

Meeting NINETEEN
of the
Directors of The Promise Scotland (SC693269)
on Tuesday 25 November 2025 from 14:00-16:30
at The Promise Scotland, South Charlotte Street, Edinburgh

Approved Minutes

Attendees – Directors:

Fiona Duncan (FD)	Chair
Anna Matthews (AM)	Director
David Garbutt (DG)	Director
Fraser McKinlay (FMK)	Director and Chief Executive
Jane O'Donnell (JOD)	Director
Philip Rycroft (PR)	Director
Victoria Underwood (VU)	Director

Apologies:

Jim Savege (JS)	Director
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In attendance – The Promise Scotland:

Morag Burnett	Head of Strategy & Governance
Gillian Graham	Executive Assistant and Governance Coordinator (minutes)

1. Welcome, introductions, apologies and purpose of meeting

Fiona Duncan (FD) welcomed the Board to the meeting, noting apologies from Jim Savage.

It was agreed that in addition to the standing agenda items, the meeting would focus on the strategic scope and 'reset', both linked to recommendations in the "Improving care experience: Delivering The Promise" report by the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission and linked to demonstrating organisational impact .

Victoria Underwood proposed items to discuss in Item 6. White Space.

2. Minutes and action log

The minutes of Meeting EIGHTEEN (2 September) were approved as accurate with all actions either complete or in progress.

To facilitate swift publication of approved minutes on the website, the Chair invited members of the Audit and Risk Committee to consider the minutes of their meeting of 28 October 2025 (Item 2, Paper 1a). Committee Members approved the minutes, appreciating the value of avoiding delay until after their next scheduled meeting in 2026.

The Chair noted the updated Exception and Escalation Process to reflect the discussion in Meeting EIGHTEEN (Item 2, Paper 1b). Directors confirmed the version included the points discussed, their comfort with the roles and responsibilities and approved the Process.

Jackie Brock held the governance role of whistleblowing champion and following her demitting office, there was a need to appoint a Director to that role. JOD volunteered. DG advised the NHS training platform Turas is a useful reference guide and accessible to anyone.

3. Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were received.

4. Quarter 2 reporting & management accounts

FMK presented the Quarter 2 report that covers the period from July to September 2025 in under the new [Strategic Work Programme](#) and gave an update.

The population of content in the 25 Route Maps on Plan 24-30 and the next stage of the Promise Story of Progress will be completed by the end of December, as planned.

FMK reiterated both Plan 24-30 and the Promise Story of Progress are intended to remain dynamic to reflect change as it happens, whilst making clear what change needs to happen. As both are highly innovative ways of planning and reporting, new to Scotland, and designed to evolve, FMK requested that Directors take time to review them and give any feedback on design, navigation and content, as this would be very helpful to the team for further development.

Directors observed that The Promise Scotland's impact on supporting and leading the operating system to change is demonstrable in the Quarterly reports and reiterated their ongoing desire to understand how change is impacting the lives of children, families and care experienced adults. They noted the breadth of contextual factors integral to the promise being kept but may be considered outside the organisation's purview – such as poverty, housing, substance use etc. DG updated Directors on changes to the health landscape that may affect future liaison.

Directors approved the Quarter 2 report and management accounts for formal submission to Scottish Government.

5. Chief Executive's Report

FMK gave an update on recent activities including:

- The Story of Progress, the tripartite collaborative with Scottish Government and COSLA, will contain multiple sources of data to provide a richer picture of progress across three questions.

- The Promise Progress Framework dashboard has been uploaded to the Plan 24-30 website with Scottish Government responsible for ensuring that the most up-to-date data is available. Increasingly the dashboard will be refined to be more user-friendly which includes some planned snagging work.
- Full engagement in the progress of the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Bill has continued since it was published in June 2025. Directors will be kept updated.
- The team led work on a joint letter and secured 35 organisational co-signatories, sent to all parties urging the next Scottish Government to keep the promise. It was issued in parallel to a personal letter and briefing to all party leaders from The Promise Scotland detailing what needs to be done post May 2026 and included an offer to discuss manifestos. Both are on the website.
- FMK has been invited to give evidence at the Public Audit Committee on 10 December. The Convenor did not invite FD but did ask her to provide written evidence by 1 December, which she will share with Directors. Other invitees include the Chair of the Oversight Board – David Anderson, COSLA Policy Manager for the promise, Fiona Whitelock and the Scottish Government (Neil Rennick, the Director General for Education and Justice, Andrew Watson, the Director for Children and Families and Gavin Henderson Deputy Director for The Promise. FMK noted that the process of reflecting on the report with external sources has been both interesting and beneficial.
- Directors were informed the Chair would be carrying out the annual appraisal of the Chief Executive, this year being the 360° review, and they would be asked for input.

6. White Space

This is an unminuted discussion.

7. Strategic Risk Register

At the meeting on 28 October 2025 (Item 2, Paper 1a), the Audit and Risk Committee considered the Strategic Risk Register. The Chair (VU) outlined that the Committee asked for both 1) the potential impact of the Bill and 2) the recommendations in the “Improving care experience: Delivering The Promise” report be mapped to the Risk Register to assess scores and mitigations, to identify gaps or new risks, and to focus on opportunities to help ensure the promise is kept. VU confirmed she was satisfied the process undertaken and the updated Risk Register.

There was a discussion about growing international interest, with several countries seeking advice and guidance, including the United States and Canada, Australia (4 individual state governments) and New Zealand, Holland, Iceland, Finland and Denmark. With universities tracking the approaches and impact of work. This was followed by a discussion about the opportunity presented to drive change in Scotland from the view that work to keep the promise is leading. AW proposed exploring opportunities with universities and PhD student researchers routes to capturing this. PR noted he mention the promise with his university contacts who may also be interested in contributing. FMK will follow up.

8. Glide Path

FMK presented the current thinking on The Promise Scotland to 2030 (Paper 5), confirmed the decision to exercise the break clause on the office lease and relocate to smaller premises for the remaining five years. Directors noted their comfort with plans towards organisational obsolescence.

9. Forward Plan and any other business

DG noted his term as Chair of NHS Education for Scotland comes to an end in March 2026, at which point he will step down from the Board of Directors. Meeting TWENTY will have an agenda item on 'Recruitment to future proof the Board of Directors'. In advance, MB will carry out a skills and experience audit to inform a paper, aligned to the Glide Path (Item 8), to take The Promise Scotland through to 2030. It will include how to make best use of the Board to engage sectors and drive change. AM and DG offered MB support with this.

NEXT MEETINGS:

Finance Committee – 10 February 2026

Directors' meeting - 3 March 2026

Governance Principles **Independence – Assurance - Proportionate – Transparent**

N.B. All papers are copied to the Scottish Government, as per the Members' Agreement.