

Gillian Martin MSP, Convener  
Health, Social Care and Sport Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

5<sup>th</sup> September 2022

Dear Ms Martin,

**Re: Call for evidence on the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill**

I write to highlight research commissioned by [The Promise Scotland](#) to establish the implications of the National Care Service proposals on work to implement the conclusions of the [Independent Care Review](#).

Members of the Committee may be familiar with the Independent Care Review and its concluding report, [The Promise](#), which set out the rationale and vision for reform of the Scottish care system. Following cross-party support for implementation, The Promise Scotland was established as an independent organisation to support and monitor the change required to the care system for all children and young people to grow up loved, safe and respected so that they realise their full potential.

Children and families repeatedly told the Independent Care Review the way the system works is a primary barrier to change, as the services they experience are disconnected which severely impacts their ability to seek and receive support. Structural and legislative change to improve the quality and consistency of social services is urgent and necessary work.

It is also work which presents significant risk of worsening experiences and outcomes if not fully scoped and understood in the context of existing policy commitments.

To establish whether including children and families within the proposed National Care Service would keep the promise already made, The Promise Scotland commissioned [research and analysis of the 1,095 published responses](#) from the Scottish Government consultation.

This work concluded that there is not enough information at present to reach a view on the impact and value of a National Care Service for children and families. To support decision-making, twelve core questions were identified (p.85 of the enclosed report) relating to the inclusion of children and families' services which will be helpful for the Committee in considering the impact of the Bill on services.

The Committee will be aware there is work underway to build an evidence base for decision-making on the future of children and families' services. The Promise Scotland continues to engage constructively on this with the Scottish Government. Whilst building evidence bases takes time, the current timeline of the set-up of the National Care Service necessitates decision-making on children's services prior to any service design work to avoid the risk of a retrofitted model. As the Bill currently stands, our concern is that there is a potential

disconnect between the legislative process now underway and the developing evidence for making a decision on whether to include children's services as part of the National Care Service.

As you know, The Promise has enjoyed cross- party commitment since the conclusions of the Independent Care Review in February 2020. We look forward to working with the Committee to build on that consensus as the Parliamentary process continues. I would ask the Committee to consider whether the structure of this Bill provides sufficient information and detail to determine whether a National Care Service will best serve the interests of children and families.

Children and families have been clear that what matters most is that they can easily access the support they need, when they need it, regardless of structures or legislative underpinning. Services must be responsive to the specific needs of individual children and families, offering holistic support that is not siloed or complex to access due to the systems and frameworks put in place by decision-makers.

If the Committee would find it helpful to discuss the work to keep the promise and how this may interact with the development of a National Care Service, I would be happy to do so.

Yours sincerely



Fraser McKinlay  
Chief Executive, The Promise