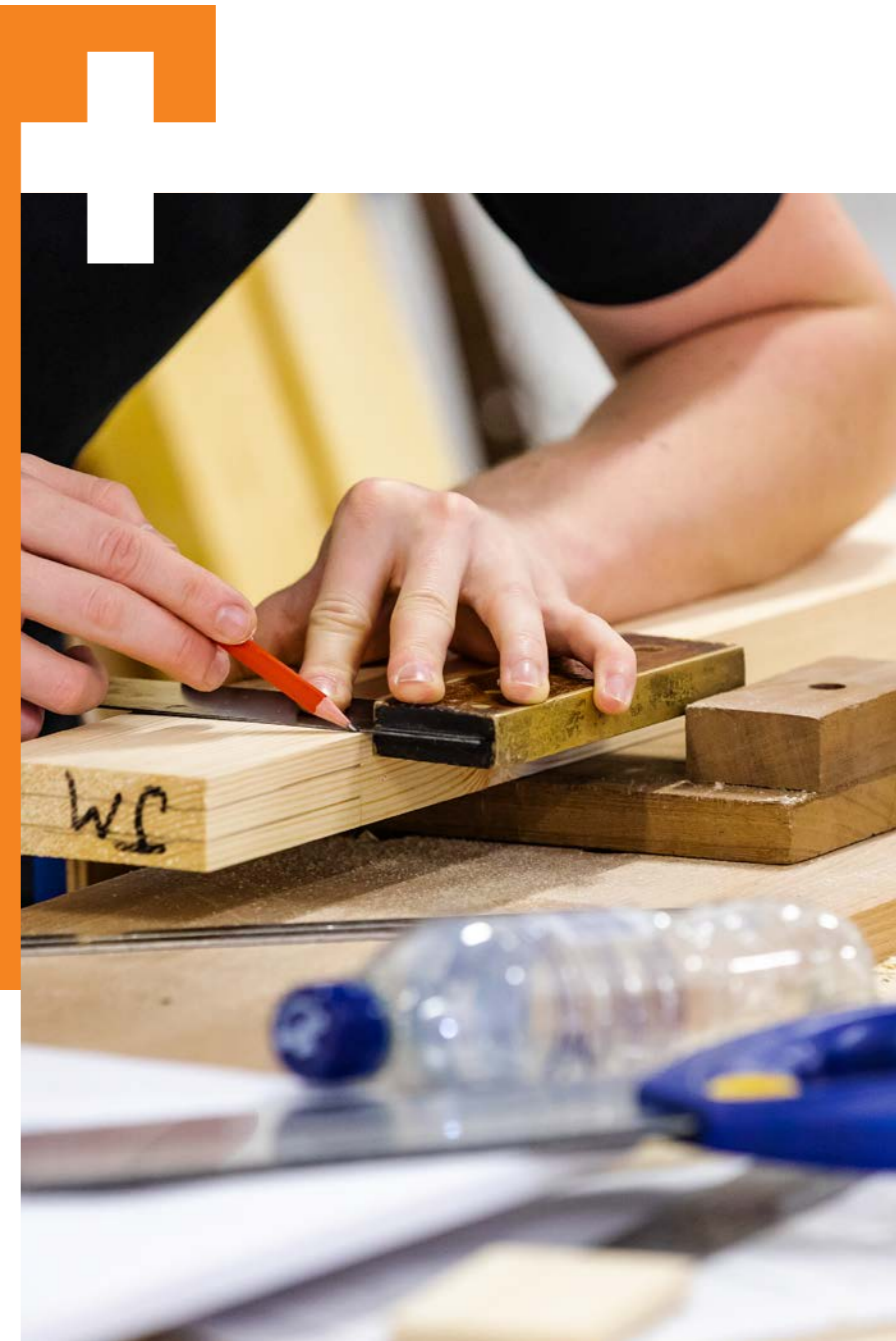
## Post Pandemic Recovery Planning

During the pandemic we noted that, despite the on-going high level of support offered to all our learners, the sustained and unpredictable nature of the pandemic meant that many struggled to engage with remote or blended learning and found it hard to manage the subsequent disruption and change.

In addition, much of the community based support stopped in March 2020 and the online environment of support was not adequate for learners with care experience. The unprecedented and continually evolving challenges of the Covid 19 Pandemic, including the challenges presented to our setting to work within the restrictions and guidelines, meant that the measures of success for learners with care experience since 2018-19 have been significantly affected. Through sector level discussions we are aware that the concerns about re-engaging learners with care experience and closing the attainment gap is not unique to Inverness, however we remain determined to re-establish our in-person outreach activities and rebuild our relationships with both learners and other corporate parenting partners in order to meet the ambitious target set by the Scottish Funding Council of equal outcomes for care experienced learners by 2030.<sup>(2)</sup>

**"I didn't think I'd ever be able to come to College and I have had no other opportunities because of Covid. Since Covid I have just felt so sad, I would just get up, eat and play on my X-box then sleep and repeat. The LEEP Ahead programme was the best ever news. I was told that I could never go to college but now my life has changed, I want to see if I can become a joiner"**

One of our previous male LEEP Learners



# Building on a Firm Foundation

**Over the past 6 years we have evidenced a significant and positive increase to the services and support available to our learners with care experience.**

**At UHI Inverness we have built a firm foundation of support throughout the student journey, from encouraging early college experiences whilst young people are still in school, at pre-application and enrolment, throughout the learning journey, and beyond into employment.**

**We work proactively with corporate parenting partners across the region to build early relationships which allow us to be guided by the needs of each individual.**

## Pre-Entry & Application Support

UHI Inverness operates a positive declaration environment and encourages declarations of care experience at the earliest stage to enable timely and appropriate support.

We work with partner agencies and schools to support the transition of learners with care experience from as early as S1. Individuals are invited to discuss their requirements for an effective transition and the Access and Transition Coordinator creates a person-centered Transition Plan based on the needs of the individual. This draws together any relevant support needed both from UHI Inverness and from external partners.

Prior to applying for a course, learners with care experience are provided with preparatory support such as help in identifying suitable routes of study, completing application forms, writing personal statements, preparing for interview, tours of the campus setting and accommodation.

UHI Inverness applies contextualised admissions for all applicants with care experience to ensure a guaranteed interview and an offer of a place on the course of choice, or a suitable alternative.

Over the summer months, UHI Inverness offers a tailored programme to support transitions including advice around funding and accommodation, budgeting and financial planning, and ongoing support arrangements which, wherever possible, are put in place prior to enrolment.

## Support Throughout Learning

Robust data sharing agreements with our corporate parenting partners allow us to;

- + **clearly identify learners with care experience, those who have experienced estrangement or who have extra consideration needs who reside in halls**
- + **keep informed and updated with any concerns raised out of hours**
- + **extend the support we offer to learners who require it through a shared monitoring and information sharing process.**
- + **Give learners confidence that we will only share information about them with their permission.**

During the academic year, FE learners have timetabled weekly pastoral support with their Personal Development Advisor and additional 1:1 support as required. HN / HE learners have their Personal Academic Tutor as a point of contact throughout the year and additional access to the Student Support Team and the Access and Transition Coordinators.

As part of our continued commitment to improving outcomes for learners with care experience, estrangement and extra consideration needs, we regularly monitor the attendance and engagement of all FE FT learners through the INSIGHT monitoring and tracking system. Learners with care experience, amongst other priority learner groups, are flagged for additional consideration. Early interventions are made for learners who show signs of struggling with engagement. Following discussion with the PDA / PAT, referrals to various forms of support are made, for example, wellbeing; funding; additional learning support, to provide the learner with the necessary support required to get back on track.

## Ongoing Support

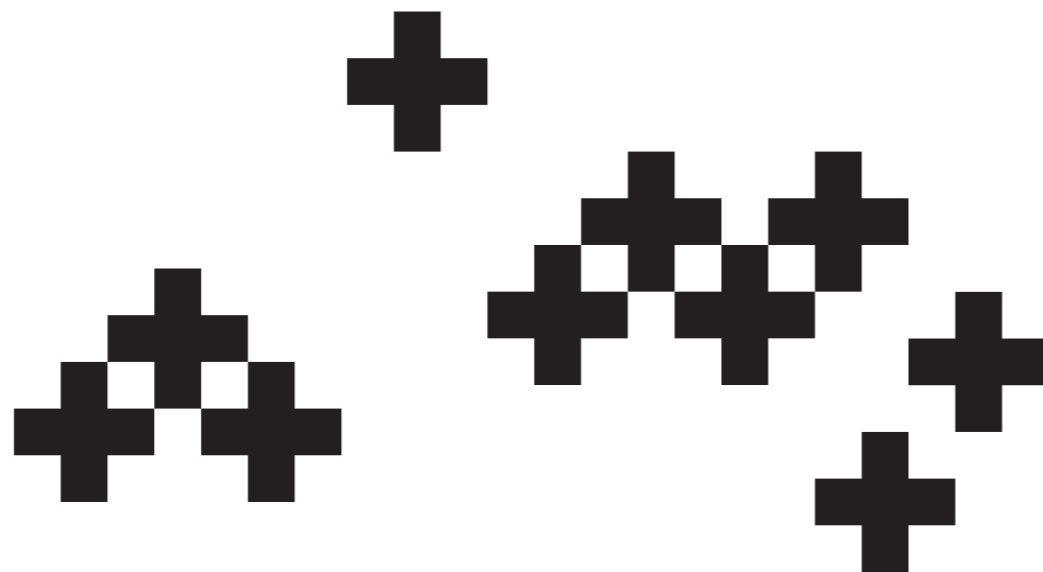
Transition Plan Review meetings are held between the Access and Transition Coordinators and learners twice each year. This ties in with the key stages of the learner journey and are designed to review and update any support measures in place. Where learners do not have an active Transition Plan in place, contact at key stages of the learner journey are in place to check in on student wellbeing and remind learners of the support available to them.

UHI Inverness welcomes the views of learners with care experience, and their voice is captured at several points through the academic year including through student surveys and specific focus groups.

Towards the end of the course of study, Personal Development Advisors / Personal Academic Tutors hold exit interviews to discuss progression opportunities or to provide support in taking the next steps to employment. Learners are supported to create a skills profile and find employment opportunities utilising 'My World of Work' or by utilising our Handshake platform, 1:1 career advisor meeting with SDS coaches, and attendance at careers and employability events organised at both departmental and college level.

Financial support is offered to ensure learners with care experience or who are estranged can attend graduation and celebrate their success alongside their peers.

The outcomes and destinations of our learners with care experience are carefully monitored, analysed and used to inform future planning



## Community Partners

We have partnered with MCR Pathways who regularly attend our staff conference to recruit and train staff to become mentors to young people with care experience within our local community.

UHI Inverness produces a Holiday Toolkit of resources and events to support all learners during holiday periods. Online mental health and wellbeing support is available out of hours with our specialist provision 'Spectrum life'. UHI Inverness also hosts a weekly summer club throughout the academic holidays to maintain contact with all learners.

The Access and Transition Coordinators work collaboratively with Barnardos and Highland Council's employability team to find meaningful employment for learners with care experience and to offer social days, pizza making, and football within the community and on campus throughout the year but particularly during holiday periods.

UHI Inverness lead the Highland Corporate Parenting Steering group which comprises of representatives from education, local authority, social work and the third sector.

The My Future My Success Team at Highland Council work collaboratively with UHI Inverness to support young people with 70% school attendance or less into positive destinations including further learning.

## Awards

Through our approach to transitioning young people with care experience, UHI Inverness was commissioned by the local authority to create and run a 2-year pilot programme for learners with care experience aged 16-22 not currently engaged in learning or employment. The LEEP Ahead programme is founded on nurture principles, human developmental awareness, and trauma informed practice. The outcomes have been a resounding success and the programme will now be adopted into our mainstream delivery. We have also been recognised in the following regional and national awards.

### UHI Student Initiative Awards 2022 Highly Commended

#### The judges' comments:

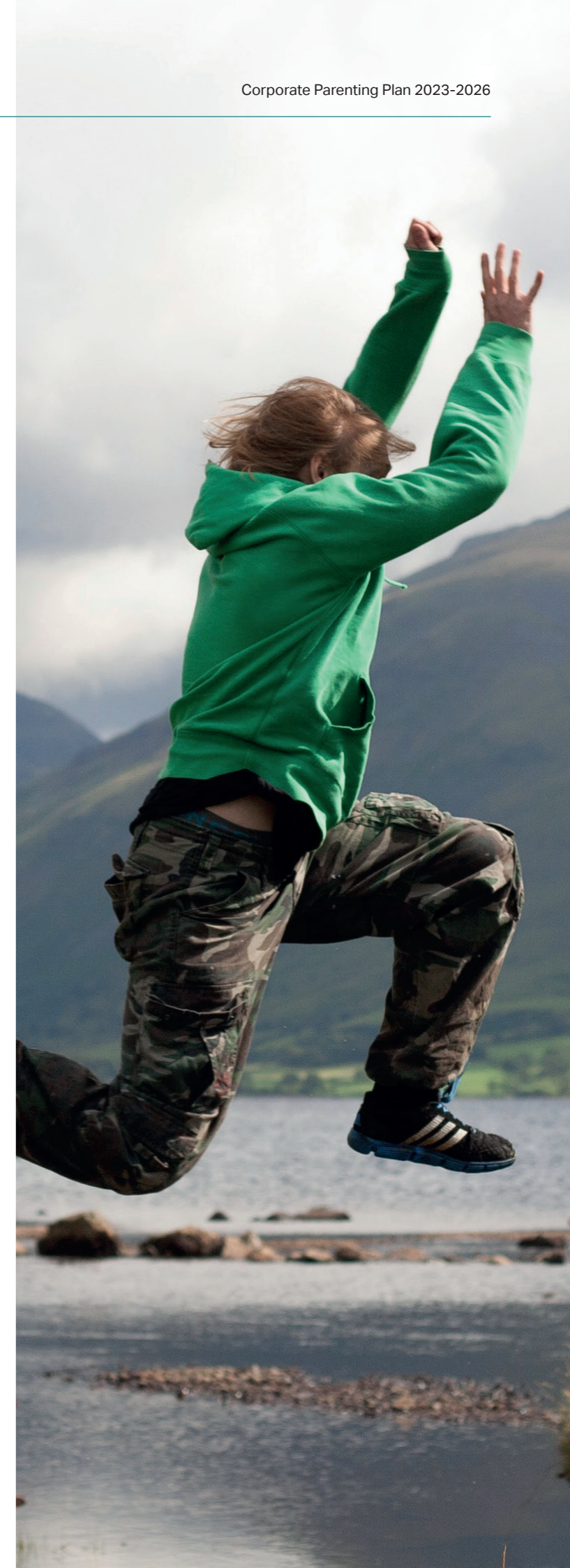
*What an inspiring project. Anything that allows people to realise their potential is always worthwhile.*

*Sounds like a very worthwhile programme for some of the most disadvantaged in society.*

*This initiative is excellent as it addresses the needs of an often forgotten about group of learners. Giving them the skills and confidence to feel that they can enter education is a massive step. Really wonderful.*

### College Development Network Inclusive College Award 2022 Commended

### The Herald Education Awards 2023 Widening Access Award Winner



# What do our learners say?

## 98%

of our care learners with care experience reported that they had a positive early experience.

## 74%

said they were progressing on to the next year of their course

## 93%

said they knew how to access support and were satisfied with their transition support.

## 95%

said they felt fairly treated by staff

## 95%

said they knew how to access mental health and wellbeing support.

## 100%

were satisfied with the support offered through The Bothy

## Cost of Living

We understand that learners with care experience, estrangement and who require extra consideration can face the greatest hardships in relation to essential needs. At UHI Inverness we are committed to ensuring the essential needs of all of our learners are met so that they are free to focus on learning.

- + We offer accommodation 365 days a year with flexible payment arrangements.
- + Emergency accommodation in case of relationship breakdowns and unexpected homelessness
- + Home starter kits complete with bedding, pans, crockery and cutlery
- + Support with digital devices, digital literacy and IT services
- + The Bothy – offers a wide range of academic, wellbeing and learning support, advice and guidance
- + The Cubby– offers a selection of free toiletries and sanitary products
- + The Larder – offers food items, recipes and online cookery classes to support healthy eating
- + Free breakfast (toast and beans) and lunch (soup and a roll) every day in term time
- + Free warm winter clothing, keep warm kits, gloves and scarves

# Moving Forward For 2023-2026

Our new Corporate Parenting Plan draws on feedback and engagement with learners with care experience and extended corporate parenting partners across the region, our partners in the local authority including the Through Care and Aftercare teams and staff involved in supporting those with care experience.

Our 2023-26 plan will focus on the following overarching themes:

**Theme 1:**

Increase opportunities for the learning, development, and progression of learners with care experience to impact positively on their outcomes and life chances.

**Theme 2:**

Expand opportunities to hear and represent the voice of learners with care experience and ensure they are represented in ways which are meaningful to them. We will also seek to develop the quality of communication we have when working with and referring to learners with care experience.

**Theme 3:**

Improve the financial support for learners with care experience.



As a Corporate Parent, we have an ongoing responsibility to the following duties as set out in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014:

Corporate Parenting duties



Be **alert** to matters which, or which might, adversely affect the wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers.



**Assess** the needs of those children and young people for services and support.



**Promote** the interests of those children and young people.



Seek to provide looked after children and care leavers with **opportunities** to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing.



Take action to help looked after children and care leavers **access** opportunities and make use of the services and access support they provide.



Take any other action you consider appropriate for the purpose of **improving** the way in which you exercise your functions in relation to looked after children and care leavers.

Image: Who Cares? Scotland <https://www.whocarescotland.org/resources-learning/corporate-parents/>





## ACTIONS

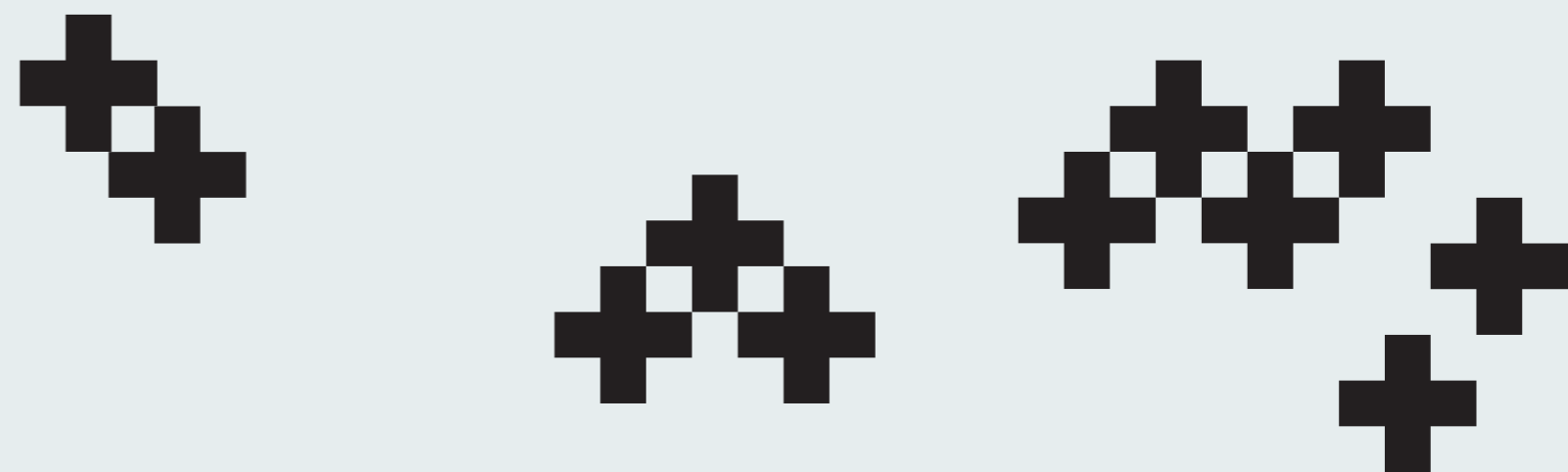
### Increase opportunities for the learning, development, and progression of learners with care experience to impact positively on their outcomes and life chances.

What will success look like?	Timescale
Embed the process of monitoring engagement and attendance of all learners with care experience to ensure contact is made after one absence to support early intervention.	<b>June 2024</b>
Encourage a supportive and inclusive learning environment which promotes positive relationships and restorative approaches to ensure that the exclusion of learners with care experience only takes place when all other approaches have been exhausted.	<b>June 2024</b>
Increase the number of learners with care experience engaging in the Student Voice Representative role and the new Student Ambassador role	<b>December 2025</b>
In collaboration with Highland Council Employability Team and Skills Development Scotland, offer all exiting learners with care experience employability coaching and interview preparation to support meaningful employment opportunities.	<b>June 2025</b>
Building on the waiving of graduation fees, celebrate the success of learners with care experience in ways which are meaningful to them, including ensuring a known support attends graduation and other celebratory events.	<b>June 2025</b>
Embed the new programme design principles for all level 4 and 5 programmes to support flexible pathways and improved outcomes for care experienced.	<b>June 2026</b>
Embed target setting across all FE FT programmes for curriculum teams to support improved outcomes for learners with care experience along with other priority groups	<b>June 2026</b>
Establish a team of staff Care Experienced Champions who will act as mentors to provide additional mentorship and support to learners	<b>June 2026</b>
Working in partnership with community-based providers, offer on-going support to learners with care experience exiting their programme to ensure their on-going needs are met, such as housing and mental health services.	<b>June 2026</b>
Establish a pilot programme to run in conjunction with selected secondary schools to raise the ambitions of S1-3 learners with care experience through a collaborative programme to increase engagement with learning beyond statutory education.	<b>June 2026</b>

## ACTIONS

### Communication, Representation, and the Care Experienced Voice

What will success look like?	Timescale
Engage with Each and Every Child to provide a programme of professional development to shift how our staff communicate when speaking about care experience to influence public opinion and build support for The Promise being realised.	<b>June 2024</b>
Participate in the College Development Network National Trauma Training Programme to extend our work on trauma informed practice across our setting.	<b>June 2024</b>
Create opportunities for learners with care experience to get together, should they want to, by holding regular action group meetings, study groups, and social group sessions across the academic year led by the suggestions of our learners with care experience.	<b>June 2024</b>
Further extend the opportunities to raise staff awareness of our responsibilities to learners with care experience from point of staff induction to on-going professional development.	<b>June 2025</b>
Embed stories from staff and learners with care experience in marketing materials and promotional activity to support and amplify their voice.	<b>June 2025</b>
Applicants with care experience will receive a designated support pack outlining the support available to them, at point of interest or following their application.	<b>June 2026</b>
In partnership with the Quality team, continue to monitor the voice of those with care experience through our routine surveys and feedback channels in order to continuously improve their experiences.	<b>June 2026</b>



## ACTIONS

### Improving financial support for care experienced learners

What will success look like?	Timescale
Offer a Home Starter pack to learners with care experience who move into halls of residence and or to those requiring an emergency placement during the academic year.	<b>June 2024</b>
Establish a system with the UHI Residencies Team to ensure that any learner with care experience who defaults on their rent payment is flagged immediately and offered early financial support to prevent them from falling into debt.	<b>June 2025</b>
Continue to prioritise learners with care experience for hardship and discretionary funding.	<b>June 2026</b>
Ensure learners with care experience are aware they can access food, toiletries, and sanitary products throughout the summer.	<b>June 2026</b>
Ensure all learners with care experience are aware of and can access an additional year of SFC FE funding to allow greater flexibility of choice over learning opportunities.	<b>June 2026</b>

### Corporate Parenting Partners of UHI Inverness




# UHI | INVERNESS



## References

- [1. Home - The Promise](#)
- [2. SFC's National Ambition for Care-Experienced Learners Issue Date: 13 January 2020 Reference: SFC/CP/01/2020](#)
- [3. The Care Review \(2020\)](#)
- [4. The National Network for the Education of Care-Leavers \(NNECL\) June 2022](#)
- [5. Widening participation in higher education: 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

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