

News release

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Care system reform lacks clarity and accountability

Plans to improve Scotland's care system have been slow to come together after not enough early delivery planning by the Scottish Government and COSLA.

The Promise, a national commitment to improving the lives of care experienced people by 2030, was made by the Scottish Government in 2020. Organisations and individuals remain dedicated to achieving that goal. But five years on, there is still confusion about what different bodies should be doing to deliver the changes needed.

Plans to date have lacked detail and direction for individual sectors. New structures set up by the Scottish Government to help deliver The Promise have lacked clarity about their roles and responsibilities. And Scottish Government efforts to streamline The Promise's complex governance arrangements have been insufficient. This has contributed to slow progress and made collective accountability challenging.

From the outset, there was no assessment of what resources and skills were needed to deliver The Promise by 2030, or how success would be defined or measured. A framework to measure progress was agreed in December 2024 but further work remains. The Scottish Government is working on national data, which is not currently good enough to assess if services are improving the lives of care experienced people.

Stephen Boyle, Auditor General for Scotland, said:

“Public bodies remain committed to improving Scotland's care system and the lives of people who go through it. But initial planning about how The Promise would be delivered didn't provide a strong platform for success.

“The Scottish Government needs to work with its partners to clearly set out the action that will be taken over the next five years to deliver The Promise, and how that work will be resourced.”

Angela Leitch, a member of the Accounts Commission, said:

"Despite public bodies working hard to support local and national change to the services underpinning Scotland's care system, greater pace and momentum is now needed.

"Local bodies need to work with their national partners to clarify roles and responsibilities, and prioritise the work needed to achieve The Promise's aims."

For further information contact:

Patrick McFall Tel: 0131 625 1663 / 07786660171

pmcfall@audit-scotland.gov.uk or media@audit-scotland.gov.uk

Notes to Editor:

1. The Promise was made by the Scottish Government in 2020 in response to an independent care review which engaged widely with care experienced people and the paid and unpaid workforce. More on The Promise [here](#).
2. Scottish Government funding for The Promise has increased but is difficult to quantify and track.
3. The Scottish Government introduced a £500 million Whole-Family Wellbeing fund in 2022/23 to help deliver The Promise. It is unclear how the £500 million was arrived at and only £148 million has been allocated.
4. Local authorities spent £1.2 billion on care experience in 2023/24, a 1.2 per cent increase in real terms since 2017/18.
5. Audit Scotland has prepared this report for the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission. All Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 are available at www.audit.scot
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