

UHI | ARGYLL

UHI Argyll

Corporate Parenting Plan

Progress Report 2020-2023

Introduction

UHI Argyll recognises its duties and responsibilities as a Corporate Parent. This report looks at what progress the college has made towards developing the steps identified in the initial plan, where progress has been less than anticipated, and what the next steps should be.

Progress against original plan

Management and delivery of plan

- UHI Argyll continues to work closely with the UHI cross partner Care Leavers Group and also external links such as CDN, Who Cares Scotland, CELCIS, Argyll & Bute Council Corporate Parenting Board, local Throughcare & Aftercare. This helps to ensure the sharing of best practice.
- UHI Reporting systems (METIS Reports) have been developed that now allow easier analysis of the key performance indicators relating to students who declare they are care experienced.
- The Head of Student Services is a member of the college senior management team and ensures that SMT is kept aware of the college corporate parenting responsibilities. This also makes it easier to highlight the needs for care experienced students to be considered in operational and strategic management decisions.
- The college VLE (Brightspace) now holds an online training module for Corporate Parenting awareness and this training is mandatory for all front line support staff and teaching staff. To date 96% have completed this training.

Raising aspirations and improving pre-entry guidance

- Developing and enhancing relationships with external agencies and stakeholders was identified as being a key part of providing information and guidance to potential applicants who come from a care experienced background. However the last two years of Covid restrictions has led to some of these links becoming less effective.
- Staff turnover and fewer face to face interactions with some of the local organisations has meant that there is currently a lower level of awareness of what support the college can provide to care experienced people. This can be seen in the lower numbers of care experienced students applying to UHI Argyll and is an area that has been identified as needing a more pro-active approach.
- UHI Argyll has a named Care experienced contact and highlighting this to external agencies could help to raise a greater awareness of the services and support that we can provide to care experienced people.

Application

- Potential students are encouraged to declare if they are care experienced as early as at the application stage.
- The application form has a simple tick box with a brief explanation of what is meant by care experienced so that this information can be collected. This helps to identify students who may need support for any interview process or discussion with student services regarding funding options or additional support.
- Care experienced applicants who do not have the standard course entry requirements will have a meeting either with curriculum staff or support staff to assess what would be the most appropriate course level for them to begin with.

Pre-entry

- The college website now contains more information about funding that is available to students including information regarding Care Experienced Bursary.

- Where a student has declared earlier in the application process that they are care-experienced then support staff can help them to make their funding application.

On course support

- Students can choose to declare that they are care experienced at any point in their student journey. Many choose not to declare this initially but during funding applications it may become apparent then.
- Students are offered the support from the named Care Experienced officer and reminded that they can access this at any point in their student life. As students from a care background can now be more readily identified (if they wish) it is now easier to fast track their funding applications or put learning support plans in place if required.
- All students now have the support of a Personal Academic Advisor (PAT) for Higher Education study, or a named Student Advisor for FE level study. These advisors can often be an effective link between academic and pastoral support. They can also help to link a student with the Care Experienced officer if more appropriate.
- UHI Argyll now has a student counsellor in post. Students experiencing mental health issues can make contact themselves with the counsellor, or a member of support staff can make a referral if the student wishes. In addition to this support the college also has links to several online wellbeing services - Togetherall and Spectrum Life.
- Support staff can help to signpost students to various wellbeing resources to help with a variety of issues from anxiety, sleep management, budgeting and general life matters.

Next steps

UHI Argyll has made progress in embedding its role as a Corporate Parent over the last few years but recognises that there is still much that can be done to further develop this. The focus over the next year will be:

- A refresh of all college and public facing information regarding support available to Care Experience students.
- A more pro-active approach to re-establish closer links with key stakeholders and local organisations, especially with schools, local Opportunities for All groups, Throughcare & Aftercare groups.
- Wider publicising of UHI Argyll named Care Experienced officer.
- Greater use and analysis of management reporting systems to identify specific care-experience data. This will help to identify under performing areas and enable the college to address any problems there.
- Continued interaction with cross UHI Learner Support groups and CDN groups.

Appendix A

