

Written submission from the Chair of the Oversight Board for Keeping the Promise

1

Oversight Board Chair reflection on Audit Scotland's findings – Housing focus

Audit Scotland's *Improving Care Experience: Delivering The Promise* (October 2025) reinforces what the Oversight Board has reported since our first publication in 2023. Progress to deliver The Promise has been too slow, accountability remains unclear, and planning across government and partners has not been coordinated in a way that gives confidence that – given we are at the halfway mark – enough meaningful change is being achieved. That said, we reported the qualified hope that The Promise recommendations can still be implemented.

Audit Scotland identified the same weaknesses we have consistently highlighted: lack of accountability, limited coordination, and insufficient pace. The report confirms that strong intent and public commitment have not yet translated into implementation.

Housing as a test of delivery

A safe and secure home is the foundation for wellbeing and belonging. In **Report Three** the Board stated that ***“a house is not just a place to live but a place to feel safe, supported and connected – it must be a home.”***

That remains the test for any Government or local authority claiming to keep The Promise. The national **Homelessness Prevention Pathway** for care-experienced people was “paused” by the Scottish Government in 2023 and has not yet been reinstated. Nothing of equivalent strength has replaced it, leaving many young people without a guaranteed route to stable housing. Some continue to leave care into homelessness or temporary accommodation.

Independent and official evidence points to a consistent picture: care-experienced young people face distinct housing risks in a wider system under strain, and practical, scalable solutions already exist. Who Cares? Scotland documents housing as a leading concern for 16+ care-experienced people and sets out implementable supports to secure stable tenancies and the essentials of a home. [Who Cares? Scotland](#). The Care Inspectorate's thematic review finds that **access to suitable housing is the most significant challenge** in transitions from care, directly compromising delivery of young people's plans. [Care Inspectorate](#). Government's own consultation and analysis on moving on from care recognises the elevated housing risk for care leavers and the need for stronger scaffolding at transition, aligning with the Oversight Board's call for a guaranteed pathway. [Scottish Government+1](#) Wider inequality reporting adds that temporary accommodation is at unprecedented levels amid declared housing emergencies, reinforcing why a national homelessness pathway for care-experienced people is not optional but essential. [Scottish Health Equity Research Unit+1](#)

Slow progress cannot be explained by complexity alone. It reflects the absence of timely decision-making and clear ownership within Government. When leadership hesitates, systems drift. The barrier is often not process but people. We have seen decisions delayed, accountability avoided, and the urgency of lived experience overlooked.

Oversight Board actions and influence

Date	Oversight Board action	Outcome
Jun 2023	<i>Report One</i> identified the South Lanarkshire pilot as a key test of system change and called for national rollout.	Recognised housing as a measure of Promise progress.
Oct 2023	<i>Report Two</i> revealed the pathway pause and called for reinstatement.	Brought public and parliamentary attention to the issue.
Nov 2023	Letter to the Minister for Housing.	Reply cited capacity pressures but offered no plan.
Jan 2024	Director for Children & Families attended OB meeting to discuss the pause.	Agreed to raise “reinstate or replace” request with the Cabinet Sub-Committee on The Promise.
Dec 2024	Following numerous requests for an update throughout the year. Correspondence received from Director seeking an update. Correspondence received from Director seeking an update.	Disappointingly, the written reply gave no assurance of pathway being reinstated or replaced.
Jan 2025	Chair emailed Director of Housing: “The plan should be reinstated and properly resourced. Failing that, it should be replaced with a guaranteed pathway to a safe home.”	Director confirmed new resources and creation of a Homelessness Sub-Group under the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group (HPSG) . Ministers were to meet 11 March and HPSG to decide implementation in April. The sub-group has not yet met.
Feb 2025	<i>Report Three</i> recorded the resource commitment.	Commitment placed on the public record, expectation of visible progress established.
Feb 2025	Chair spoke publicly in <i>The Ferret</i> : “Urgent action needed to stop care leavers becoming homeless.”	Broadened awareness and reinforced accountability.
Mar–May 2025	Chair met Barnardo’s (‘Gap Homes’) and requested The Promise Scotland convene supported-housing providers.	Six organisations met to share models and barriers, forming an evidence base for national design.
Aug 2025	Chair met Permanent Secretary (second meeting) to raise continuing delay.	Permanent Secretary confirmed that progress would be made before the next election.
Oct 2025	Audit Scotland report and Education Committee evidence referenced OB findings.	Independent validation of the Board’s analysis.

Audit Scotland's findings amplify the Oversight Board's own reporting. They demonstrate that the gap between policy and delivery remains wide and that decisive leadership has been lacking, though recent engagement and commitments from the new Permanent Secretary are welcome.

The commitment to allocate new resources for the pathway followed direct Oversight Board intervention in January 2025. The national providers' meeting later that spring occurred because the Board requested it. The subsequent assurance that progress will be made before the next election came after two meetings—both initiated by the Board—with the Permanent Secretary.

Independent oversight has clearly driven movement, yet progress continues to rely on external pressure rather than internal resolve. The structures exist and resources have been identified, but pace remains unacceptably slow.

Next steps

The Oversight Board will continue to treat housing and homelessness as a live test of Scotland's ability to deliver The Promise. Audit Scotland's report should mark a turning point. It shows that where leadership is clear and effort coordinated, progress follows. Where decisions are delayed and accountability is uncertain, promises remain words on a page. For young people leaving care, keeping The Promise begins with something simple and fundamental: a house that is a home.