
To: Education and Children's Services Policy Board

On: 9 March 2023

Report by: Director of Children's Services

Heading: The Promise: Progress on delivering on Renfrewshire's Promise (#KeepThePromise)

Summary

- 1.1. Renfrewshire Council along with our partners are committed to delivering on The Promise to the Care Experienced community, that by 2030, Scotland is "the best place in the world to grow up in" and that all our children are "loved, safe, and respected and realise their full potential".
- 1.2. The Promise is the outcome of Scotland's three-year Independent Care Review, where more than 5,500 Care Experienced children and adults took part, to transform the wellbeing of infants, children, young people, and adults. It is one of seven concluding reports published in 2020 and organisations, communities, and groups across the country have all pledged to #KeepThePromise.
- 1.3. Elected members considered and approved a motion at Council on 4 September 2020 which was carried unanimously to support the development of a delivery plan for how Renfrewshire will deliver The Promise and the involvement of the Champions Board should be central to this plan.
- 1.4. In January 2021, the Education and Children's Services Board considered a report on how Renfrewshire planned to deliver on The Promise. Further update reports were provided in January 2022 and in August 2022.
- 1.5. As we enter year 3 of this 10-year programme of change there is good evidence of progress in Renfrewshire to #KeepThePromise with significant developments underway and more planned.
- 1.6. The delivery of The Promise in Renfrewshire requires a strongly committed multi-agency partnership working approach and demonstration of a collective understanding, commitment, and activity in relation to The Promise across all the partners. Renfrewshire Council and its partners are well placed to #KeepThePromise by 2030.

Recommendations

2.1 The Education and Children's Services Policy Board is asked to:

[a] note the progress being made within Renfrewshire to “#KeepThePromise”; and

[b] note that regular update reports will continue to be brought to Board to ensure elected members are sighted on implications for policy and practice in Renfrewshire as our Promise work progresses.

Background

- 3.1 In October 2022 the Promise Lead Officer started post. This post is being funded by contributions across Council Services and the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP). This post is managed by Children's Services. The post is designed to be a dedicated resource to drive forward the ambitious programme of change we have already embarked on. The creation of this dedicated senior leader resource is further evidence of Renfrewshire's commitment to #KeepthePromise.
- 3.2 Renfrewshire has a Promise Strategic Oversight Group with more than fifty individuals involved in the workstream from different agencies. This includes all key strategic partners, frontline staff and lived experience of the care system. The vision for Renfrewshire's Promise Strategic Oversight Group is “Renfrewshire listened and we will deliver on The Promise”.
- 3.3 The Policy and Governance Structure of Renfrewshire's Promise has been revisited and refreshed. Renfrewshire's Promise work is overseen by Renfrewshire Children's Services Partnership. The Children's Services Plan outlines key priorities for how the Promise will be delivered in Renfrewshire.
- 3.4 The roll out of Promise Keeper role has progressed significantly since its inception, and we have ambitious plans to grow this network in 2023. There are currently 102 Promise Keepers across Renfrewshire. A Promise Keeper can be a senior leader, middle manager, or member of frontline staff. Promise Keepers will be responsible for championing The Promise within their staff teams ensuring that their colleagues are aware of their responsibility to #KeepThePromise. They will also be central to ensuring The Promise remains at the forefront of service design and delivery. Promise Keeper values have been developed and recruitment to the role is ongoing. All Promise Keepers undergo training to ensure that they have a good understanding of The Promise and are being supported to fulfil this role.
- 3.5 Prior to December 2022 Renfrewshire has been successful in obtaining £200,000 of funding from the Corra Foundation to support three projects which will drive forward our Promise ambitions.

- 3.5.1 Project 1: The first grant of £50,000 enabled us to establish a Promise Ambassador whose role is to help Renfrewshire and its planning partners to make changes which reflect what is important to Care Experienced children, young people, and families. We have continued to fund this post internally on a temporary basis as we recognise its value in supporting our delivery of our Promise commitments.
- 3.5.2 Project 2: The grant of £50,000 was awarded to fund development of supports to parents whose children have been placed for adoption. The project aligns with the whole family support promoted by the Promise and aims to help children's future understanding of their birth family by encouraging and supporting parents to maintain indirect (or letterbox) contact with their children post-adoption. The funding will enable our adoption team to refine their approach and inform embedding of the service beyond the end of the funding period.
- 3.5.3 Project 3: Providing Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) and Lifelong Links for a small group of families, enabled by a £100,000 grant. The work is being delivered in partnership with Barnardo's. FGDM is being offered to parents within the pre and post birth social work team with the aim of reducing risk such that child protection measures are not required. In this approach, the extended family is supported to understand the risks and to develop their own solutions to overcome problems. The Lifelong Links work will focus on young people placed in out-of-authority residential setting for whom safe family placements cannot be identified. Interventions will be undertaken with their extended families and wider social networks to develop positive relationships to support them during their time in care and beyond.
- 3.6 Activity will begin in 2023 on a Supportive School Structure - Right to Education Project. Renfrewshire has been successful in a funding application to the Corra Foundation for an investment of £150,000 to support us to think differently and challenge ways of working around Supportive School Structure (Right to Education). This funding is for two years and will allow us to conduct targeted work to highlight the need to ensure that all Care Experienced (CE) children and young people have a key person who is their advocate/supporter. This key person will ensure their attendance, participation and achievement are being supported and monitored effectively. This resource will provide focus tracking, and a genuine response to building positive relationships to ensure that school and life outside school is supported appropriately.
- 3.6.1 The Right to Education Programme focusses on ensuring the voices of our children who are in and around the edges of care shape policy and procedures to improve outcomes and future destinations. One of the aims of the Promise nationally is to reduce the exclusions of Care Experienced children and young people from school and this project will work to ensure that preventative and relationship-based approaches continue to be developed to work towards that aim.
- 3.7 A Promise Self-Evaluation Tool has been developed to assess progress and areas for development in key areas across different services in Renfrewshire. The self-evaluation tool will be circulated across all services in the local authority and to partner agencies. We are gathering examples of best practice to provide opportunities to learn from each other and celebrate the positive work and progress that is underway. It will also assist with the identification of

gaps in provision and will allow services to plan how to make improvements to better deliver The Promise.

- 3.8 Embedded in the Promise is the use of language and the importance of care being a non-stigmatising experience. In 2022, Each and Every Child delivered a workshop to a wide range of staff from across the local authority. This session was very well received by all who attended and provided key information about tackling stigma around Care Experience. To ensure that the learning from the Each and Every Child framework is embedded locally, a Language Policy is currently being developed with rollout planned in early Spring 2023. This piece of work ensures that the words and phrases that we use to describe Care Experience are positive and do not further exacerbate existing stigma. Alternative words and phrases have been identified through consultation with Care Experienced people and staff from various areas of the local authority to ensure that this will be adopted in our work moving forward.
- 3.9 A programme funded by Renfrewshire Council and devised by Who Cares? Scotland called the Learning about Care Experience Schools Programme is being offered across Renfrewshire's education establishments (Early Learning Years to S6). The goal of the programme is to create more caring and inclusive school environments for Care Experienced pupils. The longer term aims of the programme are that:
- Care Experienced pupils stay in school longer and improve educational outcomes.
 - An increased understanding of Care Experience is an integral part of school life
 - A reduction of stigma and discrimination towards the Care Experienced.
- 3.10 The Promise must be kept by 2030 and there is clear evidence of progress happening across Renfrewshire Council and its partners. Given the partnership involved commitment, along with our wider accountability and collective activity approach we are well placed to increase the pace of, and the scale of change required to #KeepThePromise and to deliver better outcomes for our Care Experienced Children and Young People.

Implications of this report

1. Financial

It is likely that there will be financial implications as services undergo a redesign process to address the issues identified in The Promise. It is not yet clear what the financial implications will be.

2. HR and Organisational Development

As the plan for the delivery of The Promise becomes clearer the implications for staff and organisational development will also become clearer and there will likely be actions for HR and Organisational Development Teams.

3. Community/Council Planning

Building strong, safe and resilient communities

Providing families and children with support to remain together will ensure our communities are supportive places for children to grow up in.

Tackling inequality, ensuring opportunities for all

Providing families and children with the help they need at the earliest point possible will ensure our communities are inclusive for all.

Working together to improve outcomes

Providing good quality care is central to ensuring that the most vulnerable children and families in Renfrewshire are provided with an opportunity to achieve their potential

4. Legal

The Scottish Government (SG) has set out a Legislative Programme to Support the Change required to #KeepThePromise. This legislative programme involves introducing legislation between now and 2030 including: The incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots law; a Bail and Release from Custody Bill; a Children's Care and Justice Bill; a Housing Bill; a Legal Aid Reform Bill; and a Human Rights Bill. By the end of this parliamentary session, there are plans to bring forward a Promise Bill to make any further legislative changes required to #KeepThePromise. It is likely that there will be legal implications as a result of this legislative programme, and it is not yet clear what those legal implications will be.

5. Property/Assets

None.

6. Information Technology

None.

7. Equality and Human Rights

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because for example it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

8. Health and Safety

None.

9. Procurement

None.

10. Risk

None.

11. Privacy Impact

None.

12. Cosla Policy Position

Cosla and its 32 Member Councils are fully committed to #KeepThePromise and to delivering on the changes required throughout the Promise Plan 21 – 24, and beyond.

13. Climate Risk

None.

List of Background Papers

None

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