
To: Education and Children's Services Policy Board

On: 20 January 2022

Report by: Director of Children's Services

Heading: Renfrewshire's Promise: An update on the work within
Renfrewshire to deliver "The Promise" to Scotland's children

1. Summary

- 1.1 In October 2016, following extensive lobbying by care experienced people and the organisations which advocate for them, Scotland's First Minister announced an independent, root and branch review of Scotland's care system. The independent Care Review began its work in February 2017 and looked at the underpinning legislation, practices, culture and ethos of the Care System. It was agreed that the Care Review would take up to three years to conclude.
- 1.2 The Independent care review was published on the 5th February 2020 and makes significant recommendations about the future of Scotland's Care system and the changes required to improve this. In addition to listening to care experienced people, the care review listened to the paid and unpaid workforce who deliver Children's Social Care in Scotland. In total the review engaged with over 5500 people. Over half of these were children, young people and adults with experience of the "care system".
- 1.3 The published findings of the review centred on '*the promise*' narrating a vision for Scotland, built on five foundations of voice, family, care, people and scaffolding. Making the promise that all children in Scotland will grow up 'loved, safe and respected'.
- 1.4 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 that the involvement of the Champions Board should be central to this plan
- 1.5 In January 2021, the Education and Children's Services Board considered a report on how Renfrewshire planned deliver on the Promise. This report provides an update on the work undertaken over the course of the past 12 months.

2. Recommendations

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

[a] note the working being undertaken within Renfrewshire to "Keep the Promise"

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

3. Background

3.1 The Independent Care Review was established as a root and branch review of the care system, covering legislation, practice, culture and ethos. It gathered evidence from a wide range of sources, with the voices of around care experienced people central to the evidence gathering. The findings of the review were published on 5 February 2020.

3.2 Following publication, it was recognised that delivery of the key findings and the recommendations contained within Scotland's Promise to its Children would be undertaken over a ten year period, with an accompanying programme of legislation this will be intended to simplify the current landscape but is also expected to introduce new duties for corporate parents.

3.3 The Promise is built on the foundation of five pillars; Family, Voice, Care, People and Scaffolding, which sets out the key areas of changes for how children and their families are supported across Scotland. The Promise also 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 a lack of mental health support. The Promise challenges all of us to make the necessary changes are made across a wide range of areas to ensure that we #KeepThePromise to all Care Experienced individuals across Renfrewshire.

3.4 A national team was established to deliver on the Promise Plan and began work in July 2020. The Promise team facilitates and support change across the system, wherever that change needs to happen. The Promise team has published several updates and is working closely with many Local Authorities including Renfrewshire.

3.5 Renfrewshire has a Promise Strategic Oversight group with 5 subgroups sitting beneath replicating the 5 pillars of the Promise. More than 50 individuals are involved in this workstream from 9 different agencies. This includes all key strategic partners, frontline staff and care experienced people. Throughout 2021, Renfrewshire's Promise Strategic Oversight Group and Promise Sub groups met regularly. Our vision has been developed and agreed as follows.

Renfrewshire listened and we will deliver on the Promise:

Putting you first when we make decisions
Re-designing our services and approaches to ensure they support your needs
Offering you positive opportunities
Making sure you are safe, loved and respected
Investing in you, you have a bright future
Supporting families to stay together
Ensuring we are the best parent for you, when you can't be with your own parent

- 3.6 The Chairs of the subgroups meet frequently with each other to share progress, ideas and engage in collaborative planning. This is to reduce duplication of effort and to make relevant links between pillars. One of the first tasks for the subgroups was to develop a **BIG** ideas plan which brings together 2-3 priorities from each sub-group. Good progress is being made in relation to this BIG ideas plan. For example, work is underway to develop a training plan specifically related to the Promise and to support the workforce with the right knowledge and skills to Keep the Promise. Given the direct links with trauma, links have been made with the Alcohol and Drug Commission's group who are developing the trauma responsive organisation recommendation to ensure a coordinated approach to workforce development. This work also includes a small test of change focused on training through digital VR goggles as well as an audit of to review what each partner is currently offering in terms of learning, which links to the Promise details.
- 3.7 Renfrewshire applied to The Promise Partnership fund which is managed by the Corra Foundation for a £50,000 grant to create a Promise Ambassador. This application was successful and the postholder took up post in late June. The Promise Ambassador will help Renfrewshire and its planning partners to make changes which reflect what is important to care experienced children, young people, and families. The post-holder is involved in all workstreams related to the five pillars of The Promise and will design and undertake a range of consultation activities with children, young people and families who have experienced care, cascading the learning across the system.
- 3.8 While it is understood that consultation was undertaken as part of the national Care Review, in Renfrewshire, we recognise the importance of our local data and using this to drive forward improvement. With this in mind, work has taken place to gather local data which will support the development of actions and activities. In particular, data has been gathered on placements and transitions between children and adult services to provide insight into these thematic areas. A survey will be shared with social work practitioners, in the first instance, to gather information and their views on training needs, quality and quantity of contact with children and young people etc.
- 3.9 In addition to our local work we have engaged extensively with the National team and in August 2021 the strategic oversight group and other Council service representatives met with the national Promise team to develop the role of the Promise Keeper. Partners discussed the importance of the Promise and the organisational wide focus that is required to support system change. Themes which were discussed included:

- whole family support
 - supporting the workforce
 - promoting the core principles of the Promise
 - building capacity (integration of services, collaboration, and community planning) and
 - ensuring children and young people have a good childhood (brothers and sisters)
- 3.10 A communications plan is being developed to ensure that key messages and progress related to the Promise is shared across the organisation. A workshop was held in November in collaboration with the communications team to ensure that the plan is organisational wide. Our Promise vision will be shared widely across the organisation as part of this communications strategy so all services, children, young people and families are aware of the vision and commitment to deliver on the Promise in Renfrewshire. A Promise newsletter has been created and shared with staff which outlines key developments. Our Promise Ambassador is currently exploring the development of an i-Learn module which all services can access. Furthermore, the Promise Ambassador has been meeting with different service and teams to raise awareness of the Promise and how it is relevant to all.
- 3.11 Embedded in the Promise is the use of language and the importance of positive framing of care experience. To develop this action, The Each and Every Child team have initially met with the Strategic Oversight Group to discuss their approach to framing and how this can be used throughout the organisation. Training will be delivered in the first instance to the Strategic Oversight group with this being cascaded to other teams within the Council. As a first activity, senior leaders participated in an exercise which is designed to challenge perceptions of care experienced children and young people at the Leaders Forum in November.
- 3.12 The Promise recognises the importance of keeping families together and quality family time. The Brothers and Sister policy was approved at Board and then launched during the Summer. This ground-breaking policy was co-produced with the Champions Board. It is a robust, rights-based policy starting with a pledge to keep siblings together, where possible, when they come into care. To support this policy, the Promise Ambassador has designed a series of age-appropriate Family Time plans which children and young people can complete with the support of a practitioner. These plans capture the voice of children and young people to ensure their needs, views and wishes are met in relation to spending quality time with family.
- 3.13 While it is understood that consultation was undertaken as part of the national Care Review, in Renfrewshire, we recognise the importance of our local data and using this to drive forward improvement. With this in mind, work has taken place to gather local data which will support the development of actions and activities. In particular, data has been gathered on placements and transitions between children and adult services to provide insight into these thematic areas. A survey will be shared with social work practitioners, in the first instance, to gather information and their views on training needs, quality and quantity of contact with children and young people etc.

- 3.14 As part of the Life Changes Trust Digital Skills fund, Renfrewshire Council was successful in a partnership bid to support care experienced children and young people. The partners include YMCA Scotland, YMCA Paisley, Barnardo's Scotland and Youthlink Scotland. This work directly links with the Promise pillars and the funding will be used to:
- Provide opportunities for young people with care experience to develop their digital skills, improving their educational and employment opportunities and increasing their ability to exercise their right.
 - Develop peer-to-peer resources and/or peer mentoring to improve digital confidence and build relationships amongst young people.
 - Put people with lived experience at the heart of planning and developing resources (based on but not limited to the Trust's learning) that help to promote positive change across the care sector.
- 3.15 Similarly, an Art and Culture Participation and Engagement Officer post was approved through the Futures Paisley fund. The post holder will work directly with our Promise Ambassador to support vulnerable young people to broaden their horizons through participation in arts and culture and more broadly to deliver the Council's Corporate Parenting strategy.
- 3.16 Our Aberlour Attain service recently provided all young people with the Pinky Promise on a USB stick which is a child friendly version of the Promise and what it means for young people. This has started to raise awareness of the Promise amongst children and young people with the Promise Ambassador working to further promote key messages through different groups of children and young people.
- 3.17 Recruitment features predominately in the Promise. We want to ensure we get their right people, with the right skills, experience and values. As part of our recruitment process, Keeping the Promise will feature in our adverts going forward and will also form part of interviews, where relevant. Some progress has been made in relation to this however the next steps is to discuss a more holistic approach with HR.
- 3.18 In conclusion, there has been good progress made in relation to the Promise over the course of the last year. Activity has focused on getting strong foundations in place regarding our partnership approach and securing multi-agency, multi-disciplinary commitment. A number of service / 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. The next steps will be to review the landscape to ensure efforts are not being duplicated and we are maximising resources effectively for all 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 isn't 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 become clearer.

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

Unknown at this time, it is likely that legislation will follow.

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

None.

13. Climate Risk

None.

List of Background Papers

None.

Children's Services

MMcC/KO/JT

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