

PE1836/D

The Promise submission of 15 January 2021

In response to the Committee's invitation, The Promise can offer the following:

The Promise was established in July 2020 to take forward the final [conclusions](#) of the Independent Care Review (the Care Review). With three years of careful listening as its foundation, the conclusions of the Care Review - published on 5th February 2020 - set the steps Scotland must take to embed transformational change in the 'care system'.

The Care Review heard the [stories](#) of more than 5,500 people with experience of Scotland's 'care system'. The [methodology](#) used ensured the Care Review focused on the human experience of moving through the 'care system' and took a wide angled approach to consider the impacts of the system on care experienced infants, children, young people, adults and their families. Many of these stories and experiences were about when things went wrong. The picture of the 'care system' uncovered by the Care Review was complex, fragmented and system rather than person focused at every level.

At times, these stories told of experiences of services, interactions with those who were employed to provide support and protection, and the impact of the behaviours and actions of the workforce. Where the issue of complaints arose, the overall message was one of frustration as it was felt that complaints were not handled in a serious manner and procedures were not correctly followed.

Some people expressed anger towards professionals that had made mistakes or done something wrong which had negatively impacted their lives. They spoke of the need for the 'system' to acknowledge the suffering that had been caused by any mistakes or wrongdoing that occurred whilst being cared for by the state. Specifically, some spoke passionately about the importance of making sure the same mistakes were not made again and that nobody else had to go through what they experienced.

The Care Review recognised that many services operate in a risk averse environment with an overt focus on risk assessment, management and the reduction of risk which maximises the sense of safety but does not always support families in the way they need. Nor do these risk frameworks support the development and nurturing of safe, kind and loving relationships between the workforce and children and young people. Too often, the workforce is placed in positions where they must focus on protecting themselves and their colleagues above the children and young people in their care.

The evidence gathered by the Care Review identifies 'risk aversion' as one of the professional barriers prohibiting the positive health and well-being for children and young people in care. This is not about tolerating more risk or having a culture that does not consider risk, it is about ensuring that the workforce and Scotland's services broaden their understanding of risk to include a more holistic approach that recognises the risk of not having safe, kind relationships with the workforce.

Moreover, there must be active encouragement of a supportive and collaborative culture when making decisions about children and their families. Transforming the 'care system' will fundamentally change the way services are designed, delivered and scrutinised.

A key part of the transformational, whole system change is a fundamental alteration of the way Scotland inspects services for children and the way it regulates and supports its workforce. Accountability and what is measured has a profound impact on the way professionals behave and services are run.

If Scotland is to shift its practice to support, prioritise and nurture relationships, then Scotland must shift its accountability structures. However, making only this change and adding it onto the existing ineffective system is insufficient.

As acknowledged by the committee members, a multiagency approach is needed. The Promise outlines a shift that involves all those who have a role in inspection and regulation, including the Care Inspectorate, the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), working together to drive changes in the 'care system' shaped around a new framework that values what children and families value. This work needs to significantly declutter and streamline professional codes, procedures, and processes with a clear focus on enabling relationships – above anything else.

An effective framework is one totally focused on children's experiences. This would include:

- Prioritising the quality of relationships experienced by children, with the rights and voices of children at the heart;
- Consistency across all inspectors and regulators to align and avoid duplication;
- High quality inspectors who value and understand relationship-based practice. Support and training should be provided for less experienced inspectors.

To conclude, the premise of The Promise is that the entire system needs to be re-designed to be fit for purpose. As the 'care system' operates within a series of complex interdependencies, beyond granting additional powers and small amendments, changes must be considered in the wider context of change that is required throughout the 'care system' to maximise efficacy and impact.