



MCR Pathways' Open Letter - Why Scotland needs a Trusted Adult Guarantee

**John Swinney MSP
First Minister
Scottish Government**

Via email 22nd May 2026

Dear First Minister,

Congratulations on your return to Government. We wish you and your Government every success in the new parliamentary term.

At MCR Pathways, we believe every young person in Scotland should have access to a consistent, trusted adult volunteer mentor relationship that helps them realise their potential and move confidently towards positive destinations, including further education, apprenticeships, and employment.

We were grateful for the opportunity to meet with you in March and greatly welcomed your interest in the role trusted adult relationships can play in improving outcomes for Scotland's young people. Through mentoring, and in partnership with organisations across education, communities and the third sector, we see every day the transformational impact that consistent, trusted relationships can have.

This year we are expanding our offer of a Trusted Adult mentor to as many communities across Scotland that we possibly can through the incredible investment you have made in us through your government and the new 'Bringing Hope, Building Futures' child poverty plan. We are very privileged to work closely with you, your ministers and other third sector and public sector partners to truly achieve the goal of eradication of poverty.

Having launched our first-ever Manifesto in the lead up to the recent Scottish Parliament elections, we are now calling on the new Scottish Government to

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commit to a national Trusted Adult Guarantee for every Care Experienced young person who needs one.

The evidence is clear: when a young person has a trusted adult in their corner, they are more likely to attend school, achieve qualifications, sustain positive post-school destinations and experience improved wellbeing. Independent evaluation, including by ScotCen and Ipsos Scotland, has consistently demonstrated the impact of mentoring in improving attainment, confidence and progression:

1. +13% more CE young people staying on to S5.
2. 2.8 x social return on every £1 invested in MCR Pathways mentoring.
3. +7% more CE young people in positive post-school destinations.
4. 3,452 CE young people supported during Ipsos evaluation period.
5. -9% less CE young people excluded from education settings.

For further information, please visit: <https://hi.mcrpathways.org/evidence>

A Trusted Adult Guarantee would directly support many of the Scottish Government's priorities, including but not limited to:

- Eradicating child poverty
- Investing in Scotland's future workforce
- Closing the attainment gap
- Delivering The Promise

This is a preventative, early-intervention approach that helps young people build the confidence, resilience and aspirations needed to transition successfully into adulthood. In doing so, it reduces pressure on already stretched public services while strengthening Scotland's future workforce and communities.

For Scotland's Care Experienced young people, this commitment is particularly important. Mentoring was recognised within The Promise as a key form of support, and MCR Pathways is working to make access to mentoring a reality for every Care Experienced young person who wants one.

The recent passage of the Children (Care, Care Experienced and Services Planning) (Scotland) Bill is an important step forward. Having contributed to the legislation's development and submitted evidence to the Education, Children and Young People Committee, we see a significant opportunity to strengthen accountability and improve outcomes for Care Experienced young people across Scotland.

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Alongside the Care Experienced community, we support young people facing barriers linked to poverty, inequality and adverse childhood experiences. As a lived-experience engagement partner in the Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, *Bringing Hope, Brighter Futures*, we believe young people's voices and experiences must continue to shape policymaking throughout this parliamentary session.

We welcome your manifesto commitments to expand apprenticeships, strengthen education and increase support for young people. A national Trusted Adult Guarantee would enhance and connect these ambitions by ensuring young people not only have access to opportunities, but the relationships and support needed to sustain them.

It is also vital that the Scottish Government continues to recognise the third sector as a strategic partner in facilitating the shift to preventative support and spending. We look forward to working together with your government alongside other organisations to make trusted relationships a reality for more young people who need them.

The economic case is compelling. Independent analysis estimates that for every £1 invested in MCR Pathways, society benefits by £2.80. Without sustained investment in preventative approaches such as mentoring, societal and economic inequalities will deepen - stifling economic growth, trapping generations in systemic poverty, and placing costly strain on already pressurised public services.

While we welcome existing commitments such as the expansion of apprenticeships, increased in-school support staff, and greater investment in further and higher education; there remains a systemic gap that only a national trusted adult guarantee can bridge. Without this, the rights based approach remains a promise rather than a reality. We urge the Scottish Government to work with the third sector, education providers and communities across Scotland to make a Trusted Adult Guarantee a reality.

Yours Sincerely,

Sharon McIntyre, Chief Executive, MCR Pathways



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