

#KeepThePromise



Family Support

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

- Scotland must do all it can to keep children with their families.
- There must be more support for families, based in the communities where they live.
- There must be significant, ongoing and persistent commitment to ending poverty and mitigating its impacts for Scotland's children, families and communities.
- Whatever issues families face, Scotland must ensure that intensive family support is available, proactive and characterised by the **10 family support principles**:
 - Community Based
 - Responsive and Timely
 - Work with Family Assets
 - Empowerment and Agency
 - Flexible
 - Holistic and Relational
 - Therapeutic
 - Non-Stigmatising:
 - Patient and Persistent
 - Underpinned by Children's Rights

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. The current 'looked after at home' model does not provide families with a sufficient basis of support to stay together and thrive.
- p.52** 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.
- p.52** 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.54** Whatever issues families face, Scotland must ensure that intensive family support is available, proactive and characterised by the 10 principles laid out below.
- p.54** These principles apply to all families that need support to stay together.
- p.54** The scaffolding of the system must shift from managing risks and needs to supporting families to find their own solutions. At its core, intensive family support must be based on relationships between families and the workforce.
- p.54** The workforce must be supported to be themselves and to be genuine with families that they work with.

Ten Principles of Intensive Family Support

1. Community Based

Intensive family support must be geographically located in local communities, with the explicit intention of maximising the assets of the community and community-based relationships. Support must be explicitly connected to, or even housed in, locations that work for local families and the community, such as schools, health centres, village halls and sports centres. Scotland knows where this support is most needed. Communities must have a say in where support is located.

2. Responsive and Timely

Intensive family support services must operate outwith a Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm approach. There must be no concept of an 'out of hours' service. Families do not operate on those timescales and support must be responsive to family need.

3. Work with Family Assets

When working with families, the orientation of support must look at what is working well for the family taking a strengths based approach rather than a deficit-based approach that operates from a premise of what is going wrong. The starting point must be listening to what children and their families say they need in order to flourish, not what the system dictates they need.

4. Empowerment and Agency

Children and their families must have a say about the people who provide them with support. Intensive family support requires relationships built on trust and honesty. If support services are going to succeed, the families receiving support must be able to choose those people with whom they have a natural connection. The quality of relationships between families and the workforce is a key factor in the likelihood of

interventions being successful. Peer support has been proven to work in other parts of the world and must be tested during the Implementation of the Care Review. Budgets must be responsive to families' choices. There should be no barriers to families' wishes being carried out, with members of various services and organisations available as a support team.

5. Flexible

The needs of each family are different and Scotland must recognise the agency and unique needs of families to ensure that support is tailored and specific. Scotland must think creatively in terms of the support families might need and ensure the workforce is responsive. For some families there may be a need for partial foster care (a couple of nights a week). For other families there may be a need for live in support to raise the capacity of parents. There is not a 'one size fits all' approach. The crux of success lies in the family-workforce relationships.

6. Holistic and Relational

Children live within families and support must be family based. Interventions must be focused on the wider family context so that there are not a multitude of services addressing specific, isolated and individual issues within families. The likelihood of success is not based on the specific intervention but on a relationship of trust between families and workers. Support must look across the width of the family and not simply the variety of issues that the family may present with. Family plans must incorporate the child's plan (and the needs of all other children who may be impacted by changes in the family setting) and these must always be actively considered as part of decision making.

7. Therapeutic

It is likely that families requiring long-term intensive support have experienced trauma in their lives. Scotland must ensure that support to families recognises trauma and works with families to heal. There must be no barrier, be it referral or category, that limits parents and children from having access to mental health support when and if required.

8. Non-Stigmatising:

The way in which support is delivered must not stigmatise the family. That means there must be no uniforms, lanyards or branded vehicles appearing outside houses or schools to provide support. The basis of all support must be the quality of relationships, not the professionalisation of the workforce. The language of family support must reflect normal discourse, and not be hidden behind professional language such as 'looked after child' ("LAC"), reviews and risk assessment. Overly professionalised language stigmatises families and acts as a barrier to engaging and supportive work.

9. Patient and Persistent

Scotland must accept that human change takes time and effort. Intervention has to be based on need. Scotland must move away from limiting intervention to set periods of time. Long term change and intensive support take time and Scotland must be patient in working with families where there are complex, challenging circumstances.

10. Underpinned by Children's Rights

Whilst the family must be viewed collectively and not as isolated individuals, support services must be underpinned by the rights of the children they are working with. That means ensuring that all the rights of children are upheld in all decisions and support for the family. It will mean that children's rights are the funnel through which every decision and support service is viewed.

Poverty must be addressed

- p.46** The Care Review has not been able to ignore the impact of poverty on families and communities across Scotland. There is significant evidence that social and economic inequalities, particularly poverty and debt, increase the stressors in families and communities.
- p.46** Poverty can make parenting more difficult. When poverty is combined with other issues such as mental health problems, domestic abuse or substance use, the challenges of parenting can be magnified. Families struggling to cope with poverty, poor housing, substance use and health difficulties may have little capacity to engage with services in order to make changes.
- p.46** Providing support through universal services is non-stigmatising for families and is critical to building relationships with trusted professionals which can ameliorate the impact of poverty. It establishes good patterns of help-seeking behaviour.
- p.46** Given the prevalence of poverty, these services need to be able to support and assist families sensitively where poverty is the underlying problem.

There must be more support for families, based in the communities where they live

- 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.47** Those services must have the development of authentic human relationships as their core focus, so Scotland's experience of support is one that builds on relationships to facilitate human connection.
- p.46** Good universal support also provides the basis for the identification of risk of harm for children. Universal support will look different in every community, and be delivered by a range of organisations and groups, but it must follow the journey of a family.
- 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** There must be criteria free, community based access to therapies that do not stigmatise, but help and support children and young adults to work through difficulties they are facing.
- 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.

- 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.

#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 family support, see the **Evidence Framework**.



#KeepThePromise