**Scottish Borders Promise Work write ups for COSLA report 2022**

**Scottish Borders Champions Board**

In the Summer of 2021 Scottish Borders Council appointed a Lead Young Person to develop and embed a Champions Board Approach in Scottish Borders.  As this time they also secured Corra Foundation funding to create a twelve month Promise Implemention Officer post.  Over the last six months with support from a small group of dedicated social work and CLD colleagues, our Lead Young Person and Promise Implementation Officer have been working together to develop and establish the Scottish Borders Champions Board.

The group is still early in its development and currently has a core membership of four care experienced young people attending weekly, with outreach work taking place with an additional two young people at this time.   Since Christmas the group has been starting to think about Children’s Rights, The Promise and Corporate Parenting, and in recent weeks has been working on designing a logo and motto.\* There are further plans for a monthly online group for young people aged 16+ who live out of authority. Champions Connect will aim to ensure care experienced young people who are supported by Scottish Borders Council but live outside the area have a way of keeping in touch with the Borders, and the work of the Champions Board.

If you would like to find out more about our Lead Young Person’s work, please see the video Cory created for Modern Apprenticeship week in March:

<https://youtu.be/Hbg7LufA6Eg>



**A GOOD CHILDHOOD**

**Brothers and Sisters**

Following the changes in legislation last summer, Scottish Borders Council developed Brothers and Sisters Practice Guidance for children and families social work practitioners. In partnership with Children 1st,the two organisations were successful in securing funding from the Promise Partnership to set up a collaborative Brothers and Sisters project.  The Project launched on 14th February and will be led by Children 1st.  An initial mapping exercise is being conducted to scope out relationships between brothers and sisters in the Scottish Borders.  Mapping will seek to identify key information about barriers and practices which have led to poor outcomes for brothers and sisters in the past, and highlight areas of unrecognised need.  (*Do we need an example of what that might be to demonstrate?)*

Starting with a focused test and learn group of four to five families, the project will then look at improving and re-establishing contacts between brothers and sisters who do not live together, focusing on practical solutions to improve their time together that meets their needs and ensures that the relationships between brothers and sisters can be supported and flourish.

The project will seek to involve harder to reach children and young people in decision making. This shall include siblings who are young adults, and those with additional and complex needs.  The project will form links with other services; including kinship care, FGDM, early intervention services and key partner agencies, building on their expertise and promoting a model of trauma recovery-focussed support in relation to brothers and sisters.

The project will fully involve care experienced children, young people and families in the creation, design, and delivery of the Service to ensure they can support them effectively. It shall be led by children, families, and communities, testing the approaches to service delivery to ensure they fully meet their needs.

**WHOLE FAMILY SUPPORT**

**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.

Working alongside families and professionals, Children 1st has:

* facilitated 6 family meetings (involving 6 children),
* supported a family to create a Family Plan without a meeting,
* completed significant pieces of work with 3 families which didn’t result in family meetings,
* facilitated 2 family review meetings.

There have been seven referrals where families have opted not to engage with the service, circumstances have changed or the referring social worker has withdrawn the referral.  Some of these referrals will be reviewed going forwards to see if the FGDM service can still have a role to support.

Children 1st continues to work with 13 families.  For the 10 families where FGDM work has been completed, the service supported; 2 children to maintain a kinship placement where there was a risk of breakdown, 4 children who were on the edge of care to remain at home, 2 children to make plans for contact.  1 child was accommodated into foster care after a FGDM meeting.

Over the last 6 months Children 1st has provided scaffolding to SBC children and families practitioners through the delivery of short presentations on the FGDM model and the referral pathways.  Children 1st has also been inducting, training, and supporting their own staff to develop their skills as FGDM coordinators.

As part of their evaluation process Children 1st has incorporated in depth feedback from children and their families about what the FGDM experience meant for them, and what impact it had within their family.  They also consulted with social workers to find out what impact FGDM had on their perceptions of the family, and how the process supported their workload.  One social worker shared the following views about the process:

*‘It was a helpful way of reducing the perceived unequal power dynamics that often exist between family and social worker.  The meeting was very child focussed, allowing the child to feel important and listened to (he wore a suit!). The plan they came up with was very specific to how they functioned together and was unique to their circumstances. Statutory plans are often more generic and centre on the concerns of professionals.   The family were more engaged in the process than a normal statutory meeting and had ownership of the meeting and plan.’*

Another worker shared their views on the impact of FGDM work on their relationship with the family: ‘*I had a better understanding of the family and the family dynamics, plus what the culture of the family was which was really helpful and I wouldn’t necessarily have known as much about this without the FGDM process.’*

**SUPPORTING THE WORKFORCE**

**Corporate Parenting Training**

A group of Corporate Parents in the Scottish Borders are working on a collaborative project to create multi-agency online live and e-learning corporate parenting training. The group consists of representatives from Scottish Borders Council, the lead young person for the Scottish Borders Champions Board, Skills Development Scotland, NHS Borders and Borders College.

The group are currently reviewing initial content provided by Who Cares? Scotland, which speaks to the national picture with a view to tailoring this in a way which captures the unique story of Corporate Parenting in the Borders. Who Cares? Scotland are early adopters of the Each and Every Child Framing Recommendations, and the language in the training materials carefully reflects this. The working group hopes in future to include local voices and perspectives, with content shaped by members of their recently established Champions Board.

*“With it being two years since the Promise was published, awareness raising of corporate parenting responsibilities has never been more important.  As lead young person for the Champions Board here in the Scottish Borders, I have been working alongside corporate parents in partnership with Who Cares? Scotland to develop local training. I am committed to ensuring that young people’s voices are at the heart of this project from beginning to end. It has been a really positive experience and I am looking forward to the up and coming roll-out later this spring.”*

Cory Paterson

Lead Young Person for the Scottish Borders Champions Board

***\*I had forwarded this to our colleagues at Who Cares? Scotland to check they were happy with the write up- I have not heard back yet but will let you know if there is anything they would like tweaked or changed in this.***