

---

## NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

23<sup>rd</sup> August 2022

### Cabinet

---

<b>Title:</b>	<b>The Promise in North Ayrshire – Update on Progress</b>
<b>Purpose:</b>	To update Cabinet on the ongoing work within North Ayrshire to deliver “The Promise” to our children and young people.
<b>Recommendation:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Note the progress in North Ayrshire to lay the foundations to deliver on the ambitions of The Promise and note the further areas of work planned during Phase 1 to 2024.</li><li>2. Note that a further progress report and action plan will be remitted to Cabinet following the The Promise Conference to be held in November 2022.</li></ol>

---

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 North Ayrshire has welcomed the findings of the Independent Care Review and subsequent publication of the “The Promise” and the call to action that lies within. We are committed to improving outcomes for children, young people and families in our North Ayrshire communities and recognise that, whilst progress has been made in the first two years, there are many areas we will continue to develop and improve in the years to come.
- 1.2 Substantial work has been undertaken to progress the commitment to lay the foundations to deliver on The Promise in North Ayrshire during the ‘bedding down phase’ (Phase 1) of a 10-year implementation plan. This report updates and assures members progress is being made both nationally and locally, and it also outlines key next steps until March 2024. The calls for action in The Promise are significant and involve whole system change with an agreed timeframe of no later than 2030.
- 1.3 This update report does not seek to outline all of the supports, interventions and plans in place across multiple agencies - including North Ayrshire Council - to support care experienced young people, but rather provides Cabinet with an update on some of the specific pieces of work completed and planned to lay the foundations, scaffolding and governance arrangements as set out in the 5 priority areas. There are further reports presented to the Council which contribute to the delivery of the Council’s commitment to The Promise, for example the annual report presented to Cabinet in relation to Educational Attainment for Care Experienced children and the annual Child Poverty Action Plan.

- 1.4 This report sets out how the foundations have been laid in North Ayrshire for the delivery of The Promise. These include governance and oversight arrangements (illustrated in Appendix 1), engagement across services and with young people, capacity and resources to support our workforce in line with the five priority areas of:
- A Good Childhood
  - Whole Family Support
  - Supporting the Workforce
  - Planning
  - Building Capacity
- 1.5 The funding available to realise the full ambitions of The Promise is unclear at this stage. £190k has been received to support the change programme and deliver a specific North Ayrshire project in relation to siblings. More recently funding has been allocated to the Children's Services Strategic Partnership for Whole Family Wellbeing. This recent allocation is to date the most significant investment provided to local areas to deliver on The Promise. There remains a risk that the scale and pace of change locally could be constrained by resources being made available to deliver, for example, the transfer of resources to early intervention services and approaches.
- 1.6 The work to embed and implement the principles of The Promise is ongoing, the next most significant milestone being The Promise conference which will be held in November 2022 where the voices of children and young people will be central. This engagement will inform a more detailed progress report and action plan to be presented at a future Cabinet.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Scottish Government announced in 2016 that an independent, root and branch review of Scotland's care system would be undertaken, following extensive lobbying from care experienced people and advocacy organisations. Commencing in 2017, the review examined the underpinning legislation, practices, culture and ethos of the care system. The Care Review concluded at the end of March 2020 with the publication of "The Promise".
- 2.2 The National Independent Care Review heard that Scotland needed to change how it cares for children, young people and their families, and concluded that the care system required a radical overhaul. "[The Promise](#)" was subsequently developed; consisting of 80 changes to support the whole system redesign required and narrating a vision for Scotland. Built on five foundations of Voice, Family, Care, People and Scaffolding, it made a promise that all children in Scotland will grow up loved, safe and respected. The calls for action in The Promise are significant and involve whole system change with an agreed timeframe of no later than 2030.
- 2.3 The Promise is a large-scale, complex 10-year change programme with multiple objectives and interlinked activities, across multiple partners. Building for the future takes time. To maximise impact and ensure sustainability of approach, a firm foundation needs to be built to give assurance of governance and accountability; to allow all partners to be clear of their own, and collective, roles and responsibilities; and on which to build all future developments.

- 2.4 Delivery of The Promise does not sit in isolation and also cannot be delivered by North Ayrshire Council alone. Delivery sits alongside the commitment to incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), our Corporate Parenting Plan, North Ayrshire's Child Poverty Strategy, the Children's Services Plan and work in relation to children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. Delivery and progress with all of these plans require multi-agency working across a number of partners.
- 2.5 The timeline below provides a high-level illustration of the implementation of the plan by 2030 and the expectations at each phase of delivery:

**Years Two to Four – Bedding Down**  
**April 2021–March 2024**

- Early intervention and prevention will become standard with obsolescence of crisis services commenced.
- The necessary legislative reform will be underway to make sure The Rules are enabling.
- A practice and culture change programme will be embedded.

**Years Five to Seven – Consolidation**  
**April 2024–March 2027**

- A midpoint review of The Plan will be carried out to ensure pace and performance is on track.
- The Promise will be being realised and the impact felt by children and families.

**Years Eight to Ten – Continuous improvement**  
**April 2027–March 2030**

- All targets will be achieved.
- The majority of crisis services will have become obsolete.
- The Promise will be delivered across Voice, Family, Care, People and Scaffolding.
- The independent oversight body will cease to exist, giving way to a new standard of care.

- 2.6 The National Promise Team has published a [National Plan for 2021-2024](#) and the Promise '[Change One Programme](#)', highlighting their expectations around what should be accomplished by 2024, which is illustrated below:



- 2.7 Building this foundation and the subsequent scaffolding around the change programme, has been the major focus for North Ayrshire in the last two years. To make sure that we get it right for North Ayrshire's care experienced community, we need to be clear of the linkages between different parts of the system, the intended and unintended impact of introducing new ways of working, and making sure that the child, young person and their families understand and are central to this, in addition to feeling heard and supported by all parts of "the system".
- 2.8 The Promise sets out a clear commitment for all corporate parents to have an enhanced understanding of the experiences of those who have spent time in care, and to drive forward the findings and recommendations. Examples include: separation from their brothers and sisters during their time in care; multiple placement changes; and the provision of mental health support. The Promise challenges all of us to make sure the necessary changes are made across a wide range of areas to ensure we #KeepThePromise to all North Ayrshire's care experienced people.
- 2.9 The last two years have coincided with the global COVID-19 pandemic which has impacted our ability to progress some aspects as originally planned. This includes opportunities to work alongside children and young people face to face. Despite this, partners have remained strongly committed to progressing The Promise and have

sought creative and innovative ways to overcome some of the additional challenges presented by the pandemic.

## Governance

2.10 Formal Governance arrangements are in place to oversee and drive the delivery of The Promise. A Promise Oversight Board and Promise Operational Groups (PrOG) have been established to ensure consistency and involvement across partners at a strategic and operational level. These forums include all key strategic partners, frontline staff and care experienced individuals and have met regularly throughout the last two years. The Oversight Board meets once every three months and is attended by Senior Managers and two care experienced young people; one of whom co-chairs the meetings.

2.11 The PrOG meets every six weeks and is attended by front line managers, front line staff and six care experienced young people; one of whom co-chairs the meetings. It has four subgroups progressing work around:

- Language and Communications
- Alternative Care
- Trauma Informed Practice, and
- Data and Discovery Mapping

Each of these sub-groups have agreed their own priorities for Phase 1 which include:

- Developing a multi-agency social media platform
- An anti-stigma campaign
- Strengthening representation by young people
- Developing mentoring pathways
- Roll out of trauma aware and trauma skilled resources and training
- Mapping early intervention services to prevent young people coming into the care system
- Data mapping across multiple agencies
- Developing a Performance Management Framework

## Examples of Achievements and Actions to Date

2.12 Whilst not an exhaustive list some specific examples of achievements and actions to date across delivery partners as part of the bedding down phase are highlighted below:

- Over 100 awareness raising sessions have been delivered to a variety of services and partners including: Police Scotland, Third Sector Forums, Private Provider Forums, Housing, Education, Youth Services, Health, Scottish Fire & Rescue, all of Children, Families & Justice Services Teams and Active Schools. The purpose of these sessions is to raise awareness of care experience, share the message about the aims of the Promise and suggest ways in which individual service areas can be good corporate

parents and better understand their role in making changes to align with The Promise vision and principles.

- Our Champions Board have drafted a glossary of preferred terms to be used when describing the 'Care System' and to be used in paperwork, meetings and written material.
- A new 'Cost of the School Day' policy was approved and a conference was held to look at mitigating the impact the cost of the school day has on families and individuals' finances.
- Education services continue to focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap and raising the educational attainment and achievement of care experienced children and young people, including through nurture.
- Education have employed an additional Home Tutor to provide one to one tuition for care experienced children and young people.
- Care experienced young people have played a crucial part in interviews for new Health and Social Care staff, where that role could potentially impact of the lives of the care experienced community.
- Provision of employability support for care experienced people through group work sessions and one to one support with resilience, interview skills and employability skills.
- All teams and departments have appointed a Promise Champion to be the central point of contact for all consultations, views and to disseminate information and developments to their teams. A 'Promise Champions' SharePoint site has been established and has 25 Champions as members.
- Offering mental health and wellbeing support for care experienced young people through Mental Health Project workers, this has included full mapping of mental health services and group work/ one to one sessions.
- A Welfare Rights Officer has been appointed to work with families to deliver welfare rights services and signpost to other support services in 7 of North Ayrshire Council's Secondary Schools, more than £150k has been secured for families in the past year.
- The Signs of Safety model and Safe and Together models are currently being implemented across Health and Social Care and wider partners. Both models take a rights-based approach and fully align with the principles and shift in culture and practice required to deliver on the ambitions of The Promise. 'Signs of Safety' being a relationship-based model working within the context of child welfare and protection. The approach develops a shared and explicit understanding between professionals and families of where the risk from harm lies, in what set of circumstances it may arise and how these risks will be mitigated through effective safety planning.
- A care experienced housing officer is in place to be a single point of contact for Care Experienced Young People, improving the housing service and minimising their need to repeat their story to multiple people.
- The Active Schools Team work closely with key school staff to target care experienced young people to access all sport and physical activity opportunities, both in the school environment and their local communities.
- Care experienced young people are embedded within the Youth Participation and Citizenship Strategy with the inclusion of young people from the Champions Board as part of our Executive Youth Council, Joint Youth Forum Meetings and other voice and rights structures.
- Our Champions Board have produced an Anti-Discrimination and Stigma Policy for Corporate Parents.

- The Family Centred Wellbeing Service was introduced in October 2021 and is a collaborative partnership between the Health and Social Care Partnership and Education. The service is predicated on early intervention approaches.
- The Health and Social Care Partnership have developed and implemented their 'Keeping Brothers and Sisters Together' guidance (a key focus of The Promise). The key principles of this guidance are to ensure we take all possible steps to place siblings together should they need to be received into care with careful consideration will be given to the best interests of each individual child.

### Key Next steps

2.13 The following key areas will continue to be progressed in Phase 1 to 2024:

- Continue to be engaged in and be active participants in the National Promise Leads and Sharing Practice Networks, liaising with the National Promise Oversight Board, Promise Development Partners and Children's Services Strategic Leads networks to share best practice and learn from other areas regarding their Promise developments.
- Work closely with key national partners including Social Work Scotland, to influence their approaches on the current planning on legislative changes to progress outcomes regarding the Children's Hearings System, Youth Justice and Inspection and Regulation.
- Organise and hold our first Promise Conference in November 2022, a key milestone in engaging and listening to the experience and views of children and young people.
- Progress with ongoing work to reduce the number of children and young people coming into the care system and increase the number of children and young people coming back to North Ayrshire from external placements, through active review and identification of local alternatives, where appropriate.
- Further develop, expand and roll out The Family Centred Wellbeing Service.
- Develop creative and transformative plans with partners to bolster existing services and initiate innovative new projects in line with the criteria for the new Whole Family Wellbeing Fund, ensuring resource allocation decisions are aligned with investment in early intervention and prevention approaches.
- Implement and embed the 'Signs of Safety' and 'Safe and Together' models across the Health and Social Care Partnership and wider partners.
- Review and improve current practice in relation to promoting and managing school attendance and preventing and managing school exclusions.
- Continue to target actions to close the poverty-related attainment gap and raise educational attainment and achievement of care experienced children and young people.
- Build on the network of Promise Champions from staff teams and departments across all services in North Ayrshire and raise awareness/spread the message of The Promise.
- Provide ongoing employability support and funding for training and events.
- Provide further opportunities for care experienced young people to express their views and opinions through workshop spaces at events and inputs to larger youth voice forums.
- Further develop models of care for young people transitioning from care into adulthood and independent/supported living, including for those young people

who request continuing care (whereby an individual can continue to reside within their current placement, if appropriate, until age 21 years).

## Resources

- 2.14 The GIRFEC and Corporate Parenting Lead is North Ayrshire's Promise Operational Lead. Hearing the voice of the care experienced community is integral to The Promise and since 2021 there is a full time Engagement and Participation Lead and a Corporate Parenting Youth Worker, with plans to recruit to the role of Participation Assistant. Further plans include appointing a Family Wellbeing support worker and Trauma informed support worker to support with work focused on keeping siblings together.
- 2.15 Limited financial resources have been allocated to deliver on The Promise so far. A total of £190k has been received from the Corra Foundation and the Promise Partnership Fund to support the role of Promise Lead, and to support work in relation to keeping siblings together within their own homes and out of care. This funding has supported a focus on prevention and early intervention work, the roll out trauma-informed training and nurture approaches across services and realigning resources and services to work with families on the edges of care.
- 2.16 On 1 July 2022 the Scottish Government allocated £32m from the Whole Family Wellbeing Funding to Children's Services Planning Partnerships (CSPPs) to build local capacity for transformational whole system change and to scale up and drive the delivery of holistic whole family support services. This funding has a multi-year commitment to 2025-26 and sets out the ambition that by 2030, at least 5% of community-based health and social care spend should be spent on preventative whole family support measures. This funding is the most significant investment received to date and will support and drive forward a key element of how The Promise can be delivered. The North Ayrshire allocation of funding for 2022-23 is £959k.
- 2.17 2022-23 is the first year of this funding and the purpose is to support Children's Services Planning Partnerships (CSPPs) to:
- Build transformational capacity within the CSPP – for example by setting up a dedicated team to consider whole system change; buying in specific transformational expertise; training and learning to develop skills and capacity for change; supporting the development of collaborative leadership.
  - Test new system approaches to family support in line with strategic plans i.e. tests of change, implementation activity, or development of new approaches identified within strategic development plans; support to establish long term sustainable engagement with children and families.
  - Scale existing transformative and effective approaches which align with the National Principles of Holistic Whole Family Support, with a view to making the case for their integration into longer term local investment plans (noting that the expectation is the Whole Family Wellbeing Funding will end in 2025-26).
- 2.18 North Ayrshire CSPP are required to submit and share plans for spend with the Scottish Government by 3 October 2022. Future updates to Cabinet will provide further information on the plans for use of this resource.



## Summary

- 2.19 Good progress has been made in relation delivering on the ambitions of The Promise and North Ayrshire has laid strong foundations to take forward these ambitions by 2030, which will radically redesign the whole care system. Local activity has focused on building the foundations, strengthening partnership working and securing multi-agency and multi-disciplinary commitment. A number of service and practice developments are underway and links have been made with other major projects and programmes which are related to care experienced children and young people both locally and nationally.

## **3. Proposals**

- 3.1 Note the progress in North Ayrshire to lay the foundations to deliver on the ambitions of The Promise, and the further areas of work planned during Phase 1 to 2024.
- 3.2 Note that a further progress report and action plan will be remitted to Cabinet following The Promise Conference to be held in November 2022.

## **4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty**

### Financial

- 4.1 The report details specific funding received to date. Further financial implications are likely and expected as services undergo various stages of re-design to meet our commitment to The Promise. Financial implications will be identified at the earliest stage in planning and development processes as our work towards achieving The Promise actions are progressed. There is a significant risk of realising the full ambitions of The Promise if the system is not sufficiently resourced or funded to respond and change.

### Human Resources

- 4.2 There will be an impact on staff as we reframe how some our services support care experienced children and young people. The specifics of this will be clarified as more detailed plans emerge.

### Legal

- 4.3 Unknown at this time however it is likely that legislation will follow as The Promise contains the commitment to legislative reform.

### Equality/Socio-economic

- 4.4 The vision of The Promise seeks to address the inequality of outcome experienced by our children and young people who have been or are in the care system. If the ambitions of The Promise are realised, not only will there be improved outcomes but also a reduction, and ideally, an elimination of the inequity that exists between care

experienced children and young people and children and young people with no experience of care.

### **Climate Change and Carbon**

4.5 None.

### **Key Priorities**

4.6 Implementation of The Promise aligns to the following priorities:

- North Ayrshire's vision that Children and young people experience the best start in life.
- North Ayrshire's residents and communities enjoy good life-long health and wellbeing ensuring our communities are inclusive for all.
- Community Planning Partnership strategic vision of: Working together to improve well-being, prosperity and equity in North Ayrshire, through Aspiring Communities and Inspiring Place.
- Implementation of The Promise is a key ambition of the HSCP Tackling Inequalities Strategic Commissioning Plan 2022-2030: Caring Together.
- The Promise features heavily as part of North Ayrshire's work to tackle poverty.
- The Promise is a key aspect of the work of NHS Ayrshire and Arran's Corporate Parenting Steering Group, Corporate Parenting Taskforce, Infant Children and Young People's Board and Poverty Taskforce.

### **Community Wealth Building**

4.7 None.

## **5. Consultation**

5.1 As evidenced through the work progressed and planned to date ensuring the voices of care experienced children, young people and their families is integral to the delivery of The Promise in North Ayrshire. We have described many examples of where young people have been at the heart of decision making, including through the governance arrangements locally, and also in service developments such as recruitment processes. This will continue and be an integral part of delivery of North Ayrshire's commitment to The Promise, with the voices of children and young people being central.

Caroline Cameron  
Director, North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership

For further information please contact **Alison Sutherland, Head of Children, Families and Justice Services**, on **01294 317727**.

### **Background Papers**

0

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – North Ayrshire's The Promise Governance Chart

North Ayrshire’s The Promise Governance Chart

