

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Education & Children's Services Committee
<b>DATE</b>	26 November 2024
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Keeping the Promise – Year 3 Evaluation
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	F&C/24/337
<b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	Eleanor Sheppard
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Graeme Simpson
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Graeme Simpson
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	2.1; 2.1.1

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report progress of our partnership's 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 Three of Plan 21-24 as outlined in the appendix report (Appendix 1);
- 2.2 Instructs the Chief Officer of Children and Family Services to provide a report to Committee on the delivery plan for Plan 24-30 when it is published and on the proposed reporting arrangements for delivery of this plan; and
- 2.3 Instructs the Chief Officer of Children and Family Services to provide a report to Committee updating the partnership's Corporate Parenting Plan to take account of the delivery plan for Plan 24-30 and for this to include the voice and views of Aberdeen City's care experienced children and young people.

### 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 progress over years one and two of Plan 21-24 was presented to the Education and Children's Services Committee in November 2022 and November 2023. The Committee requested that the Chief Officer of Children and Family Services provide an annual report on the progress in delivering Plan 21-24. Locally our refreshed Children's Services Plan and Corporate Parenting Plan 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, have now undertaken a further self-evaluation of progress in Year Three of Plan 21-24 (Appendix 1). This evidences how children's services in Aberdeen are supporting 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.
- 3.7 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. Our self-evaluation demonstrates there is a lot of positive work that is being undertaken that is making a difference to the lives of children and families with experience of care. This must be celebrated but our focus must continue to build on and further embed our change activity as we transition into Plan 24-30.
- 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 some key areas – Moving On/Homelessness; Education; and Brothers and Sisters. 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.
- 3.9 The Thematic Inspection in relation to Moving On currently being undertaken by the Care Inspectorate will provide a further focus to support and drive change.
- 3.10 Alongside these priorities, we remain committed to developing and embedding a 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. The Committee had a report shared with them on this activity at the previous meeting.
- 3.11 The Promise Oversight Board has acknowledged the challenging context within which The Promise and Plan 21-24 was launched, referencing the impact of the Covid pandemic and cost of living crisis on people and organisations. The Board was realistic in stating that due to these circumstances and the current pace of change, they do not believe that delivering the original aims of Plan 21-

24 is realistic by 2024. However, they reiterated that The Promise is non-negotiable and must be kept by 2030.

3.12 This commitment was reiterated at the launch of Plan 24 -30 in June 2024. This plan continues to emphasis the importance of the five priority areas (3.4). Plan 24 - 30 currently sets out **WHO** needs to do **WHAT** by **WHEN** to #KeepThePromise by 2030. Promise Scotland acknowledged in launching Plan 24 -30 that work to progress the **HOW** was ongoing. They intimated further information on the HOW would be published in the autumn of 2024. This update is still awaited.

3.13 The Promise Oversight Board have intimated that at a local and national level there is an inconsistency as to how Scotland is evidencing its commitment to deliver The Promise. To address this it is proposed that a more standard reporting approach be adopted in relation to Plan 24-30. The format of this is still awaited. Aberdeen City's reporting on the evidential progress it has made over the past three years places us in a positive position to respond to this expectation.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. 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 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 Scottish Government have indicated their intention to bring forward a Promise Bill in 2025.

5.3 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) <small>*taking into account controls/control actions</small>	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	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
<b>Compliance</b>	No significant risks identified.	Services across all multi-agency partners are aware of legislative requirements and ensure compliance	L	Yes
<b>Operational</b>	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
<b>Financial</b>	No significant risks identified		N/A	Yes
<b>Reputational</b>	No significant risks identified	The Council and partners are committed to keeping The Promise and implementing Plan 21-24 .	L	Yes
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	No significant risks identified		N/A	Yes

## 8. OUTCOMES

**COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN**

		<b>Impact of Report</b>
<b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b>		<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"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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</li> </ul>
<b>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</b>		
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes		<p>Plan 21-24 has direct relevance to the following stretch outcomes in the LOIP and will help support delivery of these:</p> <p>3. 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>4. 90% of children and young people report they feel listened to all the time by 2026.</p> <p>5. 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</p>
<b>Regional and City Strategies</b>		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.
<b>UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes</b>		<p>Ensuring the effective planning for children and young people is central to the planning for all children and young people open to Children’s Social Work.</p> <p>Implementation of Incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots Law; The Children (Care &amp; Justice) Act and the impending “Promise Bill” (which will incorporate legislation in relation to the Children’s Hearing system) are all relevant to our collective commitment to #KeepthePromise.</p> <p>This wide ranging and ambitious programme impacts on 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 &amp; Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 and Children (Scotland) Act 2020.</p>

## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
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<b>Impact Assessment</b>	It is confirmed that no Integrated Impact Assessment is required.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required.
<b>Other</b>	Not required.

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

## 11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

<b>Name</b>	Graeme Simpson
<b>Title</b>	CSWO
<b>Email Address</b>	<a href="mailto:gsimpson@aberdeencity.gov.uk">gsimpson@aberdeencity.gov.uk</a>
<b>Tel</b>	0777616929