



Corporate Parenting Report

April 2026

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1. Introduction

1.1. About Healthcare Improvement Scotland

Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) is part of NHS Scotland. Our job is to make health care services better for everyone. We do this by helping services like GPs, pharmacies and hospitals to make improvements in how they do things. To achieve this, we:

- check how health services are working and give advice on how they can do better
- help staff listen to and act on what people say about their care
- set clear rules about the kind of care people should get
- listen to complaints about health services and try to make things better

We do not deliver any health care services ourselves. Our role is to support the people who provide care and make sure those who access care have a voice and can influence improvements in how health care is delivered.

1.2. Our role as a Corporate Parent

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 makes us a Corporate Parent. The Act overall helps make sure that public organisations play a positive role in the early stages of people's lives by offering the right support when a family or young person needs help. The Act is about sorting things out before they become an issue or there is a crisis. It helps organisations give people their rights and plan for children's wellbeing.

Being a Corporate Parent means that our staff need to do their best to improve the wellbeing of Care Experienced people in Scotland. It is the responsibility of everyone who works with us to:

- **Be alert** - look out for things that impact the wellbeing of Care Experienced people
- **Assess** the needs Care Experienced people have around our work
- **Promote** the interests of Care Experienced people
- **Provide opportunities** for Care Experienced people to get involved in our work
- **Take action to help** Care Experienced people get involved in our work
- **Always try to improve** how we support Care Experienced people.

The Act explains what the wellbeing of children and young people means. It says wellbeing for a child or young person involves eight key things. These are:

- Safe
- Healthy
- Achieving
- Nurtured
- Active
- Respected
- Responsible

- Included.

The acronym 'SHANARRI' is often used to remember these eight things. When we involve children and young people in our work, we aim to look after their wellbeing. For example, by asking people what they think about a health service, we can help them feel respected and included. By taking on board their feedback, we can help people get better access to the service and stay healthy and active.

1.3. About this report

This report describes what we have done over the last three years to improve the wellbeing of Care Experienced people in Scotland. We have organised the report around our responsibilities described above.

While we have done a lot, there are some areas we have found it easier to take action in and some areas where we have not managed to do as much as we would have liked. We have been honest about this when we write about what we have done. Where we would have liked to have done more, we will try again. For more information, read our [Corporate Parenting Plan for 2026-29](#)

2. How we met our responsibilities

Below we explain how we met our corporate parenting responsibilities over the last three years.

2.1. People who work for us better understand the needs of Care Experienced people.

Through training and awareness, we have ensured our staff better understand what it means to be Care Experienced and what they can do to help. Here are the activities we carried out and the specific impact they had:

Care Experience Learning: We have made it essential for all our staff to complete an online learning module about the Care Experienced community. The module gives our staff a better understanding of what it means to be Care Experienced. They also get a better understanding of the legal term 'Corporate Parenting' and what it means in practice. It increases their confidence in their role as a Corporate Parent – as individuals and members of our team.

After introducing the module in May 2023, it has been completed by 579 people. This is around 93% of our staff. The reason we cannot say 100% of staff completed the module is that we have people leaving and joining the organisation regularly. For example, in the last year 37 people left and 39 people joined. Anyone who has not completed the training yet will however be asked to do so. And anyone who completed the training more than two years ago will be asked to take it again.

Working with our [Board members](#): It is not just our staff who have improved their knowledge. Members of our board took part in a session to learn about the legal responsibilities we have as a Corporate Parent and how to keep the Promise. We highlighted case studies to demonstrate the positive impact that meeting these responsibilities can have. We also discussed the importance of using loving and clear language when we talk to and about Care Experienced people.

Trauma informed practice: Many of the circumstances which can lead to children and young people becoming involved with the care system can be highly traumatic.¹ This makes it important that we give staff relevant skills for working with people who might have experienced trauma. Importantly, we will not always know when someone is Care Experienced. It could apply to a member of the public we meet with, a volunteer we work with or one of our colleagues.

We made it essential for all our staff to complete a training module called ‘developing your trauma skilled practice’. In this module, staff learn about the impact trauma has on people and how to respond using trauma informed principles. Our staff are expected to use these principles wherever they work so that they are always kind and considerate of others. So far, 489 staff have completed this training – 79% of everyone who works with us. We are reminding people to take the training and have also started asking staff in certain areas such as Community Engagement to do more training in this area. We will let you know about the outcomes of this in our next report.

As well as the training, we ran sessions for staff to learn and discuss important topics. The topics were:

Contextual Safeguarding: This is an approach which helps professionals identify and address harm being experienced by children and young people up to the age of 18. It focuses on identifying, assessing, and responding to serious risks that come up in social groups, schools, online spaces and in the community. The type of risks looked at are violence, exploitation and abuse. Parents and carers might not be able to help completely with these things and so professionals have an important role.

The Promise - Scotland has made a promise to children with experience of care. The Promise is that all children will grow up loved, safe and respected by the year 2030. A representative from the [Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations](#) spoke to our staff about how the Promise is being kept in Aberdeen. This helped our staff understand the different things needed to keep the Promise and how organisations work together to do this.

2.2. We assessed the needs of Care Experienced people when planning work

We continued to ensure that our staff assess any potential impact of their work on different groups of people, including children and young people up to the age of twenty-six who have experience of being in care. We provide guidance which says this includes foster care, supported care, kinship care, residential care, or being looked after at home with the support of a supervision order. Not all of our work has an impact for Care Experienced people, but we do our best to identify anything that might and to listen to Care Experienced people’s needs. For example, as part of our [Bairns Hoose](#) work we heard from kinship and foster carers about the particular needs

¹ [Care experience and trauma-informed practice: companion document](#)

of children they look after. We heard it was important to involve kinship and foster carers when trying to understand the needs and wellbeing of a child for their future care arrangements.

When university students studying pharmacy visited HIS to learn about our work, we talked to them about the needs of Care Experienced people. We also discussed how to approach child protection issues. We think it is important that people starting out in community pharmacies are aware of the different situations people might be in and are confident about the different ways they can offer kindness and support.

2.3. We promoted the interests of Care Experienced children and young people

We have made it easier for children and young people, including those with experience of being in care, to tell us how health and care services are working for them.

Child Friendly Complaints Process: Children have the right to express their views, be listened to, and complain when something goes wrong, either independently or with support. Healthcare Improvement Scotland agrees with the [Child Friendly Complaints Handling Principles](#) and [Child Friendly Complaint Handling Process Guidance](#) made by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. Our staff will use these resources when a child or young person would like to make a complaint. When a child or young person complains, we will:

- **Trust them** to make their own choices
- **Listen** to what they tell us
- **Be kind and supportive** so that they feel comfortable to express their thoughts and opinions freely and openly
- **Keep information they share private and confidential** by not telling other people without permission, unless we need to take action to keep the child or young person safe.
- **Share information with them about their rights** to help them understand what they are entitled to.

Inspections: We work with the Care Inspectorate to check that services are doing the right things for children and young people at risk of harm. Our inspections check that:

- **Children and young people are safer** because risks to them have been identified early and responded to effectively.
- **Children and young people's lives improve** because they have loving and nurturing relationships that keep them safe from further harm.
- **Children and young people can make decisions about their lives**, along with their families, and be supported with those decisions.
- **Services are genuinely helpful** and work well together to support children and young people and their families.

We receive good feedback about our inspections. For example, we recently heard from an organisation we inspected:

‘the commitment shown by inspectors to participation and to amplifying the voices and experiences of children was particularly valued ... feedback from children and parents has been

encouraging. One parent, who has experienced significant challenges, reflected this week that they felt “buzzing” after their conversation with an inspector’.

Hearing feedback like this makes us very happy and we are committed to making sure we have a positive impact whenever we do an inspection.

When we were doing our inspections this year, we found that Care Experienced children and young people with a compulsory supervision order had worse wellbeing than other Care Experienced children and young people. For this reason, we changed how we do inspections. We started to inspect services for children and young people who have a compulsory supervision order while living at home with their parent(s). Our first inspection covered services in the Western Isles, and we found that:

- Most children and young people had the help they needed
- Staff worked hard to make sure that children and young people felt they were seen, listened to and understood.
- Children and young people were kept safe and helped to stay in secure and stable home environments.
- Leaders needed to understand what they did well and what they had to do better and ask children and young people for their thoughts and ideas more.

You can read our full report on the [Care Inspectorate website](#).

Consultation on developing a universal definition of care experience: We contributed to the Scottish Government consultation to advocate for a more universal, commonly understood definition of care experience as recommended by the Promise. We support actions that will help deliver the Promise – in this case, by establishing clear and shared language that can help Care Experienced people access their rights more easily. We know the term ‘care experience’ is poorly understood in many places and different terms are being used by different organisations. This can make it harder for Care Experienced people to know what help is there for them. Sharing a common term could help people work together better and ensure no Care Experienced person is treated differently because of where they live and the organisation they spoke to for help.

2.4. We shared our knowledge to improve the way children and young people can get involved

Engagement standards: Through our [Scottish Patient Safety Programme](#) we have a project about improving care for children and young people. Our project staff helped the [Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health](#) develop engagement standards for children’s health services. The engagement standards support the rights of children and young people to be listened to, respected and involved in decisions that affect them and to have the best health services possible, as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The standards cover: trust and rights, inclusive and practical arrangements, community reach and taking action. You can read the standards in full on the [Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health website](#).

Involvement: We did want to do more to help Care Experienced people get involved in our work. For example, we know that Care Experienced people in Scotland face challenges getting into work.² We wanted to find a way to support Care Experienced young people to gain employment within HIS – but we have not yet managed to identify a suitable way to do this. We also wanted to understand where Care Experienced people do and do not get involved in our community engagement activities. We asked all engagement participants whether they had experience of being in care and no one said they did.

We are disappointed that these actions did not work out and we are committed to trying again. We have included new actions in our Corporate Parenting Plan 2026-29. Our new plan includes working with other corporate parents to support employment opportunities for Care Experienced people. It also includes being more active in making sure Care Experienced people in our communities have opportunities to help shape decisions that affect them.

2.5. We worked to improve how we support you

We have been engaging with the Collaborative Corporate Parenting network that is hosted by [Who Cares? Scotland](#). This network helps us stay connected with other corporate parents in Scotland. We can keep up to date with developments and new information and share ideas and good practice. It is also an opportunity to access advice from other corporate parents and Who Cares? Scotland about our activities and how we can best support Care Experienced people.

3. Conclusion

Over the last three years we have met our corporate parenting responsibilities through training and awareness, ensuring our staff understand the needs of Care Experienced people. We have made changes to our processes to help Care Experienced people speak to us when they need to. We have worked with others to share what we know, and we have championed the needs of Care Experienced people where we have been able to.

We wanted to do more to help Care Experienced people get involved in our work and are disappointed that the activities we planned here did not work out. We have committed to trying again and have included new actions in our corporate parenting plan for 2026-29. We would encourage you to read this and let us know if you have feedback or questions.

² [Care experience and employment | Iriss](#)

4. Annex 1: Corporate Parenting Plan 2023-2026

This is the plan we worked from over the last three years.

Our outcome & Corporate Parenting duty	Action/s	Relevant UNCRC article	Lead(s)
<p>1. We understand the issues that care experienced people face and assess their needs</p> <p>Duty: Be Alert and Assess Needs</p>	<p>a) Identify and map HIS work with impact on Children and Young People (CYP).</p> <p>b) Invite one project impacting CYP per quarter to working group to share learning.</p> <p>c) Promote learning opportunities identified by members via HIS Campus</p>	<p>Article 3, best interests of the child</p>	<p>Public Involvement Advisors</p>
	<p>d) Create care experience communications/awareness materials to support the sharing of current learning/literature/research with colleagues e.g. through flash reports and intranet pages.</p>	<p>Article 2, non-discrimination</p>	<p>Children and Young People Working Group members</p> <p>Children and Young People Key Delivery Area Network</p>
	<p>e) Review content on the updated mandatory corporate parenting e-learning module to ensure ongoing relevance.</p> <p>f) Bi - Annually review HIS staffs' compliance with undertaking mandatory module.</p> <p>g) Bi - Annually review HIS staffs' compliance with undertaking mandatory</p>		<p>Public Involvement Advisor</p> <p>Public Protection and Children's Health Service Lead</p> <p>Communications Team</p>

	trauma informed practice module		Nursing and Integrated Care operations team.
	h) We publish Child Friendly /Easy Read Information		
	i) Identify HIS workstreams relevant to our corporate parenting duties and actions to deliver positive change.	Article 13, Freedom of expression.	Children and Young People Working Group members
	j) Develop an optional and visible support offer for care experienced HIS employees.	Article 2, non-discrimination. Article 12, respect for the views of the child.	People and Workplace Team. Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights Team.
	k) Maintain corporate parenting awareness among non-executive members by offering ongoing learning opportunities.		Public Involvement Advisors
	l) Develop and promote 'Engaging with ... Care Experienced People' community engagement resource	Article 2, non-discrimination. Article 3, best interests of the child. Article 12, respect for the views of the child.	Public Involvement Advisors.

<p>2.We promote the interests of care experienced people and provide them with opportunities.</p> <p>Duty: Promote Interests and Provide Opportunities</p>	a) Develop relationships between our local engagement offices and regional Champions Boards to support them to have their voice heard in shaping health and care services.	Article 3, best interests of the child Fundamental, 'what matters to children and families'; Priority 'Listening'	Strategic Engagement Leads. Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights team.
	b) Use data collected regarding the number of care experienced people who have participated in our community engagement activities to make informed decisions about targeted recruitment for future engagement activities	Article 12, respect for the views of the child Fundamental 'Listening'	Public Involvement Advisor
	c) Build on and create learning opportunities to explore how all staff can best support care experienced people we work with.	Article 6, life, survival and development.	Public Involvement Advisors Organisational Development and Learning Team
	d) Work with NHS Scotland Employability and Apprenticeships Network to explore opportunities to offer NHS work experience for care experienced people to support them to build on their strengths and prepare for the workplace.	Article 28, right to education.	Organisational Development and Learning Team.
<p>3.We collaborate with other corporate parents and improve the way we work with</p>	a) Identify Corporate Parenting Leads in other national boards.		Public Protection Lead
	b) Co-develop community of practice to share learning		Public Involvement Advisor

<p>care experienced people.</p> <p>Duty: Easy to Access and Constantly Improving</p>	<p>with Corporate Parenting Leads and learn from external organizations.</p>		
	<p>c) Good practice relating to corporate parenting duties is shared with other boards</p>		<p>Public Involvement Advisor</p> <p>Children and Young People Working Group members</p>

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