



**OFFICIAL INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL  
Outcomes Report**

This report must be submitted to the Premier within 40 working days of the Minister's return and, once approved by the Premier, promptly published on the relevant department website (within a total of 60 working days of the Minister's return).

As it will be published, this report should not include commercial-in-confidence or otherwise sensitive information. The published report does not need to include signatures.

<b>Name of Department/s or Agency/s</b>	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
<b>Departmental or Agency Contact/s</b> <i>(Will not be published)</i>	
<b>Phone Number</b> <i>(Will not be published)</i>	
<b>TRAVEL DETAILS</b>	
<b>Minister's Name</b>	Hon Lizzie Blandthorn MP
<b>Portfolio/s</b>	Minister for Children, Minister for Disability
<b>Accompanying travellers</b>	Paul Frayne, Chief of Staff
<b>Countries visited</b>	United Kingdom (Scotland and England) Republic of Ireland
<b>Dates of travel</b>	14 – 21 December 2025
<b>Number of official travel days</b> <b>(include day of departure and day of return)</b>	8 days
<b>Funding source</b>	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
Include combined expenses for Minister and accompanying travellers	
<b>Air fares (including taxes and fees)</b>	\$36,224

<b>Accommodation (including taxes and fees)</b>	\$9,577.56
<b>Other expenses (including surface travel and travel allowances)</b>	\$6,208.00
<b>Total cost for Minister and accompanying staff</b>	\$51,924.61
<b>Are the above costs final and complete?</b>	All relevant costs have been included, however some costs were invoiced in GBP, and AUD equivalent has been estimated based on current GBP to AUD exchange rate.
<b>OUTCOMES</b>	
<b>Purpose of travel</b>	

Travel was undertaken to the United Kingdom (Scotland and England) and the Republic of Ireland to hear first-hand about approaches to improving outcomes for at-risk children and families and enhancing child safety.

The United Kingdom and Ireland are recognised as delivering innovative and best practice initiatives for children and families. This includes leading programs supporting young people leaving out-of-home care to successfully transition to independent living, employment and adulthood, and the package of reforms in Scotland to improve support for families and significantly reduce the number of children and young people in statutory care.

The travel included a focus on learning more about innovative approaches to:

- ‘Corporate parenting’ and whole-of-government approaches to supporting children and families across the different jurisdictions, to better understand different approaches and key implementation enablers and challenges.
- Barnhaus model of child-centred, multidisciplinary support to improve service coordination and integration for children and young people impacted by violence and abuse.
- Child safeguarding, including mechanisms to oversee quality of service delivery and review critical incidents, and efforts to address child sexual exploitation.
- Structures and approaches for engaging directly with children and young people to hear about their experiences and what matters most to them, to ensure lived-experience perspectives are at the centre of policy development and decision-making.

These focus areas are strongly aligned with the objectives of the Victorian Government and will inform the implementation of existing reform directions in Victoria, including:

- a Bill recently introduced into Parliament to establish a Supporting Stable and Strong Families Scheme, modelled on the successful Corporate Parenting scheme in Scotland; and
- Victoria’s nation-leading child safety reforms, to strengthen regulation, oversight and safeguarding of children across all workplaces and settings.

### **Benefits of travel to the State of Victoria**

Official engagements occurred over five days, with two days of engagements in Scotland, one day of engagements in Ireland and two days of engagements in England. In each country, meetings occurred with:

- the Minister with portfolio responsibility for children and families
- senior officials from the responsible department and/or program area
- representatives of independent and non-government organisations.

These meetings provided an opportunity to hear first-hand about the delivery of specific initiatives, to gain a deeper practical understanding of their implementation and delivery, and to explore opportunities for continued information exchange, learning and collaboration.

Meetings included discussion on the following key issues:

- Implementation enablers and challenges
- Evidence of impact on practice and outcomes
- Evaluation and monitoring of implementation and ongoing delivery
- Lessons learned that would be of value to share with Victoria
- Ongoing opportunities for collaboration and connection.

### **Corporate Parenting**

Corporate parenting-type schemes operate in Scotland and England, while Ireland has a whole-of-government policy (*Young Ireland*) directed at improving outcomes for young people. While all jurisdictions share a common focus on improving outcomes through cross-government effort and collaboration, there are differences in implementation and focus in each local context.

During the travel, I undertook the following bilateral engagements, where I had the opportunity to learn about the implementation and delivery of Corporate Parenting and alternative whole-of-government approaches to supporting at risk children, young people and families:

#### Scotland

- **Natalie Don-Innes MSP, Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise**, who is responsible for implementing 'The Promise', ensuring that services for children who have been in the care system are reformed to provide better support. The meeting discussed the Minister's role and experience with the Scottish Corporate Parent scheme, which is one of the key mechanisms by which Scotland is seeking to achieve the commitments made as part of The Promise.
- **Andrew Watson, Director for Children and Families** and other senior Scottish Government officials. Mr Watson's role is responsible for early learning and childcare, children's rights, child protection and wellbeing, child and maternal health, keeping The Promise, care experience and whole family wellbeing. This engagement provided an opportunity to learn more about how Corporate Parenting has evolved as a concept over time, from early implementation to an embedded part of the Scottish system.
- **Fiona Duncan, Chair and Independent Strategic Advisor to The Promise Scotland**. Ms Duncan led Scotland's Independent Care Review between 2017 and 2020, which led directly to the Scottish Government's national commitment to reform care experiences and outcomes for vulnerable children and young people. The meeting included discussion of the evolution of The Promise and Scotland's experience of Corporate Parenting, along with Ms Duncan's current role leading The Promise Scotland, an independent body whose role is to support those working to keep the Promise, including to deliver on the focus areas identified in Plan 24-30.

#### Ireland

- **Norma Foley TD, Minister for Children, Disability and Equality**. Minister Foley's portfolio responsibilities include the *Young Ireland: National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028*. Young Ireland is Ireland's whole-of-government policy framework for children and young people up to the age of 24. The framework seeks to deliver on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Ireland ratified in 1992. The meeting provided an opportunity to hear about the Minister's role in leading and coordinating this work across government.

- **Kevin McCarthy, Secretary General in the Department of Children, Disability and Equality** and other senior department officials. The Department supports Minister Foley and its responsibilities include children, Tusla (Ireland's Child and Family Agency) and supporting Ireland's National Youth Assembly. The meeting included discussion of the Department's work in supporting delivery of the *Young Ireland* framework and support for the National Youth Assembly of Ireland.

#### England

- **Josh MacAlister OBE MP, Minister for Children and Families.** Minister MacAlister's portfolio responsibilities include family supports, child protection, safeguarding, children in care and care leaver supports. Prior to his election as MP, Minister MacAlister was the chair the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, which delivered its final report in 2022 and recommended significant reform to England's child protection and care systems. Along with a discussion on Corporate Parenting, the meeting with Minister MacAlister included an opportunity to discuss common challenges relating to foster care and carer supports and share information on work underway in England and Victoria to trial new and improved care models.
- **Mark Riddell MBE, National Adviser for Care Leavers** and officials from the care leaver support unit at the Department for Education. As National Adviser for Care Leavers, Mr Riddell provides advice directly to UK Government Ministers on issues facing care leavers and works to support Local Authorities across England to improve their local leaving out-of-home care services. The meeting provided an opportunity to learn about the Care Leaver Ministerial Board, which supports cross-government collaboration and effort as part of the UK's Corporate Parenting scheme, where each Minister pledges priority access to services under their portfolio of responsibilities. The meeting also included discussion about the development of the 'local offer' of services and supports for care leavers across all Local Authorities, and Mr Riddell's leadership and advocacy to generate and coordinate corporate involvement in improving support for care leavers through internship and apprenticeship pathways, free or reduced services (e.g. free broadband internet access, free gym membership), and fee discounts or waivers (e.g. reduced licence fees).
- **Dr Jo Casebourne, Chief Executive of Foundations UK.** Foundations is the national What Works Centre for Children and Families. It was established in 2022 to generate and champion actional evidence that improves services to support family relationships. This meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the organisation's work to strengthen evidence-based approaches and the measurement of impact of early intervention supports for children and families. This included discussion of the importance of setting and utilising outcomes measures to assess impact and guide policy, investment and implementation decisions, as is proposed to form an integral part of Victoria's Supporting Stable and Strong Families Scheme.

#### Child Safety

Unfortunately, child safety, including neglect, abuse and child criminal and sexual exploitation, are common challenges across the United Kingdom and Ireland. Like Victoria's experiences with the recent *Rapid Child Safety Review*, these jurisdictions have experienced high-profile incidents of significant criminal offending against children, in both institutional and community settings – some of which have led to public inquiries.

During the travel, I undertook the following bilateral engagements, where I had the

opportunity to learn about approaches to improving safety and addressing these significant, common challenges, including efforts to identify and disrupt organised offending activity that targets vulnerable children and young people.

#### Scotland

- **Jackie Irvine, CEO of Care Inspectorate Scotland** and other staff from the Care Inspectorate Scotland team. The Care Inspectorate is Scotland's independent scrutiny and improvement body for social care and social work sectors, including early childhood and out of home care. The meeting discussed the Inspectorate's work in providing public assurance about the quality of social care, social work and early learning services, promote innovation and drive continuous improvement.
- **Professor Alexis Jay OBE.** Professor Jay is the former chair of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in England and Wales and Jay led the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotterdam. Professor Jay is also a member of the Scottish Government's National Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Strategic Group. The wide-ranging meeting provided an opportunity to discuss common challenges and learn more about how the United Kingdom is responding to child abuse and sexual exploitation.

#### England

- **Sir David Holmes CBE, Chair, Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel.** The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel is an independent panel of experts that provides national leadership and learning on child protection and safeguarding. The meeting provided an opportunity to hear about the work of the Panel to improve service quality and safety, as well as plans to expand the Panel's role and resources following the UK Government's recent announcement that the Panel will form the foundation of a new Child Protection Authority in England.

#### Improving services supporting children and families

I undertook the following engagements where I had the opportunity to learn about innovative approaches being taken to improve the quality, effectiveness and integration of services delivered to children, young people and families.

#### Scotland

- **Andrew Baird, Team Leader, Bairns' Hoose** and other senior Scottish Government officials leading the implementation of Scotland's Bairns' Hoose model. Bairns' Hoose is based on the internationally recognised Icelandic Barnahus (child's house) child-centred approach to justice, care and recovery for children who have experienced trauma, including sexual abuse. The meeting enabled a discussion of Scotland's experience in establishing Bairns' Hoose, in translating the Scandinavian model to suit local systems and context, and the evaluation of the model that is currently underway.
- Staff from the **Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection (CELCIS).** CELCIS is a leading improvement and innovation centre in Scotland, funded by the Scottish government and supported by the University of Strathclyde. This engagement provided an opportunity to hear more about the Centre's work in support the workforce and organisations to implement and sustain complex change, and factors that contribute to effective and enduring implementation.

#### Ireland

- **Gerard Brophy, Chief Social Worker** in Tusla, the Child and Family Agency in

Ireland. Tusla is responsible for improving outcomes and wellbeing for children through a range of universal and targeted services, including early years services, child welfare support, alternative care and child protection. As Chief Social Worker, Mr Brophy leads a team, which supports practitioners in delivering effective services to children and families and promoting excellence and continuous improvement in practice. The meeting included discussions of work being led by Mr Brophy and his team on recruitment and retention of social workers and the implementation of the Barnahus interagency model to support children who have experienced sexual abuse.

### **Lived-experience engagement with children and young people**

To deliver better outcomes in the child protection and care systems, it is critical to hear directly from children and young people and ensure that the voice and experience of those with lived experience of the service system is an essential part of policy development, decision-making and implementation.

The United Kingdom and Ireland have well established processes seeking and incorporating the views of children and young people. During my trip, I was fortunate to be able to hear directly from children and young people about their role in shaping government priorities and policies, including learning about several innovative approaches to draw directly on the expertise of those who have interacted with government systems and services.

#### Scotland

- The engagement with Care Inspectorate Scotland included the opportunity to learn more about the **Young Inspection Volunteers program**, which is one of the commitments in the Inspectorate's Corporate Parenting Plan for 2021–2023. The Care Inspectorate had engaged a team of volunteer young inspectors aged between 18-28 years (some with care experience) to support its quality assurance and improvement activities. The young inspection volunteers visit children and young people's services during an inspection providing lived-experience insight into the inspection process and supporting organisations with improvement activity.

#### Ireland

- Representatives of the **National Youth Assembly of Ireland**, which ensures that the voice of young people has a prominent and meaningful role in the development and implementation of public policy and prioritising actions for the Irish Government. I had the pleasure of meeting and talking with Yasmin, Charlotte, Thomas, Sarah-Anne and Sarah, who are members of Youth Advisory Group (part of National Youth Assembly), to hear about their work with the department to plan and run the Assembly, discuss and have input into themes, plan activities and methods of data collection. I would particularly like to thank these impressive young people for generously sharing their time and experiences, including their thoughtful advice on how Victoria can more effectively engage with and empower the voices of children and young people as part of policy development and decision-making processes.

#### England

- I met with care-experienced young people to learn more about the **London Care Leavers' Compact**, which was established in early 2022 to deliver a consistent and high-quality 'offer' (a set of services and supports that each Local Authority is required under legislation to develop and provide to care-experienced young people) for care leavers across the capital. I was very pleased to meet and talk with Alfie, Louisa, Angel to learn more about how they are drawing on their experiences of care

and the child protection system to improve outcomes and supports for care leavers in London. This included learning more about the remarkable success they have achieved to date, which includes free prescriptions, a 50 per cent reduction in public transport fees from Transport for London, and Council tax exemptions. I thank Alfie, Louisa, Angel for being so generous in sharing their perspectives and compelling advice on the key supports that young people require to make a successful transition to adulthood and independent living, and ways in which Government can better engage with and incorporate the voice of young people and draw on their 'expertise through experience'.

#### Next steps/Follow up

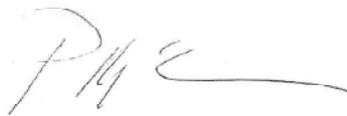
The information and insights gained from the meetings undertaken will provide significant benefit to the Government and Department of Families, Fairness and Housing in supporting work to successfully implement and embed the proposed new Supporting Stable and Strong Families Scheme and with continuing reform to improve supports and safety for children, young people and families in Victoria.

The connections made with government counterparts and non-government organisations are expected to provide further opportunities for engagement, collaboration and information exchange into the future. Specific follow up actions for Victoria that were agreed during the travel were:

- Victoria will further engage with colleagues in Scotland and England about the implementation of the proposed Supporting Stable and Strong Families Scheme. This will aim to establish an ongoing relationship of collaboration and knowledge exchange to support improvement and refinement of Corporate Parenting-type schemes in each jurisdiction.
- The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing will share information and arranging for a virtual meeting with members of the care leaver policy unit in the Department for Education (UK) to discuss the Victorian 'Housing First for young people leaving care' initiative. This initiative was of particular interest to UK colleagues given similar experiences with young people leaving out-of-home care experiencing homelessness or housing instability and challenges with a lack of available social and affordable housing options.
- The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing will work with the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (Ireland) and the Department for Education (UK) to explore opportunities to connect members of the Victorian Ministerial Youth Advisory Group with members of the Youth Advisory Group in Ireland and London Care Leavers' Compact in the UK, to provide opportunities for young people to connect and share experiences and learnings about lived experience engagement processes and the role of young people in shaping and influencing the work of Government.

#### APPROVALS

Noted by Department Secretary/s  
(Signature)



<b>Name/s</b>	<b>Peta McCammon PSM</b> Secretary Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
<b>Date/s</b>	27 / 01 / 2026
<b>Approved by Minister (Signature)</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Hon Lizzie Blandthorn MP</b> Minister for Children Minister for Disability
<b>Date</b>	3 / 2 / 26
<b>Approved by Premier (Signature)</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Hon Jacinta Allan MP</b> Premier of Victoria
<b>Date</b>	12 / 03 / 2026