

North Lanarkshire Council Report

Education and Families Committee

approval noting

Ref

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P080.1 *Keeping the Promise: Support for Families, Children and Young People*

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Executive Summary

Family support is a key strand of the council's programme of work to support all children and young people achieve their potential in line with the ambitions of the Plan for North Lanarkshire. Family Support is also central to the delivery of The Promise, which calls for flexible, relational, and intensive family support to be embedded into the practice of all services supporting children and their families.

This report advises CMT on the opportunity to escalate transformation in this area through joint work with the national Promise team on the area of Human and Economic Cost Modelling, work which is fundamental to the ability to shift investment upstream and to the realisation of the Promise. The synergy with the Plan for North Lanarkshire, Delivering for Communities and work already undertaken in North Lanarkshire to shift the balance of care and remodel support for families forms the key rationale for the request to North Lanarkshire to partner in this work.

Previous reports to committee have provided details of improvement activity to the intensive family support service and direct financial support to address the adverse impact of the pandemic on families. This report also provides an update on three other strands of this work:

1. *Contextual Safeguarding*
2. *Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Support and Services Framework*
3. *Youth Justice*

All these strands of work are rooted in our values and approach to supporting families which understands that many parents, families and carers have been, or are, themselves impacted by adversity including poverty and that an inclusive, strength-based and trauma informed way of working are central to successfully engaging with children, young people and their families. This programme of work contributes to the wider work on health and wellbeing being taken forward within the service, as reported to committee, and through the North Lanarkshire Children's Services Plan 21-23.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Education and Families Committee:

- (a) Endorse the developments activity outlined in this report and the next steps as set out in section 2.

The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority	Support all children and young people to realise their full potential
Ambition statement	(9) Invest in early interventions, positive transitions, and preventative approaches to improve outcomes for children and young people

1. Background

- 1.1 In February 2020 the Independent Care Review reported its findings in the form of *The Promise*, which sets out a path for a 10-year programme of transformation in the delivery of care and family support in Scotland and places the voice of children and young people at its heart. North Lanarkshire Council has committed to supporting this programme and to *Keeping the Promise*.
- 1.2 *The Promise* is an ambitious call to recalibrate and transform whole systems and culture to ensure all children enjoy nurturing and loving relationships in which to thrive. *The Promise* therefore places prevention and family support at the heart of its vision of care and support in which as many children and young people as possible can achieve their potential within their own families.
- 1.3 The Promise Plan 21-24 published on 31st March 2021 sets out 5 key priorities for the first phase of this programme including a focus on 'Whole Family Support'. It sets out the expectation that the 10 key principles of family support outlined within *the Promise* are embedded into practice by 2024 and that there is a place in every community for families with children 'to stay and play with their children and get support and advice'.
- 1.4 In parallel to other developments to address the mental health and wellbeing needs of children and young people through additional investment in CAMHS services and school counselling, the Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Board, jointly chaired by COSLA and Scottish Government, has overseen the development of a Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Support and Services Framework. This Framework has a complementary focus on early support for children and young people within the context of their families and communities. This shares the aspirations of *the Promise*, focusing on co-production and support which is accessible where and when children, young people and their families need this most. North Lanarkshire received funding of £938,000 under this Framework for 2021/22 and will receive the same level of funding for 2022/23.

Local Context

- 1.6 The *Plan for North Lanarkshire* and its commitment to invest in preventive approaches to improve the outcomes of children and young people is fully aligned to this national policy context. The ASN Review and creation of the We Aspire College to provide inclusive education sits within a holistic approach to meeting the needs of children and young people and is aligned to the principles of effective intensive family support. Moving forward planned town and community hub developments, along with our family learning centres and spaces provided by Empowering Clusters, will provide

a platform for the type of spaces envisaged within the Promise Plan. The review of intensive support to families, reported to committee in September 2020, has also strengthened our capacity to provide responsive and holistic family in a number of areas including out of hours, to care experienced young people and through the provision of family group meetings.

- 1.7 In May 2021 the new Children's Services Plan for North Lanarkshire was published framed around the foundations of *the Promise*. Family support is at the centre of the plan which prioritises an approach in which families get the support that 'promotes the nurture and love children need and overcome the difficulties which get in the way'. Within the Education and Families Service the new operating model and cluster-based planning and wellbeing teams are fundamental to this, as is the work to strengthen planning for individual children and young people through the GIRFEC pathway.

2. Report

Contextual Safeguarding

- 2.1 In May 2021 the committee was advised of plans to implement a contextual safeguarding approach to protect young people at risk of harm outside the home, including criminal and sexual exploitation, knife crime, or abuse within peer groups. The approach supports a shift in practice and culture in which child protection professionals and partners actively take steps to make the places in which young people have experienced abuse safer.
- 2.2 As part of the implementation plan, the multiagency steering group is undertaking an audit of current practice comprising a review of processes and consultation with staff. In addition our Promise Development Workers are leading, with the support of Who Care's Scotland, a consultation and engagement with young people in relation to their experience of service responses to risk of harm outside the family. An early output of this process has been to address an identified gap in the coordination and oversight of interventions to address significant harms to young people in the community through the establishment of a Young Person's Safeguarding Panel. The panel considers young people at significant risk of harm outside the home and is co-chaired by Police Scotland and Social Work. It has representation from across council services (CLD, education, community safety, housing) as well as from partners to ensure a holistic response. The panel adds value to case planning with young people by agreeing actions to address risks in locations or contexts for young people.

Next Steps

- 2.3 In addition to the multiagency audit noted above, the service is also completing a self-evaluation specific to the approach within the Education and Families service to young people at risk of harm outside the home and/or who are reported missing. This will provide further focus to improvement actions. The next steps for the contextual safeguarding steering group are to implement the multi-agency training plan for contextual safeguarding to ensure the workforce is trained to the right level in the approach. The group is also coordinating a pilot of the approach within a secondary school to align contextual safeguarding with the range of preventative supports being developed through Empowering Clusters.

Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Support and Services Framework

- 2.3 Initial information on additional supports and service enhancements established in early 2021 under the Framework to support children's mental health and wellbeing at an early stage were reported to committee in September 2021. These included increased weekend emotional and wellbeing support to care experienced young people; an enhancement to the Living Life to the Full programme delivered by CLD and the delivery of Let's Introduce Anxiety Management (LIAM) in schools- a preventative approach for children and young people experiencing stress and anxiety.
- 2.4 Additionally an approach to co-producing supports between schools, the community and voluntary sector was also piloted. 20 projects were established across 22 schools, supporting a total of 462 children and young people between April and June 2021. The impact of the pilots and the process of establishing them has now been evaluated leading to the continuation and strengthening of the approach with a greater focus on (1) Co-producing supports with children, young people and their families; (2) Measuring outcomes for children and young people in line with the mental health and wellbeing quality framework; and (3) Developing supports that prioritise emotional and practical family support. 26 schools are now participating in this work and 30 projects will be in place by end of March 2022.
- 2.5 As part of the strategy to deliver on The Promise Plan 21-24, and ensure services meet the 10 principles of intensive family support, the service is also piloting an integrated approach to children and young people referred to CAMHS, but who are assessed as not meeting the criteria for this service. The aim of pilot is to enhance family support provision within two clusters, and ensure children and families have a clear pathway to support at universal and additional levels when intensive levels of support are not indicated from CAMHS or social work. In this way, children's wellbeing needs will be identified and supported by those closest to them through the GIRFEC pathway and eliminate the risk of children's needs being lost in the system or families having to 'start again'.
- 2.6 In addition, a further family support worker is being recruited to the support service for children and families impacted by neurodevelopmental difficulties to allow schools to access the support for families directly at an early stage.

Next Steps

- 2.7 The Improving Children's Services Group, provides the governance for the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Support and Services Framework in North Lanarkshire, and planning is undertaken by a dedicated multiagency task group. The next steps for the group are
- To complete a co-production exercise with care experienced young people who have identified a need for some more specific mental health supports
 - To develop further service provision in line with findings of the SDQ work reported separately to committee, with particular reference to the needs of children and young people looked after at home or previously looked after

- To evaluate outcomes to support further planning in line with the Wellbeing Quality Framework

Review of Youth Justice Services

- 2.8 In September 2021, the committee was advised of the plan to review our approach to youth justice to ensure alignment with the new national vision and priorities for youth justice, the actions within the Promise Plan 21-24 and to strengthen early intervention for children and young people in conflict with the law through the GIRFEC pathway within Empowering Clusters. Ensuring young people and their families receive a rights-based and holistic support is at the heart of the review.
- 2.9 A self-evaluation exercise involving a case file audit, staff survey and engagement with young people is now well underway and will be completed by March 2022. However, we already know that courts need to be provided with options to support greater use of powers to refer 16 and 17 year olds to children's hearings for disposal in line with new sentencing guidelines. The service is therefore working in partnership with the Children's Reporter, the Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP) and through discussion with the Sheriff Principal with a view to reducing further the numbers of 16 and 17 year olds being sentenced in the court system and the time young people are subject to a compulsory supervision. A bid to the Promise Partnership has been made to allow the service to increase wrap around and holistic support to divert 16 & 17 year-olds from custody or secure accommodation and increase support for under 16's in conflict with the law. The ADP will match fund to provide additional support to young people experiencing substance use difficulties. An innovative part of the programme is to draw on the success of Structured Deferred Sentencing by piloting a similar approach in hearings with the aim of young people spending less time on a CSO with a comprehensive care plan underpinned by intensive service provision, and using panel member continuity, to meet need holistically and reduce risk of future interaction with the adult justice system. Panel Members and a dedicated Reporter will form part of the initiative and be jointly trained alongside dedicated social work staff.

Next Steps

- 2.10 Following completion of the self-evaluation exercise the youth justice review will work with young people and staff, with the support of Children and Young People's Centre for Justice, to re-design services to reduce young people coming into conflict with the law through the provision of holistic and rights base support. The service will continue to update the committee on this ongoing programme of work. The service will also explore alternative funding the project outlined in 2.19, should we be unsuccessful in securing funding from The Promise Partnership.

The Cost of Care: Human and Economic Cost Modelling

- 2.11 As part of its suite of reports, The Independent Care Review published two reports, 'Money' and 'Follow the Money', which detail how inadequate outcomes of the current

'care system' have implications on the public purse as well as the human cost to individuals: 'when the 'care system' fails children and adults they fail in a way that hurts them, is avoidable, and drives more demand on services' (The Money p.5). *The Promise* itself sets out how a transformed system should address such failure and The Promise Plan contains milestones towards achieving this over the next 10 years.

- 2.12 The Promise Plan 21-24 requires partnerships, by 2024, to embed human and economic cost modelling across budgeting and organisational process and challenges organisations to work together to align and spread investment to achieve the transformational change required. This involves shifting the balance of spend and strategic investment in relationship-based and preventative support for children and families, a direction of travel which aligns well with the *Plan for North Lanarkshire* and our aspirations for family support and co-production with families and communities. In recognition of this shared ambition North Lanarkshire is one of three local authorities/partnerships in Scotland chosen to work with the Promise Team at national level to achieve this change. This will allow us to build on work undertaken previously through the Realigning Children's Services Programme and to identify the structural barriers and bridging support necessary to achieve this transformation. We will therefore be partnering with Promise Team to
- Establish how money and resources are currently used across the partnership
 - Develop models for how we use money better to deliver better outcomes and better value
 - Understand the strategic investment required to get to where we need to keep *The Promise*
- 2.13 The work which has also been endorsed by partners through the Children's Services Partnership Board is at the initial engagement and scoping stage with initial contact made with senior managers and the council's finance team. It is recognised that outcomes for young people are impacted by a range of public services as well as macro-economic policies and the ambition parameters of the current work are being established. This is a welcome and exciting opportunity for North Lanarkshire as working with The Promise Team will add capacity and support to make transformational change and to make the case for the kind of funding required to keep *The Promise* and in particular the bridging funding required to support the shift in the balance of spend upstream,
- 2.14 Next Steps will be identified following the conclusion of the initial scoping and engagement phase and will include dialogue with CMT and identification of the parameters of future work,

3. Public Sector Equality Duty and Fairer Scotland Duty

- 3.1 The developments in improving support to families described above aim to improve outcomes and remove barriers to success by ensuring that structures, systems, and processes align effectively around the needs of individual children, young people, and their families.

The activities described in this report therefore support the council in its delivery of its Fairer Scotland Duty. In the design of new service approaches, the service will

undertake Equality Impact and Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments as required.

4. Impact

4.1 Financial impact

The developments to strengthen family support detailed above are being or will be delivered within existing budgets or are being met through specific government grants as detailed in section 2.

Through the work on Human and Economic Cost Modelling, the service will, with the Promise Team, identify the costs of meeting the needs of children and young people within the current service model while new services are being designed and implemented.

4.2 HR policy / Legislative impact

The above developments support the council deliver its duties under Part 12 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 to provide support to children at risk of being accommodated and increase the ability of the council to meet its wider duties to children in need under S 22 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

4.3 Technology / Digital impact

There are no additional technology or digital impacts anticipated with these proposals.

4.4 Environmental impact

There is no environmental impact anticipated with these proposals.

4.5 Communications impact

There is no communication impact anticipated with these proposals.

4.6 Risk impact

There are risks to outcomes for children and young people and to the reputation of the council if action is not taken to strengthen family support and our response to young people in conflict with the law. There are also financial risks associated with a growth in the number of children experiencing formal care, should there be an insufficient focus on providing high quality and flexible intensive support and effective early intervention.

5. Measures of success

5.1 Reduction in the numbers of children experiencing care away from home.

5.2 Children and young people have strong and trusting relationships

5.3 Children and young people feel safe and supported in their own community

6. Supporting documents

6.1 The Promise Plan, March 2021

<https://thepromise.scot/plan-21-24/>

6.2 Justice for children and young people: Vision and Priorities

[Justice for children and young people - a rights-respecting approach: vision and priorities - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

6.3 Community Mental health and Wellbeing Supports and Services Framework

[Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Supports and Services Framework \(www.gov.scot\)](#)