

Angus Promise Plan

Getting It Right for Care Experienced Children, Young People, and their Families

2021 – 2024

Foreword

I am pleased to bring forward this Promise Plan for Angus particularly at such an exciting time in Scotland. The Independent Care Review and [The Promise](#) brought the voices and experiences of thousands of children, young people and adults right into the centre of service planning. The Promise will influence what we do and how we do it over the next 10 years and I speak for corporate parents in Angus when I say we welcome this.

The challenge remains for our children and their families struggling in the context of inequalities like child poverty with low income, poor quality housing, lack of social and economic opportunity and the impact of mental health, substance use and domestic abuse affecting communities. Covid-19 has made these already significant difficulties more pronounced.

We know that for many children who are, or have, experienced the care system, the pandemic has meant increased poverty, unemployment and isolation, disrupted family contacts and relationships, increased anxiety and delays in making assessments and decisions that impact on family life. We work hard to get it right for children who need our love, care and support. Where things can be better, we listen to those experiences and to use them to drive positive change. Over the last 4 years we have worked with young people to understand what it is like for them in Angus and what we can do together.

"A desk is a dangerous place from which to view the world" (John Le Carre).

We remain committed through our Promise Plan to work together and do more to involve those with experience of the care system to ensure we are Getting It Right. Whilst The Promise requires whole system change, the Angus Promise Plan focuses on the specific needs of children, young people and families who are on the edges of the care system, in the system or have moved on to independence. We are working across the Angus Community Planning Partnership so that the Promise underpins whole service planning and delivery.

We need to ensure that children and young people experience the best support, care, and protection to minimise any further trauma and ensure we deliver support and environments to offer the best chance of success. With this in mind, we have consulted widely on our commitments below. We will continue to challenge each other to hold true to these.



Mark Armstrong

Chair Angus Corporate Parenting Board

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Introduction

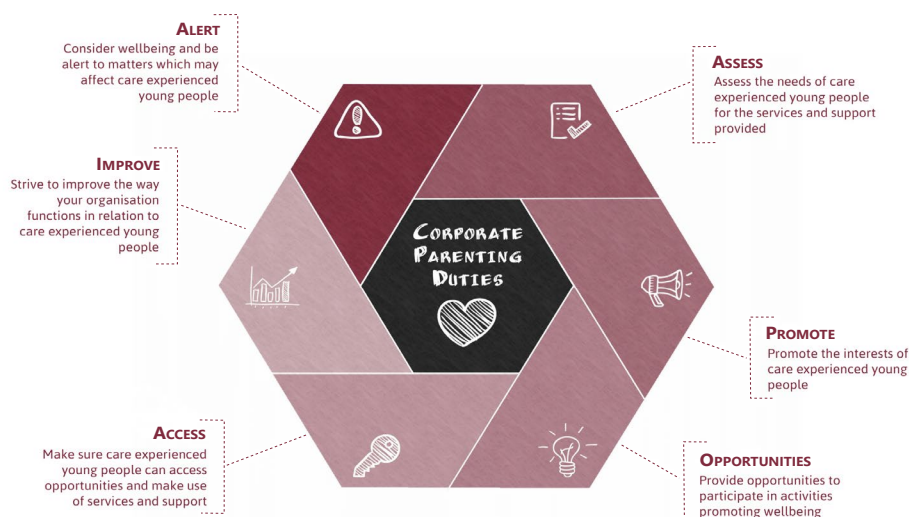
This plan sets out our commitments to Corporate Parenting in Angus. This is in line with the duties set out in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, Part 9.

The term 'Corporate Parenting' is defined in the guidance accompanying the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 as:

"an organisation's performance of actions necessary to uphold the rights and secure the wellbeing of a looked after child or care leaver, and through which physical, emotional, spiritual, social and educational development is promoted, from infancy through to adulthood... It is a role which should complement and support the actions of parents, families and carers, working with these key adults to deliver positive change for vulnerable children"

Corporate parenting intends to encourage people and organisations to do as much as they can to make sure children and young people who remain at home, live away from home or have previous care experience feel in control of their lives and are able to overcome the barriers they face. Figure 1 below highlights the key responsibilities and duties placed on named organisations.

Figure 1



This plan follows on from our previous [Corporate Parenting Plan 2017 – 2020](#) (extended through to 2021).

This plan sets out how organisations work together in partnership in Angus to provide supports, services and opportunities for our children and young people. These partner organisations come together in various strategic groups to plan, deliver and report on key actions (see below). Some organisations have their own single agency corporate parenting plans that have the details of how they will deliver change and improvement in a single organisation. In writing this plan, we have taken these into account including NHS Tayside Corporate Parenting Action Plan 2021 – 2024 and Scottish Children’s Reporters Administration, [Stay Connected \(scra.gov.uk\)](https://www.scra.gov.uk).

Our learning over the last 4 years has given us a better understanding of what we need to do. We have delivered many developments to improve the experience of young people and families; a summary of these is available in our annual report 2019 – 2021, but we know we have so much more to do. This plan reflects our commitment to this work.

We have heard the feedback from both our own young people and from the Promise which tells us how stigmatising some of our language is; for example being a ‘looked after child’, having a ‘corporate parent’, and for many children who live away from home, being in ‘placement’, going to ‘contact’ and having ‘siblings’ are terms that set them apart from language that we ordinarily use to describe children and their relationships. However the terms ‘looked after’ and ‘corporate parenting’ remain in legislation and we do have to use these terms at times in the course of this plan; we will use these descriptions only where we need to and are working on finding alternatives to improve our own practice in Angus.

Strategic Corporate Parenting Groups

Our current Corporate Parenting Board comes together every three months to monitor and ensure the delivery of improved services to our care experienced children and young people across a range of agencies. The board considers matters including the care, health, accommodation, education, and employment of care experienced children and young people.

The Corporate Parenting Lead Officers Group sits below the Corporate Parenting Board and works together to share information and support changes and developments to practice.

There are a range of members across the groups including:

- Representing voice of young people - Who Cares? Scotland, Angus Independent Advocacy
- Children's Hearings Scotland
- Angus Council Education and Lifelong Learning
- Angus Council Children, Families and Justice
- NHS Tayside
- Police Scotland
- Angus Alive
- Angus Active Schools
- Third Sector partners (Angus Third Sector Collaborative rep, Kith n Kin Angus)
- Angus Council Elected Members/Convenors of Children and Learning Committee
- Scottish Children's Reporter Administration
- Skills Development Scotland
- Angus Council Housing
- Rossie Young People's Trust (new partner joining from 2021)

Influence and Voice of Young People

At the publication of our last Corporate Parenting Plan in 2017, we recognised that we had not done enough to engage with our young people, to create opportunities that suited them and promoted their engagement, and created environments that supported relationships, listening and action. At that time our young people shared some of their 'asks' with us:

- *"We would like to know who our corporate parents are, and we would like them to know us"*
- *"We would like our corporate parents to make time to have a real relationship with us"*
- *"We would like our corporate parents to really understand our journey"*
- *"We want our corporate parents to make changes for us when we need them"*
- *"We want to be treated as equals"*

We have spent the last few years developing opportunities to listen to and value the voices of our young people. During 2017 and 2018, we consulted with a range of children and young people who told us that being directly involved in the Corporate Parenting Board or Group did not work for them. The feedback was clear; what works is not a 'one size fits all' and they asked us to provide a range of different ways to engage and to ensure that the messages they gave us were taken directly into the various planning groups.

The voice and experience of children, young people and families is brought into the planning groups in the following ways. This will continue through this plan and we will evolve the approach based on feedback:

- Advocacy representation – key advocacy providers attend the planning groups with the role of sharing the key messages from young people both from individual advocacy and collective advocacy, and holding partners to account
- Consultation events - there have been a variety of different consultation events for professionals and care experienced young people to come together and these are important to build relationships. These events have been led by the young people involved who told us the best way for them to have meaningful discussions together with corporate parents needed to be in environments that were comfortable for the young people and involvement in activities where everyone could have lots of fun together. Young people have also been involved in a variety of wider opportunities including consultations events with senior managers, leaders, and Councillors as well as individual meetings with corporate parents from the corporate parenting board and lead officers' group

- Young Person Advisor role – We have had 3 young people acting as Advisors by linking in with key people, developing relationships and advising us on initiatives and developments; we are keen to develop this approach through the life of this plan
- Young Persons Participation Worker – we are working with Who Cares? Scotland, to employ a local care experienced young person to support us to improve our approach to participation
- Digital engagement – we have already developed My Views, an app for young people to share views on their individual circumstances and we will work to promote this and develop other digital solutions including the ongoing offer of joining meetings on MS Teams or pre-recording views etc.

We still have some way to go to be accessible, representative and to work fully in partnership with young people and their families. Through these approaches we will ensure that our actions are influenced and directed by the voices of children and young people in Angus.

What the Data Tells Us

It is important we gather information and data to enable us to better understand how our young people experience care, what the 'data' tells us about a child or young person's journey through care, whether we are making improvements in the outcomes for some or many children and young people and critically where we need to target resources to better support this vulnerable, disadvantaged group. We have used this data to inform some of the priorities in this plan.

Demographic information

Local population [data](#) tells us the number of children and young people under 17 years has been decreasing over the past 5 years. However the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation ([SIMD](#)) highlights that despite there being fewer children in Angus, there are growing numbers of children and young people experiencing poverty and the additional pressure that poverty puts on families.

In Angus, approximately 1.1% of the population of children up to age 17 are looked after (this does not include those who have previously been looked after). There are around 80 young people in receipt of active care leaver support at any one time. The total number of children looked after across Scotland has gradually fallen over the last seven years. The number of children looked after in Angus in 2019 was 244, a decrease of 2.8% from 251 in 2018. The national downward trend is not reflected in the most recent local figures for looked after children in Angus which indicated an increase from 244 to 272 between 31 July 2019 and 31 July 2020, an increase of 11.5%.

Type and quality of care for children and young people

Figure 2 below shows that the numbers of children being looked after by family in kinship placements has remained stable. Angus Council invested in a Kinship Care Team in 2017 and analysis of the available data shows that more children are being supported to remain in kinship placements with fewer placement breakdowns. Kinship carers are being offered more extensive training and support to care for their family which helps children have a positive caring experience.

Figure2

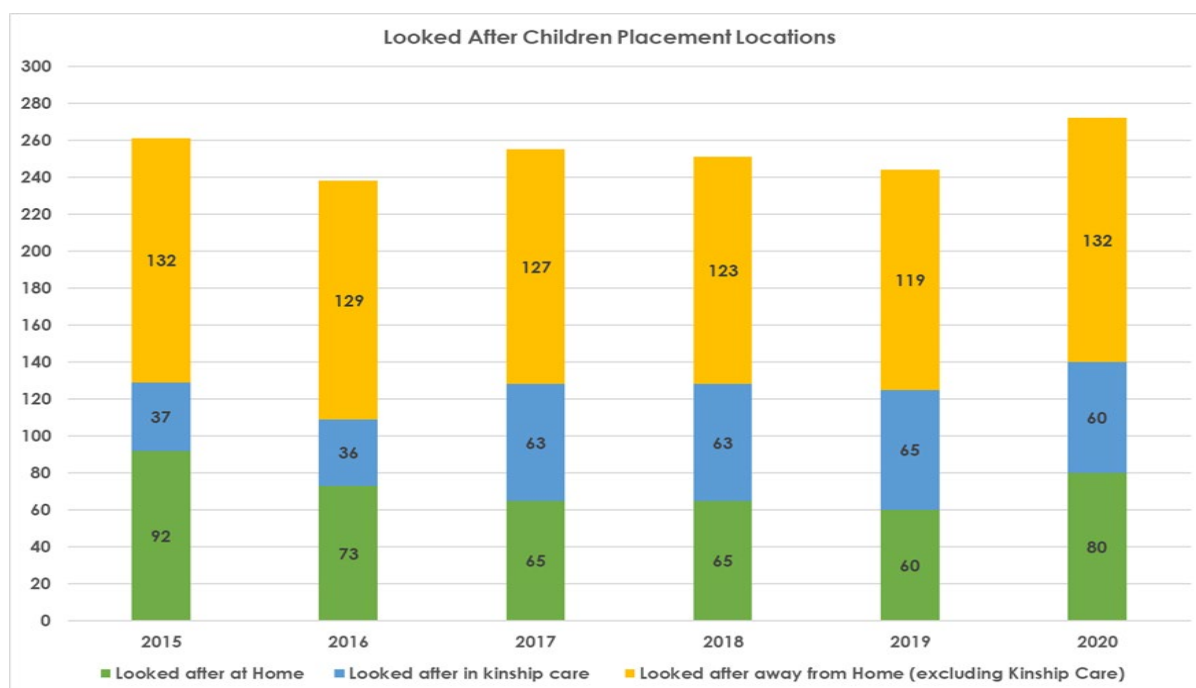
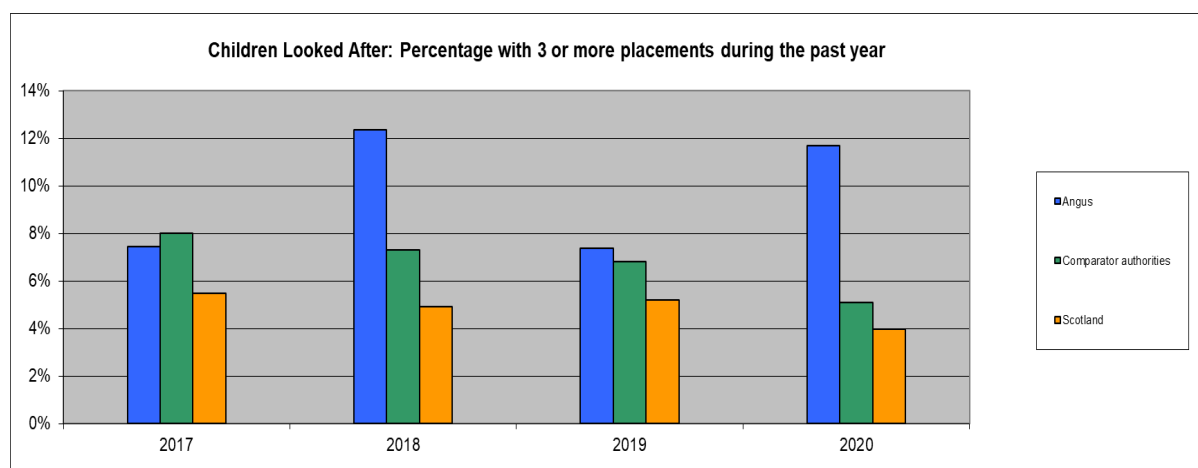


Figure 2 also shows an increase in the number of children who are looked after at home. Services are targeted to support children to remain at home where it is safe to do so. There has also been a slight increase in the number of children and young people being looked after away from home. For these children, 90% live in family-based placements and around 10% are cared for in residential houses. Angus Council has established resource and residential review panels to ensure scrutiny of types and quality of care for children living in foster care and external residential provision to ensure this is what the child or young person needs. We will continue to monitor and review trends over time and will use the experiences of children, young people, and families to inform our approach. Our focus will continue to be on keeping children and young people within their local communities where that meets their needs.

Across Scotland, trend data shows that around 5% of looked after children have three or more placements during the past year. We can see from Figure 3 below, that performance on this measure has been variable for children in Angus. However, in 2018, over 12% of looked after children had 3 or more placements in the last year and by 2020, this had reduced to 7.7%. When considering the data, it is important to note that the number of looked after and accommodated children in Angus is such that percentage changes are a less reliable indicator of performance. This remains an important priority locally to ensure young people experience stability in their care.

Figure 3



We are looking at how well we keep brothers and sisters together in Angus and are working to implement [Staying Together and Connected: Getting it Right for Sisters and Brothers, National Practice Guidance](#). When we consider the number of children from the same household who live together away from home, snapshot data from 2020 shows that 52% of children live with all the children from their household. However when we track each of the families and consider the reasons why some children do not live together, it is mostly linked to children living in blended families who are not placed together because there are alternatives for some children, to live for example with a kinship carer who is unrelated to other children in the family. We need to understand this more closely, so this is an area of focus in this plan; not only the placing of children together but how we maintain closer relationships and family ties for those not living together.

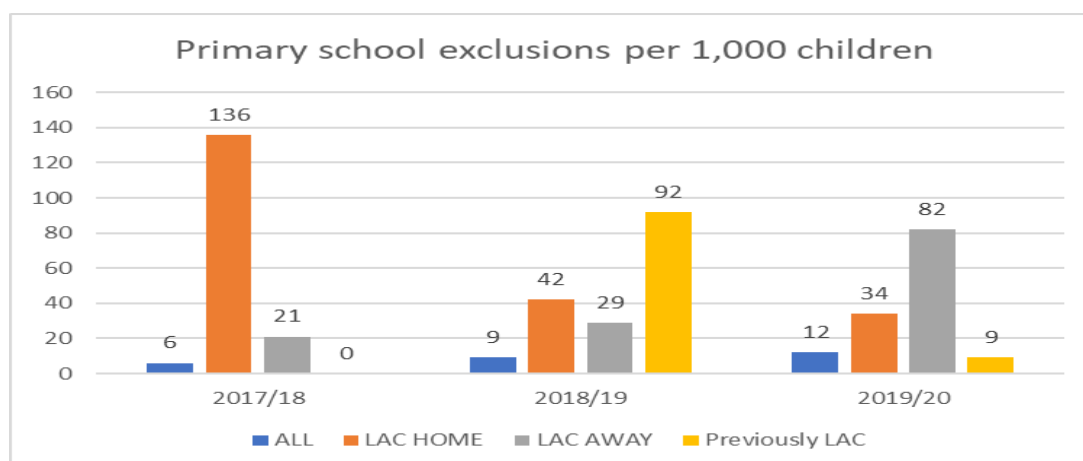
Attainment for children and young people

Fewer young people who are 'looked after' achieved qualifications in literacy and numeracy compared to their peers and 87% of young people who are looked after away from home were recorded as having an initial positive school leavers destination, compared to 56% of young people who are looked after at home.

Angus has the highest exclusion rate in Scotland per 1,000 for looked after children and young people. Figure 4 shows that exclusions for primary aged children who are looked after at home have been decreasing since 2017/18.

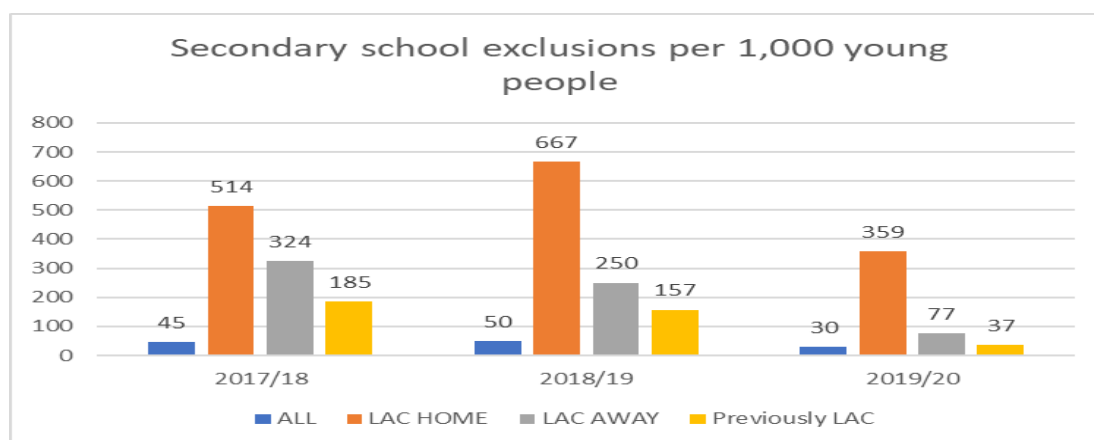
However, exclusions for those looked after away from home have increased over the same period. Some caution in interpretation is again required due to the small numbers of children these figures relate to.

Figure 4



For secondary aged young people, Figure 5 below shows that patterns are more variable. Exclusions for those looked after at home remain high. For young people looked after away from home, there has been a steady decrease since 2017/18. Further work is being undertaken to understand the data available regarding exclusions, particularly for secondary school.

Figure 5



Attendance for children looked after away from home is closely aligned to overall attendance rates; for previously looked after children, attendance is a little below their peers; attendance is lower for children looked after at home, and has been decreasing over the past few years in both primary and secondary schools.

Nationally, the proportion of children who are looked after at home has decreased over the past decade. More locally, across Tayside, Angus has (at 30%) the highest proportion of looked after children remaining at home with their parents. The data above highlights a need for us to focus on children looked after at home, to better understand the barriers to educational engagement for this group and to ensure we target resources appropriately.

What our young people tell us needs to change

As part of our consultation approach, alongside the collective advocacy group work program, we held a consultation fortnight in January 2021 where we reached out to all children and young people currently in our care and those care experienced young people engaged with aftercare services.

Feedback from children and young people during the consultation fortnight highlighted concerns regarding the numbers of changes in social workers and numbers of placement changes for some young people including changes due to respite. Concern about information not being passed on at points of transitions and the loss of personal and family identity was highlighted with some young people who described how their personal history was not fully recorded or shared with them. Not being heard and listened to in meetings and in the wider sense of not being involved in their own plan was a concern for some young people.

Suggestions for positive change included:

- supporting staff relationships with young people longer term. this was felt to be hindered by procedures and protocols such as having to change workers at key points.
- Prioritising and supporting relationships between brothers and sisters especially when they are not living together.
- early recognition and support for young people experiencing difficulties with their mental health and wellbeing.
- Stigma is an issue for our care experienced children and young people; language and vocabulary used by everyone around them is too professional and should be more child friendly; phrases such as 'contact' rather than family time and 'placement' rather than home is stigmatising and sets care experienced children apart from their peers.
- Training for carers and staff to provide better understanding, support and care was felt to be important.
- Development of a central place to access information on matters relating to the lives of the young people in care or previously in care.

Formal qualifications and further education are not felt to be within the reach of all of our care experienced young people and staying in school or moving onto further education can be very difficult when they are still dealing with early life traumas and for some at a significant transition point as they move towards adulthood.

We need to better understand the destinations of our young people. Opportunities for young people for work experience, volunteering etc. should be available at an earlier stage and for longer with support in place in the longer term, and at the point when care experienced young adults are ready.

Case study examples

"Sometimes they listened to my views and they helped me with school. I just didn't like school, I stopped going at 14 and then went to (another) place which I liked better and my attendance was better, I started to meet new people and make friends with other people my age and my confidence improved. I always said I would not go to college, but I applied for college and got in. I hope to go to university".

Care experienced young adult

"Social work has helped with my relationship with mum, it improved after I moved out. I'm in supported accommodation now but away to get my own house next month. My health also got better. I never used to go to the doctor or dentist. When I met Throughcare they went with me to appointments and I got loads of work done and now I phone and go to appointments by myself."

Care experienced young person

The Chair of the Kinship Panel highlighted good, relationship-based practice and working across boundaries to ensure a young person had access to the one key relationship that they had identified as important. Excerpt from minute:

"Panel queried if the case management would be transferred to XXX, given the significant distance between Angus and XXX. (The worker) confirmed that Angus will remain case holders at present. (worker) has built a trusting relationship with (young person) and it is felt further changes would be detrimental to (young person) at this time. (Carer) stated that (young person) sees (worker) as a positive support, and they would like this to continue."

A young person has written about the person who inspires her the most:

"the person who inspires me the most is R, my social worker. She is funny.... She likes to play with me.... She keeps me safe.... She brings me presents from my (family).... Thank you for being my social worker for 7 years".

Young person age 11

Parents also reflect the importance of relationships with workers. The following is parental feedback on our newly qualified social workers' first year:

"XXX is brilliant. Not a bad word to say about her. She has so much time and patience for us 3 and always listens to everything I say to her. She's been so helpful! God-send"

"Couldn't have asked for a better worker so easy to talk to listened and gave very good advice. Just wish we had her before. She made my kids feel at ease and they got on really well from the start and that doesn't happen very often"

Areas for reflection, learning from feedback:

"I got closed to social work before I was 16, they just closed me and no support was provided, I was no longer social works responsibility until I committed an offence".

Young care experienced person

"The main thing from my care experience I remember is being bounced about from place to place. Every time I got comfortable I would then have to move again. There was no consistency for me, I lived with 5/6 different carers. I felt isolated from my real family. I wasn't able to build relationships properly due to all the moving about".

Young care experienced person

I feel happy living with XXXXX but sometimes I feel that I shouldn't as I don't want to upset mum

Young person age 12 plus on My Views

Some feedback on what has helped:

...helping me to understand who I am

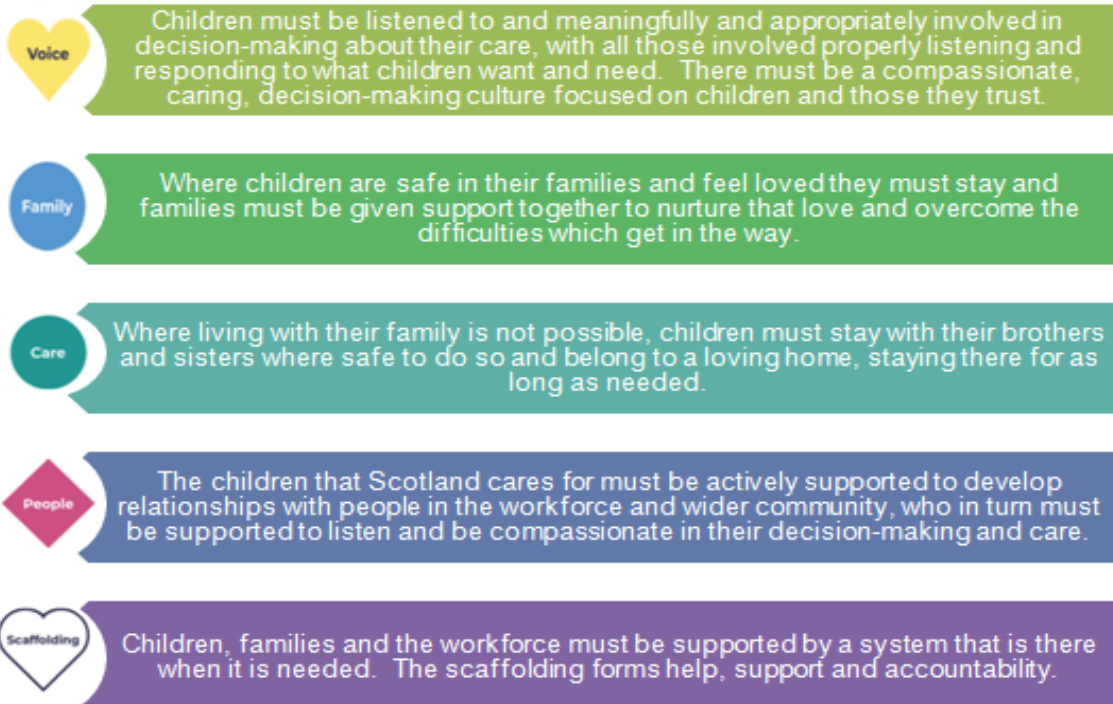
young person age 12 plus on My Views

Someone makes me a cup of coffee, have a chat with a trusted adult

Young person age 12 plus on My Views

The Promise

The Independent Care Review commenced in 2017 and concluded in 2020 with The Promise which outlines 5 key foundations of change:



Angus Promise Plan 2021 - 2024 is based on the findings of the Care Review and our commitment to uphold the rights of children in line with the Promise and United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This plan will support us to make changes that will ensure we keep our promise to all our care experienced children and young people.

As a partnership, we will focus on the following promises to our children and young people. These have been shaped by data, and evaluation of earlier work, feedback from and working together with local children, young people, parents, carers and staff:



Our Promise to You #AngusPromisePlan

Your Voice

We will listen to you by using the standards you have set us. We will create opportunities and environments that encourage you to engage with us and recognise you as an individual; we will work hard to provide different opportunities for you in all matters that affect you.

Your Family and Relationships

We will support you to stay with your family as we recognise that, if it is safe, your family is the best place for you to live. Where you cannot remain with your family, we promise to support you to keep and develop relationships with the people who are important to you.

Your Rights and Opportunities to Learn

We will understand and respect you and your care experiences and the impact that these may have on your learning. We will ensure you get what you need to thrive in education by identifying and breaking down the barriers to your learning and inclusion.

Your Mental and Emotional Health and Wellbeing

We will ensure you have access to a range of different services, so you feel supported to deal with any trauma and loss. We will recognise the importance of one key relationship to support you with your wellbeing.

Your Right to Move on to a Bright Future

We will support you, when you are ready, to move on from care. We will behave like good parents by supporting you to be independent whilst also being there for you when you need us.

To keep these promises to you, we need to work together. We will ensure the right local 'scaffolding' in Angus, we will work in partnership, plan together and make sure the needs of care experienced young people are met across the different plans. Ensuring that everything is joined up in policies, procedures and importantly in action.

If this does not happen well enough or fast enough, we will challenge each other, plan how to improve and learn from our mistakes. We will work honestly, respect each other and, most importantly, bring everything we do back to the difference it will make to our children, young people, and families.

To do this we will also:

Support the workforce to understand, care and respect work with children, young people and families and make sure we do not reinforce inequality by our language or actions.

The Plan 2021 – 2024

This plan has the key actions we have agreed to deliver together over the next 3 years. Single agencies are working on many improvements that are contained in their own improvement plans. The progress on actions that require partnership support that will be monitored via the Corporate Parenting Board to deliver this plan. Our key actions are related to our promise to young people under the following headings:

1. Voice
2. Family, Relationships and Care
3. Rights and Opportunities to Learn
4. Mental and Emotional Health and Wellbeing
5. Moving On
6. Workforce and Planning

the Corporate Parenting Lead Officers Group will work from an annual plan which will show how we are delivering these actions and how we know progress is being made.

1. Voice

Continue to build our participation strategy to promote opportunity and environments for engagement. This will include:

- Promotion of digital engagement using My Views
- Offering choice on how meetings are held by rolling out digital, direct, and blended meeting options for children and families
- Continued development of relationship-based advocacy and increasing uptake of individual advocacy
- Continued development of collective advocacy with support from a dedicated participation worker with lived experience
- Rolling out the PREpare model of engagement in child's planning meetings
- Growing the development of our corporate parenting engagement approach with Young People's Advisors, recruitment of care experienced Participation Assistant, collective activities, and targeted consultation events
- Evidencing how we have acted in response to the views and wishes of our young people

2. Family, Relationships and Care

Continue to promote and support all relationships that are important to children and young people and where it is safe to do so support children to stay with their families. This will include:

- Work in partnership with NSPCC to improve children and families' experiences of return home assessments, plans and support
- Establish a sub-group to understand the experience of Angus children being placed together or apart from brothers and sisters and work with young people, families, and carers to identify improvements at the initial placing stage and throughout care; implement the Staying Together Connected National Guidance
- Promote and facilitate key relationship for children and young people and show evidence of this
- Ensure all our caregivers provide a secure base model of care to our young people to help promote positive relationships and outcomes
- Extend the Aberlour support service, providing intensive flexible support to children living at home out with office hours (tier 2)
- Partner with Angus Alive to Improve access for care experienced children, young people and adults to leisure activities and social opportunities
- Prevent the criminalisation of care experienced children and young people:
 - Ensure they are fully aware of their rights
 - All agencies to promote and protect these rights
 - Young people who are aged under 18 to be supported within Children's Hearing system
- Help families to maximise their income. provide financial help and support through the provision of a discretionary fund available to pregnant women and families with children in need via Welfare Rights service
- Work on delivering Better Hearings programme to ensure children feel partners to decisions about them and giving effect to the promise and changes in legislation ensuring the child's voice is strong

3. Rights and Opportunities to Learn

We will ensure Children and young people rights under the UNCRC are consistently upheld by addressing the barriers to education and extra-curricular activities in school and the wider community

- Host an Angus website to ensure children, young people and families have access to information about their rights, what to expect in care, and how to access help and support

- Improve inclusion and educational outcomes of the care experienced children by undertaking a programme of review meetings with care experienced pupils, staff, parents and carers to understand what leads to and prevents exclusion. examine the planning and support that schools provide for our care experienced learners at a systemic and individual level
- Implement findings from the reviews above to break down education barriers; promote attendance and inclusion and monitor impact
- Direct our Inclusion Support Work towards those children looked after at home to ensure a focus on learners at greatest risk of exclusion, poor attendance and poor attainment
- Increased access to advocacy support for children and young people to understand their rights in relation to Children's Hearings

4. Mental and Emotional Health and Wellbeing

We will ensure children have access to a range of mental health and wellbeing supports that are accessible and are provided in different ways including digital support and face to face

- Review the service model of health assessment and reviews for Care Experienced Children and Young People and Care Leavers
- Ensure care experienced young people are supported through our developing Angus Mental Health and Wellbeing Programme, which provides a tiered support service to meet the different mental health and wellbeing needs including the looked after children (LAC) Nursing pathway up to 26 years
- Ensure the needs of care experienced children and young people are included in the local implementation of Connected Tayside: An Emotional Health and Wellbeing Strategy

5. Moving On

We will support our young people to have good transitions when they are moving into adulthood. We will conclude the mapping and gap analysis and design services with young people to provide more seamless support

- Services will work together to support young people moving into adulthood to ensure seamless transition into specialist adult services when required
- Housing pathways will provide young people moving on with options which meets their needs, and additional support for as long as it is required
- Expand the moving on opportunities available for care leavers so that we can better match resources to need e.g. more Supported Lodgings placements; emergency respite placements for care leavers who are in crisis

- We understand that leaving home is not always a straightforward choice and will explore options for returning to care if needed
- Support young people to 'stay put' for as long as they need and want to
- Support young people to maintain relationships with carers after they have moved on
- Decisions regarding transitions for young people moving on into independence will be made based on individual need, in conjunction with young people
- Information sharing between partners/agencies will be clear and confident to better support young people moving on

6. Workforce and Planning

There will be a consistent approach in Angus which clearly values and understands care experience

- Establish a working group involving people with care experience which addresses the stigmatising language used across services and raises awareness of the importance of inclusive and non-stigmatising language
- We will develop leadership across the partnership and work with Columba 1400 to deliver a Children and Families Leadership Academy and work to deliver the plan that results from this work
- We will continue to invest in developing a trauma-informed workforce across services
- We will raise awareness of the Promise, linking with Community Planning Partners to embed this widely and ensure whole system change is influenced by the Promise; this will include single agency and multi-agency training and other learning models such as practitioner enquiry

Draft plan agreed at Angus Corporate Parenting Board on 30th July 2021

Should you required any further information on this plan, please contact PEOPLE@angus.gov.uk