



# Corporate Parent Plan Report March 2018

## West Highland College UHI Corporate Parenting Plan Report March 2018

*“Our ambition is to be the education provider of choice in the West Highlands of Scotland, delivering excellence in learning, training and support for all students, businesses and rural communities”*

### Introduction

West Highland College UHI is identified as a corporate parent under Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. It is widely accepted that many care experienced and looked after children have some of the poorest personal outcomes of any group in Scotland. Low levels of educational engagement and achievement lead to poverty, homelessness and poor mental health.<sup>1</sup> Care experienced young people in particular face considerable barriers to accessing further and higher education including: access to appropriate levels of funding, a lack of schooling or disrupted schooling, a challenging home environment, low self-esteem and a lack of confidence and positive role models. These factors mean that they often do not perform as well as their peer group in terms of academic achievement and career progression.

West Highland College UHI is one 13 partner institutions of the University of the Highlands and Islands and serves Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross through the delivery of further and higher education at 10 learning centres across the region. Much of our delivery is in remote and rural areas, from Ullapool in the north, to the Isle of Skye and the extremely remote Ardnamurchan peninsula in the west, Fort William and Kinlochleven in the south.

The college corporate parent plan focusses on building a culture and infrastructure across our 10 learning centres to ensure a consistency of approach and support for care experienced young people applying to study at both FE and HE levels across our curriculum offering. Although the college has its own corporate parent plan under the legislation which is designed to meet the needs of our local area we are also engaged with the overarching university plan which focuses on collaborative work across the partnership

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<sup>1</sup> Scottish Government (published annually) [Children’s Social Work Statistics](#), Edinburgh; Meltzer, H, et al (2004) *The mental health of young people looked after by local authorities in Scotland*, London: TSO.

and the coordination of actions which encourage care experienced young people to apply to the college and university and to support them through their studies. The college plan was approved by the Board of Management in December 2016.

## College Vision

The college aims to create a culture to support the duties of a corporate parent under the legislation, by ensuring appropriately trained and qualified staff and developing a commitment to shared values throughout the organisation. The college is committed to ensuring that care experienced young people are fully supported during their time with us, to enable them to successfully complete their course and to prepare them for the future by developing skills to ensure they leave us as:



## **Corporate Parent Plan: Consultation and Preparation**

The West Highland College UHI Corporate Parent Plan builds on the work already undertaken with the Buttle UK trust. The college was awarded the Buttle UK quality mark for our support of care leavers in January 2015 and have built on the planning and consultation to achieve that award as the basis for the development of our corporate parent plan for 2016 -2018.

Since 2013 the college has been a member of the UHI Care Leavers Group, which has representation from each academic partner college. The Group meets twice yearly and more recently part of their work has included Corporate Parenting. This group offers peer support and information sharing that is invaluable to a smaller partner college. In addition to this group the college attends training events and conferences and makes use of websites to support them in their role as a corporate parent from organisations such as CELSIS. Colleges Development Network has been a key support for the development of our plan through their Access and Inclusion Forum, bespoke corporate parent training events and access to a development officer with a remit for Care Leavers and Corporate Parenting.

The college has worked with Who Cares Scotland since 2016 for advice and training for the College Board of Management, Executive Leadership Team and College Management Team.

In addition, the college has ongoing dialogue with local support agencies, voluntary organisations, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and social work teams to ensure a partnership approach to supporting our care experienced students.

Most importantly, the college engages with our care experienced students and seek their feedback on an ongoing basis. Staff engage fully with students and offer a very personal support network to them, through a consistent named individual who works as part of the Student Support Team.

In order to achieve the ambitions set out in our plan we agreed a set of actions. This report is monitoring progress to date and we will use this as a basis to develop a continuing action plan for the coming session 2018/19 to ensure that the College continues to fulfil its obligations to support our students under the legislation. The College Management Group has overall responsibility for ongoing monitoring of progress against actions.

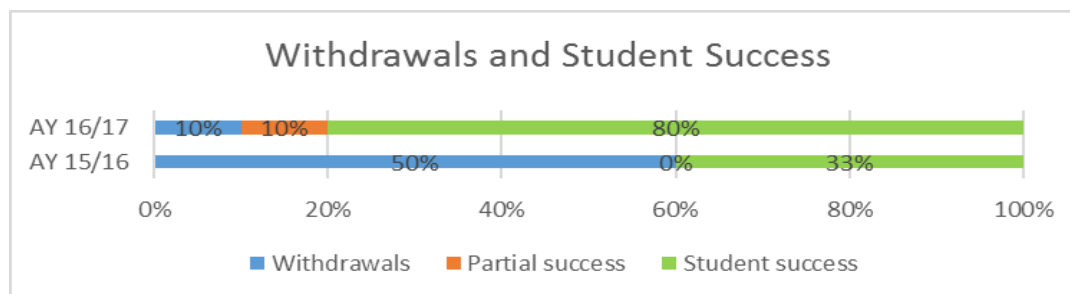
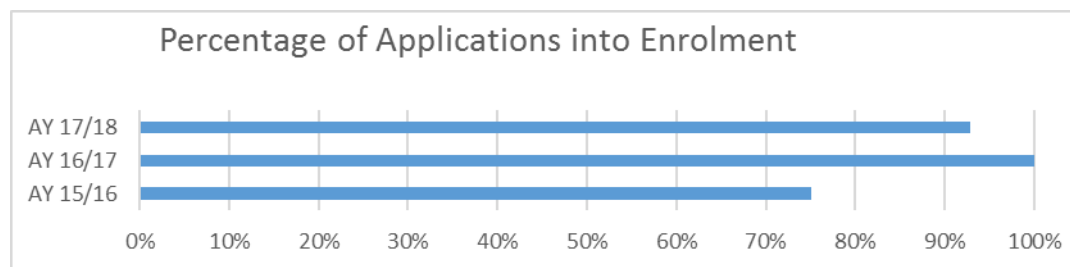
Corporate Parent Plan Actions 2016- 2018			
No	Action	Target Date	Progress
1	Membership of the cross-partnership Care Leavers Group and associated activities. The group meets on a bi-annual basis.	Dec -16 and ongoing	WHC UHI continues to be an active participant in the UHI care Leavers Group
2	Share best practice across the partnership by actively seeking feedback from partners in relation to the development of literature and services.	Ongoing	As part of the UHI Care Leavers Group sharing best practice continues and has led to a review of literature issued to care leavers at application stage. As a result of student feedback, leaflets were rewritten and issued to students at face to face meetings rather than sending them out.
3	Ensure care experienced students are considered during strategic and operational planning and that the impact of decisions on this student cohort are considered and mitigated where possible.	Ongoing	The College planning processes have taken in to account the impact of decisions on a range of student groups with additional support for learning needs which includes care experienced students and adjusted support where necessary. E.g. working with our academic partner to secure additional access to discretionary funds for FE students. This was already available to our HE students.
4	Create an internal reporting system and procedures to analyse data for care experienced students regarding recruitment, retention, and outcomes	Jun-17	This is now in place and we can report on outcomes through the student records system.
5	Organise relevant training for West Highland College Board of Management and staff in relation to the college duty as corporate parents	Jun-17	Training is arranged and will be carried out in March 2018. Delay was due to changes of staff at Who Cares Scotland. In addition to this training the college has adopted an online training package which is mandatory training for all staff across all our learning centres.
6	Review all published information available to care experienced students to ensure it remains current.	Feb-17	Review carried out for Induction in August 2017.

7	Improve signposting to information on the website and in the prospectus on the support available for care experienced applicants by all frontline enquiry staff	Feb-17	Text and information on our website and in our prospectus has been updated. A automatic system of identification and referral of Care Leavers has been introduced through the UHI student records system for HE students and a manual system of referral is in place at WHCUHI for FE students
8	Notify curriculum staff of the need for special consideration for care experienced students during interviews and the need for early decisions and notification	Feb-17	This takes place through the Interview checklist process and through work with interviewing lecturers from our Admissions team
9	Admissions officer will review and monitor the system for arranging early interview dates for care experienced applicants to allow additional planning time.	Feb-17	In place. With regard to university Admissions processes, students who declare care experience at the time of application are flagged on the student record system and the application form marked. This ensures that for HE applications the interviewer/decision maker is aware of the student's situation and can take this into consideration.  A manual system which reflects this process is in place at WHC for FE students. We also have an agreement to offer additional opportunities to attend interview on a case by case basis.
10	Review published information in relation to student funding to ensure it remains current.	Jun- 17	A review of this took place for Induction in Aug 2017
11	Arrange to meet with partner colleges in relation to bursary allocation and to examine the proposal to ring fence discretionary funding to support emergency situations with regard to care experienced students.	Apr-17	Achieved and agreed.
12	Develop a new leaflet to outline services and supports available for care experienced students which will encourage disclosure.	Jan-17	Achieved. Following feedback from students we agreed a system of face to face interviews.

13	WHC will support named care experienced residents by giving them a named person in relation to support for their tenancy.	Dec -16	Achieved – we have had care experienced tenants in the residency for sessions 16/17 and 17/18 and have provide named support and exceptional tenancy agreements to cover 50 weeks in conjunction with UHI and Cityheart the residency management company
14	Maintain information available to ensure it remains relevant and useful and train frontline staff to ensure appropriate signposting	Jun-17	Achieved for 17/18. Information review about to begin for 18/19.
15	Provide a named person to support all care experienced applicants and students	Sept -17	A guidance officer with a specific remit was appointed in February 2017.
16	Increase awareness of the UHI on line counselling service to all students and staff across WHC.	Jan -17	Information on this is included in the information we give to care leavers.
17	Ensure that information on the WHC counselling service is included in the care leaver information and that staff and students are aware of the referral process	Jun -17	Achieved. This information is highlighted as a service which we will offer to care leavers as a priority group. However many of them come to college with good support already in place and for most counselling has not proved to be the most effective way of offering support. The college works closely with social work and support agencies to ensure the most appropriate outcome of the student.
18	Engage with Who Cares Scotland to devise and coordinate Board of Management and staff training via online module developed by Who Cares? Scotland	Jun-17	Achieved
19	Establish a monitoring and reporting system to comply with legislative requirements	Apr-18	Achieved

## Care Experienced Student Success 2015 - 2018

Year	Applications	Enrolments	Withdrawals	Partial success	Student success	Known Education Progressions	Employment
AY 15/16	8	6	4		2	1	
AY 16/17	10	10	1	1	8	4	1
AY 17/18	14	13	5				



There has been a positive increase in application to enrolment conservation rates over the last three years. In 16/17, there was a reduction in withdrawals. In 2017/18, five students have withdrawn to date: one moved away from the area, one was a Christmas school leaver and was not ready for college they will be offered the opportunity to return in 2018/19 if appropriate, one moved on to employment, one left as they did not like the course and did not want to move to another course and one when their friend did despite efforts to support them to stay but they had moved away from their home area together. One student suspended their studies in 2017/18 due to personal relationship difficulties and if appropriate staff will support the student to return in the future. In 2016/17, one student was a partial success. This means that they stayed until the end of the year and have achieved a number of units that make



up a full time course, but did not achieve the full qualification. 80% of students achieved their qualification in 16/17, an improvement on the 2015/16 figure. As numbers are very small, it only takes one or two students to withdraw, to affect the overall students' success. In 16/17, four students progressed into further or higher education, which is a strong indication that their experience at college was a positive one. One student is known to have gone into employment.

## **Conclusion**

Since its inception in 2010 West Highland College UHI has been committed to supporting care experienced young people to achieve their ambition in relation to accessing further and higher education. That commitment is demonstrated through gaining recognition from the Buttle UK quality mark. The college believes that the actions identified as part of this corporate parent plan have firmly built on that achievement and allows a focus on continuous improvement. Through the actions in the corporate parent plan it is evident that the college has attracted a small increase in numbers over the past three years. The appointment of a named person in the student services team as a point of contact who will work with students throughout their student journey has been a positive addition to the process. This is helping to ensure an increase in students staying on course, which will increase the numbers of students achieving positive outcomes. There remains many challenges for care experienced students in settling in to new environments and often learning to take on the responsibilities of an independent adult life. As a partner in UHI, the college can offer preferential access to accommodation through its on-site residencies. The residencies offer extended tenancies for care leavers, which takes away the necessity to move out in holiday periods. UHI have agreed to act as guarantor for care experienced students if their local authority is unable to do so, to allow them to have the same access to safe accommodation as other students.

In order to develop a cross college culture of support and to develop the necessary commitment as a corporate parent the college has recently introduced an on-line mandatory training package to ensure that all staff are fully aware of their responsibilities as corporate parents. All student facing policies ensure that barriers are removed and students are supported to access services as they require. The aim is to ensure that care experienced students get the information they require regarding application and student funding as timely as possible. The college has information on funding and learning support as well as specific information for care experienced applicants on its website. Preferential access is in place for both HE and FE discretionary funds. While recognising that not all care

experienced students want or need to be identified for additional support and that they are not a homogenous group, a student centred approach is taken to ensure that help, information, advice and support is targeted to the students who need it and will benefit most.

The college is proud of its record in relation to its responsibilities as a corporate parent and will continue to promote a culture of support while looking to review and improve policies and practices to support success in the future.