

#KeepThePromise



# Workforce

---

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:** 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:** 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:** 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:** 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:** 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

- 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.
- 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.
- Scotland must support the workforce to contribute to a broader understanding of risk.
- There must be no barriers for children to have regular, positive childhood experiences.
- The language of care is stigmatising for children and must change.
- The purpose of the workforce must be to be caring above anything else.
- There must be a rethinking of learning and training in Scotland to create a well-supported workforce that can operate across disciplines.
- 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.

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

- p.100** Supervision and reflective practice is essential for all practitioners, regardless of their professional discipline or role, who are working with children.
- p.100** That must include teachers, particularly those working in residential or alternative provision.
- p.100** Providing adequate time for effective, flexible, day to day and more regular structured support, supervision and reflective practice is vital in caring for the workforce so that they can care for others.
- p.100** It supports the development of a workforce that can manage risk in a relational rather than a process driven way and feels safe to practice even in challenging circumstances. Scotland must ensure the provision of properly trained supervisors.
- p.100** Without proper supervision and support, the workforce is more likely to feel isolated, vulnerable and risk averse. Scotland must recognise the secondary effects of working with and caring for children who have and continue to experience trauma.
- p.100** Reflection, supervision and support must be recognised as an essential part of practice for anyone working with children.
- p.100** Scotland must value relational practice with children and families. Scotland must build in time for reflection across all of the workforce, tailored to the needs and preferences of individuals and delivered in ways which work best for children, young people and their families.
- p.100** Reflective practice (coaching, mentoring, and supervision) must include things that matter to children, including how loved they feel, how their rights are upheld and how stigma is being reduced. This must emphasise support for the worker and their relationship with the child over evaluation of performance.
- p.100** Scotland must recognise that the workforce is also made up of survivors of trauma. Those with lived experience must be supported to be part of the workforce and nurture their instinct to 'give back,' but there must be recognition of the pain that may accompany that involvement. They must be supported to continue to care.
- p.101** Employment conditions must allow people involved in the care of children to flourish and feel valued, including attention to workload, remuneration, employment status and environmental conditions. Scotland cannot expect those providing relational human care to operate on good will alone.
- p.101** Nurture and care for the workforce, particularly for Family Carers, will involve time away. All families benefit from babysitting opportunities and short breaks; these can also benefit children and be a time of fun, treats and love. All short breaks must mirror those routinely in place in wider family networks (with recognised continuity of relationship), and take place in ways that do not create or compound stigma, and help children continue to feel part of the family.

## Children who have been harmed through relationships, must have supportive relationships in order to heal.

**p.101** 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.101** The personal and the professional must not be seen as two different things; the workforce must be supported to be human with the people they work with.

**p.101** The workforce must be supported to have a strong understanding of themselves. That must begin with personal insight that:

- Fosters a core sense of self;
- Accepts personal vulnerability;
- Enables awareness and reflection;
- Facilitates understanding of the relationship between self,
  - team and the context in which the team is operating;
  - Allows response in accordance with individual values when
    - children, young people and contexts are challenging;
    - Encourages curiosity and openness to learn;
    - Enables people to be the 'person' not the 'badge.'

**p.103** Personal identity must then support the development of a cohesive professional identity that actively supports meaningful human connection. That must involve:

- Cultivating values based leadership and emotional intelligence at all levels.
- Fundamentally shifting the power balance and treating children and families with respect, as equal and never 'othering.'
- Always actively upholding children's rights and challenging practice which is not consistent with those rights.
- Articulating aspirational and inspirational aims for all professional roles.
- Designing systems and processes that are value based and emotionally informed.
- Creating working conditions that align to values to support personal lives.
- Fostering a culture of openness that welcomes challenge.

**p.103** Prioritising relationships and bringing your whole self (including your own lived experience) into the workplace is vital in embedding value based practice and leadership.

**p.103** Scotland must retain and recruit a workforce that really wants to work with children, young people and families and make a difference. That workforce must be supported to develop the space within which loving care and nurturing relationships can develop.

**p.103** The workforce must be supported and encouraged to maintain relationships with people that matter to them, even if they 'move on'. The relationship and the needs of the young person must be prioritised. This will require imaginative planning, supportive systems and adequate resource.

## Scotland must support the workforce to contribute to a broader understanding of risk.

- p.104** Children need to be enabled to take sensible risks in order to grow and develop their resilience. If they are not allowed the space to take risks that are a natural and perfectly ordinary part of growing up, children remain dependent on the 'system' rather than moving towards independent living. Independence is rooted in relationships, and young people should be able to transition to adulthood in a supportive and positive way when they feel ready to do so.
- p.104** The Care Review has heard of the frustration of children who have been prevented from engaging in activities that their peers were allowed to do.
- p.104** The workforce wants to provide appropriate opportunities for personal development. They reported frustration with the 'care system' and its processes, and an inherent fear that they would be blamed and punished if things went wrong. These circumstances tended to be exacerbated in situations where children might have complex needs and/or challenging behaviours, or during periods of crisis.
- p.104** Scotland must help the workforce to have a different conception of risk taking, where risk taking is seen as a normal part of care. This shift in mindset must be underpinned by developing the confidence of the workforce.
- p.104** Leadership based on a broader understanding of risk is critical. Leadership must recognise that completing all the forms may make you or your organisation 'feel better' but

may not actually minimise the risk in any given circumstance or represent defensible decision making.

- p.104** Natural, warm human relationships must be an essential component of strong leadership, and act as a demonstration to the wider workforce.
- p.104** The workforce must be supported to work autonomously so that they can make decisions that are natural and thoughtful. Developmental training and ongoing professional development must give the workforce the tools and confidence to exercise effective judgement.
- p.104** 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.
- p.105** This includes:
- Reframing of risk as part of positive development; risk must be contextualised with differentiation between risk associated with crisis and risk associated with other behaviours. Balanced, incremental risk taking as part of healthy personal development in wider society must be encouraged.
  - Systems and processes that behave like a good parent and maintain a focus on the safety and wellbeing of children and workforce members, rather than a narrow risk framework.
  - Family Carer roles must be able to make decisions on all the usual aspects of parenting within previously agreed parameters rather than having to seek individual permissions on every occasion. Bureaucracy must not get in the way of day to day decision making.

- Values, permissions and the courage to build childhoods rather than manage risk. There must be a revisiting of values individually and organisationally when things get difficult.
- Complaints and disciplinary processes that are clear about what supports are in place for the workforce when things do not go as planned.
- Culture change which is supportive of making mistakes as part of learning, building reliability, predictability and trust.
- Establishment of a courageous culture in which workforce members are encouraged to challenge practice that is not meeting the needs of children and families.
- Societal recognition that the workforce is helping young people find a way through complex and emotive areas of their life, and is engaging young people in active decision making about a risk enabling environment.
- Minimising paperwork so that more time can be spent with children to reduce risk effectively, working through relationships and building their own risk competence within their community.

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

**p.22** Children in care must be actively supported to develop connections and relationships. Relationships must not be prevented by an assumption that children may come to harm and / or face unnecessary risk. All children, whether cared for at home or removed from their family, must be

supported to participate in wider family and community networks.

- p.22** Children must have opportunities to build a range of relationships that are similar to 'grandads' or 'aunties'.
- p.22** Spending a weekend with a relative or family friend while a parent has a break is a common experience welcomed by many children and is significantly different to being placed in short term care while your foster family has a holiday.
- p.22** Children must have experiences of visiting, staying over or holidays with people outside of their immediate carers – and these must never be called respite and must never be used in a way that makes a child feel excluded from family and home.

## The language of care is stigmatising for children and must change

- p.24** For years, pre-dating the Care Review, care experienced children and adults have said language needs to change to normalise their lives and shift away from professional speak. The language of care is stigmatising for children.
- p.24** Scotland must not use terms like 'placement' and 'contact' to talk about a child's home and spending time with their family. Professionalised language for some members of the workforce helps them to detach in order to deal with what can be emotionally difficult work.
- p.24** For children, unintentional use of professionalised language compounds a sense of them being different, and they told the Care Review it can feel belittling and have an impact on their sense of self.

- p.24** Similarly, environments where meetings are taking place must be home-like, rather than institutional, whether a child's home or where they meet family and / or people who support them.
- p.24** Timing of meetings for support and how the people who provide support look (for example, not wearing lanyards and badges) is important. When meetings take place, they must be at times and in locations that work for the child and must not adversely impact on their life and education.

## The purpose of the workforce must be to be caring above anything else.

- p.23** That starts with recruiting people with the right ethos and qualities rather than qualifications. This means a shift away from reliance on specialism to an understanding of the importance of relationships, values and peer networks of support and care.
- p.23** Many professionals talk about the need for training and specialist skills and knowledge to meet needs. There is no doubt that staff need to build confidence in developing relationships. Training and specialist skills are vital in supporting this development, but this is also about creating trust and supporting the capacity to love.
- p.24** There must be increased trust in the workforce to make meaningful connections based on instinct and judgement with any associated process designed to support their ability to care and make connections.
- p.24** There must be a significant decluttering of guidelines and procedure –giving clear permission to make connections and act in kindness.

- p.24** Guidelines must be targeted and necessary so that relationships take clear precedence over everything else.

## There must be a rethinking of learning and training in Scotland to create a well-supported workforce that can operate across disciplines.

- p.107** The Care Review recognises the questions about qualification frameworks; and has approached these from the perspective of what children and families need to support the maintenance and development of loving relationships.
- p.107** Scotland must support a model of a workforce learning together, both in a multidisciplinary context and with families. The foundations of learning must be loving relationships, having fun, an understanding of self, and key aspects of child development and children's rights.
- p.107** There must be a focus on developing shared understanding across development and practice. That starts with a wider understanding and recognition of the importance of good parenting.
- p.107** Parenting education should be encouraged and available for everyone in advance of parenthood as an essential part of building a healthy society. That does not mean the provision of parenting education programmes that can be stigmatising, where an invitation onto a course can be interpreted as a sign of failure. Rather there must be a broader celebration of parenting and universal, community based, accessible nurture and support.

- p.107** There must be a clear learning pathway at all levels of the workforce that builds a sense of self, emotional competency and human connection through relationships. This must involve shared learning across professional disciplines to create a common language and culture, transferable skills and better information sharing between sectors.
- p.107** There must be active consideration of the development of multidisciplinary foundation years of learning for a range of professionals, covering basic principles of child development and children's rights. Shared learning allows disciplines to learn together and gain a shared perspective, values and language.
- p.107** In the meantime, there must be an identification of gaps in the training of the workforce in some related sectors (such as education, justice and health) to ensure they are addressed as a matter of urgency.
- p.108** Scotland must ensure flexible entry routes that build towards qualifications, recognising prior learning and experience, including lived experience. Scotland must recognise that, where educational experience has been disrupted, some people may require additional or different support to realise their potential.
- p.108** There must be efforts to ensure that learning pathways are accessible and promoted to all with appropriate funding routes to build a diverse workforce.
- p.108** All of the workforce should access, at a level appropriate to their role, initial and lifelong learning that is grounded in attachment theory, trauma responsive care and the clear understanding and application of children's Rights.
- p.108** Child development should be part of essential foundation learning for anyone working with children, not merely 'added on' as part of continuous professional development.
- p.108** There must be clarity about the application of theory to practice so that all learning can be applied.
- 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.

## #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 the workforce, see the **Evidence Framework**.



## #KeepThePromise