

Paving the Way



Care Experienced people's views
on the Scottish Government's plan to
Keep the Promise.

June 2022

[‘Keeping the Promise’ Implementation Plan](#)

Saturday 18th June

If you require this report in a more accessible format, please contact policy@whocaresscotland.org

"More action should happen.
There's been a lot of chat
and not enough action."

"I worry that
the Implementation Plan talks a lot
about the existing
work within Scottish Government.
Shouldn't
it be more innovative?"

"Don't get distracted.
Focus on the road
ahead to avoid accidents
and incidents."

"How do we
know they'll keep the
Promise? What are the
repercussions?"

"Why has there been a
lack of progress with The
Promise?"

"I'm concerned that
things aren't moving fast
enough."



A message from our Chief Executive



Louise Hunter
Chief Executive
Who Cares? Scotland

Following a root and branch review of the care 'system', [The Promise](#) was made to Care Experienced people across Scotland in 2020. A key commitment of The Promise was the intention to listen to Care Experienced people and provide a feedback loop throughout the duration of the 10-year implementation plan.

With full commitment to achieving The Promise, [Who Cares? Scotland](#), as the national independent membership organisation for Care Experienced people, with over 3,600 members, is uniquely placed to understand what is happening for and to Care Experienced people in Scotland.

Since the publication of The Promise, we have provided meaningful participation opportunities for our members in a number of ways, including targeted work to understand how they are impacted by specific issues. For example, we have engaged on the topics of [parenthood](#) and [mental health](#) with Care Experienced people, in order to influence change to policy and practice.

In response to the publication of the Scottish Government's report '[Keeping the Promise to our Children, Young People, and Families](#)' in March 2022, Who Cares? Scotland facilitated an engagement event for Care Experienced people called 'The Promise and You' on 18th June 2022. I would like to thank Jasmin Pilling, one of our [National Representative Body](#), for her involvement in co-producing the event and reviewing this report.

This interim report presents feedback gathered from Care Experienced people in direct response to the Scottish Government's Plan. Our key asks for the Scottish Government are as follows:

1 - To provide immediate clarity on roles and responsibilities for ensuring that Scotland keeps The Promise, this should also be available in an easy read format to ensure accessibility. This should include a timeline for, and further information about, the proposed 'Promise Bill' in the implementation plan.

2 - To ensure that Care Experienced adults are recognised and included in changes made to implement The Promise.

3 - Alongside local authorities, commit to engaging directly with Care Experienced people across Scotland on implementation of The Promise, with support from WC?S.

4 - Provide answers to the list of questions asked at our event by Care Experienced people. These are shared in full at the end of this report.

It is our intention to continue focused engagement about The Promise with Care Experienced people in the coming months through regional forums. There is an open invite to the Scottish Government, elected officials and other key decision makers to attend these regional events. We would welcome direct participation from interested parties and will continue to share the feedback and recommendations from these events in further interim reports, providing a final report ahead of the Promise Bill being shared with the Scottish Parliament.

If Scotland is to #KeepThePromise by 2030, collectively, we must listen to the people who will be directly impacted by the changes. Thank you for taking the time to engage with this report and I welcome ongoing engagement, discussion and debate over the coming months and years, enabling us to work together with Care Experienced people for a lifetime of Equality, Respect and Love.

Louise Hunter

Chief Executive, Who Cares? Scotland

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What did we find out?

We invited Care Experienced people from across Scotland to share their thoughts on the Scottish Government's 'Promise Implementation Plan' (**The Plan**).

The participants:

Identified the need for **The Plan** to be **clear, engaging,** with **easier to understand language.**

Were supportive of a **promise bill** to **hold to account** those responsible for **keeping The Promise.**

Identified gaps in **The Plan** relating to **lifelong support.** Particularly in **advocacy, mental health, housing, employment, financial support** and **access to education.**

Identified the **need** for amended **legislation** to **protect the rights** of Care Experienced people throughout their lifetime.

Identified the **need** for **whole family support** to prevent children going into care and initiatives to **protect relationships** in families.

Identified the **need** for **dedicated mental health services** for Care Experienced people.

What did we find out?

We invited Care Experienced people from across Scotland to share their thoughts on the Scottish Government's 'Promise Implementation Plan' (**The Plan**).

The participants:

Want to see the end of the criminalisation of Care Experienced people including **ending placing children in prison.**

Want to see equal rights for young people in **Scotland** on **cross-border placements.**

Want to see actions to ensure **Care Experienced parents** receive a **consistently positive** and **supportive experience** when they access services, **free from stigma.**

Identified the need to prevent disruptions to schooling, ensure schools know the **impacts of trauma** and **end exclusions.**

Identified the need for a **public education** campaign to **combat bullying** and **stigma.**

Want to see a wider roll out of **trauma training** and for **all Corporate Parents** to be **trauma-responsive.**

What did we do?

On 18th June 2022, we created space for people with care experience to engage with the Scottish Government's [‘Keeping the Promise’ Implementation Plan](#). This report sets out what the Scottish Government will do to make sure the findings of the Independent Care Review – The Promise – are put into action.

We wanted to find out Care Experienced people's views on The Plan as we believe that the Scottish Government must involve those with lived experience of care when planning on how to make it better. This gives the government a better chance of getting it right and allows us to make sure people in power follow through on their promises.

The event took place in our office and online, with 46 people with care experience attending. Scottish Government officials also engaged in the conversations and will feed in what they heard alongside this report back to government to effect change.

Alongside some energising activities, food and time to connect, our participants learnt about The Plan and asked questions in the first session [through a series of interactive posters we developed to explain each chapter](#), supported by our staff facilitators.

The four chapters in The Plan came from The Promise Scotland's [Change Programme ONE from Plan 21-24](#):

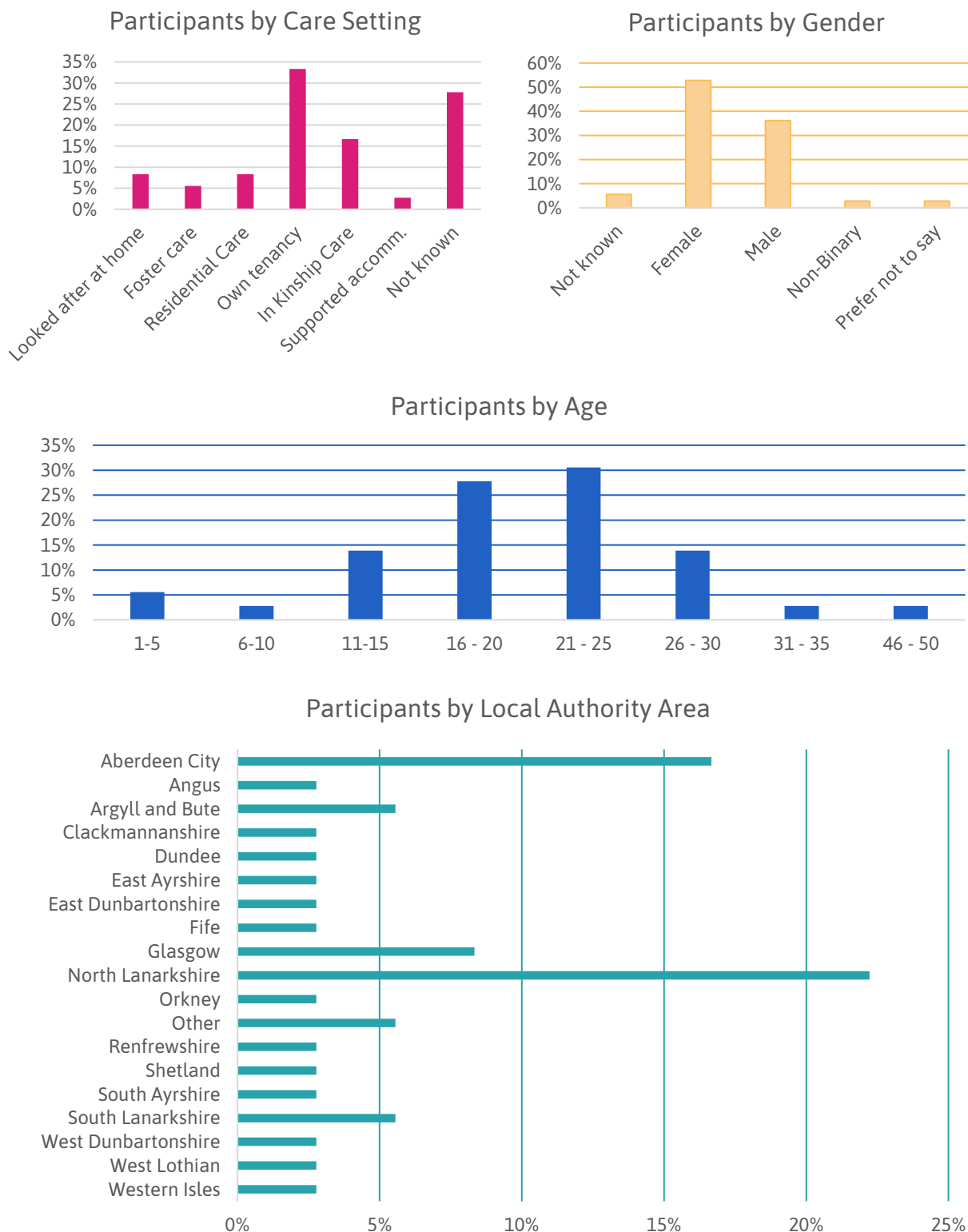
1. Keeping Families Together
2. A Good Childhood
3. The Right Scaffolding
4. Building Capacity

Care Experienced people then gave their views on the government's route map for Keeping the Promise by annotating designed maps with post-it note chips, clouds, cars, stop-signs and checkpoints (staple features of many journeys!) to indicate:



Who shared their views?

46 people took part in the event,¹ 41 participated in person and 5 participated virtually.



¹ 10 participants did not give consent to record their information, so are not represented in the demographics.



What did Care Experienced people tell us?

The following is a summary of what participants shared throughout both the in-person and online sessions when reflecting on the Scottish Government's [Keeping The Promise Implementation Plan](#).

1. KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER



1.1 Whole family support



Good ideas from The Plan

Commitment to whole family support and the importance of well-resourced, accessible, and integrated community-based services, including wraparound childcare, was supported by participants:

"Good thing is keeping families together - keeping siblings together is vital. It's fundamental and should have happened years ago."

"A national bank of homemakers. Communities coming together to help each other out."

"Wraparound childcare. I think this is a brilliant idea. I had issues with this myself."



What is missing from The Plan?

Many participants felt mental health support was missing from The Plan. Although the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund is supposed to support child and young people's mental health, we want to see dedicated mental health services and lifelong support for Care Experienced people (see our seven tangible asks around mental health in our ['Tend Our Light' report from February 2022](#)).

Care Experienced people want knowledge and understanding of processes, services and supports communicated to families when they need it, regardless of age, stage or geography:

"For Care Experienced parents... there needs to be a clearer means of communication to ensure all understand."

"[In] Sweden and Norway - their services all link up. There's a lot of focus on pre-birth. Lots of support for fathers etc. SW [Social Work] support can still be seen as negative in our culture. Need a change in culture that SW intervention isn't negative."





What could be better?

Participants want to see more financial support available for carers, and for there to be lifelong eligibility for any support put in place:

"Comprehensive, but poses questions. Shortage of foster carers - key to keeping children in local areas."

"Kinship carers don't have access to carer payments! They are still parenting. Why is this?"

Certain support can only be qualified for if a child is on a Compulsory Supervision Order."



What needs to stop?

Discussion focused on stigma around poverty, wasted resources, with others calling for an end to informal kinship care:

"Everybody sticks a label on Care Experienced children - this needs to be dismantled."

"Spending money on things that aren't working."

1.2 Education



Good ideas from The Plan

Some participants supported the aim to improve attendance at school and to have an Adult Learning Strategy:

"Adult learning – literacy, wraparound knowledge, improve life skills."



What is missing from The Plan?

Many spoke about fairer rollout of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) payments, as well as support for families with additional support needs and equity in educational opportunities for Care Experienced people.

"Making sure all children get equal options i.e. clean clothes and shower if unable at home for school/college."

"Full roll out of EMA without the denials and an easier application system. Not being means tested for Care Experienced young people. It took me a whole school year."





What could be better?

Participants want to see the Care Experienced bursary go further, more adult learning and support to recover from trauma in schools, and success in education to be defined as more than simply attending school:

"Care Experienced bursary and benefits – it's impossible to live off £8100 for the year when rent is £6000. [It should be] extended to masters and PhD level [and] paid over 12 months."

"More help in school with traumatic experiences. Such as someone to meet and just relax and do activities. Keeping your mind active."

"It's about thriving when you attend school too - not just attending."



What needs to stop?

Participants want to see an end to exclusion of Care Experienced young people, to multiple school moves, and of children being taken out of class for non-educational reasons related to them being in care:

"Being honest - schools are not using the term 'exclusion' - I met a young lad last week who was sent home for 'thinking time' - this is exclusion in all but name. Exclusion must end."

"Moving schools - and the friends you make/leave can be a struggle - can lead to bullying in a lot of cases. Can disrupt attendance. Goes back to keeping families together."

"Stop social work from taking Care Experienced young people out of class to speak to them. Schools not to judge levels of education due to a situation. Don't assume we're stupid."



1.3 Employment

Good ideas from The Plan

Some were supportive of The Plan's inclusion of strengthening employment routes, and recognition of the financial and social challenges of entering the workforce:

"Scaffolding of support for work – why work if I get more security and support on benefits?"





What is missing from The Plan?

Participants shared the need for joined up thinking of our education system with the job market, in recognition of the current gap in employability support:

"Everything leads to employability - one of the probs is children who are not as academic don't get the support they need with CVs and application forms etc... If a YP (young person) has the opportunity for a job, but can't fill in the application form, they don't stand a chance."



What could be better?

One participant mentioned they would like support with benefits whilst undertaking part time work:

"Employability support - help with keeping benefits while working part time."

"Financial support for apprenticeship applicants similar to higher education support, the current lack may leave a young person feeling pushed to pursue higher education."

1.4 Tacking Inequality



What is missing from The Plan?

This topic was seen as too big to discuss at one session, however, one comment spoke to the stigma Care Experienced parents face:

"End stigma against pregnant parents (both parents). Just because we were in care doesn't mean we can't be good parents."

Please read our ['Believe in Us' report \(June 2022\)](#) for more evidence of this widespread issue, with eleven calls for change from Care Experienced parents.



What could be better?

Participants welcomed the rights-based approach to public engagement in the proposed new Human Rights Bill. However, special protection for Care Experienced people, who face greater barriers in realising their rights, must be in the Bill to help keep families together:

"Young person should be part of Hearing, LAC review, planning. Should be centre of change for their future."



Welcoming the aim to reduce the number of Care Experienced people who go missing, participants want to see a more young person-centred approach:

"Less judgment and stigma of missing young people."

"Listen to young person's reasons for 'going missing'."

1.5 Criminal Justice



Good ideas from The Plan

Participants celebrated the commitment to a trauma-informed justice system. Some pointed out that offending or risk-taking can be attributed to past experiences of trauma. Others were pleased to see the commitment to delivering the 'Bairn's Hoose' model for children.



What is missing from The Plan?

"North of Scotland context - as things stand, if a YP in North is put in secure, the nearest one is 100+ miles away. This has dire consequences. Same with secure education. Need to make sure North isn't forgotten."



What needs to stop?

There was consensus that criminalisation of Care Experienced young people needs to stop:

"Criminal convictions against anyone's name is major - many silly charges laid against Care Experienced children/YP [young people] - this needs to be looked at"

"Stop criminalising youth - CHS [instead]. Need love and support."



2. A GOOD CHILDHOOD



2.1 Scottish Approach to Care



Good Ideas from The Plan

One person supported The Plan's focus on the need for the public **"to understand our lives."** Participants want to see a public education campaign, to raise awareness of care experience, and want this to be led by Care Experienced people.



What is missing from The Plan?

To address stigma, participants want to see active work to stop the bullying of Care Experienced children in school and to see explicit work carried out in schools about care. They also suggested more Champions Boards could help.

"Stigma of CEYP [Care Experienced Young People] can translate to bullying in schools. Being in care system - people should take it more seriously. Need to walk a mile in their shoes. Need to talk to young people in school who are in the care system - it can be a hugely traumatic experience."



What could be better?

To ensure a universal and inclusive definition of care experience, some members wanted to ensure children in Scotland on cross-border placements get equal access to support:

"Any child who comes from care in other parts of the UK (England) should be included in the existing local authorities they live in."

"Cross border discussions with England. Stop confusion of support and entitlement."

Another wanted entitlements to support to be clearer using this definition, so everyone knows what they are entitled to.



Participants wanted to add to the 'Scottish approach to care':

"Unconditional love is key and very important to young children."

"Foster carers shouldn't be proud of supporting 120 kids. They should have one child for 20 years. Give children consistency."

"Simpler and more support funding available from the council and Scottish Government - not charities and organisations. Government are Corporate Parents too."

On addressing stigma, our participants wanted to emphasise that this does not just affect young people, as evidenced in our recent [mental health](#) and [Care Experienced parents](#) reports:

"Still a way to go to treat Care Experienced children and their parents equally - sometimes it feels like they are held to a higher standard - nobody is perfect but sometimes it feels like SWs want birth parents to be perfect"



What needs to stop?

Discussion again focused on lifelong stigma and inaccessible or age-restrictive eligibility to support:

"Remove the age limit for support for young people. Never too old for help."

"Stop asking Care Experienced people to retell their story countless times."

"We shouldn't have to fight for support we are entitled to."

2.2 Welfare-led Intervention



Good ideas from The Plan

Participants strongly supported changes to the youth justice system:

"Increased age for young people to access secure services instead of prison."



What is missing from The Plan?

"Within the court system, with jury duty - Care Experienced people should have the option if they want to do it. For some it can bring back horrible memories from childhood."



What could be better?



Participants fully support lifelong availability of advocacy when individuals need it:

"Rights and information being more available."

"In North we push for advocacy for those 'on the fringes' of care too. Lifelong should mean for pre-care too."

"Support for Care Experienced people should be lifelong."



What needs to stop?

Participants identified police practice and how decisions are made as needing more focus:

"The way police handle stuff – too hands on. If you are upset and crying you shouldn't be handled into a police van."

"Stop decisions being made by people who don't know us i.e. senior social worker, etc."

2.3 Minimising Intervention



Good ideas from The Plan

Participants strongly supported work to continue prioritising relationships between families, including siblings and parents.



What is missing from The Plan?

"Examine and address the reason for a local authority placement."

"Support to see parents who may not have been around in early years if young person wants to be in contact."



What could be better?

Participants want to see more action to keep relationships with parents and other family:

"Brothers and sisters - been totally ignored for years. Been getting better for specific YP recently. Get the impression that SW know about the Guidance, but perhaps there is a resource issue."

"Hard to travel to see brothers and sisters - reduces the number of times I can see my brother. Reduces amount of time I can spend with brother. Would be even worse if at work - have to take time off school to visit now. Makes it hard to build relationship"



"Only get to see my birth parents every few months - sometimes the way the contact is set up is more for the convenience of SW than to foster YP relationships."



What needs to stop?

There was clear support to change how relationships with family are currently supported:

"Siblings should never be apart, only guided and supported to connect and bond with each other."

"Feel like you can't talk to your brothers/sisters/parents if you're in supervised situation. Feels 'super unnatural' - person always sitting there or always 'butting in'. Had to negotiate with SW to take their badge off in the room."

2.4 Moving On



What is missing from The Plan?

Participants want to see much stronger financial lifelong support, with support for the Universal Basic Income and a minimum income scheme, with clear offers and information proactively communicated by services:

"For the local authority to help with financial support once left college or school. Make sure every Care Experienced young person knows what they are allowed."

"Look into putting money into savings for Care Experienced young people."

Many members want support for 'care leavers' be available without an age cut-off – lifelong as needed:

"Stop over 18s falling through the net. Continued and more intensive supports lifelong."

"More support for people 18+. There's lots of support for under 18s but not 18+. It's not fair, we deserve better."

"More multi-agency planning for moving on to prevent prison, hospital admissions and suicides."

"Could they put in place some support around young care leavers and loneliness? Could they support a person to be there like, a family member?"

"The envelope of support should be there at all times as much as possible."



Other practical ideas included supporting the purchase of electric cars and free train travel.



What could be better?

On the Care Experience Grant, participants want a stronger financial support package and a minimum income scheme:

"£200 is not enough in the current and future cost of living."

"Care Experienced people having a basic income, separate to other financial support."

Housing was another priority that needs more focus in The Plan:

"Government Help to Buy schemes need a tailored service to support Care Experienced people. A lot of Care Experienced people who receive help gaining their first home are single. Those with children have to apply to local authorities with wait times of up to three years."

"Give Care Experienced people the right to buy their 'forever homes' regardless of council or housing association."

"Range of housing options that are suitable and allow a quality of life – not just 'homeless units'."

"Consider guarantors for Care Experienced people when becoming adults for giving young people better chance at life, securing a mortgage, getting a car, etc."

Support should be available for all Care Experienced people who have experienced informal placements:

"We've been through the same issues but it's not recognised."



What needs to stop?

"Applying for benefits require proof of ID. Most don't have this! ID costs money!"

"Care leavers going into homeless accommodation."



3. THE RIGHT SCAFFOLDING



3.1 Strategic Approach to Change



What is missing from The Plan?

Our [‘Being Human’ report with Care Experienced people’s views on the National Care Service](#) (shared at our Bairns’ Supper event in February 2022), sets out key recommendations on how best Scotland can Keep the Promise by protecting Care Experienced people’s rights throughout their lifetime. Our members have identified many gaps in The Plan around lifelong support from services.



What could be better?

In relation to Children’s Hearings, there was support for the redesign, and one participant wanted:

“Legislation at Children’s Hearings that a Safeguarder is appointed at every Hearing.”

3.2 Information Sharing



Good ideas from The Plan

Participants support the work to improve the information they have access to:

“Young people having autonomy over their experiences and sharing that with professionals as and when they want.”



What could be better?

Participants want to see much easier access to existing care records and there to be an entitlement to these for all Care Experienced people. They also want to see:

“Care passport – build a profile which each Care Experienced person can choose who sees their information.”

“Information sharing with consent so Care Experienced person doesn’t have to repeat to multiple people.”



3.3 Supporting the Workforce



Good ideas from The Plan

Participants want to see investment in the workforce and agree there needs to be better support, including good training, pay and hiring practices.



What is missing from The Plan?

Participants felt strongly that social work should be closely linked with implementing The Promise and all new social workers should know and understand The Promise before starting in post.

It was also shared that different services should be clearer about what they could or should be offering to Care Experienced people.

One participant highlighted the importance of accessibility when training the workforce:

"Sign language should be taught and promoted in nurseries, schools, colleges and unis."



What could be better?

"All school staff and professionals need to understand kinship and the differences between kinship/fostering when it comes to things like 'contact'."

"Listening to children to pave the way forward."



What needs to stop?

Issues with the 'postcode lottery' describing the variation in what different local authorities offer, empty promises and tokenistic examples of participation were raised.

Alongside this, participants want these things to stop:

"Fostering and adoption shouldn't be a job."

Jargon!"



3.4 Trauma-informed Care



Good ideas

Participants agreed that trauma-informed practice and care is vital, with one participant pointing to how important this can be for children with additional needs.



What could be better?

Although strongly supportive of trauma-informed care, participants pointed to the need for more action and to be 'trauma-responsive' in practice – not just knowledgeable. There was consensus that every professional and sector should be trauma-responsive, this should happen alongside teaching about care and the challenges of being in care.

"Trauma should be made more aware and young people should be supported with dignity and confidence."

Trauma responsive
Scotland – every
sector, every worker."



4. BUILDING CAPACITY



Good ideas

Last but not least, the participants were broadly supportive of The Promise Bill if it would bring about accountability.



What is missing from The Plan?

Participants also want to see much stronger accountability for whether The Promise is kept:

A dedicated Promise Keeper (like a Commissioner) in every local authority with one national Commissioner to oversee."

"A Care Experienced Minister in Scot Gov!"



What could be better?

As reflected at the top of this report, participants generally reflected about The Promise and progress not being fast enough.

One participant also shared their concerns about further legal changes:

"A Promise Bill must untangle the legislative landscape, not layer on top of it."

It is also important to highlight that many participants had found the implementation plan from Scottish Government to be dense and difficult to engage with:

"You need a PhD to understand it!"

"Someone found the handouts still confusing – us bringing it to life was helpful."

"Language is too confusing in The Plan."

Several participants also chose to share messages to inspire the journey towards Keeping the Promise:

"They should take better care of people in care."

"Young people should be raised up, not knocked down."



One participant prepared a statement highlighting frustrations and hopes for change within with wider context of the cost-of-living crisis and recovery from Covid-19:

“Cost of living by Renee Bertram. I understand we need rules to follow to balance our society but remember no one asked to be born. Fight for their life, love to work all our existence through all the battles each soul goes through yet only the successful get the privilege to be rich and worry free (celebrities, musicians, talented folk). Stratification, because that’s how balance works but it’s not fair, not moral or equal.”

Everyone deserves their rightful success for the fact that person has fought to be where they are now. Covid has affected us all, whether loss of job or increase in mental health, now the cost of living is going up. In all respect, even the wealthy are struggling. If making mental health chronic, then you are not making your citizen healthy or happy. Poverty/location/environment/hygiene/behaviours all have an impact and I need to stand up for my integrity for all my friends and family and if I am one reaching out, then times that by the amount this country has! This is our future to come, so help make it happen.”



Questions for the Scottish Government

Keeping Families Together



1. "More support for kinship and foster carers – how is this going to happen?"
2. Several questions related to funding commitments: "Is the funding stated enough to deliver on something so complicated and important?"
3. "How are you going to ensure young people get the benefit of any money families receive?"
4. "Community support for families - is the 5% going to be national or local authority?"²
5. "How will you ensure that young people can learn in ways that suit their learning style?"
6. "Brothers and sisters legislation. After legislation came in my brother and sister [moved to another country, while I stayed here]. Why is this happening after it became law?"

A Good Childhood



1. "What is £200 a year going to do to stop me having financial issues? It doesn't even cover half a month's rent or a proper food shop."³
2. "Why is it not clear where we can find the supports we need?"
3. "What is the long-term effect of sudden placement moves?"
4. "Where is secure care in the Implementation Plan?"
5. "How will you ensure young people in secure/close support settings aren't withheld their right to education for behaviour?"
6. "Are Scottish Government going to nationalise secure care?"
7. "Would the Scottish Government consider looking at extending the Care Experienced bursary to help Care Experienced students not choose between heating and eating?"
8. "Why is family contact limited to 9-5 Mon-Friday when it has to be supervised? How is this a normal family experience? What about jobs, school college, etc.?"

² Question is about the government's commitment to invest at least 5% of all community-based health and social care spend in preventative measures by 2030.

³ Question is about the Care Experienced Grant.



9. “Who has responsibility [sic] to ensure brothers/sisters see each other – social work, foster, residential, etc.?”
10. “Why is there such a lack of mental health support for Care Experienced children?”

THE RIGHT SCAFFOLDING



1. “Will teachers, support/classroom assistants, nursery staff have trauma-informed training prior to their employment? Can’t it be built into [PGDE], HNC, etc?”
2. “Does this include plans to train the police on trauma?”
3. “What does a trauma-informed approach actually mean? What are the deliverables?”
4. “What will SSSC (the Scottish Social Services Council’s) role be?”⁴
5. “What can be done to make sure each social worker is able to see their Care Experienced person regularly?”

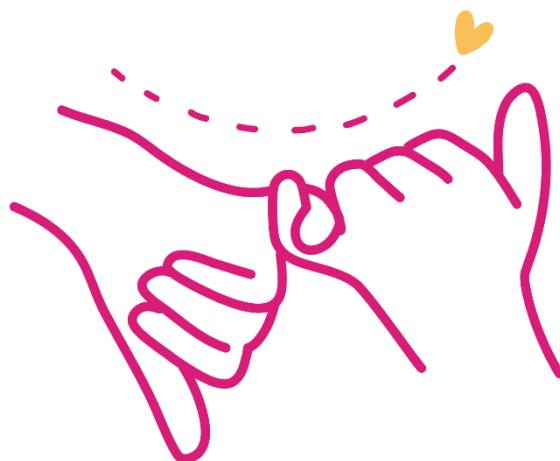
BUILDING CAPACITY



1. “What is the difference between the Oversight Board and The Promise Collective?”
2. “When will the legal age for Care Experienced people to get support be amended?”
3. “How fast will you make the laws?”
4. “How do we know you will keep your promises?”

⁴ This question was raised while discussing the implementation plan’s commitment to create a new National Social Work Agency. The participant wanted to better understand what each organisation would be responsible for.





If you would like to set up a meeting or discuss this report in more detail, please get in touch at:
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**WHO
CARES?**
SCOTLAND

EQUALITY | RESPECT | LOVE

