

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for
Covid Recovery

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Fiona Duncan
The Promise Scotland
By email

25 June 2021

Dear Fiona,

The Change Programme, published today by The Promise Scotland, challenges us all as organisations and individuals to make the necessary changes happen and continue to ensure Scotland reaches its ambition to #KeepThePromise by 2030. My colleagues and I very much welcome The Change Programme and the continued challenge it brings and I want to reaffirm the commitment we have to drive forward the transformational change that is required to make Scotland the best place to grow up where all children are loved, safe, respected and realise their full potential.

Although we cannot legislate for love, we can help create a supportive and nurturing environment in which love is possible for everyone. We know that children, young people and families have been significantly impacted by the pandemic. Now more than ever is the time for bold, decisive and collective action. This means Scotland's COVID recovery must be focussed on children's rights and wellbeing.

The Independent Care Review - The Promise

In February 2020 we accepted the conclusions of all the reports produced by the Independent Care Review. 'The Promise' recognised that to become that best place in the world, we need our public services to work for, and with children, young people, and their families. The focus of those services must be on improving lives based on what matters to people, not what matters to the organisations tasked with providing those services. We need a 'care system' that places love and relationships at the centre for every child and family who needs support.

This is a bold ambition, but it reflects the best of what Scotland has demonstrated it can achieve through the COVID pandemic. However, to do this consistently and sustainably, in the long term, and across a wide range of public services we are determined to work differently within government, across organisations and services, and in partnership with children and families. As a mark of working differently, we have supported the set-up of The Promise Scotland; committed to the continuation of

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the £4 million Promise Partnership Fund up to financial year 2024/25; provided service design expertise to The Promise Scotland's Design Programme, committed to continue this and to extend it to include improvement. The latter points are vital in delivering services designed around people.

The vision laid out in 'The Promise' for families and children that will come into Scotland's care, as well as those it cared for is a direct reflection of our ambition for public services. Indeed, we have made a commitment to working with The Promise Scotland to explore all options around redesigning the Children's Hearing System to ensure the principles of Kilbrandon and the Care Review are fully realised.

In order to #KeepThePromise, we know it will take more than a series of individual deliverable actions. It requires collective leadership at every level, sustained commitment, and a strategic shift that centres everything we do on what matters most to children, young people, and their families.

The Promise Scotland's first Plan 21-24 and Change Programme

The Scottish Government agrees that The Promise Scotland's Plan 21-24 is the first step towards full implementation and welcomes the approach outlined within the Change Programme. Regular review of the Change Programme, based on evidence and intelligence from all parts of the system including those with care experience, will ensure we keep a focus on what really matters.

We recognise that to fully play our part in meeting the critical priorities set out within Plan 21-24 we must acknowledge that much work is still to be done. To help drive this forward we are committed to work collaboratively with The Promise Scotland and key stakeholders to lead the way for this transformational change to take place.

The Scottish Government's role

It is clear that the Scottish Government has a significant set of responsibilities. Activity to #KeepThePromise touches on almost every Ministerial portfolio in government, and this is why cross-government delivery of 'The Promise' sits within my responsibilities as Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery.

In order to play our part to establish the right leadership, commitment and focus on children, young people and families, we undertake to:

- provide strong leadership in taking the bold steps needed to keep the Promise, both recognising and modelling the changes needed in how we are held to account and in working together across parliament, government and public services;
- shift the culture around leadership and power, with proactive participation of children, young people and families built into the fabric of how we do things,

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and doing so on their terms not ours, underpinned by the implementation of the UNCRC;

- facilitate the alignment of resources that focus on improving the experience of those in care and preventing children and young people being taken into care in the first place
- review, adapt and evolve how and what we measure to understand better whether what we are doing is making a difference to the wellbeing of children and families, and to clearly articulate progress and areas for improvement;
- continue to engage with and listen to organisations, services and families as the change programme progresses to ensure we adjust what we do and how we do it, as part of the wider system.

Details on specific steps by the Scottish Government to fulfil responsibilities in The Plan 21-24 will be further developed and brought forward, including in our next Programme for Government. We have already identified 46 policy and legislative strands of work as part of our contribution to the Change Programme and commit to working with all partners to both draw the strategic coherence across this work and in closing the delivery gaps identified in your review.

'What we can change now we must change now' – change is happening, we've heard the voices, the narrative is changing and there is a commitment across Scotland for change. Ultimately, we must all remain accountable to those with lived experience of care. I look forward to continuing to work with The Promise Scotland to ensure our ambition of Scotland being the best place to grow and that every child grows up loved, safe and respected being able to reach their full potential.

JOHN SWINNEY



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