**Eligible 2’s Charter – The Village**

**Background**

The Village is a safe online community for parents with care experience, established through collaborative partnership of care experienced parents, Care Visions Fostering, Early Years Scotland and Scottish Attachment in Action. The Village is funded through investment by The Promise Scotland and Care Visions Fostering.

While promoting the availability of funded early learning and childcare for eligible 2s through the Village, it became evident that for many parents, this had life changing significance, allowing individuals to return to work and removing some from an in-work poverty status. A really positive way of closing the pervasive poverty-related attainment gap which persists within Scotland.

Although the intention of offering eligible 2 places was sincere, the dissemination of information was not uniform across all local authorities in Scotland and the process experienced by applicants was described as complicated and potentially stigmatising. Local Authorities we have spoken to have recognised there are challenges and have been keen to engage with us to look at possible improvements. In order to support the improvement process, raise awareness and reduce stigma, we have developed a charter of good practice. This Charter has been developed by bringing together best practice from differing authorities into one document. The aim is for the Charter to be shared with all Local Authorities, encouraging them to sign up to best practice protocols and support standardisation of practice across the country.

At present, each LA website offers differing information and inaccuracy exists around eligibility, with some suggesting the child must be looked after, some suggesting eligibility is means tested and some not including care experienced parents as part of eligibility criteria when undertaking the automated application process. Our Villagers have also experienced situations where some information shared by council employees during the application process has been inaccurate and, as a result, the process has taken longer than it should. Where appeals have been undertaken in cases of the provision of inaccurate information, funding is not backdated to the original application and instead a new application has been required and funding only given from the outcome of the secondary process. We are aware of too many cases where the nursery fees incurred during the appeal process have run into hundreds of pounds.

The processes of claiming for eligible 2 nursery places differ across the 32 authorities, however one common area is the need for the claimant to evidence their care experience. Obtaining evidence has proven challenging for some of our Villagers and anxiety provoking for others. No authority articulates the easiest ways in which information can be gained, what information will be shared about the claimant’s care experience, or who it will be shared with. This causes unnecessary stress and potential re-traumatisation for care experienced parents who are merely attempting to access that which they are entitled to.

The intention of this Charter is to ensure the process is as transparent, non stigmatising, anxiety free and simple as possible for all parties, while continuing compliance with Section 2 of The National Standard For Early Learning And Childcare Operating Guidance - Funding follows the child and the national standard for early learning and childcare providers: operating guidance - gov.scot (www.gov.scot).

**Template**

Template eligibility letter to be provided by Local Authority on headed paper

Dear Sir/Madam,

I can confirm that (state name of claimant) has care experience and therefore meets the requirements for additional nursery funding through the eligible 2’s criteria.

Yours sincerely,

Name - Designation - date.

**Eligible 2’s Charter**

* Information stated on the website will expressly include care experienced parents as eligible, will clearly state that funding is not means tested and that the child does not need to be known to the social work department.
* A clear process for obtaining proof of care experience will be published by each authority.
* A shared template will be used, which shows only that the individual was in receipt of local authority care and is eligible for associated benefits. There is no requirement for dates, reasons, or type of care to be included. A copy of the completed template will be given to the claimant.
* A clear statement will be given, outlining who the information that the recipient is eligible will be shared with. While it is recognised the information will need to be shared with the person who deals with accounts and billing in the care environment, it does not need to be shared with individual employees undertaking the nursery care of the child. It is recognised that in the case of childminders or smaller provisions, someone providing care may also be the person who manages the payments.
* While it is agreed professional values should ensure there is no element of stigmatisation from information being shared, this has unfortunately not been the experience of many and therefore information sharing will be on a strictly need to know basis.
* Trauma informed practice will be adopted ensuring all involved have the skills and knowledge to deal sensitively with all parents and their children.
* The template eligibility letter will be used ensuring individuals know the level of information being shared.

**Pledge**

(name of LA) pledge to support care experienced parents by meeting the requirements of the eligible 2’s charter. Following the charter will ensuring we give clear and accurate information through all our communication channels including digital and in person processes.

Signed: Date:

Role: