

The Scotland care review - Key messages of THE PROMISE

Introduction

The review was undertaken between February 2017 and February 2020. It included the voices of 5,500 people, over half of whom were children and young people, and adults with care experience. The principle underpinning the review was that actions related to its findings could be implemented prior to the completion of the review which is in process.

The review team commissioned its own research to fill gaps, with the aim of making connections between the root and branches of the care system.

The review document is divided into four sections,

(1) The PROMISE.

(2) The Plan – explains how this change must happen.

(3) The Money and Follow the Money – explains how Scotland could invest better in Children and families

(4) The rules – outline how the current legislative framework needs to change to achieve THE PROMISE.

The review document is written in an accessible way and a specific shorter version is available for children and young people – entitled the “Pinky Promise “The report includes many direct contributions from children and young people as part of its narrative.

Summary of the PROMISE

The overriding PROMISE of Scotland’s ambition for children and young people in care is:

“We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential “

The PROMISE covers 5 areas

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.
- Active listening and engagement must be fundamental to the way Scotland makes decisions and supports children and families. There is no simple formula or standardised approach that will suit all.

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

- Scotland must therefore broaden its understanding of risk. This is not about tolerating more risk or becoming more risk enabling. It means ensuring Scotland has a more holistic understanding of risk that includes the risk to the child of removing them from the family. There must be a shift in focus from the risk of possible harm to the risk of not having stable, long term loving relationships.
- When children talk about wanting to be safe, they talk about having relationships that are real, loving and consistent. That must be the starting point. Scotland must prioritise that message from children over rules that have too often failed to keep them safe.
- There must be significant, ongoing and persistent commitment to ending poverty and mitigating its impacts for Scotland's children, families and communities.

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.
- Carers in all settings must be supported to develop caring relationships and know that those relationships must be nurtured. Young people growing up must be supported to have lifelong links with their careers.
- The workforce needs support, time and care to develop and maintain relationships. Scotland must hold the hands of those who hold the hand of the child.
- Scotland must support adoptive parents to provide a loving and permanent home for children whilst recognising the importance of children understanding their birth identity and the maintenance of relationships that are important to the child.

PEOPLE:

- The children that Scotland cares for must be actively supported to develop relationships with people in the workforce and wider community, who in turn must be supported to listen and be compassionate in their decision-making and care.
- There must be no barriers for children to have regular, positive childhood experiences.
- The purpose of the workforce must be to be caring above anything else. Rather than detach, the workforce must be encouraged not to step back but to step in.

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.
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- Scotland must create an approach to care where maintaining, sustaining and protecting loving relationships is possible and much more probable.
- Scotland must implement the rights of the child in a way that does not reinforce a focus on policy, process and procedure but supports the ability of children and those around them to connect and develop relationships and cultures that uphold their rights as a matter of course.
- There must be a complete overhaul of regulation and scrutiny that centres on listening to children about how they are cared for, their ability to flourish and thrive and that measures the that matter to them.

J.W 2.5.2021