



We are delighted to showcase the local work that is going on across Dumfries and Galloway to Keep the Promise.

We recognise for us to progress the work to Keep the Promise, does not sit in isolation, it sits alongside our commitment to the full incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

We are committed to ensuring our work to Keep the Promise is not siloed and is joined up across our services together in collaboration with our partners including Social Work Services, Education, Children's Hearing, Skills Development Scotland, and Health. This work is led by our Corporate Parent Group with members of the group from all key partners.

The Promise

The main output from the Independent Care Review and our First Ministers commitment that Scotland would '*come together and love its most vulnerable children and give them the childhood they deserve*' is contained within The Promise. For Scotland to support our children and young people to grow up feeling loved, safe and respected so that they release their full potential, the Promise outlines the need for a redesign of the 'care system' including a fundamental shift in how decisions are made, and money is spent in supporting Scotland's children and families. You can read more about the Independent Care Review [here](#).

The narrative below sets out the different areas of activity we have been progressing under the five priority areas capturing the breadth of work being undertaken across Dumfries and Galloway and the progress made to #Deliver on Our Promise in the two years since The Promise was published.

A Good Childhood

Dumfries and Galloway have adopted a Signs of Safety approach – a **strengths-based model** which aligns closely to the Promise. Our operating practices have currently been refreshed, adopting a relationship and strength-based approach to the work we undertake to support families, enabling them to come up with their own solutions to the issues and barriers they face with the aim of creating and developing more sustainable plans for children and young people to remain where possible with their families and siblings.

This model has been implemented across our service with training delivered to our council staff and multi-agency partners supporting the establishment of a common value base and common language for how services and systems work collaboratively to support children and families.

Embedded in the Promise is the **use of language**. Young people, along with staff have been active in developing better understanding of the labelling that can often be associated with many of our children. Developments around this have included consultation with our young people resulting in our Leaving Care Team name changing to the **Young Peoples Transitions Team**. We know for some young people being transferred to the Leaving Care Team resulted in increased levels of anxiety and trepidation as they didn't feel ready to 'leave care', we wanted to promote 'staying put' for as long as possible, as well as supporting them with their transition into adulthood. Our young people are currently designing a logo to compliment the new name change.

We have successfully **secured suitable accommodation** at one of our newly refurbished third sector providers allowing for our young people's transition team workers to use to meet young people in a welcoming community-based environment.

We have been successful securing investment from The Promise Partnership – A Good Childhood in partnership with Children's and Young People's Centre for Justice, to ensure **our approach to children and young people in conflict with the law is rights-respecting**, contributing to better outcomes for our children, young people and communities with safe place to express their views, listened to and are heard.



There is a significant improvement area in relation to the **offer and accessibility of Advocacy** for all our young people. We have secured additional investment to enable us to increase our commissioned services with our Third Sector providers to address the increased demands to support our early and effective intervention. Our advocacy services have supported over 900 referrals to services supporting with domestic abuse, homeless, mental health, emotional wellbeing, caring responsibilities, accessing further education, practical house management skills, budgeting and managing finances, therapeutic and parenting groups. Our investment has created additional funding for our Region through the Corra matching funding principles.

Work is progressing to ensure that all our young people who require accommodation to **access and sustain accommodation** they choose and is available to meet their needs when they need it most. We are continuing to work hard with our housing providers to identify a range of safe and comfortable accommodation choices. We have developed and introduced various protocols for our young people transitioning through care including hospital discharge pathway, prisoner discharge protocol, homelessness prevention protocol and pathways, together with working with our Registered Social

Landlords and private sector landlords to identify and implement early intervention initiatives to **improve tenancy sustainment and prevent homelessness**.

We were one of three local authorities successful in being one of the pilot areas for **'Voice and Opportunities'** focusing on positive destinations. This is an Improvement Service and Volunteering Matters collaboration to support improvements in services for our young people, designed to continue to evolve as an interactive learning process with an aim to audit current employability services provided, identify areas of strengths within services and explore the areas of improvements needed, and create action plans with our young people.

Within our education settings we introduced our **Care Experienced Teachers Team** together with our Care Experienced Support Officers within our Supporting Learners settings to improve the education attainment of our care experienced children by removing barriers to learning, improving tracking and monitoring, improving attendance, reducing exclusion and providing equal access to opportunities, continuing to develop, deliver and support intervention and prevention initiatives.

We are now seeing an increase of our children and young people moving into a **positive destination** by 17% to a 3 year high of 84% and an overall exclusion rate reduced by 1.2%. Our multi-agency Care-Experienced Raising Attainment Group have approved and enabled - support to the Employability and Skills Service to focus on positive destinations for our children; support to our young people in our children's home to support with homework and study; additional ICT equipment to be purchased to allow teachers to deliver innovative and engaging educational interventions, staff training in key interventions such as nurture, bereavement, catch up literacy, catch up numeracy and emotion works, alternative education opportunities on offer for our young people not in full time education and one to one tuition for senior phase young people approaching exams.

Fantastic progress on our **tracking and monitoring of our data** to enable targeted intervention and prevention with lead professional and designated senior managers identified across all school settings.

We continue to have a focus on our young people in terms of health and wellbeing – rolling programme for the timeline delivery of **CEL 16 health assessments** for all our children and young people who become newly looked after across our Region together with targeting initiatives to improve the number of children accessing both core and specialist health services as a result of attending CEL 16 new and return health appointments. We have recently completed an exercise to gather the evidence to understand our present system including a case note audit of 40 families from those who chose to attend and those who chose not to attend with additional engagement activity with children and young people about their experience of health assessment.

We recently for the first time delivered the Foundations of Attachment 6 week training programme, to support parents and carers to **nurture attachments with their child**. Our health and social work colleagues will continue to deliver this training on a wider scale together with implementing a quality improvement project to improve the uptake of health assessments offered.

We have developed a partnership approach to progress opportunities to look at specific cohorts of young people in education to see **what we could do better at re-engaging** them successfully. This project is at initial stages with the intention of introducing a framework for children to contribute and challenge own programme planning and monitoring.

Whole Family Support

The reduction of the overall number of children and young people in the statutory system is integral to our implementation of The Promise. The emphasis of our transformation whole family support activity is focused on:

- Relationship based intervention
- Strength based intervention
- Early intervention
- Preventative approach
- Strengthening family and community support
- Improved relationships with our third sector

Our family support team continue to lead and deliver on the **early and effective intervention** across Dumfries and Galloway. Our transformation journey has changed the way our social work assistants and family support workers attached to locality teams' work. Their work has become more complex. The team provide early support to help families at the earliest opportunities in building community support that enable lasting change and prevent children entering statutory social work together with helping families intensively in providing the best care to their children that they can, this may be to help prevent children needing to be cared for by people other than their parents or carers or to be able to return home to their family safely from a placement within kinship or foster carers. The team are currently supporting and working with 148 number of families, 334 children. The focus of the team is supporting our children and families across the Region referred to the service for reasons including neglect, poor home conditions and poverty, physical abuse, sexual abuse, poor parental mental health, domestic abuse, drug/alcohol misuse, parenting capacity, help with routines and boundaries and managing challenging behaviour. In addition to these reasons, some children have been referred because of poor school attendance, children's mental health and isolation. The team are also supporting some families from pre-birth supporting with early parenting.

Following a service redesign (Scottish Approach to Service Design) being carried out in 2021, we saw the closure of one of our residential homes and the creation of **Family Hub75 West**, rolling out an edge of care service designed to put families in the driving seat of creating loving and safe homes for children on the edge of care. Although this service only commenced in September 2021, the impact on our children and families has been immense.

We recently held our **Foster Carers Celebrations Day** to say a huge thank you to all our foster carers. This year we managed to introduce a fee for foster carers and seek an increase to our foster care mileage. Work is underway prioritising brothers and

sisters relationships which includes increasing the number of foster carers who can care for brothers and sisters within one home, this forms part of our training programme to promote the importance of sibling contact. We have further developed our training and support for our foster carers including linking all new foster carers to a buddy for the first 6 months with an annual training programme planned, together with a recent launch of our new web page <https://fostering.dumgal.gov.uk/>

Our Families First project introducing the whole family support approach to **families experiencing substance misuse** in Dumfries Galloway has recently launched test of change activities in the North West of the region to ensure support for families experiencing substance misuse with the behaviours and infrastructure in place to ensure sustainability of change and as a way to alleviate the negative impacts on all family members. Early feedback is positive.

We have continued to expand our delivery of Parents Early Education Programme (PEEP) across Dumfries and Galloway, increasing delivery capacity to 80 trained deliverers. Participation in PEEP Programmes is positively impacting on parents and families, with 100% of participants agreeing that they are more confident supporting their children's learning. Working in partnership, Dumfries and Galloway College and the Employability Team, have worked to identify parents who have participated in the PEEP Programme to undertake a Learning Assistant Course, this has resulted in 11 parents successfully completing the course and completing local school volunteering placements.

To date early evidence is showing families are now empowered to address various challenges, reducing problems and risks and in some cases helping to make sure that children remain with their family. What we have seen in terms of success in our work to date is a significant decrease in the number of children on the child protection register. This is because we are building better, more trusting relationships with our children and families. We are identifying with them local supports within their own family, friends' network and communities. This does not decrease the amount of work we do with families but does improve outcomes for them. The interventions are more welcome and less stigmatised.

Planning

Support is received from **The Promise Scotland Team**, who are a member of the national Family Support Group accountable for reporting to the national collective leadership group for vulnerable children and young people, that is jointly chaired by the Scottish Government and Solace.

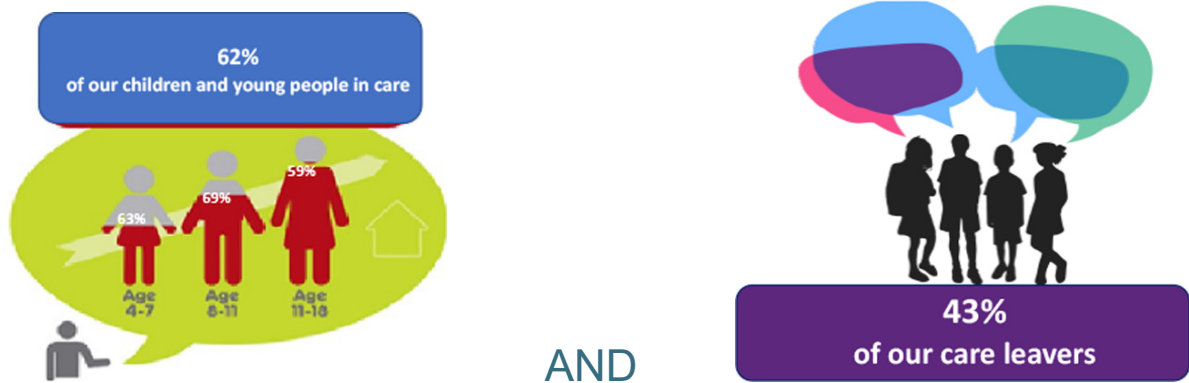
Our Promise Plan will be refreshed setting out our commitment to Delivering on Our Promise, The Promise being one of its principal drivers and at the heart of the plan's activity. This gives us significant opportunities to progress the more transformational changes in the services landscape required to meet the challenges of the Promise.

As part of the overall programme management, a plan is currently being developed to coordinate all activities. This is in line with the Plan 21-24. Work is ongoing to strengthen the reporting to ensure we are capturing the positive progress and impact of the work together with identifying a Promise Lead for each of the five priority areas.

We were excited to be one of three Local Authorities in Scotland to be part of the **Bright Spots Programme** that supports local authorities to listen to our children in care and care leavers, about the things that are important to them and have carried out two surveys over January and February 2022 to capture the views of our children and young people aged 4 to 25 years of age



This was a fantastic opportunity for us to listen to our children and young people. The survey is now closed with a fantastic response rate which has helped us to hear from –



We are currently awaiting collation of themes, with events planned over the coming months to share the findings with the opportunity to think about what the findings mean for our own practice and discuss / identify key priorities for taking forward Bright Spots findings and more importantly, changes/improvements in our local area.

As a Corporate Parent Group, we had the opportunity to take part at this year's #WeCareEvent on 23 June as one of our routes for engaging with our children and young people.

The findings of our engagement and participation activity will be the driver for our refreshed Promise Plan, ensuring we meet the needs of our children, young people and families, rather than the needs of our systems.

Investment in the lives of our children and families was considered strategically and holistically as part of our allocation of **Scottish Government Winter Support Funding**. Our approach to ensure we addressed the disproportionate impact over the last two years on the most disadvantaged children and young people, including disruptions to transitions out of care for our care leavers was to engage with all our children and families and **identifying gaps in basic essentials** including adequate food, clothing, household equipment and furniture. Through this additional fund we supported 430 families comprising of 661 adults and 762 children.

Supporting The Workforce

Training is currently being developed, co-ordinated and will be delivered that supports **culture change** that will be embed the Corporate Parenting responsibilities and The Promise's priority areas. We are also working in partnership with WhoCares? Scotland on key activities including the development and introduction of awareness and training to key strategic groups on corporate parent responsibilities and e-learning targeted at practice level staff across all partners.

We have been successful in securing funding from The Promise Partnership to adapt our approaches to ensure we build staff resilience for the development of work programme to build staff resilience to keep their skills up to date. We are introducing **virtual reality applications** to deliver this training.

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, leading 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. 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.

Current developments are underway, using similar methodology in preparation for the implementation of the **Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019**.

Another key element to the work we are progressing is our **workforce being trauma informed**. The Council's Trauma Champion and Human Resource service are developing ways to improve the whole workforce's trauma knowledge and are currently

exploring how we improve our direct work with children and families alongside other supports, and to also support staff who work with trauma or experience trauma in the workplace

Building Capacity

Over the past year Children's Hearing Scotland (CHS) have created a **Children's Hearing Scotland Promise Programme**, which will put child and family friendly care and justice at the heart of what we do meeting the Promise Plan and the calls to actions of Our Hearings, Our Voice (OHOV).



In December of last year, Dumfries and Galloway Panel Members participated in a CHS discussion on 'Delivering The Promise', which outlined the aims of The Promise and how CHS is seeking to implement these objectives in children's hearings.

In Dumfries and Galloway, we have a team of **independent reviewing officers** to carry out tasks across a number of key areas (initial child protection planning meetings, review child protection planning meetings, our looked after children's review following deregistration). This is a significant value in this team of independence across the council area who help blend the support that offers accountability to children's plans with a view to better outcomes and early resolve around matters affective children and their families.

The Promise Scotland Partnership **offers funding and support** to organisations and collaborations to #Keep the Promise and help drive forward change that matters together with other routes of funding. As noted above funding to date have included £50,000 to adapt our approaches to build staff resilience in response to the increasing impact of COVID on mental health, trauma and neglect; secured £99,000 in partnership with Children's and Young People's Centre for Justice to support improvement in youth justice; £5,000 to support the participation of our children and young people in the development of the Bairns Hoose Standards; allocation of the Children and Young Peoples funding from Alcohol and Drugs Partnership for £45,000 for 2021/22 with recurring allocation of £194,000 for current year for the following five years to enable the upscaling of our support offering to whole family support and third sector organisations. Our investment to third sector organisations has attracted an additional £470,000 funding into the our region over the past 3 years.

Contact Us

If you have any queries or any areas, you wish to discuss you can contact us at ThePromiseTeam@dumgal.gov.uk

Dumfries and Galloway Corporate Parent Group

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