

Participation Network Online Event

TUESDAY 25 JANUARY
10.45 - 13.00



KEEPING THE PROMISE

Discussion points from breakout groups

Main takeaways from the event:

- Blown away by everything going on and by voice being central to all of this
- Making Connections was really important.
- Importance of relationships in participation. We will need more time in post-Covid era, as people get used to being in spaces again, and sharing information etc.
- Need for a human approach to participation
- Lots of positive discussion about the network and others, providing a safe place to share and letting people know that they are not alone and the need to reach out and make connections/ask questions to uncover links.

What do we want to see in future?

- Inputs from people at different levels of participation – Beginners right up to 'experts'
- Suggestion of a full day training, networking and awareness training event on the Promise, delivered by the Participation Network
- A network directory of 'who's who' to allow people to continually network, share opportunities etc. and link in with each other in between events
- More knowledge and focus on The Promise on network webpage
- More music and singing! (semi-serious answer)
- Spotlight on best practice would be beneficial.
- Meatier, deeper details about issues – not just oversight.
- How can we share ideas and resources?
- Want to hear about opportunities to collaborate
- Could the network do an event on language? Or create working, live document re: language that is shared?
- How do you create co-production properly?

Good practice and examples

- There is a lot of recruitment of workers to focus on The Promise across many organisations
- Bright Spots pilot is another piece of work that may help support the promise - it has just rolled out in a pilot area (East Ayrshire) lots of work to roll out and is looking promising (no pun intended!), but too early to understand children or young people's feelings on this just yet
- Borders spoke about using a collaborative statement to drive The Promise forward with agreement from all involved
- Some organisations have sent out small surveys/ voting options for preferred language within their organisations
- A housing organisation is doing advocacy to ensure voices of children and young people is heard by senior management etc. – where they might not have the confidence to do this themselves. E.g. Around good practice of ensuring young people who are siblings can live together where this is what they both want, when a referral came in and someone wanted to live with their brother, who was housed with this organisation.
- Love Inc's work on embedding the Promise within the organisation has involved the drive to recruit a Participation Officer who will work with the collaborators team to help make the Promise a reality. Focusing on the reality of how this will be experienced and what it means for children, young people, and families. The focus is on voice and the views of children and young people in the decision-making processes - relationships and connection are central to this.
- Lots of examples of good practice – Love Inc recruiting a Participation Officer, East Ayrshire now using the Bright Spots surveys to actively seek opinions and experiences of children and young people to help shape services moving forward. East Ayrshire are also looking at a corporate parenting action plan to try and help join up the good work that is occurring across services, as well as running a Connected Forum as a safe place for children and young people to voice their opinions about all aspects of the care they have received; health, education, relationships and also their use of Modern Apprenticeships to enable care experienced young people to come and "work for the family firm". This sparked discussion with another organisation who are setting up a group to focus on the Promise and service design shaped with input of children and young people, so are keen to link in with East Ayrshire around Bright Spots surveys.

Ideas and opportunities

- One solution is 'pledges' to children and young people, to be displayed prominently, which can focus on what they should expect and commitment to work on the promise.
- A couple of people/organisations in one breakout room were looking at different ways of how to spread awareness of The Promise with children and young people- trialling small focus groups and other methods
- Supporting relationships with residential workers when young people move on – difference between how this is done with third sector/private residential homes and local authority run residential services – as Local Authority services still have some way to go on keeping important connections.
- Need to develop language and writing skills in 'letter to the child' – need for leadership to help with skills development on this.
- There was a lot of discussion around the need for joining up and 'threading together' the approaches and examples of good practice from across the 32 local authorities, to help create a national picture of how Promise work is being approached. There was also discussion about including examples of improvement work pre-dating the Promise and looking at organisational practices and government practices across Scotland to try and avoid fragmentation.

Observations and challenges

- Challenge around communication with both children and young people to build work/ have discussions around The Promise. Some have good awareness, eg if they have worked with Who Cares, but not all. There is a need to explain clearly in a way that is accessible, but also to build trust, as for some children and young people (and practitioners) there is scepticism that this will be another piece of policy that won't deliver – need to build trust that The Promise is 'a working document not just policy paper to file'
- Feeling that there is still some lack of clarity around defining co-production and participation although 'fudginess' can be useful sometimes
- Another challenge for practitioners making plans to implement The Promise with children and young people is the ongoing need to focus on more urgent recovery work around the pandemic – i.e. to support mental health needs.
- There was a thought that we might need to bring peoples focus back to the Promise, in the aftermath of the pandemic. Indication that the launch coinciding with the pandemic might have caused a bit of overshadowing (perhaps quite rightly in lots of cases).
- Barriers to promoting work that amplifies voice of children/young people, due to IT/firewalls etc.
- There is a need to protect practitioners time so that they are able to do the work that will keep the Promise, (e.g. developing loving relationships), that does not get diverted to emergency/crisis work (e.g. of asking social worker to go on last minute child protection visit to respond to urgent need)
- Impact of Covid 19 on projects and connections has changed approaches and required creativity to sustain connectedness but has also opened the geographical reach via online platforms.
- Queries about funding streams and what happens as projects come to the end of these, and the thresholds for support of these services. Discussion of the family wraparound support discussed in the presentation, and how that might be funded, how long that programme is available and how much of that type of support is out there.
- Consensus that there seems to be a gap between all the excellent work that goes on and the linking of this to other organisations – there is not total awareness of the Promise and what it is, and the work that goes on. Examples from within education and care where there was no awareness, but that there also needs to be consideration for the capacity of these workforces, particularly throughout the pandemic.
- There needs to be a way of increasing the knowledge of the Promise across organisations – what is needed to keep the promise and how to actively work with it.
- Use of language and jargon was discussed and the impact this might have on the understanding of what the Promise is. There is a need for open spaces for discussion that involve more levels and members of the workforce (not just core groups) to help spread awareness, and also the inclusion of children and young people and their participation as well.
- Recognition that a lot of professionals, families and children are not aware of the Promise
- Need to ensure short term funding does not get in the way of delivering change through long term working relationships, with families and across professionals
- Language is critical and needs to be strengths-based and not stigmatising