

Appendix: Realising potential – our plan for putting care experienced children, young people and adults at the heart of what we do 2020-2023

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Foreword from the Chief Executive

This plan sets out our approach to putting Scotland's care experienced children, young people and adults at the heart of everything we do. The reports by the Care Review sets out the compelling and profound need to transform the care system for children and young people in Scotland. The review highlights our collective role in a vision where we grow up 'loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential'. The focus now is on keeping the promise that has been made to Scotland's care experienced young people.

We contribute to the Promise by making sure that Scotland can count on the services that are provided by a trusted, skilled and confident workforce. Every day, people working in social services across Scotland support millions of people of all ages to improve their life chances and to access the care and support they need.

The Care Review notes that the purpose of the workforce must be to put caring above anything else. We are identifying implications across the full range of our work including the Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers, Fitness to Practise and the qualifications required to work in this sector.

There are several corporate parents with responsibilities around supporting care experienced children and young people. We are proud to be one of them. This plan also sets out some of our progress and identifies the next steps for this journey.

We cannot achieve the grand ambitions in the Promise on our own. We work closely with key partners including regulators and the sector who deliver these critical services. We support formal and informal partnerships between services which work together to meet the needs of care experienced children and young people. We also do what we can to make sure our workforce recognises the challenges for care experienced children and young people and our contribution to improving outcomes.

We would welcome your feedback on this approach and how we can improve the way we care for and support Scotland's care experienced children and young people.

Language

Various terms are used to describe someone who has experience of care, including care experienced, looked after and care leavers. The Care Review reinforces the point that the language of care is stigmatising for children.

We recognise that the language is complex. We've typically used 'care experienced young people' or 'care experienced children and young adults' in this plan, although we're aware that care means different things to different people. Our definition of children includes younger children. Similarly, we know that people do not stop being care experienced because they have left care or are over 26 years of age. We're also aware that some people may not realise that they are care experienced until they are adults.

The Independent Care Review noted that the term corporate parenting, the term used to describe our current statutory duty, 'feels demeaning and is an example of cold process driven relationships'. The Care Review highlights the need to move towards the language of good parenting. We've referenced our corporate parenting duties in this plan, and we will continue to reflect on the right terminology.

An evolving plan

This plan sets out the steps we have or will take to contribute to the ambitions in the landmark independent care review. These actions are about helping to love our most vulnerable children and to give them the childhood they deserve. They are also about ensuring that young people grow up loved, safe and respected so that they realise their full potential.

The actions in this plan are a fresh starting point for us. They include the actions we've identified to date from our involvement in the Care Review and the findings in the reports. They also include the next steps on our corporate parenting journey.

The Scottish Government is setting out plans to deliver on the promises made to care experienced young people. Our plan will evolve as the Promise is implemented. We may also revise the plan to reflect key challenges such as the ongoing pandemic. There are likely to be positive and negative consequences arising from COVID-19. The challenges faced by many care experienced children and young people are likely to have been compounded during these challenging times. However, there may also be new opportunities such as innovative approaches to communication or service delivery.

The policy landscape may impact on our plan. Key changes could include:

- the incorporation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scots law
- the proposals to raise the age that a young person can be referred to a children's hearing
- proposals to make greater use of technology in social care.

Developing this plan

Our plan was developed following feedback from our Council, managers and wider staff. We also consulted key stakeholders including:

- Who Cares? Scotland
- The Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection
- Social Work Scotland
- COSLA

The Care Review is currently transitioning into the Promise. We also consulted with the independent team taking forward the Promise. The team were unable to provide formal feedback on our draft plan although they were able to offer some suggestions.

Who we are and what we do

The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) is the regulator for the social service workforce in Scotland. Our work means the people of Scotland can count on social services being provided by a trusted, skilled and confident workforce. We protect the public by registering social service workers, setting standards for their practice, conduct, training and education and by supporting their professional development. Where people fall below the standards of practice and conduct, we can investigate and take action. We:

- publish the national codes of practice for people working in social services and their employers
- register people working in social services and make sure they adhere to the SSSC Codes of Practice
- promote and regulate the learning and development of the social service workforce
- are the national lead for workforce development and planning for social services in Scotland.

Our Strategic Plan

Our Strategic Plan for 2020 to 2023 sets out our plans for the next three years. It also sets out our three strategic outcomes.

Outcome 1: People who use services are protected by ensuring the regulated workforce is fit to practise.

Outcome 2: The SSSC supports and enhances the development of the registered workforce to deliver high standards of practice and drive improvement.

Outcome 3: Our workforce planning activities support employers, commissioners and policy makers to deliver a sustainable, integrated and innovative workforce.

The Care Review and the social service workforce

Care experienced children and young people experience some of the poorest personal outcomes of any group in Scotland. In October 2016, the First Minister commissioned the Independent Care Review (the Care Review) to identify how Scotland could love its most vulnerable children and give them the childhood they deserve. The review identifies transformational changes for the care system for children and young people in Scotland.

Our Council, Executive Management Team (EMT) and staff have been actively involved in the Care Review. Two examples follow.

- The Care Review set up a 'Stop: Go' group with the purpose of working with local authorities to determine what practices they should either start or cease doing. One of our Council members (Alan Baird) was the Co-Chair of this group. Our Director of Development and Innovation (Phillip Gillespie) met with the group.
- We were active participants in the Review's Workforce Group. Our role has been to consider the whole workforce, how different professions work together and how they are supported and trained. The Workforce Group considered regulation and the way it hinders the ability of staff to build relationships with children and young people.

The Care Review findings

In February 2020 the Care Review published their call for a radical overview of Scotland's 'care system'. The Independent Care Review highlights Scotland's ambition to ensure that children are 'loved, safe and respected and realise their full potential'.

The Care Review's findings are based on 5,500+ experiences. Over half were children, young people and adults who had lived the care. The experiences of the paid and unpaid workforce are also considered. The flagship report by the Care Review – The Promise - sets out an overall view on what the new approach must be. The Promise sets out the need for a fundamental change in the way decisions are made about children and families. It calls for 'higher collective ambition that enables loving, supportive and nurturing relationships as a basis on which to thrive.'

The Care Review reinforces the message that care experienced children and young adults must be at the heart of decision making. It is critical that children and young people are at the centre of everything we do. We need to listen to them and feedback on the changes that we make.

The Care Review identifies significant and immediate challenges for the SSSC. There is a call for the SSSC and other regulators to work together to drive a focus on enabling recovery and rethink their approaches to driving change. The review identifies the need to 'significantly declutter and

streamline professional codes, procedures and processes with a clear focus on enabling relationships – above anything else’.

The Care Review highlights the need to broaden our understanding of risk when making decisions about children and their families. The focus is on developing a wider understanding of risk which includes recognition of the risk to a child of removing them from the family. This is not about tolerating more risk. The Care Review indicates that there ‘must be a shift in focus from the risk of possible harm to the risk of not having stable, long term loving relationships. This shift in mindset is partly about ‘developing the confidence of the workforce and has implications for regulation. We will consider what this means for the workforce as part of our work around revising the Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers.

More generally, the Care Review identifies the need for significant changes including:

- meaningful involvement and collaboration with key partners to make sure all partners share a common language to uphold children’s rights and relationships
- workers to have support and permission to connect and build relationships with children in their care
- workers to have the right ethos and qualities.

The Scottish Government is committed to making the changes that are needed to deliver a whole system approach to care and support for care experienced children and young people. They are developing a plan to implement the Review and creating an independent oversight board to make sure the promise is kept. As the Care Review evolves into the Promise we continue to play a key part in the development of the a plan to deliver on these recommendations.

Delivering the promise has significant implications for the SSSC, regulators and the staff delivering these critical services. We are considering implications across the breadth of our work, including fitness to practise, qualifications and workforce development. Our focus throughout remains on supporting the implementation of the promise, which includes caring in a way that gives children every possible chance to experience love throughout their lives.

Corporate Parenting

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 identifies several corporate parents across Scotland. These bodies are legally required to consider how they can support care experienced children and young people. We are proud to be a corporate parent. This plan also sets out how we will provide and support opportunities for care experienced young people to promote their wellbeing.

What we've achieved since 2017

We've carried out a range of actions since we published our first Corporate Parenting plan in 2017. These actions include:

- ensuring we consider the views of care experienced children and young people throughout our work, including the Strategic Plan 2020-2023
- raising staff awareness of our corporate parenting duties and our contribution to the Care Review
- developing resources which support the workforce to develop the skills they need to support and care for care experienced children and young people
- working with corporate parents to develop resources.

This section sets out our progress since 2017 and sets out how we'll continue to implement some of these actions.

1. Putting care experienced children and young adults at the heart of what we do

We consulted Who Cares? Scotland and Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection (CELCIS) on the development of our 2020-2023 Strategic Plan. The plan has involving people connected to social services at the heart of delivering its work, to make sure we make a positive and lasting contribution to the quality of services in Scotland.

We consulted care experienced children and young people and those who represent them during the development of the 2019/20 Involving People Plan. This plan recognises the critical contribution people with lived experience make to our work. We are implementing the recommendations in the plan.

Our registered workforce continues to promote the interests of care experienced children and young adults during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are publishing ['Inspiring Care Stories'](#) which set out the values and commitment of the social service workforce during the pandemic. These stories demonstrate how the workforce promotes the interests of care experienced young people and provides opportunities to promote their wellbeing. For example, one of the stories is about Rossie Young People's

Trust in Montrose and it explores how the young people and staff have supported their local community during the pandemic.

We worked with Who Cares? Scotland and others to develop and implement our 2017 Corporate Parenting Plan. For example, we met quarterly with Who Cares? Scotland colleagues and Care Council members. We also engaged with Dundee Champions Board.

Our governing body – the Council - has held development sessions on the Independent Care Review and Corporate Parenting. These sessions informed the development of this plan, and we will arrange further sessions as the Promise is delivered. Who Cares? Scotland and CELCIS have also contributed to the development of this plan and we have well-established links with both partners. For example, our previous Chief Executive is on the board of Who Cares? Scotland.

We're taking further steps to raise staff awareness of our corporate parenting responsibilities. We use Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) to ensure that our work promotes equality, diversity and inclusion. Our EIA form requires staff to consider whether the policy or process has an impact on children or young people. We're currently revising this form to require staff to think further about the implications for care experienced children and young people. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group is monitoring these actions and we publish the EIAs on our website.

2. A growing Register

Our vision is that the people of Scotland can count on social services being provided by a trusted, skilled and confident workforce. Every day, people working in social services across Scotland support thousands of care experienced children and young adults. The social care workforce we register aim to do all they can to make sure our children and young people grow up in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. It is critical that workers hold the right skills, values and qualifications.

We have a key role in public protection by ensuring the regulated workforce is registered and fit to practise. As of June 2020, we have more than 220,000 registrants. This includes more than 40,000 registrants in day care of children services and 8,000 registrants in residential childcare.¹

We maintain the National Occupational Standards (NOS) which underpin the qualifications for registration with the SSSC. We set the qualification requirements for social services in Scotland ensuring workers have the right skills, knowledge and values.

¹ Many of our registrants are on more than one part of our Register. For example, some registrants are on the care at home and housing support parts. As of June 2020 there are approximately 160,000 people on our Register.

We have more than 10 years' worth of data on the sector's workforce, services and providers. Our workforce data helps employers and commissioners to build a sustainable workforce. We will explore that data to examine residential childcare workforce trends over the past decade. Our workforce data helps employers and commissioners to build a sustainable workforce.

3. A workforce that is fit to practise

There may be various reasons why a social service worker's fitness to practise may be impaired such as misconduct, health issues or a criminal conviction. A relatively small percentage of workers are referred to Fitness to Practise. The evidence indicates that there are higher referral rates in residential childcare and we continue to improve our understanding of the drivers behind this. The findings will inform our approach to developing qualifications and resources for the sector.

Care experienced young people may be asked to attend a hearing as a witness. Our Fitness to Practise rules set out how we support vulnerable witnesses to attend hearings. This can include pre-recorded evidence or video links. We may also meet their travel costs.

Our Development and Innovation Directorate worked with Police Scotland and Social Work Scotland to develop a joint investigative interview programme for police and social work. We are working with both to consider developing a specialist award.

Fitness to Practise staff attended training on Joint Investigative Interviews and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Protocol. The training helps us to support vulnerable child witnesses throughout the Fitness to Practise process.

Fitness to Practise staff have also participated in training in trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences. The training helps us to understand how trauma experience can affect survivors and their evidence.

4. Developing skills and careers

Modern Apprenticeships play a key role in helping young people to access employment. They help young people to build self-esteem, learn new skills and achieve new qualifications. We manage the Modern Apprenticeship framework for social services and healthcare (SSH) and social services (children and young people). We also work with employers to develop qualification structures and apprenticeship frameworks.

Modern Apprenticeships are a key route into a social care career. The Scottish Government and Skills Development Scotland have provided

additional funding to support care experienced young people to begin to access and succeed in apprenticeships.

We are responsible for promoting high standards of conduct and practice among social service workers. We must ensure that high standards in their education and training are maintained. We do this by developing rules and requirements which help us to ensure that all qualifications are of a high standard. These rules cover social work training, specialist training for social service workers and awards developed from the Standard for Childhood Practice.

Our career ambassadors help us to promote social care careers and to raise awareness of what a role in the sector involves. Careers ambassadors share their stories at career fairs and events. Our ambassadors work in a range of settings including residential childcare.

Our Learning Zone website contains apps and resources to help staff to develop knowledge and skills. Our resources are used by managers, volunteers, workers, coaches and mentors. They cover a range of topics including engaging with children and young people and enabling a personal outcomes approach.

We will consider the implications for the Common Core setting out the skills, knowledge and values that everyone working with people with experience of care should have. We led on the development of the previous Common Core in 2015. We participated in the development of the previous Common Core identifying the skills, knowledge and values for people who work with children and families in Scotland.

We've published a booklet on building collaboration and compassion for integrated working which include contributions from people with lived experience. Our Open Badges allow people to recognise and demonstrate their continuous and informal learning.

Our career website sets out how people can begin and develop their career in care. The website has case studies from across the sector including social workers, service managers and staff in frontline residential childcare.

5. Supporting our workforce

It is critical that our staff are aware of the challenges for care experienced young people, the findings of the Independent Care Review and our corporate parenting duties. We updated staff on the progress of the care review and we intend to reinforce key messages over the life of this plan.

In February 2020 we received our Investors in Young People Award. We encourage applications from care experienced young people and we are exploring how we can improve the ways they can begin or develop a career

at the SSSC. We're working with Skills Development Scotland to support more young people to work with us. We offer student places, short-term work experience, Modern Apprenticeships and delivered a Certificate of Work Readiness programme.

Our new organisational development programme (Evolve) is about nurturing and developing our managers and staff throughout their time at the SSSC. In time this work will consider the implications for our work with care experienced children and young people. For example, one of our workstreams is currently focusing on how to improve our application process. We will explore how we can support a wider range of people to apply for and obtain a role at the SSSC.

There are approximately 30 young people aged 16 to 25 employed by the SSSC. We've piloted a mentoring programme to support their professional development. The programme will give our younger staff an opportunity to use their knowledge and skills effectively. We're planning to roll this out across the SSSC.

Our special leave policy allows staff to take time off for key community-based roles such as being on the Children's Panel.

6. Collaborating with key partners and corporate parents

We work with a range of partners to deliver our ambitions. We share our HR and Finance functions with the Care Inspectorate. Our work to promote a career at the SSSC benefits from this shared approach. For example, our HR team develops and tailors several resources and policies for both organisations.

We work with a range of corporate parents to deliver the objectives in our strategic plan. For example, our Learning Zone website contains several resources for supervisors, managers, mentors and coaches, many of which were developed in partnership with NHS Education for Scotland (NES). We work with Skills Development Scotland to promote our vacancies to Care Experienced Young People. We have also supported Children's Hearing Scotland by enabling them to hold recruitment interviews in our offices.

We participate in a national Corporate Parenting Involvement Network run by the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland. This group provides opportunities to learn and share approaches to support care experienced children and young people.

Our next steps and monitoring progress

The following pages set out the steps we're taking to continue our aim of furthering the potential of Scotland's care experienced young people. We monitor our contribution in several ways.

- Our internal Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group helps us to mainstream equality throughout the SSSC. The group monitor a wide-ranging delivery plan which includes the actions in this plan. The group will establish targets for actions and monitor progress. Our Council and Executive Management Team (EMT) receives regular updates.
- Where relevant we have identified the lead directorates or departments for each action.
- We will publish an annual update setting out our progress.

Link to our Corporate Parenting duties

Our action plan helps us to contribute to the six Corporate Parenting duties identified in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

1. Alert - to be alert to matters which, or which might, adversely affect the wellbeing of looked after children and young people and care leavers.
2. Assess - to assess the needs of those children and young people for any services or support provided.
3. Promote - to promote the interests of eligible children and young people.
4. Opportunities - to seek to provide eligible children and young people with opportunities to promote their wellbeing.
5. Access - to take actions to help eligible children and young people to access these opportunities.
6. Improve - to take other action to improve how we exercise our functions in relation to eligible children and young people.

Realising potential – our plan for putting care experienced young people at the heart of what we do 2020-2023

1. We put care experienced children and young adults at the heart of what we do

Action	What this means for care experienced children and young adults	Lead Directorate	Start or completion date
<p>Raise new and existing staff awareness of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - challenges for care experienced children and young people - our Corporate Parenting duties - the Care Review and the Promise. <p>We do this by promoting key resources on our intranet, incorporate key elements into our induction programme and offering interactive training sessions for our staff.</p>	Staff have the knowledge and skills to ensure care experienced children and young people needs are put at the heart of what we do.	<p>Development and Innovation</p> <p>Strategy and Performance</p> <p>Finance and Resources</p>	Start date: June 2020
Implement our Involving People Plan 2019/20 actions.	Involving people in how we work and deliver services is meaningful and care experienced young people can influence our work.	<p>Development and Innovation</p> <p>Strategy and Performance</p>	Start date: 2019, ongoing
Enhance Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) template and guidance to improve the way we consider impacts on care experienced children and young adults. The Equality Group will monitor progress and we will share examples across SSSC.	We will have a process to support us to consider the impact of our work on care experienced children and young adults.	Strategy and Performance	New guidance in place by October 2020. Monitoring: ongoing

Engage with stakeholders to promote the interests of care experienced children and young adults. We will contribute to Who Cares? Scotland's planned participation strategy.	We use opportunities to listen to and improve the way we support care experienced children and young adults.	Development and Innovation Strategy and Performance	TBC
Introduce new resources to update our staff on Promise and the SSSC's contribution.	Our staff have a greater awareness of the Care Review and the challenges for care experienced children and young adults.	Strategy and Performance	Start date: Sept 2020.
We will develop a report examining the last ten years of residential childcare workforce data.	Our workforce data helps employers and commissioners to build a sustainable workforce.	Development and Innovation	March 2021

2. We do what we can to ensure that care experienced children and young adults are protected by a registered workforce that is fit to practise.

Action	What this means for care experienced children and young adults	Lead Directorate	Start or completion date
Continue to participate in and act upon the next steps for the Care Review, which include revisiting our approach to residential child care qualifications.	We will work to deliver on the Promise for care experienced children and young adults.	Regulation Development and Innovation	Ongoing
Working with key stakeholders to revise the SSSC Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers.	A common language and approach within our Codes of Practice will maintain the focus on promoting children's rights and supporting relationships.	Development and Innovation	Start date: Nov 2020

Continue to quality assure approved programmes and qualifications.	Our work ensures that social service workers have the knowledge, skills and values needed to care for care experienced children and young adults.	Development and Innovation	Ongoing
We will introduce enhanced analysis of the common factors driving higher referral rates in residential childcare.	Standards and resources for residential childcare workers will be updated based on improved insight. Care experienced young people will benefit from those supporting them have the right skills, knowledge and values to carry out the role.	Strategy and Performance Development and Innovation	Initial report by June 2021.
Explore how we can provide further support for care experienced children and young adults involved in a Fitness to Practise case.	Care experienced children and young adults are protected by ensuring that the regulated workforce is fit to practise.	Regulation	Start Date: April 2021

3. We support services to attract and develop the staff needed to support care experienced children and young adults

Action	What this means for care experienced children and young adults	Lead directorate	Start or completion date
Enhance our careers guidance and promote funding opportunities designed to support care experienced people, including enhanced Modern Apprenticeship contribution rates and the Care Experienced Students Bursary.	Care experienced people see that their skills and life experiences are valued by social service employers and are informed about the routes they can take to enter and progress in a career.	Development and Innovation	October 2020 and ongoing
Continue to develop learning resources that reflect the needs of staff working with care experienced children and young people.	Care experienced young people benefit from high quality care from staff who have the resources they need for registration and continuous professional development.	Development and Innovation	Ongoing

4. We support care experienced young people to access employment opportunities and develop their skills at the SSSC

Action	What this means for care experienced young people	Lead Directorate	Start or completion date
Explore how we can support care experienced young people to apply for and to work at the SSSC. Our current focus is on improving our application process. Following that we will explore how we can encourage more people to apply for roles.	Care experienced young people will be encouraged to begin and develop their career at the SSSC.	Finance and Resources Strategy and Performance	Start date: June 2020
Continue to provide opportunities for care experienced young people to access Modern Apprenticeships and Foundation Apprenticeships at the SSSC.	We support care experienced young people to access a learning opportunity at the SSSC.	Shared Services (HR)	Ongoing
Evaluate our first mentoring programme and expand to support more of our young staff.	We will help our younger staff to develop and use their skills in a safe environment.	Finance and Resources Development and Innovation	Start date: TBC

Scottish Social Services Council Compass House 11 Riverside Drive Dundee DD1 4NY
Tel: 0345 60 30 891 Email: enquiries@sssc.uk.com Web: sssc.uk.com

We promote equality by removing unlawful and unfair treatment on the grounds of any protected characteristic wherever possible.

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