



THE PROMISE: SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL STRUCTURE (RIGHT TO EDUCATION) PROJECT

Report by Chief Social Work Officer

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to update Members on the use of Whole Family Wellbeing Fund to allow a continuation of the Supportive School Structure (right to education) project that had been established and funded from The Promise Partnership.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Scottish Government, through The Promise Partnership and with Corra Foundation as the delivery partner, funds initiatives to improve education outcomes for care-experienced children and young people, focusing on early intervention, supportive school structures, and youth justice, aiming to ensure they grow up loved, safe, and respected.
- 2.2 The Comhairle was successful in receiving funding in 2023, allowing innovative interventions with care experienced children and children on the edge of care to improve their attainment and achievement outcomes. The Extended Learning Resource (ELR), The Shed and the Nicolson Institute formed a partnership to identify and support pupils from P7 through to S6 who would benefit from additional support. The Promise funding expired on 31 March 2025 and, given how successful the project has been, the Children's Services Partnership has decided to redirect Whole Family Wellbeing Funding towards this project to allow it to continue until the end of this academic year beyond the period of the original Promise funding.
- 2.3 The Whole Family Wellbeing Fund is designed to support children and families on a range of issues, including improving attainment of care experienced children through direct work and through supporting the child's family network.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 **It is recommended that the Comhairle:**
 - (a) **note the progress of The Promise Project innovations in the Nicolson Institute, ELR and several feeder primary schools.**
 - (b) **support the continuation of the project for the 2025-26 financial year based on the use of external funding streams referenced in the report.**

Contact Officer: Jack Libby – Chief Officer for Children's Services/CSWO
Appendix: None
Background Papers: None



IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None																
Financial	<p>In September 2023, the Comhairle was awarded £200,00 Promise funding from the Corra Foundation. The funding expired on the 31 March 2025 and was utilised in full.</p> <p>The Comhairle and wider Children’s Services Planning Partnership received £156,000 Whole Family Wellbeing Funding for 2025/26. There is also a projected £81,882 carry-forward from previous years due to delays with earlier projects getting underway.</p> <p>The cost of extending The Promise project until the end of the 2024/25 academic year is approximately £37,500.</p> <p>To extend the project into the 2025/26 academic year would be £119,101, with the estimated budget breakdown and potential spend being as follows:</p> <p>2025-26 funding</p> <table> <tr> <td>£15,000</td> <td>SEF</td> </tr> <tr> <td>£25,538</td> <td>Uncommitted WFWF funding</td> </tr> <tr> <td>£81,882</td> <td>Est. WFWF Carry forward from 2024-25.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>£122,420</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>2025-26 funding required to continue The Promise</p> <table> <tr> <td>£13,574</td> <td>11 hr per week CSSW</td> </tr> <tr> <td>£45,527</td> <td>21 hrs per week -Teaching Post</td> </tr> <tr> <td>£60,000</td> <td>Commissioned Service (The Shed)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>£119,101</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	£15,000	SEF	£25,538	Uncommitted WFWF funding	£81,882	Est. WFWF Carry forward from 2024-25.	£122,420		£13,574	11 hr per week CSSW	£45,527	21 hrs per week -Teaching Post	£60,000	Commissioned Service (The Shed)	£119,101	
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Legal	n/a																
Staffing	Extends the contracts of staff affected until at least 30 th June 2025.																
Assets and Property	n/a																
Strategic Implications	Implications/None																
Risk	The risk of not extending the project is that vulnerable P7 pupils have their transitions to S1 affected and vulnerable secondary pupils may not achieve or attain to the anticipated level.																
Equalities/Child Rights	n/a																
Corporate Strategy	Protecting the most vulnerable in the community.																
Environmental Impact	n/a																
Consultation	n/a																



BACKGROUND

5.1 On 27 August 2024, the Scottish Government released the latest figures relating to education outcomes for children legally considered care experienced. In a statement, Fraser McKinlay, Chief Executive of the Promise Scotland said:

“There continues to be gaps in many areas between those with care experience and their non-care experienced peers. Those gaps are still too large, and in some cases, widening. In particular, it is worrying to see exclusion rates rise for the first time in 12 years. The latest data shows that children and young people with experience of care are now almost six times more likely to be excluded. The last few years have been difficult for many children, young people, and families and it is clear that those in education are working hard every day to help make their lives better. However, the reasons why children struggle in school are not just about education. There is a need to better understand what is going on behind the numbers. It takes clear, compassionate leadership and collaborative working across the entire system to ensure all children, and their families, are supported to engage fully in education and fulfil their potential.”

5.2 The Scottish Government, through The Promise Partnership and with Corra Foundation as the delivery partner, funds initiatives to improve education outcomes for care-experienced children and young people, focusing on early intervention, supportive school structures, and youth justice, aiming to ensure they grow up loved, safe, and respected.

5.3 The Comhairle was successful in receiving funding in 2023, allowing innovative interventions with care experienced children and children on the edge of care to improve their attainment and achievement outcomes. The Extended Learning Resource (ELR), The Shed and the Nicolson Institute formed a partnership to identify and support pupils from P7 through to S6 who would benefit from additional support

5.4 The funding was used to recruit an experienced, recently retired Depute Headteacher from the Nicolson Institute (x3 days per week), a classroom auxiliary (11 hours per week) and 5 mentors (via The Shed, totalling the equivalent of 2 full-time posts) to deliver on the objectives set out in the funding application.

5.5 The main objectives of the project are as follows:

- Raise attainment and wider achievements.
- Increase attendance.
- Decrease the number of pupils and incidents ‘looping’ the school campus, not attending classes, and at times causing disruption.
- Support vulnerable children transitioning from Primary School to Secondary School.
- Support children with anxiety difficulties to return to mainstream education.
- Divert children from anti-social and offending behaviours, within and out with the school premises.
- Identify a space (Room 19) in the school where vulnerable pupils can attend as part of transitioning back to the Nicolson Institute or who’s behaviours at a given time require them to receive support and education out with a mainstream classroom.

5.4 To support Uist and Barra, additional ELR hours have been provided to ELR Uist and Barra (based at the LEC) with the lessons learned from the Nicolson Institute shared across the Education estate, where the ELR service will be reaching out to in order to plan for future support.



DETAIL

- 6.1 Over the course of this project, 53 children and young people were supported. Amongst this group are care-experienced children, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, children on the child protection register, children with emotional and mental health concerns, including children with school and wider anxiety issues and children who engaged in anti-social and offending behaviours.
- 6.2 Whilst the Outer Hebrides has challenges not dissimilar to those experienced nationally, significant improvements have been made with the group of 53 children who have participated in local Promise initiatives. There are pupils who have attained Nat 3 and Nat 4 qualifications who would not have achieved them otherwise. There are pupils who would not be attending school without this project. There are pupils who would have been excluded or have had more school exclusions from school if not for this project. Vulnerable P7 pupils were supported with enhanced transitions, making the adjustment from Primary school to Secondary School that bit more manageable.
- 6.3 With the Promise funding coming to an end, and having seen the positive outcomes of the project, a case was put forward from the Nicolson Institute, ELR and The Shed for continued funding to, as a minimum, extend the project until the end of the 2024/25 academic year, and at best, funding to extend the project into the 2025/26 academic year.
- 6.4 The cost of extending the project to the end of the academic year can be met from an underspend in the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund budget.
- 6.5 By carrying forward the remaining WFWF underspend into 2025/26 and redirecting it towards The Promise Project, coupled with use of Attainment Scotland Fund - Strategic Equity Fund monies, the project could be extended for the remainder of the financial year 2025/26.
- 6.6 The intention going forward is to use the five mentors to extend their support into the wider community, working not only with the children/pupils themselves, but offering support to their parents and carers. By taking a whole systems approach such as this, the child's wider wellbeing needs are supported, making for improved outcome across the child's life and lifespan.

CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The Report is intended to update Members on the impactful interventions arising from The Promise monies received by the Comhairle and wider Children's Services Partnership, offer reassurance that we are journeying in the right direction in terms of meeting The Promise to Scotland's children, and to offer an explanation as to how other funding streams can be utilised to build upon the successes achieved thus far.

