

The Promise Progress Framework Quality Assurance Paper 17 December 2025

1. Introduction

In March 2025 the Promise Data and Evidence Group¹ was established, chaired by the Scottish Government's Chief Social Policy Adviser, Professor Linda Bauld. It brings together a network of analysts from across sectors and organisations to review the data and evidence landscape, identify activities to improve data infrastructure, and support research priorities that enhance understanding of progress towards keeping the Promise over the next five years. The work of the group directly supports the development of the Promise Story of Progress.

At the same time the Chief Social Policy Adviser asked the Chief Statistician to provide assurances on work being taken forward to monitor and track progress on the Promise.

The Data and Evidence Group work programme is set out across three workstreams focusing on quantitative data, qualitative data and longer-term research. A 12 month work plan was published in August 2025 presenting a set of proposed objectives across the workstreams to support the development of the Promise Story of Progress.

1.1 Promise Progress Framework Quality Assurance

The purpose of this paper is twofold to:

- i. To update on work undertaken across 2025, overseen by the SG Chief Statistician, to ensure the required level of quality assurance is in place to update the Promise Progress Framework and that is in line with other National Outcome reporting
- ii. Provide recommendations around quality assurance of the Promise Progress Framework going forward.

2. Background

During 2025, The Promise Scotland developed the Promise Progress Framework dashboard, where indicators within the Promise Progress Framework are updated and presented in a user-centred interactive format. A dashboard is beneficial for users as it allows for indicators which are published at points throughout the year to be updated at agreed intervals, instead of via a static annual report. The first iteration of the Promise Progress Framework dashboard was launched on the Plan 24-30 website on 30 September 2025.

To progress work on providing assurances to reporting mechanisms, the Scottish Government's Chief Statistician requested support from an experienced group of senior analysts within government to quality assure updates to the indicators within the framework based on data that has been published throughout 2025.

3. Quality Assurance Model

¹ [The Promise Data and Evidence Group: terms of reference - gov.scot](#)

The Promise Progress Framework dashboard is a critical product to help Scotland understand progress towards keeping The Promise. A quality assurance process is required for verifying the robustness of the quantitative data for the indicators within the framework, and how progress will be assessed. A large proportion of the data in the Promise Progress Framework is published by the Scottish Government.

Between September 2025 and December 2025, the Data and Evidence Group has worked in partnership with the Promise Scotland and COSLA to update the statistics within the second iteration of the Promise Progress Framework dashboard on 17 December 2025. As part of this updating process Scottish Government analysts called upon learning from the successful approach taken by the [National Performance Framework](#) to delivering rigorous progress assessments of official statistics.

The Scottish Government currently has a route to validate national statistical dashboards, such as the National Performance Framework. This is important when scrutinising and applying qualifiers, for instance direction of travel on Government commitments like The Promise. A National Performance Framework Technical Advisory Group is Chaired by the Scottish Government's Chief Statistician who plays a role in leading and coordinating this work, providing independent advice and ensuring that the principles of timeliness, value, and quality from the Code of Practice for Statistics are embedded at each stage of quality assurance.

The ambition is to apply a similar process to The Promise Progress Framework dashboard, in order to ensure a robust assessment of progress, upholding trust in the use of key statistics for this purpose and the progress made.

3.1 Technical Advisory Group

Quality assurance of the data presented in the Promise Progress Framework has benefited from this Technical Advisory Group approach. The National Performance Framework Technical Advisory Group (NPFTAG) have led the quality assurance of the data presented.

Using this established group and approach has ensured that the Progress Framework is aligned to the approach taken for other national reporting frameworks and is embedded in the existing processes of national statistical accountability.

Building on this learning, a separate and dedicated Promise Technical Advisory Group will be established in January 2026, chaired by the Chief Statistician. This will connect professional analytical teams across Government portfolios to oversee and provide assurance on the data that is presented in the Promise Progress Framework. Going forward this will support regular and timely updates of the data in line with publication of relevant national statistics.

3.2 Technical Advisory Group Principles

The initial quality assurance process, focused only on baseline selection and supporting narratives for each indicator, agreeing to the following principles.

3.3 Principles for Baseline Selection

The Promise Progress Framework is designed to monitor progress towards keeping The Promise made to care experienced children and young people in Scotland. A consistent and meaningful baseline is essential to understanding change over time.

3.4 Default Baseline

In the Promise Progress Framework published on 18 December 2024, the year 2020 was adopted as the default baseline across the Framework. This reflects the year The Promise was made and provides a reference point for assessing progress. Following the quality review of the framework the Technical Advisory Group noted the following:

- i. COVID-19 Disruption: across the wide range of areas covered by the PPF, indicators have seen impacts of varying magnitudes and at different points throughout the pandemic period. Without the inclusion of a pre-COVID baseline figure across all indicators, it is difficult for users to understand how indicators changed (if at all) at the onset of the pandemic, and trends since.
- ii. Need for flexibility: certain indicators follow a non-annual publication cycle (i.e. every other year, or quarterly), and others do not have a time series which extends back to prior to 2020. The relevant reporting periods that different data collections cover also vary across the framework, including but not limited to those that report by calendar year, financial year, or school year. For this reason, these principles need to allow for discretion to be exercised where appropriate, rather than stipulating a particular year as the default baseline.

3.5 Baseline Recommendations

The Technical Advisory Group have made the following recommendations for the baseline in December 2025 update of the Promise Progress Framework:

- i. The most recent pre-COVID data point is adopted as the default baseline across the Framework. The amended baseline avoids misleading comparisons and supports more meaningful interpretation of trends. A common baseline promotes consistency and simplifies interpretation for users, particularly where indicators are conceptually or methodologically linked.
- i. Where data is published more frequently than annually (e.g. quarterly), the Framework reports on indicators annually unless there is a strong rationale to do otherwise. A single quarter is selected as the baseline (following guidance set out above), and subsequent progress should be monitored using the same quarter in each following year. This approach supports consistency and comparability while reducing the risk of seasonal variation distorting trend analysis.

3.6 Principles for Supporting Narrative

The supporting narrative accompanying each indicator plays a critical role in helping users understand the latest position and trends over time. In line with the Code of Practice for Statistics, the narrative must aid interpretation, ensure consistency with other government outputs, and support transparency and public confidence.

The supporting narrative includes:

- i. How the indicator has changed since the last datapoint
- ii. Change compared to the baseline
- iii. Where appropriate, how trends for care experienced children compare to the overall population.
- iv. Any additional context that aids responsible interpretation. This includes legislative or policy changes or impacts of COVID-19 which may have affected trends over this period.

4. Recommendations and Next Steps

In January 2026, the Scottish Government Chief Statistician will establish a dedicated Promise Technical Advisory Group which will oversee future quality assurance of the quantitative data within the Promise Progress Framework Dashboard.

The following areas of development will be considered by the Promise Technical Advisory Group:

4.1 Interpretation of Progress

- i. From 2026 onwards, the framework may include qualifiers for each indicator update, where the Technical Advisory Group may recommend a direction of change based on the most recent data—up, down, or stable. There is potential for these qualifiers to be different to those in existing reporting, where it is deemed appropriate to do so in the particular context of The Promise progress.
- ii. Principles for how these recommendations will be determined by lead analysts and scrutinized and approved by The Promise Technical Advisory Group (TAG) will be developed and agreed in early 2026. In the interim period, interpretations of trends should reflect existing reporting only.

4.2 Data Trends

- iii. Consideration for future inclusion is trends data prior to the baseline, where this may help understand whether the direction of travel has changed since the Promise was made. This may be particularly relevant where a positive trend has simply continued, or a negative trend has slowed but not reversed.

4.3 Streamlining of Indicators

- iv. Each indicator will be reviewed by subject matter experts to ensure that the correct indicators are selected to create a more strategic and impactful framework.

4.4 New Indicators

- v. The Promise Data and Evidence Group will continue to support the work of the Promise Technical Advisory Group to explore and develop new indicators. This will include discrete research projects and improvements to the long-term data infrastructure, using methods such as data linkage. Work is currently underway in partnership with Public Health Scotland to collect new health indicators for school aged care experienced children. The first set of health indicators will be published in Spring 2026.

5. Conclusions

Throughout 2025, significant steps have been taken in developing the Promise Progress Framework and its supporting dashboard in partnership with the Scottish Government NPF-TAG the Promise Scotland and COSLA . These tools are central to understanding how Scotland is moving towards keeping The Promise at a national level.

The work to oversee the updating of the Promise Progress Framework with the Scottish Government Office of the Chief Statistician has laid strong foundations for robust and transparent reporting, drawing on best practice from the National Performance Framework.

Looking ahead, a dedicated Promise Technical Advisory Group will be established in early 2026 and will strengthen the integrity of the framework by overseeing data quality, refining baselines, and introducing meaningful qualifiers to help interpret changes over time. Alongside this, efforts to address gaps in indicators and outcomes will ensure that the framework reflects the full breadth of the vision statements and provides a comprehensive picture of progress.