

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE3 APRIL 2025Report by Director of EducationEAST RENFREWSHIRE CHILDREN'S SERVICES PROMISE 5TH ANNIVERSARY
PROGRESS REPORT**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the work undertaken by East Renfrewshire Council, the Health and Social Care Partnership, and the wider Children's Planning Partnership - the Improving Outcomes for Children and Young People Partnership – in promoting The Promise. The report highlights progress with local implementation over the period 2020 to 2025. The local partnership acknowledges that whilst progress has been made there is much still to do to be fully Promise compliant by 2030.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Education Committee is asked to:
- a) Note the publication of the national Promise Oversight Board 5th Anniversary Report (2025);
 - b) Note and comment on the Education Department update on implementation of The Promise in East Renfrewshire; and,
 - c) Note that a full report on the progress of The Promise will be taken to Council on 23 April 2025.

BACKGROUND

3. The 5th February 2025 marked 5 years since the conclusions of the Independent Care Review were published and The Promise was made and launched. This anniversary is an important time for all public services and wider society to reflect on what has happened so far and the journey ahead. Five years ago this landmark publication acknowledged that the current "care system" in Scotland wasn't working and proposed transformational change over a ten year period driven by the following promise to care experienced children and young people:

"You will grow up loved, safe and respected. And by 2030, that promise must be kept".

4. On 5th February 2020 a promise was made to the infants, children, young people, adults and families who have experience of the care system in Scotland. The Promise and its commitments were clear that by 2030 the following would be delivered:

- Love will no longer be the casualty of the 'care system,' but the value around which it operates;

- Wherever safe to do so, Scotland will make sure children stay with their families and families will be actively supported to stay together; and,
- Children, young people, and their families will be listened to, respected, involved and heard in every decision that affects them.

5. The Scottish Government and the national Promise Team reinforced that this work is “*immediate and urgent work - what can change now must change now*” and that implementation of The Promise must not be delayed. In East Renfrewshire we have made the same commitment to our current looked after children and young people, those who we previously looked after, and for those who will experience care in the future. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic we sought opportunities to drive forward The Promise believing that during this extraordinarily challenging time, children and young people in our care needed to be loved, safe, and listened to more than ever.

CONTEXT

6. The Promise Oversight Board published their [report](#) in February 2025 to mark the five year mid-way point in the ten year programme. It concludes that the national journey is behind schedule but still on course to be achieved by 2030. The report states that to get there will “*require pace, renewed purpose, and everyone to play their part*” over the next five years. It highlights the statutory provisions of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2024 that relate to public bodies as corporate parents and is clear all of these local and national organisations must fulfil their responsibilities if children and young people are to get the support they need from across the system.

7. The Calls to Action from the Oversight Board Report are being considered by our local multi agency Improving Outcomes for Children and Young People Partnership and where necessary we will ensure areas for improvement are included within A Place To Grow.

REPORT

8. Through our multi-agency East Renfrewshire Improving Outcomes for Children and Young People Partnership we have worked hard since 2020 to promote and implement The Promise. Firstly by consistently raising awareness of the role of Corporate Parents, we have sought to ensure that partners understand that when a child or young person becomes looked after – at home or away from home - the local authority, health board, and a large number of other public bodies take on the statutory responsibility of Corporate Parent. Achieving a shared understanding that Corporate Parenting is a collective responsibility is key to successfully keeping The Promise.

9. The two published statutory East Renfrewshire Children’s Services Plans that cover the period since 2020 ([Children’s Services Plan 2023-26](#) and [Children’s Services Plan 2020-23](#)) have very clearly placed the Promise as our top priority across the partnership. The five year progress report demonstrates the breadth and depth of implementation locally and the importance of the partnership in making this happen. The report is structured around the foundations of *Voice, Care, Family, People, Scaffolding* and indicates the partners who contribute in each area.

10. Similar to the national picture, over the last decade East Renfrewshire looked after population of children and young people has been reducing and changing, and this is as a consequence of national as well as local factors. Specifically, changes to how children can access essential services has meant that there has been a cultural and systems shift away from requiring a statutory supervision order to get the help they need and when they need it.

Furthermore the implementation of Signs of Safety and a risk sensible approach has meant children's services work more collaboratively with parents and carers to achieve better outcomes for children.

11. The delivery of the national Permanence and Care Excellence (PACE) Programme has also led to the reduction in this population as more innovative ways of working, informed by children's rights, trauma and relational based practice, have been rolled out. Overall, the strengthening of prevention and early help provision has resulted in need being identified and responded to earlier by universal services in line with the Getting it right for every child approach.

12. In addition the characteristics of the looked after population have changed as there is a clear trend towards more children and young people with very complex needs such as neuro divergence and co morbidity mental health, becoming subject to a supervision requirement. Approximately one third of the current population are separated young people (unaccompanied asylum seeking young people) and who have a high level of need that we are responding to. Both trends are forecast to continue to increase over the period. It is important to state that although the overall number who are looked after has reduced the actual number of vulnerable children, young people and families who require intervention to prevent them from entering the care system is increasing across all services.

13. The East Renfrewshire 5th Anniversary Progress Update highlights a range of further activity that has been undertaken by a range of our corporate parent partner agencies and includes:

- Development of an East Renfrewshire #KeepThePromise Board
- Child Friendly Children's Hearings through 'Better Hearings' practice group
- Imagination Library has supported 63 children in East Renfrewshire
- Roll out of 'Keeping Trauma in Mind' Training
- Partnership working to support readiness to learn for care experienced children and young people through LearnWell Service
- Keeping the Promise Award in settings and schools

14. A range of activity has been undertaken within the Education Department related to the 5 key areas which were highlighted under education in The Promise Plan 2020-23 and includes:

- Raising awareness of The Promise and Corporate Parenting Duties through the Development of 'Our Promise' which is the Education Departments approach to corporate parenting. This has increased school understanding and knowledge of The Promise, resulting in increased focus on the experiences and outcomes for care experienced children and young people.
- There is evidence of increased focus on school improvement activities that value and recognise the needs of care experienced pupils with most school improvement plans including activity related to The Promise, this has included robust tracking of attendance and attainment so that support is identified and given early.
- There is evidence that care experienced children and young people are actively participating in subjects and extra-curricular activities in schools and this was evidenced through The Promise themed visits which took place in all schools this session.
- Through the processes outlined in revised Standard Circular No 8 Included, Engaged And Involved Part 2: A Positive Approach To Preventing and Managing School Exclusions, the formal and informal exclusion of looked after children from education has ended with no looked after children and young people being excluded in ERC.

- Our schools have effectively supported and ensured care experienced young people go on to genuinely positive destinations, such as further education or employment with 100% of looked after children in a positive destination in 2022/23.

CONSULTATION AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

15. The Improving Outcomes for Children and Young People Partnership oversee the planning, implementation and evaluation of The Promise in East Renfrewshire and the work of the partnership individually and collectively has been captured in this five year mark report. Reporting also takes place annually through the Children's Plan.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

16. An Equality, Fairness and Rights Impact Assessment was undertaken as part of the planning process for the Children's Services Plan.

CONCLUSIONS

17. We are determined to deliver The Promise in East Renfrewshire by 2030. However we agree with the Oversight Board that there is not a moment left to waste and all agencies need to play their part in making this happen. The five year report illustrates the strength of commitment locally to do this. Ultimately we will be judged by children, young people and their families and carers as to how well we are achieving the change that needs to take place.

RECOMMENDATION

18. Education Committee is asked to:
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 - c) Note that a full report on the progress of The Promise will be taken to Council on 23 April 2025.

Mark Ratter
Director of Education
3 April 2025

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