

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education and Children's Services Committee
DATE	21 November 2023
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Keeping The Promise – Year 2 Evaluation Report
REPORT NUMBER	CFS/23/364
DIRECTOR	Eleanor Sheppard
CHIEF OFFICER	Graeme Simpson
REPORT AUTHOR	Amy Evans
TERMS OF REFERENCE	2.1, 2.1.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report progress of our partnership implementation of the Scottish Government's Plan 21-24 to keep [The Promise](#).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- 2.1 Notes the local progress made in Year Two of Plan 21-24 as outlined in the appendix report (Appendix 1); and
- 2.2 Instructs the Chief Officer of Children and Family Services to provide a progress report in Autumn 2024 in relation to the partnership's implementation of Plan 21-24 and subsequent Promise plans.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 In 2020, The Independent Care Review published 'The Promise' narrating a vision for Scotland, recognising that the whole landscape of systems and services that interact with children and families needed to change.
- 3.2 The Promise is responsible for driving the work of change drawn from the findings of the Independent Care Review and makes clear the extent of change required, however, the outcomes that Scotland needs to achieve are simple and reflect Scotland's existing commitment that all children "grow up loved, safe and respected so they can fulfil their potential."
- 3.3 The Scottish Government's Promise team translated the findings of the Care Review into The Plan for change which will be phased across ten years from 2020-2030. Plan 21-24 is the first Promise plan and was published in April 2021. Plan 21-24 focuses on the period from 1 April 2021 until 31 March 2024 and outlines a series of outcomes.

3.4 The five priority areas for Plan 21-24 are:

- The right to a good childhood
- Whole family support
- Supporting the workforce
- Planning
- Building capacity

3.5 A report on year one's progress keeping The Promise was presented to the Education and Children's Services Committee on 8 November 2022. The Committee requested that the Chief Officer of Children and Family Services provide an annual report on the Council's progress in delivering Plan 21-24. Locally our refreshed [Children's Services Plan](#) and [Corporate Parenting Plan](#) (presented to and approved by this Committee earlier in 2023) have been carefully aligned to Plan 21-24.

3.6 Led by Aberdeen City Council colleagues, under the auspices of the Children's Services Board, the partnership has now undertaken a further self-evaluation of progress in Year Two of Plan 21-24 (Appendix 1) to examine how children's services in Aberdeen are and need to support the change agenda to keep the Promise. The evaluation presents an overview of activity to date and of our level of confidence that changes will be implemented and embedded by the end of the lifetime of Plan 21-24. The evaluation identifies two areas for change that are not included in currently published local Plans and these areas will be taken into account as we report on our progress in delivering the Children's Services Plan and refresh the Plan in March 2024.

3.7 Significant progress has been made in Year Two against the 25 priority actions from Plan 21-24 and we are confident that many of the actions will be completed by 2024. Our evaluation broadly mirrors the findings of the Promise Oversight Board who found that some areas are likely to take longer to embed with some of these areas reliant on changes at Scottish Government level or from the Children's Hearing System. The next national Promise Plan, which is likely to be a six year Plan and due for publication in Spring 2024 will take account of this learning.

3.8 The Promise Oversight Board, which reports on the progress made at a national level to keep the Promise, has reported a need to prioritise 3 areas. These priorities are:

- Education
- Brothers and Sisters
- Homelessness

3.9 Whilst we have made significant progress locally in all three of these areas, we agree that improving the educational outcomes for our looked-after and care experienced children and young people, keeping brothers and sisters together and connected, and ensuring young people leaving care have everything they need, remain local priorities too.

3.10 Alongside these priorities, we remain dedicated to developing and embedding our local Family Support Model to deliver on early and preventative support to children, young people and their families. With the aim of increasingly preventing children and young people from coming into our care at all.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report of itself, however, the scale of reform anticipated by the Independent Care Review will trigger a need for finance to be pooled more routinely across the partnership.

4.2 The Promise has called for a move away from using resources to deal with the consequences of the current care system towards building a better system, focused on keeping children in their families wherever safe to do so by providing earlier, whole family support.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Promise and Plan 21-24 impact upon a range of statutory duties on the Council in relation to vulnerable and care experienced children, including those contained in the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011, Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 and the Children (Scotland) Act 2020.

5.2 Some aspects of the Independent Care Review, as articulated in The Promise and Plan 21-24, have been or are anticipated to be, enshrined in statute. The Children (Scotland) Act 2020 has implications for local authorities as it brings the law further into line with children's rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), in particular:

- Supporting relationships between brothers and sisters
- Making sure children have greater opportunity and means to have their voices heard
- Providing better advocacy and support for children
- Developing rules for contact centres where children, parents and other people in the child's life can meet.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

7. RISK

7.1 The assessment of risk contained within the table below is considered to be consistent with the Council's Risk Appetite Statement.

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Many of the requirements of Plan 21-24 are already built into a variety of strategic plans. It is expected that gaps will emerge as the Council and partners scrutinise the requirements of Plan 21-24 in detail.	The Children's Services Board and Community Planning Management Group have oversight of the delivery of the relevant strategic plans in this respect. They are ensuring that the terms of Plan 21-24 are incorporated into current and future strategic planning.	M	Yes
Compliance	No significant risks identified.	Services across all multi-agency partners are aware of legislative requirements and ensure compliance	L	No
Operational	The aims of Plan 21-24 are ambitious and will require our people, equipment and buildings to change in order to drive on the plan. This may impact on morale as the change process is undertaken.	Leadership supports participation and planning across the multi-agency partnership in the delivery of Plan 21-24 to best ensure operational support for changes identified.	M	Yes

Financial	No significant risks identified			Yes
Reputational	No significant risks identified	The Council and partners are committed to keeping The Promise and implementing Plan 21-24 .	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	No significant risks identified			Yes

8. OUTCOMES

COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2023-2024	
	Impact of Report
<p>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</p> <p><u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u></p>	<p>Plan 21-24 has direct relevance to the delivery of the following policy statements contained within the Council Delivery Plan for People:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the Council follows best practice as a corporate parent to get the best outcomes for looked-after young people, those in kinship care and those with additional support needs such as autism, developmental disorders or mental health problems. • Continue to seek to support young people to receive care in Aberdeen, through fostering, adoption and other services and seek to reduce “out of authority” placements. • Work with the city’s universities, North East Scotland College and businesses to increase educational and training options and the number of care experienced young people and young people from deprived communities, going onto positive destinations, including further and higher education, vocational training and apprenticeships.
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26	
<p>Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes</p>	<p>Plan 21-24 has direct relevance to the following stretch outcomes in the LOIP and will help support delivery of these:</p> <p>4. 95% of children (0-5 years) will reach their expected developmental milestones by the time of their 27-30 month review by 2026.</p>

	<p>5. 90% of children and young people report they feel listened to all the time by 2026.</p> <p>6. By meeting the health and emotional wellbeing needs of care experienced children and young people they will have the same levels of attainment in education and positive destinations as their peers by 2026.</p>
Regional and City Strategies	Plan 21-24 is relevant to Aberdeen City Council's Delivery Plan, the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, the Children's Services Plan and the Corporate Parenting Plan.

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	It is confirmed by Chief Officer Graeme Simpson that no Integrated Impact Assessment is required.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	N/A

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 [The Promise](#)

10.2 [Plan 21-24](#)

10.3 [Children's Services Plan](#)

10.4 [Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26](#)

10.5 [Aberdeen City Council Delivery Plan](#)

11. APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix 1: Keeping The Promise – Year 2 Evaluation Report

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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