



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Public Audit Committee

Douglas Ross MSP  
Convener  
Education, Children and Young People Committee

**12 March 2026**

Dear Convener

### **Improving care experience: Delivering the promise**

The Public Audit Committee took evidence from the Auditor General for Scotland (AGS) and the Accounts Commission on their report [Improving care experience: Delivering The Promise](#) (the Report) at its meeting on [5 November 2025](#). The Committee took further evidence from the Scottish Government, COSLA, The Promise Scotland and the Oversight Board for Keeping the Promise at its meeting on [10 December 2025](#). It also took evidence from the Independent Strategic Advisor - the promise and Chair of The Promise Scotland at its meeting on [21 January 2026](#).

The Committee closed its scrutiny of the report at its meeting on 21 January, and in doing so, agreed to write to the Education, Children & Young People Committee to draw its attention to key issues arising from its scrutiny.

### **Overview**

Our scrutiny focused on the Report, which looked at the foundations for delivery of The Promise and how they have supported change so far. The Report did not look at detailed progress in individual areas. The AGS told the Committee that initial planning about how The Promise would be delivered did not provide a strong platform for success and concluded that “if the Promise is to be delivered, greater pace and momentum will be needed in the years up to 2030”.

### **Complexity of governance arrangements**

The landscape surrounding The Promise is complex, with its ambitions linked to 26 of 40 Scottish Government Directorates and 49 of 117 policy areas. The Report found that, among multiple layers of governance, demonstrating collective accountability for The Promise remains challenging. Exhibit 3 on page 16 of the Report illustrates the complexity. While the following example provides a snapshot of governance peculiarities of certain roles—

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“The ISA [Independent Strategic Advisor] chaired The Oversight Board until 2024, while advising government on strategy and chairing The Promise Scotland. The ISA previously held a post at Corra Foundation (Corra), as chief executive up to late 2022. From February 2017, the ISA’s role was split between Corra and chairing the Care Review.

From May 2020 the ISA was seconded from Corra to take up the ISA role and in late 2022 their role at Corra changed to Strategic Director. Since taking up the post of chair of the Care Review, the ISA was recused from all grant-making processes and decisions at Corra. The ISA left Corra in May 2025 to continue in the ISA position for a further five years up to May 2030.

The ISA has led on developing Plan 24–30 with support from The Promise Scotland. It is unclear who holds ownership of Plan 24–30.”

The Director General for Education and Justice, Scottish Government, emphasised on 10 December that delivery is about a whole set of interventions and activities cutting across a range of governance arrangements, pointing to local governance arrangements for delivery in local authorities. He said—

“It is all about ensuring that the commitment to the Promise is spread across all of those areas and all those governance decisions, because that is the only way in which we can respond to the actual lives and needs of children, young people and families.”

The AGS said—

“New entities have been established to support delivery and oversight of the Promise, but we consider that there has been a lack of clarity about their roles and responsibilities. Those tasked with planning have sought to take a different approach, but having national plans will require producing further detail for individual sectors on how the Promise will be delivered.”

**We note from the AGS and Account Commission’s Report that the Scottish Government and COSLA, with support from The Promise Scotland, should review and identify opportunities to streamline the remit, status, and expected impact of governance groups, boards and forums linked to The Promise; and agree collectively how to utilise the work carried out by The Promise Scotland on governance and accountability.**

**In addition, the Report recommends that the ISA and Scottish Government ensure that their respective strategies on prevention are aligned, and they agree on the approach before further work takes place. Further to this, it is recommended a clear set of protocols be agreed which set out how the Scottish Government will respond to recommendations made by the ISA.**

## **Measuring and reporting progress of delivery**

The Report recommended that the Scottish Government and COSLA, with support from The Promise Scotland, should clarify and set out roles and responsibilities for

overseeing, monitoring and reporting at a national level on local activity to inform the overall picture of progress.

In December 2024, a delayed Promise progress framework was published, which was developed by a partnership of the Scottish Government, COSLA and The Promise Scotland. The AGS noted in its current form, “the framework does not yet capture whether care-experienced people feel the impact of change and whether their lives are getting better”. The AGS said children and young-people’s experiences “should be at the heart of any interpretation of success”.

The Chief Executive of The Promise Scotland explained on 10 December 2025 that there is work ongoing to measure the experience, the qualitative part, of the framework and this would be published shortly.

The Report recommended that key stakeholders should through the recently established data and evidence group, work to coordinate various data projects under way to identify and align actions, timescales, impact and how it informs the Story of Progress.

**We consider delivery of Audit Scotland’s recommendations should be closely monitored to identify whether delivery progress is being made at the pace and momentum required to meet the 2030 timescale.**

## **Resources for delivering the Promise**

The Report found that the Scottish Government has not yet assessed the skills or resources needed to deliver the Promise by 2030, which the AGS saw as “a significant delivery risk”. It stated that the workforce remains dedicated to improving the lives of care-experienced people, but significant challenges around recruitment, retention and staff wellbeing remain prominent.

One of the recommendations from the Report is that key stakeholders should work together to identify where resources need to be targeted to deliver The Promise – and, in line with this - clearly set out which actions will be delivered, and how, over the next five years and beyond. This includes identifying any gaps both nationally and locally in funding, workforce, skills and infrastructure, and setting clear timescales for prioritisation.

On funding the actions to be identified, the Director-General for Education and Justice said—

“...the Promise is around how we shift resources. It is not just about additional resources but about how we make sure that we are shifting resources towards prevention, so that we do not need to spend money further down the line in responding to the crisis when it arises.”

There was recognition of the scale of the task ahead from the Chief Executive of The Promise Scotland—

“We are not on track and not where we want to be, but this is still very doable. We all recognise the amount of work and change that need to happen.

**The Committee recognises that addressing the Report's resourcing recommendations will be vital to ensuring that existing and new resources are directed to the right places to deliver The Promise for care-experienced children and young people.**

**The Committee values the work of the AGS and the Accounts Commission and commends all 11 recommendations which look to ensure key stakeholders responsible for the delivery of The Promise are on a firm footing as they move into the latter phase of the 2030 delivery period.**

I hope our scrutiny will prove helpful in informing the work of your successor Committee in Session 7.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Leonard". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**Richard Leonard MSP**

**Convener**