



SABHAL
MÒR OSTAIG

Ionad Nàiseanta Cànan is Cultar na Gàidhlig

Corporate Parenting Plan Report 2016-18

March 2018

1. Introduction

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig UHI (SMO) is legally designated as a corporate parent under Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. Colleges, institutions, and other agencies identified as corporate parents have had to create and publish a Corporate Parenting Action Plan (See Section 5). Leading on from this, it is a legislative duty that all corporate parents produce a Report on such a Plan and the activities and actions identified therein. Corporate Parenting Reports are required to be produced every three years, with 2018 being the first year of such a requirement.

Through its multi-faceted activities, College management and staff fully recognise the legislative duties set out under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (See Section 3 below) in regard to enhancing the well-being of care experienced young people and removing barriers to opportunities which they may face. At present, many care experienced young people experience some of the poorest personal outcomes of any group in Scotland. Low levels of educational engagement and achievement feed in to high levels of poverty, homelessness and poor mental health.¹

The SMO Corporate Parenting Plan Report 2017-18 was presented to the SMO Management Group (February 2018) and the SMO Board of Directors (March 2018) and the actions and activities therein were approved by both committees.

1.1 Corporate Parenting Vision

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig is committed to providing all children and young people who are enrolled as students or on a skills-based apprenticeship and who have experience of being in care with a safe, supportive learning and work environment which meets their educational needs and general well-being and enables them to successfully complete their course or apprenticeship. As a Corporate Parent, the College will endeavour to ensure that appropriate support systems are in place for this group of children and young people in order that they are able to fulfil their potential.

In addition to supporting care experienced students, SMO will ensure that staff have access to training opportunities and materials, with the aim of having all staff made aware of what is expected of them as corporate parents.

2. Sabhal Mòr Ostaig

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the National Centre for Gaelic Language and Culture is a unique institution offering access, advanced, under-graduate and post-graduate level courses solely through the medium of Scottish Gaelic (See College Mission below). The College is a founding academic partner of the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) and is the lead/responsible partner for the management and delivery of UHI's Gaelic and Gaelic-medium undergraduate and postgraduate provision. The College offers a full range of programmes at different SCQF² levels and these programmes can either be studied on-site or through distance learning.

2.1 Student Numbers

In academic year 2017/18, a total of 220 students registered on the HE programmes, with 75 studying full-time and 145 enrolled as part-time students. A high percentage of the full-time students (95%) elect for on-site study, while almost all part-time students are distance learning students. In relation

¹ Scottish Government (published annually) *Children's Social Work Statistics*, Edinburgh; Meltzer, H, et al (2004) *The mental health of young people looked after by local authorities in Scotland*, London: TSO.

² SCQF – Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

to FE numbers, around 230 students annually undertake SMO's distance delivered Gaelic language learning provision and just over 900 students attend the College's programme of short courses each year. SMO offers residential accommodation, comprising 85 study bedrooms, for both HE on-site students and students attending short courses. In Session 2017/18, 55 of the on-site registered students are housed in the student residences.

2.1 Our Mission

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig is committed to being a centre of excellence for the development and enhancement of the Gaelic language, culture and heritage, by providing quality educational, training and research opportunities through the medium of Scottish Gaelic and by interacting innovatively with individuals, communities and businesses, to contribute to social, cultural and economic development. The College is an all-Gaelic educational institution and business, and the College's prime objective is to maintain, support and develop the Gaelic language.

2.2 Partnership working and reporting

The College is committed to working in partnership with the Scottish Government, Bòrd na Gàidhlig³ and with other agencies in taking forward its mission, strategic priorities and statutory duties. SMO has its own Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), with priority outcomes and outputs reviewed and reported on annually. The College also engages with Education Scotland and SFC in producing the College's Evaluative Report and Enhancement Plan (EREP).

3. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 sets out 6 main duties for Corporate Parents:

- 1 To be alert to matters which might adversely affect the wellbeing of children and young people covered by the duties;
- 2 To assess the needs of those children and young people for services and support the Corporate Parent provides;
- 3 To promote the interests of those children and young people;
- 4 To seek to provide those children and young people with opportunities to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing;
- 5 To take action to help those children and young people access those opportunities and to make use of services and support the Corporate Parent provides;
- 6 To take such other action as it considers appropriate for the purposes of improving the way in which it exercises its functions in relation to children and young people.

Additionally: There is also a duty on all Corporate Parents to collaborate with each other when exercising their corporate parenting responsibilities.

4. SMO Safeguarding Group

The SMO Safeguarding Group⁴ was established in Session 2016/17 and meets on average 4 times a year. The main purpose and remit of the Group is to advise SMO staff in relation to safeguarding matters, to ensure appropriate support systems are in place for students and staff, to identify and promote training opportunities and to make recommendations to the SMO Management Team in

³ Bòrd na Gàidhlig is the principal public body in Scotland responsible for promoting Gaelic development.

⁴ Originally formed as the 'SMO Duty of Care Group'.

relation to safeguarding policies, procedures and resources. In Session 2017/18, the work of the Safeguarding Group has focussed mainly on preparing, monitoring and reviewing SMO's Corporate Parenting Plan.

The membership of the Safeguarding Group is representative of the College's various roles, functions and activities requiring safeguarding awareness, knowledge and experience. In effect, this covers its main functions and services, with Group membership drawn from the SMO Senior Management Team (3 members); student services; teaching, learning and admissions staff and senior management staff from corporate and hospitality services.

Group members have undertaken two face-to-face safeguarding training sessions. The first was in Session 2016/17 and was delivered by Colleges Development Network (CDN). The most recent was in February 2018, with Group members attending bespoke Corporate Parenting training delivered by Who Cares? Scotland (See Section 6.1).

5. SMO Corporate Parenting Plan: Consultation and Preparation

The SMO Corporate Parenting Plan was drawn up by representatives of the SMO Safeguarding Group and, as part of the internal consultation process, the draft Plan was considered by the SMO Staff Consultative Committee, before being approved by the SMO Board of Management in November 2017. An Equalities Impact Assessment of the Corporate Parenting Policy and Plan was also undertaken in November 2017 and no negative impacts or barriers to its successful implementation in respect of equalities were identified.

5.1 Preparation and Consultation

As a constituent partner of UHI, the College benefits from a close liaison with UHI cross-partnership groups involved in safeguarding related work. SMO is represented on the UHI Care Leavers Group and on UHI's Safeguarding Group and, in addition to sharing best practice, the College contributed to the preparation of UHI's Corporate Parenting Plan. Members of the SMO Safeguarding Group also benefitted from attending CDN meetings and staff development events. In preparing the SMO Plan, Group members consulted with Bòrd na Gàidhlig who are also legally designated as a corporate parent. This was mutually beneficial, given that both organisations are engaged in Gaelic-related work and conduct their respective business mainly through Gaelic.

On-line resources prepared by CDN and Who cares? Scotland were referred to and proved useful in preparing the Action Plan. As part of the consultation process, a draft version of the Plan was also submitted to Who Cares? Scotland. The detailed feedback provided was greatly appreciated and has resulted in improvements to the Corporate Parenting Policy and in identifying further actions and activities in respect of the Action Plan.

6. SMO Corporate Parenting Plan: Action Areas and Activities

The SMO Corporate Parenting Plan is similar in format to the UHI Plan, with 7 main areas or themes identified and planned activities and outcomes outlined for each area. Progress under each of the main areas is reported on below.

6.1 Management and Delivery of Plan/Outcomes

The SMO Safeguarding Group continues to play a central role in the management and delivery of the Corporate Parenting Action Plan outcomes. Since the beginning of Academic Session 2017/18, the Group has met three times, with the Group's business now more focussed on Corporate Parenting

responsibilities. A Corporate Parenting Sub-group also met in December 2017 to consider the feedback from Who Cares? Scotland on the SMO Action Plan and to reflect on and identify further actions and activities. (See Section 5.1)

There is strong Senior Management representation on the SMO Safeguarding Group (see Section 4 above) and the SMO Senior Management Team continues to be supportive in progressing relevant activities and outcomes and in promoting and undertaking training.

Progress with 2017/18 Actions - In relation to strategic priorities, the College's Outcome Agreement and Evaluative Report and Enhancement Plan (EREP) recognise its responsibilities in respect of corporate parenting and identify the need for continuous enhancement of the provision.

Staff training and awareness raising for all staff are important components in managing and delivering planned outcomes identified within the Corporate Parenting Action Plan. In addition to completing the on-line module developed by UHI, 11 Senior Management staff (80% of the Senior Management Team) and 7 members of the Safeguarding Group (78% attendance) have undertaken bespoke training delivered by Who Cares? Scotland in February 2018.

As part of awareness raising on-campus, the SMO Safeguarding Group produced bilingual posters and postcards promoting the work undertaken by the Group under the headings of Prevent, Protect and Parenting. The bilingual promotional materials are displayed throughout the College, including the SMO residences. A dedicated e-mail and phone contact is provided on the posters and postcards for anyone seeking assistance, advice or further information. It is hoped that in time, through greater awareness amongst all staff and students, that more care experienced young people will be encouraged to apply for our courses and thus benefit from the planned actions and activities to support their needs and enhance their learning experiences.

6.2 Raising Aspirations and Pre-entry Outreach

As part of raising awareness of the support services available for care experienced students, UHI have created a Care Leavers Section on their main website, providing contact details of UHI and SMO Student Services, with a link to the UHI Care Leavers page and the SMO Corporate Parenting Plan. This section provides full details of the support offered to care experienced students both centrally and at academic partner level.

SMO has in-house services able to provide additional support as required to care experienced students. The Student Services co-ordinator, who is also the SMO Safeguarding Officer, is the SMO representative on the UHI Care Leavers Group and the UHI Safeguarding Group.

Progress with 2017/18 Actions – As part of raising awareness of services available through SMO, a link has been created to the UHI Care Leavers Information page and, as part of the support available directly through the College, a dedicated Corporate Parenting web-page is to be found on the SMO web-site, under Student Services Information. This may be accessed in both Gaelic and English and, as well as outlining the SMO Vision for Corporate Parenting, the web-page has links to the SMO Corporate Parenting Policy and the SMO Corporate Parenting Action Plan.

➤ Further Action:

1. Information on Corporate Parenting has been forwarded to the College's Marketing Department for inclusion in the new SMO Prospectus. (available from August 2018)

6.3 Application

Applications for the SMO undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are managed and administered through UHI's admissions processes. Students who declare care experience are flagged on the UHI data management system and the UHI Application Form is marked accordingly. This alerts the SMO Admissions Officer and the course/programme leader to the student's situation and thus admissions staff are able to take this into consideration. UCAS⁵ forms also provide care experience students with the opportunity to self-declare.

SMO is committed to achieving a fair balance of entrants to higher education and our admissions processes are designed to support widening access. SMO fully supports the recommendations of the Commission on Widening Access and adheres to the guiding principles set out within UHI's Widening Access Framework. The SMO Equality Mainstreaming Report (April 2017) and Equalities Outcomes 2017-21 set out the College's commitment to equality and mainstreaming, ensuring parity of experience for all students and staff.

Progress with 2017/18 Actions - The Application Form for students applying directly for a place on SMO's distance learning FE provision has been up-dated to encourage applicants to self-declare. Academic staff with responsibilities for access are clear as to their responsibilities regarding widening access to Care Experienced students and, in 2017/18 Academic Session, membership of the SMO Safeguarding Group was extended to include staff from registry and admissions.

➤ Further Actions:

1. Further action is required in encouraging young people to self-declare as being care experienced, including careful review of the wording currently used in the direct Application Forms so as to be as positive and encouraging as possible.
2. SMO Widening Access Policy to be developed.

6.4 Pre-entry

The UHI and SMO websites contain details of financial support available to all students, including information on bursary schemes through SMO and UHI and on Discretionary and Childcare funds.

Prior to gaining entry to the HE courses all prospective candidates are interviewed to assess that their Gaelic language skills are at the required entry level for the award and to assess whether they are able to fulfil the objectives of the course. Admissions staff ensure that all applicants are made aware of the student support services that are available to them through SMO and UHI, including additional support for Care Experienced students.

Progress with 2017/18 Actions - As referred to previously, SMO offers accommodation for on-site students and students attending short courses. Students admitted to the HE courses delivered on-site are provided with detailed information on the residences and are required to complete a Residences Application Form. Accommodation Forms also encourage students to self-declare in relation to care experience. The SMO hospitality manager is a member of the SMO Safeguarding Group, as is the Short Courses Development Manager.

For full-time students, the College has made a commitment that 365-day accommodation will be available to care experienced students in the SMO student residences on campus.

⁵ UCAS – Universities and Colleges Admissions Services.

➤ Further Actions:

1. Investigate additional financial support for care experienced students, including the provision of a SMO/Bòrd na Gàidhlig bursary to support Gaelic learners who may be care experienced.

6.5 On-course Support

SMO has well developed student support systems designed to enhance retention and attainment, with all students having access to effective learning support and specialist services provided by appropriately qualified professionals. SMO students registered on the College's HE programmes, whether studying on-site or at a distance, also have access to the support of a Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) for matters relating to learning, teaching and personal development planning. In addition to providing academic support and guidance, the PAT is able to signpost and refer students for additional support.

PAT resources are available on-line and, within the past two years, SMO academic staff have undertaken PAT training sessions, delivered by UHI and by an internal member of SMO staff.

The SMO Counsellor works part-time and is based on campus for one day a week. She is also employed by Counselling Care: Skye and Lochalsh and works two days a week in local schools where she has experience of working with care experienced children and young people. In terms of pastoral support, UHI have facilitated the creation of an online counselling service which is available to students from across the partnership. The SMO Counsellor was one of the first cohort of counsellors to be trained for on-line support and provides this service in both Gaelic and English.

Progress with 2017/18 Actions – The Student Services Co-ordinator has e-mailed all HE students studying on-site and at a distance, providing them with information on the support available to care experienced students and seeking their views on the SMO Corporate Parenting Policy and Action Plan.

Feedback from care experienced students is encouraged, with a guarantee provided that all responses and information received will be treated confidentially. Contact details and links were also provided to the Who Cares? Scotland websites and to the following sites: [Buttle UK](#), [The Care Leavers' Foundation](#), [The Care Leavers' Association](#).

➤ Further Actions:

1. SMO staff to attend UHI PAT Development Day on 01/06/18. This will include a session on dealing with care experienced students.
2. SMO staff to deliver own in-house training for all PATs, including session on corporate parenting. Session to be delivered by end of August 2018, with refresher training to be offered prior to the start of each session.
3. It is proposed that, in addition to the PAT, a further staff mentor be identified to support care experienced students during their period of study at the College.
4. Student Services Co-ordinator to contact SMO Alumni to get their views on the Plan and to invite those who may have care experience to consider further engagement with current students regarding their experiences.

6.6 Communication

Awareness raising and regular consultation and communication with staff in respect of their corporate parenting duties and responsibilities are key to achieving planned outcomes. UHI have developed an on-line training module which is available on Blackboard, UHI's Virtual Learning Environment.

Progress with 2017/18 Actions - All SMO staff are required to undertake and successfully complete UHI's short training module (15-20 minutes). As the materials were not available on-line until January 2018 the completion timescale for this outcome has been extended to July 2018 and the Action Plan has been revised accordingly. In addition to receiving information about training, all SMO staff have received up-dates from the Safeguarding Officer containing information about Corporate Parenting.

As a further successful outcome, Corporate Parenting training (i.e. UHI on-line module) has been included (from January 2018) as a mandatory requirement in the induction process for new staff.

6.7 Monitoring of Plan/Outcomes

This is the first Review Report detailing progress of the activities and actions outlined in the SMO Corporate Parenting Action Plan. The Action Plan is to be monitored and reviewed annually, with review and reporting of progress to take place every three years in line with Government requirements. A member of the SMO Safeguarding Group⁶ is charged with version control and policy changes and up-dates to relevant documentation.

In updating and reviewing the 2017/18 Corporate Parenting Action Plan, the Safeguarding Group agreed at its last meeting (March 2018) to include two further actions. (See below).

➤ Further Actions:

1. SMO Safeguarding Group to promote and contribute to Who Cares? Scotland '40 Acts of Love'.
2. SMO to provide financial support towards graduation costs for care experienced students and, in addition, SMO registry and student services staff to assist care experienced students with graduation arrangements. This will be in effect for the 2018 College Graduation.

7. Future Priorities

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig will continue to adhere to legislative requirements and, through its own and UHI's monitoring and review systems, will keep its Corporate Parenting Plan under review and up-dated.

By ensuring that all SMO staff complete the mandatory training module (UHI Module available on-line), this will raise awareness of the challenges and difficulties care experienced students may face and, as a result, the College will be able to enhance the support it is able to give.

SMO is sympathetic to the fact that some young people do not wish to draw attention to their care experienced status, for numerous complex reasons, and may not wish to declare this. It is hoped though, that through the collective efforts of staff, including PATs, academic and support staff, the SMO Student Services and the SMO Safeguarding Group that they will be encouraged to do so.

The Safeguarding Group/Corporate Parenting Sub-group will continue to engage with SMO staff and students and will continue to collate responses from its staff and student consultations in order to inform future actions and activities.

⁶ Current SMO role – Director of Corporate Affairs