

Skills
Development
Scotland

Corporate Parenting Plan

2021 – 2024 Report

Foreword

It has now been three years since Skills Development Scotland (SDS) published its Corporate Parenting Plan 2021-24.

As we publish our plan for the coming three years, it's essential we also report on our performance in fulfilling the ambitions of our previous plan, and so I am proud to be able to share this summary of our activity.

It must be acknowledged that this period presented a number of challenges. The Covid-19 pandemic was very much front and centre when our previous plan was published, and since then, in common with all of our public sector partners, we have worked hard to continue delivering high-quality services whilst also delivering substantial cost savings and efficiencies.

Despite these challenges, we have managed to make great progress, and as Scotland's national skills body, we recognise we have a fundamentally important role to play in supporting young people who face particular disadvantages, and this includes those who are Care Experienced.


Data tells us that outcomes for Care Experienced young people remain poorer than for those without experience of care, and to help address this our Corporate Parenting Plan 2021-24 contained five commitments which aimed to enhance our capabilities and effectiveness in working with people who are Care Experienced.

Those commitments covered areas such as awareness levels of SDS colleagues, data sharing, internal progression routes, delivery of products and services and ensuring the voice of Care Experienced young people is heard.

Across all of these areas I'm confident we have a strong story to tell which illustrates not only our commitment to providing the best possible support to Care Experienced young people but also to continuous improvement, building on our successes so far and identifying opportunities for further growth.

Our Corporate Parenting Community of Practice played a key role in sharing ideas, approaches and successes, spreading expertise and deepening our knowledge base. We formalised a data sharing agreement with local authorities which helps all partners in quickly identifying those in need of further support, and we have worked to become an exemplar employer, using our Young Talent programme to offer opportunities to young people who are Care Experienced, whilst also supporting their continued career progression.

There remains a great deal to do, but as we look ahead I'm confident the progress outlined in this report puts us in a strong position to continue developing the support we offer Scotland's Care Experienced young people in the coming years.



Damien Yeates

Chief Executive, Skills Development Scotland

Contents

1. Introduction	3
About Skills Development Scotland (SDS)	
2. Our Corporate Parenting duties	4
Defining 'Care Experience'	
What is Corporate Parenting?	
Our duties as a Corporate Parent	
About this report	
3. Summary of performance against the 2021-24 commitments	6
4. Monitoring and reporting	15

1. Introduction

About Skills Development Scotland

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is the national skills agency. Our ambition is that skills contribute to a thriving, productive and inclusive Scotland. We work to achieve this through intelligence-led delivery of Scotland's all-age career service and Scottish apprenticeships, as well as other learning and skills interventions in support of Scottish Government ambitions. While our services are universally available to any individual or business requiring support, they are targeted to help those most in need.

SDS collaborates extensively across the education and skills system. By sharing expertise and intelligence, we enable the development and delivery of innovative solutions to Scotland's skills and labour market challenges. Further details on SDS's strategic approach and operational activities can be found in 'Skills for a Changing World', our [Strategic Plan 2022-27](#), published in November 2022.

“[SDS careers guidance] was useful and informative when school or family didn't give you much information.”

Care Experienced school pupil, Pupils' Voice Survey, 2023

2. Our Corporate Parenting duties

Defining 'Care Experience'

While there are legal definitions for the terms 'looked-after' and 'care leaver', within SDS we choose to use the inclusive term 'Care Experienced'. By this we mean anyone who is currently in care or has been for any length of time regardless of their age. This inclusive approach includes those looked after at home, or away from home in kinship, residential, foster or secure care. Our intention is to act as Corporate Parent to anyone who identifies themselves within this broader 'Care Experienced' definition, and as such, this term is used throughout this plan.

We also recognise that not everyone who could identify as Care Experienced will choose to do so. The Promise outlines that the term 'Care Experienced' tries to acknowledge that, for some people:

- the sense of being in care is a shared experience
- care is an experience, but not one that totally defines you
- language should put the person it talks about at the centre.

The regular sharing of data between SDS, local authorities and colleges helps to minimise the reliance on self-disclosure so that Care Experienced people can get the support they are entitled to, allowing us and partners to provide effective targeted support.

What is Corporate Parenting?

As a Corporate Parent we have responsibility to looked-after children and care leavers, and to respond to their needs as any parent or carer would.

Corporate Parents have duties as set out in the **Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 ('The Act')**, which came into effect on 1 April 2015. Part nine of The Act makes specific provision for those who are Care Experienced, providing a legislative framework for Corporate Parenting.

The related statutory guidance defines Corporate Parenting as:

"An organisation's performance of actions necessary to uphold the rights and safeguard the wellbeing of a looked-after child or care leaver, and through which physical, emotional, spiritual, social and educational development is promoted"¹.

Within the Act, SDS was named as one of the public bodies to which Corporate Parenting duties apply.

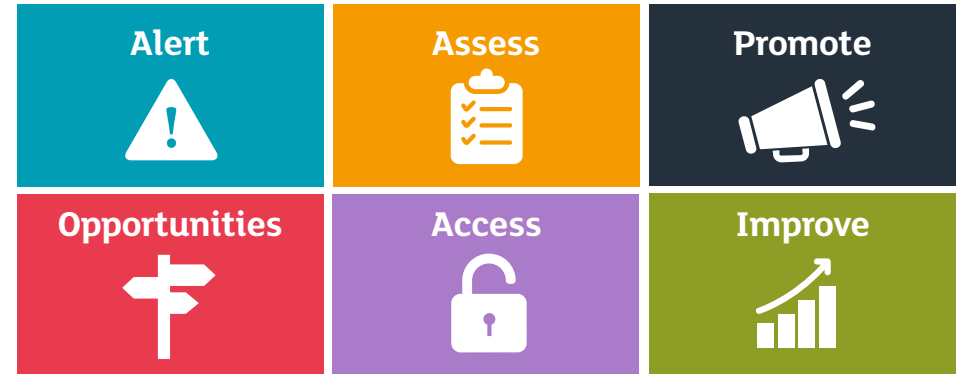
Our duties as a Corporate Parent

Our role as Corporate Parents and the duties that come with that role are intended to improve the wellbeing of Care Experienced children and young people. The key question we ask ourselves when designing services or opportunities as a Corporate Parent is "Would this be good enough for my child?".

¹ Scottish Government, Statutory Guidance (2015).

The Act (section 58) sets out the following six statutory duties for Corporate Parents, including SDS. Corporate Parents must:

- **be alert:** to be alert to matters which, or which might, adversely affect the wellbeing of children and young people to whom this part applies
- **assess needs:** to assess the needs of those children and young people for services and support it provides
- **promote interests:** to promote the interests of those children and young people
- **provide opportunities:** to seek to provide those children and young people with opportunities to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing
- **make sure services are easy to access:** to take such action as it considers appropriate to help those children and young people
- **look for ways to improve:** to take such other action as it considers appropriate for the purposes of improving the way in which it exercises its functions in relation to those children and young people.



Corporate Parents must also publish (and keep under review) detailed Corporate Parenting plans and reports, collaborate with each other, follow directions and guidance, and provide relevant information to Scottish Ministers (sections 60 – 65 of The Act).

About this report

Section 61 of The Act requires SDS, as a Corporate Parent, to report on its Corporate Parenting duties. This report outlines the progress made against the commitments in our 2021-24 Corporate Parenting Plan.

2. Summary of performance against the 2021-24 commitments

Our previous Corporate Parenting Plan was published at the end of 2021 and contained our five commitments covering 2021-24. Those were:

- **Commitment one:** Help SDS colleagues understand how to be a good Corporate Parent in practice
- **Commitment two:** Continue to collaborate with partners to improve the collection and use of data on Care Experienced customers
- **Commitment three:** Ensure SDS benefits from Care Experienced talent by creating sustainable progression routes into our workforce
- **Commitment four:** Develop and deliver products and services that improve the learning and employment outcomes of Care Experienced people
- **Commitment five:** Put the voice of Care Experienced young people at the heart of SDS decision-making.

Our teams have worked collaboratively to deliver against the 2021-24 plan. This section provides a high-level overview of our performance. It provides a summary of activity for each commitment, highlights key achievements, and sets out where activity from our 2021-24 commitments will be taken forward through the next plan period.

“I really enjoyed the supportive and patient nature of my careers adviser!”

Care Experienced school pupil, Young People’s Career Ambitions 2022/23

Commitment one: Help SDS colleagues understand how to be a good Corporate Parent in practice

In practice, this meant we were committing to:

- continue to develop and support the SDS Care Experience Community of Practice
- review our colleague training materials to ensure they remain fit for purpose
- share case studies of good Corporate Parenting practice, particularly increasing visibility of non-customer facing examples
- ensure our internal communications continue to profile Care Experience campaigns that colleagues can engage with and support.

What we did:

During this plan period, SDS staff continued to engage proactively in our Corporate Parenting Community of Practice (CoP). This included regular exchange of new ideas and approaches, as well as signposting news items and resources to help build cross-business awareness of matters relating to our Care Experienced customers. The CoP is a very active group, and they play a key role in supporting customers from Care Experienced backgrounds. In doing so, it makes a valuable contribution to our Corporate Parenting responsibilities. The original CoP was held in person but now uses Viva Engage and Teams to allow wider and more frequent participation. The CoP hosts various 'deep dive' sessions focused on topical insights to allow colleagues to see the rich variety of SDS work underway to explore Care Experienced

journeys. A 2023 CoP event focused on the range of research on Care Experience ongoing at SDS, including customer and evaluation feedback and our current PhD research. The CoP membership continued to widen to include greater representation from non-customer-facing roles. We will continue to expand the reach of the group into the course of the 2024-27 plan.

All SDS colleagues have access to Corporate Parenting training, developed in partnership with Who Cares? Scotland, which allows them to understand our statutory duties and invites them to consider how this impacts their job role. The training is mandatory for all colleagues' induction on joining SDS. SDS introduced a refreshed and updated mandatory corporate parenting learning module for all colleagues in 2024. The new learning package has been comprehensively updated to include key asks from The Promise – the legal duties to safeguard and support the wellbeing of young people from Care Experienced backgrounds, coverage of the UNCRC, and information on the journey through care. This learning encourages colleagues to continue to develop their knowledge by signposting to a range of additional resources beyond the module content. Who Cares? Scotland delivers in-person training sessions for our Board as part of their CPD which helps them understand and uphold their specific duties as senior leaders within a Corporate Parent organisation. The next session is scheduled for November 2024.

Another way in which we share best practice, knowledge, insight, and resources is through dedicated pages on our staff intranet 'Connect'. These pages provide information and resources for operational colleagues on how to best deliver our services to Care Experienced young people. At a local level, Career Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) colleagues engaged in relevant partnerships and attended events related to Corporate Parenting which extend their knowledge and understanding of local partners and provision.

We use communication tools such as case studies and blogs to talk about the achievements of Care Experienced customers. To maximise impact we coincide these activities with national campaigns including Care Day, Scottish Apprenticeship Week, Scottish Careers Week, the Love Rally and Care Experienced Week, whenever possible. We continued to include the words “Proud to be a Corporate Parent” in our corporate email signature template for all colleagues to reinforce awareness of our role through all email communications with colleagues, partners, customers and stakeholders.

There is now a high level of awareness of Corporate Parenting across SDS. In 2024, 95% of colleagues responding to our staff survey said they were aware of SDS's role as a Corporate Parent, and 91% of colleagues felt they understand the importance of Corporate Parenting to their role.

As we enter the new plan period we remain committed to maintaining this high level of understanding and awareness amongst our colleagues.

“[SDS careers guidance] has helped me gain a deeper understanding of my future and how to achieve my dreams and goals”

Care Experienced school pupil, Pupils' Voice Survey, 2023

Commitment two: Continue to collaborate with partners to improve the collection and use of data on Care Experienced customers

In practice, this meant we were committing to:

- continue to work towards having data sharing agreements in place between SDS and local authority social work departments in Scotland to improve our ability to identify and deliver services to Care Experienced young people
- improve records-matching activity between our different customer databases to ensure young people are better supported.

What we did:

As set out in our Strategic Plan 2022-27, SDS has the aspiration to “Transform our use of system-wide data, intelligence, and customer voice to deliver better customer outcomes”. A key area of this work is to improve the collection and use of data on the Care Experienced young people we work with. Significant work has been ongoing since 2018 as covered in previous SDS Corporate Parenting Plans, and it has proved to be a complex and challenging area.

In 2022 SDS formalised a new data sharing agreement with all local authorities which made provision for social work departments to provide data to SDS. SDS receives data, including on Care Experienced individuals, from local authorities’ education system through regular data sharing and pupil census. This data is entered into our customer management system and combined with the information recorded by our careers advisers through customer engagement, before being shared back with local authorities and colleges.

We continue to focus on the effective use of data and data sharing, including collaboration with local authorities to develop solutions for the provision of data from social work departments as part of our wider Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

Access to up-to-date information from social work departments can enable us to better identify those who are currently, or were previously, Care Experienced. This joined up approach allow us and our partners to offer more personalised support to customers.

We will continue to roll out the 16+ Participation Portal which will replace the 16+ Data Hub under our 2024-27 Corporate Parenting Plan.

We investigated records-matching between our customer databases, but this was problematic due to differences in how training providers input data to each system and the age that young people can consent for data sharing themselves. We were therefore unable to progress this action.

Commitment three: Ensure SDS benefits from Care Experienced talent by creating sustainable progression routes into our workforce

In practice, this meant we were committing to:

- continue to develop approaches that better support Care Experienced individuals to access and sustain career opportunities within SDS, including apprenticeships and internships
- develop our employment pipeline to support the career progression and skills development of Care Experienced people in SDS.

What we did:

Our Strategic Plan 2022-27 sets out the aim to “Attract, nurture, and retain a diverse team of people that share and achieve our ambitions, demonstrating fair work practices.” To date, our Young Talent Programme has been the primary route for creating effective pathways for Care Experienced young people to access and develop careers within SDS. A range of opportunities have been available including work tasters, work experience and Foundation Apprenticeships through to Graduate Apprenticeships and Graduate Internships.

We have taken positive action to support Care Experienced young people to apply for Young Talent Programme positions at SDS. This includes adjustments to the wording in our recruitment adverts, ringfencing vacancies and extending applicants’ maximum age limit from 24 to 29 for Care Experienced individuals.

In 2021, we piloted an internship programme for Care Experienced undergraduates in the summer before their final year at university. Care Experienced young people took part in an eight-week paid internship at SDS to get a work-based learning experience that was relevant to their studies. This approach recognised the greater need for some of these students to be able to support themselves financially over the summer break. Following completion of their degree most took up the opportunity to work full-time at SDS for one year and gain experience and support to make their next career move.

We invited Who Cares? Scotland to facilitate a session with our HR colleagues to improve understanding of lived experience of care and the barriers to work an individual with Care Experience might face. This led to a wider CPD session with Who Cares? Scotland to deepen their understanding of Care Experience and our statutory duty.

In line with our fair work ambitions, we have been recording Care Experience data for our employees since 2019. Monitoring this data allows us to identify the effectiveness of our approaches in attracting and retaining Care Experienced talent within our organisation. The volume of colleagues self-identifying as Care Experienced in our 2024 staff survey remains similar to 2021 results at 1.8%². Of those who identified as Care Experienced, 65% strongly agreed that they are satisfied working at SDS, compared with 63% of staff who were not Care Experienced.

² Calculated as a proportion of survey respondents answering “Have you ever been in care?” followed by the explanation: “In care means you are or were formally looked after by a local authority, in the family home (with support from social services or a social worker) or elsewhere, for example, in foster care, residential/secure care, or kinship care (with family friends or relatives).”

Commitment four: Develop and deliver products and services that improve the learning and employment outcomes of Care Experienced people

In practice, this meant we were committing to:

- explore opportunities to develop trauma-informed practice principles in the delivery of our face-to-face services and to inform the development of our products
- consider ways to implement best practice approaches to supporting Care Experienced young people and their families, as set out in The Promise
- continue to work to increase participation of those with Care Experience in work-based learning programmes
- explore how we better support Care Experienced adults to access and sustain learning and employment opportunities through our products and services.

What we did:

The majority of SDS careers advisers have now undertaken initial trauma-informed training and are in the early stages of implementing a trauma-informed approach to careers practice. A qualitative research project on embedding trauma-informed practice within a career guidance context is underway in 2024. There is a lack of data on how careers advisers use these approaches in their everyday practice and this research can address this evidence gap. The project aims to understand how implementing a trauma-informed approach can best support Care Experienced adult customers and others who have experienced trauma or Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE).

Our CIAG services continue to offer an enhanced, targeted service to Care Experienced young people. In 2022/23, 94% of targeted senior phase pupils with known Care Experience received coaching guidance from SDS and 84% of targeted senior phase pupils with known Care Experience showed an improvement in their career management skills (CMS). We offer our Next Steps service, available to all unemployed young people seeking employment aged 15 to 18.5-years-old, and has extended eligibility up to the age of 26 for individuals who are Care Experienced. In 2022/23, 60.4% of Care Experienced Next Steps customers progressed to learning, training or work. While this was lower than the overall Next Steps cohort overall (68.3%) it was an improvement of 4.8 percentage points from 2020/21.

Our external communications are used to highlight support available for Care Experienced people. For example, we carried out a campaign targeting those with Care Experience as part of the Results helpline 2023 campaign activity and featured specific content on Corporate Parenting as part of Scottish Careers Week 2023.

We worked collaboratively with SFC to successfully include SDS advisers in the counter signatories list for the further education Care Experienced Bursary. This system change will help to remove barriers for Care Experienced people in accessing funding to support their further education study.

We continued to look at ways to support more Care Experienced people into and during their apprenticeships. In 2023/24, the volume of Modern Apprentices self-identifying as Care Experienced reached its highest recorded level of 2.3% of all starts. While the achievement rate for Care Experienced Modern Apprentices was 64.8%, an improvement relative to the previous year, it was 11.5 percentage points lower than those without Care Experience. The achievement rate was lower again if those

Care Experienced individuals were also living in the 20% most deprived areas (61.8%), disabled (59.7%), minority ethnic (57.7%) or male (54.5%). Further improvements are needed to the support provided to Modern Apprentices and their employers to allow Care Experienced young people and other customer groups to thrive and achieve a positive outcome.

SDS completed an Integrated Equality Impact Assessment (IEIA) on the achievement rates across all protected characteristic groups, including those with Care Experience, across Foundation Apprenticeships, Modern Apprenticeships and Graduate Apprenticeships in 2024. We consulted with equality partners who are specialists in supporting Care Experienced individuals during the process and will take forwards the actions identified to further improve the achievements rates of Care Experienced individuals.

Providers can apply for additional funding through the Enhanced Funding Contribution process for Care Experienced apprentices up to 29 years old, where the provider and learner have identified that significant additional support is necessary for completion.

SDS facilitated and contributed to the report 'How do we make apprenticeships more accessible and attractive to Care Experienced young people?' led by the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) Employer Equalities Group (EEQ) and published at the start of 2024. The report identifies good practice that employers, SAAB, local authorities and SDS can put in place to better support Care Experienced young people and recognises that key structural barriers can only be addressed by the government. A key recommendation of the SAAB EEQ for SDS is to explore how to provide quality mentoring support to Care Experienced apprentices, alongside providers and Care Experience organisations. Work is underway to build the capacity of learning providers on mentoring approaches. Training on

mentoring for Care Experienced Apprentices has been developed and delivered to providers by Barnardo's Scotland and Who Cares? Scotland.

We continue to develop CPD with learning providers on awareness and support strategies for trainees from a Care Experienced background. We work with learning providers and employers to increase their capacity to support Care Experienced young people access and achieve apprenticeship opportunities. Sessions to raise awareness of, share good practice on and hold discussions around supporting those with Care Experience have been delivered through existing employer, learner and sector forums. This approach can be replicated across other groups in the future. Our corporate website hosts a range of SDS-created **support guides** for learning providers, employers and participants, including specific resources on Care Experience. These resources were commissioned from Who Cares? Scotland and are currently being reviewed.

“What I liked about [my SDS careers advisor] were that they understood what I needed and wanted, even when I wasn’t sure about myself”

Care Experienced school pupil, Young People’s Career Ambitions 2022/23

Commitment five: Put the voice of Care Experienced young people at the heart of SDS decision making

In practice, this meant we were committing to:

- enhance opportunities for Care Experienced customers to contribute to the development of SDS products and services through co-design and co-production approaches
- develop the Care Experience Focal Point Group further to strengthen partnership working between SDS and Care Experience advocacy and support organisations
- utilise the Each and Every Child Reframing Toolkit, which aims to change the narrative around Care Experience across Scotland, to inform our communications approach when talking about care and Care Experience
- develop further insight and research on Care Experience, including through the SDS-sponsored PhD programme.

What we did:

Our Strategic Plan details our commitment to “Develop an approach to the co-design of products and services which amplifies and embeds the voice and lived experience of our customers”. SDS was asked to undertake a comprehensive review of career services in Scotland, alongside an independent programme board to deliver the work. A key focus of the Career Review was to address the persistent inequalities across our economy and society. The review included equality groups within the co-design and stakeholder consultation, listening to the views of those with lived experience of equality factors. This was critical to ensure that the recommendations developed were inclusive.

Furthermore, during the development and testing of the new Beta version of My World of Work we engaged with Care Experienced young people through schools. We are further developing these relationships and looking at a co-design approach and continually looking for more contacts to ensure there is representation from across Scotland.

We take a national approach to equality stakeholder engagement which includes our Focal Point Groups (FPG), with third sector organisations, which provide valuable input on equality, diversity and inclusion to inform such development of our services. The FPG on Care Experience invites representatives from Care Experience advocacy and support organisations to share insight and feedback on issues affecting the people we both support. It also helps shape the development of SDS services for our customers and our own practice as an employer.

The support offered by key partners, specifically Action for Children, Barnardo's Scotland, Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection (CELCIS), Children in Scotland, Hub for Success, MCR Pathways, The Prince's Trust, Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum (Staf), and Who Cares? Scotland, has been exceptional and has helped to increase our understanding of our statutory duties and what 'good' looks like in relation to Corporate Parenting.

To ensure collaboration and shared learning with other Corporate Parents, we have joined and attended the CELCIS Education Forum and Staf's Care Leavers into Employment, Education and Training Group. Many of our operational colleagues provide input and support to children's services partnerships and are often part of local partnerships such as Corporate Parent Boards, while our careers advisers routinely collaborate with partners through joint casework for the benefit of the individual.

Adviser helps Tiffany create a new life for career in care

In 2022, Tiffany was separated from her two younger siblings when she left her birthplace of Newcastle at 15 years old and moved into Horizons Residential Care's Glendale House in Gorebridge.

Tiffany's key worker at Glendale, Nicola Mann got in touch with Skills Development Scotland careers adviser Mark Harrison to see what he could put in place to help Tiffany build confidence and a new life for herself.

Nicola explained: "Mark can help create a structure for young people like Tiffany and help them look at learning and career options."

Tiffany met with Mark and it was clear that she had aspirations to work in care. Mark explained: "Tiffany told me she had two interests; social care and childcare. This was mainly down to her own experience and she wanted to help other people in similar situations."

Mark got in touch with Volunteer Midlothian, which runs the Transform Project for young people from 14 years old who need some extra support to get involved in volunteering. He helped Tiffany prepare for an informal interview to successfully land a placement at Woodburn Primary afterschool club.

Tiffany said: "I loved being around the kids at the afterschool club. After caring for my brother and sister from a young age, I was used to dealing with a lot of things that would happen."

After a year in the afterschool club Tiffany moved to another volunteer programme, organising activities for elderly people in a residential care home.

She explained: "It's been great to get experience of supporting elderly people, which has helped me to understand the type of job I'd like to do in the future."

Mark helped Tiffany explore her options for leaving school, like employment, college courses and apprenticeships.

Tiffany said: "Mark helped me get into volunteering, create a CV and find jobs. He also helped me with mock interviews, which really helped."

Tiffany is now studying at Edinburgh College towards a career in Social Services: "I really like college because I got to choose what I wanted to do. I'm working towards an HNC qualification and my plan is to go to university to get a degree."

Mark said: "Everything I put in place has helped Tiffany to get out, get to know her new area and feel confident living in Midlothian, developing her network and gaining a sense of belonging."

Tiffany still volunteers at the care home and at a local Rainbows club.

Nicola said: "The difference in Tiffany since she arrived is down to a joint effort from all those who have supported her. But Tiffany put the effort in to succeed and take opportunities."

Tiffany added: "Meeting Mark was really important because, before I met him, I didn't know anyone, have an education plan or go out much. Mark got me into volunteering and college and I have made friends, so he's made my life better."



Tiffany Cummins

SDS treats Care Experience as if it was a protected characteristic. We have introduced a new Integrated Equality Impact Assessment (IEIA) process that brings together Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments, Equality Impact Assessments and Islands Communities Impact Assessments. This ensures all SDS colleagues have visibility of Care Experience and what the evidence tells us in the context of wider equality impact assessments. It is designed to simplify the process and provide thorough, systematic assessment of the effects of introducing a new, or making adjustments to an existing policy, project or service is likely to have. Our SDS Equality Evidence Hub on our intranet brings internal and external equality data, statistics, reports and other information together in one place for use by colleagues. Alongside our externally published Equality Evidence Review, we publish focussed papers on equality groups on our intranet. Information is broken down by protected characteristic group, including Care Experience.

SDS colleagues from all across the organisation have completed the Framing Sessions with Each and Every Child, and some have also attended the follow-on training.

Since first becoming a Corporate Parent, we have worked to embed Care Experience across our equality monitoring forms for customer feedback. This enables us to better identify, understand and respond to the views and experiences of our Care Experienced customers. We now have data broken down by Care Experience (where sample sizes allow) across our Young People's Career Ambitions, Pupil Voice and Apprentice Voice research.

As a result of this insight, we can highlight and understand differences in experiences and career paths for Care Experienced young people. Respondents are now also asked if they are happy to be contacted by SDS for future research which enables us to identify Care Experienced individuals to carry out further in-depth research where permission is given.

The SDS collaborative PhD programme is a partnership between SDS and the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science (SGSSS). Our PhD researchers examine key questions in skills policy, skills delivery, and career information, advice and guidance. We funded an SDS PhD topic to look at post-school destinations and experiences of Care Experienced young people which aims to understand the intersectional challenges and impacts on transitions to work and further study from the lived experience and perspectives of young people themselves. The PhD topic was developed in consultation with colleagues across SDS and Care Experienced stakeholder organisations. The PhD programme was nominated for the Excellence in Innovation award in the first Who Cares? Scotland Corporate Parenting Awards, which took place in August 2024.

4. Monitoring and reporting

This Corporate Parenting Report 2021-24 is published alongside our Corporate Parenting Plan 2024-27.

As committed to in our first Corporate Parenting Plan, we have continued to convene a Corporate Parenting Plan Monitoring Group, incorporating key colleagues from across SDS.

The monitoring group is responsible for reviewing activity and progress made against the plan, and for ensuring that our plan remains a live document, with an ongoing profile and prominence within SDS. It meets two to four times a year, as appropriate, and provides regular progress updates to both the executive and non-executive boards of SDS.

We understand that Scottish Government Ministers may call on us to report progress at any time and we will continue to respond to the best of our ability in these circumstances.

“Just support us and make choices with us and make us feel that we are actually just people”

Care Experienced focus group participant

If you require this report in alternative formats please contact equality@sds.co.uk

Skills Development Scotland

Monteith House
11 George Square
Glasgow G2 1DY

www.sds.co.uk



Front cover: Tiffany Cummins, Care Experienced young person and career adviser Mark Harrison