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Our Reference: 202300384735

Your Reference: Keeping the promise – homelessness and suicide prevention

21 November 2023

Dear Mr Anderson,

Thank you for your letter of 10 November, regarding keeping The Promise – homelessness and suicide prevention.

The Scottish Government is committed to keeping The Promise by 2030, working with children, young people and families, and across the public and third sectors, to improve the outcomes for our care experience population. This commitment is reinforced in the Programme for Government which recognises the cross portfolio responsibility to introduce the change required. In support of this, the First Minister has established a dedicated Cabinet Sub-Committee on the Promise which met for the first time last month.

I understand that you have also written to Maree Todd, Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport. Whilst I focus my response on my portfolio area, I wish to recognise the connections between our respective portfolios. As you are aware, the Scottish Government have convened a Ministerial Oversight Group on Homelessness, which both Ms Todd and I sit on.

I note the concerns you have raised in your letter regarding the implementation of the [Care Leavers Homelessness Prevention Pathway](#) and would like to reassure you that tackling homelessness is a key priority for the Scottish Government. [Our Ending Homelessness Together strategy](#), developed with expert input, is the right long term strategy to end homelessness in Scotland.

Whilst the recommendations in the Care Leavers Homelessness Prevention Pathway are not being implemented via a formal implementation group, work is progressing on related policies, such as the homelessness prevention duties and Continuing Care and Aftercare for care leavers, which directly link

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to the recommendations in the pathway.

The pathway to prevent homelessness for care leavers sets out a number of recommendations designed to protect care leavers, including ensuring consistent implementation of both Continuing Care and Aftercare policy.

In respect of the recommendations relating to Continuing Care, we are working with local authorities to improve our annual care leaver data collection, and we commissioned the CELCIS report [Continuing Care: An exploration of implementation](#), which was published in May 2022. In response to the CELCIS report, we are currently updating Continuing Care guidance to provide clarity and improve accessibility for all to support young people in accessing the help they are entitled to and will benefit from. This is due to be published in Spring 2024.

Preventing homelessness from happening in the first place is the best and most effective way to end homelessness. As announced in the Programme for Government 2023 to 2024, we are also bringing forward new duties on the prevention of homelessness as part of the introduction of housing legislation during the coming parliamentary year.

The proposals for new Prevention of Homelessness Duties build on the strong housing rights that already exist in Scotland for people who become homeless and the approach is based around the principles of shared public responsibility, earlier intervention and increasing choice and control.

The Scottish Government has committed to work closely with partners, both in strategic and frontline roles, and with people who have lived experience of homelessness, in developing the legislation and the guidance and training required to accompany the new duties.

In recognising that youth homelessness is not just a housing issue, the pathways call for change across youth, welfare, health, justice, housing, homelessness and the children and families' sectors. In progressing this joint response, the Ministerial Oversight Group on Homelessness brings together Ministers from across the Scottish Government to identify the actions required across portfolios to prevent and end homelessness. It also provides a space for shared political leadership and enhanced policy links with a view to ensuring everyone has a safe, warm place to call home.

If I may reassure you, the Scottish Government is committed to continue to work in partnership with key stakeholders to ensure that the ambitions of the recommendations of both the Care Leavers Homelessness Prevention Pathway, and the Continuing Care reports are addressed. If you would welcome the opportunity to discuss further any areas where you feel the partnership approach should be adjusting its focus to better meet the recommendations of The Promise I would welcome the opportunity to hear from you.

In your letter you have raised the issue of suicide prevention and I am aware that Ms Todd is responding separately. However, let me share the ambition that as a Government, we are absolutely focused on tackling the root causes of suicide – such as poverty, homelessness, substance use and the cost of living crisis and in doing so taking a whole of Government and society approach to action.

The National Suicide Prevention Advisory Group includes representation from the care experience community and Scotland's Suicide Prevention [Action Plan](#) carries commitment to engage with care experienced people to better understand what action is needed to embed suicide prevention activity

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and ensure that our work has maximum impact.

I hope the information contained in this response is helpful to you. I appreciate the Board's feedback on these issues and their continued oversight. I'd be happy to meet with you and the Board to discuss this and other actions being undertaken by the Scottish Government to drive forward activity to keep The Promise.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul McLennan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

PAUL MCLENNAN
Minister for Housing

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