

Parliament made a promise to its children, **a promise you get to keep.**

Congratulations on becoming one of the 129 Members of the Scottish Parliament chosen by the people of Scotland to represent them. In taking on this role, you are now part of an extraordinary collaboration of those who have made **a promise** that *all Scotland's children and young people will grow up loved, safe and respected— so that they will realise their full potential.*

The promise goes back to 2017, when the Independent Care Review was established, following years of campaigning from the care community demanding change. The 'care system' in Scotland had been reviewed many times before, but this Review was different. It listened to over 5,500 children and families, adults with experience of Scotland's 'care system', as well as members of the unpaid and paid workforce.



On February 5th 2020, it published seven reports, one of which was the promise. To keep the promise, the Independent Care Review set out over 80 recommendations on what must be done, organised around five foundations – Voice, Family, Care, People and Scaffolding.

Scotland's then First Minister promised that the country would implement these recommendations in full, by 2030. That commitment got the support of all of the Scottish Parliament's political parties, and so Parliament made the promise.

Since 2020 Scotland has come together to improve the lives of children, families and care experienced adults in a way that has never been seen before.

In that time MSPs from all parties have worked together to make the changes needed, including unanimously passing the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Bill in March 2026.

This collaboration also extends to the charitable sector, public sector and private sector who work directly with children, families and care experienced adults. 54 of these organisations came together ahead of the election to call on all parties to commit to keeping the promise. The promise has commitment from all local authorities and corporate parents, as well as being a longstanding Scottish Government policy.

Parliament made a promise to its children
a promise you get to keep

As you have been chosen to represent the people of Scotland for the coming five years, your responsibilities will include making sure the promise is kept, to improve lives, reshape the public sector, better use public finances and show that Scotland cares about its children.

Although Scotland is now past the midpoint, there is still much work to do, and the scale of the challenge ahead must not be underestimated.



What will keeping the promise look like in 2030?

Keeping **the promise** means making sure children remain together with their families where it is safe to do so and, when that is not possible, that children and young people's experiences of care make them feel loved so they grow up into adults who thrive.

In 2030 Scotland will have made all the changes called for by the Independent Care Review, creating truly interconnected systems that work seamlessly to support every child, family and care experienced adult, and a supported and empowered workforce able to keep the promise, giving consistent, compassionate, respectful and responsive care.

This means:

- **VOICE:** Children will 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 will be a compassionate, caring, decision-making culture focused on children and those they trust.



Parliament made a promise to its children
a promise you get to keep

- **FAMILY:** Where children are safe in their families and feel loved they will stay – and families will 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 will stay with their brothers and sisters wherever safe to do so, and belong to a loving home, staying there for as long as needed.
 - **PEOPLE:** The children that Scotland cares for will be actively supported to develop relationships with people in the workforce and wider community, who in turn will be supported to listen and be compassionate in their decision making and care.
 - **SCAFFOLDING:** Children, young people, families, and care experienced adults will be supported by a system that is there when it is needed. The scaffolding of help, support and accountability will be ready and responsive when it is required.
-



What is the role of MSPs in keeping the promise?

To fulfil your responsibility as a parliamentarian, you will need to work collaboratively to address the systemic barriers getting in the way of change by:

- Listening to children, families and care experienced adults in your constituency to understand what changes would make a positive difference to their lives.
- Representing those in your constituency with experience of care who rely on the promise being kept.
- Listening to those who are working locally to keep the promise on the changes they are already making, the impact they are seeing and the challenges they face.
- Creating a clear legislative environment by scrutinising, improving and supporting legislative and policy changes, and sustaining cross-party support.



Parliament made a promise to its children **a promise you get to keep**

- Examining and holding to account Scottish Government's work to keep the promise.
 - Supporting an end short-term, siloed funding and ensuring good practice within commissioning.
 - Helping improve data collection about children, young people, families' and care experienced adults' experiences.
 - Strengthening scrutiny, accountability and governance.
-



What difference has cross-party support made?

All parties in the Scottish Parliament committed to keep **the promise** in 2020. These parties reaffirmed this support in November 2024, again in March 2026, and in their manifestos.

Sustained cross-party support has ensured there is no political impediment to keeping the promise and has resulted in progress across many areas – from supporting children and families to stay together, to embedding rights and voice into overarching frameworks and structures, to improving the experiences children, families and care experienced adults have with the ‘system’.

The Education, Children and Young People Committee held responsibility for the promise in their remit. This has seen cross-party MSPs scrutinise and strengthen work so far. A number of other committees have also played a role in scrutiny, demonstrating the way in which the work of Parliament cuts across all parts of people’s lives and cannot be done in siloes.

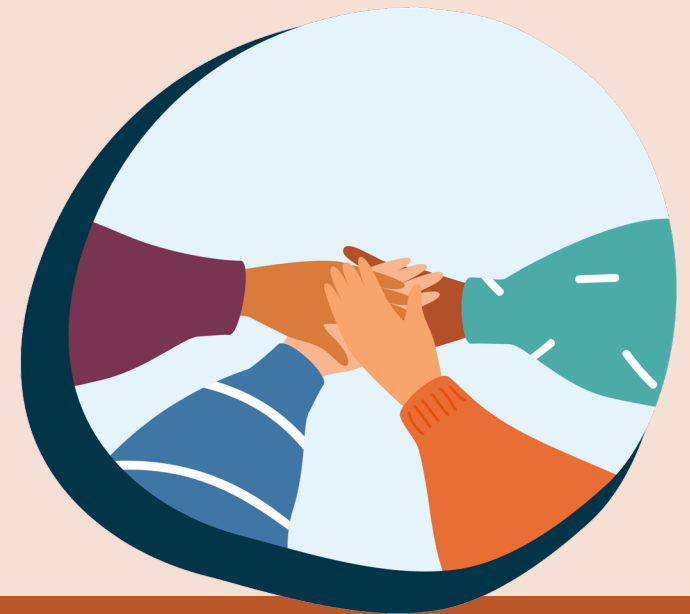
At the end of the last Parliament cross-party support saw both the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Bill and the Restraint and Seclusion in Schools (Scotland) Bill pass unanimously.

Parliament made a promise to its children
a promise you get to keep

Once commenced, both will see significant improvements made in the lives of children, families and care experienced adults.

This will include but is not limited to, extending aftercare and continuing care, greater access to advocacy, limiting profit in care, reforming the Children's Hearings System, and moving Scotland closer to a nation that does not restrain its children. The debates held ahead of the Bill's passing showed the value all parties saw in working together on this.

The make-up of this Parliament is different to the last, but sustained cross-party support for the promise will help ensure all Scotland's children have loving childhoods, so they can thrive as adults— and make sure Scotland keeps its promise.



What can MSPs do now?

There are some immediate priorities in urgent need of action:

- Plans for implementation, resourcing and sequencing of the Bills passed at the end of the previous Parliament must be developed and scrutinised.
- Following the Scottish Government's consultation on the future of secure care, which closed in April this year, there must be action to progress the change required.
- There must be continued focus on whole family support, including the use of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund and where funding should be deployed in 2027-2028 and beyond. This includes considering the value of expanding existing community support and community hubs, and where preventative spending is best placed.



How will the promise be kept by 2030?

Plan 24-30 is a shared planning framework for Scotland to keep the promise. It was developed with input from over 100 organisations.

It is made up of two main parts:

- **25 route maps**, which turn the vision of the promise into clear, measurable outcomes, showing:
 - **what** needs to happen for the promise to be kept,
 - **who** is responsible for doing this, and
 - **when** it must be done by.
- **The Promise Story of Progress**, which answers three questions to show progress and impact:
 - **how is change being felt** and what impact is it having on the care community?
 - **what does national data tell Scotland** about what is shifting over time?
 - **what changes are organisations making** and what are they learning about this?



Who is involved in keeping the promise?

Since **the promise** was made, there has been commitment from across Scotland on both a national and local scale, with the public, charitable and private sector delivering this work.

To find out more about the roles and responsibilities of those involved in delivery of the promise, including the roles of the Scottish Government, COSLA, local authorities and corporate parents, visit The Promise Scotland's website page on [Keeping the Promise](#).

There have also been roles and bodies set up to provide guidance, support and monitoring, including:



The Oversight Board for the promise: The Oversight Board, set up in 2021, reports to the care community and the Scottish Parliament, tracking Scotland's progress and making calls to action as to what needs to be done to ensure the promise is kept. More than half of the Board's members bring lived experience of care to their role.

Parliament made a promise to its children
a promise you get to keep

Independent Strategic Advisor

The Independent Strategic Advisor – the promise: Fiona Duncan holds the ministerial appointment of Independent Strategic Advisor for the promise. She chaired the Independent Care Review, and following its conclusions, was appointed to support its implementation. This involves setting the strategic direction and culture of all work to keep the promise, chairing The Promise Scotland, sustaining relationships with Ministers and MSPs, and giving advice to those who require it. Her contract is to 2030 with her current work programme outlining her priorities through to May 2027.



Parliament made a promise to its children
a promise you get to keep



The Promise Scotland: The Promise Scotland was set up in 2021 to support all those working to keep the promise. This involves:

- Supporting effective parliamentary scrutiny of policies, actions and spending.
- Supporting those working to keep the promise to be able to use Plan 24-30 in planning and delivering work.
- Supporting the workforce through networking, collaborating, designing solutions to problems, and helping to use data differently.
- Supporting the Oversight Board for the promise and the Independent Strategic Advisor – the promise in their functions.

The organisation is committed to its own obsolescence by 2030, by which, the promise must be kept.

Parliament made a promise to its children
a promise you get to keep

This briefing was prepared by The Promise Scotland.

If you would like a more detailed briefing
or any other information, please contact
emma@thepromise.scot.

