

#KeepThePromise



Children's Social Care

Autumn 2020

Between 2017 and 2020, the Care Review heard the experiences over 5,500 care experienced infants, children, young people, adults and members of the paid and unpaid workforce had of Scotland's 'care system', and their vision for what needed to change. This vision was set out in ['The Promise'](#) which reflected what was heard and detailed the foundations that Scotland's care for its children and families must be built on:



Voice

Voice: Children must be listened to and meaningfully and appropriately involved in decision-making about their care, with all those involved properly listening and responding to what children want and need. There must be a compassionate, caring, decision-making culture focussed on children and those they trust.



Scaffolding

Scaffolding: Children, families and the workforce must be supported by a system that is there when it is needed. The scaffolding of help, support and accountability must be ready and responsive when it is required.



Family

Family: Where children are safe in their families and feel loved they must stay – and families must be given support together to nurture that love and overcome the difficulties which get in the way.



Care

Care: Where living with their family is not possible, children must stay with their brothers and sisters where safe to do so and belong to a loving home, staying there for as long as needed.



People

People: The children that Scotland cares for must be actively supported to develop relationships with people in supported to listen and be compassionate in their decision-making and care.

This series of briefings is intended to help Scotland **#KeepThePromise**, highlighting key areas of alignment between what was heard during the Care Review and mapping those to different sectors, in order to guide and inform planning and implementation. They will also bring into focus the substantial amount of overlap between these areas across all parts of the country's workforce. It is hoped that in doing so, the briefings will support inter-sector, partnership discussions on how to take forward Scotland's Ambition, to make it the best place in the world to grow up.

Each briefing begins with a bullet point summary of the 'headline' themes for the sector. The remainder of the document highlights key sector-relevant themes and sections from The Promise giving the relevant page numbers to help signpost readers.

Briefing Summary

- Scotland must respect, uphold, champion and defend the rights of children.
- Scotland must do all it can to keep children with their families.
- The presumption that children will stay together with their brothers and sisters must be fully implemented and monitored.
- The importance of relationships cannot be overstated- Scotland must nurture and sustain positive relationships.
- Nurturing and supporting families to stay together will take far more than what Scotland currently provides.
- Scotland must support care givers, wherever children live, to ensure children in their care feel loved and safe.
- Secure attachments, based on loving, consistent relationships, must be the bedrock of every decision made about children.
- Scotland must limit the number of moves that children experience, and support them through any transitions.
- There must be a shift in focus from the risk of possible harm to the risk of not having stable, long term loving relationships.
- Children, families and the workforce must be supported by a system that is there when it is needed.
- Scotland must stop stigmatising the children it cares for. Scotland must change the language of care. Language must be easily understood, be positive and must not create or compound stigma.
- There must be no barriers for children to have regular, positive childhood experiences.
- Supporting the workforce to care must be at the heart of Scotland's service planning.
- Active listening and engagement must be fundamental to the way Scotland makes decisions and supports children and families.

Scotland must respect, uphold, champion and defend the rights of children

- p.26** Scotland must respect, uphold, champion and defend the rights of children and recognise that their rights are most often realised through relationships with loving, attentive caregivers. Scotland must fully incorporate and uphold the UNCRC.
- p.26** Scotland must implement the rights of the child in a way that does not reinforce a focus on policy, process and procedure but supports the ability of children and those around them to connect and develop relationships and cultures that uphold their rights as a matter of course.

Scotland must do all it can to keep children with their families

- p.52** The UNCRC recognises families as the fundamental group in society and the natural environment for growth and wellbeing. Scotland has demonstrated consistent legislative intention to keep families together, yet there has not been a consistent programme of support for families.
- p.52** The current 'looked after at home' model does not provide families with a sufficient basis of support to stay together and thrive. Families have told the Care Review that support felt conditional and suspicious with no real help or relationships to address the challenges they faced.
- p.52** It is babies, infants and young children who are most likely to be removed from their families. It is hard for decision makers to hear and properly listen to their voices. Judgments about the adequacy of their care are made by

others. Scotland must do more to recognise the context in which families live. Interactions must focus on supporting families to care for their babies, infants and children.

- p.52** Following the Care Review, Scotland must have a collective acceptance that there will be some families who will require long term support that goes beyond what is current normative practice. Scotland must ensure holistic family support and individualised planning with the principles of 'one family one plan' wraparound support for all families in and on the 'edges' of care.
- p. 61** If Scotland removes children from their families, their rights must be upheld as a basic minimum standard for their care. That must mean a clear commitment to creating the right culture of care where the whole of the workforce respects, upholds, champions and defends the rights of children for whom they are responsible.
- p.63** If children are removed from the care of their parents, Scotland must not abandon those families. Families must continue to be provided with therapeutic support, advocacy and engagement in line with principles of intensive family support.

The presumption that children will stay together with their brothers and sisters must be fully implemented and monitored

- p. 62** Brothers and Sisters – Scotland already has a presumption that children will stay together with their brothers and sisters. That presumption must be fully implemented and closely monitored.

p. 62 Scotland must ensure:

- An expansive understanding of siblings that includes half, step and adoptive siblings and reflects children's experience of their family lives.
- Public service planning and commissioning strategies and procurement attuned to the needs of brothers and sisters to promote those relationships and prevent separation.
- The number and quality of kinship, foster carers, adopters and other carers available to meet the needs of sibling groups exceeds the needs of the children. This resource must be managed effectively.
- Robust management processes that facilitate and support good practice relating to sibling relationships and addresses any sibling estrangement.
- A social care and health workforce that is enabled to undertake high quality assessments of the relationship needs of siblings in or on the edge of care and to meet these needs.
- Official recording practices that reflect the value placed on sibling relationships as a right and a source of wellbeing. Decision making in relation to any sibling separation must be accurately recorded and reviewed.
- A strong legal framework that acknowledges protects and promotes brother and sister relationships in and on the edges of care. Those legal protections must include the right to time together, meaningful participation in decision-making about their siblings and clear, simple rights to appeal.

The importance of relationships cannot be overstated- Scotland must nurture and sustain positive relationships

- p.63** Relationships that are important to the child - It is not only sibling relationships that are important to children but cousins, step-siblings and a range of other relationships including former carers.
- p.63** All children must be supported to continue relationships that are important to them, where it is safe to do so.
- p.17** When children talk about wanting to be safe, they talk about having relationships that are real, loving and consistent. That must be the starting point. Scotland must prioritise that message from children over rules that have too often failed to keep them safe.
- p.25** Scotland must create an approach to care where maintaining, sustaining and protecting loving relationships is possible and much more probable.

Nurturing and supporting families to stay together will take far more than what Scotland currently provides

- p.15** Nurturing and supporting families to stay together will take far more than what Scotland currently provides.
- p.46** Scotland's commitment to early intervention and prevention must be realised through proper, holistic support for families. There must be a significant upscale in universal family support services.

- p.48 Scotland must support a broad understanding of the importance of the early years of parenting.
- p.49 Scotland must ensure that there are places in every community for parents of young children to go for support and advice, to meet other local parents and to stay and play with their children.
- p.51 Scotland must ensure that timely, trauma informed and thoughtful support therapies act as a cushion to all those that require it, regardless of diagnosis.
- p.51 Scotland must recognise that there are some families experiencing particular issues who are much more likely to come into contact with the 'care system'.
- p.52 Scotland must support all families caring for disabled children and those with additional support needs. If families require intensive support they must get it and not be required to fight for it.
- p. 55 Whatever issues families face, Scotland must ensure that intensive family support is available, proactive and characterised by the **10 family support principles**.

Scotland must support care givers, wherever children live, to ensure children in their care feel loved and safe

- p.72 Attachment and Co-regulation – Secure attachments, based on loving, consistent relationships, must be the bedrock of every decision made about children. This principle must not operate only at a strategic level, but be part of the everyday practice of the workforce and family based carers.

- p.72 The way Scotland cares must be underpinned by the guiding principle of attachment and must be informed, responsive and reflective about the nature and impact of trauma.
- p.72 Every care setting must facilitate a relationship based approach, the workforce must be trained and supported to attune to children's physical and emotional states. This practice of 'tuning in' to how children are feeling, enables a process of co-regulation and stability where children can learn to manage stress and anxiety.
- p.72 The workforce must be supported to be present and emotionally available to the children in their care.
- p.73 All care givers, wherever children live, must know that their primary purpose is to develop nurturing, patient, kind, compassionate, trusting and respectful relationships so that children in their care feel loved and safe.
- p.74 Kinship Care – Whatever the mode of arrangement, Scotland must ensure that children living in kinship care get the support they need to thrive. Kinship must be actively explored as a positive place for children to be cared for.
- p. 76 Adoption Support – Adopting parents must have access to support at any point during the life of their child if they require it. That support must be available even if it was not initially required and must mirror the principles of intensive family support.
- p. 77 Foster Care – Scotland must better support its foster carers to be the best parents. Foster carers must feel valued, cared for and supported to care.
- p. 79 Residential Children's Homes and Residential Schools –The quality of relationships that children experience in residential settings must be the priority.

- p. 80** Secure care – There must be absolute clarity that the underlying principle of Secure Care is the provision of therapeutic, trauma informed support.
- p. 81** There must be far more alternatives for community based support and monitoring.
- p. 82** Use of Secure Care – The planning and provision of Secure Care must reflect the needs of children in Scotland to ensure there are sufficient places for those that need them.
- p. 84** Children must not be held in Secure Care because there are inadequate options for them within the community.

Scotland must limit the number of moves that children experience, and support them through any transitions

- p.67** Stability – Scotland must limit the number of moves that children experience and support carers to continue to care.
- p.67** The Care Review has heard from many children and adults who experienced far too many moves to allow for them to make friends and build relationships, settle at school and in neighbourhoods and communities. Scotland must limit the number of moves that children experience and support carers to continue to care.
- p.68** Transitions-Any transition in a care experience child's life must be limited, relational, planned and informed.
- p.68** Many care experienced children have told the Care Review how scary and upsetting transitions are and specifically that the transition away from their families was often badly managed.

- p.68** There must be recognition of the importance of the small daily transitions that happen across children's lives (such as going to and being collected from nursery), so that they are supported to be trauma free.
- p.93** Parenting does not stop at 18. Throughout The Plan, Scotland must continue to consider how to create greater equity and opportunity for care experienced young adults. That consideration must include how to increase opportunity for care experienced people to access employment, training, stable housing and support.
- p.93** There must be comprehensive thematic reviews of 'transition services,' and all those with ongoing parenting responsibility must be required to explain how they plan to deliver integrated services for care leavers to adulthood.
- p.93** Young people with care experience must have access to independent advocacy and legal representation so that they understand their rights to certain benefits and services and are able to access them.
- p.93** There must be a streamlining and clear communication of the variety of financial support available to those with care experience.

There must be a shift in focus from the risk of possible harm to the risk of not having stable, long term loving relationships

- p.16** Risk and Safety - Scotland must broaden its understanding of risk. This is not about tolerating more risk, or becoming more risk enabling. It means ensuring Scotland has a more holistic understanding of risk that includes the risk to the

child of removing them from the family. There must be a shift in focus from the risk of possible harm to the risk of not having stable, long term loving relationships.

- p.104** People and Risk – Scotland must support the workforce to contribute to a broader understanding of risk. Scotland must understand, through its people and structures, the risk of children not having loving supportive relationships and regular childhood and teenage experiences.

Children, families and the workforce must be supported by a system that is there when it is needed

- p.110** The scaffolding of help, support and accountability must be ready and responsive when it is required.
- p.110** Scotland must declutter the landscape of how it cares. Services and provision must be designed on the basis of need and with clear data, rather than on an acceptance of how the system has always operated.
- p.110** Scotland must stop selling care placements to Local Authorities outside of Scotland.
- p.111** Scotland must avoid the monetisation of the care of children and prevent the marketization of care.
- p.112** Scotland must make sure that its most vulnerable children are not profited from.
- p.112** The standards of care must be consistent across providers and these must continue to be subject to independent scrutiny and accreditation that values what children and families value.

- p.112** Legislative Environment – Scotland must create a clear legislative, enabling environment that supports families to stay together and protects and allows relationships to flourish.
- p.114** Data Collection - Scotland must improve the quality and completeness of its data and consider the potential of data linkage to improve accountability for outcomes rather than inputs alone.
- p.115** Advocacy Care experienced children and adults must have the right and access to independent advocacy, at all stages of their experience of care and beyond.
- p.116** Legal Representation – Scotland must consider the creation of an accredited legal specialism to set standards for legal professionals representing children.
- p.119** Inspection and Regulation - The Care Inspectorate and the SSSC must come together with other regulators to create a new, holistic framework that values what children and families value. That framework must apply to the totality of care experience and include aftercare and advocacy services. A new framework must be totally focused on children’s experience and their ability to find and sustain safe and nurturing relationships.
- p.27** Scrutiny and Regulation - Scotland must re-orientate its system of scrutiny to uphold relationships so children feel loved, safe and respected.
- p.27** There must be a complete overhaul of regulation and scrutiny that centres on listening to children about how they are cared for, their ability to flourish and thrive and that measures the things that matter to them.

p.118 Definitions – Scotland must ensure that current definitions that act as the access point for rights and entitlements are inclusive enough to benefit all young people for whom Scotland has had parenting responsibility.

Scotland must stop stigmatising the children it cares for

- p.87** Normalisation of Care Experience – Scotland should be a good parent to the children it has responsibility for. That means carers and workers must act, speak and behave like a family so that Scotland can be the best parent it can be. Scotland must stop stigmatising the children it cares for.
- p.87** Language of Care – Scotland must change the language of care. Language must be easily understood, be positive and must not create or compound stigma.
- p.87** Respite - Scotland must stop using the word 'respite' and rethink the nature of short breaks.
- p.69** Life Stories – Scotland must understand that 'language creates realities'. Those with care experience must hold and own the narrative of their stories and lives; simple, caring language must be used in the writing of care files.
- p.35** Scotland must be committed to the development of digital tools that incorporate the principle of information ownership. These digital tools must operate at a scale that allows care experienced children and young adults to have control over their information and how it is shared.
- p.36** Scotland must acknowledge that it is the culture surrounding information sharing that has the biggest impact on protecting children.

p.22 There must be no barriers for children to have regular, positive childhood experiences.

p.88 Childhood experiences – In all care settings, Scotland must provide and promote positive, regular experiences for children.

Supporting the workforce to care must be at the heart of Scotland's service planning

- p.97** The workforce must be nurtured. They must be supported at all stages of their caring journey. That support must enable them to facilitate a sense of home, family, friends, community and belonging in which children feel loved and can flourish.
- p. 97** Structure and definition – Scotland's understanding of the workforce must primarily be about their role in terms of the degree of closeness of relationships they have with children, rather than their status as paid/unpaid or in terms of professional/voluntary.
- p.100** Supporting the workforce to care must be at the heart of Scotland's service planning. Supervision and reflective practice is essential for all practitioners, regardless of their professional discipline or role, who are working with children.
- p.101** Personal identity, love and relationships - Children who have been harmed through relationships, must have supportive relationships in order to heal. Scotland must support and encourage the workforce to bring their whole selves to their work, and to act in a way that feels natural and not impeded by a professional construct.

- p.23** The purpose of the workforce must be to be caring above anything else.
- p.24** Rather than detach, the workforce must be encouraged not to step back but to step in.
- p.107** Learning and Development – There must be a rethinking of learning and training in Scotland to create a well-supported workforce that can operate across disciplines.
- p.108** Learning must support the interaction between Family Carers and other professionals. It should nurture equal partnerships and encourage joint learning, with informal learning, mentoring, coaching and support networks, and opportunities for joint reflective practice. Feedback must be a routine component of development.

Active listening and engagement must be fundamental to the way Scotland makes decisions and supports children and families

- p.14** Scotland must ensure decision making is based, first and foremost, on what the child needs and wants.
- p.14** This is particularly important in decisions about where a child will find a stable, loving home. This is not naïve; listening to children, particularly those who have experienced trauma can be difficult, and requires a thoughtful and supported workforce to act in their best interests with a comprehensive understanding of what those interests are.
- p.14** There will be times where children may be so hurt and traumatised that they may say they want to stay in family settings that are severely inappropriate for them. Decision

making must also take account of what those closest to children report, rather than relying on a professional hierarchy.

- p.14** Many in the workforce who are close to children have expressed concerns to the Care Review that they have been ignored in decision making processes. People who children trust, and who have all the information available to them, must be able to make decisions that provide children with the best possible start in life.
- p.14** The Care Review has heard stories where a powerful voice from a range of professional backgrounds has dominated, crowding out of the voices of children and alternative perspectives, leading to decisions that have not been in the best interests of the child.
- p.14** Scotland must challenge power dynamics within all decision making processes to achieve a balance which ensures all decisions taken are in the best interests of the child.
- p. 37** Scotland must listen to care experienced children and young adults in the delivery, inspection and continuous improvement of services and of care. Scotland must never again have to commission a review or a judicial inquiry on this scale because participation and listening must form part of everything within Scotland’s system of care.
- p. 41** To support parents and ensure Local Authorities are fulfilling their obligations to children and families, Scotland must test the extension of the enforcement and compulsion powers to ensure both families and those with statutory responsibility are compelled to attend and comply with the orders of the Children’s Hearing.

#KeepThePromise

'The Promise' outlines an approach to family and to care that will mean that Scotland can truly be 'the best place in the world to grow up.' To achieve that, there is considerable work to be done.

This series of briefings is intended to support your organisation in thinking about what it means to #KeepThePromise. It should be used to help you to align organisational policies, strategies and practices with what the Care Review heard, and to identify what changes can be made to those, both now and in the future. The Care Review made clear that it is simply not possible to isolate any one aspect of the system. Therefore, these sector briefings should also help organisations understand who else they need to work with in order to make change happen.

To realise the ambitious scale and extent of change, The Promise Team will need the ongoing input and views of all those with responsibility. Please look at the #KeepThePromise **engagement document** to help you think about the work of change.

The Promise website will be regularly updated with information and resources.

For more information about what the Care Review heard about children's social care, see the **Evidence Framework**.



#KeepThePromise