

FOI reference number: 202300380841

- Letter from Fiona Duncan to First Minister

By email to:

The First Minister, firstminister@gov.scot

Date:

2 March 2023

I am writing to you in my capacity as Independent Strategic Advisor - The Promise.

First, I want to acknowledge your dedication to care experienced children, young people and adults, and to making sure that families get the support they need to stay together. This commitment, reaffirmed in your resignation speech, then again last Thursday at First Minister's Questions, means so much to so many in the care community.

The time before you depart the office of the First Minister is short and will be in demand. It is my belief there are a number of actions you could take over the coming weeks that will strengthen the foundations of the good work underway to #KeepThePromise and support further progress. With this in mind, there are also initiatives you could prepare the ground for, to help ensure your successor sustains government's commitment to #KeepThePromise.

Fraser and I would like discuss this with you, and hear your thoughts on what you may want to focus on after you leave office, and how best to signal this - as well as your view of the challenges.

My hope is that we can explore all these issues when we meet on 6th March, and how I and the Promise Scotland can help.

You will see I have proposed a possible running order and provided a short briefing that outlines priorities. The clarification provided by you last Thursday at First Minister's Questions on the purpose of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund being "to transform services so that families can access support they need, when they need it and in the way they need it", with an objective to "prevent the need for children to go into care, supporting families and keeping families together" was very welcome. And therefore the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund has been used as a thread throughout the briefing to illustrate priorities and action.

As you know, there is more to the change required than money alone. However, in the short term, it would be very useful if Scottish Government should provide an assurance to local authorities and Children's Services Planning Partnerships about the Fund's distribution, including formal confirmation to local areas of what they can expect to receive in 2023/24. This would also provide an opportunity to stress again the purpose and objectives of the Fund, enabling local partnerships to plan ahead but also – as above - providing clarity, and supporting innovation.

Fraser and I look forward to meeting with you next week and discussing these issues in more detail.

With best wishes.

Fiona Duncan
Independent Strategic Advisor – The Promise