

*We will keep*

# The Promise



COSLA



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# Foreword



In February 2020, a landmark publication signified the culmination of three years of listening, reflecting, finding out and analysing what was known about Scotland's "care system" and considering how transformation of our services and listening to our children and young people can give them the childhood they deserve.

The Promise was so much more than a report of the work of the care review, it was an inspirational call to action, demanding the attention of everyone who could contribute to overhauling current systems and challenging all of us to do better.

From the outset, COSLA's Children and Young People Board recognised the Independent Care Review as a unique opportunity to hear the insight of those with the most knowledge and experience of the current systems, and to think differently about how and what we offer children and their families.

COSLA has been, and continues to be, determined, and delighted to play our part in ensuring that Scotland's children grow up loved, safe and respected and able to reach their full potential.

As we reach the end of our term as members of COSLA's Children and Young People Board we can reflect on this work; the challenges, the progress made to date and the road yet to travel.

We are proud to present '**Two Years On...Local Government's Work to #KeepThePromise**' which sets out our achievements to date, holding ourselves accountable for the work we do and reaffirming our continuing commitment to #KeepThe Promise.

# Introduction



COSLA is the voice of Local Government in Scotland, we are a Councillor-led, cross-party organisation who champions councils' vital work to secure the resources and powers they need to deliver effectively. We work on councils' behalf to focus on the challenges and opportunities they face, and to engage positively with Governments and stakeholders on policy, funding and legislation.

COSLA and its 32 Member Councils are fully committed to Keeping The Promise and to delivering on the changes required throughout Plan 21 – 24, and beyond. In the pages ahead you'll read and see the commitment of local authorities and the progress being made across communities and with children, young people and their families.

You'll read examples of service redesign and transformation; increased and innovative participation and engagement with children and families; new models of family support; examples of workforce development, recruitment, and training; and multi-agency and multi-disciplinary partnership approaches.

As Corporate Parents local authorities have statutory duties to deliver for care experienced people, with a responsibility to promote their wellbeing. In this report you'll see how local authorities are planning and delivering with other Corporate Parents and how Champions Boards are leaders and advocates in this work.

It's been two years since the Care Review published its conclusions and The Promise, and in those two years we've lived through the COVID-19 pandemic which has impacted the lives of all of Scotland's people. This is a moment to reflect, recognise the progress that's underway and reaffirm our commitment to Keep The Promise, whilst acknowledging we still have a way to go, and there's still work to be done.

Local Government has been a leader, driver, and delivery agent of change in the years since The Promise was published, but we know that change doesn't happen alone. It happens by working with children and families, with our partners across local government and in the third sector, with the Scottish Government and with The Promise Scotland.

We thank all the people and organisations who have, and continue to, work alongside us, push us and demand that we do more to ensure that our children grow up loved, safe and respected. We thank our staff and volunteers across local authorities. One service and one organisation on its own cannot Keep The Promise; we strive to work together across organisations, with partners and mostly importantly with our children, young people and families.

Of course, work to Keep The Promise does not sit in isolation, as you'll read throughout this report. It sits alongside our commitment to the full incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC); our work on education, including education reform; the Scottish Child Interview Model for joint investigative interviewing; children and young people's mental health; child poverty, and the vast range of services and policies that local government plans, prioritises and delivers each and every day. We are committed to ensuring that our work to Keep The Promise is not siloed and is joined up across connected services, including health, employability, housing and welfare and others.

We are proud to showcase the local work happening across Scotland and demonstrate our ongoing and unwavering commitment to The Promise. Underpinning all our work, locally and nationally, are the five foundations on which The Promise told us our work must be grounded:

1. 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 focused on children and those they trust.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.

In each chapter there will be a snapshot of the national work taking place accompanied by case studies, service re/design and examples of practice from across Scotland's 32 local authorities. We have set this out under the five headings of Plan 21 – 24:

1. A Good Childhood
2. Whole Family Support
3. Supporting the Workforce
4. Planning
5. Building Capacity.

Given the enormous amount of work taking place across the country it has only been possible to showcase a selection of examples throughout this project. Further information from each local authority can be found on COSLA's website: [www.cosla.gov.uk/the-promise/annual-report](http://www.cosla.gov.uk/the-promise/annual-report).

# Chapter 1



# A Good Childhood



COSLA

## What The Promise Says...



"Care experienced children and young adults have told the Care Review that their time looked after by the state often felt cold, overly professionalised, stigmatising and uncaring.

Scotland should be a good parent to the children it has responsibility for. That means carers and workers must act, speak and behave like a family so that Scotland can be the best parent it can be. Scotland must stop stigmatising the children it cares for."

## Work at a national level

### Mental Health Joint Delivery Board

The Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Joint Delivery Board, co-chaired by COSLA and Scottish Government, provides oversight to task and finish groups looking at a range of improvements to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

This includes enhancing community-based support for emotional wellbeing/mental distress for children and young people. Significant work has been undertaken across local authorities to provide new and enhanced mental health support aligned to the [Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Supports and Services Framework](#). This new provision includes a range of services across Scotland to provide early intervention and address distress and is designed to meet local need. Early support is also being provided through the school counselling provision, which was utilised by over 10,000 children in the first half of 2021.

Further work being developed includes support around crisis, the implementation of both the CAMHS and Neurodevelopmental service specifications and identifying training needs of the workforce.

A workshop was hosted to help ensure work progressed across the breadth of the board's remit is aligned to The Promise and a specific workstream was established to further consider mental health support for vulnerable children and young people. The Board is due to conclude in December 2022.

### Mental Health in Schools Working Group

Through its membership of the Mental Health in Schools working group COSLA has supported the development of and endorsed a [Whole School Approach to Mental Health](#) (published Aug 21) and a [professional learning resource](#) for all school staff. These intend to support local authorities and schools to embed support for mental health across all aspects of the school environment and provide staff with knowledge and understanding of mental health and wellbeing in schools, taking a prevention and early intervention perspective.

### Relationships Brothers & Sisters

Colleagues from across Local Government are involved in the CELCIS and Scottish Government led working groups tasked with supporting the implementation of new duties and guidance '[Staying together and connected: getting it right for sisters and brothers](#)'.

## Education

COSLA worked with the Scottish Government on the development of the next phase of the Scottish Attainment Challenge. A revised approach to funding was agreed by COSLA Leaders in 2021 and included the retention of the funding stream specifically for Care Experienced Children and Young People. Approximately £11.5m will be available to local authorities across the 2022/23 academic year. We know that Councils have deployed this funding in a number of innovative ways, appropriate to their local communities. This has included investing in mentoring schemes, outdoor learning and play activities and the implementation of 'virtual' Head Teachers to support care experienced children and young people across authority areas.

Work is ongoing between the Scottish Government and the Regional Improvement Collaboratives to create opportunities to share learning from experiences of the programme so far.

COSLA are members of the Supporting Young People Development Board which is supporting the increased investment in mentoring and leadership programmes, including the additional match funding from the Scottish Government to support the ongoing roll out of the [MCR Pathways](#) programme.

COSLA, ADES and SOLACE are working together to progress the expectations of education outlined in Plan 21 – 24.

## Youth Justice

Local Government is a key stakeholder on the Youth Justice Improvement Board.

All provisions within the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019 were fully commenced on 17 December 2021. This raised the age of criminal responsibility in Scotland from 8 years old to 12 years old, a development that is part of wider work to prevent the early criminalisation of children.

Over the past two years, as provisions within the legislation have been phased in, local authorities have considered the implications of this Act and undertaken work locally to ensure readiness to respond effectively to the needs of these children.

Nationally, Operational Guidance co-signed by COSLA, Police Scotland and Social Work Scotland, has been developed to support Police Scotland and local authorities in the application of their operational duties, under the Act as they relate to the investigative interviews of children under the age of 12 years. New training has also been developed.

Learning from this first phase of raising the age of criminal responsibility in Scotland will be utilised to consider the implications of raising the age further, as urged by The Promise, which encouraged Scotland to align itself with the most progressive global Governments.

## Secure Care & Secure Transport

COSLA co-chair the Secure Care Group with the Scottish Government. Discussions are progressing with the Scottish Government on reform of the secure estate which includes consideration of approaches to ensure that 16-17 year olds are no longer incarcerated in young offenders institutions. This work also includes taking short and long-term actions to reduce cross-border placements in secure care and end the monetisation of care, in line with The Promise. Consideration is also being given to wider reform of the secure care estate and the role of secure care in providing safe environments, taking into account funding and commissioning models.

COSLA and the Children and Young People's Centre for Justice are leading work to find solutions to long standing issues around provision and availability of secure transport. This work has taken place with secure centres, local authorities, Social Work Scotland, transport providers, Scotland Excel, the Children's Commissioner's office, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration and Scottish Government.

Fundamental to this work has been engagement with children and young people with experience of secure care to understand their experience and needs for this service and ensure that transport is safe and in keeping with a rights based, trauma informed approach.

This work has included developing a national service specification to standardise expectations of service from providers.

## Continuing Care / Moving on

There is strong support in place to help young people navigate their future learning and employment options. Scottish Government has in 2021/22 increased their resourcing to the Developing the Young Workforce initiative, notably by increasing the number of DYW support workers in schools.

As the lead accountable body, local authorities are working as part of Local Employability Partnerships to plan and deliver services and support to young people to help them into opportunities and ultimately into sustainable, fair work. This focus is promoted by Scottish Government's investment in the Young Person's Guarantee that seeks to connect every 16- to 24-year-old in Scotland to an opportunity. This could be a job, apprenticeship, further or higher education, training, or volunteering.

COSLA officers continue to work closely with local authority employability leads through [The Scottish Local Authorities' Economic Development Group](#) (SLAED) on the implementation of [Young Persons Guarantee](#) (YPG) and advising the Scottish Government on its evaluation of YPG and [No One Left Behind](#). COSLA officers are also advising the Scottish Government on its evaluation of the DYW initiative.

A continuing challenge for Local Government will be to ensure that the transition from school based support to mainstream employability services is effective and seamless for young care experience people.

CELCIS published their [research](#) on implementation of the continuing care legislation on 17th March 2022. This highlights the ongoing challenges and inconsistencies in how the right to continuing care operates. COSLA will work with local authorities, CELCIS and partner organisations on the action plan to progress this work.

COSLA and national partners have continued to work together with the Scottish Government on foster and kinship care allowances, applicable to children in foster care and eligible kinship care. This follows the recommendations of the Review of Care Allowances Group in 2018. This work aimed to assist in the recruitment and retention of foster carers, enabling local areas to better meet the needs of children in a family setting and contribute to the brothers and sisters agenda.

COSLA is a member of the Kinship Care Collaborative, set up following a Scottish Government Programme for Government commitment. The Collaborative was set up to inform the delivery of improvements in support for kinship families across Scotland. The Collaborative considers current policy and legislation and explores the changes that are required to drive improvement.

The Collaborative agreed six priorities which are being taken forward by three groups:

1. Review of kinship care legislation and guidance and establish clear and universal understanding of definitions within legislation
2. Identification of resources and gaps with a view to eliminate any gap, and identification of good practice
3. Improve consistency of service provision across Scotland and ensuring kinship care is visible within communities and promoting this.

One aspect of this work was endorsement of a Kinship Care Protocol to ensure clarity of responsibility for cross authority placements. This will assist local authorities and avoid confusion for carers thus improving the experience of children in their care. This was led by Social Work Scotland and driven by the profession, with input and support from SOLAR and COSLA officers were instrumental in bringing the protocol to conclusion.

We are delighted to showcase a selection of work from across Scotland demonstrating how local authorities are working to Keep The Promise and that children in Scotland have 'A Good Childhood'.



## Aberdeen City

The [MCR Pathways](#) programme was rolled out to 6 of the 11 academies in the city, supporting 217 young people in S1-6 to develop relationships, increase confidence and self-esteem. Current data shows that there is an increase in overall attendance and decrease in exclusions for secondary age pupils over a 3-year period and this is thought to be partially attributable to the programme. MCR-mentored young people in Aberdeen had a higher staying-on rate (100%) in 2020/21 compared to their peers (87.6%).

## Stirling

Stirling Council support our Champs Board through the funding of a full time Development worker and 3 part-time participation workers, two of whom have lived experience of care. We have repurposed a part of the Council's estate to provide a permanent physical base for our Champs and they have successfully fundraised to decorate and furnish it as a homely and welcoming space for young people. Known as the Home & Belonging Hub this space includes a kitchen/dining/living space, cosy gaming room, general purpose areas and bathrooms.

The space is well used with sessions for Mini Champs (aged 5-10) on Saturdays, champs (aged 11-15) on Monday evenings and Champs (16+ years) on Thursdays. Young people are involved in cooking and baking and often prepare meals for the whole group, birthdays and special achievements are celebrated and activities and workshops with local artists and corporate parents are facilitated. Out with these weekly sessions the space can be accessed daily during the week for any young person needing advice, support or a safe place to study, socialise and spend time. There are opportunities to meet with social workers, income maximisation officers and complete person centred plans in the space at any time. The Champs are being supported by members of our Corporate Parenting Group to develop their own plan to utilise the Home & Belonging Hub to offer Brothers and Sisters time and activities to nurture their relationships as part of Stirling's efforts to #KeepThePromise.

## North Lanarkshire

### Keeping the Promise Award Pilot - Session 2021-22

Working with two clusters, Bellshill Academy and Coatbridge High, the [Virtual School](#) has created a "Keeping the Promise" Award course. The purpose of the course is to support schools in developing their awareness and understanding of The Promise and the commitment made by North Lanarkshire Council to improve the educational experiences and outcomes for our care experienced young people.

The course has been created in partnership with a variety of staff across Education and Families, our Promise Development Workers, wider council services and other relevant partners including [WhoCares?Scotland](#).

The Main Aims:

- To raise awareness and understanding of The Promise – the commitments made around education and learning to support inclusion and improve outcomes
- To highlight our responsibilities under The Promise – what we need to do as "good parents" to ensuring the best for our care experienced learners
- To highlight the particular needs of our care experienced learners and some of the challenges they face which impacts on their access and availability for learning
- To support staff to consider how they can contribute to positive changes both individually and collectively
- To recognise those schools who are striving for excellence in their understanding of the specific needs of care experienced young people and in their delivery of support to them
- To drive forward the Plan 21-24







## Chapter 2



# Whole Family Support



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### What The Promise says...

“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 listen to and absorb the overwhelming evidence of the lasting pain that removal has caused children, families and communities. This must result in a fundamental shift of thinking about when a child should be removed from their family.”

## Progress at a national level

COSLA is a member of the Children and Families Collective Leadership Group (co-chaired by Scottish Government and SOLACE) and its subgroups, the Family Support Advisory Group (co-chaired by Scottish Government and Social Work Scotland) and Workforce (co-chaired by COSLA and Scottish Government). Each group has wide representation across Local Government and with the 3rd Sector and are exemplars of collaborative planning and action.

The Collective Leadership group developed “*Holistic Family Support – Ambition and Blueprint for Change*” which focuses on families being able to access preventative, needs based support when they need it, for as long as they need it. The principles within this Vision were drawn out by the CLG subgroup and the Family Support Delivery Group (FSDG) and were used to inform a “Routemap and National Framework Principles of Holistic Whole Family Support” for delivering the whole system change necessary.

Included as work of the Family Support Advisory group is the

- ‘How Good is our Family Support?’ National Self-Assessment Framework;
- Family Support Commissioning and Procurement workstream;
- Whole Family Wellbeing Fund principles and design.

All workstreams include representative from across local government, through COSLA, Social Work Scotland and local authorities, to ensure national design and decision making is reflective of the local needs of children, families, and communities.

COSLA’s Children and Young People Board and Leaders have, and will continue to be, engaged in the design and delivery of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund throughout the lifetime of this Parliament and officers across Local Government will work with Scottish Government to ensure the needs of local families are met through this fund.

The actions outlined in Plan 21 – 24 ‘Whole Family Support’ are being progressed nationally through the Collective Leadership Group and Family Support Advisory Group.

Plan 21 – 24 highlights that *'Families'* means all families including families of origin, kinship, foster and adoptive families. In this chapter you'll read about the multitude of work going on across the country to foster family wellbeing and provide family support, where and how it matters to families.

## Scottish Borders

### Family Group Decision Making

A Family Group Decision Making service was launched for families in Scottish Borders in July 2021, delivered by Children 1st and funded by SBC. There are currently three possible referral pathways into the service. FGDM can be offered to families where:

- children are on the cusp of care
- support is needed to plan for children's rehabilitation home
- there has been a new child protection referral for one of the children

Children 1st received support from the Promise fund to test out the third referral pathway.

To date there have been 24 referrals involving 36 children across the 3 referrals routes, and Children 1st has completed 10 pieces of FGDM work. The cusp of care route has had the most referrals, and Children 1st continue to work in partnership with Scottish Borders Council to develop the other referral pathways.

## Renfrewshire

The Promise recognises the importance of keeping families together and quality family time. The Brothers and Sisters policy was launched during the Summer. This ground-breaking policy was co-produced with the Champions Board. It is a robust, rights-based policy starting with a pledge to keep siblings together, where possible, when they come into care. To support this policy, the Promise Ambassador has designed a series of age-appropriate Family Time plans which children and young people can complete with the support of a practitioner. These plans capture the voice of children and young people to ensure their needs, views and wishes are met in relation to spending quality time with family.

The 10 principles of intensive family support will now feature in our Parenting Strategy which has a focus on family support. The principles are also being adopted as part of a wider consultation with families accessing family support in Renfrewshire.

## Clackmannanshire

'We, like all local authorities, receive funding for the Parental Employability Support Fund (PESF) as part of the Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Action Plan.' We have Key Workers in place to help support both unemployed and employed parents to maximise their income either through benefits or improving their employment situation. For more information on the type of support available in Clackmannanshire, visit our [website](#).

The PESF Key Workers are part of the wider Clackmannanshire Works team, the Council's employability service, which provides person-centred support to local people of working age (16 - 67) to remove barriers to employment and help them progress towards and into work. Find out more [here](#). We are currently working with 63 eligible parents through PESF.

An example of our work with young parents:

*'Jen' is a lone parent with a primary school aged son. She had moved to Clackmannanshire and had a very limited knowledge of the area and services available locally for her. Jen had no family support near her so was keen to secure work that could be flexible for her son. She had started doing some online training prior to registering with PESF. We referred her to the New Enterprise Allowance scheme and the local Business Gateway service for start-up support.*

*Jen had previously studied Mental Health and Social Care at college and had experience of working as a Listener at her local hospital. She had identified her long-term goal of becoming a children's counsellor but was keen to wait until her son was older before pursuing this further. She was however, keen to gain some additional work experience or training that would help her further down the line. We agreed a good starting point would be to gain some work experience with children and look at some basic courses such as Mental Health Awareness. Alongside her business start-up we started applying for jobs within schools and enrolled her onto an online Mental Health Awareness course. We arranged a chat with an Educational Psychologist from the council to give her an idea of the type of work she could get involved in. On the back of this, we got her in touch with a local charity that provides support to families and was offered some volunteering with one of their groups.*

*Meanwhile, we continued to support Jen with her applications and supporting statements and arranged some interview prep for her too. After applying for several school-based jobs, on her second interview she was offered a Support for Learning Assistant post at a local school. We supported Jen to access after school provision for her son and paid her first month's invoice so she wouldn't be out of pocket. We advised her how to claim some of her childcare costs back through her Universal Credit so she could keep on top of her childcare costs going forward. We provided clothes for starting work and paid her travel expenses for her first month.*



## Aberdeenshire

### **Aberdeenshire's Aim:**

*"Create the opportunity for intensive wrap around and sustained work with children and families before crisis but displaying early flags of vulnerability"*

"Supporting Local Families" based in Buchanhaven School in Peterhead will focus on how universal services can come together to provide early interventions to families in need of support by supporting families to develop increased resilience and capacity.

The aims of the project are to work collaboratively with families to co-design a system of support that is non stigmatising, holistic and builds family capacity and resilience based on strong, trusting relationships with members of the Supporting Local Families Team and in particular Family Link Workers who are supported through strong connections with the school nurse, speech and language therapy, clinical psychology, early years practitioners and local police. At this point in the pilot, families are identified by the school team and are approached with a view to inviting them to participate. If the family consent, the initial focus is to begin to build a trusting relationship in order to begin to work with them on the areas they identify as being something they would like help to work on and change. This could be anything from financial strategies, education/further learning and/or employment opportunities, mental health, or help with child routines and Behaviour.

Some of the indicators currently being used include: domestic abuse, substance misuse, mental health, school attendance, managing a child's behaviour, offending, housing, unemployment, financial challenges and a lack of trust in services potentially offering support.

## South Lanarkshire

### **Family Based Care**

The Short Breaks Service provides short breaks to children living at home or in kinship placements. The focus is on early intervention and support to families, with the overall objective of keeping children at home, with their families. There are currently 17 Community Short Break carers, with a further nine applicants in the process of assessment. There were 25 children receiving Short Breaks on 31 March 2021, 15 living with parents and ten in kinship care. Our target is to increase the size of the service to 50 carers by March 2025, with the potential to offer short breaks to 75 children. On 31 March 2021 there were 22 children waiting for a placement. This is a significant increase on last year, which appears, from referrals, to be linked to the increasing pressure faced by families during the Pandemic.



## Shetland

We recognise the huge importance of families to ensure children are safe and feel loved. We will support families to stay together and thrive; to nurture that love and overcome difficulties which may get in the way.

We work closely with families to ensure that all of our support is shaped by their views.

We have:

- Developed an effective way of providing whole family support: through our Anchor Project we have collaborated with families to develop a type of support which is valued and enables the families to achieve positive change.
- Benefited from additional funding, from the Promise, to scale up our learning and the level of change required to embed our Anchor approach to whole family support across Shetland.
- Extended the number of parenting programmes on offer through the Family Centre.
- Taken a more proactive approach to supporting links and establishing contacts with siblings and the birth family.
- Taken a more flexible approach, out-with traditional work patterns, to ensure that parents and their babies have been able to stay in Shetland, for assessment, rather than off-island, far from their family networks.

We will:

- Re/design pathways for families to be able to access our family support, overcoming barriers that may be in the way.
- Evidence the impact of a Family-Support worker role across our North Mainland schools.
- Draw together everything we've learnt through Anchor / The Promise to make recommendations for the model of delivery of whole family support, across Shetland.
- Explore Lifetime Connections: work to ensure that young people who live with alternative carers are supported to maintain links with their birth families (including extended family).
- Implement Family Group Decision Making, with the support of Children 1<sup>st</sup>.



## Chapter 3



# Supporting the Workforce



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### What The Promise Says...

“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 place trust in its workforce to develop and nurture relationships, enable their capacity to care and love and provide support to make this part of daily life.”

## Progress at a national level

### Workforce

COSLA co-chairs the Collective Leadership Workforce Sub-Group which is providing oversight on the implementation of the workforce requirements outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the workforce recommendations of the The Promise and Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC).

As part of the strategic objectives of the sub-group it is overseeing the delivery of the workforce recommendations set out in Plan 21 – 24 and reports to The Promise Oversight Board and COSLA’s Children and Young People Board as required. The group will engage with the Promise Single Plan to consider what it means for the Group & what is required of the Group to support its workforce recommendations being effectively and meaningfully implemented across all partners.

### Trauma Informed

All local authorities (and police divisions) have committed to implementing a new model of practice for the joint investigative interviewing of children – the Scottish Child Interview Model. Children involved in child protection processes are very vulnerable, may be care experienced and may be on the edge of care. The new model of practice is trauma-informed and interviewers will access a new, comprehensive training programme that equips them with the necessary skills and knowledge for this specialist task. Thirteen local authorities are currently live in practice with this new model and seven more are actively preparing the local conditions for implementation. Most of the remaining local authorities have made decisions about the timing of their implementation of this new model over the next two years, aligned with other local priorities. Local authorities with remote and island communities have additional implementation challenges to navigate. COSLA hosts the National Implementation Coordinator for this new model who provides tailored implementation support to every local authority area, working in partnership with Police Scotland and Social Work Scotland.

The Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019 commenced on 17 December 2021. Local authority social work services will work closely with Police Scotland in relation to many of the new powers within the Act, and the development of the new approach to responding to the needs of these children is informed by trauma-informed principles.

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Revised National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland was published on 2nd September 2021 and a National Implementation Group has been established to support and oversee implementation. Trauma-informed principles underpin the new guidance and implementation plans and all local authorities and their partners will be strengthening their local child protection practice and processes in line with this publication. COSLA is a member of this group, ensuring the implications for local government are considered within the work of the group.

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## Relationships

As part of its work, the CLG Workforce Sub-Group will:

Promote and support the health and wellbeing of the workforce as they recover from the pandemic.

Support the workforce to fully implement the GIRFEC practice model.

Oversee investment in leadership development, by taking forward the GIRFEC Systems Leadership Programme and links to the wider Scottish Government and other public leadership programmes.

Oversee the development of an integrated skills and advanced practice framework that supports transitions and family support models

Provide strategic oversight on the delivery of a trauma informed training programme for the integrated children and families workforce.

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## Clackmannanshire

### Family Wellbeing Partnership

The Scottish Government, via the Social Innovation Partnership, are working with Clackmannanshire Family Wellbeing Partnership (FWP) to support Clackmannanshire Council to reduce child poverty, particularly for priority groups. This approach involves investing and learning from the adoption of wellbeing and capabilities approaches, focusing on improving outcomes for children and families. Formed in 2020, The Clackmannanshire FWP is a long-term partnership that seeks to capture deep learning, over time, to test and embed new ways of working that can be scaled and replicated across other local authorities.

A key objective is to understand the extent to which power and agency can be transferred to children, families and the frontline staff who support them. The Clackmannanshire FWP have aligned with Columba 1400 as a delivery partner for values and capabilities leadership experiences for staff at many levels, elected members, local families, children and young people and partners. Two STRIVE cohorts have also participated in the C1400 experience. The purpose of these leadership experiences is to set the conditions for change, to enable our families to lead flourishing lives. This learning has been captured by the learning partner I-sphere and informs the programme in an iterative manner.

This work is underpinned by The Promise and one emergent strand of work is exploring how we can seek to ensure flourishing lives for our care experienced children and young people. This links to the wider work of Community Wealth Building, and Clackmannanshire's Transformation Programme: Be the Future.

## East Ayrshire

We have accessed funding to recruit an implementation lead to support our drive and ambition to implement the changes required to help us Keep The Promise. This provided us with an opportunity to consider how we created a stronger infrastructure and connection to drive forward change and strengthened the voice of our children and young people. This resulted in building what has become known as 'The Promise Participation Team'. This included moving our children's independent reviewing officers into the team and recruiting three participation leader posts. These have been funded through three different routes. One through the Scottish Attainment Challenge fund, another through the Young Person's Guarantee Scheme and the third through the Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Grant. Two of the Participation Leaders are care experienced, and have a focus in this area, and the third has a focus on emotional health and wellbeing of our children and young people. East Ayrshire Council also funded two modern apprentice posts to support participation. We believe this is a unique model in Scotland to target and strengthen the voice of our children and young people but also create stronger links with children's planning.

## West Lothian

There was recognition early on that there required to be clear Values and Principles to underpin the wider development of The Promise in West Lothian. The following were agreed to be the focus and launched at a Service Development Day for Social Policy:

- 1. TRAUMA INFORMED** - In order for children to be safe – all adults supporting them need to feel safe, which includes the workforce. We will continue to grow networks and systems of support for *everyone* involved in children's lives in West Lothian.
- 2. STRENGTHS BASED** - Every family has its own assets and strengths but may also need support at different times.
- 3. CONNECTEDNESS** – We believe children should remain within their own families and we will actively work to ensure families remain together. Where it is not possible for families to live together, we will identify and support the lifelong relationships that matter to children and young people in order to promote their sense of belonging.
- 4. VALUING RELATIONSHIPS** – We will work in a relationship-based way to promote the best possible outcomes for children and young people in West Lothian.
- 5. EARLY HELP** – Help for families will be offered at the earliest opportunity. It will also be clearly articulated what this help will look like.
- 6. WORKING TOGETHER** - Listening carefully and working with care and compassion will be an important part of any decision making. We will use everyday language without codes and acronyms. Any plans are to be made *with* families. We will work in partnership with all key agencies.
- 7. RIGHTS CENTRED** - We strongly believe in, and wish to uphold children and young people's rights and it is also an essential element that their experience is sought and understood to inform any plans.
- 8. STABILITY** - For any growth and development to happen – a sense of stability and safety are essential. Stability happens when there are as few transitions as possible – either in people or places. We strive to provide a sense of safety in all the caring experiences we provide to infants, children, young people and their families across all Services.
- 9. CHILD FIRST APPROACH** – actively challenge the unnecessary criminalisation of children and young people in the children's and adult justice system and ensure they are supported in a way that is appropriate, proportionate, supports their rights and is age appropriate in line with the whole systems approach.



## ♥ Dumfries & Galloway

Joint investigative interviews (JIIs) - are formal interviews conducted by trained police officers and social workers where there is a concern that a child is a victim of, or witness to, criminal behaviour and where there is information to suggest that the child has been or is being abused.

Over a number of years child protection and justice partners have been working with the Scottish Government to improve the quality of JIIs with the aim of providing a more trauma informed approach for children and ultimately to remove the need for children to have to appear in court - if we get the interview right it can be used as 'evidence in chief' and the child won't need to appear in court and be further traumatised as a result of their experiences.

This has led to the development of the Scottish Child Interview Model for Joint Investigative Interviewing. Dumfries and Galloway became the third Local Authority Area in Scotland – and the first rural area - to pilot the new model.

Working with the National JII Team, the Interviewers (three Police Officers and three Social Workers) completed their training in May 2021 and the pilot went live on 19th May. Initial feedback from Interviewers is that the intensive 10-week training has equipped them well to ensure that they undertake interviews in a much more planned and trauma informed way.

Dumfries & Galloway's achievements have been recognised at a National Awards Ceremony held at Tulliallan in September of last year.

Initial feedback from children is that they have found the interview experience to be supportive and helpful within the context of the circumstances arising which necessitate the interview.



## ♥ Moray

Within Moray's social work department, the staff have been attending training and co-designing a new model of social work in Moray that better keeps the promise. This is a transformational change to the way social workers work alongside families, from initial referral through to closure and works to ensure practitioners 'wrap around' families, as opposed to families being passed through different teams. The council has agreed significant investment to this new model and allows for the Moray Children's Planning Partnership to support children at home and prevent episodes of care. Alongside other partners, social work are using the Outcome Star to evidence positive outcomes.



## ♥ Shetland

In order to support you, we need to support and value our workforce.

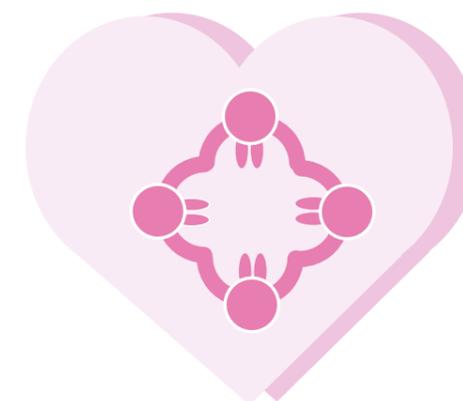
We are proud of how we grow and develop our own staff, through training and support, and through career development opportunities.

We have:

- Started implementing Dyadic Developmental Practice across our Children's Social Work Teams.
- Supported our staff to improve the assessment of the capacity of parents and their capacity for change, in order to better meet the needs of the child.
- Commissioned a piece of work so that we can understand how best to support our workforce to act on the many policy agendas for change, such as GIRFEC, Trauma-Informed and the Promise.

We will:

- Use the Trauma-Informed Lens to inform the work of our Children's Social Work Teams.
- Implement the recommendations of the workforce capability study, including:
  - Ensuring everyone knows and understands the roles and responsibilities of other services
  - Use coaching and supervision to develop relationship-based support
  - Take a values-based approach to recruitment
  - Develop and implement a front-line worker induction programme that: sets the context, sets out and explores expectations, and delivers communication and emotional literacy skills.



# Chapter 4



# Planning



COSLA



### What The Promise Says...

**"There must be strategic, needs based planning for children so that they are provided with warm, relational, therapeutic, safe, loving environments when they are required."**

## Work at a national level

### Planning

COSLA co-chairs (with Scottish Government) the Secure Care group, where **Secure Care Standards** were developed. These were agreed by COSLA Leaders in January 2020.

COSLA works with Scotland Excel, Local Government colleagues and the 3rd sector on improvements to commissioning and procurement, particularly in the context of family support through the Family Support Advisory Group. This work is being led by COSLA and the Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland (CCPS).

As outlined in 'A Good Childhood', COSLA and local authority colleagues are working with Scottish Government, Scotland Excel and partners to develop short and long term plans for the reform of secure care; which include ending cross border placements and preparation for no longer placing U18s in young offenders institutes.

#### Kinship Collaborative

COSLA are members of the collaborative and supportive of the aims and objectives. The Collaborative aims to review current provision and deliver improvement in the support for kinship carers across Scotland, including if necessary legislative amendments. was set up to inform the delivery of improvements in support for kinship families across Scotland. The collaborative considers current policy and legislation and explores the changes that are required to drive improvement.

### Investment

COSLA is working with The Promise Scotland and Directors of Finance to understand the implications and support required for Human and Economic cost modelling for local authorities. The Promise are working closely with Clackmannanshire, North Lanarkshire and Scottish Borders Councils and learning from this work will be developed and shared across local authorities.

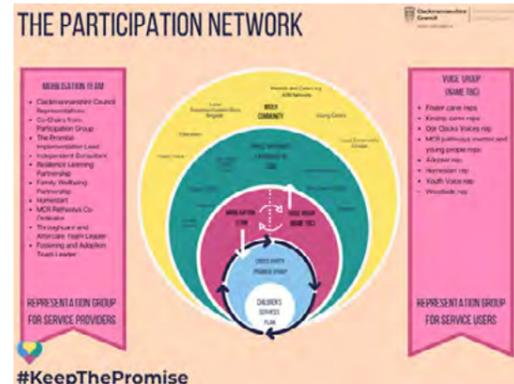
COSLA, SOLACE and local authority colleagues have represented local government through the design of the 22/23 Whole Family Wellbeing Fund, which will see a share of £50m allocated to Children's Services Planning Partnerships to enable local, collaborative design and decision making over investment in family support.





## Clackmannanshire

We have used Corra funding, learning from The Promise Design School, support from The Promise Scotland Implementation Team and collaborative discussions with a number of different partners across Scotland to support the development of a Participation Network. The Participation Network will improve the current collaboration and participatory opportunities for care experienced children and young people and their families and carers to support Keeping The Promise across Clackmannanshire. The network aims to support how we can better listen, strengthen and connect the voices of care experienced children and young people across all our schools, partners and other networks such as MCR Pathways. This includes the 'Oor Clacks Voices' group which is continuing to meet with an integrated team of support around them to ensure their voices are influencing The Promise as we progress.



## East Lothian

There is a major focus on preventing children and young people leaving East Lothian for external placements and returning those who are currently in external placements (where appropriate). Planning is highly aspirational, long term, and has the voice of families, young people and their families at the heart of it. Independent Reviewing Officers will lead the auditing and quality assure the plans. The family group decision making model is used extensively with our children and young people supported by our 3rd sector colleagues.

## Glasgow

Glasgow City Council have reduced the numbers of children looked after and accommodated by 24% since the launch of the Independent Care Review. 988 of Glasgow's children were looked after and accommodated in February 2020, in February 2022 this was 751. This considerable reduction continues as a result of our Transformational Change programme – our commitment to keeping Glasgow's children with their families, in their own communities and at their own schools. This is overall a 46% reduction in the number of Glasgow's children looked after and accommodated since the programme commenced in 2016 (1381 children in February 2016). This is keeping Glasgow's Promise.

## South Ayrshire

### South Ayrshire's Parenting Promise

To demonstrate the fundamentals of [The Promise](#) and reflect the views of children and young people, we chose to name our new Corporate Parenting plan **'South Ayrshire's Parenting Promise.'**

This reflects the plan's close alignment with The Promise and the challenge from children and young people on using language which is clear and relatable. South Ayrshire's Parenting Promise aligns with the timeline of The Promise setting actions across short (2021-24), medium (2025-27) and long-term (2028-30) and is underpinned by the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (UNCRC).

**South Ayrshire's Parenting Promise** was written collaboratively and the writing group included representatives from South Ayrshire's Champions Board who have used their care experience to shape and share the plan. Our Champ's board has also supported wider participation from young people with care experience. Click [here](#) for South Ayrshire's Parenting Promise.

### Learning Disabilities Strategy

We have now followed this co production approach in the development of our Learning Disabilities Strategy. Read the draft strategy [here](#).

### The Promise Data Map

South Ayrshire Council and Health and Social Care Partnership are the only Local Authority taking part in The Promise Data Map, which focuses on mapping data that matters to children, young people and their families. Click [here](#) for additional information on the data mapping process.





## Chapter 5



# Building Capacity



COSLA



### What The Promise Says...

"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."

## Progress at a national level

<b>Children's Hearings Systems</b>	<p>COSLA are not members of the newly established Hearing Systems Working Group but will be involved through the lifetime of the Group as a key stakeholder.</p> <p>COSLA is also a member of the Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership where current improvement work is being developed and led.</p>
<b>Inspection and Regulation</b>	<p>Early conversations have taken place at a national level to join up work and communication between Local Government, The Care Inspectorate and The Scottish Social Services Council. This work will also sit in the 'Supporting the Workforce' section and will not happen in isolation with these organisations alone.</p>
<b>Policy Coherence</b>	<p>COSLA is committed to ensuring policy coherence around The Promise. We are working with The Promise Scotland to present on The Promise at all of COSLA's policy boards; and in developing internal staff sessions. This work is on-going.</p>

This section focuses on how local authorities are working collaboratively with other Corporate Parents, with children and young people and across partners to build knowledge, understanding and capacity as transformational change is planned and delivered.

East Dunbartonshire

In 2020, our Champions Board was established and began to meet on a weekly basis online. There were positive outcomes from the group and opportunities including;

- Sharing experiences of care and highlighting some of the difficulties and challenges they faced.
- A number of Corporate Parents attended the meetings; introducing themselves, sharing information about services and, at times, discussed issues identified by the champions.
- Young people were invited to work with Children’s Hearing Scotland and share their experiences at a panel member training event.
- Individual supports and links were also made as the pandemic progressed.

East Dunbartonshire was successful in a funding application made to The Promise Partnership to establish an Implementation Lead role for The Promise. Our Local Authority realised an implementation lead was crucial in order to create and maintain the shift in culture and operations that is needed. Our Implementation Lead commenced the role in August 2021. Initial priorities have included promoting awareness of The Promise and the potential impact of its findings, and networking across East Dunbartonshire Council and Scotland. A Steering Group has been established, and fourteen partner agencies have committed to being part of this. A Care Experienced Subgroup has also now been established in conjunction with our Champions Board.

Two care experienced young people recently designed a leaflet promoting an initial open evening, with the aim of building on our Champions Group and Care Experienced Subgroup. The open evening was a success, and the group is now made up of 14 care experienced young people aged from 15 - 25 with a diverse range of experiences and current circumstances.

East Lothian

East Lothian council has launched a transformation of services programme for children and young people, which is seeking to ensure that they receive the right support, from the most appropriate source, at the earliest possible time and that East Lothian children remain in East Lothian where appropriate. The first part of the transformation centred on a redesign of services for better outcomes project involving the complete restructuring of children’s services social work. As part of this, an outreach service has been created to look at preventing young people coming into children’s social work services. There has been significant investment in staffing and restructuring including the Wellbeing and Justice team. New systems allow referrals to children’s services to move directly into the Wellbeing and Justice Team to limit any unnecessary changes in workers ensuring the right support is offered as quickly as possible.



Edinburgh

A short-life working group has been created to ensure that Edinburgh’s Promise has a clear framework for involving children’ young people, parents and carers. Such a framework is needed to ensure that when Edinburgh’s Promise activities reach the stage of development (beyond initial mapping and discovery work) that will require collaboration and involvement of children and young people that there is an agreed and consistent framework for such engagement. This work is connected to and working with colleagues already involved in Edinburgh Learns work already engaged in some of this activity.

As part of this is also the need to explore and develop Edinburgh’s use of voice. Voice is the collective experiences of children, young people, adult and carers, which are shared with colleagues in children’s services day in, day out. To date Edinburgh does not have a good mechanism of both capturing voice nor a way of responding to what such collective feedback and requests are. This group will also explore how Edinburgh’s services can maximise existing work to capture the experiences, views and outcomes that are part of voice.

Inverclyde

Connections have been made with current corporate parents in line with the Champions Board. This diagram demonstrates the vision for Inverclyde’s I Promise board. As time is spent with partners and colleagues, discussion is and will continue around the importance of Keeping the Promise and the need for Promise keepers to be identified.





## West Dunbartonshire

West Dunbartonshire Council has engaged with Social Work in multi-agency work with Children’s Hearings Scotland and Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration (SCRA) towards a more inclusive and accessible reporting format for children’s hearings. This work includes development of an assessment format in collaboration with panel members, social work, education, health and SCRA. Parents, carers, children and young people will also be consulted. This work will provide more relevant and inclusive reports to children’s hearings where significant decisions in respect of the arrangements for the care of children and young people are agreed.

## Renfrewshire

In July, our Promise Ambassador joined Children’s Services to work across the organisation to raise the profile of the Promise, build capacity and ensure that all services engaged with the recommendations. Our Promise Ambassador plays a key role in communicating our Promise vision in Renfrewshire and has met with over 20 different partners and services to enhance their understanding of the Promise and relevance in their own service / role. We aim to deliver on the Promise by:

- Putting you first when we make decisions**
- Re-designing our services and approaches to ensure they support your needs**
- Offering you positive opportunities**
- Making sure you are safe, loved and respected**
- Investing in you, you have a bright future**
- Supporting families to stay together**
- Ensuring we are the best parent for you when you can’t be with your own parent**

The strategic oversight group and other service representatives met with the national Promise team to develop the role of the Promise Keeper. Partners discussed the importance of the Promise and the organisational wide focus that is required to support system change. Following this, we have developed a clear remit and recruitment process for Promise Keepers in Renfrewshire. Promise Keepers will be supported through a network and will have access to learning and development opportunities related to the Promise. Following an awareness raising workshop at our Senior Leaders Forum, the Chief Executive and service Directors were invited to apply for the role of Promise Keeper.

## Glasgow

Glasgow’s Promise Plan 21-24 reflects our partnership commitment to keeping the Promise. There are 44 named Promise Keepers and 100 actions highlighted in the Promise Plan. The Glasgow Care Experienced Board includes representatives from children’s residential services, fostering and adoption services, the independent care and review team, specialist children’s services, health visiting and nursing services, children’s rights, alongside partners from education, Police Scotland, Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration (SCRA) and third sector family support services.

The board meets on a 6 weekly basis and is chaired by the Head of Children’s Residential Services and Families for Children (Fostering and Adoption Services).

The Care Experienced Board together created Glasgow’s Promise Plan 21-24. Glasgow’s Promise outlines how the city will together keep the Promise. It is an honest reflection of what we think we are getting right for our children, young people and their families; and where we need to get better. It embraces the use of non-organisational language as demonstrated in The Promise. The board are responsible for the implementation and overview of Glasgow’s Promise.

## Midlothian

### Midlothian House Project (MHP)

In consultation with our Champions Group, poor housing outcomes for Care Experienced Young People (CEYP) were consistently raised as an area they would like to see improved. In response, Children’s Services successfully applied for Life Changes Trust funding to set up a National House Project (NHP) framework within Midlothian. Midlothian House Project is guided by a multi-disciplinary steering group consisting of representatives from Police Scotland, Health, Housing including Registered Social Landlords, Community groups, Skills Development Scotland, Residential Care and Education. Since November 2020, MHP has supported 20 CEYP in their transition into adulthood. The Midlothian House Project promotes interdependent rather than independent living using a community support model. To date, 20 young people are engaged with Midlothian House Project with 13 successfully living in their own permanent tenancies with no tenancy breakdowns occurring. The remaining seven are engaging well with the project and are on track to move into their own tenancies in due course. Multiagency working and exercising organisational corporate parent responsibilities is ensuring the Midlothian House Project is providing long standing successful outcomes for our most vulnerable young people.





## Moray

Twenty two young people have contributed to the Better Meetings Project supported by; Who Cares? Scotland, Children Hearings Scotland and Social Work (Highland and Moray). Improvement work to deliver the changes requested by young people is in development. This includes physical redesign of rooms where Children's Panels are held, as well as changes to how meetings are run. Due to the pandemic Children's Hearings have at times been conducted with the young person taking part via online, this has allowed greater participation and the continuation of this new way of working will be facilitated. A checklist for the Chairs and members of Children's Panels, as well as social workers to ensure the views of children and young people are evidenced in reports and in meetings is being tested.



## Angus

Legislation: Our commitment to making information easily available and legislation understandable to the people who it affects.

Angus Council is commissioning a new Protecting People website. We want our children, their families, and all our staff to have clear and easy access to vital information in one place! This will include everything from advocacy to explaining our social work processes – from duty, to child protection to becoming looked after. Our aim is to ensure everyone knows their rights, and how to access the help they need and how we can support our children and families when we might not be getting it right – Keeping our Promise to you to learn from our mistakes.

This will include our Promise video, made by our staff and care experienced young adults sharing their lived experiences alongside some of our dedicated frontline workers and corporate parents.



# Final Words...



It's been a pleasure and a privilege to share Local Government's 'journey so far' to #KeepThePromise. The case studies and examples featured demonstrate our continued commitment and progress and we look forward to sharing more with you in the year ahead.

COSLA will continue national and local work to support our Members and represent the voice of Local Government; a summary of the upcoming national work is outlined below.

## **Local Government Programme Board**

COSLA and Solace (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers) are developing a 'Programme Board' to provide oversight, support, and accountability to local authorities as we work to implement the ambitions of Plan 21 – 24 and beyond.

## **Scottish Government's Single Implementation Plan**

We will work in close partnership with the Scottish Government on the policy and practice developments required of and for local government following the publication of Scottish Government's ['Keeping The Promise Plan'](#) on 30th March 2022.

## **Elected Members**

We will welcome new Elected Members across Scotland in May 2022. We will work in partnership with the Improvement Service to offer support to Members on The Promise.

## **Local Authority 'Promise Leads' Network**

COSLA has established a network of local authority leads for The Promise. This network has been established to share practice, develop collaborative policies where required and to connect local and national policy and practice developments.

## **The Promise Scotland**

COSLA and The Promise Scotland will continue to work in partnership in the years until we Keep The Promise. We'll provide each other with support where it's required and work together to ensure local and national policy is well connected and cohesive.

## **A National Care Service**

Whilst we await the outcome of Scottish Government's decision on a National Care Service, Local Government continues to drive and deliver the services and change required to ensure we Keep The Promise by 2030.

Until we publish our next annual report you can keep up to date on our progress through COSLA's website and our social media channels, using **#KeepThePromise**.

We'd like to give our sincere thanks to our member councils for sharing their journey and to all colleagues who contributed to this report.

## COSLA's Children and Young People Board



If you are interested in hearing more about the work of any local authority, head on over to their websites by clicking on any of the links below.

If you'd like to talk to us about our work on The Promise, please email us at [thepromise@cosla.gov.uk](mailto:thepromise@cosla.gov.uk)



**Aberdeenshire**  
COUNCIL



**Clackmannanshire**  
Council



**Comhairle nan Eilean Siar**



**Dumfries & Galloway**  
COUNCIL  
*Comhairle Dhùn Phris is Gall-Ghàidhealibh*



**East Ayrshire Council**  
*Comhairle Siorrachd Àir an Ear*



sustainable thriving achieving  
**East Dunbartonshire Council**  
[www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk](http://www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk)



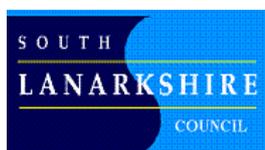
**East Lothian**  
Council



**Falkirk Council**  
*Development Services*



Midlothian



*We will keep*

# The Promise



COSLA

