



University of the  
Highlands and Islands  
Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd  
agus nan Eilean

**Orkney College UHI**  
**Corporate Parenting Plan**  
**2016-2018**

**Report – March 2018**

## Introduction

Orkney College UHI is identified as a corporate parent under Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

We recognise that currently many looked after children and care leavers experience 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.<sup>1</sup> Barriers to education which care experienced young people face include lack of funding, disrupted schooling, an unstable home environment, and accessing further and higher education at a later age than their non-looked after peers.

Orkney College as part of Orkney Islands Council (OIC) and a partner of the University of the Highlands and Islands has a Corporate Parenting Plan, which works in conjunction with both OIC, and the overarching UHI plan to support the wellbeing of care experienced young people who are students at Orkney College UHI.

## Orkney College UHI Vision

Orkney College UHI as part of OIC and UHI is committed to ensuring care experienced young people are fully supported during their time with us. We also strive to enable our care-experienced students successfully complete their course and undergo a worthwhile experience throughout their student journey.

As a UHI registered student, this support also extends past graduation with further assistance offered, for a fixed period, to enhance their career development and ambitions.

The College acknowledges that some young people do not wish to draw attention to their care experienced status, for numerous complex reasons, notwithstanding Orkney being a small community; consequently, not all applicants may declare their status prior to enrolment. However, students may disclose this information at any point during their time at College and this will be updated on their live records. In addition, there is a significant amount of support available online which can be easily accessed by care-experienced students whilst maintaining their privacy and this information is clearly promoted via links from the UHI Care Leavers webpage as well as through our support staff.

In addition to supporting care-experienced students, Orkney College UHI also ensures that staff are provided with training opportunities, which both raise awareness of the difficulties, care experienced students face and information to enable them to signpost within the College to direct practical support.

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## Corporate Parenting Plan: Consultation and Preparation

In 2013, UHI established a Care Leavers Group, with representation from Orkney College UHI; this Group meets bi-annually with Corporate Parenting as part of their work.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> February 2016, the Orkney College senior management team attended a training event by *Who Cares? Scotland* with senior colleagues from OIC's social work team. All staff will have undertaken the UHI Corporate Parenting staff development module by the end of this academic year, which was launched in January 2018.

## Corporate Parenting Action Plan update

### **Management and Delivery of Plan/Outcomes**

The Access and Inclusion Group at Orkney College UHI reviews data for care experienced students. This group meets every quarter. Students disclosing that they are care-experienced are very low and our approach reflects both the local context and that we are able to take an individualised approach. At present baseline numbers are being established which will enable future comparison regarding recruitment, retention, and outcomes. It was planned that a care experienced student would be recruited to the Access and Inclusion group however to date this has not been possible due to very low numbers and the current cohort profile; this will continue to be reviewed.

In addition, the Assistant Principal who Chairs the Access and Inclusion Group is a member of the Care Leavers Group and has been invited to sit on a newly established OIC Corporate Parenting Strategy Group to further develop and improve local collaborative working among corporate parents. The cross-partnership UHI Care Leavers Group continues to meet bi-annually to share best practice and discuss issues affecting care experienced young people. This helps to ensure equivalence at every academic partner college and it is hoped in time this will also contribute to improved retention rates for care-experienced students.

In terms of strategic and operational planning, UHI Student Support Services Operational Plan 2017/18 makes specific reference to care experienced learners, and includes monitoring of the actions within the university Corporate Parenting Plan.

With regard to relevant training for all staff, UHI have developed an online Corporate Parenting module, in consultation with *Who Cares? Scotland* and the university Care Leavers Group, which is now mandatory for all staff. Promotion of the module began in January 2018 and all staff must complete the training by the end of July 2018. The creation of this training module continues to develop awareness amongst all staff of their legislative duties, under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and, importantly, of the challenges faced by care experienced students.

### **Stage 1. Transitions, Application and Enrolment**

Orkney College UHI continues to work collaboratively with local corporate parents to raise awareness and plan for better transitions to College for care-experienced young people. There is still more work to do in this regard although the direction of travel has improved in the past year. With low numbers of care-experienced young people in Orkney there is the opportunity to ensure that this works very well; currently corporate parents locally have not yet developed a collective strategy although it is intended that this should be completed during 2018. Meetings with local partners, such as OIC Education and OIC Social Services have been held to progress how corporate parents can work more cohesively and it is expected that this will be further developed during 2018. On an individual basis, the Assistant Principal and Curriculum Leader for Inclusive Practice work with local partners to ensure where it is known before application that there is a transition plan for a care experienced learner.

To raise awareness of the support services available for care-experienced students at Orkney College, a Care Leavers section has been created on the website with links to the UHI website. This provides details of the support available locally and centrally with contact details, related videos, and links to external organisations such as *Who Cares? Scotland*. Originally a local leaflet was planned however this was overtaken due to resources being available through the UHI website it was therefore decided to replace this with a personalised letter with directions to available resources.

In addition, UHI has a dedicated Corporate Parenting webpage, which outlines for students what corporate parenting is and has links to the Orkney College UHI's Corporate Parenting Plan. The information on the webpages is regularly reviewed and updated, as required.

### *1.1 Application*

With regard to Orkney College UHI admissions process, students who declare care experience at the time of application are flagged on the data management system and the application form marked. This ensures the interviewer/decision maker is aware of the student's situation and can consider this. For students applying for UHI courses, a representative of the university Admissions Team is a member of the Care Leavers Group and assists with the refining of processes and sharing of relevant information.

UHI has also developed a Contextualised Admissions policy and practice to formalise the existing inclusive approach to admissions for higher education programmes. This means that contextualised data provided on an application form can be used to assess an applicant's prior attainment and potential to succeed in higher education in the context of the circumstances in which their attainment has been obtained, if they do not meet the standard entry requirements for the course. In addition, a wide range of equivalent qualifications are accepted and the university recognises that there are a variety of routes through which qualifications may be gained and ways in which readiness for higher education study may be demonstrated.

## *1.2 Pre-entry*

Orkney College works with local corporate parents to plan for individual transitions when it is known, into College, this aspect has improved in the past year although there is still scope for further development once a local joint corporate parenting plan has been finalised.

Since Orkney College UHI's corporate parenting plan became operational, all enrolments have been for FE programmes. Orkney College will continue to encourage care-experienced students to progress from FE programmes to HE programmes.

For care-experienced students applying for HE programmes at Orkney College, UHI maintains timely information regarding funding on their website and full details of the financial support available. It was planned to produce a leaflet locally for care-experienced students however this was superseded by UHI developing a centralised resource; therefore this was not progressed however will be reviewed if going forward it is felt that localised information is preferable. The information includes individual bursary schemes, internal and external, and the university's Discretionary and Childcare funds. A link to the webpage can be found on the dedicated Care Leavers section of the UHI website.

Students applying for HE programmes are also encouraged prior to enrolment to access the online Essential Student Skills resource. This provides information on the university, and includes elements such as thinking about learning, collaborative learning, and new to blended learning, all of which are specific to pre-entry.

With regards to accommodation for care-experienced students studying higher education programmes, UHI can act as guarantor for care-experienced students if the local authority is unable to do so.

## **Stage 2 – Staying On Course**

As previously stated there are a range of resources and information on the UHI Care Leavers page Orkney College UHI which individuals are referred. Further personalised support is available through the Course Tutor and the Curriculum Leader for Inclusive Practice as required who are also to sign post and seek support from agencies and services. Curriculum Leaders also report on individual progress to the Assistant Principal each semester and alert to any concerns in the interim; this is currently manageable due to the low numbers of care experienced students currently studying at the college.

All students enrolled on UHI Higher Education programmes at Orkney College UHI have access to a Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) to provide academic support and guidance as well as signposting for additional support services. The university Student Services Team coordinate the support and training available for Personal Academic Tutors based across the network, which includes an annual Development Day. Recent agenda items for the day have included a session on care-experienced students, delivered by a current PAT.

The online Essential Student Skills resource is available to all students and these interactive modules can be accessed at all stages of the learner journey. Full details of the resource, and a link to access it, are on the university Care Leavers webpage.

### **Stage 3 - Post Course**

This is the first progress report for Orkney College UHI Corporate Parenting Plan. Both the College's Access and Inclusion Group and Senior Management team review the Corporate Parenting Plan annually. Reporting will subsequently take place every three years in line with Government requirements.

### **Stage 4 – Monitoring and Evaluation**

The UHI Care Leavers Group and the College's Access and Inclusion Group will continue to work on issues affecting care-experienced young people. Corporate Parenting is a standing item on the agenda for Orkney College's Access and Inclusion group. Baseline data is being collected within this academic year which will be monitored and reported going forward. Further work with local corporate parents will also enhance and improve the College's Corporate Parenting Plan and actions for the next period.

### **Conclusion**

All of the work undertaken since 2013 has been with the aim of ensuring care-experienced students have access to all the support they need, which will allow them to make the most of their time at Orkney College UHI and help achieve their full potential.

Through the specific actions in the Corporate Parenting Plan our aim is to encourage more care-experienced young people to study at Orkney College and to improve retention, outcomes and their overall student experience.

From the 2017/18 academic year, baseline data is being collected which will allow Orkney College to monitor and analyse recruitment, retention and outcomes more accurately. Orkney College representatives will also continue to work closely with UHI, partner colleges and OIC colleagues as well as, *Who Cares? Scotland*, and the College Development Network to achieve our objectives.

By ensuring all Orkney College staff complete the UHI training module this will raise awareness of the difficulties care-experienced students face and enhance the support which can be offered. The UHI Care Leavers Group will continue to share best practice across the partnership and the College's Access and Inclusion Group will continue to work to action the Corporate Parenting Plan across the college.

Orkney College UHI will continue to strive to remove any barriers care-experienced students currently face and our deepening local collaborative working will, it is intended be clearly reflected in the achievements and outcomes of the actions in our Plan on enrolment, retention, and positive destinations for our students.