

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	18 November 2021
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	#KeepingThePromise – Plan 21-24
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/21/273
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne
CHIEF OFFICER	Graeme Simpson
REPORT AUTHOR	Kymmie Fraser
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To introduce the Committee to the Scottish Government's Plan 21-24 to #KeepThePromise and to provide information and proposals on our implementation of it.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

- 2.1 Notes the national Plan 21-24 to #KeepThePromise;
- 2.2 Notes the local response to Plan 21-24;
- 2.3 Requests that the Chief Officer of Integrated Children & Family Services provides an annual report to this Committee on the Council's progress in delivering Plan 21-24; the first of these being in June 2022; and
- 2.4 Agrees to refer this report to the next meeting of Public Protection Committee on 7 December 2021 for information.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 **The Promise and Plan 21-24**

The Promise Scotland is responsible for driving the work of change demanded by the findings of the Independent Care Review into Scotland's care system.

It works with a range of organisations to support shifts in policy, practice and culture so Scotland can **#KeepThePromise** it made to care experienced infants, children, young people, adults and their families – that every child grows up loved, safe and respected, and able to realise their full potential

3.1.2 On 5 February 2020, the Independent Care Review published seven reports, with '**The Promise**' narrating a vision for Scotland, built on five foundations, namely:

Voice: Children must be listened to and meaningfully and appropriately involved in decision-making about their care, with all those involved properly listening and responding to what children want and need. There must be a compassionate, caring, decision-making culture focussed on children and those they trust.

Family: Where children are safe in their families and feel loved they must stay and families must be given support together to nurture that love and overcome the difficulties which get in the way.

Care: Where living with their family is not possible, children must stay with their brothers and sisters where safe to do so and belong to a loving home, staying there for as long as needed

People: The children that Scotland cares for must be actively supported to develop relationships with people in supported to listen and be compassionate in their decision-making and care.

Scaffolding: Children, families and the workforce must be supported by a system that is there when it is needed. The scaffolding of help, support and accountability must be ready and responsive when it is required.

With cross-party support and broad commitment to **#KeepThePromise**, Scotland, its statutory agencies, local authorities, third sector and thousands of children and families knew that much needed to change to make sure that all Scotland's children grow up 'loved, safe and respected.'

3.1.3 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** <https://thepromise.scot/plan-21-24-pdf-spread.pdf> is the first of 3 plans and was published in April 2021. It sets a series of outcomes that must be fulfilled by 2024.

3.1.4 This initial phase focusses on the urgent and immediate changes which will have the greatest impact on the lives of children and young people and their families.

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

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

3.1.6 A Change Programme was published in June 2021 which outlines who and what need to work together to drive towards the changes needed in Plan 21-24. The Scottish Government's Oversight Board requires an annual update report on progress from all areas to assess whether what is happening is good and fast enough to #KeepThePromise.

3.2 Progressing Plan 21-24 in Aberdeen City

3.2.1 Led by Aberdeen City Council colleagues under the auspices of the Children's Services Board, the partnership have commenced a self-evaluation exercise to map where we are across the City in relation to delivery on Plan 21-24. Partners are currently:

- a) identifying where existing strategic and work plans have anticipated the expectations of Plan 21-24 and have already incorporated various improvements into their programmes;
- b) checking that the activity in those existing strategic and work plans is sufficiently ambitious to meet aims of The Plan 21-24, and, if not, to undertake to highlight any gaps and initiate revision of the strategic plans to effect the aims of The Promise; and
- c) putting in place mechanisms to provide relevant data and progress reporting to enable a collated update of this self-evaluation to be produced annually on 1 April each year.

3.2.2 This work will be supported by a new post, Corporate Parenting Lead Officer, who was appointed on 27 September 2021. The postholder will have a dedicated focus on The Promise and implementation of Plan 21-24 and support the shift in culture and practice called for. The role will work across the Council and the Partnership.

3.2.3 The self-evaluation is grouped into the 5 foundations of The Promise and in this way we will ensure that all expectations of Plan 21-24 are identified and progressed locally. These 5 foundation areas can be summarised as follows:

1) A Good Childhood

Children who have been removed from their family of origin and live in and around the 'care system' will have a good, loving childhood.

Ensuring that children in Scotland's 'care system' feel loved, their needs are met, and their rights are upheld is a priority for Plan 21-24. The Promise Team consider that this change is urgent and must be a focus for all organisations that have responsibility towards care experienced children and young people.

2) Whole Family Support

All families need support at different times of their lives and family support is a crucial emphasis for Plan 21-24. The United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises family as the fundamental group in society and the natural environment for growth and wellbeing. Supporting families is a children's rights imperative.

'Families' means all families including families of origin, kinship, foster and adoptive families. Support will not be predicated on the setting of care.

Supporting families to stay together and thrive was an imperative before the pandemic and is of even greater import now.

3) Supporting the Workforce

Children experience the 'care system' through people. Over Plan 21-24, support for people who care and continue to care if times get tough, will improve. There will be consistency of approach, values and understanding across Scotland's workforce.

4) Planning

The Promise aims to achieve a different approach to investment and planning. National partners have a significant role to play in ensuring a new context for funding, investment and planning.

Children and families live in local communities and use local services. It is important that their experiences and outcomes are not determined simply by which local community they live in or local service they use. Planning and investment should be nationally coordinated to ensure that children and families get what they need.

Whilst the majority of The Promise relates to matters which are reserved to The Scottish Parliament, the English Independent Review of Children's Social Care has relevance in respect of cross-jurisdiction issues.

5) Building Capacity

Over the next 3 years, there will be a focus on work that ensures that the structural underpinning of the 'care system' is orientated to the needs of children and families. This work to build capacity and coherence reflects the planned obsolescence of The Promise Scotland. It will not always be there to provide oversight and accountability and the structures need to move to ensure that the scaffolding around the 'care system' facilitates and upholds children's rights.

3.3 Annual reporting to Scottish Government and to this Committee.

3.3.1 A national “Promise Oversight Board” has been established to ensure that the Promise made to Scotland's children and families is kept. The Oversight Board will use the Plan 21-24, and its successive plans, to monitor the progress organisations make individually, and the progress Scotland makes collectively, towards The Promise's key priorities to make sure Scotland will #KeepThePromise.

3.3.2 We are required to report to the Oversight Board annually and as work develops more comprehensive reporting will be possible. It is proposed that this Committee also receives an annual update report in or around June each year outlining our progress across Aberdeen City in implementing Plan 21-24.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Whilst there are no direct financial implications arising out of this report per se, the scale of reform anticipated by the Independent Care Review, as articulated in #KeepThePromise, will incur cost.

The Promise has called for a shift in the utilisation of resources away from the dealing with the consequences of the current system towards building a better system. The Scottish Government are currently looking at how this is to be achieved and local authorities await that response. Financial and other resources will be required. These will require to be met within Council, and partners', budgets and future reports to Committee will outline any implications in this respect.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Some aspects of the Independent Care Review, as articulated in #KeepThePromise and already outlined in 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 contact between brothers and sisters
- Making sure children have greater opportunity and means to have their views heard in family court cases and children's hearings
- Providing better advocacy and support for children in Hearings and Court cases
- Developing rules for contact centres where children, parents and other people in the child's life can meet

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	Many of the requirements of Plan 21-24 are already	M	The Children's Services Board and Community Planning Management

	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.		Group have oversight of the delivery of the relevant aspects of strategic plans in this respect. They are ensuring that the terms of Plan 21-24 are incorporated into current and future strategic planning.
Compliance	No significant related risks.	L	Services across all multi-agency partners are aware of legislative requirements and ensure compliance
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.	M	Leadership supports participation and planning across the multi-agency partnership in the delivery of Plan21-24 to best ensure operational support for changes identified.
Financial	No significant related financial risks from this report.	L	n/a
Reputational	There are no material reputational risks attached to this report.	L	The Council and partners are committed to #Keepingthe Promise and implementing Plan 21-24.
Environment / Climate	n/a		n/a

7. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	<p>Plan 21-24 has direct relevance to the delivery of the following policy statements contained within the Council Delivery Plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. UNICEF Child Friendly accreditation. 3. Work with the Scottish Government to provide flexible and affordable childcare for working families on the lowest incomes. 4. Support the implementation of Developing the Young Workforce, seek to gain the highest level of investors in young people accreditation and ensure

	<p>there is a focus on supporting pupils excel in STEM subjects.</p> <p>5. Appoint a mental health champion.</p> <p>7. Commit to closing the attainment gap in education while working with partners across the city.</p> <p>9. Promote diversion activities for youths and adults in our city with enhanced focused on our three locality areas.</p>
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
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 child health reviews by 2026.</p> <p>4. 90% of children and young people will report that they feel mentally well by 2026.</p> <p>5. 95% of care experienced children and young people will have the same levels of attainment in education, emotional wellbeing, and positive destinations as their peers by 2026.</p> <p>6. 95% of children living in our priority localities will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026.</p> <p>7. Child Friendly City which supports all children to prosper and engage actively with their communities by 2026.</p> <p>8. 25% fewer young people (under 18) charged with an offence by 2026.</p>
Regional and City Strategies	Plan 21-24 is relevant to Aberdeen City Council Delivery Plan, the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, and the Children's Services Plan.
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	The report sets out the Scottish Government's drive to #Keepthe Promise and the national expectations of Plan 21-24. 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 & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 and Children (Scotland) Act 2020.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
------------	---------

Impact Assessment	This report to introduce members to Plan 21-24 does not require an Impact Assessment to be completed.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

#KeepthePromise	#KeepThePromise - The Promise
Plan 21-24	Plan 21-24 - The Promise
Children's Services Plan	Childrens-Services-Plan-2020-1.2.pdf (aberdeengettingitright.org.uk)
Local Outcome Improvement Plan	https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/aberdeen-city-local-outcome-improvement-plan-2016-26/
Aberdeen City Council Delivery Plan	Council Delivery Plan 2020-21 Appendix.pdf (aberdeencity.gov.uk)
National Improvement Framework	Schools: National Improvement Framework (NIF) - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

10. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Name	Kymme Fraser
Title	Children's Services Manager
Email Address	kfraser@aberdeencity.gov.uk