

Education, Children and Young People Committee
Wednesday 26 March 2025
11th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

The Promise

Introduction

1. In November 2023, the Committee held an [evidence session](#) on progress in relation to the Promise. As part of that session, significant concerns were raised around social work recruitment and retention and how this was affecting the Promise implementation across Scotland.
2. In March 2024, the Committee also [spoke informally](#) with 37 young people from across Scotland via Who Cares? Scotland. This highlighted the impact that social work recruitment and retention issues were having on care experienced children and young people. This included frequent changes to Social Workers and/or infrequent access to Social Work support.
3. At its meeting on 6 November 2024, the Committee agreed to hold three sessions on the Promise focusing on workforce issues, whole family wellbeing and voice. The Committee took evidence on workforce issues at its meeting on [4 December 2024](#) and at its meeting on [19 January 2025](#) it took evidence on whole family wellbeing.
4. On Monday 24 March 2025, the Committee will hold an informal participation session with young people from across Scotland via Who Cares? Scotland on the voice; a note of that session will be published in due course.

Committee meeting

5. At its meeting today, the Committee will be hearing the Scottish Government on what it has heard in relation to all three strands of its work on the Promise, namely, workforce issues, whole family wellbeing and voice. The Committee will take evidence from the following panel of witnesses—
 - Natalie Don-Innes MSP, Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise
 - Gavin Henderson, Deputy Director, Keeping the Promise
 - Iona Colvin, Chief Social Work Advisor

Supporting information

6. SPICe has produced a briefing paper for this session which is attached at **Annexe A**.

Committee Clerks
March 2025

Annexe A



Education, Children and Young People Committee

Wednesday 26 March 2025

The Promise: Minister for Children, Young People and Keeping the Promise

Introduction

This SPICe briefing has been prepared ahead of the Committee's evidence session with the Minister for Children, Young People and Keeping the Promise Natalie Don-Innes MSP (the Minister) on children's social work reform and The Promise.

The Committee has held two recent evidence sessions on this topic: in [December 2024](#) members heard evidence about recruitment and retention issues impacting on The Promise; and in [January 2025](#) the Committee heard from representatives from projects using a whole family support approach to supporting children and families.

The Committee also held a previous evidence session in [22 November 2023](#) and an informal evidence session with care experienced young people on [27 March 2024](#).

Background information about the Independent Care Review, care system reform, The Promise, child protection and the care system can be found in the [SPICe briefing for the Committee's first evidence session on this topic](#). Background information about whole family support can be found in the [SPICe briefing for the Committee's second evidence session on this topic](#). Further information can also be found in the [SPICe briefing Scotland's care system for children and young people](#).

This briefing paper provides information about recent developments related to implementation of The Promise, and a summary of evidence heard previously by the Committee.

Implementation of The Promise

The Scottish Government's initial [Keeping the Promise Implementation Plan](#) was published in March 2022. [Keeping the Promise to our children, young people and families: progress update](#) was published in September 2024. This provides a summary of [progress so far](#) and outlines next steps.

The [Promise Progress Framework](#), developed by COSLA, the Scottish Government and The Promise Scotland, was launched in December 2024. The framework is intended to build understanding of progress toward keeping the Promise by bringing together data. It contains ten initial vision statements taken from The Promise. Each vision statement has an attached set of outcomes/indicators. These are split into core indicators, looking at change the Promise can directly influence and contextual indicators tracking the context within which the Promise is operating.

The Framework finds that the number of children in care is decreasing, with a 14% decrease in the total number of children in care since 2020 and a 16% decrease since 2019-20. However, it is important to note that the [Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection \(CELCIS\) has previously said](#) the figures on children in care provide "only an outline drawing", missing the details needed for complete understanding, such as information about unmet need, changed thresholds for escalation or barriers to services. CELCIS also noted there was a 39% drop in the number of children being taken into care in the months after the pandemic started and numbers have not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

The Framework sets out information on developments in relation to workforce recruitment and retention, which was the focus of the [Committee's December 2024 evidence session](#). The [Framework finds](#):

- Overall, there has been a "very small increase of 0.4%" in Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) staff working in Children's services between 2020 and 2023.
- The WTE workforce involved in caring for children and young people in care homes and residential additional needs schools fell by 3.5% between 2020 and 2023 (from 6,300 to 6,080).
- The WTE secure care workforce increased by 5.6% from 360 in 2020 to 380 in 2023.
- The stability index measuring year-to-year staff retention in residential childcare (care homes, residential additional support needs schools and secure care) fell from 79.6% in 2020 to 73.0% in 2023.
- The number of children 'looked after' with foster carers or kinship carers fell from 9,200 in 2020 to 8,081 in 2023. However, the proportion of looked after children living in kinship care rose from 31% in July 2020 to 34% in July 2023; 31% were living in foster care in July 2023 compared to 32% in July 2020. The proportion of children with prospective adopters remained at 1% for both of these time periods.

- The number of registered foster care households has decreased from 3,540 in 2020 to 2,998 in 2023 – a fall of 15.3%.
- The number of foster carers de-registering is increasing: in 2020, 349 foster carers deregistered and in 2023 the figure was 405. There were 178 new foster care households registered in 2023.

The Framework also sets out the following information on development on outcomes related to whole family support, which was the focus of the [Committee's January 2025 evidence session](#). The [Framework finds](#):

- Progress on work to gather national data on child deaths, noting that the first national report on child death reviews was published in March 2024.
- The number of children in temporary accommodation has risen by 33% since 2020 and the overall number of households assessed as homeless has increased by 6% since 2019-20.
- Rates of child poverty are “broadly stable”.
- In 2023, 42% of children on the Child Protection Register had domestic abuse listed as a concern – similar to the 2020 figure of 43%.
- The proportion of children in the care system experiencing multiple home moves has been around 4% since 2020.
- The attendance rate of care experienced pupils dropped from 87.9% in 2020-21 to 84.4% in 2022-23 and was also 2.4% lower than in 2018-19.
- At 97 exclusions per 1000 pupils, the rate of exclusion for care experienced pupils was around six times that of all pupils in 2022-23. This is up from 78 in 2020-21.
- In the quarter up to June 2024, 84.1% of care experienced people referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services were seen within 18 weeks, a decrease from 86% the previous quarter but an increase on the 2020 percentage of 61.7%.
- The percentage of children referred to the children's reporter on offence grounds has decreased by 4.8%, from 2,840 in 2019-20 to 2,701 in 2023-24.

The framework document states an additional indicator set on health outcomes and access to health services is under development.

Oversight Board Report 3

The Oversight Board reviews progress toward implementing The Promise and has published progress reports monitoring change. [Report One](#) was published in May 2022. [Report Two](#) was published in June 2023, and it concluded that delivering Plan 21-24 commitments would be challenging due to “worsening circumstances for many and the current pace of change”.

[Report Three](#) was published in February 2025 and found "issues impacting the workforce and whole family support have meant the promise is not halfway to being kept", and some people, organisations and systems "are not yet doing enough". The report concluded that The Promise can still be kept, given progress so far and continuing commitments made.

The report found people cannot access family support when needed, due to issues including housing barriers and gaps in data to help understand what matters to children and families. Short-term funding cycles for whole family support projects were also highlighted.

Recruitment and retention issues facing the workforce, along with falling foster care numbers, were highlighted as ongoing challenges.

The development of a Community of Practice for Siblings and the introduction of a Scottish Rate of Allowance (SRA) for kinship and foster carers were among examples highlighted as positive. Further information about the SRA is available in the [SPICe briefing Scotland's care system for children and young people](#). The Scottish Government is currently [reviewing the roll out and future funding of SRA](#).

The Oversight Board set out recommendations calling for:

- Corporate parents (as set out in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014) to detail in their corporate parenting plans how they will keep the promise.
- The development of a more detailed plan for progress from 2024-2030, led by Independent Strategic Advisor Fiona Duncan.
- Move toward long-term funding for public services, led by the Scottish Government, with the Independent Strategic Advisor developing a strategic approach to help inform decisions about investment and disinvestment.
- The Scottish Government and COSLA to produce the Joint Workforce Improvement Plan "as a matter of urgency".
- Ways of working to be reviewed, with duplicated and wasted effort removed.

Scottish Government consultations

Scottish Government consultations on [moving on from care into adulthood](#), the [future of foster care](#) and [developing a universal definition of 'care experience'](#) were launched in 2024 as part of its work toward implementing The Promise.

The [consultation analysis of moving on from care](#) was published in January 2025. Suggestions from respondents included: the need to involve the young person and their family in planning; supporting young people to develop lifeskills; provision of advocacy; extension of eligibility for continuing care and aftercare to other groups of care experienced young people; greater need for awareness around rights and corporate responsibilities; lifelong support; and the importance of trauma informed multi-agency collaboration.

The Hearings System Working Group (HSWG) chaired by Sheriff David Mackie [published recommendations for the redesign of the children's hearings system](#) in June 2023. The [Scottish Government response](#) accepted a number of recommendations but did not accept proposals to introduce salaried professional Chairs and remunerated Panel Members. A [Scottish Government consultation on redesign proposals](#) launched in July 2024 and an [analysis of responses](#) was published in February 2025.

The analysis found there was general support for a move away from an adversarial approach to children's hearings toward an inquisitorial one, though some expressed concerns about a complete move away from this in terms of legal rights. There was also support for ensuring children's voices are at the heart of the system and alignment with UNCRC. The need to consider the unintended consequences of changes to the system was also highlighted by many respondents.

While 51% of respondents did not answer a question on whether there should be "some measure of payment for panel members, over and above the current system of expenses, in return for the introduction of new and updated expectations", of the 49% that did answer, 26% said no and 74% said yes.

The consultation also put forward a proposal for the creation of a new 'legal member'. This proposal [was not put forward in the report from the HSWG](#), and has been developed by the Scottish Government since the publication of the working group's report. The qualified legal member would reform the role in determining grounds for referral to a children's hearing currently performed by a sheriff. The legal member would operate in the children's hearing centres but would not be a children's panel member.

Of the 43% of respondents answering a consultation question on whether the creation of a legal member would fulfil the recommendation of the HSWG that there should be a consistent specialist sheriff throughout the children's hearing process, 41% said yes and 59% said no.

National Social Work Agency

Prior to the [Scottish Government's decision not to go ahead with a National Care Service \(NCS\)](#), Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport Maree Todd MSP, had stated her intention to introduce amendments at Stage 2 of the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill (NCS Bill) that would have given Scottish Ministers a regulation-making power to [delegate certain children's services to integration authorities across Scotland](#). As the NCS is not progressing, this change will not go ahead. Further background about the NCS Bill in relation to children's services can be found in the [2022 edition of the SPICe briefing Scotland's Care System for Children and Young People](#).

The Scottish Government's Stage 2 amendments to the NCS Bill also included provisions for the creation of a National Social Work Agency (NSWA), intended to [provide "leadership, oversight and support"](#). During Stage 1 scrutiny of the NCS Bill, [questions were raised](#) about the roles and remits of the NSWA and how they might impact on existing bodies such as the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and the Care Inspectorate.

The Scottish Government intends to go ahead with the creation of a NSW. [In a Written Answer](#) following the announcement that the NCS would not progress, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs, Angela Constance MSP, stated:

We have agreed to establish a National Social Work Agency to support the social work profession. This will be an executive agency of the Scottish Government, and will be established by spring 2026. – [Written Answer, 17/02/25](#)

Promise Bill

A Promise Bill, containing legislation necessary for the implementation of various elements of The Promise, is expected to be introduced before the end of this parliamentary session. The Bill has the potential to be wide-ranging, covering changes to the Children’s Hearings System, governance, inspection and accountability surrounding the care system, as well as a range of other areas. The Scottish Parliament will face the task of scrutinising this legislation within a short time frame if the Bill is introduced ahead of the 2026 election.

The Scottish Government’s [September 2024 progress update](#) says of the Bill:

The Scottish Government aims to introduce a Promise Bill by the end of this Parliamentary session, dependent on wider pressures on the Parliamentary legislative calendar. The Bill will be positioned to make any further legislative changes required to keep The Promise. For example, this may include, provisions required to implement recommendations of the Children’s Hearings System working group and recommendations of The Promise Scotland in relation to a national lifelong advocacy service for people with care experience. The Scottish Government will continue to work with partners including The Promise Scotland and COSLA to identify areas where a legislative direction may support delivery of The Promise. Subject to Parliamentary timetabling – [Keeping the Promise September 2024 update, Scottish Government](#)

In [response to a November 2024 Written Question](#) on the timetable for the introduction of the proposed Bill the Minister stated that the “future legislative programmes will be announced in the relevant Programme for Government in the normal way”.

The [Oversight Board’s Report Three](#) states the Bill is “an opportunity and a risk”, as it may help create the approach required in law but is also:

“...a ready-made excuse to slow the process down and to seek further consultations on issues, some of which Scotland has long known the answers to.” - [Oversight Board Report Three](#), 5/02/25

Whole Family Wellbeing Fund

The [2021-22 Programme for Government \(PfG\)](#) committed to a [Whole Family Wellbeing Fund](#) of £500 million over Session 6 of the Parliament. This is aimed at tackling issues faced by families before they need crisis intervention. The PfG also

stated that, from 2030, at least 5% of community-based health and social care spend will be focused on preventative measures. The overall intention of this preventative spend is to reduce the number of children being taken into care.

In a [September 2024 written answer](#), the Minister stated that £110 million of Whole Family Wellbeing Funding (WFWF) has been invested since 2022. Of this, £96 million was provided to Children's Services Planning Partnerships (CSPPs); £1.6 million for national support for local transformation work; and £13.1 million for 12 system change projects across Scottish Government policy areas.

£50 million WFWF [has been allocated for 2025-26](#). The Scottish Government also announced that funding for CSPPs will rise from £32 million to £38.1 million in 2025-26 and 2026-27.

In a [Written Answer on 28 January 2025](#), the Minister set out information gathered from 29 CSPPs on spend and allocated funding.

In Year 1 (2022-23) of the funding the 29 CSPPs spent £5.2 million of the £25.5 million allocated to them. In Year 2 (2023-24), £16.5 million of the £25.5 million was spent.

[Year 1 evaluation of the WFWF](#) was published in January 2024 and concluded that, in general, CSPPs and partners had "engaged well with the ambitions of WFWF in Year 1", with "substantial progress" made by most though some key activities toward early outcomes were found to be outstanding in some areas. It highlighted difficulties CSPPs were having in relation to filling posts with short-term funding, and concerns around the period of time up to 2026 being too short a timescale to bring about lasting change. Recommendations for the Scottish Government and CSPPs to make further progress on whole family support included embedding the principles of whole family support, ensuring skills are in place for necessary monitoring, and gathering data and evidence to understand progress.

[Year 2 evaluation of the WFWF](#) was published this February. This concluded that there was varied achievements of outcomes in year 2, with inconclusive evidence for some outcomes but no evidence of outcomes worsening. In terms of implantation of plans, the report found most CSPPs continued to implement their initial funding plans, with a "greater focus in Year 2 on delivery", with some CSPPs able to carry over funding from Year 1 and early evidence of CSPPs aligning existing services with WFWF projects to sustain staffing.

The evaluation found inconclusive evidence that more children, young people and their families were receiving whole family support, inconclusive evidence of a shared understanding of families' needs, and inconclusive evidence of leaders using evidence from families to inform planning of service provision. There was some evidence that children, young people and their families were meaningfully involved in service design and also some evidence of a move toward non-siloed, aligned family support funding.

Recommendations from the Year 2 report included a call for the Scottish Government to work with CSPPs to plan for the long-term financing of whole family

support; CSPPs to continue to establish and develop systems for capturing feedback and continue to evolve and embed whole family support.

Previous work of the Committee

Following the informal evidence session with care experienced young people in March 2024, [the Committee wrote to the Minister](#) stating concern that those involved in the session had not seen improvements in the care system since The Promise was made. The [Minister responded in June 2024](#) outlining the Scottish Government's actions toward implementation of The Promise. This included mention of a joint workforce improvement plan. This has not yet been published.

On whole family wellbeing, the Minister stated the Scottish Government planned to publish an investment approach. An investment approach timeline was then set out in the [Keeping the Promise progress update](#). While this does not provide figures for overall investment, it does set out a general approach up until 2031-32 with the caveat that funding past 2026-27 will be determined by a new administration.

Evidence heard by the Committee

Key themes relating to whole family wellbeing and workforce recruitment and retention from the Committee's previous sessions are summarised below.

Workforce recruitment and retention

The Committee's evidence session on workforce recruitment and retention was held on [4 December 2024](#).

During the session, witnesses discussed:

- The fact the recruitment and retention crisis is happening alongside increased need and complexities within families.
- Increasing demands being placed on social workers, with new duties being placed on them.
- The debate around the National Care Service and National Social Work Agency (NSWA) slowing down progress on The Promise. Fraser McKinlay of The Promise said if the NSWA was going ahead, "it needs to be progressed quite quickly". Claire Burns of CELCIS said that the workforce were currently being asked to implement a "massive change programme without having a settled landscape".
- The negative public perception of working in children's services and how this must change in order to make progress.
- The need to strengthen Scotland's research infrastructure for social services and social care to underpin decision making and provide more robust data.

- The critical role played by foster carers and the need to address the crisis in their recruitment.
- Workload faced by social workers leading to a focus on statutory responsibilities only.
- Workload issues and staff turnover leading to children and young people having multiple social workers, being unable to build meaningful relationships with their social workers and only receiving support at crisis point.
- Budget cuts and a lack of investment in the 'front-line' having an impact on workforce morale. Professor Trish McCulloch of the University of Dundee said there was a sense that "the only thing that seems to matter now is money, whereas what people want to be doing is providing care, support, protection and empowerment." She later added that addressing recruitment issues will address retention issues.
- The need for a national recruitment campaign for social work, highlighting the positive elements of the role.
- For social work students, an increase in bursary support and the need to ensure courses support readiness for practice was mentioned. The potential for Graduate Apprenticeships in social work to be part of a workforce strategy was also supported by a number of witnesses.
- The role of the Promise Programme Board in leading change across local government and understanding differences in progress made at local authority level was discussed. The need for greater involvement from health and the third sector was raised.

The need for a government strategy on recruitment and retention was also highlighted. On this, Claire Burns of CELCIS stated:

"If we want to support things such as recruitment and retention, we therefore need a Government strategy that is funded and supported regionally and is then also supported at practice level. If we try and do it at only one of those levels, we are not likely to be successful." – [Official Report, 4/12/24](#)

Professor Trish McCulloch of the University of Dundee and independent strategic adviser Fiona Duncan also highlighted the need for a workforce plan from the Scottish Government. Fiona Duncan said this should be "cohesive, planned, organised and time bound".

Professor Trish McCulloch said there was a need for experienced social workers within teams to support newly qualified social workers.

"It is about not simply doing the supervision and being one step removed, but being that experienced voice within new teams. We know that children and families teams often have a high turnover and are very imbalanced in terms of newly qualified or early-career members. It is therefore important that senior practitioners remain in practice." - [Official Report, 4/12/24](#)

On issues around short-term funding related to the WFWF, Claire Burns said there was a need to “get real” about reporting requirements and impact on outcomes, as these would not be realised in six months. She highlighted the need to allow time to plan spending.

Alison Bavidge of the Scottish Association of Social Work (SASW) said her organisation had found almost half of social workers are dissatisfied with their jobs, with 32% reporting “strong emotional responses, such as crying, at least once a week”.

UNISON’s Stephen Smellie said that staff were working long hours, taking work home at evenings and weekends, suffering from stress and facing burnout. He underlined budget cuts as the main reason for these problems. Ben Farrugia said that while social work does not have a waiting list system, in reality people were waiting for assessment and the system has become “risk responsive”. He added:

“If someone seeks support but there is not a crisis, we cannot get to them.”- [Official Report, 4/12/24](#)

On the establishment of a NSWA, Ben Farrugia of Social Work Scotland said while it would not fix everything, it is:

“...an opportunity for us to have a single national profession that is managed across the 32 local authorities, and that does not even include all those who work in the third sector.” - [Official Report, 4/12/24](#)

Ben Farrugia called for the Scottish Government to consider pausing “relevant policy activity until the end of the current session of Parliament” and focus on implementing existing plans.

He also said a strategic approach to the introduction of AI was needed, as having different approaches by different local authority areas would not help workforce recruitment and retention issues.

Alison Bavidge highlighted the potential for the NSWA to help with coordination of change. Laura Caven of COSLA said the Scottish Government needed to give attention to the planning and sequencing of change for reforms to be effective, and efforts needed to be coordinated.

Whole Family Wellbeing

During the Committee’s [4 December 2024 session](#), Fraser McKinlay said while there had been some progress on whole family support, the “system has got in the way of itself” on the WFWF, later adding:

“There is no doubt that some of the investment in the whole family wellbeing fund has not yet reached the places that it needs to reach. Too often, we have spent it on things that matter to the system and not to the families that are

supposed to feel the difference. We still have a very long way to go.” - [Official Report, 4/12/24](#)

Claire Burns spoke of a project where access to whole family support to maximise income was being provided through health visitors with funding from social work. This made accessing support less stigmatising for people. However, a cut to the number of health visitors meant social workers had to go back to delivering the support. Claire Burns said this was an example of:

“...a complete tension in the system between people trying really hard to meet the policy objectives and the current financial climate, which is pushing against that all the time.” – [Official Report, 4/12/24](#)

She later added that the lack of long-term funding for effective projects meant that maintaining and sustaining change was often difficult. Alison Bavidge also said she would like to see an end to short-term funding.

In response to a question on delayed allocation of WFWF money by local authorities, Laura Caven of COSLA stated:

“The money was delayed in coming out to local authorities in the first place. Also, it is short-term funding, which is difficult for local authorities to work with. An additional factor is that it was not for local authorities to decide how that money was to be spent. Authorities had to work with community or children’s services planning partnerships to decide what the best use of that funding would be at a local level, and then for that funding to be used.” - [Official Report, 4/12/24](#)

Laura Caven added that she expected the process to be “much slicker, going forward”, but a long-term commitment was needed in order to attract people into posts created from the funding.

On the question of funding being used to add to existing budgets, Laura Caven said it was difficult to know for sure, because cuts to existing services meant services had changed:

“For example, we might be talking about the delivery of a service from a community centre, but the community centre is now shut. You then have to redesign the service.” - [Official Report, 4/12/24](#)

Stephen Smellie mentioned that Unison had heard of some private residential care providers that:

“...cherry pick the kids who they can work with, and they will leave the hard ones to others.” - [Official Report, 4/12/24](#)

On [15 January 2025 the Committee held a roundtable evidence session](#) with representatives of projects using an early intervention/whole family support approach to supporting children and their families. Some of these projects were funded by the WFWF, while others were not.

Members heard from:

- Perth and Kinross' REACH project, funded via existing council budgets and running since 2017. The aim of the project is to reduce the number of young people in residential accommodation by providing intensive support in the community, and it has so far been successful in helping to achieve this.
- Action for Children's Upper Nithsdale Family Service, which aims to offer accessible family support for parents and children, providing everything from employment support to after school clubs. The project focuses on building relationships with families to help support them before they reach crisis point.
- Aberlour's Mother and Child Recovery Houses provide residential, intensive support to mothers and their babies during recovery from drug and alcohol dependency.
- Inverclyde Transformation Initiative project, also run by Action for Children, working with young people who have been identified as being criminally exploited. The service provides intensive support to youngsters, recognising there is currently no legal definition of criminal exploitation and very little support for families. The project aims to help families by building relationships and working intensively with the young people and their families, including those on the edges of being excluded from school.
- South Lanarkshire Council's South Lanarkshire Pathfinders works with young people not attending school, many of whom looked after or at risk of becoming looked after.

During the session, witnesses said that:

- Support with speech and language can have a huge impact for young people and their families, as many have undiagnosed speech and language challenges.
- Building trust with families is a crucial part of whole family, relationship-based support. This takes time.
- For many projects, working with families before they reach crisis point is the key to successful outcomes.
- Involving families in the development of services and listening to their feedback is crucial for success.
- Sustainability of funding was discussed, with participants highlighting:
 - Year to year funding causes recruitment challenges as those with the necessary skills were unavailable to take up these posts.
 - Some projects previously awarded longer-term funding prior to the establishment of the WFWF were now being offered year-on-year. This caused great uncertainty and put the future of some projects at risk.

- For projects funded from existing budgets, funding certainty was less of an issue.
- Where projects funded from WFWF projects were showing results, there is often uncertainty over what would happen once the funding ended as local authorities can't absorb the costs.
- Participants also spoke of the challenges of having to constantly seek and apply for funding.
- Children with complex disabilities and/or autism should be considered as part of discussions on whole family support, as families were facing pressure due to a lack of support.
- Social work and related jobs need to be promoted in a positive light to tackle negative perceptions.
- REACH had resulted in savings and had almost halved the number of young people from the area in residential accommodation from 27 in 2017 to 14 now.
- The 'no wrong door' approach of enabling families to ask for and receive different kinds of support all in the one place rather than having to be referred on from other services was repeatedly highlighted as having a positive impact.
- The need to fund 'what works' rather than looking for new solutions was highlighted.
- The issue of formal and informal school exclusions was raised, with the example given of young people being timetabled to be in school for 15 minutes a day in some cases. The need to support young people to attend school was highlighted.

Lynne Currie, Senior Researcher - Further Education, Higher Education and Children's social work, child protection and adoption, SPICe

20 March 2025

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