

# CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY : 2024-2026

ACHIEVING POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN OUR CARE.

This document sets out the plan for looked after children and care leavers in our care. It details how the SPS will work with partners, stakeholders and those in our care to achieve positive outcomes for young people.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the revised SPS Corporate Parenting Strategy is to outline how the SPS, as a corporate parent will work to ensure children and young people in our care are safe, healthy, achieve, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, included and their rights under UNCRC (United Nations Convention Rights of the Child) are upheld. Whilst reaffirming our responsibilities and statutory obligations as corporate parents this strategy contributes to the Scottish Governments national outcome that children and young people “grow up loved, safe and respected and realise their full potential” (Scot Gov) providing better outcomes for care experienced people in our care as viewed in Appendix 1 Logic Model.

In reviewing and developing our strategy, contributions were sought from representatives of external agencies working directly with care experience young people, SPS establishments and external partners. A review of our progress to date and what we currently know about our care experienced young people was also carried out. Research was carried out with our young people with the aim to ensure they felt listened to in relation to their needs. Essential to developing this strategy has been the collation

of feedback from our young people, which will feature regularly throughout our planning and improvement.

This strategy and approach fits within the wider strategic context of the SPS strategy for women in custody, SPS family and Parenting strategy and the SPS vision for young people in custody, which outlines our approach to mitigating the negative impacts of imprisonment whilst utilising this period of custody to prepare young people for a positive future.

By adopting a person centred, rights based and trauma informed approach that supports positive family environments, social networks and relationships. This strategy contributes towards achieving improved mental, physical health and wellbeing of our care experienced young people in line with commitments within the SPS Corporate Plan 2023-28.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 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.**

This duty requires corporate parents to provide better outcomes for care experienced children and young people securing nurturing, positive childhoods, from which these vulnerable young people can develop into successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

### Who does this apply to ?

**‘Looked after’ child** or **care leaver** is a formal status given to young people in the care of the local authority. A child may be **looked after** if they:

- Live in foster care; a residential unit or school; or within a secure care setting.
- Formally live with friends or relatives (e.g. in a kinship placement).
- At home, subject to a Compulsory Supervision Order through the Children’s Hearing System.
- They might be looked after on a voluntary basis (with their parent’s agreement); via an Order made through the Children’s Hearings System; or certain types of Court Order.

#### Care Leavers:

A young person is a **care leaver if they were looked after on their 16th birthday or any time up to the age of 26.**

The statutory guidance for corporate parenting provides advice and information on how corporate parents should fulfil the duties set out in Part 9 of the 2014 Act. Which applies to every child who is looked after by a local authority, and every young person who is under the age of 26, and was (on their 16th birthday or at any subsequent time) but is no longer looked after by a local authority.

Corporate parenting responsibilities are underpinned by the UNCRC (United Nations Convention Rights of the Child) and linked closely with obligations set out in Part 1 (Rights of Children) of the Act. This strategy aims to build on our approach to corporate parenting through alignment with key Scottish Government priorities including Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), UNCRC ,The Promise and ‘Getting it right for Sisters and Brothers’ national practice guidance.

Set out in Scottish Government statutory guidance are the parameters within which corporate parents should develop their own approach individually or in partnership. These approaches should be shaped by the primary function of the corporate parent and informed by the needs, views and experiences of care experienced children and young people.

SPS duties entail collaborating with other corporate parents in the promotion of wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers to

achieve positive outcomes. In addition, SPS must prepare, keep under review, and publish a corporate parenting plan that will set out how the SPS as a corporate parent proposes to fulfil its responsibilities.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

Part nine of the 2014 Act outlines the **six corporate parenting responsibilities** applied equally to all corporate parents of looked after children and care leavers. By fulfilling our responsibilities we will uphold the rights and promote the wellbeing of care experienced young people, the SPS will be

- **Alert** to matters which, or might, **adversely affect the wellbeing** of our children and young people. By engaging with young people and where appropriate their carers and family.
- **Assessing** the **needs** of children and young people for **services and support** that promotes their wellbeing and provision of system for profiling the needs of our care experienced young people.
- **Promoting** the **interests** of our care experienced children and young people.
- **Seeking to provide** our care experienced young people with support, awareness **and access** to participate in **opportunities** and activities designed to **promote wellbeing**.

- Keeping our approach to corporate parenting under **constant review, seeking to improve** whenever possible. Developing our action plan to formalise our activities and outputs.
- **Collaborating** with other corporate parents to promote wellbeing of our care experienced children and young people and enable our young people to achieve the best outcomes.

## PROGRESS SO FAR:

Since the publication of the SPS Corporate Parenting Plan in 2016-18, there have been developments and activities that further embed corporate parenting within the SPS including:

- The inclusion of corporate parenting learning in our new recruit training package has enabled our newly appointed staff to be aware of our corporate parenting duties and responsibilities.
- Development of a corporate parenting e-learning module which has been designed to increase awareness to all staff of the SPS collective responsibility towards improving outcomes for care experienced young people.

- This e-learning module was designed and developed through engagement with young people who were invited to share their experiences on film, with the purpose of raising staff understanding of the care leaver definition, the responsibilities of a corporate parent and to provide an insight into the background of care leaver status.
- Upon publication, this learning module will provide staff with a greater understanding of their roles and responsibilities within SPS as corporate parents.
- Changes to our record system have enabled SPS to record identification of care leavers in our care. Through initial assessments staff are able to then provide information to young people in our care of their rights and entitlements to aftercare.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT OUR CARE EXPERIENCED PEOPLE ?

In our 2019 prisoner survey, **one quarter of prisoners indicated that during their up-bringing they had been in care (25%)** and of these, six in ten had been in care at the age of sixteen, equating to 15% of the total prison population.

Two fifths of **young people (40%) reported being in care as a child** and of these, over two thirds had been in care at the age of sixteen, equalling 27% of all young people in custody. Almost one third **(31%) of female prisoners had been in care as a child** and one fifth of those reporting in the survey were also in care at the age of sixteen—over 6% of the women’s prison population. (*‘People in custody who have been in care as ‘Looked after children’ 2019’, ‘Women in custody 2019’ & ‘Young people in custody 2019’*).

Custodial History

From our 2019 survey those who had been in care were most likely to report having been on remand between 1 and 5 times (38%), followed by ‘over 10 times’ (28%) and ‘6-10 times’ (16%). Just under one fifth of respondents had ‘never’ been on remand (19%) (*People in custody who have been in care as ‘Looked after children’ 2019’*).

Care Leavers:

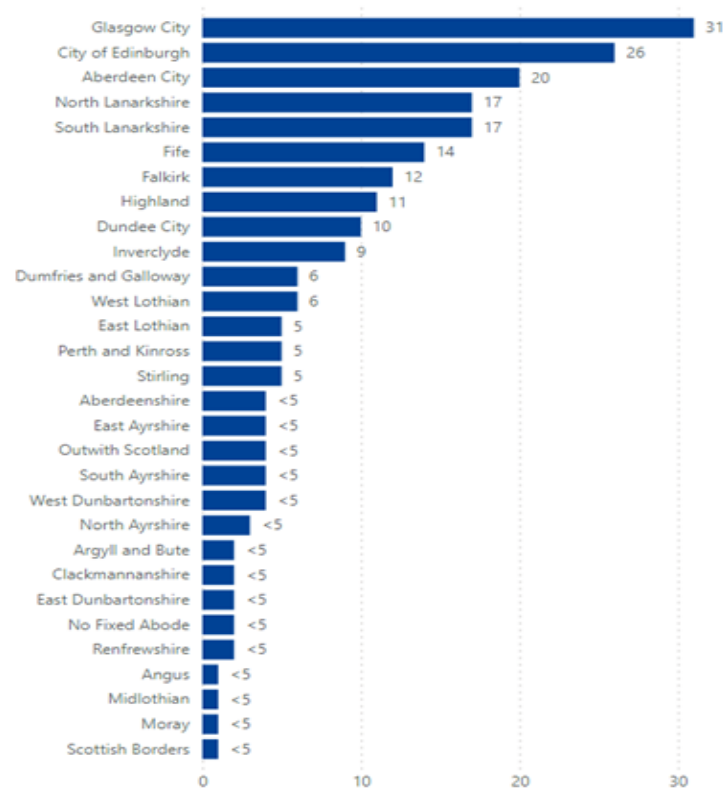
The looked after and care leaver population recorded on SPS systems in April 2024 was 233, 92% male and 7% were female with an age profile of:

16-17	18-24	25-29
2%	72%	24%

Of care leavers in our care their legal status as of April 2024 was:

Convicted	Remand	Awaiting Sentence
65%	27%	7%

Care Leavers by Local Authority



(Figures correct as of April 2024)

*\*Data available to SPS is self disclosed data by those in our care through survey data and our prisoner record system, so may not include all care-experienced people.*

WHAT PEOPLE IN OUR CARE TOLD US

To inform the corporate parenting strategy we listened and engaged

with young people in our care to understand their knowledge of their rights as care experienced young people. We focussed on those who had transitioned to an adult establishment to understand the needs and issues for young people within an adult establishment. Our engagement with men and women in our care informed our plan and explored any gaps in support provision for young care experienced people.

Awareness of Rights

To ensure that care experienced children and young people in our care are aware and understand their rights and entitlements we asked our young people if they have been asked regarding their care experience and if they understand what their rights are. When speaking with young people **most had not heard of the terminology of corporate parent or care leaver. With many young people unaware of the different arrangements relating to being care experienced.**

Many young people were uninformed of their right to support from corporate parents both whilst in custody and in the community, demonstrating **the need to provide accessible information to young people on their rights whilst in custody.** Young people highlighted the need for **clearer information on their rights from those who are**

Young people reported they had been asked regarding their care experience but were not provided with any follow up on its meaning or entitlements. The lack of follow up made young people feel it was a tokenistic gesture.

In respects of understanding what criteria relates to care leaver status, young people highlighted that **being with an alternative family member wasn't viewed as being in care**, such as the case with kinship care. This highlighted the **need for young people in our care to be supported in understanding the broad definition of care to ensure access to their rights and staff to have a better understanding** of their corporate parenting duties and a shared language of rights.

## Transitioning to an Adult establishment

When transitioning to an adult establishment our young people told us that **more support and information is needed to ease this process**. It *"didn't feel like a smooth transition", placed into a cell, door shut -until the next morning"* (Male).

The impact and anxiety associated with transitioning to an adult establishment was described as *"unsettling" and being "agitated"* due to being told the night before with the move **renewing feelings of be**

*ing moved between foster/residential/secure care described as the "chaos of moving"* (Female). Highlighting the change in *"dynamic going from being the oldest person in the hall to arriving in an adult establishment"* (Male).

Our young people related to the lack of information or understanding of expectations associated when entering an adult establishment. Young people relied on information provided to them by their peers or through negative press information *"just the bad things you read in the paper"* (Male).

## Recommendations.

Young people advised us on how to better support those transitioning to an adult establishment, focussing on the use of peer mentor supports, *"it means more - advice coming from people who've been there"* (Male). Generally, the young people we spoke to felt it was helpful if staff provided more information prior to the moving.

## RELATIONSHIPS

In line with the aims of The Promise this strategy highlights the importance of supportive and nurturing relationships for care experienced children and young people with family, carers and trusted adults.

Relationships with our staff are essential to improving outcomes and creating safe, supportive and nurturing environments for young people. Further guidance provided in the Scottish Governments 'Getting it right for Sisters and Brothers' National Practice highlights the importance of sibling relationships and for their rights to be upheld in maintaining contact with family. Maintaining and sustaining positive supportive and nurturing relationships whilst in our care will be a crucial element in supporting care experienced young people.

## OUR APPROACH

Our strategy focuses on embedding the principles of The Promise and UNCRC whilst meeting our corporate parenting responsibilities to provide better outcomes for our care experienced young people. To achieve this SPS will focus on five key areas of development within our plan.



**Listen and Engage** Our care-experienced people will feel their involvement is meaningful, feel listened to and supported to express their needs and views of services whilst in our care. Regular engagement and dialogue will enable children, young people and their families to raise issues and concerns that directly impact them.



**Positive Relationships** Our young people are supported to maintain safe and loving relationships that are important to them.



**Rights:** Young people in our care are provided with easy to understand information relating to their rights whilst in custody and in the community up to the age of 26.



**Workforce:** SPS staff have an understanding of their role and responsibilities and the rights of looked after young people, as a corporate parent.



**Collaboration and Improvement:** SPS works with other corporate parents to develop best practice and continually review and improve our plan based on evaluation, lived experience and evidence.

## LISTEN AND ENGAGE:

It is crucial that engaging with care leavers and care experienced people in our care, **will and should be**, a **continuous part of our corporate parenting work**. Participation and feedback play vital roles in engaging with young people as we continue to develop, monitor and improve our



corporate parenting plan. Through engagement with care experienced people SPS will be able to identify, understand and address the issues which matter most to care experienced children and young people.

- SPS will work with partners to facilitate opportunities for young people to engage and participate in the corporate parenting plan.
- Research and engagement with our young people will provide an opportunity to assess needs, post COVID, and encourage participation and feedback on the transition to adult establishments.
- Ensure that the services and support provided by us as a corporate parent are both relevant and accessible to the widest possible group of looked after children and care leavers.
- Ensure opportunities are well publicised and accessible to a wide range of young people across the estate whilst being sensitive to their needs.
- SPS will work with external agencies on **best practice to engage care experienced** children and young people, through developed

questions, which are discussed as part of the initial needs assessment. SPS will review how this is embedded in needs assessments at admission, throughout custody and prior to release.

- Young people transferring from HMYOI Polmont to adult establishments are **supported throughout this transition, in a caring way, with a focus on their individual needs** (*SPS Vision for young people in custody, 2021*).

## POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

- **Positive contact is supported** and facilitated with family and those who our young people care about, **including siblings and carers**, where appropriate.
- Within the SPS Family and Parenting Strategy, we will support families and wider social networks to maintain contact with people in our care by provision of visits which are suitable for different age groups and abilities including sessions which encourage sibling contact.
- Relationships and engagement between staff and our young people are positive and young people are involved in decisions that affect them.

## RIGHTS

- Young people are provided with **clear, easy to read, and accessible information on their rights** including an easy to read version of this strategy and plan made available online and in establishments.
- Young people are **supported to understand their rights** and entitlements whilst in our care.
- Throughout key stages of a care leaver's time in our care, **they will be offered access to 'advice, guidance and assistance'** including but not limited to **secure accommodation, education and employment opportunities**. Including (SHORE Housing Strategy and Standards), education (Fife College support) and employment opportunities (Job Centre Plus). This will be achieved through collaboration with external partners with the consent of the young person.

## WORKFORCE

- Staff have an **understanding of the impact of care experience on young people in our care**.
- Staff **understand children rights** and **shared language of child-ren's rights**. Staff must also be able to understand and

explain rights to care experienced and care leavers, and promote disclosure of care leaver status in a non-stigmatising way.

- Staff undertake training in **trauma informed care**, learning how to engage with and support young people in ways that do not trigger or re-traumatise.
- Staff undertake **training in attachment and relationship building**, focussing on **building trusting positive relationships** with young people in our care. Embedded within the learning and development strategy being developed by SPSC, training will encompass trauma informed care, attachment and relationship building approach.

## PLANNING, COLLABORATION & IMPROVEMENT

- Establishments develop local processes that will record and provide evidence of compliance **with policy, legislation and best practice**.
- The family and parenting policy lead will form partnerships through participation in corporate parenting events to have an **up to date knowledge of issues affecting care experienced children and young people**.
- Ongoing collation of best practice from establishments will be

gathered to share with the prison estate and external forums on how SPS perform in its corporate parenting duties.

- The family and parenting policy lead will ensure the corporate parenting plan **is kept under constant review, and improved** wherever possible.
- The family and parenting policy lead will **meet with establishment leads to support the implementation of corporate parenting, sharing best practice, monitoring and evaluation processes.**

## NEXT STEPS:

### Monitoring our progress:

As part of our responsibilities as a corporate parent, we have developed an action plan that details our key activities which contribute to achieving the outcomes detailed in this strategy. We will capture evidence and impact through various sources, which will enable evaluation and review to take place of our corporate parenting plan and reporting on our progress.

- **Establishment data** e.g. relationships, family contact engagement and case studies.

- **Research** e.g. interviews/ focus group work and feedback from young people in our care.
- **Research findings**
- **Training reviews and compliance rate**
- **Collaboration and consultations** with external partners

The outline logic model lists the key outcomes which can be used to gauge how far and how well the strategy is achieving its intentions.

### Responsibility for the outcomes is shared by all partners and corporate parents

The outline logic model will be refined in parallel with the development of the quality Indicators and will then be used as part of a cycle of evaluation to assess progress towards achieving the intentions of the strategy.

<b>Shorter Term</b>	<b>Medium Term</b>	<b>Longer Term</b>
Staff are provided with refreshed training in their roles and responsibilities within Corporate Parenting.	More care experienced people in our care are informed of their rights.	Establishments are able to provide clear evidence of their input with care experienced people and fulfilment of our responsibilities.
Staff are aware of the Corporate Parenting strategy and the impact of care experience on young people in our care.	Establishments offer meaningful ways to engage care leavers and care experienced people with what impacts them.	Increase in partnership working and communication with other corporate parents on best practice.
Care experienced people will have through care arrangements and plans in place for returning to their communities ( <i>Vision for Young People: 2021</i> )	Further research and engagement with care experienced young people assessing their needs for services and support.	Increased engagement with carers, family members and wider social supports are positively improved.
Care experienced and care leavers are supported to access appropriate housing options ( <i>Vision for Young People: 2021</i> ).	Care leavers and care experienced young people report they feel listened to and their voice is heard.	Transitions and support to adult establishments is improved and is carried out in a caring way ( <i>Vision for Young People: 2021</i> ).
Baseline research carried out with young people in our care who have transferred to an adult establishment to inform the corporate parenting plan.	Staff knowledge and skills in working with care experienced people is improved and these skills are put into practice ( <i>Vision for Young People: 2021</i> )	Care leavers rights and needs are represented and referenced within SPS policy and practice.
Refreshed guidance will be provided to establishments on the process of recording care leaver status and where to access further information to provide to young people.	All establishments will be supported to develop local processes that record and evidence their fulfilment of corporate parenting duties.	Care leavers have more positive contact with those they care about including family, carers and siblings ( <i>SPS Family and parenting strategy 2024-2029</i> ).

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This document is also available from our website

[www.sps.gov.uk](http://www.sps.gov.uk)

