

Highland Community Planning Partnership

Chief Officers' Group – 21 April 2016

Agenda Item	8.
Report No	COG 10/16

Scottish Care Leavers Covenant

Report by: Bill Alexander, Director of Care and Learning

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Scottish Care Leavers Covenant was produced by an alliance of children's organisations¹, as "a bold step to make the changes needed to give care leavers the bright and better future they deserve." It is available at: https://www.celcis.org/files/3114/4604/4920/Scottish_Care_Leavers_Covenant.pdf
- 1.2 The Covenant sets out a cross-sector approach to 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.
- 1.3 The Covenant is an ambitious agenda to further improve services for Scotland's looked after children. The alliance state 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."

2 Scottish Care Leavers Covenant

- 2.1 The starting point for the Covenant is that care leavers often struggle on their journey into adulthood. For many, the leap from care to independence is a major challenge, and young people continue to experience problems that cause them to have poorer outcomes than their peers.
- 2.2 The alliance recognises that corporate parents face financial challenges, because of the current financial climate, but believe that the actions in the Covenant will help achieve long term financial benefits, as well as better outcomes for looked after children.
- 2.3 Four guiding principles explain what the Covenant expects from corporate parents:

1. Care-proofing of policy: Corporate parents recognise the vulnerability

¹ 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

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.

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 remaining in positive care settings until they are ready to move on.

4. 'Relationships are the 'golden thread' of good practice.' 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.

2.3 The Covenant identifies 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. These mirror the priority areas that are being taken forward by Highland's own Champions Board for care experienced young people, and are in relation to:

- Health and wellbeing
- Housing And accommodation
- Education and training
- Employment
- Youth and Criminal Justice
- Rights and participation

2.4 The C.H.A.M.P.S. Board has also supported the principles and objectives of the Covenant.



2.5 The alliance call on all corporate parents and others with an interest in the lives of care leavers, 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.

Recommendation

The Chief Officers Groups is invited to recommend to the Highland Community Planning Partnership Board, that it signs up to and endorses the Scottish Care Leavers Covenant.

Bill Alexander
Director of Care and Learning
8 April 2016