

Stirling Community Planning Partnership

# Keeping the Promise Stirling's 10 Year Strategy

For Children and Young People in Stirling



**Stirling's 10 year Strategy** 2024-2030  
**Keeping the Promise**





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# Introduction



In 2020, The Independent Care Review published the Promise, alongside a range of other documents, which made a commitment to making Scotland ‘the best place in the world to grow up’ (Promise Scotland, 2020, pg 4). As such, ‘a promise was made to Scotland’s infants, children, young people, adults and families. By 2030, it must be kept.’ (Promise Scotland, 2021, pg 3). Within Stirling, we welcomed The Promise as it built on work that we were already undertaking to reshape the nature of care.

In March 2022, the Stirling Community Planning Partnership published our ‘Corporate Parenting Plan – Keeping The Promise 2021-2024’ which included our plan for implementing the Promise over the same timescale. This is the first of three core plans which details the improvements we are implementing in order to #keepthePromise by 2030. Feedback on our Corporate Parenting Plan has been positive, and we have already seen a huge amount of progress in implementing the changes identified in the plan. However, we now need to develop our longer term approach for implementing The Promise ensuring that we remain well aligned with the national approach in a way that is flexible to changing needs. Feedback from young people in Stirling has told us that they want us to think on a more long-term basis too.

Therefore, alongside our three consecutive Corporate Parenting Plans, we have produced this 10 Year Strategy, which draws upon work being developed in co-production with young people in Stirling and staff from across the Stirling Corporate Parenting Group, with input from The Promise Scotland. This 10 Year Strategy, in conjunction with the plans highlighted above, will offer a broad picture of the world we want to create for all children and young people in Stirling and how we will deliver on the aspirations of The Promise by 2030.

# How we will deliver on The Promise



**The approach for implementing this Strategy builds upon the method for developing our first three year Promise Plan. As we approach the end of this first planning cycle, it has allowed us to reflect on the progress that has been made and outlines, in broad terms, what still needs to be done.**

It is important to highlight that, earlier this year, Fiona Duncan, who chairs the Promise Oversight Board announced a shift away from the initial schedule to publish three Plans (2021-2024, 2024-2027, 2027-2030) and instead would be publishing only one subsequent Plan covering the period 2024-2030 – with a mid-point review in 2027 (Duncan, 2023). The period which the first Plan covered was fraught with challenges, from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the subsequent lockdown and recovery, to the ongoing cost of living crisis and the war in Ukraine. This is the reason Fiona Duncan has argued the need for an overarching Plan 24-30 to take us forward all the way to 2030 when the Promise must ultimately be kept.

Whilst the national framework may have changed, it is our intention in Stirling to continue as we planned before, with our next two plans (2024-2027 and 2027-2030) and this overarching Strategy to 2030 helping us shape the general direction of travel over the coming period. This approach will align with our statutory requirements to publish a Corporate Parenting Plan whilst also providing the opportunity to reflect on progress at the end of each planning cycle. Each iteration of our Corporate Parenting Plan will therefore be best placed to evolve and respond to changing needs acknowledging that the world is constantly changing.

By taking this approach, it is hoped that we can reflect on local feedback from our young people and their desire for longer term planning whilst maintaining the crucial detail required to establish how we plan to #keepthepromise.

Both our 10 Year Strategy and our underpinning Corporate Parenting Plans will continue to be co-produced with care experienced children and their families as well as partner agencies reflecting our approach to co-designing improvements across our services in line with the Promise and the Scottish Approach to Service Design.



The Keeping The Promise – 10 Year Strategy is based on the **five foundations** that were set out in the Independent Care Review and these are:

<p><b>Voice</b></p>	<p>Children must be <b>listened to</b> and meaningfully and appropriately <b>involved in decision-making</b> about their care, with all those involved properly listening and responding to what children want and need. There must be a compassionate, caring, decision-making culture focussed on children and those they trust.</p>
<p><b>Family</b></p>	<p>Where children are <b>safe</b> in their families and <b>feel loved</b>, they must stay. Families must get support together to nurture that love, and to overcome the difficulties which get in its way.</p>
<p><b>Care</b></p>	<p>Where living with their family is not possible, children must <b>stay with their brothers and sisters</b> where safe to do so and <b>belong to a loving home</b>, staying there for as long as needed.</p>
<p><b>People</b></p>	<p>The children that Scotland cares for must be <b>actively supported to develop relationships</b> with people in the workforce and wider community, who in turn must be <b>supported to listen and be compassionate</b> in their decision-making and care.</p>
<p><b>Scaffolding</b></p>	<p>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.</p>



Work will begin in late 2023 to formally review our Corporate Parenting Plan 2021-2024 including a detailed consideration of the progress made on delivering our Promise plan for that period. We will then move on to develop our next Corporate Parenting Plan which will include our Promise Plan 2024 -2027. This will consolidate, embed and build upon the work done so far and detail our next steps towards our longer term goals.

Nevertheless, it is clear that this area is still developing and we will continually review our approach, as we have done already, in line with recommendations made by Fiona Duncan. Our approach will ensure that what we are doing locally is well aligned to the national approach and that we can flex what we are doing to respond to that if need be.

Progress on the delivery of the Keeping The Promise – 10 Year Strategy and each iteration of the Corporate Parenting Plan will be provided to the Stirling Corporate Parenting Group. The strategy will also be submitted to Stirling Council's Children & Young People Committee for noting and to provide assurance. Progress updates will be provided quarterly to the Stirling Corporate Parenting Group with an annual update being provided to the Children & Young People Committee.





# Barriers and Challenges



As already outlined in the introduction of this document, the last few years have been challenging and whilst we are now emerging from the Coronavirus Pandemic, we are firmly now in the midst of a Cost of Living Crisis with double digit inflation posing serious issues for families and public bodies alike. The barriers that we have already experienced have the potential to impact our continued delivery of the Promise and relate strongly to each of the 5 foundations detailed on page 5.

## Poverty

Data from the Scottish Government over the last decade has shown the proportion of children growing up in persistent poverty **has been rising** – from around 14% a decade ago to 18% in 2021 (*Scottish Government, 2023b*). Likewise, despite long-term reductions in the proportion of young people growing up in both relative and absolute poverty, in the last five years this trend has stalled (*ibid.*).

**As Stirling’s Children’s Services Plan makes clear:** “Poverty puts additional strain on families, which can lead to parental mental health and relationship problems, financial problems and substance misuse. This can have a negative impact on parenting behaviours, which impact children’s outcomes.” (*pg 33*). Likewise, the Promise itself is clear that “**Poverty is a mediating factor among various factors that increase the risk of child abuse and neglect**” (*Independent Care Review, 2020a, pg 17*)

Moreover, the Independent Care Review's report on The Money further highlights that "Without addressing the extent of poverty and inequality in Scotland, those avoidable circumstances that have potential to generate the need for care will remain." (Trebeck, 2020, pg 7)

The scale and spread of poverty in Stirling is not something that is entirely within our control. However, as corporate parents we have a duty to support families to overcome the effects of poverty as best we can. In doing so, we can support and nurture families to stay together in line with the foundations of the Promise - Family.

## Recruitment and Retention

The issue of recruitment and retention is well documented across numerous different public services. In Social Work, Social Work Scotland's Setting the Bar Report found that **a quarter** of graduate Social Workers were **leaving** the profession within six years and the overall number of Social Work students has fallen since 2013 (Miller and Barrie, 2022, pg 9). Furthermore, it reports: "an increase of 20% in the proportion of social workers aged over 55 and therefore approaching retirement age" (Idem, pg 8), highlighting this issue is likely to worsen in the years to come.





It is not just Social Work Services facing recruitment issues. Regarding health services, the Auditor General's report on the NHS in Scotland in 2022 said "Workforce capacity remains the biggest risk to the recovery of NHS services" (*Audit Scotland, 2023, pg 3*). The report went on to say "The NHS workforce remains under severe pressure and there are concerns over staff capacity, wellbeing and retention" (*Idem, pg 17*).

In education services, The Scottish Government published the results of its National Discussion on Scottish Education consultation earlier this year. One of the key overarching priorities that was identified was the need "to **recruit and retain more teachers and pupil support staff**, and for better teacher training. Many felt these improvements would drive greater capacity, stability and quality in education and underpin better learner experiences and outcomes." (*Scottish Government, 2023a, pg 2*).

These three examples represent key aspects of the workforce that are crucial to delivering The Promise highlighting the challenge in recruitment and retention, and delivering the Promise's key foundation: **People**.

Moreover, a lack of adequately supported staff, in turn creates barriers for young people in making their voices heard. Again, **Voice**, is a key foundation of the Promise and in order to deliver this aspect, issues around **recruitment and staff retention must be overcome**.



## Public Finance

The impact of the cost of living crisis is being felt, not just by families living in poverty, but also by public bodies and corporate parents who fulfil the **Scaffolding** with which Stirling's young people, families and staff are supported.

This requires investment - as the Independent Care Review's Follow the Money report highlights, the cost of providing what we understand as 'the care system' costs almost **£1 billion a year in Scotland** (*Independent Care Review, 2020b, pg 16*). This cost will have risen in the years since the Promise was first published.

In the follow up report 'The Money', it is made clear that "Spending on those who need it, particularly to invest in such vital relationships, should not be seen as a cost." (*Trebeck, 2020, pg 23*). However, in the current financial climate this approach is challenged as the requirement to make savings becomes more necessary across the public sector.

**Care** makes it clear that where possible, children and young people should be cared for at home where it is safe to do so. Significant savings have already been made as a result of the wider transformation of care in Stirling, with more children and young people being supported to stay at home or with their family. However, these savings are reliant on wider investment in other earlier forms of intervention which are just as important as those resources supporting families in crisis. If we are not able to invest in community based supports, we run the risk of jeopardising the progress that has been made so far.



# The views of Young People

## “I” statements

To successfully deliver on the aspiration of The Promise we have continually consulted and worked closely with young people in Stirling through Stirling Champs who first developed a set of ‘I’ statements for Stirling’s Children’s Services Plan 2020-23. These statements should be true for every child and young person with experience of care.

In November 2022, Lead Officers and Senior Managers met with Stirling Champs to review these ‘I’ Statements. Following the COVID-19 pandemic and the first phase of implementing The Promise, we wanted to see if the young people’s priorities had changed and if there was anything additional they wanted to include in the I Statements.

We held a group session with several young people, many of whom had been involved in developing the ‘I’ Statements previously. The conversations resulted in some amendments to the wording of the underpinning detail in order to reflect the impact of the Pandemic on mental health & wellbeing and the importance of tackling isolation and digital connectivity. The young people were also keen to make children’s rights more prominent and to refocus on education and learning rather than referencing school specifically. **The ‘I’ statements are:**

- I am asked what I think
- I am understood
- I am treated as a person and not a case
- I am supported to learn and achieve
- I have opportunities like any other child or young person
- I am protected from harm
- I am still supported when I become an adult
- Transitions in my life are minimised and when needed I am supported through them.

In January 2023, the redrafted ‘I’ Statements were shared again with a group of Stirling Champs for sense-checking and to ensure they reflected their views accurately. The Champs recognised their influence in the changes made and updated the underpinning wording reflected in the ‘I’ Statements art work (*overleaf*) to reflect the changes for the new Children’s Services Plan.

# 'I' Statements Artwork





# Long term outcomes for delivering the Promise in Stirling

As part of the 2023 Children's Services Plan, the 'I' statements above went on to inform the long term outcomes which will be contributed to throughout the period 2023-2026. In turn, it is hoped that all young people in Stirling are able to say:

*"We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential".*

In addition to this core long term outcome for children and young people in Stirling, which relates to every aspect of the Promise, the Children's Services Plan identifies a number of other long term outcomes for all children growing up in Stirling. These were informed by extensive work undertaken between October 2022 and March 2023. This includes a specific consultation regarding the proposed outcomes and actions that occurred between February and March 2023. 4 types of presentation were designed targeting: Children and young people aged 8-11; Young people aged 12+; Parents and carers; and Professionals from across a range of internal and external partner agencies. 230 people were able to provide their views.







**Building upon this consultation process, this 10 year Strategy seeks to utilise these key long term outcomes as its own.**

1. Improved mental health and wellbeing for Stirling's children and young people.
2. Every child and young person in Stirling is able to live without the limitations of poverty.
3. Improved family wellbeing (aligned to Children, Young People & Families Outcomes).
4. Reduction in the gap in Wellbeing Outcomes for families from our most disadvantaged communities.
5. Children and young people receive the right support to live safely at home within their families.
6. Reduction in families requiring crisis intervention.
7. Increase in families taking up wider supports.
8. Children and young people with disabilities are confident individuals, successful learners, effective contributors and responsible citizens.
9. Children and young people in Stirling are kept safe from abuse, harm and neglect.
10. Families are supported to build on their strengths by services that are trauma informed and improvement driven.

As the Promise makes clear, we need to be holistic in our approach to supporting children and young people. It is hoped, that by adopting these key long-term and ambitious outcomes as our own, we are able to build upon the successes already seen as part of our Corporate Parenting Plan – Keeping The Promise 2021-2024 and our Children's Services Plan 2023-2026.

This process is a continuously evolving model of coproduction with a growing population of children, young people and families and staff. As part of our commitment to delivering the Promise, we also commit to developing the widest possible and fluid consultation with those who we support.

If we are able to deliver upon each of these 10 key outcomes by 2030, we feel this will go a long way to demonstrating that in Stirling, we have worked hard to #keepthepromise.

# Measuring Improved Outcomes



In order to demonstrate that we are delivering on the priorities and outcomes for The Promise, a number of indicators have been defined and mapped against the five foundations of The Promise. Reporting on these indicators as part of our progress reporting to the Corporate Parenting Group will demonstrate that the work we are doing is effective and provide assurance of the progress being made. These indicators will also be important for each planning cycle to inform decision making about what else needs to be done to ensure that all aspects of The Promise are delivered on.

Defining the indicators has included a review of all existing strategic planning and reporting both locally and nationally to identify which measures best align with the various aspects of The Promise and demonstrate improvements.

**This has included a review of:**

- National datasets such as the Children's Social Work Statistics (Scotland) and the Local Government Benchmarking Framework.
- Stirling Children's Services Plan 2023 – 2026
- Stirling Children & Young People Committee Performance & Strategic Priorities reports.
- Stirling Child Protection Committee and Clackmannanshire & Stirling Chief Officer's Group (Public Protection) performance reports – these are based on the Child Protection National Minimum Dataset



Whilst this strategy sets out a number of core indicators, it is also acknowledged that further indicators may be identified in the future as part of the three yearly planning cycle. Fiona Duncan has also indicated that a monitoring framework will be established as part of the work to develop the national Plan 24-30. Any additional indicators that are identified as part of that process will be included in our local set of indicators.

Furthermore, in relation to the 'I' statements, we acknowledge that these measures are largely subjective. We are committed to designing an appropriate measuring tool to evaluate progress towards this and will ensure that children and young people are at the heart of this process.



Indicator	Foundations		
Number of looked after children at <b>home</b>	Voice	Family	People
Number of looked after children in <b>kinship care</b>	Voice	Family	People
Number of looked after children in <b>foster care</b>	Voice	Family	People
Number of looked after children in <b>residential care</b>	Voice	Family	People
Number of looked after and accommodated children who have an <b>unplanned move of placement</b>	Voice	Family	People
<b>Attendance at primary schools:</b> looked after children (% age)	People		Scaffolding
<b>Attendance at secondary schools:</b> looked after children (% age)	People		Scaffolding
Number of <b>Cases of Exclusions at primary schools</b> (looked after children)	People		Scaffolding
Number of Cases of Exclusions at <b>secondary schools</b> (looked after children)	People		Scaffolding
Percentage of care leavers with a <b>Pathway Plan</b>	Voice		People
Proportion of care leavers who are able to access <b>appropriate accommodation</b>	Voice	People	Scaffolding
Number of children referred to <b>Reporter for care and protection</b> (non-offence referrals)	Voice	People	Scaffolding
Number of children referred to <b>Reporter for offending behaviour</b>	Voice	People	Scaffolding
Number of children subject to <b>Initial and Pre-Birth Child Protection Planning Meeting</b>	Voice	People	Scaffolding
Number of Registrations on <b>Child Protection Register</b>	Voice	People	Scaffolding
Number of <b>De-Registrations</b> from the Child Protection Register	Voice	People	Scaffolding
Number of children on the <b>Child Protection Register</b>	Voice	People	Scaffolding
Percentage of children on the <b>Child Protection Register</b> who are <b>re-registered within 18 months</b>	Voice	People	Scaffolding

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