Corporate Parenting Plan Report for 2016 – March 2018
**Introduction**

Inverness College UHI is defined as a Corporate Parent under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. Corporate Parenting is defined as:

> An organisation’s performance of actions necessary to uphold the rights and secure the wellbeing of a looked after child or care leaver, and through which their physical, emotional, spiritual, social and educational development is promoted, from infancy through to adulthood. In other words, corporate parenting is about certain organisations listening to the needs, fears and wishes of children and young people, and being proactive and determined in their collective efforts to meet them” (Scottish Government, 2015).

At present many care experienced young people have some of the poorest personal outcomes of any group in Scotland. Low levels of educational engagement and achievement feed into high levels of poverty, homelessness and poor mental health (Meltzer, 2004). They can often experience multiple barriers to education such as lack of funding, disruptive schooling and an unstable home environment.

Inverness College UHI published its first Corporate Parenting Plan in October 2016 after extensive consultation and collaboration with third sector agencies, a range of other Corporate Parents and care experienced young people. Since then significant progress has been made against our action plan.

This report details our work over the period since the publication of our plan to March 2018, the impact that this has had on care experienced students and our priorities for the future.

1. **Management and delivery of plan/outcomes**

Inverness College UHI is committed to ensuring care experienced young people are encouraged and assisted to apply for Further and Higher education and are fully supported during their learner journey. We strive for continuous enhancement of the support we provide and many of our initiatives have been recognised as sector leading.

A Corporate Parenting Steering Group has been established which is composed of college senior management, operational managers, transition co-ordinator, academic staff, third sector agencies working with care experienced young people and care experienced students. The remit of the group is to monitor and review the implementation of our Corporate Parenting Plan, ensuring that actions are met within timescales and that the actions are evaluated with regard to positive impact on the student experience. The group reports into several committees – Student Support Committee, Equality and Diversity Committee and to the Board of Management.

We have ensured that our plan compliments provision from other groups and that opportunity for joint funding of initiatives is available through ongoing discussions with other Corporate Parents through the CHAMPS board, partners from College Development Network and with other academic partners through the University of Highlands and Islands (UHI) Care Leavers Group.
2. Staff awareness
The college ensures that all staff are aware of the challenges facing care-experienced students and of their role and responsibilities as a Corporate Parent. Corporate Parenting has become an integral part of new staff induction enabling all staff to have information at an early stage of their employment. This is consolidated by interactive training during staff development days and with information on the staff intranet.
In partnership with Who Cares? Scotland and our care experienced students, UHI developed an online Corporate Parenting training module, which will be made mandatory for all staff at the start of the next academic year, 2018-19. This will continue to help us consolidate staff awareness around the challenges faced by care - experienced young people and our collective responsibilities as a Corporate Parent.

3. Raising aspirations and pre-entry outreach
Inverness College UHI has a dedicated, named member of staff who meets with third sector agencies, schools and individual care experienced students at an early stage to support their transition to college. The Transition Co-ordinator role enables the College to raise awareness of Further and Higher Education opportunities and the support available to help raise the aspirations of care leavers. This member of staff continues to be the main contact for care-experienced students, ensuring continuity of support throughout the student’s learner journey.

Our Transition Co-ordinator arranges a series of transition days where future students can visit the college, meet with curriculum and support staff and become more comfortable and confident in the college environment prior to becoming a student.

Details of the support available to care experienced students is detailed on our website https://www.inverness.uhi.ac.uk/students/student-support/care-leavers
Leaflets with information about support and opportunities for care-experienced young people are widely disseminated to organisations working with this group to help encourage greater participation in Further and Higher Education.

The Transition Co-ordinator in partnership with our careers and employability staff work with our current care experienced students to raise awareness of opportunities for educational progression and/or employment to help secure positive destinations.

4. Identification of applicants that are care experienced
We encourage declaration at pre-entry and application stage through information on our website and prospectus and through early contact at school 16 plus meetings, and third sector agency meetings which we are invited to. To ensure that we can share information we have Data Sharing agreements with the main relevant agencies, with schools and with social work.

To help ensure that we capture all care-experienced students, and have the opportunity to support them, we have changed the wording on the declaration
statement on the application form, helping to clarify who should tick the box. We also have measures in place to help students declare at any stage of their journey e.g. at interview, during funding discussions, during interviews with their personal academic tutor (PAT).

5. Application
Students who declare on their application that they are care-experienced are flagged on the data management system. In February 2016, we introduced contextualised admissions, guaranteeing that all care-experienced applicants are invited to interview.

6. Pre-entry
All students who have declared care experiences on their application are contacted prior to the start of their course to welcome them to the institution; outline the services available to support them; and to offer a meeting with our Transition Co-ordinator.

Accessing funding and providing the information required is often a hurdle for care-experienced students. Additional support is available to help with the completion of forms and flexibility is given with regard to any documentation required. Funding applications are prioritised by our Student Funding Team to ensure finance is available from the earliest point possible.

Our Halls of Residence give preferential status to all care experienced students and provide 365-day contracts for them to ensure they do not have to leave the accommodation during the summer period when most students vacate and go home. We collaborate with through care and after care services and local authorities regarding any financial support for accommodation.

7. On course support
Students who have declared care experienced status are offered an initial meeting with the Transition Co-ordinator. At this meeting, a co-ordinated support plan is created with the student. This enables students to be directed to appropriate support for their needs whilst having one individual who is their key point of contact and who takes responsibility for any support being put in place. Any additional support needs are considered for education, wellbeing support, and funding support. Care-experienced students are also flagged on our internal INSIGHT system which closely monitors student attendance and progress on a weekly basis. The flagging system ensures that their PAT is aware of their situation, the additional challenges they may face and the higher risk they may face of withdrawing. The flagging of care-experienced students allows the PAT to signpost individuals and give additional support where required. We have a referral system in place where all curriculum staff can refer students to different support services ensuring that any problems/challenges are dealt with timeously. Experience has shown that timely intervention allows better resolution and helps with retention and attainment.
The Transition Co-ordinator offers meetings with care-experienced students at key periods throughout the year – at the start of the course, before Christmas, before exams and towards the end of their course. However, we also operate an ‘open door’ approach, which is made clear to the individuals.

During academic year 17/18, we have introduced coffee and chat sessions where care-experienced students can meet and share experiences. Once more established we hope to extend this by developing a peer mentoring / buddy system.

For further education students bursary is only paid on 100% attendance. We appreciate that due to challenges that care-experienced students face many of them may encounter attendance issues. We have therefore introduced a system where the Transition Co-ordinator can release bursary for care-experienced students in appropriate situations. We also introduced breakfast vouchers, extra print credit, and food bank vouchers to provide additional financial support to those students in financial hardship.

8. Monitoring of plan/outcomes
The Corporate Parenting action plan is continuously monitored and updated by the Transition Co-ordinator. The outcomes are evaluated in a number of ways such as student surveys, targeted focus groups and meetings with college staff, students and external partners. At a strategic level the Corporate Parenting Steering Group and the committees that it reports to oversee the plan and the outcomes.

The college data system allows us to track numbers of care leavers and their retention and achievement. Analysis of these figures also helps us to monitor the outcomes of our outcomes.

9. Impact
All of the work undertaken within our Corporate Parenting Plan has been with the aim of ensuring that care-experienced students have access to support at every stage of their learner journey.

Feedback from surveys and focus groups confirms that our care-experienced students feel well supported and value the impact and support given by the Transition Co-ordinator. External agencies have been surveyed to seek their views on the service we provide to the agencies and to care experienced young people. Again, responses showed appreciation of our named contact person and of the support provided.

We carefully monitor and analyse data in relation to trends in application, retention and success of care-experienced students. The proportion of credits delivered to care leavers has risen slightly over three years and is around 1 point higher than the regional target for 2017-18. We are also pleased to report that the success rates for care-experienced learners on Further and Higher Education programmes have improved over the last three years and are now above sector levels for this learner group. Retention has also improved over the period e.g. early withdrawal rates have fallen by 50% in 2017/18 compared to 2015/16. Despite these positive indicators, we recognise that as a group, successful outcomes for care-experienced students

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remain significantly lower than outcomes for the whole college population and we will continue to work to reduce this attainment gap.

10. Future priorities
Our continued objective is to encourage and inspire greater numbers of care-experienced young people not only to enrol onto our courses but also to ensure that they have access to all of the support they require to accomplish their academic and personal goals.

To help meet this objective we will continue to work with partners to focus on helping to reduce the financial, emotional and social barriers facing care-experienced students.

In the coming academic year, 2018-19, we will produce a range of materials to help raise the aspirations of care experienced school pupils in Highland to include local case studies, videos and web based materials. It is expected that these materials will help to increase the number of care experienced young people applying for Further and Higher Education over the next three years.

We will work to strengthen peer networks within the college environment to give care-experienced students the opportunity to share challenges and solutions.

We will also include progression and careers support into our co-ordinated support plans helping students to progress to higher levels of study or into employment.