Midlothian Council
Tuesday 24 June 2025
Item No 8.9

Update report: Keeping the Promise in Midlothian

Report by Rebecca Hooton,
Chief Officer Children's Services, Partnerships and Communities
Deputy Chief Social Work Officer

Report for Information

1 Recommendations

Council is asked to note the progress made to keep the Promise and the ongoing challenge this poses specifically in respect to resources and the workforce.

2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary

"The Promise" is a comprehensive, ongoing commitment to ensure care-experienced children and young people in Scotland grow up loved, safe, and respected, and can realise their full potential. This initiative, driven by the Independent Care Review, aims to transform how care and support is provided, moving towards a more child-centred and collaborative approach. The Promise asks services to direct support to early intervention and prevention and ensure that children and families are involved in decision making at all levels. Where children cannot stay safely at home, The Promise asks that we ensure all children and young people are cared for with love, stability and are supported to maintain safe, loving relationships. 2025 marks the halfway point to the Scottish government's committed to keeping the promise by 2030.

This report provides an update of Midlothian's efforts to keep the Promise. The report focuses on the actions taken by the local authority and in collaboration with partners. The report does not summarise the national actions or those lead by other statutory organisations.

Further detail of the national progress and the plans from NHS and Police Scotland are included in Appendix B.

Date 30 May 2025

Report Contact:
Rebecca Hooton
Chief Officer Children's Services, Partnerships and Communities
Deputy Chief Social Work Officer

rebecca.hooton@midlothian.gov.uk

3 Background/Main Body of Report

3.1 Background

In October 2016, the First Minister made a commitment to figure out how Scotland could love its most vulnerable children and give them the childhood they deserve. She commissioned the Independent Care Review. For over three years the Care Review listened to those with experience of living and working in and around the 'care system' to properly understand what needed to change.

As well as listening carefully to what matters to children, the Care Review considered the research on the 'care system'. The work of the whole Care Review culminated in the publication of 7 outputs, the main volume of which was The Promise. The First Minister and all of Scotland's political parties pledged to #keepthepromise to Scotland's children.

The Promise is centred around five foundations: Voice, Family, Care, People and Scaffolding.

Voice - Children must be listened to. That means they should be meaningfully and appropriately involved when decisions are made about their care. Scotland's culture of decision-making must be compassionate and caring. It must be focused on children, and those they trust.

Family - Where children are safe in their families and feel loved, they must stay. Families must get support together to nurture that love, and to overcome the difficulties which get in its way.

Care - Sometimes, it's not possible for children to live with their family. But they must still be able to live with their brothers and sisters, as long as it's safe. And they must belong to a loving home, staying there for as long as they need to.

People - The children Scotland cares for must be supported to develop relationships: with people in the workforce, and those in the wider community. And these people must also be supported: to listen, and to be compassionate in their care and decision-making.

Scaffolding - 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.

Keeping the Promise is a national commitment, but local authorities and Children's Services are central to this. To lead this transformation, we need to

1. **Prioritise Early Intervention and Prevention** – supporting families before they hit crisis, strengthening community and family support with a view to reducing the need for formal care.
2. **Keep Children in Safe and Loving Families** – by keeping children at home or in the wider family where it is possible and reduce the need for residential care.
3. **Deliver relationship based, trauma informed practice** – where possible prioritising stable relationships for children and young people in care and on the edge and in care, to ensure access to care and support is built on empathy, trust, and an understanding of trauma.

4. **Empower Children and Families** – ensuring they are listened to and actively involved in decision about their lives and how we share services that impact on their lives.
5. **Work in partnership** – across the local authority: children's services, education, health, housing and third sector to provide holistic support tailored to individual's needs.

3.2 Key National Actions

3.21 Legislative Reforms

- Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024: This legislation prohibits the imprisonment of children, aligning with the commitment to treat young individuals within the care system with dignity and respect.
- The Promise Bill is currently in draft phase with a plan to be introduced to Parliament in the 2025/2026 session.

3.22 Systemic Changes and Workforce Development

- National Values Framework: A framework has been introduced to ensure that all professionals working with children share common values centered on nurturing, kindness, and respect.

3.23 Support for Families and Carers

- Scottish Recommended Allowance: A national minimum allowance has been introduced for foster and kinship carers, benefiting over 9,000 families across Scotland.
- Care Leaver Payment: A £2,000 payment is being provided to care leavers to support their transition to independent living.

3.24 Redesigning the Children's Hearings System

- Hearings for Children Redesign Report (2023): outlines 97 recommendations to transform the Children's Hearings System. The Scottish Government has accepted most of these recommendations and is working on their implementation.

3.25 Monitoring and Accountability

- Oversight by The Promise Scotland: An independent body, The Promise Scotland, has been established to monitor progress and ensure that the commitments are being met.
- Public Reporting: Regular updates are provided to the public, detailing progress and areas needing improvement.

3.3 Key Successes and achievements in Midlothian:

3.31 Strategic Planning

- Midlothian have committed to The Promise and children's rights being embedded in the Community Planning Partnership. The GIRFEC Board has a subgroup focused on how we are implementing UNCRC and Keeping the Promise across the partnership. This group has broad representation across the council and our partners, this group currently has representation 28 services and organisations.

  Key successes of this group include ongoing partnership wider self evaluation of how we are embedding UNCRC, Corporate Parenting and The Promise, mapping advocacy and developing plans to increase advocacy for children and young people in Midlothian and working to develop a refreshed Midlothian Play strategy.

- This strategic focus is supported by our Promise and Corporate Parenting lead, and the Education Support Officer - Equity (Care Experienced Young People). Our Promise lead is engaged in local and national networks to support transformation and share good practice.
  The ESO has successfully delivered the Promise Award to 60 staff across Children's Services and Education.

  Staff reflected that the Promise award gave them '*Greater empathy and understanding towards care experienced learners'* and a real 'u*nderstanding of the impact that giving a young person a voice can have'*.

- In addition, Education Support Officers are working with schools to embed Rights Respecting schools. Rights Respecting School Awards include evidencing that:
    - Children and young people value education and are involved in making decisions about their learning
    - Children and young people know that their views are taken seriously

As a result, we know that schools involved are actively developing systems to support children to share their views, and empower children and young people in their settings to be involved in, and influence, decisions which affect them. Midlothian currently has 6 schools who have earned gold awards, 9 schools with silver; and a further 15 schools who have achieve bronze awards.

To build on this work, colleagues are currently developing a formalised structure, due to launch in August 2025, to ensure children across all of our school settings are empowered to share their thoughts, opinions and ideas regarding decisions which affect them, with senior local authority officers and elected members.

- Embedding Trauma Informed Practice – the Trauma lead has worked hard across the council to offer Trauma Informed Practice in **2024/2025**

283 council staff were trained in level 1 or 2. This includes training staff across all departments, elected members and foster carers.

3.32 Children's Services Structure and Service delivery

To Keep the Promise and better support children, young people and their families Children's Services have engaged in tests of change, redesigned service delivery and realigned budgets to adapt how we deliver our statutory and voluntary services. Central to these changes is the increase of early intervention supports, holistic family support, supports that address the cost-of-living crisis and those living in poverty and strengthening the way children, young people and their families' voices are included in decision making. This is a process of continual improvement and we are committed to listening to how this feels and impacts the families we work with.

It is important to note that many of these changes are based in strong partnership relationships across the council, heath and third sector and evidence the wider commitment to Keep the Promise.

Key changes in service delivery include:

- Hawthorn Family Learning Centre is the only service of its kind in Midlothian, providing support to children, parents and carers in via Early Years placements, groups, outreach, and other supports. The centre works closely with both Children's Services and Education to provide high quality environments, interactions, experiences, and support to families.

Historically Hawthorn had a reputation of being a service only accessed by children engaged with social work and was fraught with stigma. Over the past 6 years we have worked hard to reduce the stigma and build engagement with the community. The shift in perception and reach into the community was celebrated in 2019 with the service being shortlisted as finalist in the MJ Awards.

Hawthorn is now a highly sought after service with request for support outweighing the service's capacity. Each week over **65 children are supported in placements** and additional families supported via outreach and groups. Between April and December 2024 Hawthorn **delivered 119 groups supporting 318 individuals**. One of the successful groups is an open One stop shop which offers a community closet, food, financial advice and an introduction to the wider service. In **Challenge Poverty week 2024** an additional **133 families and 509 Families** were supported with food hampers and activities.

In late 2024 Hawthorn secured UK Shared Prosperity funding to introduce a monthly supper club. The supper club is open to anyone in the community and is intended to introduce families to support on offer. The Supper club was started in January 2025 and each month on **average 40 families share**

dinner and engage in a family learning activity. In addition the funding has been used to develop a new outdoor learning space open to families to engage together in play and learning.

More information is included in the HFLC annual report in Appendix B.

- The Family Wellbeing Service (FWS) was established in 2023 and is funded by a blend of Whole Family Wellbeing Fund and Strategic Equity Funding. The FWS works with families, schools, health and third sector partners to support children and their families to improve low school attendance, and other wellbeing concerns. The team provide holistic support with the aim of supporting families earlier and in partnership to reduce the number of children and young people coming into statutory children's services.

  Access to the FWS is via Team around the Child meetings where partners consider who is best to support children and families who are in need of additional support. This network of partners is firmly embedded in the wider commitment to GIRFEC and The Promise. Additional third sector resources, funded by the Whole Family Wellbeing fund are available via this forum and ensure that families get connected with the most suitable support.

  Since 2023 the FWS have had 468 referrals and supported 568 children. At any one time the team are working with approximately 130 children. In 2024, the number of children and young people referred to the Family Wellbeing Service increased by 56% from referral numbers in 2023.

  The team regularly work with families where it is recognised that without the scaffolding of support provided by FWS, these families would require statutory social work intervention. Additional capacity for social work level assessment and planning has been created in the team with the recruitment of a second senior practitioner to supports efforts to keep families together and out of statutory services in line with the practice aspirations of The Promise.

  The FWS use Outcome Star tools to support and measure positive change with individual families. The data evidences positive impact of FWS intervention on family wellbeing across the following outcome areas: physical health, wellbeing, meeting emotional needs, keeping your children safe, social networks, education and learning, boundaries and behaviour, family routine, home and money, and progress to work. Across 24/25 most families working with FWS initially identified themselves as feeling stuck or at the initial stages of accepting help and with support have been able to progress positively to finding what works and effective parenting.

  Positive outcomes from FWS support:

  • A 13 year old was supported by the FWS and a multi-agency plan to rebuild relationships with school and move from online learning to being back in school for the first time in over a year.

  • A mother of 2 children was experiencing low mood and struggling to manage the competing needs of her children. The parent was able to engage in weekly support sessions with FWS where she built up

confidence and addressed health needs, routines and poor sleep patterns in the home. At the FWS review point the parent and professionals involved could see a significant improvement in how she was feeling and coping which has had a positive impact on the children's school attendance, the conditions of the home environment and the parent's engagement with health services.

• A 15-year-old with anxiety who had 0% attendance when allocated to the FWS in early 2024 increased to 41% attendance following multi-agency support planning and rebuilding of relationships with school. The young person is now physically attending school and building up their time in school gradually.

More information is included in the FWS annual report in Appendix B.

- Income maximisation – As part of our effort to reduce child poverty, children's services work with Citizens Advice Bureau to fund three income maximisation projects. This work has been prioritised based on evidence that child protection concerns and care experience is more prevalent in areas of deprivation and for those living in poverty.
  The first project started in 2021 with additional capacity added in October 2023 and again in May 2024. The provision now enables any family who has contact with Children's Services to access income maximisation, this includes those referred to Team Around the Child or dropping in at Hawthorn, families do not need to be allocated to our service.
  The project workers work directly with families to increase household income and reduce debt. **Since 2021 the income maximisation projects in Children's Services have collectively generated over £1,213,000 for 365 individual families**.

- Family Group Decision-Making (FGDM) is an approach that supports a shift in culture towards children and families having a greater say in decisions that affect their lives. It is a rights based practice that helps prevents children entering the care system or supports them to return to family quicker. The FGDM team was created in late 2019 and over the past 6 years has grown and adapted. There are now 4 meeting coordinators that work to provide the support across Children's Services. Since the team was created, they have had **over 420 referrals and supported 243 families** to create meaningful family-based plans.

  Families have shared *'It felt good to know that my family are there for me and are an additional support. It helped me realise that they are not judging me like I thought as I held a lot of shame about my past.'*

  Social workers shared *'I was surprised with how well this time was spent by the family and their ability to put differences aside and focus on constructing a plan for the young person. There was clear input from all family members and how they could contribute to supporting the young person.'*

  More information is included in the FGDM annual report in Appendix B.

- Lifelong Links supports young people to explore their heritage and identity and to reconnect with those who are important to them. **Since 2022 16 young people have been supported to understand their family history, reconnect with significant people** or 'never known' family including birth fathers, siblings, previous foster carers, social workers and other professionals who have been important to them. This helps young people to reconnect with a supportive network as they move out of care and into adult life.

  One young person celebrated ''*The best bit has been finding out a bit about my sisters that I didn't know anything about'.*

- Systemic Family Practice (SFP) focuses on improving communication, reducing conflict and improving relationships in families. In 2021 we committed to 2 workers having a dedicated role to support systemic family practice. **Since 2021 the team have had over 191 referrals and supported 88 families**. Families who engage are offered support over 6-12 months.

  Families reflect *'these sessions are a set time the family is together and can talk about the difficult stuff'*

  Evaluation following a period of Systemic intervention demonstrated improved communication, family cohesion, improved relationships and family resilience and a reduction in family conflict. Families have also reported that the intervention supported them to remain together as a family.

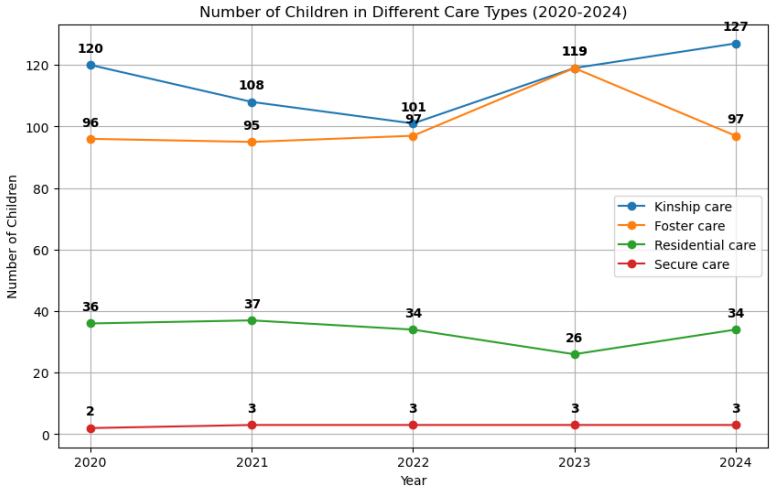
  Both of our systemic workers are now trained in non-violent resistance (NVR) a systemic family intervention approach that focuses on changing how parents address challenging behaviours rather than focus on changing the child's behaviour. NVR aims to help raise the presence of adults in a young person's life to support and strengthen positive relationships. Since completing the training **in 2024, the workers have supported 8 families using a NVR** approach.

  Parents feedback was overwhelming positive one parenting sharing '*it made me think carefully about what I need to work on and which behaviour I was most worried about. Thinking about what to focus on gave me some space to think, like permission to let some things go.*

  To further support delivery of the model, we have begun delivering a cross-service parenting programme called 'Calm and Connected' which will be delivered twice per year.

  More information is included in the SFP annual report in Appendix B.

- Kinship care is central to the Promise and keeping children in their families and communities. The graph below evidences the shift over time to move to more children staying in Kinship care.



Midlothian currently has **approximately 160 paid kinship carers**. Between August 2023 and December 2024 Children's Services received 78 kinship assessment referrals. In response to this growing trend, we have permanently recruited one kinship worker and ringfenced time within our Family centred Care Team to create additional capacity. We recognise that to prevent placement breakdown it is key that family and professional support networks are in place to provide regular practical and emotional support. We are working collaboratively with Children 1st to strengthen kinship support via the provision of therapeutic support, regular drop-in sessions, development sessions for kinship carers and planned family activities.

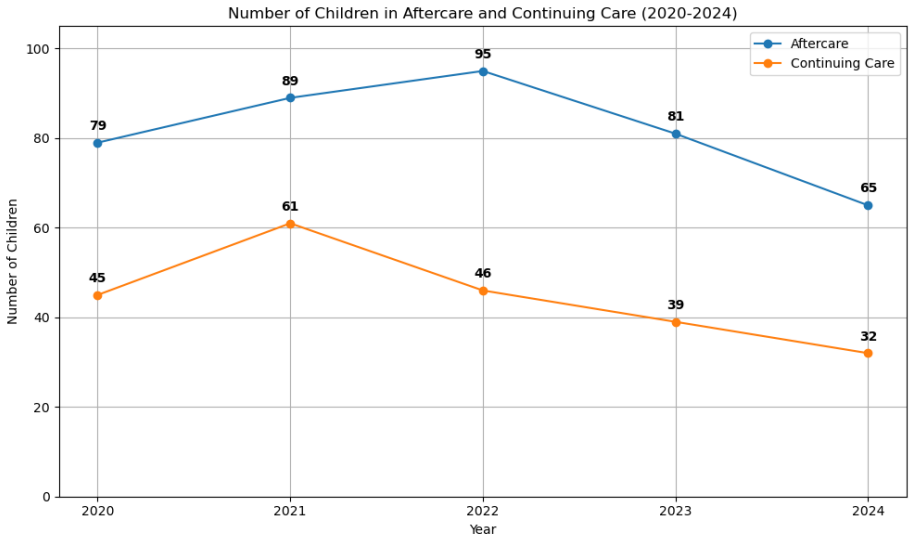
- The Practice Team provide the core support for children, young people and families who come into contact with statutory children's Services. We have redesigned the way in which support is delivered within the Practice Team. Previously the team was split into the provision of support to children aged 0-12 and those aged 12 plus. The one team now covers all children, potentially from pre-birth to their twenty sixth birthday if in receipt of aftercare. This allows for greater opportunities for developing meaningful and sustained relationships and supports a consistency of approach, whatever circumstances have led to a child or young person coming to the attention of Children's Services.

  Across the team there is a strong focus upon identifying creative solutions to provide scaffolding which can enable children and young people to remain with their families, for example the provision of extensive and sustained support packages at time of need, such as around evening routines. When it is not possible for children to remain within their birth family every effort is made to support and sustain family relationships with parents, siblings and other significant people. these approaches are supported by the wider teams including family groups decision making and systemic family support.

- Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) form part of our care experienced population. **Since October 2019 Midlothian has supported 31 UASC, including 10 spontaneous arrivals.** We are clear that our unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people are Midlothian's children and should be afforded the same local support. We have worked hard to train and recruit local carers who will provide specialist care and support. This is done alongside our dedicated practitioners and practice team social workers to provide individual support and identify creative solutions to identified need. We are currently recruiting a further practitioner to enable us to expand the support on offer.

  We have been well supported by housing colleagues to provide timely support to house our older young people and been able to support them to integrate into the local community. This is enhanced by joint work with CLLE colleagues to develop bespoke education packages for young people aged sixteen and seventeen, for whom the school setting may not best meet their needs.

- Continuing Care and Aftercare is a key part of ensuring care experienced young people are supported into adulthood and as they leave care. Young people are expected to remain looked after and accommodated until their eighteenth birthday, unless they do not wish this. And can remain with foster carers and/or Kinship carers in continuing care beyond 18. Whist young people remaining in their care placements longer poses a resource challenge for us, we welcome the parity this offers care experienced young people with their peers without care experience and will continue to promote and support this choice. Aftercare is offered to eligible young people until they are 26 and support will continue to be offered even if they have stepped away from support for a period of time.



- Midlothian House Project is an additional support for care experienced young people as they move into adulthood. The Project supports young people move from care towards independent living arrangements. The approach promotes quality relationships which are trusting, secure, and consistent. Core to the project is long term support and learning that

supports young people into adulthood. This is especially significant for our care experiences young people who generally have less informal or family supports to help navigate this process.

The Midlothian Project was created in 2020 as part of a successful funding application to Life Changes Trust and became core funded by Children's Services in 2023. To date we are **supporting 47 young people split over 5 cohorts. 31 young people have successfully moved into their properties** with no tenancy breakdowns.

Most young people are in employment and have made significant academic progress. Most notably one young person is completing an HND at a local college and has been offered places at 2 universities to further her studies. In addition, another young person has successfully completed her training with Police Scotland and is soon to graduate as a serving police officer.

Young people have said: *"honestly, such a great feeling waking up in my own place and having responsibilities"*
"*it's great, I love living by myself. Feels so much happier in ways I can't explain*."
"I can't believe this (property) is mine"

At the 2024 Who Cares? Scotland, Corporate Parenting Award ceremony, **Midlothian House Project won both the Outstanding Corporate Parent and Stable Foundations awards**.

- Children and young people in conflict with the law require a whole system approach to assess risk and ensure suitable support for individual young people and action to address emerging trends.
  The partnership approach to the management of children and young people who come into conflict with the law in Midlothian is very strong. A task action coordination group meet once a fortnight, this group is made up of a multi-agency of local partners including Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and rescue, Community lifelong learning and employability and 3rd sector partners.
  Scottish Government 'cashback funding' is utilised by some of these partners in an effort to support young people in our local communities to become involved in activities which offer them an alternative focus and deter them from becoming involved in anti-social behaviour. The outcomes of these interventions are positive and are reflected in the **low number of young people being referred to The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration on offence grounds**, reducing the number of children engaged in statutory services and becoming care experienced.

- Self-Directed Support (SDS) continues to shape and develop how we support the growing number of children and young people with additional support needs in Midlothian. The statutory principles of participation and dignity, involvement, informed choice and collaboration all echo the foundations and values of the Promise. With a **current 216 packages of**

care open to Children's Services, these principles are seen and felt by the families we work with.

3.4 Participation and Voice

Key to the Promise is that children, young people and their families' voices are included in decision making. Detailed below are some of the initiatives we have in place to support children and young **people's voices being heard.**

- Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) is core to families' voices being part of statutory decision making. As noted above this is now embedded in our service but families engaged in child protection processes or at risk being accommodated are prioritised for this service to ensure family are considered first and core to care plans.

- Reviewing Officers chair statutory planning meetings in Children's Services. In 2024 we have permanently increased the capacity of this team to allow reviewing officers time to have contact with children and young people, parents and carers prior to meetings to ensure they understand the process they are engaged in and their views are articulated in the meeting. Reviewing officers are working with practice team social workers to enhance the creative means to present children and young people's views including the use of videos and voice notes.

- Who Cares? Scotland are contracted to provide **advocacy** for our care experienced young people. In addition, they will help our care experienced children and young people throughout Midlothian to create a new **participation strategy**, with a focus on UNCRC with a re-launch/re brand of the existing **Champions' board**.

  Additional advocacy is also provided for children and young people engaged in the hearing system.

- We are in the process of developing an accessible feedback route (using digital tools such as QR codes and links) for families to use to share feedback about our buildings, our staff and the ways we engage with them.

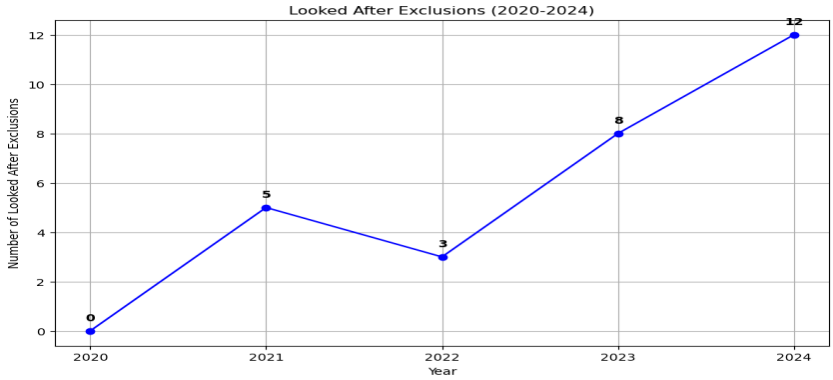
- In 2023/2024 we worked in partnership with Cyrenians who received funding to deliver an innovative 18-month Youth Justice and Rights project. This pilot hopes to develop a more progressive, rights-based approach to youth justice by listening to everyone involved in the process and making recommendations which have better outcomes for children, young people and their families. A transformation report will be prepared at the end of the work to share feedback with the Scottish Government.

3.5 Work in progress

Nationally and locally, we are clear that there is a lot more work to be done to Keep the Promise by 2030. Below are details of partnership projects in progress to further embed the foundations of the Promise.

- Refreshing Partnership approaches to GIRFEC and The Promise. Core to The Promise being felt in Midlothian is a partnership that understands the foundations of the Promise and how everyone plays a role in delivering this commitment. In 2025 we are refreshing our Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) training to ensure that our staff and partners understand why we want to support children and young people differently. Our hope is that this training will support better planning for individuals but also across wider service delivery in schools and other services. The second phase of this work is trying to establish a single planning format for children and young people across education, children's services, health and third sector services. The hope is this will ensure plans are collaborative and understandable to children, young people and their families.

- Reducing exclusions of care experienced young people. In early 2025 we have agreed to pilot a test of change for care experienced young people who are at risk of exclusion. We are engaging independent support for the team around the child to reflect on the child's experiences and how this is impacting on their behaviour and consider creative alternatives to support them to remain in mainstream education. The desire is that the supportive and reflective approach allows the workforce greater support and understanding to nurture and include some of our most traumatised young people.



- Edge of care service. Our resource data evidences a growing need to ensure intensive support is in place to prevent children and young people being accommodated out with parental care and their local communities or to prevent the breakdown of foster, adoption or kinship arrangements. Children's Services have redirected funding to employ four children and families' practitioners to develop an Edge of Care service, and we are hopeful that this service will support children and young people to remain at home or in their care placements, and if this is not possible allow time to support them whilst we can find the best placement and plan this move.

A multi-agency working group is in place to support this planning, job descriptions are now in place and recruitment can begin with a view to the service being offered from the autumn.

3.6 Workforce

Central to keeping the Promise is a skilful and well supported workforce. Nationally there is a shortage of experienced social workers. In Midlothian we have taken a range of initiatives to try and retain and recruit skilled workers but we remain, like most local authorities, with a high percentage of our workforce with being newly qualified. This poses additional challenges as the SSSC have recently introduced new expectations for the first year a social worker is qualified. To address the challenge we have taken steps to increase team leader capacity and ensure workers are supported though induction and the qualifying year.

Beyond the qualifying year with support of colleagues in learning and development we offer our staff a wide range of post qualifying courses that are focused on building knowledge, skills and retaining staff though development.

In addition, we have invested in a range of means to support the wider workforce. In later 2024 we completed a staff survey to hear what they felt would be most supportive to them. In response we have reintroduced service wide development days, created protected time for team support and development, changed the monthly briefing forum to be more interactive and enable staff to have regular opportunities to share with the senior leadership team and shape the service delivery.

Staff have access to the council wide supports including EAP and we have also introduced independent reflective sessions supported by psychologists to allow staff increased opportunities for reflection and support based on the challenging work they do.

In collaboration with other chief officers there is work ongoing to review the support in place for staff following critical incidents which will further enhance staff support.

3.7 Challenges

The national picture is a concern that Scotland as a collective will not keep the Promise by 2030. There are a range of challenges that need to be considered:

- A changing context Our communities are changing, people are still recovering from COVID, the cost of living crisis is broad reaching, there are greater prevalence of mental health concerns, trauma and neurodiversity. In Midlothian this is further enhanced by our growing population. These changes are resulting increased demand for support and increased complexity in meeting the needs of our communities. Schools are seeing higher levels of distressed and violent behaviour and our workforce is tired

and, in many cases, leaving the profession. This changing context means the ask of the Promise to provide early intervention and longer-term support is more demanding than before.

- Workforce Pressures. The Promise requires us to provide early support to the communities and families to ensure they are well supported, avoid crisis and ultimately keep children out of the care system. And for those who are part of our system to support them as long as they need. As noted above the level of and complexity of need is changing. This requires a stable and skilful workforce who have capacity to engage and care for children and young people. This inevitably means we need financial and human resources to meet this demand. We need adequate staff, who are well trained and supported to provide this support.

  In addition it is essential to understand that to keep children at home, with families and in their communities', we are often accepting and supporting families to manage high levels of risk, this can be uncomfortable for extended family, professionals and those in leadership. To safely hold this risk our staff need to have time to invest in families, to know and support them and to have time to reflect and ensure that the risks are manageable.

- Resource Pressures. It is significant to note that the many of services and teams in Children's Services that are core to our progress in keeping the promise are non-statutory, and some are maintained by short term funding. This is a particular concern in the context of ongoing financial pressures and the likelihood of further efficiencies being required in the coming years.

- Cultural and systemic change. Changing systems takes time and requires resource and commitment. Despite the commitment to keep the Promise much of the legislation that shapes the care system is unchanged and this can create barriers to systemic change. In addition there is a real risk that changes in government and leadership will impact on the political priorities and investment that support the promise.

  To deliver the promise it will take change and investment from *all* Corporate Parents and partners. Although we are making headway in Midlothian much of this change is led by Children's Services, education and services who focus on delivering support to children and young people. We can evidence significant impact of the initiatives we have introduced but real and sustainable system change with requires wider, long-term investment.

3.8 The Commitment

Finally, I want to thank all our staff and partners who are committed to Keeping the Promise and on a daily basis are doing the best they can to achieve positive outcomes for children, young people and families in Midlothian.

4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)

4.1 Resource

As detailed in the body of the report Keeping the Promise has significant implications for the partnership and Children's Services in particular. The Promise asks us to provide early support as long as families need it and to maintain stable support for our care experienced children as they move into adulthood. Systems and financial resources are historically not structured or prioritised this way and despite the local initiatives in place the pressure on finances, practical and human resources make creating and sustaining this support a significant challenge.
If short term funding including Whole Family Wellbeing Fund is not sustained and further efficiencies are required in children's services, these changes in the system of support will not be sustainable. Ongoing investment is required to make further sustainable change and enable children, young people families to be supported how they need and as long as they need it.

4.2 Digital

Advancement in the digital world brings possibility and challenges to us Keeping the Promise. There are possibilities in how we can use technology to support our engagement with children, young people and families and how services could use technology to be more efficient and transfer time and financial resources into other relationship-based work.
However, there is risk that technology impacts on the strength and priority to be relationship based. In addition, technology exposes our children and young people to new risks.

4.3 Risk

As noted above there are two key risks related to Keeping the Promise. The first is resources and funding being adequate and sustainable to enable us to support families at the right time and as long as they require it.
Second is the acceptance that keeping children at home and in their families is likely to increase the risk in the community and the risk that families and professionals have to manage. This can be uncomfortable but does not mean it is wrong. But for this to be safe and manageable we need an adequate, stable and well supported workforce. In addition, we need this commitment to keep the Promise to be a shared responsibility across the Council and wider partnership.

4.4 Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)

The Promise is based on a rights based approach.

4.4 Additional Report Implications (See Appendix A)

See Appendix A

Appendices

Appendix A – Additional Report Implications
Appendix B – Background information/Links

APPENDIX A – Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

No child or household lives in Poverty

A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

x Holistic Working
☐ Hub and Spoke
☐ Modern
☐ Sustainable
x Transformational
x Preventative
☐ Asset-based
x Continuous Improvement
☐ One size fits one
☐ None of the above

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

☐ One Council Working with you, for you
x Preventative and Sustainable
☐ Efficient and Modern
x Innovative and Ambitious
☐ None of the above

A.4 Delivering Best Value

By providing early support we aim to avoid statutory intervention and the need to accommodate children and young people. This keeps the promise but also supports better outcomes for children and young people.

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

The Promise is based in giving families a voice and participation is core.

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

As noted above keeping children in their families and communities supports better long-term outcomes. This can increase the risk in our community and requires robust assessment and support.

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The Promise promotes early support.

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

Sustainable funding is required to ensure the current initiative and transformation is sustained.

APPENDIX B

Background Papers/Resource Links (insert applicable papers/links)

The promise Scotland Oversight report

Oversight Board Report THREE: Scotland behind schedule— but still able to keep promise by 2030

NHS
Corporate Parenting – Equality and Human Rights

Police Scotland

Corporate Parenting Plan 2024-27: Stakeholder Engagement Survey - Police Scotland - Citizen Space

Midlothian Council

Our progress | The Promise | Midlothian Council

Children's Services Annual Reports

- **Systemic Practice Annual Update 24**
- **FGDM in 2024**
- **Hawthorn Family Learning Centre Annual Report**
- **FWS Annual Report 2024**