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Your Reference: The Oversight Board

23 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 Paul McLennan, Minister for Housing on similar points. 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 Mr McLennan and I sit on.

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. It is essential that we take a whole of Government and society approach which is focused on addressing the social determinants of suicide, whilst ensuring all opportunities to incorporate suicide prevention across our policy development and service delivery are taken.

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Our strategy prioritises action on high-risk settings and people with higher risk of suicide, e.g. children and young people, and we are tailoring our approaches to meet the needs of different groups, including the needs of people who are care experienced.

Scotland's Suicide Prevention [Action Plan](#) contains a commitment to work with The Promise Scotland to engage with care experienced people to better understand what action is needed to embed suicide prevention activity in our support to children and young people in care, and care leavers. To ensure that our work has maximum impact, we have established a National Suicide Prevention Advisory Group who will provide strategic advice on the delivery of the strategy and includes representation from the care experience sector. Our Youth Advisory Group also includes care experienced young people who will play a pivotal role in shaping the delivery of suicide prevention in Scotland.

Our recently announced priorities for year one of the strategy include an action to build more understanding of suicide risk and behaviour amongst young people and use this to improve responses. Discussions are underway with officials working on The Promise and other policy teams to explore cross-government opportunities to take concrete and early action on key social determinants of suicide.

In parallel, a programme of cross-cutting engagement, including with care-experienced organisations and equalities groups, is being taken forward by our delivery leads to ensure that our work on suicide prevention is aligned and connected at local and national level with partners who are driving change across their communities. In addition, an Academic Advisory Group which is undertaking an umbrella review of effective interventions to look at key settings such as education and youth work settings and focus on peer support and help seeking.

A further key action underway is the examination of available evidence, identifying gaps in data and considering what action should be taken to fill these gaps. The suicide review process that we are introducing will add to our demographic understanding of death by suicide and will include the capture of information about adults who are care experienced. This process will help inform future work to implement effective interventions.

I note the concerns you have raised in your letter regard 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.

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 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.

I understand that Mr McLennan has written to you separately with further detail on the work underway in support of addressing homelessness.

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 the Board to discuss this and other actions being undertaken by the Scottish Government to drive forward activity to keep The Promise.

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Yours sincerely,



Maree Todd MSP

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