

Report on: Strategic governance of the Promise	Date: Thursday 8 th September 2022	Author: Stuart Easingwood, Strategic Lead for the Promise Scottish Borders
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1. SITUATION

Scotland has an ambition ‘to be the best place in the world to grow up’ so that children are ‘loved, safe, and respected and realise their full potential’. The Promise, published in March 2020, reflects what Scotland must do to “make sure its most vulnerable children feel loved and have the childhood they deserve.”

Keeping The Promise requires us to work collaboratively with our multi-agency partners to bring transformational change to the way we deliver our services for children, young people and their families. Change that places love and relationships at the centre of the experiences and outcomes for every child, and keeps the views and voice of children and young people at its core. Scotland has made this Promise to our children and young people, adults and families and we need to ensure we are keeping the Promise in Scottish Borders.

Current strategic governance structures for Children’s Services Planning via the Children and Young People’s Leadership Group (CYPLG) do not allow for full implementation of the full breadth of the Promise’s recommendations, nor the linked strategic corporate parenting planning and therefore this paper outlines a proposed restructure to redress this.

2. BACKGROUND

The Promise

In October 2016, after meeting with, and listening to children and young people in care, Scotland’s First Minister announced, “an independent, root and branch review of the care system” to look at “the underpinning legislation, practices, culture and ethos” of that system.

The Independent Care Review began its work in February 2017, concluded its research in February 2020 and produced seven reports. These cover their findings, financial implications and a 10-year plan going forward. The overall finding was that the care system was broken and required a radical change to make sure our care experienced children and young people enjoy the same opportunities and rights as every other child.

One of the reports the review produced is called ‘The Promise’ and sets out an overall view of what the new approach should be around 5 foundation principles they identified which are highlighted below. As a local authority and Community Planning Partnership we have been asked to sign up to the ‘Promise’ and the associated findings.

The review identified five foundations for change, with over 80 specific changes that must be made to transform how Scotland cares for children and families as well as the unpaid and paid workforce by 2030. These foundations must be at the heart of any re-organisation of how Scottish Border thinks, plans and priorities for children, young people and their families.

The five foundations are:

Voice: When children speak, adults must really listen to them. Adults must make sure that children are included in decisions about their lives.

Family: If children are living with their family and are safe and feel loved, they should stay there. Their family should be given all the help they need to stay together. If they need extra help when things get difficult, they should get it.

Care: If children cannot stay with the adults in their family, they will stay with their brothers and sisters. The home they live in together will be a place where they feel safe and loved. It should be their home for as long as they want and need it to be.

People: Relationships are important. Adults must make sure children are able to stay close to the people they want to and keep in contact with them. Adults must also help children make new relationships as they grow up. Sometimes adults need some help too. The adults who are close to children must get the help they need to make sure they can do their best for children.

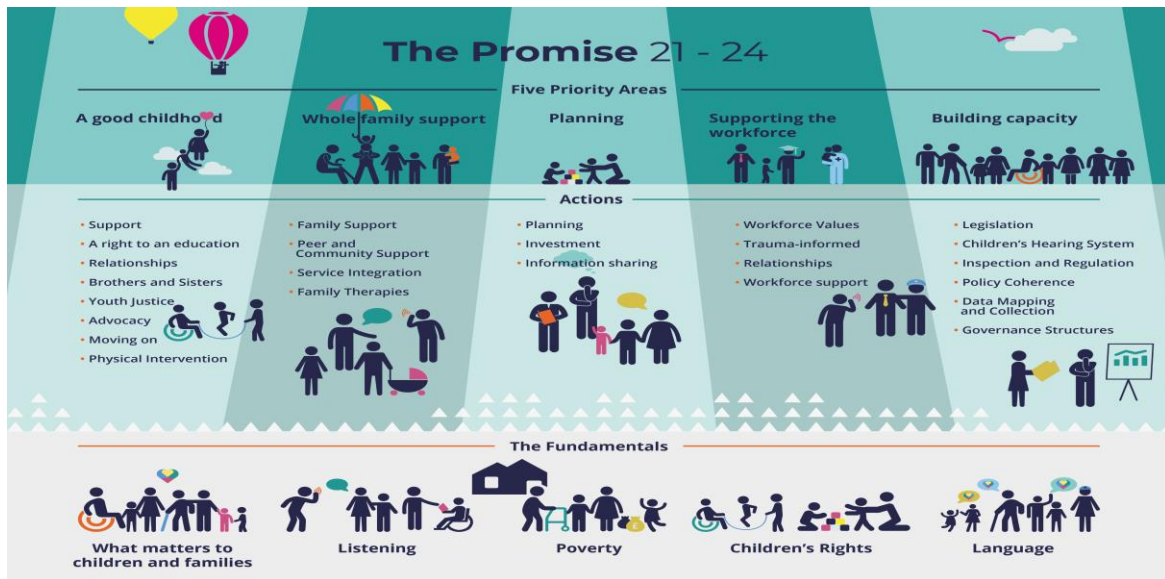
Scaffolding: Help and support must be there for children and families whenever they need it. It must also be there for the adults who are close to children and families. It is important everyone knows where to go for help and that it is ready when it is asked for.

The Promise Plan 2021-2024

The Promise Plan 2021 – 2024 outlines Scotland’s route map, providing key priorities and areas of focus under which organisations will work to achieve the required change over the next three years. This Plan is based on five priorities and rests on the foundation of five ‘Fundamentals’.

The Fundamental principles of **‘What matters to children and families’**, **‘Listening’**, **‘Poverty’**, **‘Children’s Rights’** and **‘Language’** should be woven into the fabric of any work carried out in the five priority areas.

The five priorities are **‘A Good Childhood’**, **‘Whole Family Support’**, **‘Planning’**, **‘Supporting the Workforce’** and **‘Building Capacity’**. The Plan gives further clarity for each priority in terms of the areas that we need to look at.



Costs of the Care System

The Care Review also calculated the costs of the 'care system' letting down children and their families to be up to £1.6 billion nationally; a combination of £875 million in meeting the needs of care experienced people, as a result of the 'care system' failing them and £732 million in lost income tax and national insurance.

Underpinned by GIRFEC

All the work around 'The Promise' must be carried out in line with the Getting it Right for Every Child principles and values and the components.

Corporate Parenting in Scottish Borders

This work also needs to be seen in the context of the Corporate Parent duties within the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and therefore both a collaborative approach and service specific approaches will need to be taken. The six duties are: -

- Be alert to things that are harming or may harm a child or young person's wellbeing;
- Assess children and young people's need for support and services;
- Promote children and young people's interests;
- Seek to provide children and young people with opportunities to take part in activities designed to promote their wellbeing;
- Take action to help children and young people to access opportunities to improve their wellbeing; help them make use of services, and to access that support;
- Take any other actions to improve the way we all work together to help children and young people.

In Scottish Borders we currently have a Corporate Parenting Operations Group but no Strategic Board for Corporate Parenting. Whilst there is good partnership working on an operational basis there is need for more strategic leadership around corporate parenting duties.

3. ASSESSMENT

In order to fully and effectively implement the Promise in Scottish Borders we need a clear strategic governance structure. The CYPLG collectively acknowledged that the current governance structure for children's services planning does not facilitate nor enable strategic leadership, monitoring and development of corporate parenting and The Promise in Scottish Borders. There is agreement that strategic planning could be more joined up to prevent duplication of work streams, and ensure a more accountable and streamlined approach to children's services design, development and commissioning.

Some key considerations in relation to governance of the Promise

1. Initially there was some discussion with the Chair of the CYPLG about whether The Promise governance should sit as part of the corporate parenting responsibilities, given the focus of the Independent Care Review on care experienced children and young people. Although the Promise and the Plan talk about the specifics of working with and supporting care experienced young people, their remit and scope are actually broader than this, and by 2030 will require us to make a fundamental shift in how decisions are made and money is spent in supporting *all* Scotland's children and families. Therefore governance of the Promise in Scottish Borders cannot sit purely within the remit of corporate parenting and needs to be considered as the umbrella policy driver for multi-agency strategic planning for children's services in Scottish Borders.
2. We will need to ensure that all ongoing children's service planning partnership statutory work is incorporated into this new model of governance and aligned to the Promise, e.g. the Children and Young People's Strategic Plan.
3. In addition, each organisation or service will want to analyse their own Culture, Systems and Practice against the priorities that will be set by the new board, the working groups, and through national direction from the Promise Scotland. It is important that activities are aligned across the Partnership so a robust communications plan will be key. The Promise Implementation Officer will support service specific activities where needed, and the Board and working groups will strive to ensure activities across the CPP are coordinated and collaborative.
4. It will be important to remember that The Promise is not just a national policy driver for children's services. The Promise makes a clear link between the need to improve supports to those looking after children and young people, in order to improve outcomes for children and young people. Going forwards there must be effective and flexible collaboration between children's services and those which work with and support adult caregivers such as: adult mental health, Justice, domestic abuse services, alcohol and drugs services and adult social care and health.
5. In line with the fundamentals of listening and what matters to children and families, in the longer term all strategic decision-making forums in Scottish Borders discussing children, young people and their families should have child, young person, parent and/or carer members participating in the forum.

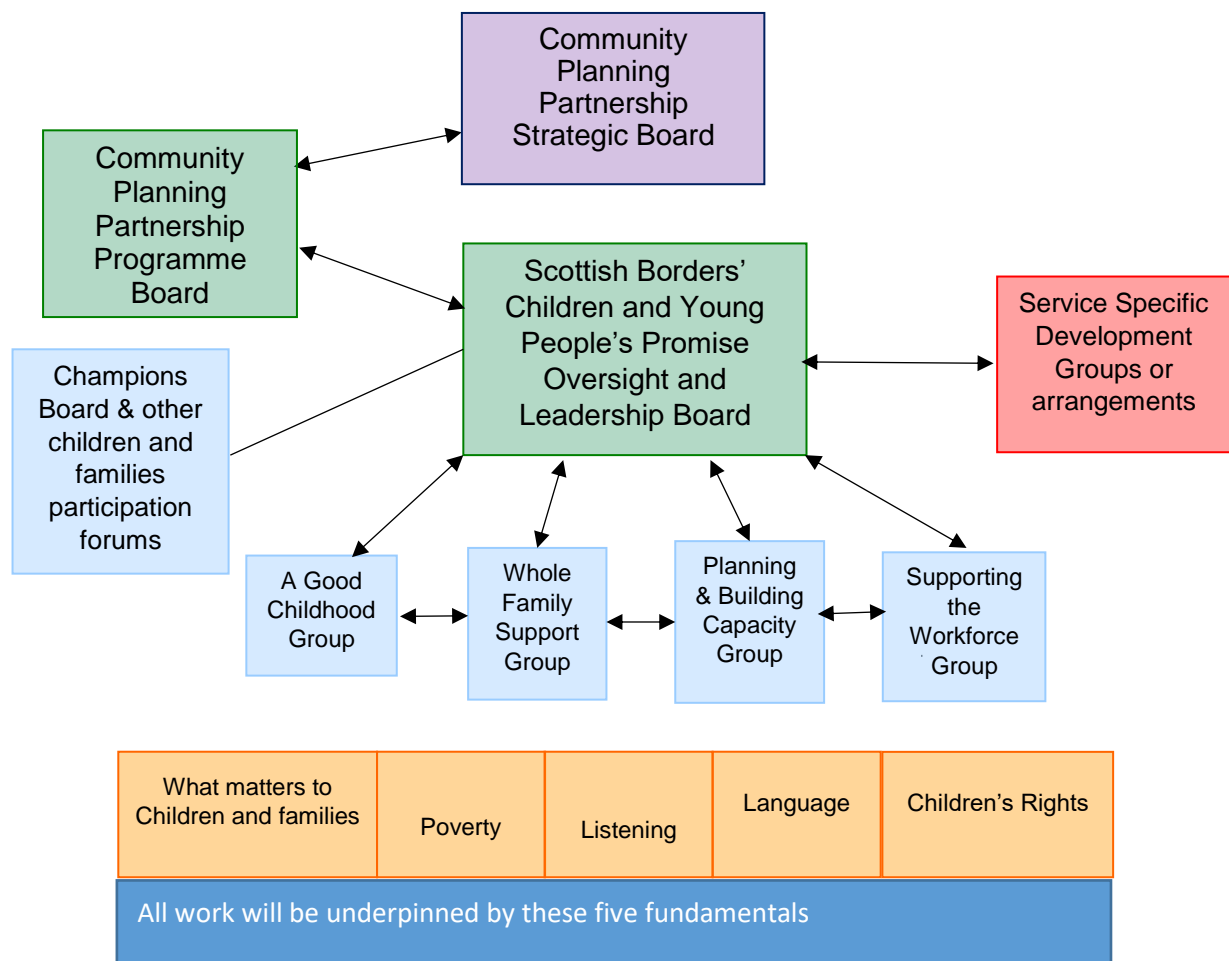
Should an appropriate multi-agency strategic governance structure for the Promise not be implemented there are significant risks which threaten our ability locally to deliver on The Promise which include;

- Not being able to deliver on the wide-ranging requirements and recommendations for change required by the Promise by 2030;

- Ill-informed service design and provision which will not reach the children, young people and families that need it most nor achieve the desired outcomes;
- Piecemeal rather than joined up approaches to keeping the Promise which will leave Scottish Borders struggling to make the ambitious transformational change required by the Promise by 2030;
- Failure to support families within communities, which will continue to lead to an increasing demand on services including statutory and voluntary services.

Proposed governance structure

Given the above, it is recommended that consideration is given to the following re-configuration of our Scottish Borders Children’s Strategic Planning Group - the Children and Young People’s Leadership Group, in order to ensure we are ‘Keeping The Promise’ and fulfilling our corporate parenting responsibilities in Scottish Borders. This proposal was discussed with the CYPLG at their away day on Thursday 30th June 2022. The creation of a new multi-agency strategic board for children’s services planning, which replaces the Children and Young People’s Leadership Group and incorporates strategic governance of corporate parenting and the Promise was agreed in principle.



Community Planning Partnership:- Under this structure, the Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership (CPP) would receive updates on the progress of Scottish Borders’

Promise at each CPP meeting. They will be encouraged to play their part in keeping Scottish Borders' Promise by scrutinizing the reports and providing feedback, and ensuring the five fundamentals underpin their work as a Partnership.

Scottish Borders' Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership:- The Scottish Borders' Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership would replace the Children and Young People's Leadership Group in providing strategic leadership for Children's Services across the Children's Partnership. In order to prevent duplication of attendees at high level children's strategic groups, it would also act as the Corporate Parenting Steering Group to provide strategic leadership for corporate parenting in Scottish Borders, including overseeing that the six Corporate Parenting duties are being progressed with close collaboration between Corporate Parents.

The Strategic Partnership will be a multi-agency group of very senior managers and executives who will be responsible for leading the strategic direction of The Promise. They would report directly to the Community Planning Partnership.

The Board would receive reports and updates from each of the four priority working groups via the working group Chairs at each Board meeting. There would be clear mechanisms in place for setting tasks and timescales, reviewing progress, signing off documents, and discussing and agreeing developments and priorities. Each working group would have a work plan incorporating performance measures and set measurable targets for new activities, to monitor their implementation, and keep plans under regular review.

Priority Working Groups:- Whilst the detail still needs to be finalised, it is anticipated that the Priority Sub-Groups will align with the five priority areas set out in the Plan 2021-2024. These Priorities are: -

- **A Good Childhood** – Support, A Right to an Education, Relationships, Brothers and Sisters, Youth Justice, Advocacy, Moving on, and Physical Intervention.
- **Whole family support** – Family Support, Peer and Community Support, Service Integration, and Family Therapies
- **Planning** – Planning, Investment, and Information Sharing
- **Supporting the Workforce** – Workforce Values, Trauma Informed, and Relationships, Workforce Support
- **Building Capacity** – Legislation, Children's Hearing System, Inspection and Regulation, Policy Coherence, Data Mapping and Collection, and Governance Structures

Priorities three and five would be merged into one working group. Each of these Groups would have their own chairperson with a clearly defined role description, terms of reference and priority action plans to focus on. They will report directly to the strategic board via the working group Chairs who will attend as non-voting members.

These groups would need to take into account the five fundamental principles of 'What matters to children and families', 'Listening', 'Poverty', Children's Rights' and 'Language' and these would need to be woven into the fabric of any work carried out in the five priority areas.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Community Planning Partnership is asked to support the following recommendations to ensure Scottish Borders can 'Keep The Promise' by 2030:

- **Approve the implementation of the Strategic Partnership outlined above (which was agreed in principle at the Children and Young People's Leadership Group away day on 30th June 2022);**
- **Direct that the Promise Strategic Lead Officer, Promise Operational Lead Officer and Promise Implementation Officer continue to work with the current members of the CYPLG to finalise and implement the new governance structure;**
- **Direct that additional partners, including AHSCP and ADP, are made aware of the re-organisation of CYPLG in order to identify areas of cross partnership working in relation to the Promise.**

<p>Resource implications</p>	<p>Scottish Borders Council are currently responsible for resourcing the central administration, support and maintenance of the Promise Implementation, and any external supports that may be required.</p> <p>Partner agencies would be responsible for resourcing agreed supports for a successful implementation, including release of staff to attend meetings and groups and contribute to work plans. (Role descriptions for members and chairs of the working groups would be created.)</p>
<p>Risks</p>	<p>If multi-agency strategic governance is not in place, we may face the following risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of definition, scrutiny or understanding of the full Scottish Borders' Promise project and its significance for children, young people and their families; • limited understanding of the breadth and significance of the Promise across stakeholders; • incomplete project design and deliverable definition; • collective failure across our services to achieve the changes required by 2024 (under the Plan 21- 24) and ultimately by 2030.
<p>Mitigation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement in principle from CYPLG to review structure to deliver The Promise. • Potential that additional funding can be allocated to "Building Capacity" at a local level via the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund (Tranche 2), and this matter is being considered at present to ensure the right level of support is available to the strategic partnership and the working groups.