

To: Education and Children’s Services Policy Board

On: 18 August 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 review team listening to care experienced people and 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”. The Independent care review report and recommendations was published on 5 February 2020. The report, called The Promise made a number of wide-ranging recommendations about the future of Scotland’s Care system and the changes required to improve this.
- 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 to deliver on The Promise. An update report was provided in January 2022. This report provides a brief overview of

the work in relation to The Promise for newly elected members and an update on the significant progress achieved since January 2022.

2. Recommendations

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

[a] note the progress being made 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.

[c] note the opportunity for elected members to become a Promise Keeper as detailed in paragraph 3.11.

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 2500 care experienced people central to the evidence gathering. The findings of the review were published in their report The Promise 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. To deliver The Promise changes to policy, legislation and direct care practice will be required. The programme of legislation being considered in relation to The Promise is 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 across a wide range of areas to ensure that we #KeepThePromise for all those with care experience in 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. In recent weeks we have been allocated a Promise Delivery Partner from the National team who will meet with Renfrewshire on a regular basis to assist us with our improvement journey. Furthermore, we are a member of the recently established Promise Communities of Interest

network, a forum chaired by the Promise National team to allow local authorities learn from each other by sharing practice developments to address the recommendations contained in The Promise.#

- 3.5 Renfrewshire has a Promise Strategic Oversight group with more than 50 individuals involved in the workstream from 9 different agencies. This includes all key strategic partners, frontline staff, and care experienced people. The Vision for Renfrewshire's Promise Strategic Oversight Group is:

“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 Renfrewshire has been successful in obtaining £200k of funding from Cora to support three projects which will drive forward our Promise ambitions. The first grant of £50k 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 because we recognise its value in supporting our delivery of our Promise commitments. The second grant of £50k was awarded earlier this year 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.
- 3.7 The third project is providing Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) and Lifelong Links for a small group of families, enabled by a £100k 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.
- 3.8 The Renfrewshire Champions Board is currently in the process of being re-designed and they will now be known as Promise Champions. The Promise Champions will allow young people to have direct influence within their local area and hold their Corporate Parents to account to ensure that they #KeepThePromise. They will also be pivotal in ensuring that services are tailored and responsive to the needs of Care Experienced young people and

are sensitive to their needs and experiences. This is a key area of development for the Promise Ambassador.

- 3.9 The development of the Promise Keeper role has progressed significantly in the first half of 2022. 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.
- 3.10 Promise Keeper values have been developed and recruitment to the role is underway. To date, we have 16 Promise Keepers who have expressed an interest in undertaking the role. All Promise Keepers will undergo training to ensure that they have a good understanding of The Promise and will be supported to fulfil this role.
- 3.11 To ensure Promise Keepers are prominent across the local authority some individual elected members may wish to express an interest in becoming a Promise Keeper. If an elected member would like to become a Promise Keeper further information on the recruitment and expectations is available from the Head of Child Care and Criminal Justice.
- 3.12 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 will gather 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.
- 3.13 Embedded in the Promise is the use of language and the importance of care being a non-stigmatising experience. Earlier this year, 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. 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 will be 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.
- 3.14 An education specific action plan has also been developed to ensure we embed the Promise improvement recommendations in our schools. Two information sessions were delivered in partnership with Education Scotland to a wide range of education staff to begin the journey of ensuring a baseline understanding of The Promise in school settings. Education staff will also be involved with the Promise Keeper framework, with the aim being to have at least one Promise Keeper in place per school cluster. Schools will also complete the Self-Evaluation Tool which will form part of their School Improvement Planning to ensure that we capture best practice in educational settings appropriately. Furthermore, there is a significant work stream

underway in partnership with Who Cares? Scotland to develop a range of training / awareness raising materials about being care experienced which can be used with pupils and staff.

- 3.15 A significant development since the last update to Board has been the creation of a Promise Lead Officer post. This post is being funded by contributions across Council Services and the HSCP though it will be based in and managed by Children's Services. The post will be dedicated to driving forward the ambitious programme of change we have already embarked on. Recruitment has concluded and the new postholder will take up their role in September. The creation of this dedicated senior leader resource is further evidence of Renfrewshire's commitment to #KeepthePromise.
- 3.16 In conclusion, good progress continues to be made in relation to the Promise. Several service / practice developments are underway, not least of all the Promise Keeper and self-evaluation work. The appointment of a Lead Officer for the Promise has been a significant development and will greatly assist with our journey towards system change that removes barriers and stigma and improves outcomes for our most vulnerable children and families.

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

Author: Michelle McCargo, Children's Service Manager, email - michelle.mccargo@renfrewshire.gov.uk