

Scottish Care Leavers Covenant

Supporting corporate parents to
improve the lives of care leavers

SUMMARY



SCOTTISH
CARE LEAVERS
COVENANT

Introduction

The Scottish Care Leavers Covenant is a bold step to make the changes needed to give care leavers the bright and better future they deserve. It outlines the cross-sector approach to support the implementation of Part 10 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 by supporting corporate parents to deliver changes in action and practice to bring consistency to entitlement and support to young people.

Care leavers often struggle on their journey into adulthood. For many, the leap from care to independence is just too great, and young people continue to experience problems that lead to much poorer outcomes than their peers. This is why this Covenant is needed - to change thinking and practice and effect a culture shift to tackle these issues.

These outcomes are not inevitable and should not be accepted as the norm.

The Covenant is produced by an alliance of organisations working together including CELCIS, Who Cares? Scotland, Barnardo's Scotland, Life Changes Trust, Quarriers, Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice, the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services and the Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum. The alliance has also had the active participation and support of young people and over 30 other key agencies and stakeholders who have contributed to the Covenant.



Our Covenant: a promise to act

We call on all corporate parents and others with an interest in the lives of our care leavers, to endorse and sign up to the Scottish Care Leavers Covenant.

Endorsing and implementing the Covenant will support, complement and enhance corporate parenting activity and improve consistency of practice and provision across all local authority and health board areas.

We call on all corporate parents and other public bodies to:

- Actively endorse the Scottish Care Leavers Covenant and commit to uphold and promote its principles, within and across their remits and responsibilities.
- Fully support and implement actions in the Agenda for Change to close the gap and make real our ambitions and aspirations for care leavers.



Guiding Principles

For the general population, growing up, moving out and becoming more independent happens gradually, with on-going family support over many years.

Scotland's care leavers should expect nothing less.

These four guiding principles explain what the Covenant expects from corporate parents:

1. Care-proofing of policy: Corporate parents recognise the vulnerability of care leavers as young adults, and prioritise and reference them as a 'protected group' in policy documents.
2. Assumption of entitlement: Corporate parents will assume all care leavers are entitled to services, support and opportunities, up to their 26th birthday. Where discretion exists in definitions of vulnerability or in giving priority access, these will be in favour of care leavers.
3. Staying Put and Continuing Care: Corporate parents will demonstrate that looked after young people and care leavers are actively encouraged, enabled and empowered to benefit from 'Staying Put' arrangements, remaining in positive care settings until they are ready to move on.
4. 'Relationships are the 'golden thread' of good practice.' All good practice is based on good relationships: Corporate parents will demonstrate that priority is given to relationship-based practice, based on understanding, empathy, respect, and 'stickability'. They will support young people to maintain positive relationships and attachments with previous carers and professionals throughout their care experience and beyond.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places new duties on local authorities and other corporate parents to ensure the best possible outcomes for care leavers into adulthood and Part 9 defines Corporate Parenting as:

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

Closing the Implementation Gap

Good parents aim to do much more than the basics for their young people, and Scotland's care leavers should expect their corporate parents to do the same.

The 2014 Act provides a real and renewed opportunity to close the gap between policy and practice and close the outcomes gap for care leavers. We need to take this opportunity to deliver real sustainable change around how we support care leavers into adulthood.

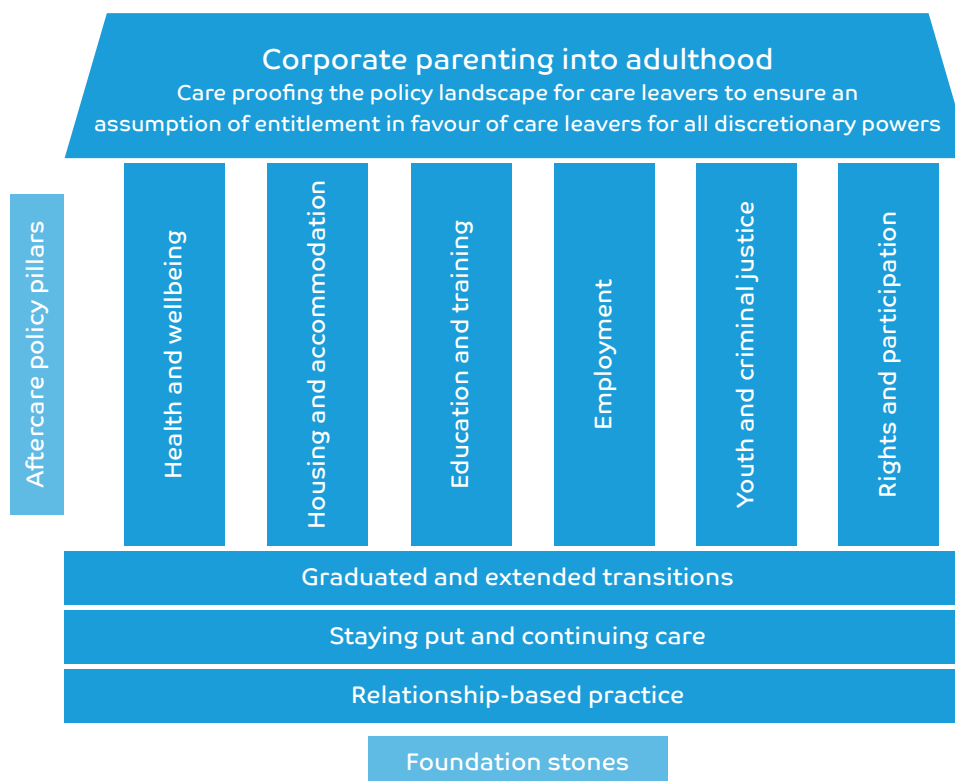
By endorsing the principles of the Covenant and putting the actions outlined in the Agenda for Change at the heart of Corporate Parenting Plans, corporate parents will be better able to fulfil their duties and realise their ambitions for their care leavers.



The Agenda for Change: Principles into Action

We have identified priority actions and key changes within six policy themes. These actions are not a definitive or exhaustive list, but delivered together from a clear and robust framework, will improve consistency of practice and lead to better outcomes for all care leavers.

Scottish Care Leavers Covenant Key Themes



We ask corporate parents to fully integrate the principles and actions outlined within the Covenant in their Corporate Parenting Plans, through Champions Boards, Community Planning Partnerships and Health and Social Care Partnerships.

We believe that, in Scotland, we have positive, enabling policy and legislation; a committed and engaged sector; inspiring leaders; and dedicated practitioners all able to transform practice and outcomes for care leavers. This will ultimately lead to raising their ambitions, aspirations and life chances.

Sign up to the Scottish Care Leavers Covenant

We/I _____

On behalf of _____

Endorse the principles and actions outlined in the Scottish Care Leavers Covenant and will work with our corporate parenting partners to deliver the transformational change required to improve outcomes for all of our care leavers into adulthood.

Signed _____

Date _____

Send to: info@scottishcareleaverscovenant.org

Post to:

CELCIS

University of Strathclyde

Lord Hope Building

141 St James Road

Glasgow

G4 0LT

Or sign up at: www.scottishcareleaverscovenant.org

For further information on the Scottish Care Leavers Covenant and the work of the Alliance please visit:

www.scottishcareleaverscovenant.org

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