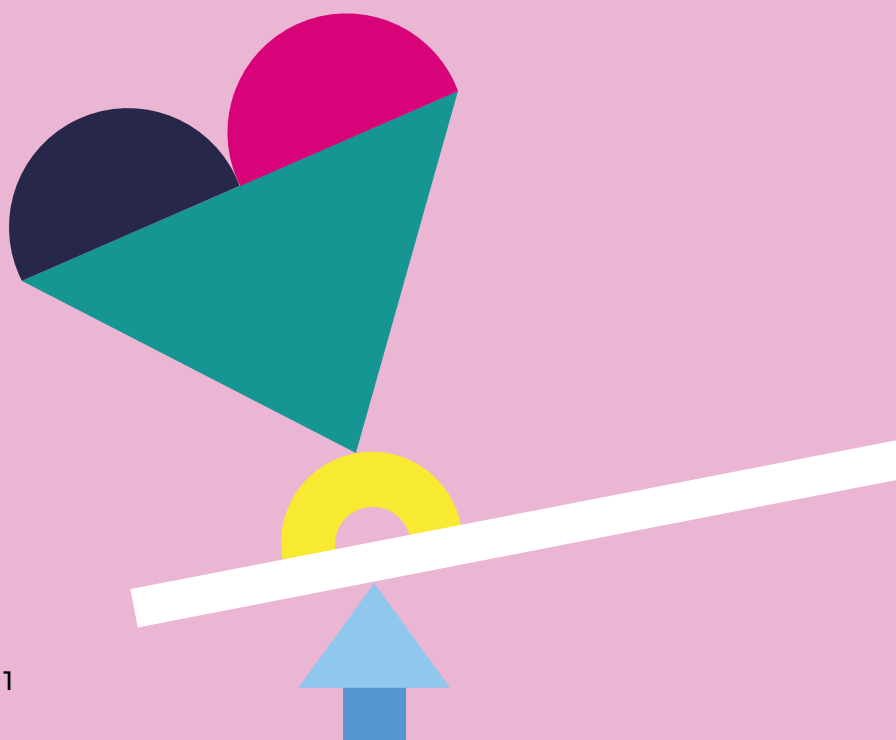


# the pinky promise



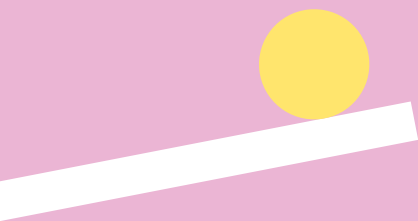


# What is this report about?

In October 2016, Scotland's First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, promised care experienced people that Scotland would do better. She said Scotland would come together and **love its most vulnerable children and give them the childhood they deserve.**

To figure out how to do this, she said the Independent Care Review should be set up.

**The Care Review had to hear everyone's voices. It needed to hear from the children and families who knew the 'care system' best – the people who had experienced it.**



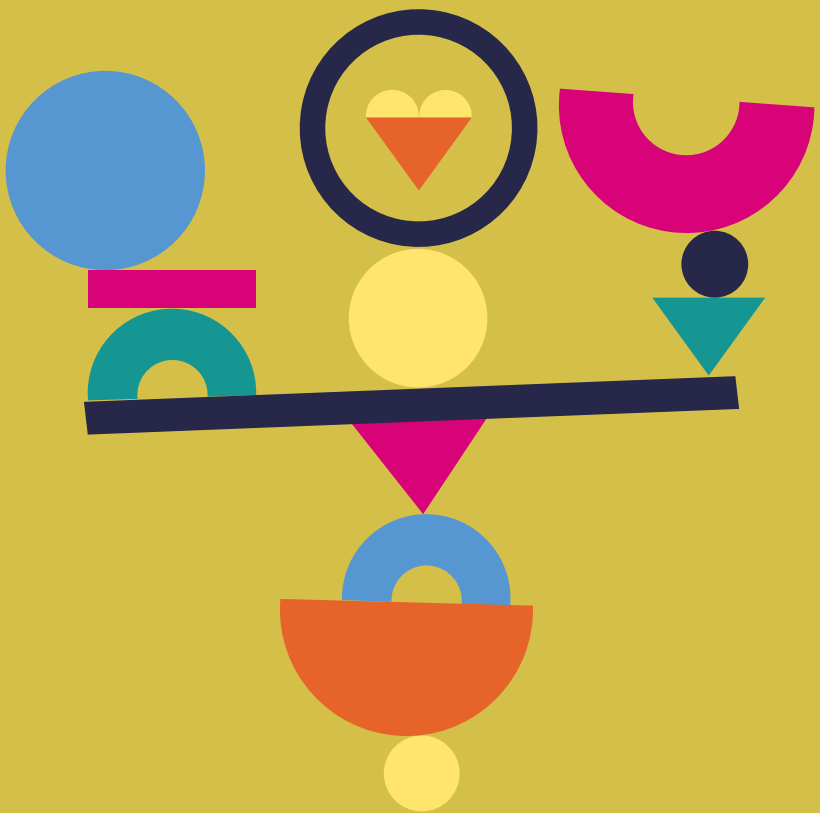
**So for three years, between February 2017 and February 2020, the Care Review travelled all across Scotland to listen really carefully to over 5,500 people.**

More than half of these people were children and adults who had been 'in care'. They told the Care Review what needed to change.

Lots of families also spoke to the Care Review about their experiences. So did the people who worked in the 'care system'.

Everything the Care Review did was based on what it heard. Everything you read in this report is based on what it heard.

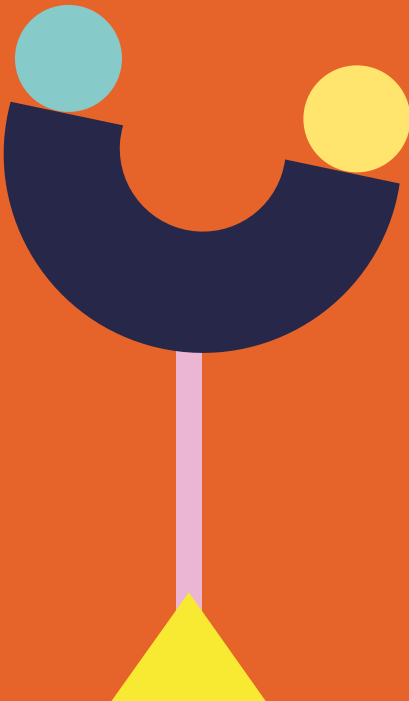
**Scotland already has a promise that children grow up loved, safe and respected. The Care Review heard this does not always happen. That needs to change.**



# Scotland's Promise

The Care Review heard that Scotland needs to change how it cares for children.

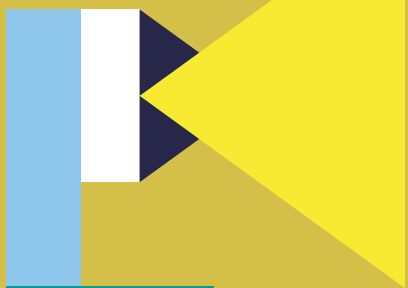
The Care Review has taken everything it heard and organised it into different groups. Each of these groups tells Scotland how it can better care for children. The Care Review calls these groups the 'Foundations'.






- **Voice:** When children speak, adults must really listen to them. Adults must make sure that children are included in decisions about their lives.
- **Family:** If children are living with their family and are safe and feel loved, they should stay there. Their family should be given all the help they need to stay together. If they need extra help when things get difficult, they should get it.
- **Care:** If children cannot stay with the adults in their family, they will stay with their brothers and sisters. The home they live in together will be a place where they feel safe and loved. It should be their home for as long as they want and need it to be.
- **People:** Relationships are important. Adults must make sure children are able to stay close to the people they want to and keep in contact with them. Adults must also help children make new relationships as they grow up. Sometimes adults need some help too. The adults who are close to children must get the help they need to make sure they can do their best for children.
- **Scaffolding:** Help and support must be there for children and families whenever they need it. It must also be there for the adults who are close to children and families. It is important everyone knows where to go for help and that it is ready when it is asked for.

# Voice




When children speak, adults must really listen to them. Adults must make sure that children are included in decisions about their lives.







Children should be able to bring the people they trust into the places where decisions about them are made and people should listen to what they say too.




The Care Review heard from lots of children and families that they had not been listened to. This made them feel like other people's opinions about their lives were often more important than theirs.

People who work with children and families told the Care Review how difficult these decisions are, and that often they were also not heard.





### **That needs to change.**

Scotland must make sure that all decisions are based on what children want and need. That means that organisations and people who make decisions need to change the way they think and how they listen to children.






It is important that the right information is shared at the right time and that those close to children are heard.



What needs to happen to protect the relationships that are important to children should always be part of the decision.

**Children who have lived in the 'care system' told the Care Review that they want to be loved but have often not felt they were. That needs to change too.**

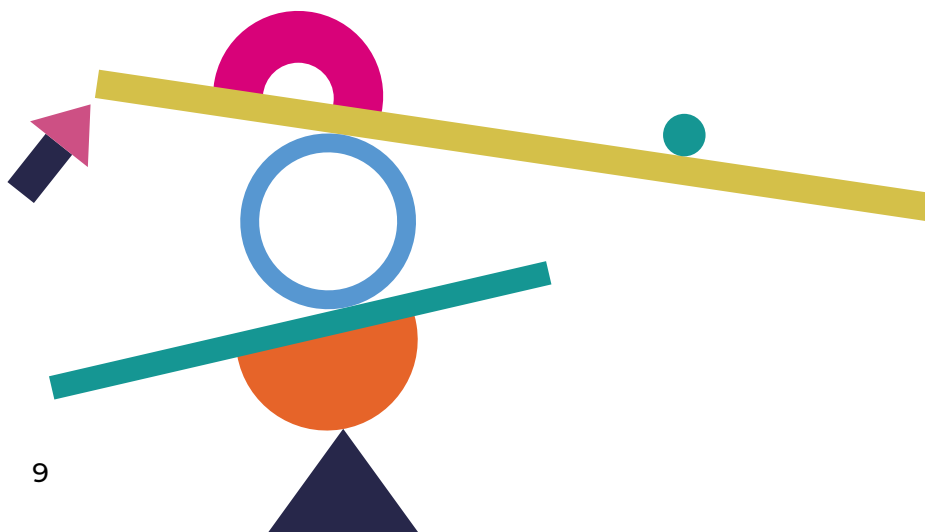



**Scotland does not need rules about love. Love is not about rules. What is really important is that children are loved and feel loved. Children said that they want the relationships that are important to them to be protected and allowed to grow.**

The Care Review heard that children felt that other people had too much control over the information about their lives. ●

Children and young people must own their stories so that they can be in charge of what people know and when they know it.

The Care Review has helped with developing some digital tools that can help with how information is shared safely. Scotland must continue with that work.






The Care Review heard from many people who look after and help children. They said they often did not know when they were allowed to share what they knew. They were also confused about who they were allowed to share what they knew with. When information was shared, people told the Care Review it was not always listened to. That must change.

It's not just people who look after children that need to listen better – it is organisations and the Scottish Government too. People with power need to keep listening to children, so that Scotland should never have to do a Care Review again.

The Care Review heard a lot about The Children's Hearings System with many children and families sharing that they found Hearings very difficult.

The Children's Hearings System needs to change. The focus of the system must be the children and families who appear before it.



**Scotland must make sure it protects the legal rights of children, especially when they are making decisions about brothers and sisters. Children must know when decisions are being made about their brothers and sisters.**

The Care Review heard that children are not always able to make their voices heard at Hearings for lots of reasons. Children must always be heard at Hearings and if they need help to make their views heard they must get that.

**Sometimes the wrong decisions can be made. When this happens, children must know who to speak to have this looked into and they must get the help they need to make sure this happens.**

At the moment it is only children who have to go to Hearings. Scotland needs to think very hard about whether Local Authorities, families and social workers also need to be made to go to Hearings. This would mean everyone who is told at a Hearing to do something, knows they have to do it and can make sure it happens.

The Care Review heard from children and young people who had been in difficulty with the police. Sometimes, this had been made much harder than it needed to be. Most children and young people need to have their case dealt with by The Children's Hearings System. The Sheriff Court is not the right place for children.



Scotland relies on volunteers to make decisions at Hearings. The Care Review heard that this meant things did not always work as well as they should. Scotland must look at other options.

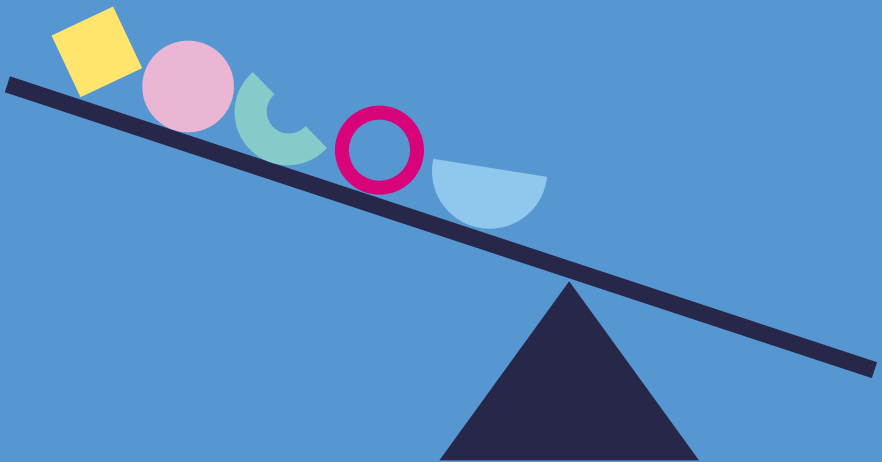
**Scotland must make sure The Children's Hearings System supports children and families early so that decisions aren't rushed.**



# Family

If children are living with their family and are safe and feel loved, they should stay there. Their family should be given all the help they need to stay together. If they need extra help when things get difficult, they should get it.

The Care Review heard from lots of children and families who said that the help they get at the moment is not enough. They sometimes feel like they are being judged. Some families need more help than others. This is ok. No one should make anyone feel bad for asking for help.



The Care Review heard from children and families who believed they could have stayed together if they had been given more help when they needed it. They felt that sometimes help had come too late.

**There must be more support for all families so that Scotland really helps families thrive together.**

Every community in Scotland needs to have places where families can go to make friends and get help if they need it.

The Care Review heard how difficult it is for families who are worried about not having enough money to live on. Families told the Care Review they had often had to make very hard choices because there was not enough money.

**Scotland must work harder so every family has enough money to live on.**

The Care Review heard a lot about mental health and how difficult it is to get help. That must change. Children and families should not have to wait so long to get the help they need.

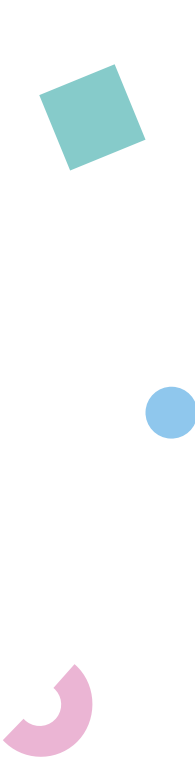
There must be more help ready for all families if and when they need it. Even if children are taken away from their families, that family must still get the help they need.

## The Care Review listened to what all families need. Families said they need:

- **help to be near to where they live:** Help should be where families are. It should be in their communities and close to where they live.
- **help to be there when it is needed:** Help must not only be there Monday to Friday between 9 in the morning and 5 at night. Help must be there when families need it. This can be at any time of day and on any day of the week.
- **people to understand what they are good at:** The people that help families must listen to families to understand what is already working well, not just what isn't.
- **more control over their lives:** Children and their families must have a say about the people who help them. Relationships are important and it is important children and families like and trust the people who help them.



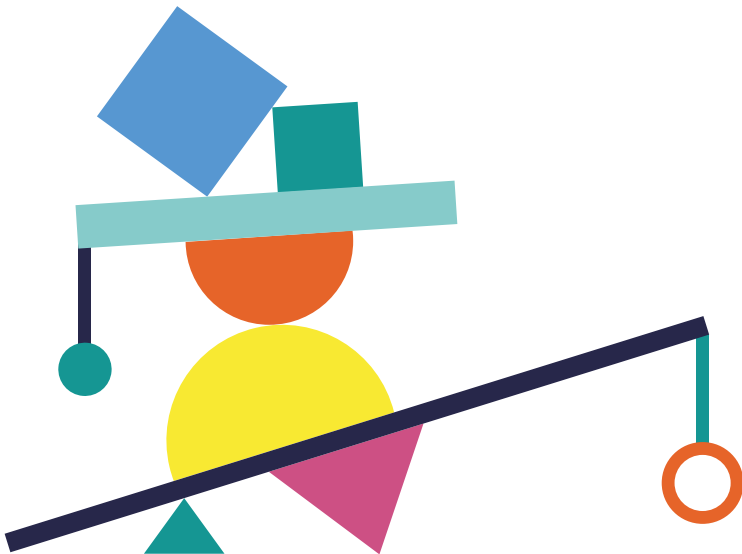




● **help to change when their needs change:** Families need different things at different times. Sometimes things are hard and sometimes they get better. Help must change too. Families must be able to say what they need and then get the help they need to make it happen. Sometimes that will mean help looks different and that is ok.

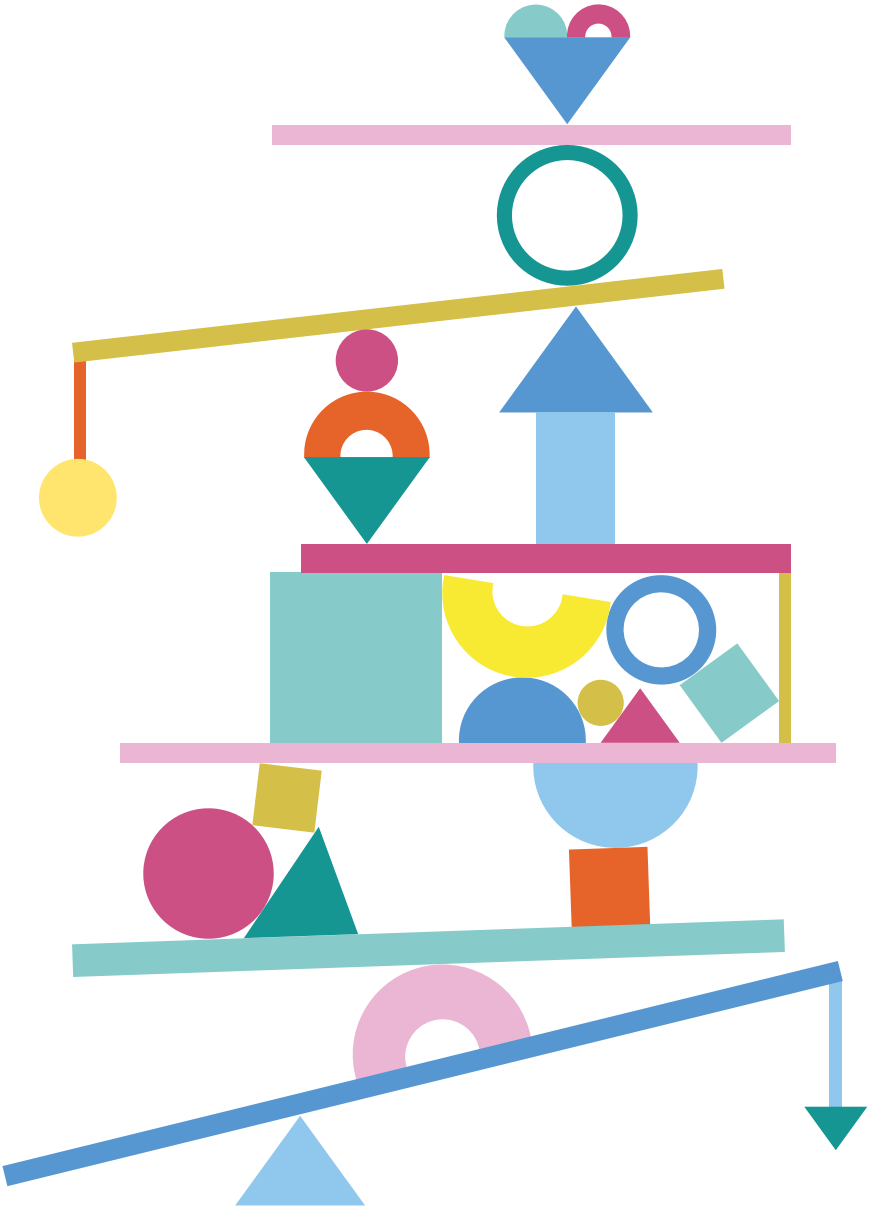
● **help for whole families:** The whole family must get the help they need. If only one person is getting help, everyone else will still be finding it hard.

● **help to understand their stories:** People in families might have had bad things happen to them in the past. They might still find it hard to do some things because of this. Help should not just focus on what is hard right now, it has to also understand why it is hard.



- **not to feel judged:** People who help families must think about how families feel. They must not use words that are hard to understand. They must not turn up in cars with organisations' names on them and they must not wear name badges. These sorts of things make children and families stand out as different. Everyone needs some help at some point. Children and families who are getting help are not different and must not be made to feel like they are.
- **help to be there as long as it is needed:** Help must be there for as long as a family needs it. It is ok for a family to stop needing help and then need it again later.
- **help to make sure children get what they need:** Children have legal rights and entitlements. Help must always be based on legal rights and entitlements to make sure children and their families get them without having to ask.





# Care

If children cannot stay with the adults in their family, they will stay with their brothers and sisters. The home they live in together will be a place where they feel safe and loved. It should be their home for as long as they want and need it to be.



The Care Review heard from lots of children who felt loved. But many others said they did not feel loved.

**Scotland must make sure everyone who looks after children knows that the most important thing they do is to love and care for them.**

Wherever children live, in kinship families, foster families, adoptive families, residential care or secure care, they should feel loved and cared for.

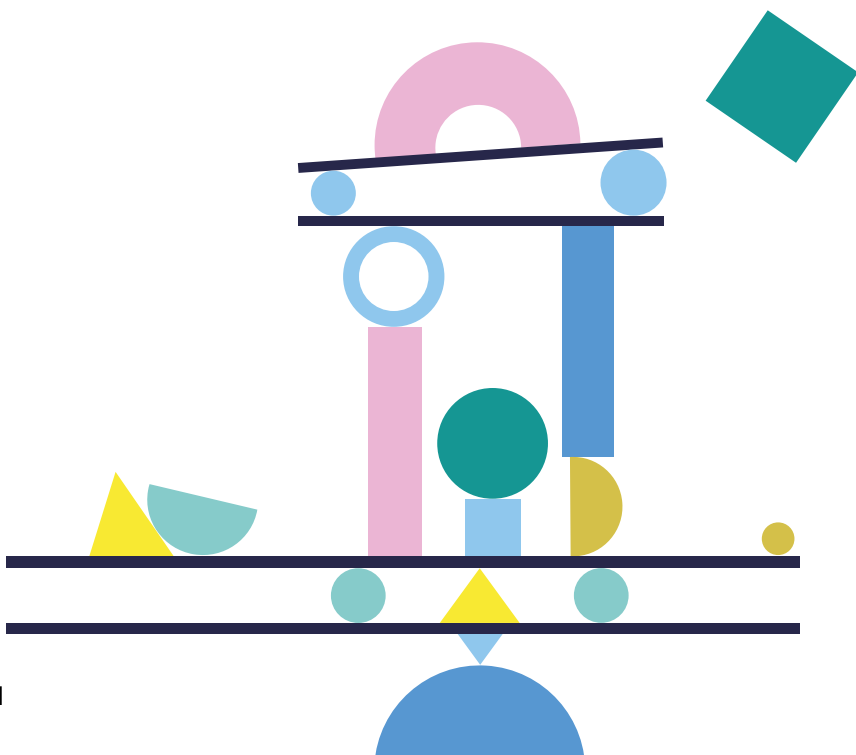




## If children are taken away from their families, Scotland must make sure:

**children's rights are met:** Children have legal rights and entitlements. It is not up to children and families to make sure the people who help them know about these. It is up to the people who look after children to know about these rights and entitlements and to make sure they happen.

**children do not move home lots of times:** The Care Review has heard from lots of children that they have moved about a lot. That has to stop.



**Scotland must make sure children live in places that are safe and caring with people who love them. Children should not be moved about. They should stay in one place so they can make friends and go to the same school right through their childhood.**



Scotland must not move children about. This is very important. If Scotland has done its best but a child does have to move, they must know what is happening, why it is happening and when it will happen. Children must be given lots of time to meet the new people they will be living with and get used to the new place they will live. This should never happen in a hurry. Children must be able to stay in touch with people that are important to them and take everything with them that they need and love.

**children are able to keep relationships that are important to them:** Children have lots of important relationships, with their family, with their brothers and sisters, with friends and with people they have lived with. These relationships are important and Scotland must make sure that children are able to keep in touch with all the people they want to.



**children have help to understand their story:** When children are not able to live with their family it can be very hard to understand why. It can feel very sad and upsetting. Children must be given lots of help to understand what has happened and how it feels.

**children get all the help they need to learn and grow:** The Care Review has heard what a special place schools can be for children and how important the relationships they have at school are to them. These relationships are important to making sure children can do their best at school.

Children must get all they need to learn and to thrive and support for the relationships that help them achieve.

**children have someone to turn to:** The most important thing children need is to know that someone who cares for them has got their back. Children need to know they have someone they can trust who will help them when things get hard. All of the people in Scotland who care for children need to know being a very good trusted friend is the most worthwhile thing they can do.



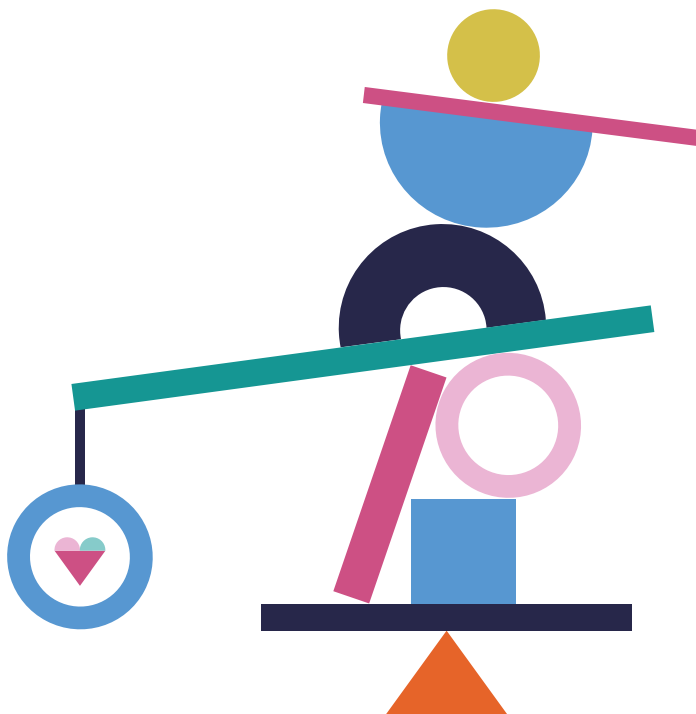


### **children are always treated fairly:**

The Care Review has heard from lots of children, young people and people who work with them about being restrained. Lots of children told the Care Review how scary, embarrassing and painful restraint is. The Review has been told of restraint being used not to keep children safe, but as a punishment.

### **Scotland must work hard to stop restraint happening.**


Everyone who works with children needs to be supported to cope with situations that can be difficult, but restraining children often does not help.





**children understand what is being said:** Children told the Care Review they do not like a lot of the words that are used to describe them, their families and their homes. These words, like 'contact' to describe seeing their mum and 'units' to describe where they live, are very different to the words everyone else uses to describe families and homes.

**Being spoken about like this makes children feel bad and does not help children feel good about themselves. Scotland must stop using these words.**

A pink triangle pointing right and a pink horizontal bar, positioned to the left of the second text block.

Children told the Care Review that 'respite' was one of those words that made them feel different. Children said it was often used when they were being sent away so their carers could go on holiday. Children told the Care Review they did not always know where they were going or who was going to look after them.

**Scotland needs to stop using the word 'respite.' If children go away for a short break, they should get to choose who they spend their time with. It should be a time of treats and fun with people they know and enjoy spending time with.**



**children are helped to be healthy:**

The Care Review heard a lot about how people who have been looked after away from their families do not always have good health.

**Scotland must make sure people who look after children know that teaching healthy habits and noticing changes in their health is a really important part of caring for children.**

**children do not get into trouble with the police:**


The Care Review knows that children who are looked after away from parents are currently more likely to come into contact with the police, even though they're not doing anything different to other children and teenagers. That needs to stop.

**Everyone who looks after children or who has contact with children needs to know that getting them in trouble with the police and courts does not help them (or their communities) and can have a big impact on their future.**



**children from other countries are looked after:** The Care Review heard from children who had come to live in Scotland from places overseas that were not safe for them. Sometimes horrible things had happened to them and they had a really hard journey to get to Scotland.

**Scotland must make sure those children are cared for and they get everything they need.**




**when children become adults, help does not stop:** The Care Review heard that becoming an adult often felt scary and confusing. Adults told the Care Review that they seemed to get less and less help as they got older. They did not feel ready to become adults or able to do all the things adults have to do.

Young people who Scotland cares for must be able to get help for as long as they need it. It is ok to not need help for a while and then need it again. This is ok even if help has not been needed for years. It does not matter what age you are or what help you need, help must be there and adults must know how to get it.



# People

Relationships are important. Adults must make sure children are able to stay close to the people they want to and keep in contact with them. Adults must also help children make new relationships as they grow up. Sometimes adults need some help too. The adults who are close to children must get the help they need to make sure they can do their best for children.



The Care Review heard from lots of people who have chosen a job working with children, young people and families because they value helping people.

Many told the Care Review how much they love the children and young people that they care for or work with, but that they feel frustrated and anxious when they try to do the right thing and the rules do not let them. They often feel overwhelmed.

**Scotland must make sure the people who work with children and their families get all the help they need to do the best job they can.**

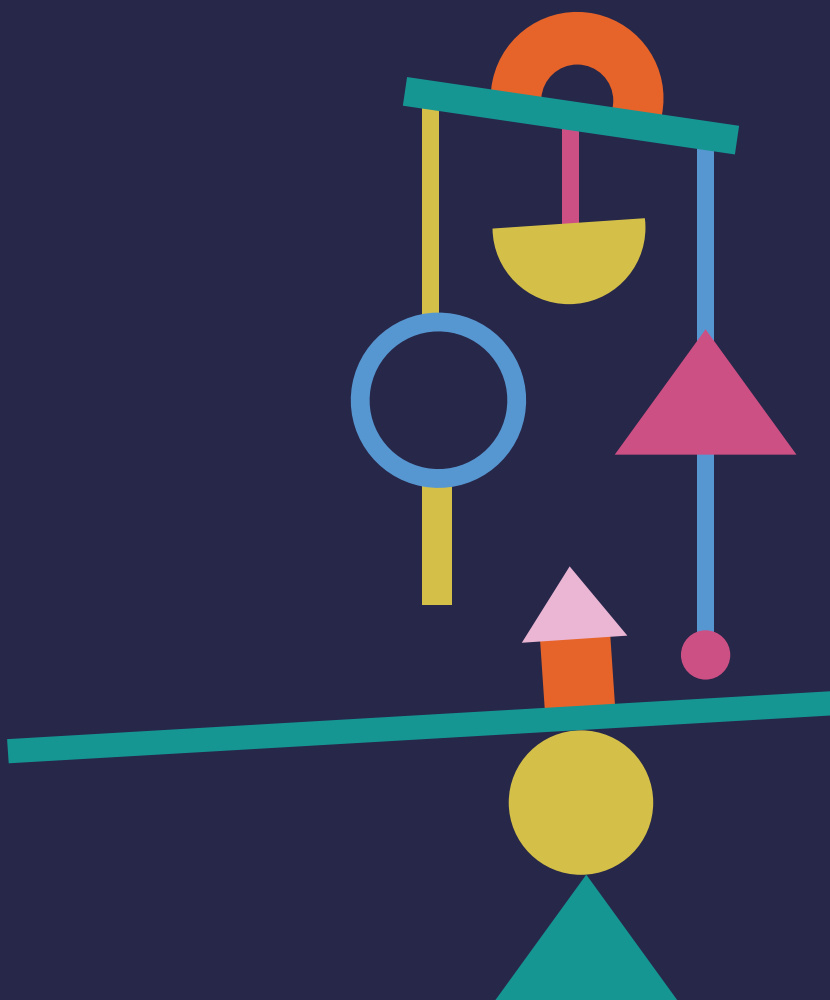
They must have proper time to think about whether they are doing a good job and talk to people about their work. People who work with children must know that they can be themselves and be natural. They must not behave in too formal a way. Children want to have real, genuine relationships with those around them.

People who are leaders must make sure they are behaving in a way they expect people close to children and families to behave. Leaders must be the best leaders they can be.

Doing the same job as someone else does not mean you do it in exactly the same way. It is important that children and families get the help they need no matter who is giving them it.

# Scaffolding

Help and support must be there for children and their families whenever they need it. It must also be there for the adults who are close to children and their families.





**It is important everyone knows where to go for help and that it is ready when it is asked for.**

The Care Review heard that care can feel confusing and complicated. Children and families do not always get the help they need and sometimes get forgotten about. That needs to change.

Everything needs to be much simpler so that children and families know what is happening and they can get what they need when they need it.

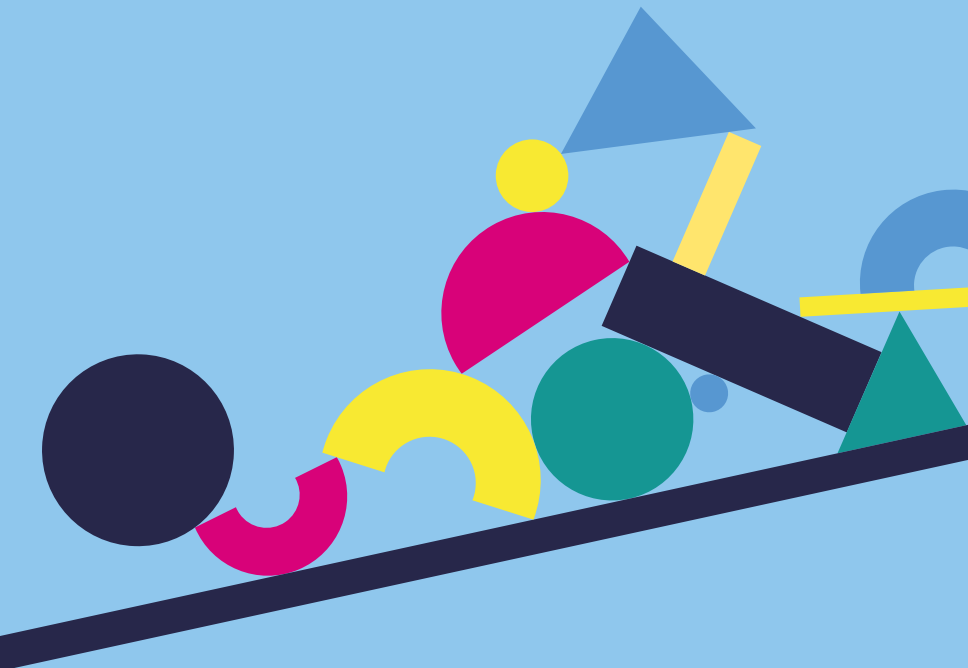
It is important that everyone is listening to children and families, understanding what they need and working out how to make sure it happens. What is important to children and families should also be important to the people who help.



# So what next?

The Care Review listened carefully to figure out what has to change.

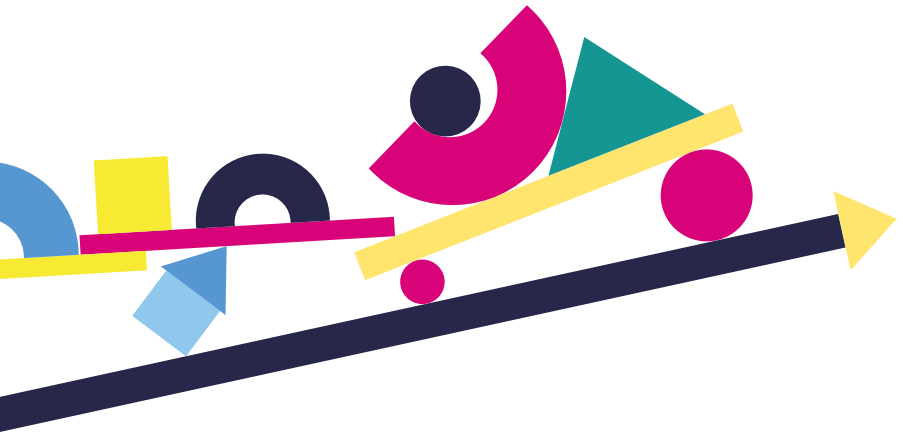
Now Scotland must make this change happen.



## The Care Review has produced some other reports to help with this change.

**The Plan** shows Scotland how it can make sure that these things happen.

**The Money** shows Scotland how it can invest to make sure children and families thrive and **The Rules** show how complicated today's rules are and what needs to change.



**“We grow up loved, safe,  
and respected so that we  
realise our full potential.”**

Scotland's Ambition for children and young people