



#keepthepromise

CROSSREACH

Care you can put your faith in

Edition 4: Autumn 2023

We will keep the promise

Hey Everyone,

Welcome to the 4th edition of CrossReach's Promise newsletter which provides our readers with an update of the changes and improvements that CrossReach is making to #keepthepromise. In this edition we are focusing on the importance of language. The Promise is very clear that 'Scotland must change the language of care. Language must be easily understood, be positive and must not create or compound stigma'. It goes on to say that 'Organisations that have responsibilities towards care experienced children and young people will be able to demonstrate that they are embedding destigmatising language and practices across the way they work'.

We hope that within this edition, you find lots of resources to get you thinking about the importance of the language that we use when supporting children, young people and their families and when working alongside your colleagues too. The best thing about changing our language so that it does not compound stigma is that it's free.



Language matters. It's the raw material of story, it changes how we feel about ourselves and others, and it's a portal to connection. With the same amount of power, language can also be used to strip people of their dignity and humanity. With awareness about how dehumanization works, comes the responsibility to call out dangerous language when we recognise it'.

Brene Brown



Thanks to all those who contributed, it's greatly appreciated.

Ruth

Highlights from the Promise Engagement Team



Since our last edition we have been able to progress further with our project to redesign the initial assessment and care planning frameworks. Thanks to all practitioners and young people who have spent time reviewing and evaluating the most recent prototypes. We are hoping that we can spend August piloting a new version of the care plans with two of our care services.

We hope to not only streamline paperwork and administrative responsibilities, but that children and young people are able to become more involved and have greater ownership in the development of their care plans.



Kirsten, Ruth and Sheila attended The Promise Partnership Showcase which was a chance to share and learn from other organisations who have received investment from the Promise Partnership's Good Childhood fund. At the event, each funded project developed a poster which highlighted:

- The change which was driven by the funding, and
- The learning gained from the project.

You can view the poster which CrossReach submitted [here](#) as well as the other contributions from other organisations too!



We are excited to share that our collaborative project with Hillhead Housing Association is progressing and we are currently waiting to receive keys to a potential property identified for a young person. We have been busy working alongside the team at Finniescroft Farm to put plans in place for one of our young people to move into this flat if suitable. We hope that in the coming months, he will have moved into his first flat to experience interdependent living, with the support of those that know and love him, whilst having the safety net of Finniescroft Farm should he feel that he is not ready for this transition.



We have also been welcomed into each of the houses recently as well as having input in the education development day where we facilitated several workshops around:

- Ensuring children's voices are heard
- The intentional use of self
- A coherent story: supporting young people to own their narrative
- The importance of language

Thank you to all teams who have participated and have provided feedback on your learning experience.

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CrossReach
Residential Care
& Education
Services

A Relational Model of Care
to Support Children and Young People

Speaking of learning experiences – Our practice model Teams channel is now live! The channel is an opportunity for us to read and engage with the practice model and to reflect and contemplate upon our learning.

You can access the teams channel by clicking on the picture.



Spotlight on Good Practice:


Language – How Words Create Worlds



We chat with Julie Conway from Mount Pleasant, one of our residential care services that supports children who for various reasons, are unable to live within their family setting for a period of time. She tells us why and how Mount Pleasant is changing the language used in it's service.

1. Can you describe the journey that the team has made in terms of changing language?

As a team we got together and discussed some of the language that could be deemed stigmatising or just made us feel a bit funny when we were using it and came up with some suitable alternatives. I think for so many of us, the language that we use had become so habitual that there was almost just a level of acceptance around that's' just how it is.




Coming together as a group gave us a moment to pause and reflect and go why do we use those words such as 'provisions' for shopping and 'rec' for fun activities.

How have you supported each other to change?

We have made an agreement that as a team we will be helpful in reminding one another when we slip back into our old ways. Change is a group activity so I think we've been clear in that pointing out when we might slip up is supportive rather than critical.

2. Why do you think it's important that we continuously reflect upon the language we use when supporting children and young people?

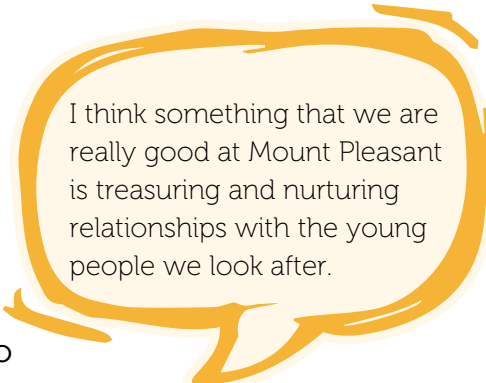


I think for our children and young people they already feel quite different to their pals who are not care experienced.

I think the language that we use can exacerbate that feeling of isolation and 'I am different', you must keep it real. As a mum, I don't think I once said to my kids 'are you spending time with your peers tonight' so why would I say it differently to the young people I support at Mount Pleasant?

3. What are you doing as an individual or as a team to #keepthepromise at Mount Pleasant?

I've been part of organisations before where if you left the service, the continuation of relationships was a big no no. I've seen kids left absolutely heart broken when a special person has left which has resulted in a complete breakdown in trust for that young person. As a sector we know that this no longer serves the children and young people whom we seek to support. Since, I have started with CrossReach, it's unmistakable the lengths we go to encourage and develop relationships with young people to enable them to continue to flourish and shine.



I think something that we are really good at Mount Pleasant is treasuring and nurturing relationships with the young people we look after.



An Interview with Sheila Gordon

Sheila Gordon is the Director of our Children and Families Services at CrossReach. She joins us today to chat all things keeping the promise.

What changes within CrossReach Children & Families that have been embedded since the publication for *The Promise* most excites you?

I think we have seen a much greater commitment to improving the quality of care for children and young people we support in terms of creating a safe and nurturing space for them with when they are no longer able to live with their families. We have also seen a phenomenal push in terms of ensuring that young people are surrounded by adults with the capacity and ability to develop, create and sustain loving relationships. We're also so much less scared of talking about love and accepting that for some of our young people, they may want, need and desire these loving relationships across their life span, not just when they are being supported by us. We are considering if these relationships are for life how can we do that whilst maintaining professional boundaries so that it works not only for the adults but for young people also. I also get excited thinking about the changes we are implementing in terms of supporting young people who are moving on from our service and getting this right too as we know that this can be an overwhelming time for young people. I also love that we are seeing more of our young people being supported for a much longer period too which has the capacity to really improve outcomes for our care experienced young people.

What do you think has enabled the changes you mention?

It's really been a multi-pronged approach. The development of the practice model has come out of CrossReach's value and ethos which we have always known exists, however the practice model has just made this more explicit. We have increased our understanding of trauma and the impact that can then have for the children and young people we support and understanding how we can appropriately respond to that pain-based behaviour which children and young people may sometimes present with. Likewise, we also know how much our responses to pain -based behaviour can contribute to a young person's healing and growth. I think all these elements have come together to give us a much better understanding of how best we support the recovery and development of children and young people who have been harmed through traumatic experiences. We also have a workforce that are knowledgeable and experienced, and I would argue that the training they receive is nationally outstanding.

Other Resources



Amy Miskimmin-Logan, Participation Development Worker at Our Hearings Our Voice (OHV) shares the thinking behind the 'Language Leaders' project which aims to change the language used in the Children's Hearings System

You previously talked about the acknowledgement that sometimes we need to nurture the special relationships that can develop between children and young people throughout their life and once they have left our care. What changes are being implemented to enable this to become day to day practice?

We now have conversations with young people setting out what the future may look like in terms of how often a young person may want to pop back and how often we, as adults will be in their life. We've seen young people move on from our services and adults regularly supporting that, keeping in touch and swapping phone numbers. We use social media better now too. I know so many adults who are in regular contact with young people and I have also heard of young people who have come back to our services and being welcomed with open arms and open hearts.

Do you think more needs to be done at an organisational level and at a national level to ensure that young people can nurture these special relationships once they are no longer being supported by our services?

I think some of our stakeholders external to CrossReach are still uncomfortable with that exact notion, so we must do some work to ensure that this concept will be supported. It also needs to be done properly and carefully so that both adults and young people are properly supported. I think we have a long way to go for this to be seen as healthy and accepted as normal practice.

What changes do you think need to happen for that to be seen as normal practice?

I think the promise has helped enormously in steering this conversation and I think as more providers and more local authorities begin to grapple with this concept, we will see it improving because at the end of the day it's all about relationships.

What do you think are the major barriers that our services face which would prevent us from keeping the promise?

I would really hope that there aren't too many barriers that exist which we can't overcome. Some issues are quite tricky and require space, time and consideration to understand how we can resolve them. Some examples for us include the work that we're doing with transitions and supporting people to move and nurturing those relationships which have grown and developed. To be honest, I see CrossReach being at the forefront of these changes. Our Head of Service, Martin Walsh has done lots of work with SSSC about having supportive relationships using social media. This should be celebrated and not something that people are suspicious about.

Other Resources



A CELCIS blog written by Graham Connelly from 2018 appealing for an end to the practice of referring to looked after children as 'LAC' and his reflections of the use language in the care system.

If you had a magic wand – what is the one thing that you would change?

The main one for me is commissioning. The fact that we purchase things for children and young people in the same way we purchase things like toilet roll and janitorial items is just not right. I am part of a group working at a national level (CCPS) trying to change commissioning practices. In Scotland, we're not a big country, we have an idea of the number of young people who may have to be looked after out with their family each year. So, let's make it so that we have lots of placement options and choices and end the competition for them. Let's make it that young people can get the place that they need to stay, whether that's a Local Authority Children's House or an Independent Provider it shouldn't matter. There would be less competition and would therefore create more opportunities for collaboration between providers and local authorities. We should be thinking geographically so that young people stay within the communities which they identify as belonging too. If we ended the way that residential placements were commissioned, then all these things would be in touching distance.

How far are you away from this being a reality?

Several years I think because within that you have procurement law for local authorities. Local authorities are bound by procurement law so if they are spending a certain amount of money, they have to be spending it correctly which is tendering. However, there is much more of a push towards different forms of tendering which still meets procurement law but are more flexible but to me that falls short of the vision and world we want. We need to take away this notion of commissioning because it's a power imbalance and it doesn't do any favours for young people.

What does your perfect world idea of commissioning look like?

I think it would look like the provision of care for children and young people to live in a place of their choice. There would need to be some kind of mapping of where places are to make sure that we have enough to meet the needs of children and young people and their families. I would love it if there was an app or portal where if a young person needed to be looked after away from their family, the social worker would be able to say this is what's available in your area. So, there would be a real flip in power, control and choice for children and young people. We would then be able to match young people properly. Lots of local authority provision tends to be larger children houses which is interesting because most young people would prefer to live in a smaller environment. So many local authority houses are 6–8-bedroom houses and not a lot of them have smaller houses as an option. I think it's another reason for us to change the provision because what tends to happen is that we support many young people who have already been supported in other houses or other another form of provision which hasn't worked rather than the independent provider being 1st choice. It would then become more balanced.

Other Resources

Changing the language of care

Carmel Jacob-Thomson with a professional and personal reflection on the words used to talk to and about Care Experienced Children and Young People.
08 November 2023



Carmel Jacob-Thomson with a professional and personal reflection on the words used to talk to and about Care Experienced Children and Young People.

It's 2030, CrossReach has played it's part in keeping the promise - what do you envisage our services will look and feel like for children and young people who access them?

There will be a change of commissioning so that children and their families who need to access support can access this much more fluidly. There will be more support for families to stay together and for families to have more support if there is requirement to live apart for a period of time. I envisage more of a spectrum of care. For example short breaks would become more readily available. If you do away with commissioning then that would make this much more easier because you're not then having to worry about vacancies and wouldn't need to fill them unnecessarily. So a much more greater holistic picture of working with families all the way through is what I would envisage for 2030. Essentially it would be more of a pick and mix approach where families can choose, what services they need at what times.

What motivates you to keep driving change forward in the services you support?

I just need to be reminded of all the amazing outcomes that we are able to achieve alongside children and young people. I regularly see and hear it but I don't think we celebrate it enough and that can be from the really small things to the much bigger things such a supporting a young person to attend school. Also, seeing the skill development of our workforce, I think we underestimate the skill set of residential workers and their therapeutic practices. That absolutely fills be with a warm fuzzy feeling which through the provision of training expands their knowledge.

Other Resources



Adoptive parent Margaret Reynolds talks about the language used around children in care. From the unthinking people asking about 'real parents' to the clinical language used to describe children's lives.



A glossary of words and terms that aims to change the language of the care system has been published. Language That Cares is a collaborative effort led by adoption and fostering charity TACT (The Adolescent and Children's Trust) and the charity's children and care experienced young people, with contributions from 15 local authorities and organisations.



The Developing Practice for Care Records in Scotland briefing produced by CELCIS, shares information about the research underway in Scotland to better understand the experiences of young people and adults accessing their records, and reflects the drive to develop good practice into the use, purpose and impact of records for them.



In June, the Promise Oversight Board, which holds Scotland to account around whether enough is happening to #keepThePromise, released it's 2nd report. You can read the report if you click on the image where you can also watch video summaries of the main findings.

As a result of the publication of the second report, Fiona Duncan who is the Independent Strategic Advisor on the promise has published the below message.

Plan 24-30

Independent
Strategic Advisor

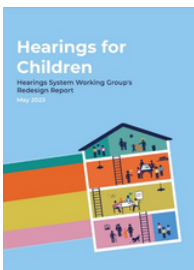


The Independent Care Review concluded in 2020, and after accepting its conclusions in full, Scotland made a promise to children and families. Scotland is now three years into its 10 year work programme.

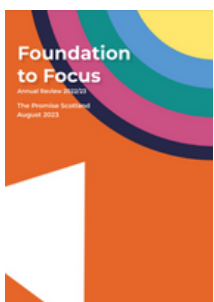
With less than a year to go before Plan 21-24 ends, the work to create a new Plan must start now. I will lead this by building upon the inclusive methods of the Independent Care Review, and I need your help. More information can be found below along with some questions I'd love you to answer.

Together Scotland can #KeepThePromise made to its children, families and care experienced community.

Thank you



The redesign report from the Hearing Systems Working Groups has been published. Supported by an extensive collaborative design and engagement program it sets out over 100 proposals to reform the Children's Hearings System with what needs to change to #keepthepromise



The Promise Scotland has published an Annual Review to provide a look back at the work of the organisation over the past year and the relationships it has built to support the change required to #KeepThePromise. Click on the link to read the full report.



#keepthepromise

We hope you enjoyed the latest edition of The Promise newsletter. Thank you for taking the time to read and helping CrossReach to #keepthepromise so that all children grow up loved, safe, respected and can realise their true potential.

THANK
YOU



The Church of Scotland
Social Care Council

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