



**To: Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership Board**

**On: 24 February 2016**

**Report by: Peter MacLeod, Director of Children's Services  
Scottish Care Leavers Covenant**

## **1 Summary**

- 1.1 The [Scottish Care Leavers Covenant](#) (the Covenant) was co-produced by a wide range of organisations including Who Cares? Scotland, Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS) and Barnardo's Scotland (see appendix 1 for the full membership including subgroups). The Covenant sets out an ambitious agenda for agencies to ensure that outcomes for care leavers are improved. The Covenant is based on the principles of Getting it Right for Every Child and is structured in a way which will assist Corporate Parents to meet their responsibilities and duties under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.
- 1.2 The Covenant outlines a range of actions and practice change which if implemented will improve outcomes for care leavers. These changes are set out in a number of areas described as pillars. The pillars are:
  - Health and Wellbeing
  - Housing and accommodation
  - Education and training
  - Employment
  - Youth and criminal justice
  - Rights and participation.
- 1.3 The authors of the Covenant recognise that corporate parents face significant challenges in light of the present financial climate however believe that by endorsing the Covenant will achieve long term financial benefits in addition to the most important aspect which is improving outcomes for looked after children.
- 1.4 The Children and Young People Thematic Board (CYPTB) considered the Covenant at its meeting on 4 February 2016. The CYPTB indicated strong support for the Covenant and recognised that there will be a journey to meeting all areas of the Covenant. The CYPTB agreed to refer the Covenant to the CPP Board with the recommendation that the CPP Board endorse the Covenant recognising that we will be on a journey to delivering the contents. The Covenant, to which we would sign up to, is attached at appendix 2.

## **2 Recommendation**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Community Planning Partnership Board:

- [a] note the publication of the Scottish Care Leavers Covenant; and
- [b] agree to endorse the Scottish Care Leavers Covenant (appendix 2) and that we aspire to meet the commitments contained in the Covenant.

### **3 Scottish Care Leavers Covenant**

- 3.1 The Scottish Care Leavers Covenant (the Covenant) was co-produced by a range of agencies with active participation, contribution and support from a wider group. The full list of all agencies involved is attached at appendix 1.
- 3.2 There is a recognition that young people who leave care often have poorer outcomes than the general population. It is also recognised that many services and agencies are committed to improving outcomes for care leavers. The Covenant seeks to make a significant shift in the way agencies and services support care leavers. It challenges corporate parents to accept that the status quo of poorer outcomes for care leavers isn't acceptable and to agree to an agenda of change to support improvement.
- 3.3 The Covenant is aligned with the principles of Getting it Right for Every Child. There are 4 guiding principles which underpin the Covenant:
  - care proofing of policy – recognise the vulnerability of care leavers as young adults and prioritise and reference them as a protected group in policy development
  - assumption of entitlement – assume that all care leavers are entitled to services, supports and opportunities up to their 26<sup>th</sup> birthday
  - right to continuing care – ensure that care leavers access continuing care until they are ready to move on
  - relationships are the golden thread of good practice – corporate parents will promote relationship based practice supporting care leavers to build and maintain strong relationships with previous carers.
- 3.4 The Covenant contains an agenda for change which aims to embed the principles into actions. The themes covered by the Covenant are:
  - Health and wellbeing
  - Housing and accommodation
  - Education and training
  - Employment
  - Youth and criminal justice
  - Rights and participation.
- 3.5 The Corporate Parenting Group is actively mapping the current position of services in Renfrewshire against the aspiration and elements of the Covenant. Areas of improvement will be identified and become actions in the Renfrewshire Corporate Parenting Plan which will be drafted, consulted upon and presented to the CYPTB on 26 May 2016 for approval.
- 3.6 Appendix 3 contains the full list of areas being promoted within the Covenant, including how to demonstrate these are being delivered. It should be noted that the Covenant is aspirational and will take time to fully embed in services.

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The Scottish Care Leavers Covenant was co-produced by an alliance of organisations:

Barnardo's Scotland  
Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS)  
Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice (CYCJ)  
Institute for Research in Social Services (IRISS)  
Life Changes Trust  
Quarriers  
Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum  
Who Cares? Scotland

The Covenant and Agenda for Change have been developed with the active participation, contribution and support of the following organisations:

Action for Children  
Association for Real Change (ARC) Scotland  
Breathing Space, NHS  
CLAN Childlaw  
Creative Scotland  
Community Jobs Scotland (SCVO)  
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)  
Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS)  
Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS)  
Enquire  
Includem  
Interventions for Vulnerable Youth (IVY)  
NHS Forth Valley  
National Union of Students (NUS)  
Police Scotland  
The Princes Trust  
Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)  
Rock Trust  
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland  
Scottish Prison Service (SPS)  
Scottish Government (Mentoring & Advocacy)  
Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH)  
Scottish Funding Council (SFC)  
Skills Development Scotland (SDS)  
Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA)  
St Mary's Kenmure  
Social Work Scotland (SWS)  
Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)  
Up-2-Us  
Young Scot



The Scottish Care Leavers Covenant

We/I

On behalf of

Endorse the principles and actions outlined in the Scottish Care Leavers Covenant and will work with our corporate parenting partners to deliver the transformational change required to improve outcomes for all of our care leavers into adulthood.

Signed

Date

Send to: [info@scottishcareleaverscovenant.org](mailto:info@scottishcareleaverscovenant.org)

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### Health and Wellbeing

Anticipated outcomes:

- Reduction in care leavers' experience of isolation.
  - Improved engagement with health services.
  - Improved opportunities for young people to access and participate in activities to promote their wellbeing.
  - Proactive engagement with services, reducing the likelihood and need for crisis responses.
  - Improved communication and collaboration between key corporate parenting agencies, ensuring services are delivered more effectively and efficiently.
- 1 Corporate parents will ensure robust and consistent support for care leavers in accessing universal, preventative and early intervention services relating to their health and wellbeing.
    - Corporate parents and third sector providers will collaborate to ensure that care leavers are able to access counselling, mentoring and other community-based services aimed at promoting improved emotional wellbeing.
    - Corporate parents will work together to remove barriers and increase supported access to cultural, artistic and other recreational opportunities for care leavers, building on strengths and interests.
    - Social care and health providers will develop accessible supports that assist in building capacity and resilience and reduce the numbers of care leavers needing to access specialist hospital based services and/or moving into crisis.
    - All staff involved in providing services to children and young people will undertake learning on child development and the impact of attachment and trauma, and this training will be refreshed every three years.
  - 2 Corporate parents will ensure that care leavers are given priority access to specialist services and improved access to adult mental health services.
    - Priority access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for assessment and access to services for care leavers avoiding the use of waiting lists and lengthy referral processes.
    - Clear access to advice and consultation with adult mental health professionals for those involved in supporting care leavers with complex and/or challenging mental health, emotional and behavioural needs.
    - Joint working arrangements between CAMHS and adult services, for example by allowing CAMHS to continue to provide a service where there is an existing relationship until the young person is ready to move to adult services.
    - Adult services models of intervention take account of care leavers' levels of development and functioning and ensure that access to services and interventions are appropriately pitched.
    - Thresholds for support and access to services must be flexible and reflect the individual circumstances of care leavers based on need rather than age.

- Specialist services will be responsive towards care leavers' individual and collective issues and needs, with access to:
    - Specialist support, assessment and advice around self-harm and suicide risks.
    - Substance misuse services appropriate to the individual circumstances and level of functioning of care leavers.
    - Sexual health clinics, including emergency appointments.
    - Specialist support for care leavers who become young parents.
  
- 3 Take action to reduce social exclusion and isolation, which impact on mental and physical health and emotional wellbeing by providing free or discounted access to:
  - Leisure facilities for all care leavers up to age 21 and, where required, up to age 26.
  - Public transport for all care leavers up to age 21 and, where required, up to age 26.
  
- 4 Each local authority and health board has a named contact with specific responsibility for care leavers' health and for promoting and coordinating actions to reduce health inequalities, these being made explicit within Corporate Parenting Plans.
  - Dedicated throughcare and aftercare nurse provision is in place for all care leavers.
  - Consistent application of national mental health indicators for care leavers.
  - Consistent application of national mental health indicators for care leavers.
  - Consistent and efficient systems to gather information about care leavers and monitor their access to, and the effectiveness of, interventions intended to support improved physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing.
  - Establish clear, consistent working arrangements across and between local authorities and health board boundaries for those young people who are placed outwith their home authority, or who return to their home authority on leaving care.

## Housing and Accommodation

### Anticipated Outcomes:

- Continuing support services allows corporate parents to offer something equivalent to a 'family safety net' for care leavers.
  - Ensures that the young person remains at the centre of planning and support arrangements.
  - Encourages partners to continue to work together with and on behalf of the young person for as long as is needed after the transition has been made - reinforcing that accessing accommodation on a one-off basis for a care leaver does not constitute a discharge of duty - corporate parents must repeatedly do what they can to make positive outcomes achievable.
  - Care leavers do not have to go through the formal adult homelessness route and can expect to receive housing options and support tailored to their needs as a vulnerable group.
  - Reduction in the risk - and costs - of repeated accommodation breakdown and homelessness.
  - Enables sustained engagement in education, training or employment
- 1 The full and meaningful implementation of Staying Put and Continuing Care for all looked after young people and care leavers should be a primary focus for all corporate parents.
- Encourage, enable and empower looked after young people and care leavers to remain in a positive care placement until they are ready to move on.
  - Local actions to develop and support this should be explicit within Corporate Parenting Plans.
  - Actively promote and facilitate extended and graduated transitions to give young people the opportunity and support to prepare for greater levels of independence while remaining in their care setting. This enables care leavers to move on from their placement in a gradual and phased way over a period of time and with opportunities to test their abilities to live more independently with on-going support.
  - Actively support and facilitate care leavers to maintain positive supportive relationships and keep in touch with their carers when they leave and, if possible and necessary, to return to their placement.
- 2 Fully implement the Housing Options Protocol for Care Leavers Guidance to comprehensively address the housing and accommodation needs of all care leavers.
- Local authorities collaborate with Registered Social Landlords to provide a range of appropriate, suitable, good-quality accommodation for care leavers.
  - Develop and maintain a range of accommodation options which meet the needs and wishes of care leavers including:
    - Supported Carers: converting foster care placements to supported carer placements becomes established practice where appropriate and supported carer placements are made available to those young people who are not yet ready to transition to greater independence.

- High-quality residential supported accommodation settings.
- Individual community based supported flats with 'living nearby' support.
- Access to good-quality mainstream tenancies with appropriate levels of person-centred support

- 3 Corporate parents must take action to ensure that care leavers do not have to make a 'homeless application' in order to access suitable accommodation/housing.
  - End the use of the homeless route to access accommodation for care leavers. This is not appropriate and fails to allow for a proper planning process or to provide adequate support.
  - Where care leavers are at risk of homelessness after a period of being outwith care/support of the local authority, they must be recognised as a vulnerable group and be supported as such.
  - Care leavers up to the age of 26 are recognised by corporate parents as potentially vulnerable and have access to support even after a prolonged gap in contact/support with care services
- 4 End the use of 'bed and breakfast' and 'adult hostels' as accommodation options for vulnerable care leavers.
  - The stress of unstable, unsuitable accommodation (such as B&Bs and homeless hostels) can impact on physical and mental health, creating, exacerbating and compounding pre-existing vulnerability and disadvantage.
  - In allocating accommodation to homeless households, local authorities in Scotland must already give proper consideration to the suitability of B&B and hostel accommodation to certain vulnerable groups, including families with children.
  - Care leavers should be given the same status as other vulnerable groups when considering these particular accommodation options.
- 5 Multi-agency transitions forum: local authorities must develop and operate a multi-agency planning and support forum around housing and accommodation support needs for care leavers, involving the active participation of all relevant corporate parents.
  - Multi-agency forums are effective in allocating appropriate housing and support, implementing creative packages of support, overcoming problems and issues and tracking progress of care leavers in moving on.
  - Joint planning and multi-agency and partnership working is at the heart of all planning with the 'one child - one plan - one care journey' principle being continued into adulthood.
  - Pathways and support plans will reflect the key roles and responsibilities of agencies and partners in meeting the young person's needs through a phased transition into adulthood.
  - The process reflects the dynamic and changing nature of young people's needs and circumstances as they progress on their journey to adulthood and interdependence.
  - To achieve this, recognition that relationship-based practice for young people leaving care is crucial in maintaining previous supportive

relationships and ensuring there is continuity and co-ordination in providing housing support.

## **Education and Training**

### **Anticipated Outcomes:**

- Care leavers experience a more positive transition from school to post-school provision.
  - Increased effectiveness and continuity of careers advice and more accurate assessment and advice around post-school destinations.
  - Increase in the number of care leavers successfully completing college and university courses with resultant benefits for employability.
  - Care leavers feel more supported and less isolated and are empowered to form trusting relationships.
  - Care leavers have a wider range of options in accessing learning institutions that are local to them, or that suit their ambitions, without compromising on support needs.
  - Care leavers are better prepared to apply and be accepted for institutions that they may otherwise see as beyond them.
  - Collaborative working clarifies roles and responsibilities, and problems are detected early with strategies and contacts in place to resolve them.
- 1 Improved and strengthened links between schools, Skills Development Scotland, social work and tertiary education providers.
    - Access to early and effective careers advice for looked after young people provided by schools and Skills Development Scotland starting before the end of Third Year and continuing for as long as is necessary.
    - Information sharing between schools, social work, Skills Development Scotland, Department for Work and Pensions and further education providers to ensure continuity of support and joint working post school, fully utilising the 16+ Learning Choices Data Hub.
  - 2 Consistent and extensive use of ASL legislation to ensure that looked after young people have Co-ordinated Support Plans in place where required.
    - Educational outcomes to feature prominently in all integrated plans for looked after young people and care leavers in senior school phase and college.
    - Extension of all Additional Support for Learning Services to all care leavers.
    - Real-term increases in spending on Additional Support for Learning Services
  - 3 Further and Higher Education (FE and HE) providers develop and offer effective, consistent and equitable care leavers' support across all areas of Scotland.
    - A dedicated student support professional is identified for all care leavers accessing further and higher education.
    - Range of financial, accommodation, mentoring and emotional support to be consistent across all providers.
    - Corporate parents, FE and HE providers and supporting agencies act to raise awareness of the range of supports available to support care leavers

and collaborate in encouraging looked after young people and care leavers to declare their status and access this support.

- FE and HE providers use protected characteristics provision creatively to widen access and provide support for care leavers

4 Throughcare and aftercare services and FE and HE providers establish proactive and effective communication links.

- Collaborate over financial and accommodation support, including non-term time accommodation and help with transport costs.
- Identify and share information - with care leaver's consent - regarding potential problems and offer proactive support to prevent care leavers dropping out of college or university.

## Employment

### Anticipated outcomes:

- Care leavers increase their participation in support available to help them into work, using a clear pathway to secure sustained meaningful employment.
- Reduction in instances of care leavers being sanctioned by the Department of Work and Pensions and increased numbers of young people receiving support as vulnerable claimants.
- Increase in the number of care leavers securing employment.
- Skills Development Scotland reporting an increase in the numbers of care leavers securing and successfully completing Modern Apprenticeships.
- Employers who receive public funds demonstrate a more proactive role in recruiting care leavers.

1 Develop an integrated national vocational training and progression pathway for care leavers.

- Develop a new employment brokering facility to match job-ready care leavers with entry level career opportunities and Modern Apprenticeships.
- Aligned to and building on the work of the Open Doors Consortium, develop a new flexible (holistic) support fund to help overcome barriers experienced by care leavers seeking to enter employment for the first time.
- Targeted financial support to help care leavers to secure and sustain employment. This can encompass work related needs, on-the-job training, support with travel and support with housing costs in the early weeks of employment. This will have a clear focus on helping the young person sustain employment.
- Ensure effective alignment of funds to support care leavers at each stage of the Employability in Scotland strategic skills pipeline.

2 Reduce any real or perceived barriers to accessing Modern Apprenticeships to ensure opportunities are aligned to care leavers' needs.

- Subject to spending review, ensure that care leavers can access Modern Apprenticeships up to the age of 30, at the highest level of public funding available.

- Scope out and harness the potential for using Foundation Apprenticeships as a way into employment with training for care leaver
- 3 Implement a full systemic approach to information sharing and joint working across education services, social work and throughcare teams, Skills Development Scotland, Department for Work and Pensions and specialist providers.
- Agencies communicate and collaborate to ensure that care leavers are supported throughout the difficult transition period from education to employment.
  - Informed consent should be obtained when using personal information.
- 4 Maximise the positive use of the 'care leavers marker' by Jobcentre Plus staff.
- Ensure that self-declaration of care leaver status is matched by tangible benefits including additional support as vulnerable claimants.
  - Department of Work and Pensions allow and actively promote advocacy and support for care leavers in attending key interviews and interactions with the agency.
- 5 Develop and enhance supportive environments for the most vulnerable care leavers as a first step into the world of work.
- Build on existing good practice e.g. Community Jobs Scotland, brokering, securing and supporting jobs in the third sector for young people.
  - Corporate parents have a dedicated 'Family Firm'<sup>36</sup> policy with ring fenced opportunities and person-centred support for care leavers.
  - Private sector employers who receive public funds or are commissioned by corporate parents to deliver services should be encouraged and supported to offer employment opportunities for care leavers.
  - Programmes that provide flexible and sustained support, including pre-employment, employment and post-employment support.
  - Partner agencies able to signpost and/or provide non-work related support to care leavers.



## Youth and Criminal Justice

### Anticipated Outcomes:

- Improved identification and monitoring of the numbers of care leavers in youth and criminal justice systems with the aim of reducing this overrepresentation.
  - Care leavers will see benefits in self-identification.
  - Improved information sharing and the inclusion of young people in this.
  - Greater consistency of assessment, planning and access to supports/entitlements.
  - Interventions are more effective, with fewer unsuccessful completed measures.
  - Holistic recognition of the experiences of care leavers to support culture change.
  - Clarity on what care leavers can expect from services that are accountable.
  - Young people in transition from the Children's Hearings System will be more appropriately supported.
  - Most 'convictions' incurred in childhood will not be carried into adulthood, which should increase inclusion in pro-social opportunities and employment.
- 1 Identification of care leavers at the outset of their involvement with each youth and criminal justice agency to enable more appropriate responses.
    - All individuals aged under 26 are asked a standardised, understandable question to determine whether they are a care leaver, and the response is recorded.
    - With the young person's consent contact should be made with other involved agencies and this should be done in accordance with information sharing protocols.
  - 2 On identification, corporate parents and youth and criminal justice agencies will ensure that care leavers receive:
    - Contact from relevant agencies who can meet their immediate and longer-term needs and/or who may have corporate parenting duties.
    - A holistic assessment of their needs for services and support and an individualised plan will be created by the local authority in partnership, detailing how entitlements will be met.
    - Ensure that any existing plans take account of the care leaver's entitlements.
    - Advocacy support.
    - An assertive outreach approach to offering support.
  - 3 Criminal justice interventions take into account the individual needs and circumstances of care leavers and offer:
    - A Whole System Approach including: timely and joined up interventions; maximising the use of diversion from statutory measures; court support; and transition/reintegration support.



- A long-term relational approach to supporting engagement and consideration of which services are most appropriate to support care leavers.
  - Additional support to comply with interventions and during transitions/reintegration.
  - Creative use of interventions, including individual and group work supports.
- 4 Learning and development opportunities are available to the criminal justice workforce, including decision makers, focusing on:
- The experiences of care leavers and the impact of such experiences.
  - Corporate parenting responsibilities and actions.
  - Legislation, definitions and entitlements of care leavers, agencies' responsibilities, and available services and how these can be accessed.
  - The youth and criminal justice systems.
- 5 Relevant criminal justice services should have clear corporate parenting statements of intent which should:
- Detail how they intend to fulfil their corporate parenting responsibilities.
  - Be included as part of Corporate Parenting Plans.
- 6 Measures taken through the Children's Hearings System (CHS) can impact on care leavers' futures. Priorities should include:
- Continuing to support 16-17 year olds on Compulsory Supervision Orders (CSOs).
  - Dealing with cases in the CHS rather than court where appropriate.
  - Ensuring young people subject to CSOs can access appropriate adult services.
  - Planning transitions from the CHS and ensuring support plans are in place.
  - Limit the carry-over of criminal records from CHS and informing when this is the case.

## **Rights and Participation**

### **Anticipated Outcomes:**

- Corporate parents can evidence activity and progress in reporting cycle.
- Corporate parents are more responsive to local need and gaps in provision.
- Local and national policy and practice is more reflective of care leavers' needs and priorities, leading to more meaningful and sustained engagement and dialogue.
- Care leavers are better informed and prepared and more aware of the options available to them when ceasing to be looked after.
- Care leavers are more likely to remain in placement for longer and to undertake more graduated transitions to independent living, leading to better outcomes.
- Care leavers are more likely to come back to request support, leading to continuity of support and relationships, preventing more serious crisis and breakdown, with resulting costs to adult services.

- Improved consistency of impartial support and equality of opportunity for care leavers who do not consistently access help.
- 1 All corporate parents have participation processes in place specifically aimed at care leavers.
    - Arrangements provided for meaningful and regular engagement with care leavers using existing forums or, where necessary, developing new ones e.g. Champions Boards.
    - Care leavers are given specific opportunities to influence and shape services and policies at local and national level, including receiving feedback on their ideas and contribution
  - 2 Clear accessible information on the choices and options open to looked after young people preparing for or leaving care to be available and accessible in written and web-based formats.
    - Information is available well in advance of preparations to move, from the age of 14 and onwards as appropriate.
    - Information on care leavers rights and entitlements is readily available, particularly around the issue of staying put and extended aftercare support.
    - Information is available to those care leavers who don't currently access support, informing them that they can request further support, up to the age of 26.
    - Services keep in touch with care leavers, throughout their leaving care journey into adulthood, not just responding at times of crisis.
  - 3 A rights-based approach to support and services for care leavers is adopted to take full advantage of enabling legislation and policy.
    - Rights of care leavers are proactively implemented and protected throughout their entire care leaving journey, not just when they first leave care or at times of crisis.
    - Harder to reach groups of care leavers are given access to independent advocacy and more consistent use of an existing supporting person in planning and implementing supports and upholding care leavers' rights.