

## Promise Learning Collaborative - CARE

### Event description:

Promise Learning Collaboratives are in person opportunities for participants to come together and share their experiences and learning in addressing challenges around the five foundations Plan 24-30. These free events are open to all.

As a collaborative we asked that when participants registered they:

- Tell us what challenges they faced around
- Shared their work and learning

This event focussed on the foundation of

The format allowed equal time for inputs, presentations and networking amongst participants.

Date: Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2025

No of Attendees: 35

Audience Profile: Participants came from a wide range of organisations across statutory and third sectors. Representatives from Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Highland, Fife and some national bodies with a focus on the North.



## sharing learning

Copies of the Power point Presentations can be found on the Promise Scotland website

Organisation	Highland Council
Contact	Malina MacDonald-Dawson, Programme Manager <a href="mailto:malinamacdonald@hotmail.com">malinamacdonald@hotmail.com</a>
Summary of Presentation	Highland Council –“We run a programme of projects to return children to highland from very expensive out of area residential placements. We seek to improve their outcomes and life changes whilst keeping them close to the people and communities they know. We've returned over 100 children to highland and developed over 20 projects to keep children in Highland. This work has avoided costs of over £21M.”
Key learning	<p>Highland Council permitted H2H to continue to spend the full CEYP budget (£13 million), but to shift the spend from OOA placements to new services in Highland, which would benefit local children.</p> <p>Currently 72% of the £13M budget is currently spent on in-area services for Care Experienced Young People.</p> <p>This has enabled the development of the over £8 million per year of in-area services, which help stop children going OOA and serve as places for children to return to.</p> <p>Currently 25 new services have been developed in Highland. These equate to over 50 beds for children in Highland that did not exist before the Home to Highland Programme.</p> <p>Governance/ structure: board level approval for budget with autonomy to spend where required, dedicated project manager to ensure sustainability and manage resources.</p>

Organisation	Barnardos
Contact	Louise Wakeling / Viv McCurdy <a href="mailto:louise.wakeling@barnardos.org.uk">louise.wakeling@barnardos.org.uk</a> / <a href="mailto:viv.mccurdy@barnardos.org.uk">viv.mccurdy@barnardos.org.uk</a>
Summary of Presentation	<p>‘Where children live’ and ‘Stability’</p> <p>The Promise recognises that children and young people should live in loving, stable homes. At Barnardo's we have 2 Mockingbird constellations that provide an ‘extended family’ support network to our children and young people, reducing transitions and providing stability in their relationships.</p>

	We would like to highlight the support the Mockingbird model brings to children and young people and foster carers. This extended family model provides sleepovers and short breaks, social activities, and support for, and by, other foster carers.
Key learning	<p>Through a fostering 'hub', foster homes are linked and provide support for each other. They are further linked with birth families and future families based on a child's meaningful relationships.</p> <p>Support for foster carers is crucial and proving a network this supports recruitment and retention of foster carers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The foundation of this approach is relationships</li> <li>- The constellation (hub) aims to build strong relationships where there is care and support offered from a range of role models</li> <li>- Promotes permanence and promotes continued connections</li> <li>- Carers have said they feel supported by being part of this model</li> </ul>

Organisation	Asylum and Refugee Care (AARC)
Contact(s)	Jayne Smith <a href="mailto:jayne.smith@aarc.charity">jayne.smith@aarc.charity</a>
Summary of Presentation	Asylum and Refugee Care (AARC) – "We support New Scots, including those who have been dispersed to the northeast who are in the UK seeking asylum. We have a number of individuals who have been age assessed on entry as being over 18. We support them with referrals to the local authority. We advocate for these potential young people and we have effected change as a result which makes the process less traumatic for them. We would welcome this opportunity to share the work we are doing with these young people. Many of the organisations attending have probably worked with young people seeking asylum, but not through the age dispute process. It could be beneficial for people to learn about what we do, so they know what and what support is available."
Key learning	<p>AARC contributed to "<a href="#"><i>Unlocking Support: Age Disputed Young People in Scotland</i></a>," a powerful report produced by <a href="#">JustRight Scotland</a>. This crucial document brings to light the complex and often overlooked challenges faced by young people seeking asylum whose ages are disputed upon arrival in the UK.</p> <p>The "<a href="#"><i>Unlocking Support</i></a>" report highlights several key findings and challenges:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Inaccurate Age Assessments</li> <li>2. Delays in Age Dispute Resolutions</li> <li>3. Inconsistent Safeguarding Measures</li> <li>4. Barriers to Support</li> <li>5. Lack of Trauma-Informed Care</li> </ol>

Organisation	Barnardos
Contact	Louise Wakeling / Viv McCurdy

	<a href="mailto:louise.wakeling@barnardos.org.uk">louise.wakeling@barnardos.org.uk</a> / <a href="mailto:viv.mccurdy@barnardos.org.uk">viv.mccurdy@barnardos.org.uk</a>
Summary of Presentation	<p>'Maintaining Relationships'</p> <p>"The Promise identified that children should be supported to develop and maintain relationships that are important to them, wherever it is safe to do so. At Barnardo's we have been progressing with this and made changes and improvements to how we help support children and young people to maintain important relationships with family members, friends and staff. We will show changes we have made, and continue to make in our foster care services, residential care, and our children's services. Our new staying connected project supports sibling and sibling like relationships."</p>
Key learning	<p>In order to support children and young people coming together regularly with people they care about, this pilot was designed to provide tools, resources and support to ensure regular connections. Key aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide venues which also provide a space for the Carers of siblings to meet separately while family time is taking place and thereby promote the development of their relationships with each other.</li> <li>• Provide a flexible resource which can transform venues in the heart of our local communities in to places where brothers and sisters / siblings, separated by family circumstances and by the care system, can regularly come together to share experiences and have fun</li> </ul> <p>Template provided- 'maintaining significant relationships'. A spidergram that can be filled in alongside a child or young person to capture the important people in their lives, including contact details to ensure relationships can be maintained. This template can be easily adapted to suit.</p>

Organisation	Aberdeen City Council
Contact(s)	Larissa Gordon, Virtual Head Teacher <a href="mailto:LaGordon@aberdeencity.gov.uk">LaGordon@aberdeencity.gov.uk</a>
Summary of Presentation	<p>Aberdeen City Council – "As part of our commitment in Aberdeen City to Keep the Promise, we have developed the Promise Pilot project across 2 of our Associated School Groups. The project adopts a whole family approach which is flexible and responsive to need. We ask the children, young people and families what they need and layer supports as required. The teams consist of Family Learning, Education, Youth Work and Social Work and support is delivered 52 weeks of the year. To date, we have been able to evidence positive impacts on a variety of measures such as attendance, attainment, health and wellbeing and positive destinations. The project is truly collaborative building on strong, positive relationships between professionals and families and removes unnecessary bureaucracy when there is a need to access further support."</p>

Key learning	<p>What has been learned?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff need to be flexible and adaptable within their roles- no hard boundaries</li> <li>• Threshold of need has indicated that additional capacity at a more intensive level was required</li> <li>• High level of need for nurture</li> <li>• Time to develop relationships in school</li> <li>• Network/ joined up with other services along the continuum of support</li> <li>• Support required for each operational team within the school- Virtual School has been well placed to do this</li> </ul> <p>What has the impact been?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Streamlined way of working for multi-agency leads</li> <li>• More collegiate approach to system change</li> <li>• A more flexible, responsive team at all levels</li> <li>• Increased Service flexibility</li> <li>• Reduction in risk level for children and families as well as a prevention of risk escalation</li> <li>• Improved attainment</li> </ul>
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Organisation	Hub Success
Contact(s)	Niamh McCrossan <a href="mailto:N.McCrossan@napier.ac.uk">N.McCrossan@napier.ac.uk</a>
Summary of Presentation	<p>'Transitions toolkit' – <a href="#">taken from Hub for Success website</a></p> <p>This resource is designed for care experienced learners at school, as well as anyone who is a part of their support network. It focusses on important aspects to consider when looking at college, university, or employment. It is relevant for any care experienced young person who is transitioning from:</p> <p>S4 into a College Course (either a January or August start)  S5 into a College Course or University  S6 into a College Course or University</p> <p>Work through this toolkit before leaving high school with an adult such as a teacher, carer, parent or social worker. It's never too early to think about next steps; you can use this toolkit even if you don't know what you would like to do after school.</p> <p>The toolkit is interactive; there are hyperlinks embedded and underlined throughout with additional information. This is a live toolkit, meaning information will be updated regularly.</p> <p>To find out more about why transitions matter, read our <a href="#">blog post</a>.</p>

Key learning

Practical tool that can be used by a young care experienced person or anyone supporting a young person with their transition into higher education. The toolkit was created in collaboration with Student Ambassadors, Hub for Success Partners and Steering Group, Colleges, Local Authorities and Local outreach programmes. This toolkit is available on Hub for Success website and free to access.



## Feedback:

There was rich discussion throughout the day and connections made in the room as people made links between learning surfaced and their own work/ work they are involved with.

Some key points from the group discussions included:

Asylum seeking children and young people are often separated from their families at borders and need to build better understanding that they are care-experienced. It was highlighted that there need to be culturally aware and responsive approach and opportunity to tap into local community for people to support with translating.

Relationships was a key thread throughout discussions, with the need to balance professional 'risk' (however that is interpreted) with the needs of children, young people and their families but also to include other people who are important to them. Lots of trauma- informed practice examples were shared with support for softening language and most tables had examples of work involving changing language. Some great examples of practice around strengthening relationships and trust were shared within small groups at the tables such as young people being informed of new arrivals via their what's app group at a residential home, this allowed them to prepare support for the young person arriving and help with the transition for those already living there.

When it comes to true collaborative and partnership work there were a few themes that came up across groups which were enablers to working together; ensuring that no one person takes full ownership and remits are clearly agreed and communicated up front, building trust and a collegiate approach takes time and it is worth spending time to do this, having buy in and trust from leadership is key and allows teams agency to do things differently and invest in work knowing that the impact may not be immediately felt by those who are being supported. Getting the right people involved at the right time was highlighted as enabling change to happen faster, ensuring that influence is supported by evidence, both qualitative and quantitative.

Data sharing was raised as an initial challenge for working with partners and required a joint approach to what information was gathered, where it is stored and who has access to it. It was generally agreed that this needs a planned approach and the 'right' software/ system (the one that works for all partners) to ensure that all partners are equally linked in, and children, young people and families can access their information and the right support when they need it.

Having diversity with partnerships/ collaborations was embraced as this brought different skills and perspectives and allows a more balanced approach to mitigating risk, moving away from a risk-averse culture. There was a lot of discussion around risk and it was discussed that this an area that could be explored more.

Long term funding streams are required to support long term goals and allow space for investment in more preventative support. Most groups discussed the challenges brought by short term funding including, but not limited to; retention of staff, inability to build on pilot work and a lack of sustaining services. There was discussion around 'following the money' and how this can help shift priorities for leaders to 'spend more, to save more'.

Housing and geography were raised as challenges when it comes to supporting siblings to stay together, children and young people to return/ stay where they feel 'home' is, maintaining relationships, supporting foster, kinship and birth families to have regular and meaningful connections. Some innovative approaches were discussed within Highland Council's presentation and groups discussed how this approach could be taken within their own localities. There was general support for a model like the 'mockingbird' that Barnardo's spoke of and a feeling that, if give the right support and resources this 'constellation' approach could be replicated within localities.

Taking time when working on change can often feel counterproductive however there was lots of support in the room for slowing down and setting up a collaborative/

partnership approach to ensure that remits and responsibilities are clearly agreed and communicated. Building trusted relationships with team members, people that you support, partners and the wider community plays a crucial role in enabling change to happen. Building relationships and trust can take time and there is often frustration about the tension between making change happen quickly and taking time to really build the foundations of change. Having a supportive leadership team and time to reflect, communicate and apply learning to do things differently supports a culture of learning, allowing things to be adaptable along the way.



#### Participant Feedback on the event:

People felt this was an informative event with lots of 'food for thought' connecting projects from today's presentations and their own practice/ work. It felt like a supportive space where people could make connections with others and enjoy learning about others work and practice. Lots of great practice, challenges and learning was shared during table discussions, over lunch and world café, as these were shared individually, it is not possible to capture these.

There was a suggestion for the Promise Scotland to improve the communications to allow more time for people to be aware of events, which has been taken on board. Another great suggestion was to supply a registration list or way of connecting everyone via email to ensure it's easy to connect after the session.



A further request for future sessions is a more national view of progress towards the promise. This will be developed alongside [the work taking place for the Promise Story of Progress](#).



## world café discussions


### World Café Discussion

The world café session took the challenges that participants had identified in incorporating voice in their work, during the registration process. We then asked those attending to share ideas and experiences that they had used in practice to help mitigate the challenges.

The challenges and feedback can be found on the attached PDF documents.

#### Next Steps:

This session will be followed by online sessions focussing on the themes under CARE

-  Closing the feedback loop – Aberdeen City & STAF

Places on these sessions can be booked via Eventbrite: [The Promise Scotland Events - 8 Upcoming Activities and Tickets | Eventbrite](#)

Our next In person Promise Learning Collaborative will be in [Perth on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2025 and focus on 'People' foundation](#). Again, spaces will be bookable via Eventbrite.