

# Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Corporate Parenting Plan 2020 - 2023



**SCOTTISH**  
**FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**  
Working together for a safer Scotland

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## **Foreword**

Since becoming a corporate parent in April 2015, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) have embraced our new role to do everything we can to improve the life chances of care experienced individuals.

The role of corporate parent was not a new concept for the SFRS but the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 has allowed us to build on previous work and identify areas that we can make a difference as a corporate parent in our own right.

As a corporate parent, the SFRS have a responsibility to tackle the inequalities that care experienced individuals face. We believe that it is not only a responsibility but an opportunity to have a positive impact and improve the life chances for care experienced people and support them in reaching their full potential.

The SFRS Corporate Parenting Plan 2020-2023 sets out our commitment to realising this ambition and the actions we will take to support positive outcomes and destinations for Scotland's care experienced individuals.

**Joint statement by Chair of Board, Kirsty Darwent and Chief Officer, Martin Blunden**

## **What is Corporate Parenting?**

Corporate Parenting represents the principles, duties and actions necessary to uphold the rights and secure the wellbeing of a looked after child or care leaver, and through which physical, emotional, spiritual, social and educational development is promoted, from infancy through to adulthood. It is a role which should complement and support the actions of parents, families and carers, working with these key adults to deliver positive change for vulnerable children and young people.

This definition encompasses the following groups:

- those in residential care
- those in foster care
- those in kinship care
- those who are looked after at home with social work involvement
- people up to the age of 26 who have experience of the care system

It should be noted that although the law defines children and young people as 'looked after children', 'care experienced' is the preferred terminology and is what will be used in this Corporate Parenting Plan. (Source: Who cares? Scotland 1000 Voices). Where relevant, we also discuss 'care experienced people' rather than only 'children and young people' as we understand that the impacts of being care experienced can also manifest in adulthood.

## **National Context**

Children and young people who are care experienced or who are looked after have the poorest outcomes of all children and young people in Scotland.

Evidence suggests that:

- 50% of the adult prison population were looked after
- 30% of looked after children become homeless
- 50% of looked after children have a mental health issue
- 4% of care leavers go onto higher education

*Source: Who Cares? Scotland 1000 Voices*

The SFRS understand that care experienced people may have different needs due to trauma and loss and may have had frequent placement moves and chaotic living arrangements. Lack of educational attainment can impact on an individual's future prospects not just in relation to employment and financial security but it can also negatively impact on their health, mental wellbeing, their ability to interact fully in public life and access public services.

As a corporate parent, the SFRS looks to support care experienced people and improve outcomes. We will continue to work with partner agencies and other corporate parents as we strive to improve life chances of everyone who lives in Scotland.

## **Corporate Parenting Duties**

On 1 April 2015, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service joined many other public bodies and organisations in Scotland to become a corporate parent under Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

This places responsibilities on us to improve the lives and futures of Scotland's care experienced young people. The duties under the 2014 Act mean that we must:

- Be alert to matters which might adversely affect the wellbeing of looked after children and young people
- Assess the needs of looked after children and young people for services and support we provide
- Promote the interests of looked after children and young people
- Provide opportunities for looked after children and young people to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing
- Take appropriate action to enable looked after children and young people access to these opportunities and make use of our services and support
- Take any other action we consider appropriate to improve our functions to meet the needs of looked after children and young people

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, embrace these obligations. We provide a range of services to help people lead safe lives in their home, at work, in public places and in education. We also have the advantage of a well-respected corporate profile which allows us to offer positive role models to young people. In this regard, we understand that these duties are not only the responsibility of one department but that to be successful, the whole organisation plays a vital part.

## **In line with our values**

Our Corporate Parenting Plan 2020-2023, directly relates to the SFRS values of **safety, teamwork, respect** and **innovation**. These values underpin:

- How we approach our work
- The words we say and how we say them
- The actions we take and the way we do them

Our journey as a corporate parent, is reflected through these principles as detailed below.

### **We value safety**

Our number one priority is to work together for a safer Scotland and safety is at the core of everything we do.

The SFRS are aware that the absence of consistent positive role models and support in developing basic life skills such as domestic chores can mean that many care experienced people are moving into independent living without the necessary skills to do so safely. Social exclusion, financial difficulties, poor mental health and chaotic lifestyles are all factors recognised by the SFRS as potentially making an individual more vulnerable from fire and other emergencies than someone who is not exposed to these factors.

We recognise the role we play working alongside communities and in partnership with others in the public, private and third sectors, to keep Scotland safe and to ensure that this encompasses the needs of care experienced individuals.

### **We value teamwork**

Teamwork is the foundation of what we do and what we achieve and is essential across the SFRS. We are committed to working alongside our stakeholders and partners in pursuit of our shared prevention agenda to help increase the life opportunities of care experienced individuals in Scotland.

The SFRS are aware that to deliver a successful Corporate Parenting Plan, we need to work with care experienced individuals and listen to their journey. We need to ensure that Corporate Parenting isn't just seen as the role of one individual or department but that we work across all departments and functions within the SFRS to meet our corporate parenting responsibilities. We are also aware that this can't be achieved working in isolation, we need to continuously identify and pursue opportunities to work with external partners and the community. We need to effectively 'co-parent' in promoting the wellbeing of care experienced people to enable them to achieve the best outcomes.

Our last Corporate Parenting Plan saw us explore and engage with other corporate parents and this will very much continue into our 2020-2023 Plan, with further sharing of good practice and expertise.

### **We value respect**

The SFRS value the individual differences and diverse communities we serve, work alongside and support. Having respect means challenging unacceptable behaviour and showing consideration for others and empathy towards their emotional and/or physical wellbeing.

The SFRS are aware that individuals with a care experienced background, face on-going discrimination and stigma in society. This stigma can have a negative impact across all aspects of life, manifesting itself in their education, housing, employment and health opportunities. There are many myths that surround the reason(s) that individuals may be in care, where the reality is that 90% of young people are referred to the Children's Reporter on

grounds of care and protection. Common circumstances include neglect, parental drug and alcohol addiction and parental mental health.

In this regard, the SFRS have committed to highlighting the stigma care experience people can face to our employees. We will explore trauma informed approaches to allow us to be more empathetic to the differing needs of care experienced people.

Another important element of respect is valuing the efforts and contributions of others by acknowledging achievements. The SFRS will consider the opportunities we may have to do just this for care experienced individuals and celebrate their achievements alongside them.

We will show that we visibly support care experienced people by highlighting our work and engagement through the introduction of an ongoing Communications strategy.

### **We value innovation**

Being innovative helps us grow, adapt, and be more responsive to change and the needs of our communities. We will value innovation by looking for opportunities to improve the way we do things for care experienced individuals. We will do this by being open minded to new ideas, and by ensuring policies and procedures are not used to constrain thinking or our approach to reach successful outcomes.

We will engage with care experienced individuals, organisations and co-parents to allow us to see the bigger picture and how we can play a role in this and be flexible in our approach to allow innovation to take place. Examples of this within this Plan are to explore employability skills, mentoring opportunities and to provide support in different ways such as utilising spaces within community fire stations.

In addition to this, the SFRS now ensures that the needs of care experienced people are considered in its policy, planning and performance through our Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment process. This process includes considering children's rights as laid out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This will continue throughout this new Plan and will include considering potential impacts throughout our transformation programme.

## **Governance**

The SFRS's Board and Strategic Leadership Team are responsible for approving the overall approach and priority placed on corporate parenting initiatives. In particular, they have responsibility for the Corporate Parenting Plan and the Strategic Plan.

The SFRS's Diversity Manager is the lead officer with respect to the co-ordination of our response to corporate parenting responsibilities. We operate a mainstreamed approach to equality where individual Directorates and Service Delivery Areas (SDA's) have responsibility for meeting and reporting on their equality obligations and this extends to the duties identified for corporate parenting.

The SFRS have recently established an Equality Partnership Group. The overall purpose of the Group is to facilitate the mainstreaming of equality, diversity, inclusion and human rights across SFRS through the sharing of knowledge, good practice and performance. This group will meet quarterly and will discuss updates around the corporate parenting agenda, allowing for the sharing of good practice and for support to be provided to meet the Plan actions if required.

The Plan will consider expanding the core membership of the Corporate Parenting Working Group to involve other key internal functions. The group will continue to play a vital part in identifying interdependencies and developing the actions within the Plan, implementing these actions, and promoting the role of the members as key contacts within the Service.

To underpin the corporate reporting framework the activities identified in the Corporate Parenting Plan will be reported on a quarterly basis to the Corporate Assurance Board with annual reports to the Strategic Leadership Team and Full Board. The format of the reporting will include progress against the action plan and relevant 'case studies' that illustrate progress towards improving the experiences of cared for children and young people. SFRS Board papers are available to access on our website.