



the oversight board

for the promise

Report FOUR: Further Information

September 2026



We grow up loved, safe, and respected so that we realise our full potential.

Scotland's ambition for children and young people



Contents

Reviewing progress 3

Experiencing care at home 4

Voice 5

Update on previous Report recommendations 6

Workforce planning 7

Corporate Parenting 8

Support for families 9

Funding 11

Moving on 14

Family Group Decision Making 15

Consultations 15

Listening 17

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children 18

Plan 24-30 Route Maps 20

Measuring progress 21

Appendix A: Intandem Young People's Voices Consultation 22



Reviewing progress

To review progress and reach the views in Report FOUR, we relied on available data and information from key sources. In addition to the in-text references throughout the report, we used:

1. [Plan 24-30: the 25 route maps to 2030 and the Promise Story of Progress](#)
2. [Children's Social Work Statistics: Looked After Children - 2024-25](#)
3. [Children \(Care, Care Experience and Services Planning\) \(Scotland\) Act 2026](#)
4. [Scotland's vision for kinship care: our offer of support for families](#)
5. [Whole Family Wellbeing Funding](#)
6. [Oversight Board Report THREE](#)
7. [Joint inspections of services for children and young people at risk of harm: Review of findings from the joint inspection programme 2021 - 2025](#)
8. [Education outcomes for looked after children 2024-25](#)
9. Audit Scotland's report on [Improving care experience](#)
10. [Serving Scotland: Our Five-Year Plan](#)
11. [Programme for Government 2026 to 2031](#)
12. Our Hearings Our Voice Report [Seeing beyond the surface: What children and young people wish all adults knew](#)
13. [The Promise: Areas of Research Interest 2026-29](#)
14. [Joint statement re: emergency in availability of alternative care options for children](#)
15. [Residential Childcare Reference Group minutes, June 2026](#)
16. [Routemap and National Principles of Holistic Whole Family Support](#)
17. Who Cares? Scotland's report [Advocacy Counts: A 2024 Snapshot](#)
18. The views of those working with children, young people families and care experienced adults in the following organisations, to whom we are grateful for taking the time and care to share their knowledge and experiences to help us further assess progress made and understand the challenges faced:
 - Aberlour
 - Care Inspectorate
 - CELCIS
 - Champions Board
 - Children First
 - Scottish Children's Reporter Administration
 - Includem
 - Intandem
 - Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
 - Professor Kenneth Norrie
 - National Social Work Agency
 - One Parent Families Scotland
 - Our Hearings Our Voice
 - Parent Infant Foundation
 - A focus group of Safeguarders
 - Social Work Scotland
 - Who Cares? Scotland
 - Dr Helen Whincup, University of Stirling
19. The views of individual practitioners
20. The views of young people themselves, as captured by the Inspiring Scotland Intandem Service (see Appendix)
21. The knowledge, skills, and experiences brought by all Oversight Board members

Experiencing care at home

“Where children are safe in their families and feel loved they must stay— and families must be given support together, to nurture that love and overcome the difficulties which get in the way.” the promise, page 15

What else we know

As of 31 July 2025, 2,411 children in the ‘care system’ were living at home with parents, accounting for 20% of children experiencing care ([Children’s Social Work Statistics](#)). This percentage has remained largely unchanged since 2023, down from 25% in 2019.

Education

- The gap in attendance rates between pupils experiencing care (78.5%) and all pupils (88.4%) in secondary schools widened to 9.9 percentage points in 2024/25 (from 9.3 percentage points in 2023/24). For primary pupils, the gap increased from 3.3 percentage points to 3.8 percentage points over the same period.
- Pupils who were experiencing care at home with parents during 2024/25 had the lowest attendance rates across all accommodation types for pupils experiencing care (69.8%). Those in foster care provided by the local authority and purchased by the local authority had the highest attendance rates (94.0% and 94.9% respectively).
- The gap in rate of exclusion cases for pupils experiencing care and all pupils has reduced substantially since 2009/10 to its lowest ever level in 2024/25 (62 per 1,000 vs 352 per 1,000). However, the exclusion rate for pupils experiencing care remains around five times the rate for all pupils in 2024/25.
- In 2024/25, 59.3% of pupils experiencing care during the year in mainstream schools achieved the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level relevant to their stage in reading, 54.4% in writing, 68.9% in listening and talking and 54.8% in numeracy. When comparing the latest achievement rates for P1 pupils experiencing care during the year in 2024/25 and those in 2018/19 (prior to any impacts of Covid-19), all subjects saw an increase.
- The proportion of care leavers who left school in S4 or earlier has declined substantially since 2009/10, from 62.8% in 2009/10 to 31.8% in 2024/25.

Source: [Scottish Government reports on education outcomes](#).

This information tells us about patterns in attendance, attainment, exclusions and destinations, identifying differences and tracking change over time.

What is known about experience adds something different. [The Promise Story](#)

of Progress describes experiences of disruption, exclusion, being singled out or misunderstood, losing friendships or trusted adults, and support that can be inconsistent or fall away at points of transition. It also shows what makes a difference: trusted relationships, support that responds to individual circumstances, safe and predictable environments, friendships, opportunities to explore strengths and ambitions, and adults who believe in what children and young people can achieve.

Improved attainment or attendance matters but does not by itself tell Scotland whether a child feels safe and included, has strong and sustained relationships, feels listened to, has confidence in their abilities or is hopeful about their future.



Voice

“Children must be listened to and meaningfully and appropriately involved in decision making about their care, with all those involved properly listening and responding to what children want and need. There must be a compassionate, caring, decision making culture focused on children and those they trust.”

the promise, page 12

What else we know

Voice and experience cannot measure progress on their own, but reveal meaning, highlight gaps, and ensure that the care community’s perspectives shape how progress is judged and understood. Collecting and using this information is not about measuring performance: when people’s experiences are gathered and used in ways that genuinely value and respond to what they say, the process drives learning and reflection rather than compliance. It will also show whether experience is reflected in daily practice.

The promise called for systemic listening: where the voices of children, families, and the people who matter to them are woven through every part of how care in Scotland is designed and improved. We have heard examples of good work to progress this, but not consistently and, crucially, not in a way that reflects the breadth of experience. [The Promise Story of Progress](#) highlights the barriers to this: the task now is to collectively overcome these.

Please also see Appendix A for the report produced by Intandem.



Update on previous Report recommendations

In Report THREE, we made comment and identified change required in a number of areas that we have not covered in detail in Report FOUR. These are:

- Workforce planning
- Corporate parenting
- Support for families
- Funding
- Moving on
- Family Group Decision Making
- Consultations and Reporting
- Listening
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
- Plan 24-30 route maps
- Measuring progress

Updates on each of these areas can be found in the following sections.



Workforce planning

We said:

“The Scottish Government and COSLA must produce the Joint Workforce Improvement Plan that was due in autumn 2024 as a matter of urgency.”

Update:

The Scottish Government Implementation Plan committed to producing a joint workforce plan with COSLA in 2024, but this was not developed. Audit Scotland subsequently highlighted the absence of this plan and the lack of clarity about the size, definition and needs of the workforce required to keep The Promise across all sectors.

There has since been some progress. The National Social Work Agency now has responsibility for national workforce planning for social work and has committed to developing a national workforce plan, improving workforce data and analysis, strengthening career pathways and ensuring that wider policy is reflected in recruitment, training and workforce planning. However, there is not yet detail about when this plan will be produced or how it will address the workforce challenges affecting delivery of The Promise.

The Scottish Social Services Council has also established a National Stakeholder Advisory Forum to support improved workforce planning and collaboration across the sector.

These developments are welcome, but they do not yet amount to the coordinated workforce planning previously called for. Social work is a critical part of the workforce required to keep The Promise, but it is not the whole workforce. There remains no clear, shared assessment of the workforce capacity, skills and support required across the organisations and sectors responsible for delivering change.

Recent scrutiny of the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) legislation has reinforced the importance of greater cohesion across services, including clearer responsibilities, integrated planning and more proportionate reporting and monitoring. These are closely connected to workforce capacity: fragmented planning and burdensome reporting take time and resource away from supporting children and families.

With 2030 approaching, Scotland needs not just greater clarity about the workforce it needs, but a clear, costed, timed plan for delivery.

Corporate Parenting

We said:

“By the end of October 2025, we expect to see all corporate parents detailing in their **corporate parenting plans** how they will keep the promise. We expect to see clear implementation plans showing genuinely collaborative approaches.”

Update

Under section 59 of the **Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014**, a corporate parent must prepare, keep under review, and publish a Corporate Parenting Plan. This plan must set out how the corporate parent proposes to fulfil its corporate parenting responsibilities (as set out in section 58 of the Act). On the back of this call, 59 responses were received, providing links to existing plans and reports, or notes detailing that plans were clear and underway.

Corporate parents have an important role, individually and together, to uphold the rights of care experienced children, young people and adults and create the conditions for them to have the same opportunities, support and sense of belonging as all children.

Corporate parenting must therefore be more than a set of statutory reports or organisational commitments. It means that they proactively seek to understand the experiences of care experienced people, act on what they hear, remove the barriers their own systems can create, and work together where responsibility is shared. The test is not simply whether corporate parents are fulfilling their duties, but whether care experienced people experience the collective impact of those duties in their lives.



Support for families

We said:

“We know that access to early help and support for families is a long-standing commitment by the Scottish Government and was restated in last year’s Programme for Government. In our first two reports, we highlighted both the progress made and the lack of adequate support.”

Update

The commitment to early help and whole family support is well established. The challenge now is to translate that commitment into consistent support for families across Scotland. Previous commitments, investment and local innovation have created important foundations, but progress has not yet been sufficient to ensure that every family can get the right support, at the right time, for as long as they need it.

The forthcoming Implementation Strategy must therefore provide a clear route from ambition to delivery. It should set out what will happen, by when, who is responsible, how activity across government will align, and how funding and wider reform will enable rather than constrain delivery. Crucially, it must reflect the urgency of the remaining period to 2030. Whole Family Support cannot be treated as a longer-term aspiration or a series of individual programmes: the learning already exists to move quickly, build on what is working and address the barriers that continue to prevent families from experiencing earlier,

more consistent and more sustainable support.

The funding has supported valuable preventative work. Government’s own [evaluation](#) also shows that the harder change – reorganising services, leadership, workforce, culture and budgets so earlier family support becomes the normal response – remains incomplete.

Housing

- Of the 3,548 children who stopped experiencing care during 2024-25, 43% had a recorded destination of at home with their biological parents. This is the most common destination, but this figure is a considerable reduction when compared to that observed in 2014-15, where 61% of children no longer experiencing care had a recorded destination of at home with their biological parents.

Source: [Scottish Government](#)

Poverty

- Of those whose home postcode at the time of entering care was recorded (67% of all children experiencing care), almost half (46%) come from one of the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland. The difference between the proportion of children experiencing care whose home postcode is in the most deprived areas compared to in the least deprived areas is more pronounced among children in care within the community than among those in residential accommodation.

Source: [Scottish Government](#)



Funding

We said:

“The issue of short-term and restrictive funding plays out through multiple routes including how Scottish Government allocates money, how local systems commission services (particularly third sector) and how philanthropic organisations spend funds. A sustainable investment approach needs to replace short-term grant funding.”

Update

We recognise that public services are under serious financial pressure. Local government, social care and wider public services are responding to rising demand with limited resources, and the workforce is carrying more than it should. From the beginning, the promise was clear that Scotland had to change where money goes. Keeping the promise means moving money earlier, towards trusted relationships, consistent workers, practical family help, advocacy, therapeutic support, housing and the workforce conditions needed to help children and families before crisis.

Whole Family Wellbeing Funding (WFWF) was meant to be one of the clearest signs of that shift. The Scottish Government committed £500 million over the 2021-26 parliament to help families earlier, and reduce the need for crisis intervention. That has not happened at the scale or pace promised. Audit Scotland reported that only **£148 million had been allocated by 2025-26**, with

most of the commitment pushed beyond the parliamentary term. It also found that Scotland still does not have a clear route to the 2030 ambition that at least 5% of community-based health and social care spend should go towards preventative whole family support.

The funding question is also a workforce question. Third sector and community partners are often central to the work the promise depends on: staying alongside families, providing practical help, building trust and helping support arrive before crisis. Stable funding can help reduce pressure on statutory social work, but only if it is planned, connected and sustained. The National Social Work Agency’s work will also need resources, authority and implementation support if its recommendations are to improve conditions and capacity.

It is also a relationships issue. Sustainable funding enables a stable workforce, who can develop and maintain relationships with children, families and care experienced adults. The workforce should be empowered to get funding to where it is needed, quickly: the relationships they hold.



Moving on

We said:

“The recommendations of the 100 Days of Listening work led by Staf and The Promise Scotland must be progressed as per Plan 24-30. This includes the production of a shared set of standards and principles that will guide systems and practice to support those moving on from care.”

Update

The Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Act contains important provisions around the support available to those moving on from care. What must happen as Scotland moves to 2030, is that the existing provisions in relation to throughcare and aftercare are fully resourced and implemented, that transitions are thoughtfully and relationally planned, and respond to what was heard via 100 days of listening. The data available around about aftercare paints a partial picture: we need to understand why those eligible are not taking available aftercare provision: is it because they are making an informed choice not to, or is it because of how it is offered, planned and delivered?



Family Group Decision Making

We said:

“We welcome the publication of national standards for family group decision making and, while it now exists in some form in 23 local authorities, there is a need to ensure it is available to everyone who would benefit from it wherever they live in Scotland, and that it is sustainably funded.”

Update

Positive progress has been made. The Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Act 2026 strengthens its place in law. Where FGDM services are available, children and families can request them; local authorities will have duties around awareness and information; national guidance is required; and provision will be reported nationally. This is important. Scotland can go further, however. No child, young person or family in Scotland should be unable to access FGDM if they wish to.



Consultations

We said:

“People are tired of restating the same thing and the retelling of stories must stop. While consultation on detailed legislative proposals will always be required, we urge the Scottish Government to keep a tight focus.”

Update

The promise was clear that there must never be another independent care review: the Independent Care Review heard, and Scotland must respond. Children, young people and care experienced adults must be heard, but also responded to. All corporate parents must be able to not just listen, but to close feedback loops, so that those who give of their time and experience know what happens next, including why things have **not** happened.



Listening

We said:

“The UNCRC Incorporation Act 2024 provides the important legal context for listening to children and young people. Looking ahead, it is vital that the workforce are adequately resourced to implement the UNCRC and equipped with the skills to build trust, listen well, protect and champion the rights of all children and young people.”

Update

Efforts are ongoing across systems and services to embed listening into practice and co-design rather than one off consultation. And where they exist, Champion Boards provide opportunities for care experienced children and young people to share their views and experiences, and to ensure the rights of the care community are upheld by corporate parents.

Despite this, the picture continues to be mixed. Greater efforts must be made to make sure all those working with children, families and care experienced adults have the time and skills to thoughtfully listen and respond. This means that experience is heard and responded to within relationships, not just in separate groups. It also means that for those harder to hear voices, there is specialist training and creative and evidence-

informed methods for listening, including for babies and infants; those with socio-communication differences, and other groups.



Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

We said:

“Given that life-long advocacy is a key element of the promise and the need to ensure the significant number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Scotland are properly supported, these issues must be included.”

Update

Over recent years there have been several positive policy responses and interventions, including those set out within the [New Scots Integration Strategy and delivery plan \(2024-2026\)](#) which emphasises integration from day one. There have also been developments in ESOL, free bus travel and continued provision of the Guardianship Service as well as the opportunities presented by the ongoing implementation of the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 to strengthen a rights-based approach to supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people across services and decision making.

Despite this progress, significant challenges remain including limited access to specialist mental health support and legal advice, the distress and uncertainty caused by lengthy age

assessment and asylum processes, and ongoing pressures on workforce capacity, resources, and training to respond effectively to the needs of unaccompanied children and young people.

The New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy sets out six outcomes:

1. New Scots live in safe, welcoming, inclusive communities, where everyone's dignity is respected and everyone is able to build diverse relationships and healthy intercultural bonds.
2. New Scots are able to access well-coordinated services, which recognise and meet their rights and needs.
3. New Scots understand their rights, responsibilities and entitlements in Scotland and are able to exercise these to pursue full and independent

lives. New Scots can pursue their ambitions through education, employment, culture and leisure activities in diverse communities.

4. Communities in Scotland understand integration interculturally and respect the diversity and strengths that New Scots bring.
5. 5. Policy, strategic planning, and legislation, that have an impact on New Scots, are shaped through their participation and informed by their rights, needs and aspirations.
6. The principles of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy guide all future responses to crises that bring forced migrants to Scotland and seek to ensure all such migrants will be treated equitably.

Source: [New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2024](#)

When the Oversight Board met with a range of stakeholders on this issue, we heard of both high quality support, and systemic challenges. We will continue to engage with those supporting and lived experience of this issue.



Plan 24-30 Route Maps

We said:

“The Promise Scotland has supported the development of this plan and is now working with organisations and individuals across Scotland to develop the more detailed route maps which they say will ensure delivery of Plan 24-30. We urge everyone involved to participate fully and seek support where necessary.”

Update

Route maps were initially launched in June 2024, with further developments updates in December 2025.

Developments included:

- Further refinement and population of route maps undertaken in partnership with over 100 stakeholders.
- Website redesign to respond to feedback from those using it.
- Translation of all of the promise’s calls to action into clear, measurable outcomes with timebound milestones.
- Route maps showing, for as many years as possible: **What** must be delivered for the promise to be kept, **Who** is responsible for doing it, **When** it must be done, and **How** route maps depend on each other for progress.

Work to continue to develop the route maps will continue as progress is made. We call on all those with a role to play to actively engage with the route map development process: across organisations and sectors, leaders must step up collaboratively develop the route maps to keep the promise by 2030.



Measuring progress

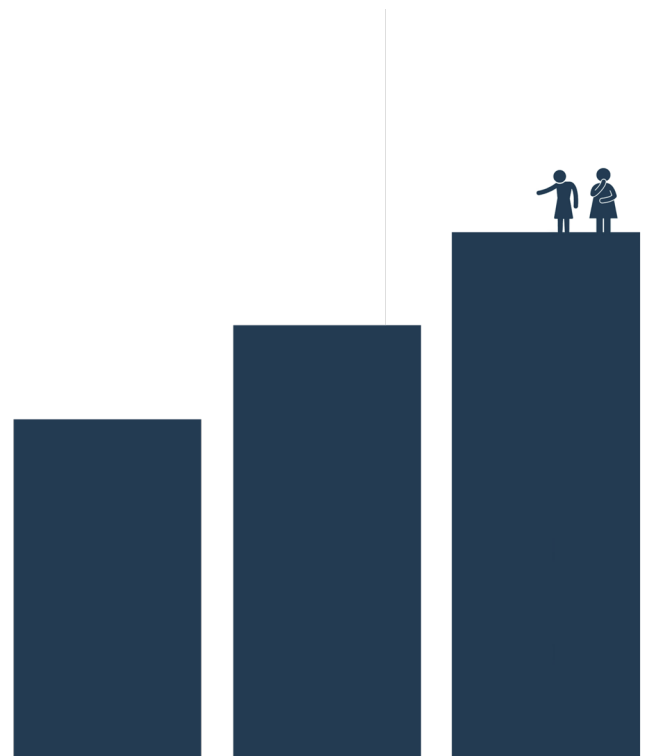
We said:

“The commitment made by The Scottish Government, COSLA and The Promise Scotland to progress putting in place the mechanisms to answer the question, ‘How are organisations doing in their work to keep the promise?’ must be actioned within the agreed timeline (by end of December 2025.)”

Update

The Promise Story of Progress underwent significant updates in December 2025, including the organisational question. More detail is found in the methods report, from page 20: <https://www.plan2430.scot/media/135fjz2q/learning-next-steps-stp.pdf>

Having the 3 parts of the Promise Story of Progress for the first time is important. The work to develop this further must happen, and gaps filled, as the journey to 2030 continues.



Appendix A

Intandem Young People's Voices Consultation

June–July 2026



Supplementary Report to the Oversight Board for The Promise

**Young People's Voices Consultation June – July
2026**



About Intandem

Intandem is a mentoring programme for children and young people experiencing the care system, or at risk of care. Mentoring starts between the ages of 7 and 15 years and continues for as long as needed. Established in 2016, the programme is managed by Inspiring Scotland and delivered by 13 partner charities across 22 local authorities in Scotland. Intandem is based around building positive, trusting and consistent relationships to support children and young people to thrive.

OUR VISION

We empower children and young people experiencing the care system to build the resilience and confidence they need to thrive

Introduction

Intandem was commissioned by The Oversight Board for The Promise to support the gathering of children and young people's voices for its forthcoming fourth report on the current progress of The Promise. This supplementary report brings together the views of **51** children and young people, gathered through 1:1 sessions and focus group consultations.

All young people who took part were care experienced, including young people living with family, carers, friends or other arrangements, with many in kinship care or looked after at home.

Age ranges of those who took part were between 8 – 18 years old.

Engagement Type	Number of young people	Age Range
Group sessions	20	11 - 18
Supported 1:1 engagement	31	8 - 17
Total	51	8 - 18

