

# Corporate Parenting in Edinburgh Annual Report 2023-2024

A look back at what we achieved in 2023/24 and what we plan to do next.



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## Corporate Parenting in Edinburgh - Foreword

This is the Corporate Parenting Team's second annual report, looking back on 2023-2024, and it has been quite the year for Corporate Parenting in Edinburgh. There have been training developments; awareness raising; events; changes to policy; a whole new Corporate Parenting Plan and we have even moved into new premises.

We hope you find the report insightful, and it helps to show the direction of travel for the City of Edinburgh as a council, but also as a developing community that aims to support, care for and nurture Care Experienced individuals.

The year hasn't been without challenges, with staffing pressures and delays in building works, but perseverance pays. We are now in and working from Edinburgh's new Corporate Parenting Hub and have recruited to get the team back up to full force.

As always, thanks to everyone involved in pushing this work forward, including the plan's action holders who, alongside their teams, are driving the change works across Edinburgh; The Corporate Parenting Board members, for their ongoing commitment to an aspirational plan; Most importantly though, the Care Experienced Community in Edinburgh, either through the Junior or Senior Champs or any form of participation and engagement – all of those thoughts views and opinions really matter and they are collectively helping change Edinburgh so that every child can grow up feeling loved, safe and respected.

The Corporate Parenting Team

The City of Edinburgh Council

## **Edinburgh's Corporate Parenting Plan 2023-2026**

Our previous Corporate Parenting Plan has now been evaluated and is available as part of last year's annual report. In summary, that plan was written under three broad themes: Best Start in Life; Bridging the Gap; Be Everything You Can Be.

These key themes were taken from the Edinburgh Children's Partnership Children's Services Plan. The plan focused on, amongst other things, getting a Corporate Parenting team established, making sure we had the right kinds of care environments available, and improving how we monitor attainment. Any targets that were not reached or still in progress have been reviewed, and if still necessary, carried forward to the new plan.

### **Who is the new plan for?**

Corporate Parenting responsibilities placed on Public Bodies come into effect upon a child or young person's entry into care, and in some circumstances can remain in place until a young person turns 26. However, The City of Edinburgh Council recognises that Care Experience is lifelong. As such, the City of Edinburgh Council Corporate Parenting Plan 2023 – 2026 has been written to take into consideration the impact of Care Experience across the lifespan.

The City of Edinburgh Council also acknowledges that preventing children and young people from becoming Care Experienced and remaining with their families is the ultimate goal for Edinburgh's children. In line with this, the plan considers how we can intervene earlier to support families, to avoid children and Young People becoming Care Experienced, where possible.

Edinburgh's Corporate Parenting Plan for 2023-2026 is written to guide both The City of Edinburgh Council Officers and Elected Members to be the best Corporate Parents that they can be. It is also written with Edinburgh's other Public Bodies in mind – this plan should complement and support their own organisation's Corporate Parenting plans, as well as highlight areas where joint working between agencies can improve outcomes for Edinburgh's Care Experienced Community.

We have also created a simpler version, showing just the priorities. This will allow people to see our Corporate Parenting Plan 'at a glance' and is more accessible for children and young people.

### **What influenced the plan?**

The Promise is the outcome of an independent review of the care system across Scotland, which made recommendations about how to improve the Care System. The recommendations are based on five foundations – family, voice, care, people

and scaffolding. We have taken these into consideration when considering our priorities in this plan.

It is written in a complex planning environment, crossing over with the work of Edinburgh's Local Outcome Improvement Groups, Edinburgh's Children's Partnership and Edinburgh's Promise.

This plan is written in line with the principles of Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC). GIRFEC is the Scottish Government commitment to provide all children, young people and their families with the right support at the right time. They want every child and young person in Scotland to reach their full potential. We have used the GIRFEC Wellbeing Indicators to frame how we aim to support our Care Experienced Community to reach their full potential.

### **What are the Wellbeing Indicators?**

As described above, the GIRFEC indicators are used to frame how we consider the overall wellbeing of a child or young person. This goes for all children and young people in Scotland, not just those who are Care Experienced. We have chosen to use these indicators to frame the priorities and tasks in this plan, to highlight that we are looking to provide for the Care Experienced Community what we wish for all children - namely that they are Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included. For each Wellbeing Indicator we have noted how the Scottish Government has defined that wellbeing indicator, before going on to note what our priorities are under these headings and how we plan to achieve these.

### **Who wrote the plan?**

Edinburgh Champions Board provides a platform for Care Experienced young people to talk directly to their Corporate Parents and influence policy and practice change. Members of the Senior Champions Board have set key priorities for their own areas of work, with a focus on improved support with mental health, supporting and nurturing sibling relationships and better support into adulthood. These priorities are reflected in the plan. They also consulted on drafts of the plan and asked for certain changes to be made in terms of language and simplicity. These changes were also made and accepted by the Senior Champions Board.

The City of Edinburgh Council has a Corporate Parenting Board, with membership including representatives from organisations with Corporate Parenting responsibilities across Edinburgh, as well as Elected Members and Council Officers. The board spent time as a group considering the priorities for the next three years, noting where there was crossover with their own agency or department plans, and considering how we can be the best Corporate Parents that we can be. Once drafts were available, Board Members consulted with their own staff groups and helped to tailor the tasks that would be undertaken to achieve the priorities.

Corporate Parenting events were held in May 2023 and attendees were consulted on the plan. Attendees included Council Officers, representatives from other Public Bodies, as well as representatives from other Organisations who have an interest in Corporate Parenting. Feedback from staff has helped to frame the priorities and tasks, as well as helping to influence the use of a clear structure to help us frame the plan.

The City of Edinburgh Council's new Social Work Recording System will allow much better tracking and monitoring of the aims outlined in this plan, than the previous recording system.

### **How is the plan monitored?**

To make sure we are staying on track, all action holders have a schedule for updates to the board. We will also hold progress meetings twice a year to make sure we are on track across all action areas. Ambassadors who sit on both the Champs Board and the Corporate Parenting Board act as a conduit between the two and make sure that each board knows what the other has been working on. The Board also reports back to the Edinburgh Children's Partnership, the Chief Officers Group and the Education, Children and Families Committee.

## Edinburgh Champions Boards

A report on the work of the Champions Boards over the last year from one of our Participation Officers.

We took a group of 17 to 24-year-olds up to Lagganlia on a summer camp in August 2023. This trip was fantastic, the young people that came away with us really pushed themselves and each other out of their comfort zones. Challenging themselves to overcome some of their biggest fears, which really helped to build on resilience, trust and overcoming what they may have feared. This was such a lovely trip and good to see. We still have regular contact with the young people we took to camp, either through Senior Champs or 1-1's.





During the past year the champs have worked on a few projects. One of the biggest was focused on Throughcare After Care provision in Edinburgh. The champs created a roadmap, showing the journey you may go on before care, during care, and after care. This was a good way to visualise the journey and present it to the Throughcare and Aftercare Team Manager and the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting. This allowed the champs to see the gaps missing in the service and help with describing how it could work differently. The champs enjoyed the opportunity to have their voices heard, both about how they have previously or currently experienced Throughcare and Aftercare, but also about how things could potentially work better.

The Champs also took part in a consultation session on life story work. They were asked some questions around their lived experience of life story work - what this looked like, how it felt, if they felt supported, etc. This conversation was used as part of the research for a Masters dissertation. This was the first research study in Scotland to look at the views of the people who should matter most in relation to life story work, those experiencing it. A short briefing was then given to all senior management with the intention of Edinburgh taking forward the findings and recommendations regarding life story work, and embedding these into good practice

Both Champs groups worked on writing pieces about their first 24 hours in care. This piece of work was done in partnership with the Superpower Agency. The champs are still doing some work around this, with the hope to collate the works and publish their own book about how it feels to become 'Care Experienced'. The Champs plan to make posters to send out to see if anyone else with lived experience of the care system would like to take part in this project.

The Champs participated in the decriminalisation of young people work that is underway in Edinburgh. They all completed surveys regarding the contact they have



had with the justice system which is part of the first phase of this CORRA funded piece of work.

Care Experienced Week was 23 to 29 October. There was a week full of activities for the Care Experienced Community, full of fun, engaging, interactive and special activities to recognise how important the community is to the City of Edinburgh. Some of the activities included a maker's art challenge with the theme 'Happy and Healthy', a Throughcare and Aftercare Happy and Healthy drop in; a Book Bug session for foster carers and kinship carers with children under 5; a Remembrance service for the care experienced young people who are no longer with us, alongside the unveiling of a memorial bench; a coffee morning for kinship carers; a free to access Aquadash session at the Royal Commonwealth Pool; and lots more in individual children's houses and other services.



During Care week our champs had a special meeting joining Senior and Junior Champs together alongside Ambassadors and friends of the board where we had dinner, played games and had a catchup with everyone who has been involved over the years with champs. During this we also gave out awards of recognition to staff and the young people. Lots of fun was had!

During December we like to bring the champs together for a winter celebration, where we give gifts, have dinner and take a trip to see a Christmas show. In winter 2023 we went to see the Snow Queen at the Lyceum. We love to make special memories with our Champs, especially at times of the year when they may have difficult memories or are unsure about who they will spend the holidays with.

The champs have worked on lots of other topics over the past year - there has been discussions with health, police and the wider council on things they can get involved in and be a part of. The champs are working on plans for the next year now as well, thinking about how this will look now that they are in the Hub, what topics they would like to focus on and take part in. This is likely to include becoming more involved in projects around housing, voice, relationships, report writing and language. They will also be helping more with the building consultation and co-design as the Hub develops.

# The Corporate Parenting Hub

## Phase 1



Completed in February 2024, the first phase of works allowed us to move into our new space and start meeting with the Champs Boards in their own venue. The initial spaces include lounge/meeting areas and a small kitchen. The Champs have settled in well to the new space and have spent time choosing soft furnishings to make the space feel more homely. We had lots of support via the Community Benefits Team, which helped us get the initial spaces opened on a very tight budget. They also

linked us in with Travis Perkins who have been extremely supportive, including putting us in touch with Altro who donated all the flooring for phase 1.



## **Phase 1.5**

This was largely made possible by a Community Benefits donation from BIFFA of £20,000. Works began on 4 June 2024 to create our two brother and sister spaces, where members of the Care Experienced community can meet with their brothers and sisters in bespoke and co-designed spaces that meet their needs. Phase two will also see the completion of the sensory room, with the funds donated in memory of Scott Dunbar providing an immersive and calming space for members of the community to spend time in peace.

## **Phases 2 and 3**

The last two phases have now been agreed by the City of Edinburgh Council's Corporate Property Gateway, giving us the green light to complete the ground floor renovations and the Basement level. We hope to open out the remaining space on the ground floor to create an airy and bright welcome area, which will be adaptable depending on use and need. Downstairs we will have our large open plan kitchen and dining area, with space to host large groups for meals and potential to host cooking and nutrition classes. There will also be a cashless shop, stocked with free to access goods for young people's homes. And of course, our flexible groupwork space, which could be set up for a conference one day, and a game of dodgeball the next. We look forward to being able to show you our progress in our next annual report – watch this space...

## **The Corporate Parenting Team – other updates**

### **Guaranteed interview scheme**

As part of our commitment to inclusive recruitment, in December 2023 the City of Edinburgh Council extended their guaranteed interview pledge to include all applicants who are or have been care experienced and who meet the essential criteria for the post.

The scheme previously guaranteed an interview to any applicant who met the criteria for the post and who declared a disability. By extending the scheme, we hope to encourage applications from individuals who are currently or ever have been care experienced at any point during their childhood, opening more opportunities for employment to the Care Experienced Community. This scheme aligns with the Council's belief that having a diverse workforce from a range of backgrounds and experiences helps us deliver the best services for our residents.

In late March 2024 a report was run to look at the potential impact of this new pledge. In the 4-month period from December '23 – March '24 the council received almost 19, 000 applications for all vacancies. Of these, 2,206 applicants declared that they were Care Experienced. 75 of those applicants were hired and have posts with the City of Edinburgh Council.

### **Updated Integrated Impact Assessment guidance**

Following a motion passed at Council in late 2022, asking that we recognise Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic, work was undertaken to look at how we better consider the impact of all services on our Care Experienced Community in Edinburgh. Although the power to declare Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic sits with Westminster, we agreed to look at how we could consider the needs of this community in a similar way to the 'official' protected groups.

Through the updating of Edinburgh's Integrated Impact Assessment form and guidance, we were able to highlight that all changes to service planning and delivery should take account of the potential impact on members of the Care Experienced Community. The updated guidance references the e-learning module and also gives basic information about what it means to be Care Experienced, and what our duties are as Corporate Parents. The Guidance includes the following -

“When considering service planning and delivery you should consider that any of your colleagues or service users may be Care Experienced. You should be mindful of the language you use regarding the Care System and consider whether specific supports or guidance could be offered to anyone who identifies as being Care Experienced. This could be additional support above and beyond what is normally offered to colleagues or service users, that allows them to fulfill their potential and

keeps them safe. What this looks like will be specific to the individual and cannot be prescribed.”

## **E-learning module**

Devised and codesigned with Edinburgh Champs, the e-learning module was launched in October 2023, to coincide with Care Experienced Week. The module covers the basics of what it means to be Care Experienced and the legal framework surrounding the Care System, as well as what a Good Corporate parent can do and the positive impacts they can have. To make this interactive and engaging the Champs helped write a script for an animated case study that runs throughout the module, in ‘chapters’.

## **Driving lessons**

Funding was made available via Community Benefits to support two young people to learn to drive. Through discussion with the Senior Champs it was agreed that the funding should be directed towards individuals in Kinship Placements. Funding has since been provided directly to two Kinship Carers to support a young person they are caring for to learn to drive. The decision to provide the funds directly to the carers meant that they had the autonomy to employ a local instructor and spend funds in a way that was best suited to the individual.

## **Memorial bench**

In early 2023 Edinburgh’s Throughcare and Aftercare Team asked if a memorial bench could be placed to provide a space to remember those lost to the community recently and in the past. This was sourced and placed in Edinburgh’s Prince’s Street Gardens. The wording for the plaque was decided by the Edinburgh Champs, and is as follows -

“In loving memory of those from the Care Experienced Community who have gone too soon. For those who sit here remember the importance of family, the one you are born to and those you choose, a family made through hardship but sustained through love.”

A remembrance service was held during Care Experienced week, in October 2023. People gathered at the newly placed bench; lit candles in remembrance; shared some poetry and words of comfort; and spent time reflecting on those we had lost. A service will now be held annually, during Care Experienced Week.

## **Training and awareness raising**

Following the 2023-2026 Corporate Parenting Plan being signed off by the Corporate Parenting and Champions Boards, presentations were made to both the Council's Corporate Leadership Team as well as the Senior Leadership Team. This meant that all senior managers across all directorates should have a level of awareness about their responsibilities as Corporate Parents. The Senior Leadership Team also made pledges of support linked to the Corporate Parenting Plan, highlighting areas of work that their teams could support and move forward.