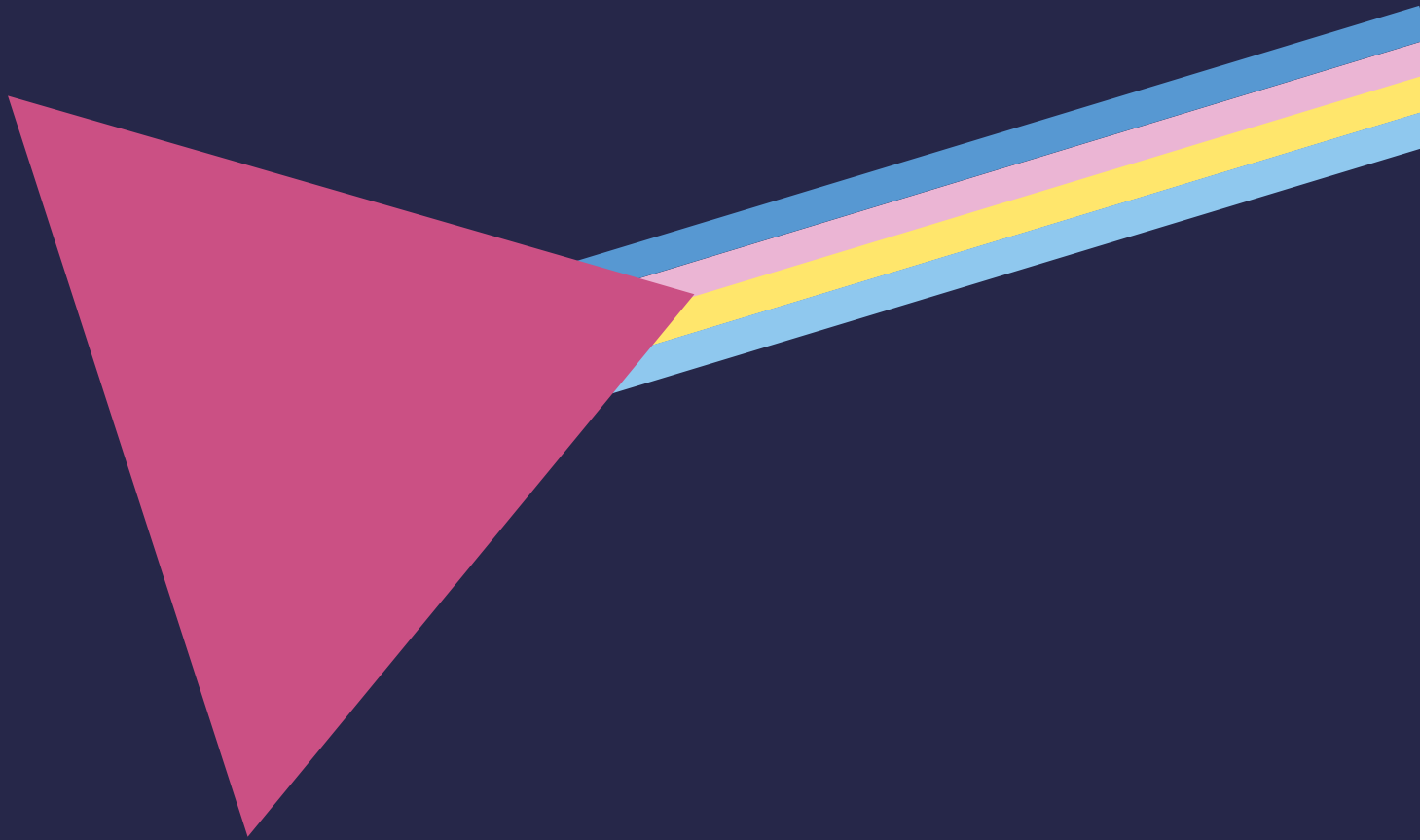


# Devising Plan 24-30 Together

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Independent  
Strategic Advisor



# Devising Plan 24-30 Together

In June 2023, Fiona Duncan set out her role in developing Plan 24-30 as Independent Strategic Advisor and outlined her intentions for the work.

Continuity is important - **Plan 24-30** will take over from **Plan 21-24**, building on what has already happened.

The Oversight Board was clear in [Report TWO](#) all actions identified in **Plan 21-24** will not be met within the timescale, but it is still possible for the promise to be kept in full by 2030. This makes the job of **Plan 24-30** critical. It must get the sequencing, prioritisation, and acceleration of the work required, right. Devising **Plan 24-30** together is the only way to achieve this. It cannot simply be produced and published. It must be the product of high levels of engagement, input from the care community and all organisations working for change, and a key success measure at point of publication is whether all those who will work to it and who are waiting for the promise to be kept, can see their inputs in **Plan 24-30**.

Maintaining continuity is also important and requires a full understanding of the achievements and efforts made under **Plan 21-24**. Engagement has shown that, over 3½ years since the conclusions of the Independent Care Review, commitment to change remains high and change across legislation, policy, practice, and culture is happening. To capture this and build on it, **Plan 21-24** will be evaluated, and the outputs fed into **Plan 24-30**.

The high levels of engagement and the depth of understanding of progress required for **Plan 24-30** to be a success means time will be taken to complete evaluation and get it right, leading to a June 2024 publication date. Moving from **Plan 21-24** to **Plan 24-30** cannot be a sharp or confusing process. It must be supportive, with clear links made between the Plans so those working for change under the former can pick up the threads left in the latter.

In June 2023, Fiona said she would publish the approach and timeline for **Plan 24-30** to ensure everyone is clear on what is happening, when, and opportunities to get involved. This is detailed below, split into three **phases**, beginning with comprehensive and broad engagement.

A first draft of core principles at the heart of the work to produce **Plan 24-30** was also published and feedback sought. [You can read more about what was heard here.](#)

The core principles were strengthened thanks to this feedback, and are outlined below:

- **Remain rooted in the needs and aspirations of the care community, children, adults and families.**

The work to devise **Plan 24-30** will be relentlessly focused on keeping the promise to the care community who will be actively and meaningfully involved throughout and in all aspects. Devising **Plan 24-30** together will ensure it will both meet the needs and aspirations of the care community, children, and families, and give confidence it is entirely deliverable by the paid and unpaid workforce.

- **Provide a single shared plan which sets out a route map to #KeepThePromise by 2030.**

**Plan 24-30** will build on the progress made by **Plan 21-24**. It will be flexible to respond to the ever-changing external environment and ensure it is appropriately supported by adequate resourcing. It will be specific about realising the vision of the promise and the roles and responsibilities required. It will include frequent milestones to make clear what needs to be done by who and by when.

- **Provide a common understanding of how progress will be measured and be able to keep track.**

Milestones will be set to make it possible to keep track of Scotland's progress against delivery of **Plan 24-30**. The clarity of what, by who, and by when will support the establishment of a monitoring framework to be clear about when children, families and care experienced adults must feel the benefit of the changes. This must result in a new way to inspect, scrutinise, audit, and govern public services.

Before publication of **Plan 24-30**, a final sense check will be undertaken against these core principles to ensure they have been met fully met.

The core principles will then remain at the very heart of **Plan 24-30** until its conclusion.

# What has been heard so far

Other crucial feedback received from the consultation and engagement earlier this year includes:

- **The purpose of Plan 24-30 must be to make sure the promise is delivered in full across Scotland in a way that ensures change is sustained.**

The promise was made to children, families, and care experienced adults because they first campaigned for and then told and took part in the Independent Care Review.

Therefore, the work to devise and deliver **Plan 24-30** must take full account of whether the change is happening is keeping the promise, is being felt by children, families, and care experienced adults, and is fast enough.

- **Plan 21-24 is well understood and embedded but not being felt by all children, families and care experienced adults.**

Across Scotland, organisations with statutory responsibilities towards children and families have incorporated **Plan 21-24** into their plans and strategies. That has not always been an easy process, but essential to maintain the fundamental structures of **Plan 21-24** within **Plan 24-30** to ensure organisations can continue to focus their efforts on change that will show impact and be felt by children, families, and care experienced adults.

Work to develop **Plan 24-30** must not ask questions to which the answers are already known. There is no time for duplication or prevarication. Learning must build on what has come before, and lead to action that delivers the promise, in full, everywhere. It must result in the sort of changes that matter most to children and families and care experienced adults and sustained. This is not currently the case and is not acceptable.

That means the fundamentals of **Plan 21-24**: Poverty, Child Rights, Listening, Language, and What Matters, will remain. A focus on family support and facilitating a good childhood will remain. This should reassure organisations working on these fundamentals, although Scotland is now three years into its work to keep the promise and it is also important to note the external landscape has changed in that time period. This means the original fundamentals will need to be added to - for example, to include a focus on the lifelong impact of care experience.

The siloed working that remains in places cannot continue. It will not deliver. There must be greater collaboration within organisations, between agencies and sectors which will require strong collective leadership.

- **Funding is challenging and requires a central, strategic approach.**

The cost-of-living crisis has had a profound impact on Scotland's families. It has also had an impact on public finances, which means that there is a huge amount of pressure on budgetary decision-making.

The moral and fiscal arguments for early help and support are well made and must continue to be made, and **Plan 24-30** needs to provide a framework for prioritisation.

There are mechanisms already in place however the depth of the challenge means a clearer and more cohesive investment and disinvestment strategy is needed. Scottish Government must lead this work and ensure prioritisation for investment and, crucially, the work that needs to move towards disinvestment, to ensure Scotland can upscale early help and support, whilst delivering what is needed and reducing the need for 'failure demand' services.

A methodology will be integrated into the development and delivery of **Plan 24-30** that will aim to align disparate funding pots, aspire for policy cohesion and result in co-terminus initiatives with funding distributed in a way that makes prevention and provision a possibility, over timeframes that reflect delivery. Crucially, this methodology must ensure the needs of children, families, and care experienced adults are met, and they can be confident this will be sustained.

- **Scrutiny drives delivery.**

For Scotland to be confident it is measuring the impact of the change in ways that truly reflect what matters most to children, families, and care experienced adults as stated many times, it must change what it collects and the ways it uses data. Still today, despite the clarity of the promise, data used for decision making continues to primarily reflect what matters to the system and not what matters to children, families, and care experienced adults. Far too much of this data is collected, analysed, and reported, then shelved, creating a burden of reporting, and demanding significant resource in both scrutiny and delivery that is not conducive to keeping the promise.

A new approach then needs to be central to how public services are inspected, scrutinised, audited, governed across the breadth of Scotland and entirety of the promise. For Scottish and local government, The Verity House agreement offers an opportunity to introduce this in the early years of **Plan 24-30**.

- **The workforce is struggling.**

The Independent Care Review took a broad definition of the workforce –paid and unpaid.

As well as the widely documented crisis in the children’s social care workforce, Scotland has insufficient foster carers, kinship carers can be fearful of engaging the state and do not seek support so go unsupported, teachers don’t always feel adequately supported, health professionals talk of their own sector’s crisis, and there are reports from national membership organisations and regulators about the difficulties in recruiting and retaining social workers. Keeping the promise requires a skilled and competent workforce and the current recruitment and retention challenges threaten this. This context is vital, the realities need to be acknowledged - but more than this, there must be workforce planning, with the demands on them to deliver prioritise, sequenced and resourced. This is a task for **Plan 24-30**.

But what is most needed is the promise to be kept to those it was made to.

For this to happen, the workforce must be enabled to deliver and not have scant resources hoovered up by a new line of inquiry, not be paralysed by the potential risk what they are doing will have to stop, not be distracted by a change of course, or be forced to take a detour from forward motion.

- **There are fewer children being removed from their families.**

The annual children’s social work statistics show a continued reduction in the numbers of children being removed from their families. What is not known are the reasons for that reduction. There is cause for hope and caution, with undoubted work taking place to support families to stay together, but equal lack of clarity about the reasons for that reduction. Concerns outlined above, specifically over the impact of workforce and funding challenges, must add an element of caution to how those numbers are received.

The milestones in **Plan 24-30** must avoid the temptation to set blunt targets that fail to understand the day-to-day lives of children, families, and care experienced adults. Scotland must get behind data sets to understand the system drivers and human consequences.

The feedback given, including what is outlined above, provided lots of information that can be used to develop, **Plan 24-30**, and further areas that **Plan 24-30** can support the development of.

Areas of the promise in clear need of acceleration were identified, and there remains areas of activity across Scotland that needs to be decelerated to allow for meaningful and

impactful change to come through. [The Promise continues to be debated and discussed, most recently in the Scottish Parliament in a debate brought by Scottish Labour](#) where the key challenges facing the work to keep the promise were highlighted and cross party support reiterated. Issues that were raised included the lack of capacity within systems; the need for sequencing, prioritisation, and alignment across policy, practice, and legislation; strong collaborative and collective leadership; adequate resourcing; and, above all, clear, constant and meaningful engagement with the care community. It is clear **Plan 24-30** must focus itself on these challenges for the promise to be kept.

All of this, coupled with the core principles, has formed the basis of the plan and timeline for devising **Plan 24-30** together.

# Phase 1: Understanding and Creating

## Between now and February 2024

The coming months will be spent listening carefully to assess what has been heard so far and how to move from what has been learned into action. The activities outlined below will run in parallel to ensure as much information can be gathered as possible:

1. Targeted engagement with groups, organisations, and bodies
2. Online form
3. Updates on progress

## 1. Groups, organisations, and bodies

In line with the core principles, the care community will be at the heart of the development of **Plan 24-30**. This will include organisations who represent all facets of the community, including parents. The organisations with 'corporate parenting duties' towards children and families living in and around the 'care system' were the focus of **Plan 21-24** but to ensure broader engagement that can engender greater collaboration, the targeted engagement for **Plan 24-30** will include a wider range of organisations.

Meetings will be set up between the Independent Strategic Advisor and representatives from groups, organisations, and bodies across Scotland with semi-structured areas for inquiry to hear more about the progress being made and the challenges faced. Wherever appropriate, organisations will be grouped together into a larger meeting to ensure experiences can be shared and heard in a wider context, to build collaborative solutions. Work to schedule these meetings will begin next week and The Promise Scotland will be in touch with groups, organisations, and bodies directly.

## 2. Online form

**Plan 24-30** development is focused on ensuring as many people and organisations as possible are included, however the breadth of activity and change required to



#KeepThePromise may preclude this always being in person.

An online form has been created based on the same semi-structured areas for inquiry so that anyone with a view to share can do so. This form will stay open until 5pm on Wednesday 31st January 2024 and asks for responses on:

#### Increasing knowledge

- What is known about the context of care in Scotland that was not known in 2020?
- What does Scotland not know enough about, where is there a need for further research?

#### Acceleration and deceleration

- What have you seen that works well that can be accelerated? *Please avoid using this as a forum to pitch for individual services.*
- Are there practices in and on the edge of the 'care system' that need to end?
- Are there services that you perceive need to be phased out?

#### Sequencing and prioritisation

- As outlined, Scotland faces a number of challenges to keep the promise. What should be tackled first?

#### Change and impact

- What does good look like and how will Scotland know it's happened? *Please be very specific about what good practice, planning and support looks like in the area you are working in.*

Everyone is welcome to complete the online form regardless of whether they are engaged in another way.

### 3. Updates on progress

Ensuring **Plan 24-30** is built on work undertaken in **Plan 21-24** requires information on the progress made to date. Several organisations have produced assessments of progress to date. Some organisation followed standard evaluation methodologies whilst some are self-assessments. Some have published these, whilst some have used them principally to develop internal understanding.

Before the end of the year, Fiona will write to all national and key organisations across Scotland to ask for their own assessment of the progress they have made under **Plan 21-24** to be sent to her by the end of January 2024.

Organisations will be asked to provide an honest, collective position on their progress. Where collective does not mean agreed, an aggregated and disaggregated view making clear where there is disagreement will be sought.

# Phase 2: Creating and Checking

**From late February until the end of May 2024**

Phase two will be dedicated to bringing everything together into a draft **Plan 24-30**, sense checking with the care community, using further engagement to iterate, and undertaking additional work if needed to fill gaps in knowledge and understanding.

This will involve non-exhaustively re-connecting with those who have been in touch. As specific roles and responsibilities and timeframes become clearer, further meetings may be scheduled to support:

- Continued commitment
- Greater collaboration and alignment
- Understanding of capacity and resource needs
- Measuring pace and performance
- Predicting bridges and barriers over time

At the end of its duration, an evaluation and assessment of the progress made against **Plan 21-24** will be commissioned, with all learning incorporated into the iterations of **Plan 24-30**.

# Phase 3: Checking and Publishing

## Between late May and end of June 2024

This final phase is focused on making sure **Plan 24-30** is ready for publication in June 2024. This will involve taking the final draft back to those who helped to devise it to check it reflects what is needed to fully deliver the promise and meet the needs of the children, families, and care experienced adults and is rooted in their realities.

This will involve:

- Continued engagement with the care community to ensure the developing draft meets their needs and makes sense.
- Re-engaging with key organisations, particularly those with inspection, scrutiny and audit responsibilities, to ensure readiness to embed **Plan 24-30** into their governance frameworks and work programmes.
- Establishing groups with responsibility to take forward work packages.
- Designing **Plan 24-30** ready for launch.