



## Care experienced news update report

### Introduction

1. This paper updates CEGG on what has happened since the last meeting held in November 2019 as the March meeting was cancelled due to COVID-19.

### Recommendation

2. CEGG is asked to note the developments in this paper.

### COVID-19

3. Institutions have acted swiftly to put measures in place to support the health and wellbeing of students in these unprecedented times. CEGG paper GG/20/06 outlines examples of good practice around the areas of reducing financial hardship, boosting health and well-being, preventing homelessness and ensuring academic continuity that institutions are providing support.
4. Here are some useful web links for updates on COVID-19:
  - SFC dedicated page for [colleges and universities](#), and [education sector](#) which includes latest information and advice from Scottish and UK Governments.
  - [Scottish Government's Coronavirus in Scotland information and support](#)
  - [Student Information Scotland student support](#). This website is being used as the central point to communicate comprehensive and consistent messaging and advice to students at college and university.
  - [CELCIS Coronavirus Information point for Children's Care and Protection](#)

### SFC update

5. SFC will not be publishing the 2020-21 Outcome Agreements (OA) on our website due to COVID-19. SFC priorities over the last two months and for the foreseeable future relate to these issues:
  - Allocating resources to help stabilise the situation for students and institutions and deciding the right balance between accountability and flexibility.
  - The immediate and longer term financial sustainability of colleges and universities, including budget setting with colleges for 2020-21.
  - Maintaining our focus on the interests of students and learners (e.g. hardship support, issues in residencies, mental health & wellbeing, the move to online learning, assessments, recruitment and returners).
  - Ensuring colleges and universities are at the heart of policy-making and interventions for economic recovery.
  - Supporting the Scottish Government with advice and input on a wide range of

policy issues (e.g. student numbers, EU fees, employer links, targets etc). We were not involved in the initial guidance on the phased relaxation of lock-down restrictions, but are now actively involved in the development of further guidance, working alongside colleges, universities and government.

- Influencing the policies and interventions of the UK Government and counterpart agencies, as they impact on Scottish colleges and universities, particularly in research and student controls.
- Ensuring the equality impacts of COVID-19 remain a focus for all, in particular, in terms of disability, gender and race, and widening access, working with the Equalities and Human Rights Commission.

### National Ambition for Care-Experienced Students

6. SFC support to care-experience students also remains a priority. We published our [National Ambition for Care-Experienced Students](#) in the New Year at an event attended by the First Minister. We were pleased with the launch which gained some media coverage together with Action for Children’s official launch of the [STAY programme](#) with Glasgow’s three college and West College Scotland which we heard about at the last CEGG meeting.
7. SFC’s vision is equal outcomes between care-experienced students and their peers by 2030. The document focuses the ambitions over the medium term up to AY 2022-23. The ambitions are in four areas:
  - Intake (headcount) of care-experienced students at college and university (Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants).
  - Reduction in the gap of the FE and HE successful completion rate for full-time care-experienced students studying in the college sector.
  - Reduction in the retention rate of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants in the university sector.
  - Articulation: Increase the proportion of the care-experienced articulating population; and equal proportions of those articulating with Advanced Standing.

### Corporate Parenting Plans

8. We asked institutions to provide a link to their Corporate Parenting Plan in the draft OAs which we received before lockdown. Here are the web-links.

College	Link
Ayrshire College	<a href="#">Ayrshire CPP</a> (includes Guidance)
Borders College	<a href="#">Borders CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>
Dumfries and Galloway College	<a href="#">D&amp;G CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>
Dundee and Angus College	<a href="#">D&amp;A CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>
Edinburgh College	<a href="#">Edinburgh CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>
Fife College	<a href="#">Fife CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a> and info about the <a href="#">Bursary</a>

Forth Valley College	<a href="#">Forth Valley CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>	
City of Glasgow College	<a href="#">City of Glasgow CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a> and <a href="#">Student Guide</a>	
Glasgow Clyde College	<a href="#">Glasgow Clyde CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>	
Glasgow Kelvin College	<a href="#">Glasgow Kelvin CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>	
New College Lanarkshire	<a href="#">New College Lanarkshire CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>	
South Lanarkshire College	<a href="#">South Lanarkshire CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>	
Sabhal Mor Ostaig	<a href="#">SMO CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>	
Newbattle Abbey College	<a href="#">Newbattle CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>	
North East Scotland College	North East Scotland <a href="#">Guidance</a> and <a href="#">Student Guide</a>	
West College Scotland	<a href="#">West College Scotland CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>	
West Lothian College	<a href="#">West Lothian CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>	
Highlands and Islands region	<a href="#">Argyll College</a> <a href="#">Inverness College</a> <a href="#">Perth College</a> <a href="#">North Highland College</a> <a href="#">West Highland College</a>	<a href="#">Shetland College</a> <a href="#">Moray College</a> <a href="#">Lews Castle College</a> ( <i>under General</i> ) <a href="#">Orkney College</a>

9. The HEI Corporate Parenting Plans:

University	Link
Abertay University	<a href="#">Abertay CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a> for Care-Experienced students
Edinburgh Napier University	<a href="#">Napier CPP</a> including <a href="#">Bitesize</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>
Glasgow Caledonian University	<a href="#">GCU CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>
Glasgow School of Art	<a href="#">GSA CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>
Heriot-Watt University	<a href="#">HW CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>
Open University in Scotland	<a href="#">OUiS CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>
Queen Margaret University	<a href="#">QMU CPP</a> including support docs and <a href="#">Guidance</a>
Robert Gordon University	<a href="#">RGU CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland	<a href="#">RCS CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>
Scottish Agricultural College (SRUC)	<a href="#">SRUC CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>
University of Aberdeen	<a href="#">Aberdeen CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>
University of Dundee	<a href="#">Dundee CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>
University of Edinburgh	<a href="#">Edinburgh CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>
University of Glasgow	<a href="#">Glasgow CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>
University of St Andrews	<a href="#">St Andrews CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a> and <a href="#">Access &amp; Outreach</a> doc
University of Stirling	<a href="#">Stirling CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>
University of Strathclyde	<a href="#">Strathclyde CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>
University of the Highlands and Islands	<a href="#">UHI CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>
University of the West of Scotland	<a href="#">UWS CPP</a> and <a href="#">Guidance</a>

## Care-Experienced Student Bursary

10. The Care-Experienced Bursary was introduced for FE students in colleges across Scotland in AY 2018-19. The Students Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) distributes funding to students on HE courses at college and university. The CE Bursary is £8,100 per year (£202.50 per week) of non-repayable, non-income assessed student maintenance support. This is to provide enhanced living cost support, adding value to any existing support provided by local authorities, not replacing it.
11. From AY 2020-21 the age cap is being removed, as per the Scottish Government's [Programme for Government](#), which means all students with formal care experience will be able to apply. CE Bursary recipients are still eligible to receive other funding such as for travel, study costs, additional support needs, childcare and discretionary funds.
12. SFC is publishing its FE Student Support Guidance 2020-21 by the end of June 2020, which will include further information with regards to the expansion to older care leavers. Colleges will be asked to take a sensitive and understanding approach, particularly when asking older care leavers to specify and evidence their care experience, assessing on a case by case basis to take into account individual circumstances.

## Summer support for students

13. Students facing hardship this summer due to COVID-19 can now receive financial support within a package of new measures. The Scottish Government has brought forward early access to £11.4 million of discretionary funds — support for higher education students in financial difficulty — and administered by colleges and universities.
14. Unlike continuing HE students, most former FE students can receive benefits if they are unemployed. The SFC will also give colleges flexibility to offer FE discretionary funds to bridge the timing gap between bursary payments ending in June and Universal Credit payments starting. Applications should be made to the funding/support team at the college or university.

## Contextualised admissions

15. Universities Scotland surveyed all Scottish HEIs and found that all institutions have implemented the Care-Experienced Guarantee for 2020-21 which is care-experienced applicants will be guaranteed an offer of a place at university if they meet minimum entry requirements. They also found:
  - the majority are also taking steps to promote the Guarantee and many had support including bursaries and mentoring support in place for care experienced students.
  - The majority of institutions stated they are monitoring recruitment, retention and progress of care experienced learners.

- Universities of Strathclyde and Edinburgh reported they both have committees who provide an overview of support for vulnerable student groups.
16. SFC is evaluating the impact of HEI's access threshold and wider contextualised admission policies and will report to the Scottish Government's Access and Delivery Group (ADG). The June meeting has been cancelled but we are hopeful a meeting will be put in for Autumn. CEGG will have a future discussion on contextualised admissions at a future meeting once the SFC report is finalised.

### **Independent Care Review update**

17. The Scottish Government announced in May 2020 that Fiona Duncan has been appointed as the Chair of the independent body to provide oversight for the implementation of action in relation to the conclusions of [Scotland's Independent Care Review](#) in February.
18. The Review listened to over 5,500 care experienced children and adults, and set out a blueprint for transformational change published in a set of [five reports](#) which covered the changes the Review recommended, plans for implementing changes, and the investment in services required.
19. The main report 'The Promise' said that 'Universities and colleges in Scotland must also act on their responsibilities towards care experienced students, ensuring they are provided with access to mentoring and support throughout their studies.'

### **Corporate Parenting e-module**

20. The Corporate Parenting module for HEIs, led by OU in Scotland, is now complete. The module has been user tested and will launch at the start of AY 2020-21, date to be confirmed (online of course). The target audience is all staff so they know their corporate parenting responsibilities. The length of the module is just over 90 minutes depending on engagement with the activities which are optional.

### **Commissioner for Fair Access's Annual Report 2020**

21. The Commissioner's annual report titled '[Fair Access to Higher Education: Progress and Challenges](#)' was published in June. Care-experience features prominently and includes this section:

"Although the number of care-experienced students is small, this is an aspect of disadvantage that has a high political profile. Care-experience is recognised alongside SIMD20 as a key measure of progress towards fair access. In July 2019 Universities Scotland, on behalf of all universities, announced that care-experienced applicants who met minimum entry requirements would be guaranteed an offer of an undergraduate place at university from 2020 entry. This goes beyond the guarantee given to SIMD20 applicants. The presence of the First Minister at the launch of this initiative indicated how high-profile this issue has become. The SFC has also published its 'National Ambition' for Care-Experienced Students. This high profile is important, because unlike the other forms of disadvantage discussed in this section, care-experience is not a protected characteristic in formal legal terms.

“The focus on care-experience is entirely justified. It is clear that care-experienced younger people are substantially under-represented in higher education. According to Scottish Government figures, 2 per cent of young people are being looked after or on a child protection register. In 2017-18, 36 per cent of those who were looked after for part-time of the year and 49 per cent of those who had been looked after for the whole year went on to higher or further education, compared with 94 per cent of other young people.

“The SFC’s National Ambition for Care-Experienced students, announced in January 2020, is that by 2030 they should have the same opportunities as their peers. Although family breakdowns can occur at every level of society, the full disadvantages of care experience are more likely to impact on families suffering from multiple deprivation. There is likely to be a significant overlap between care-experience and residence in SIMD20 areas.”

### **Children’s Social Work Statistics Scotland 2018-19**

22. The Scottish Government published this [report](#) which said as of 31 July 2019 there were 14,015 children and young people looked after in Scotland, a fall of 723 or 5% on the previous year. This information shows that for the seventh year in a row the number of children looked has fallen. There was a slight increase in how many children were placed with kinship carers, and placed with prospective adopters, while fewer children were placed in residential schools.

### **MCR Pathways mentoring programme**

23. An independent evaluation of the MCR Pathway’s mentoring programme, commissioned by the Robertson Trust and undertaken by ScotCen Social Research, has found the programme has had a decisive impact on young people’s decisions to stay on at school, the qualifications they gain and their ability to move on to a positive destination. There have also been improvements in attendance, confidence, aspirations and social skills of those taking part. There were also benefits to those who took part as mentors.
24. Highlights of the [Evaluation Report](#) show for those taking part:
  - An increase of over 10% in care-experienced pupils continuing education into S5 (70.7% of mentored pupils compared to 60.1 of their non-mentored peers);
  - a 21% increase in pupils achieving one or more SCQF Level 5 qualification (87.8% of mentored pupils compared with 66.8% of non-mentored peers);
  - over 25% increase in pupils leaving school for college, university or a job (81.6% of mentored pupils compared with 56.3% of their non-mentored peers).

### **Office for Students Care-Experienced Students report**

25. The Office for Students (OfS), the independent regulator for higher education in England, has found that care-experienced students are more likely to drop out of university than their peers but the gap is shrinking. The report [‘Differences in student outcomes’](#) found:
  - Access to higher education is much lower for young people who have been in care: in 2017-18 only 12 per cent of pupils who were looked after continuously

for 12 months or more entered higher education, compared to 42 per cent of all other pupils.

- For 2017-18 entrants, the continuation rate of care-experienced students was 5.6 percentage points lower than the continuation rate of students who have not been in care.
- For qualifiers in 2018-19, the rate of achieving a first or upper-second class degree was 12.1 percentage points lower for care-experienced students when compared to students who were not in care. However, care-experience may not negatively impact progression into highly skilled employment or further study at a higher level.

### **Care-Experience and COVID-19**

26. Two separate reports look into the impact of COVID-19 on those from a care background. The first report is from the Become Charity, Stand Alone, The National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) and the Unite Foundation called [Supporting care-experienced and estranged students in higher education – responding to Covid-19](#). It is based on a UK-wide survey of HE students who were either care-experienced or estranged from their families. The survey aim to understand the challenges which vulnerable students had during the first week of the Covid-19 lockdown over 23-27 March 2020. The report concludes that four areas require particular attention: reducing financial hardship; boosting wellbeing and support; preventing homelessness; and ensuring academic continuity. Paper GG/20/03 outlines what sector response around these four areas.
27. The second report is from Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum (STAF) called [COVID-19: the impact on care leavers and STAF member organisations that support them](#) published in May 2020. The issues raised include: loneliness, social isolation and mental health; digital exclusion; food poverty; financial precarity, access to social security, bills and debt; and childcare provision for care-experienced parents. STAF calls on a national effort, Corporate Parents in particular, to ensure that beyond the current crisis we address the wider societal issues that have been highlighted to ensure ‘we build back better’.

### **Podcast**

28. Finally, here is a podcast from a CELCIS Care-Experienced Consultant and current social work student has [taken part in a podcast](#) talking about his HE journey, the challenges faced by care experienced people during lockdown, and music.

### **Further information**

29. Nick Stansfeld, [nstansfeld@sfc.ac.uk](mailto:nstansfeld@sfc.ac.uk)