

Audit scope

Improving care experience

Delivering The Promise

ACCOUNTS COMMISSION 

AUDITOR GENERAL 

Prepared by Audit Scotland
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Background

In Scotland there are more than 12,000 children who receive extra support including foster, kinship, adoptive or residential care, and over 2,000 children are recorded on the child protection register. Each child has their own individual experiences which have contributed to them receiving care.

After age 16, care experienced people who receive extra support on or after their 16th birthday are entitled to receive 'aftercare' support until age 26. In 2023, there were over 8,500 people eligible for aftercare.

In February 2020, an [Independent Root and Branch Review of Care](#) (the Care Review) informed by those with experience of care, concluded its findings. It highlighted the need to transform the services provided for people with care experience, and their families.

Following the Care Review publishing its reports, the Scottish Government committed to delivering 'The Promise' by 2030. It established The Promise Scotland as a non-

statutory body, to support organisations to deliver change. The Promise sets out the changes needed across the whole system, and society, to deliver lasting change for Scotland's children, families, and adults with experience of care. This includes making sure individuals are involved in decision-making, supporting the workforce to develop nurturing relationships with children and families, and where possible, helping families to stay together. Supporting care experienced people's rights is a key part of implementing The Promise.

In March 2022, the Scottish Government published its [Keeping the Promise Implementation plan](#). While the Scottish Government, councils and other bodies have made progress in some areas, assessments to date have highlighted that change needs to happen faster.

Why this audit is important

The Scottish [National Performance Framework](#) includes a vision for children and young people to grow up loved, safe and

respected so that they realise their full potential. All children need help to thrive: a stable home, strong support and secure, loving relationships. Services which support children with care experience can and should provide this. With the right support, children with care experience can flourish throughout their lives and into adulthood. They can do well in school, have good mental health and succeed at work.

Providing this support can prevent adverse human costs, such as people experiencing homelessness and poor health, as well as substantial financial costs. The Care Review [Follow the money](#) report estimated that Scotland spends around £942 million per year on the operational costs of the 'care system', but wider costs are much higher.

What this audit will look at

This audit will assess the main enablers and barriers to improving care experience by delivering The Promise, and how public bodies are responding to these.

To inform this assessment it will consider:

- To what extent are governance and accountability arrangements supporting all partners to work together, and to demonstrate collective accountability for delivering The Promise?
- How well are the Scottish Government, oversight bodies, Children's Service Planning Partnerships (CSPPs), and partners, measuring and reporting progress on delivering The Promise?
- What are the trends in spending and resourcing by the Scottish Government, CSPPs, and national bodies to deliver The Promise, and what would support a shift to prevention?

How we will carry out this audit

Published progress reports have assessed wider progress to date on delivering The Promise. This audit will not carry out a detailed assessment of progress but will build on these findings. It will also use other evidence, to assess the risks, and opportunities. This will include existing information which captures the views of people with care experience.

Many policy areas and bodies are involved in delivering The Promise. We will not examine individual public bodies in detail. We will consider national bodies, and departments that provide whole family support, including but not limited to, social work, justice organisations and the third sector. We will hold interviews with national bodies, including The Promise Scotland, and national representatives for local authorities.

What we want to happen as a result

This audit aims to support improvement in how public bodies work together to deliver The Promise. It will set out the landscape, and enablers and barriers for improving care experience and, where appropriate, highlight good practice and make recommendations.

Timetable

We plan to publish the audit on behalf of the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission in October 2025.

Contact

If you would like further information about this work please contact Claire Tennyson, Audit Manager at ctennyson@audit-scotland.gov.uk. For information on how we collect, use and store personal information as part of our audit work, please refer to the [privacy notice](#) on our [website](#).