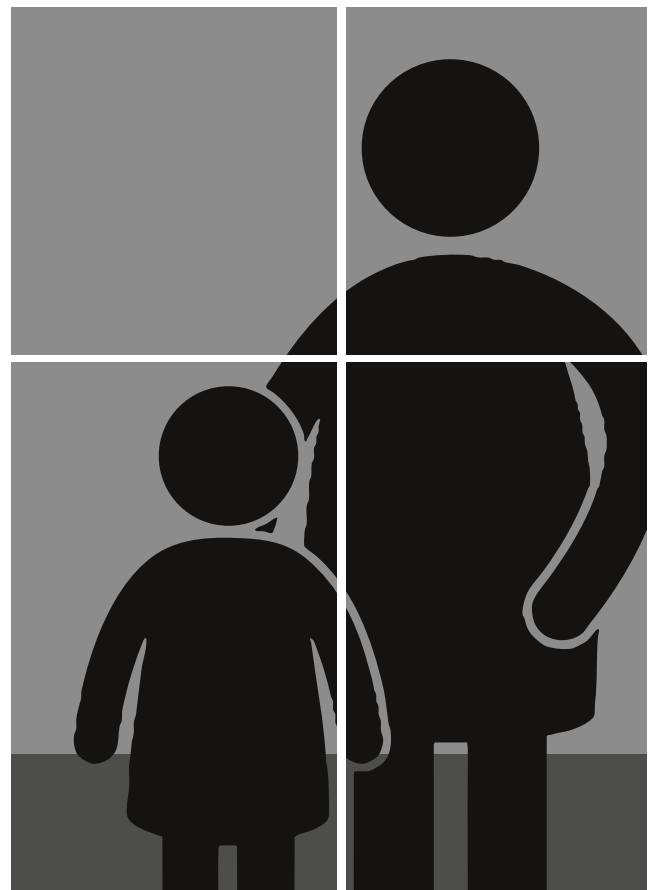
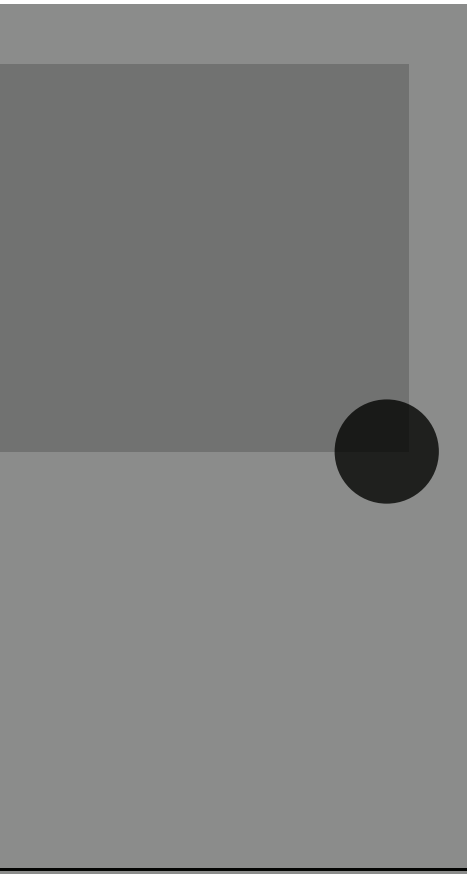


A House That Is a Home

The Test of Keeping
the Promise



**the oversight
board**
for the promise



1. Executive Summary

Progress to secure stable housing for care-experienced people has been unacceptably slow. The Oversight Board has - since 2023 - pressed for and succeeded in ensuring the reinstatement of the national Care Leavers Housing Pathway. The Board will keep pressing until tangible delivery is achieved.

A house is more than shelter. It is the foundation of belonging and opportunity. Every delay exposes young people to avoidable instability. While the Housing (Scotland) Bill and the Housing Emergency Action Plan create the right legislative and policy scaffolding, implementation lags far behind commitment.

The Care Leavers Housing Pathway has been nominally reinstated in principle through the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group (HPSG), yet this remains administrative rather than operational progress. As of writing we await a definitive action plan with timelines and transparent accountability. The first sub-group meetings have only just happened - many months after its creation was announced and after sustained pressure from the Oversight Board. Administrative reinstatement without delivery is not progress.

This briefing records the evidence, sets out what still must happen, and issues clear calls for action. It speaks not as criticism but as insistence: focus, pace, and joint working can still deliver what was promised.

2. Context and Evidence

Audit Scotland's recent *Improving Care Experience* (October 2025) validates the Oversight Board's analysis from its inception: strong intent and public statements have not translated into coordinated delivery. It highlights the same pattern the Board has documented: lack of accountability, limited coordination, and insufficient pace. The housing situation for care-experienced people is a stark example of that wider systemic failure. Care experienced people are not alone, the wider housing situation is dire for far too many in Scotland. The housing failure affecting care-experienced people is not an exception but a symptom of systemic weakness: decisions are taken, commitments are announced, but delivery is neither owned nor enforced.

Independent and official sources show the same picture:

- Who Cares? Scotland: housing remains the leading concern of young people leaving care.
- Care Inspectorate thematic review: access to suitable housing is the single greatest



weakness in transitions.

- Scottish Government consultation: acknowledges the elevated housing risk and the need for stronger scaffolding at transition.
- Scottish Health Equity Research Unit: temporary accommodation levels are at record highs, deepening inequality.

The consistency of these findings across statutory, third-sector and lived-experience evidence removes any doubt: the problem is not lack of knowledge, but lack of action.

3. Timeline of Oversight and Action (2019–2025)

Date	Oversight Board Action/Event	Outcome
Jun 2023	The South Lanarkshire pilot as a test of system change.	Established housing as a central Promise indicator.
Jun-Oct 2024	Report Two revealed the Government's pause of the Care Leavers Housing Pathway and called for reinstatement.	Elevated issue publicly and in Parliament.
2024	Continued correspondence with Ministers and senior officials; repeated calls for update.	No assurance of reinstatement. Issue kept live by Oversight Board intervention.



Date	Oversight Board Action/Event	Outcome
Jan 2025	Chair wrote to Director of Housing demanding reinstatement or guaranteed replacement.	Director confirmed intention to create an HPSG sub-group, but without timetable.
Feb 2025	Report Three recorded that commitment; Chair gave public interview urging action.	Political visibility increased; implementation stalled.
Mar-May 2025	Oversight Board convened supported housing providers via The Promise Scotland.	Building evidence base and collaborative work.
Aug 2025	Chair met Permanent Secretary to raise this issue.	Recognition of delay. Delivery remains to be demonstrated.
Oct 2025	Audit Scotland report validated Oversight Board findings on delays and weak accountability. [MB6.1]	Independent corroboration.
Oct 2025	2nd meeting with Perm Sec resulting in Letter to Oversight Board Chair acknowledging delay and confirming the sub-group's formal establishment.	Assurance that progress would occur before next election.
Oct 2025 (HPSG)	HPSG met. Co-chairs confirmed creation of a Care Leavers Sub-Group to oversee eight pathway recommendations. First meeting date only now set.	Administrative reinstatement; no implementation yet.



Date	Oversight Board Action/Event	Outcome
Nov 2025	Oversight Board sought confirmation on whether the sub-group has met and its agreed actions.	Confirmation received. No action plan devised.
Dec 2025	OB Chair gives evidence to PAC around delay.	Continued high-level pressure.
Dec 2025	OB invite Minister for The Promise to discuss issue.	Continued high-level pressure.
Jan 2026	OB request update from Subgroup.	No action plan formulated.
Feb 2026	OB meets Chair of Subgroup.	Action plan transmitted.
Feb 2026	OB hold parliamentary event.	Awareness raising.

This timeline demonstrates a clear pattern: movement occurs only after sustained Oversight Board intervention, and even then progress is slow, partial, and vulnerable to further delay.



4. Analysis: Why Progress Has Stalled

The barriers to secure housing for care-experienced people are not theoretical. They are visible in data, governance gaps, and experience.

- **Insufficient housing supply and record pressure on temporary accommodation.**

Scottish Government figures show 16,634 households in temporary accommodation at 30 September 2024—including over 10,000 children, the highest since records began. B&B use rose to 16 percent of placements (from 10 percent two years earlier) and average homelessness case-closure times increased to 280 days. Where there is no supply, there can be no pathway. (Scottish Government Homelessness Statistics to 30 Sept 2024; Housing Market Review Q2 2025.)

- **Over-representation of young people in homelessness applications.**

People aged 16–24 make up just 11 percent of the population but 22 percent of homelessness applications. Care-experienced young people form a disproportionate share of this group, entering independent living around age 17—years earlier than their peers—often without continuing care or housing support. (Homelessness Prevention Duties Equality Impact Assessment 2024; IRISS Care Experience and Employment Brief 2024.) [MB7.1]

- **No national requirement for local care-leaver housing pathways.**

Practice is inconsistent. Some local authorities link leaving-care plans to allocations; others do not. The Care Inspectorate’s 2024 Transitions thematic review found access to suitable housing the most significant challenge in transitions, often undermining young people’s care plans.

- **Fragmented responsibility and weak delivery ownership.**

Children’s services, housing and community wellbeing each hold elements of the solution, but no one body is tasked with end-to-end delivery. The Ask and Act duties will only work if matched by clear attribution of accountability, timelines and reporting. At present, there is no clarity on how the Ask and Act duties will be operationalised to meet the specific needs of care-experienced people, despite their disproportionate risk of homelessness.



- **Delayed translation from decision to action.**

The Care Leavers Sub-Group under HPSG was first referenced by officials in early 2025; its first meeting was scheduled only in October 2025—a nine-month delay between announcement and operation. (HPSG Minutes Oct 2025.)

- **Lived experience warnings unheeded.**

Who Cares? Scotland’s 2024 Housing Issue Paper identified housing as the most frequent reason young people sought advocacy. The 2024 Moving On consultation analysis found that only 29 percent of eligible young people accessed continuing care rights in 2022–23, with many reporting cliff-edges of support. The pattern is clear: needs are known, responses fragmented, and risks reproducing the same gaps.

In summary: the system knows what is needed but still fails to act with urgency. The Care Leavers Pathway was paused for two years, and even its reinstatement has yet to produce delivery. Without clear ownership, adequate housing supply and measurable accountability, care-experienced young people remain at the sharp end of Scotland’s housing emergency. These approaches are not innovative pilots; they are proven practice. The question is no longer whether solutions exist, but why they have not been scaled or mandated.

5. What Works

Learning from Scottish practice demonstrates that success is possible when intent is matched by action:

- Early joint planning prevents homelessness, but only where resources exist. No houses mean no homes. Unsuitable housing remains a failure to provide a home.
- Guaranteed allocations and supported tenancies provide stability and save public cost.
- Sustained key-worker relationships reduce tenancy failure and crisis re-entry.
- To turn evidence into collaboration, the Oversight Board asked The Promise Scotland to convene supported-housing providers, including Barnardo’s, to share models already working in practice. These organisations demonstrate what success looks like on the ground: trusting partnerships, flexible support, and stable homes. There must be a coordinated effort to both learn and act together to resolve the prevailing barriers to change.



- Frontline homelessness services report that outreach-based keyworker support during transitions into and out of care and tenancies prevents homelessness when applied early and consistently. A recent Promise-funded pilot delivered by a national homelessness organisation demonstrated that supported transitions are both effective and deliverable in practice.

Scotland does not lack ideas or evidence. It lacks focus, alignment, and accountability for delivery. The question is no longer whether solutions exist, but why they have not been scaled or mandated.

6. Calls to Action

These actions are not aspirational. They are the minimum required to translate existing commitments into outcomes and to prevent further avoidable harm. The Care Leavers Sub-Group of the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group must ensure that:

1. By March 2026, Scottish Government publishes and funds a National Housing Plan for Care-Experienced People, integrating the Care Leavers Pathway into a single, accountable framework.
2. COSLA and local authorities ensure every care-experienced young person has a housing pathway plan agreed six months before leaving care, with national reporting.
3. Scottish Government, COSLA and The Promise Scotland embed housing outcomes—tenancy stability, homelessness prevention, and time in temporary accommodation—within the performance framework, including the Story of Progress and Plan 24–30 route maps.
4. Care Inspectorate and SSSC include housing practice and transition planning in inspection and professional learning standards.
5. Scottish Government and COSLA publish an annual joint report to Parliament on housing outcomes for care-experienced people, independently verified.
6. Independent oversight continues beyond the life of the Oversight Board until these outcomes are demonstrably achieved.



7. Conclusion: Leadership and the Measure of Promise

After five years of oversight, the lesson is clear: progress follows pressure. Recent substantive movement on housing for care-experienced people has come after Oversight Board intervention. That is not sustainable; leadership must now act without external prompting. The Oversight Board's role is to report on Scotland's overall progress, not to intervene in individual policy areas. The recently convened subgroup must ensure that progress is now achieved at pace.

Scotland now faces a choice. It can continue to rely on guidance, pilots and sub-groups, allowing care-experienced young people to fall into homelessness while responsibility is debated, or it can act decisively to make housing stability a guaranteed outcome of care. What is lacking is not policy but resolve. Keeping the Promise will ultimately be judged not by plans published or meetings convened, but by whether care-experienced young people are able to leave care knowing they have a safe, stable home and a system that will not abandon them when they need it most. Keeping the Promise begins—and can only be measured—by one simple fact: that every care-experienced young person has a house that is a home.