

Scottish Government's Corporate Parenting Progress Report

Summary report



2021 – 2024

Introduction

This is a summary of the Scottish Government's Corporate Parenting report for 2021 – 2024 and has been created by Who Cares? Scotland.

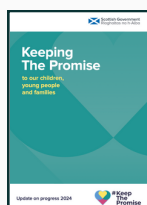
This report contains easy to read information on what Scottish Ministers have been doing over the last three years (2021 – 2024) to carry out their Corporate Parenting responsibilities and Keep the Promise. It also looks at how they have supported Corporate Parents across Scotland to help and care for Scotland's Care Experienced community.

A Corporate Parent is an organisation that supports people with care experience. Some examples of Corporate Parents are your local council, the NHS, Police Scotland, colleges, universities and national bodies like Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS). The Scottish Ministers are Corporate Parents too.

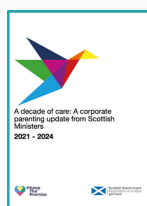
Corporate Parents have responsibilities for taking care of people with care experience – it is the law. In the law, Corporate Parenting is mentioned in part nine of The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

'Scottish Ministers' collectively refers to The First Minister who leads the Scottish Government, with the support of the Deputy First Minister, the Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers. The Scottish Ministers and all of the different government departments and agencies they are responsible for must report to the Scottish Parliament, every three years, on how they have carried out their Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

How is the Scottish Government and its Executive Agencies keeping The Promise and planning and reporting on their Corporate Parenting duties?



[Keeping The Promise to our children, young people and families: progress update 2024](#) shows the progress being made in delivering on the [Promise Implementation Plan](#).



[A decade of care: A corporate parenting update from Scottish Ministers 2021 - 2024](#) published [January 2025](#).

Corporate Parenting Responsibilities

Here are some examples of what the Scottish Government (and Executive Agencies*) have been doing to meet each of the Corporate Parenting duties. The law encourages Corporate Parents to work together and in many of these examples the Scottish Government has worked with other Corporate Parents.

* Executive Agencies are accountable to Scottish Ministers and consist of – Accountant in Bankruptcy, Disclosure Scotland, Education Scotland, Forestry and Land Scotland, Scottish Forestry, Scottish Prison Service, Scottish Public Pensions Agency, Social Security Scotland, Student Awards Agency Scotland and Transport Scotland

Alert

Be alert to what might affect the wellbeing of a person with care experience

The Scottish Government has been **alert to matters** affecting the wellbeing of children and young people by:

- Including the voice of young people with care experience throughout policy development.
- Undertaking Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments when making decisions about policy and legislation.
- Carrying out public consultations on important policy and legislative developments.
- Improving data collection and analysis for better reporting of issues facing Care Experienced children and young people.
- Using research to help create better practice, e.g. reducing preventable child deaths.

Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum - '100 days of listening'

The themes which emerged from the Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum's '100 days of listening' exercise, which concluded in February 2024, helped inform the Scottish Government's 'Moving On' from care into adulthood consultation, which ran from July to October 2024. The consultation focused on the support package required to best support young people to flourish as they move on from care. An independent report of the consultation responses and engagement sessions was published in January 2025.

We also published updated Guidance on Continuing Care in July 2024 to make it easier to understand, particularly for young people who are about to leave care. This guidance will help young people understand their rights and the supports they can access.

Assess

Assess what supports a person with care experience might need

To support and improve the wellbeing of the Care Experienced community, The Scottish Government **assesses and understands their needs** by:

- Co-designing policy ideas with children and young people and the workforce that supports them, for example reducing violence and tackling alcohol and drug issues.
- Collecting and analysing data from across Scotland to assess and prioritise needs and support
- Working with local partners to collect new data to better understand issues.
- Working collaboratively with other organisations, including other Corporate Parents to inform policy, law making and the development of strategies.
- Reviewing local Children's Services Plans to help understand local needs, priorities and responses.
- Funding and carrying out policy evaluations.

Practice Example - Keeping Brothers and Sisters Together And Connected

The law was changed in 2021 to **recognise the importance of sibling relationships and keeping brothers and sisters together** and connected. The Scottish Government published [National Practice Guidance](#) in 2021 to support this change in the law.

It was agreed that from 2023 the information that local authorities collect and share with the Scottish Government would include four new categories on siblings, to understand how often children are placed together with their brothers and sisters in care.

Practice Example - Violence Reduction

The [Violence Prevention Framework for Scotland](#) was published in May 2023. Implementation of the Framework includes an action plan with specific activities to **intervene earlier to prevent and reduce harm from violence**, including for people who have been, or are at risk of becoming, Care Experienced.

The Scottish Violence Reduction Unit has been working with North Lanarkshire Council to deliver a programme to specifically support Care Experienced people. 'Care Navigators' have been recruited to help Care Experienced people improve their outcomes and to steer them away from violence and the harm it can cause.



Promote

Make decisions and take actions which promote what is best for people with care experience

The Scottish Government has **taken action to promote the interests** of Care Experienced children and young people and care leavers. Activities, legislative changes and policies include:

- Moving investment towards early intervention and prevention activities, including through the Whole Family Wellbeing fund.
- Keeping all children out of the adult criminal justice system and ending the detention of any 16 and 17 year olds in Young Offender Institutions.
- Providing and promoting services to kinship carers, foster and adoptive parents and their families when children have a legal order put in place.
- Considering their language on care experience, tackling stigma and shifting public attitudes.
- Funding a range of organisations to take forward projects to improve the wellbeing of those with care experience.

Practice Example - Each and Every Child Initiative

The Scottish Government continues to fund and promote the Each and Every Child Initiative to create a fresh and inspiring story of care to change public attitudes and tackle stigma.

Since January 2020, Each and Every Child has been approached by over 130 organisations across Scotland to deliver bespoke training based on Framing Care Experience and the framing toolkit, with more than 1700 practitioners, civil servants and third sector staff being trained in Each and Every Child.

Practice Example - Family Nurse Partnership programme and Health Visiting

For young, first-time parents, the Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) programme is provided from pre-birth, until their child reaches two. Up to 4,000 families per year are supported by the FNP programme, and over 13,100 families have benefitted since it began in 2010.

The Scottish Government are working with NHS Boards to widen the eligibility criteria. In 2022, they committed to extending the **eligibility of FNP to Care Experienced first-time mothers up to age 25**, and all first-time mothers aged 21 and under, where capacity allows.





Practice Example - The Promise Partnership Fund

The Promise Partnership Fund, launched in February 2021 and which runs to 2025, is a transformational change fund for organisations to begin to take steps towards implementing The Promise. Criteria for funding rounds are set by an Advisory Group and applications are assessed by a Decision Maker's Panel which includes members with experience of the care system. The fund provides £4 million each year and has supported over 100 organisations across Scotland.

Practice Example - Who Cares? Scotland

The **Scottish Government has continued to fund Who Cares? Scotland, a national independent membership organisation for Care Experienced people**, supporting them to have their voices heard.

This includes annual grant funding to provide a helpline to advise and support Care Experienced people.



Opportunities

Give people with care experience opportunities that are good for their wellbeing

The Scottish Government is **improving the wellbeing** of children and young people with care experience by:

- Providing funding to local authorities to improve the educational outcomes and experiences for children and young people with care experience.
- Recognising, through the Keeping the Promise Award programme, educational settings that support the educational experience and outcomes of Care Experienced learners.
- Supporting schools to maximise attendance and engagement.
- Funding employability and Modern Apprenticeship programmes to help create greater equity and opportunity for young people with care experience.
- Providing opportunities to engage with nature.

Practice Example - The Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP) Fund

The Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP) **Fund is provided to local authorities to improve the educational outcomes and experiences for children and young people with care experience.** In 2023/24, £10.5 million was provided to local authorities through the Fund, and over £60 million provided since it was launched in 2018.

Practice Example - Social Security Scotland

In 2023, Social Security Scotland **launched a tech internship for Care Experienced applicants** which had been suggested by a member of their Champions Group. The internship included training for the role as well as financial support, mentoring and external training.





Practice Example - Keeping The Promise Award (in education)

Education Scotland have co-developed, with Promise Leads from the West Partnership, a Keeping The Promise Award Programme for individual practitioners and education settings. The full Award requires education settings and local authorities to provide evidence of the impact of any changes they have made to support the experience and outcomes for Care Experienced learners.

Practice Example - 'intandem' mentoring programme

The Scottish Government funds the **intandem** mentoring programme with **£750,000 each year to provide mentoring support to children and young people with care experience**. The eligibility for intandem has been extended to include children and young people in kinship care and those at risk of becoming subject to a Compulsory Supervision Order. The funding also supports intandem's Youth Participation Platform 'InVoice'.



Access

Help people with care experience to access opportunities that are good for their wellbeing

The Scottish Government is ensuring that children and young people with care experience not only **have opportunities to improve their wellbeing**, but receive financial and wider **support to help them access and continue to take part in those opportunities** by:

- Offering financial support through bursaries, grants and loans as well as support and advice to enable Care Experienced people to access higher and further education and keep their place on their course.
- Supporting kinship and foster carers, including the new Scottish Recommended Allowance.
- Supporting access to childcare.

Practice Example - The Scottish Recommended Allowance (SRA) for kinship and foster carers

In August 2023 the new **Scottish Recommended Allowance** (SRA) was announced. This means that all foster and kinship carers across Scotland will receive at least a standard national allowance (payment) to help care for the children and young people they look after.

Funded by an additional £16 million from the Scottish Government, the new SRA has **benefitted more than 9,000 children**. This marks the first time a set rate, which all local authorities must pay, has been introduced across Scotland.

Practice Example - Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) - application support

Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) administers financial support to Scottish students. Students are asked to provide evidence of their care experience once, regardless of the number of times that they have applied for funding. A bespoke form has been developed, to ensure a trauma informed approach to evidencing eligibility. Applications are routed through a specialist team who have undertaken trauma-informed practice training. The SAAS website has a dedicated section for Care Experienced students.

Practice Example - Early Learning and Childcare

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 ensures children in care are able to access funded early learning and childcare from age two.

Since August 2021, **funded early learning and childcare for two-year olds has been extended to include children of Care Experienced parents**. Importantly, once a child qualifies for early learning and childcare, they remain qualified.

Improve

Reflect on what they have done to support people with care experience, and try to improve on this

The Scottish Government are **improving the systems and services** that support children and young people with care experience by:

- Investing in the social care workforce.
- Embedding trauma informed practice across services in Scotland.
- Improving experiences of secure care through the use of legislation, pathways and standards.
- Keeping all children out of the adult criminal justice system and promoting the use of the Whole System Approach.
- Promoting Scottish Government 'Getting it right for every child' (GIRFEC) policy and practice guidance materials.
- Supporting The Promise Collective to align the improvement work underway across the system.

Practice Example - Child Protection

The National Guidance for Child Protection was published in 2021 and updated in 2023. This guidance **places children and young people's experience, needs, wishes and feelings at the centre of decision-making**; builds on strengths as well as addressing risk and focuses on working in partnership with families and communities.

In March 2024, a national framework for learning and development in child protection was published which supports multi-agency training. Iriss were commissioned to develop a resource which compares child protection and adult support and protection processes for 16 and 17 year olds as part of this work to help practitioners' decision-making.

Practice Example - The Promise Collective

The Promise Collective was established in 2022 with an aim to align the improvement work underway across the system. The group is co-chaired by The Promise Scotland, COSLA and The Scottish Government. Initial membership has since widened further. The Promise Collective allows organisations to come together to connect Corporate Parenting duties and activities; share information and best practice to support improvement; and identify opportunities for collaboration.



Supporting Corporate Parenting across Scotland

The Scottish Government funds [Who Cares? Scotland](#), to **provide training and support for all Corporate Parents**.

An important duty of Corporate Parents is to work together with each other to improve the support provided for Care Experienced people. The Who Cares? Scotland Collaborative Corporate Parenting Network **provides a supportive space for Corporate Parents to come together and share ideas** and create opportunities for working together.



Who Cares? Scotland Corporate Parenting Awards 2024

To mark the **10-year anniversary of Corporate Parenting** duties being added into law and celebrate positive and progressive Corporate Parenting practice from the last decade, Who Cares? Scotland held the first [Corporate Parenting Awards](#) in August 2024.



Fourteen awards were presented by Who Cares? Scotland to the inspirational winners for their **commitment and dedication to Corporate Parenting**. The winners were selected by a judging panel which was made up of a diverse group of Care Experienced people and representatives from Who Cares? Scotland. The Student Awards Agency Scotland won the 'Lifelong Rights Award'. You can read more about the [winners](#) and nominees and their work in [the event programme](#).

Impact of Corporate Parenting Activities in Scotland



If there are worries a child might be at risk of harm in the future, their name may be added to the Child Protection Register



The number of children on the child protection register **dropped much faster** between 2020 and 2023 compared to the five years before 2020

In 2020, for every **1,000 children** in Scotland, **2.9** were on the register. In 2023, this number had **gone down to 2.3 out of every 1,000** children.

'Looked after' is a legal term for children in Scotland who are in the care of their local authority.



From 2020 to 2023, the number of 'looked after children' **dropped by 15.6%.**

For every 1,000 children in Scotland, the number of looked after children went from **14.1 to 12.1.**

While this fits with Scotland's goal to reduce the number of children needing care, more information is needed to understand if this change is a good sign.

Since 2020, the proportion of **all school leavers** achieving at least one qualification at SCQF level 5 has **fallen very slightly**, whereas for **pupils who were looked after** during their final year of school, this has **risen by 4.2** percentage points.

After leaving school, in **2023 71.1%** of 'looked after' school leavers were in a **positive destination** (like work or further study) 9 months after leaving school.

Care Experienced Students starting courses (160+hours) at **College**



2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
7,541	7,887	8,434

Care Experienced Students starting full time first degree courses at **University**



2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
510	545	585

Care Experienced people starting **Modern Apprenticeships**



2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
502	535	583

New rules started on August 28, 2024, to **stop young people under 18** from **being held in young offender institutions** (YOIs). Instead, they will be kept in different places, like secure accommodation. Any young person who was in a YOI before that date has already been moved to a safer, new place.



The average number of young people **living in secure accommodation** on a given day also **fell by 28%** between 2020 and 2023

Next steps and priorities for 2024 - 2027

The Scottish Government, as a Corporate Parent, remains close to the work of the Independent Strategic Advisor for The Promise and The Promise Scotland to deliver Plan 24-30 and to keep the Promise.

The Scottish Government has identified nine key actions to support the next stages of progress and keep The Promise.

- The Scottish Government will consult on a number of areas to help to develop policy and also shape The Promise Bill.
- The Minister for Children, Young People & The Promise will chair a group of organisations, to help support changes and the consultations taking place. The first meeting will be in autumn 2024.
- The Scottish Government will work closely with The Promise Scotland to lead a Quality Improvement Programme. This will help us learn about what works, and to share best practice across Scotland.
- The Scottish Government will develop and promote support for foster carers.
- The Scottish Government will continue to work to support those who are vulnerable to harm, to reduce risk, and to ensure that people get the right help at the right time.
- The Scottish Government is refreshing the common core framework of knowledge and values required of everyone who provides support to children and their families.
- The Scottish Government is taking forward a rights and relationship-based practice and trauma informed training for people who work with children and families.
- The Scottish Government, COSLA and The Promise Scotland jointly published the Promise Progress Framework in December 2024. This Framework will provide information that will help organisations make decisions nationally and locally.

Source: [Scottish Government \(2024\) Keeping The Promise to our children, young people and families: progress update 2024](#)



The Scottish Government's existing actions and commitments, and the nine new key actions, collectively continue to shape and guide the Scottish Government's Corporate Parenting activities for the next three-year reporting period of 2024-2027.

The Scottish Government will continue to provide support to Corporate Parents in Scotland to keep The Promise and encourage Corporate Parents to use the training, support and networking opportunities provided by [Who Cares? Scotland](#).

Essential to the Scottish Government's role as Corporate Parents is to continue to listen to the 'voices' of the Care Experienced community to help inform the policies and initiatives that the Scottish Government develop.

