

Guidance and Support for care experienced students and staff

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This guidance is part of a series which outlines support for students and staff at the University of Strathclyde, with a particular focus on promoting equality of opportunity, diversity and preventing discrimination irrespective of: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, care experience or socio- economic background. These guidance documents underpin and should be read in conjunction with the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- 1.2. As a socially progressive, people-oriented organisation, the University values the diversity of our student and staff populations and seeks to create a culture where everyone is welcome and thrives within our institution. We work to ensure that our students, staff and visitors, as well as those who apply to study or work at the University, are treated fairly and equally regardless of whether they have had experience of the care system. The University will take prompt action in response to any alleged discrimination, victimisation or harassment based on a person having a care background.
- 1.3. This document aims to promote understanding and provide clarity on issues which may be of particular relevance to care experienced students and staff. It provides guidance for staff and line managers on support for students and staff and on ensuring an inclusive environment.

2. Definitions of care

- 2.1. The term 'care experience' is relevant to any student or staff member who has previous or current experience of the care system. Care definitions are outlined

below¹ to assist in understanding the different types of care which a student or staff member may have experienced.

2.2. Adoption

Adoption is a legal process where a child is placed within the care of adoptive parents as opposed to their birth parents. In most cases, adopted children will have been looked after by a local authority prior to being adopted, except where a step-parent adopts their partner's child, or an adopted child comes from outside of the UK.

2.3. Foster care

Foster care is a temporary arrangement which can be short-term or long-term, with many children who reside in foster care returning to their biological family. Fostered children are sometimes adopted by their foster family or by another family.

2.4. Kinship Care

Kinship Care describes where a child or young person is looked after by a family member which is not their parent, such as an aunt/uncle or grandparent, or a close friend. Kinship care happens when a child cannot, for whatever reason, remain in the care of their biological parents.

2.5. Residential Care

Residential care is where children or young people reside away from their family in a residential unit. Young people are placed in residential care where a Children's Panel has recommended, or as a short-term measure for their safety.

2.6. Looked after at home

Looked after at home describes where it has been decided through the Children's Hearing system that a child or young person should reside at their family home with a Compulsory Supervision Order. This means that the child will have social workers and any other relevant parties make regular visits to them at their family home.

3. Outcomes for Care Experienced people

Research described below indicates the poor outcomes which care experienced young people can often have in comparison to their peers².

3.1. Offending behaviours

A third of young offenders in Scotland have had experience of the care system, with research suggesting that 50% of prisoners in Scotland have been in care. Such outcomes are thought to be as a result of negative family relationships, lack of stability of care placements, and poor educational attainment.

¹ Adapted from https://www.strath.ac.uk/media/1newwebsite/documents/SAAS_Care_Experienced_Definitions.pdf

² Adapted from http://www.parliament.scot/General%20Documents/CEYP_outcomes_06.16.pdf

3.2. Mental health

The early traumatic experiences of some young people from care backgrounds can also result in mental health issues, with almost half of young people aged 5-17 living in care being diagnosed with a mental health problem.

3.3. Educational outcomes

Educational outcomes for care experienced young people are also poor compared with their peers. 73% of young people from care backgrounds leave school before the age of 16 in comparison to 27% of all school leavers, with just 35% leaving with one or more SCQF level 5 qualification compared to 85% of the general school leaver population. Just 4% of care experienced young people enter Higher Education directly after school, compared to 39% of their peers.

3.4. Homelessness and unemployment

Young people with experience of the care system are also more prone to homelessness, with a 50/50 chance of becoming homeless. 30% of care experienced young people are also unemployed 9 months after leaving school in comparison to 8% of their peers. It is thought that in the absence of love, positive relationships, and opportunity, care experienced people will experience further disadvantage and social exclusion.

4. Corporate Parenting

Corporate Parenting is legislation which came into force through the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act, 2014, and has been effective since April 2015. The Act describes Corporate Parenting as "the formal and local partnerships between all services responsible for working together to meet the needs of looked after children, young people and care leavers". There are over [120 Corporate Parents in Scotland](#), with University of Strathclyde being one of them. Corporate parenting duties, which are now a legal responsibility to many organisations, include striving to achieve the best possible outcomes for the looked after young people accessing their service, and prioritising their needs³. Any staff member who engages with a student has Corporate Parenting responsibilities, and the Strathclyde Cares package, outlined in section 6, helps the University to fulfil their Corporate Parenting role.

5. General guidance and support

5.1. Any student who perceives that they may have been treated in an inappropriate manner on the basis of care experience should normally speak to their Adviser of Studies/Personal Development Adviser or equivalent in the first instance. Members of staff should normally speak to their line manager. Alternatively, support and advice can be obtained via the channels listed in section 5.2 below.

³ Adapted from <https://www.gov.scot/policies/looked-after-children/corporate-parenting/>

5.2. Any student, staff member or visitor to the University who is subject to or witnesses inappropriate behaviour, verbal or physical harassment or other discriminatory acts based on care experience can report this via the channels below. Further sources of support and advice for individuals who have experienced discriminatory behaviour are listed in Section 6 of this guidance.

- [Report and Support](#) online reporting facility
- University Security, Level 1, Livingstone Tower, Richmond Street, Glasgow
Tel: 0141 548 3333 (open 24hrs)
- Student Support services, Level 1 Floor, McCance Building, Richmond Street, Glasgow: Tel: 0141 548 4273/2753 (open 10am to 4pm, Monday to Friday)
- Strathclyde Union Advice Hub, 90 John Street, Glasgow: Tel: 0141 567 5040 (drop-in 10am to 4pm)
- [Dignity and Respect Advisers](#)

5.3. Students have the opportunity to disclose their care experience on their UCAS form when applying to the University, at which time students will be contacted by the University's named contact for pre-entry support for care experienced students. Students also have the opportunity to disclose their care experience at online registration, when they register in September each year, and can update this information at any time throughout their studies. When declaring care experience at UCAS or online registration, students are made aware that the University may contact them to inform them of support available.

5.4. Once registered as students, students who have declared their care experience will then receive communication from the University's contact for post-entry support for care experienced students. Students will then be offered a staff mentor as part of the Strathclyde Cares package of support (as outlined in section 6) and continue to be kept informed of opportunities available to them throughout their studies, such as international opportunities.

5.5. Where appropriate, internal departments will share information on students who have declared their care experience to the University, such as a care experienced student declaring so on a funding application. In this instance, the Student Financial Support team would highlight this information to the Widening Access team in order for the Widening Access team to ensure that the student is informed of the support for which they are eligible.

5.6. Inclusive practices and language help to ensure all students, staff and visitors experience an inclusive campus environment, regardless of whether they have come from a care background.

Examples of inclusive practice are listed below:

- Being sensitive to the fact that not everybody has family in their lives or a support network whom they can call on for emotional or financial support, and bearing this in mind when conversing with students and staff. For example, not

assuming that all students are spending Christmas or other celebration events with their family or that everyone has someone to help them move their belongings to a new flat. This may be particularly relevant for teaching staff and support staff interacting with students, and for students interacting with one another.

- Small changes can make language more inclusive. For example, in teaching settings and in social conversations, using the word 'carer' rather than 'mother, father, parent' etc.
- Being aware of the fact that not every student has had/has a stable home life. Some students may have moved around a lot due to having various care placements, attended numerous schools and experienced interrupted education.

6. Support and information for students

'Strathclyde Cares' describes the package of support available to care experienced students at the University. The different strands of Strathclyde Cares are described below:

- 6.1. Financial support:** Care experienced students can now apply for the [Care Experienced Students Bursary](#) through SAAS in replacement of a student loan. At the University, care experienced students are a priority group for the University's [discretionary fund](#).
- 6.2. Accommodation:** Care experienced students who apply to stay in the University halls are guaranteed 365 days per year accommodation, and the £400 deposit is waived. The University also have a partnership with the Unite Foundation, where care experienced students who meet the eligibility criteria can apply for a [Unite Foundation scholarship](#). The scholarship offers up to 3 years free accommodation in the Unite student halls (no rent and no bills for 365 days per year).
- 6.3. Strathclyde Cares mentor programme:** All undergraduate care experienced students are offered a staff mentor, to be their 'go to' person for one-to-one support and guidance for the full duration of their degree.
- 6.4. Strathclyde Cares committee:** Care experienced students are invited to join the Strathclyde Cares committee, which comprises both faculty and support staff, who meet around 4 times per year. The committee discuss support for care experienced students, and students are invited along to have a voice and to be involved in decision making.
- 6.5. Care Experienced students society:** With the support of the Widening Access team, care experienced students have formed a [Care Experienced students society](#) who host regular social events and manage a closed [Facebook page](#), which students can use to communicate and form a network.

6.6. International opportunities: Care experienced students are prioritised when promoting funded international experiences to students. This provides the opportunity for care experienced students to gain cultural experience and benefit from the value-added element to their degree which they may not otherwise experience.

6.7. Employment opportunities: Care experienced students are offered a guaranteed interview for student ambassador roles.

6.8. Graduation funding: Although the registration fee has been abolished, care experienced students continue to receive £195 each to cover graduation-related costs such as gown, photography etc.

6.9. The following support services are available to offer support, information and advice to students or to staff supporting students:

- Access, Equality and Inclusion Service
- [Disability and Wellbeing Service](#)
- [International Student Support](#)
- [Information for Care Leavers](#)
- [Financial Matters](#)
- [Accommodation](#)
- [Careers Service](#)
- [Strathclyde Students' Union Advice Hub](#)
- [Widening Access Team](#)
- [Care Experienced Students society](#)
- [Dignity and Respect Advisers](#)

7. Support and information for staff

7.1. The following support services are available to offer support, information and advice to staff or line managers:

- [Human Resources](#)
- Access, Equality and Inclusion Service
- [Disability and Wellbeing Service](#)
- [Occupational Health](#)
- [Dignity and Respect Advisers](#)

7.2. Family Friendly Policies and Procedures: the University has a range of benefits and policies which help staff to balance work and family commitments, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or marriage/civil partnership status. This includes maternity leave and pay provisions, paternity/maternity support, adoption leave and pay, shared parental leave, parental leave and support for carers. More information is available on the [dedicated University web pages](#).

8. Further resources and training

8.1. Equality Impact Assessments: the University, in common with all public authorities in Scotland, has a legal requirement to ensure that its policies and practices do not disadvantage or discriminate against people and to consider how it can use policy and procedure to advance equality. This is a key element of our vision to be a socially progressive university that makes a positive difference to the lives of its students and staff, to society and to the world.

[Equality Impact Assessment \(EIA\)](#) is a systematic and evidence-based process which helps the University to make sure that our policies and practices are the most effective that they can be for our students, staff and the wider communities they affect.

EIAs can support equality of opportunity and inclusion for care experienced students and staff by ensuring that new or revised policies and procedures consider potential negative or positive impacts upon care experienced people.

The University's [EIA Tool](#) provides a step by step process and guidance on carrying out Equality Impact Assessments. Staff can access this via the [EIA SharePoint site](#).

8.2. Staff and student training: the University has a range of online training courses to help promote student and staff awareness and understanding of specific equality, diversity and inclusion issues. These can be accessed via the links on the [Equality and Diversity Courses webpage](#).

Specific courses are compulsory for all staff to complete and are included in new staff induction checklists.

8.3. External organisations: the external organisations below raise awareness of the needs of care experienced people and campaign for change, offering support to people and organisations:

- [Who Cares? Scotland](#)
- [CELCIS](#)