Keys to the Future: Developments of The Promise

The latest update from [The Promise Oversight Board](https://thepromise.scot/oversight-board/) was released on Thursday 22nd of June. It outlined the current trajectory of [The Promise’s outcomes](https://thepromise.scot/resources/2021/plan-21-24.pdf), with concern that they will not be met by the intended goal of 2030 without more co-ordinated action and stronger evidence.

“Sadly, due to the worsening circumstances for so many and the current pace of change, the Promise Oversight Board does not believe that delivering the original aims… is realistic within that timeframe.” – The Promise Oversight Board Report

Within The Promise Oversight Board update, three priority areas were identified as needing further evidence of change by 2024, these include:

1. **Brothers and sisters.** When the promise is kept, siblings will not be separated unless completely unavoidable for safety. The promise recognises that nurturing relationships between brothers and sisters can provide them with emotional support, continuity, and familiarity.
2. **Education.** Care-experienced children and young people will have a range of individual in-school relationships that they can trust and rely on to support them with educational outcomes and support in building relationships and friendships. The exclusion of care-experience children and young people will end and socio-emotional support, as well as funds to break down poverty as a barrier to education will be implemented.
3. **Homelessness.** Care-experienced young people will have affordable accommodation options that are specifically tailored to their needs and preferences. Older care-experienced young people will have full access to support they might need for as long as they need it to provide stability and prevent the idea of ‘aging-out’ of the system.

**Keys to the Future: A service to tackle homelessness**

[Keys to the Future](https://www.barnardos.org.uk/get-support/services/keys-future) is a new service which focuses on addressing this third priority area of homelessness. It currently supports 27 children and young people experiencing homelessness in North Lanarkshire, providing emotional and practical support to families throughout the homeless process and into resettlement through personalised needs assessments.

Homelessness is a prevalent problem affecting families across Scotland, with an increase by 9% of children in temporary accommodation between 2021-22 and 2022-23[[1]](#footnote-6144) Homelessness for young people poses significant risk of poor outcomes within domains such as health, unemployment, education and substance abuse. Those most at risk are young care experienced people. However, when care experienced young people develop lifelong connections with supportive adults and systems, it can reduce the risks of becoming homeless[[2]](#footnote-1), which emphasises the importance of the continuity support that Keys to the Future offer to children and young people facing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.

We have the privilege of acting as a [Learning Partner](https://www.dartington.org.uk/ourblog/makingagoodlearningpartner) alongside the delivery partner, Barnardo’s, to understand and evidence the impact of this service on children, young people and families in North Lanarkshire.

**Using the Promise to ‘scaffold’ the service**

An important element of this service is its ‘open-door policy’. This means that even after children and families have used and formally exited the service, they are encouraged to call at any point, regardless of circumstance and regardless of age. By upholding a commitment to provide long term support at any stage of the young person’s life into adulthood, this service is taking learning from [The Promise](https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/The-Promise.pdf), such as care experienced young adults feeling abandoned and ill prepared as they transition from adulthood, and applying it in practice.

“Young adults for whom Scotland has taken on parenting responsibility must have a right to return to care and have access to services and supportive people to nurture them.”

– The promise independent care review

Going forward Keys to the Future will continue to explore ways to build scaffolding within services to create a system within North Lanarkshire that is more accessible to navigate and will offer help and support to families and children whenever they need it. **Scaffolding** is a key foundation of The Promise, underlining that Children, families and the workforce must be supported by a system that is there when it is needed. The scaffolding of help, support and accountability must be ready and responsive when it is required. This will require a joint effort from the local authorities in North Lanarkshire to sustain these services and contribute to positive change for young people.

**Using learning to support service improvement**

Dartington Service Design Lab is supporting Keys to the Future as a Learning Partner to capture learning along the journey and reflect on ways to improve services and outcomes for children, young people and families. To do this, the Keys to the Future partnership will explore key aspects of service delivery and ways to enable the sustainability of the service. To achieve wider scale change, we will support Keys to the Future in embedding a [Rapid-Cycle Design and Testing (RCDT) approach](http://chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https%3A//static1.squarespace.com/static/5c86931b4d87114c07db1adb/t/5ff445fd4048ec1f15c5c69f/1609844261998/Rapid-cycle%2Bdesign%2Band%2Btesting%2Bpaper%2BJan1) in the design, implementation and refinement of homelessness provision and sustainability planning in North Lanarkshire. Some ways we are using RCDT to support the learning partnership are:

* Providing the structure and tools to help the *Keys to the Future* team and local partners embed the RCDT approach in the design, implementation and refinement of homelessness provision and sustainability planning in North Lanarkshire.
* Creating facilitated spaces to surface and aggregate up learning (via themes) about undertaking investments in developmental and summative approaches tackling systemic challenges.
* Designing from the outset an approach which has impact at scale in mind, and the focus upon producing contextualised, yet generalisable evidence that can be used to shape policy and practice across different areas in Scotland.

 All of which we hope to utilise to achieve our aims at supporting young people facing homelessness within Scotland.

To learn more our partnership with keys to the future as this work develops, please contact the lead researcher in this Partnership Annalise Clelland at annalise.clelland@dartington.org.uk

If you are a service in North Lanarkshire and are interested in a potential partnership with Keys to the Future to support families and young people experiencing homelessness, please contact the children services manager Linda McCann at linda.mccann@barnardos.org.uk

1. Scottish Government, (2023), Homelessness in Scotland:2022-23, *people, communities and places,* retrieved: [Homelessness in Scotland 2022-23 (www.gov.scot)](https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2023/08/homelessness-in-scotland-2022-23/documents/homelessness-in-scotland-2022-23/homelessness-in-scotland-2022-23/govscot%3Adocument/Homelessness%2Bin%2BScotland%2B2022-23.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-6144)
2. Sanders & Picker, (2023), The impacts of lifelong Links on Housing outcomes for young people leaving care: an evaluation using matching, *centre for homelessness impact,* retrieved: https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/59f07e67422cdf0001904c14/64b93b9dd3964ecef43acf74\_Lifelong%20Links.v.2.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)