

Independent Review of Adult Social Care

Scottish Government Debate

February 2021

Age Scotland welcomes the chance to brief MSPs ahead of this important debate. It is widely agreed that social care is in need of reform and we are supportive of the recommendations outlined by this review. We believe these proposals are ambitious and far-reaching, recognising that social care is an investment in the nation.

Key Statistics

- In 2017-18 there were 30,450 older people living in a care home.¹
- 67,985 people of all ages received home care between January-March 2018.²
- Over 30,000 people in care homes received Free Personal and Nursing Care
- Over 47,000 people living in their own home received Free Personal and Nursing Care³
- There are approximately 71,350 people who work in care at home or housing support services.
- Around 53,500 people work in care homes for adults and older people.⁴

Key recommendations

With over 50 recommendations we have chosen to highlight a few which we particularly support:

- The creation of a National Care Service which we hope will tackle regional inequalities.
- Adopting a Human Rights approach to social care, and that social care should be free on the point of access.

¹These figures are based on the Scottish Care Home Census for adults. The majority of data is based on a snapshot taken at 31 March 2017.

² <https://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Health-and-Social-Community-Care/Publications/2019-06-11/2019-06-11-Social-Care-Report.pdf>

³ Free personal and nursing care in Scotland 2017-2018: figures, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/free-personal-nursing-care-scotland-2017-18/>

⁴ Staff vacancies in care services 2018,

<https://www.careinspectorate.com/images/documents/5532/Staff%20vacancies%20in%20care%20services%202018.pdf>

Age Scotland, Causewayside House, 160 Causewayside, Edinburgh, EH9 1PR

Tel. 0333 323 2400 Email: policycomms@agescotland.org.uk

Web: www.agescotland.org.uk Facebook: fb.me/agescotland Twitter: [@agescotland](https://twitter.com/agescotland)

- Better recognition and support for unpaid carers.
- Expanding the role of Integrated Joint Boards.
- Creating a National Improvement Programme which would help to fix the implementation gap currently plaguing certain policies such as Self-Directed Support.
- Reforming the commissioning process so that it is focused on people's needs and outcomes shifting away from a competitive market driven approach.
- The efforts to help with recruitment and retention of the social care work force.
- Prioritising investment in social care as a key feature of Scotland's economic plans to recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Age Scotland's position

The Independent Review's final report is a significant piece of work that highlights the huge importance of social care to people in Scotland. It includes many things which we have been calling for such as increased financial investment, equity of access, choice, human rights and people at its heart, considerable changes to charging arrangements, improved opportunities and conditions for staff, and more government responsibility and accountability.

The review rightly identifies that there are significant gaps between what should be happening in social care and what happens in reality. Ensuring that these are addressed would be a major first step. Social care is an investment in the nation and should be recognised as such. It couldn't be clearer that more of the same will just not do. This must not be kicked into the long grass. Political leaders should grab this opportunity for reform with both hands, be bold and ensure a social care system that delivers for everyone who needs it.

National Care Service

Age Scotland recognises there is widespread support for the creation of a National Care Service although it has never been specifically defined until now. A survey of our supporters found that 82% were in favour of a National Care Service, with the majority wanting to see social care on equal footing with the NHS in terms of investment and recognition. We strongly believe that national policies can be delivered whilst not stifling choice and there is an important balance to be struck to ensure equitable provision across the country.

Health and Social Care Integration

Age Scotland supports the recommendations around expanding and reforming the role of Integrated Joint Boards – including giving unpaid carers full membership. We have been calling for better integration of Health and Social care to allow for a more holistic approach. It's clear that the policy intention of health and social care integration has not been fully realised across Scotland and we believe these reforms will help to ensure people are fully supported to live independently at home. The About Dementia forum, hosted by Age Scotland, found through engagement with both housing professionals and unpaid carers,

that council employed housing officers are often well placed to recognise social care needs and make interventions to avoid reaching a crisis.

Self-Directed Support

Self-Directed Support is another policy which has been hampered by inconsistent and often poor implementation. Older people should be empowered to make decisions about the care they receive, and the creation of a National Improvement Programme could help to ensure equitable access across Scotland. This will help to ensure care in Scotland is person centred and focused on the individual's needs rather than availability of Local Authority's resources in terms of funding and staff time. When decisions are made in partnership between the Local Authority and older people, families, and unpaid carers the impact social care can have is very positive, allowing them to live independently and often in their own home.

Our helpline hears from many anxious older people who are concerned that being assessed by social care will result in their independence being given up and losing control over their life, as well as from concerned families who feel they have not been included in decision making for a loved one. Evidence suggests older people, especially people living with dementia, face barriers in accessing self-directed support. When people living with dementia are offered social care, their choices are often limited to traditional services, overlooking the opportunity for creative care packages which could improve quality of life.

Social Care Workforce and unpaid carers

We have consistently highlighted the need to vastly improve the recruitment and retention of social care workers who provide essential care and yet are hugely undervalued. In the 2019, 38% of care services reported having vacancies, which is unchanged from 2018.⁵ We are also concerned about the impact that Brexit will have, approximately 10,000 European nationals make up Scotland's social care workforce.

The recommendations of the Review are, therefore, very welcome and strive towards making social care a more fulfilling career choice. We would like to see a greater improvement for conditions for unpaid carers in terms of support and training opportunities.

Conclusion

Throughout the report it is clear that greater accountability and transparency will be key to making these recommendations a reality. We strongly encourage that the Scottish Government accepts and takes forward the Review's findings in its entirety. The argument for reform and investment is clear, and with a sector that was already struggling before the pandemic struck the need has never been greater.

⁵ <https://www.careinspectorate.com/images/documents/5532/Staff%20vacancies%20in%20care%20services%202018.pdf>

Want to find out more?

As Scotland's national charity supporting people over the age of 50, Age Scotland works to improve older people's lives and promote their rights and interests. We aim to help people love later life, whatever their circumstances. We want Scotland to be the best place in the world to grow older.

Our Policy, Communications and Campaigns team research, analyse and comment on a wide range of public policy issues affecting older people in Scotland.

Our work is guided by the views and needs of older people themselves.

About Dementia: Shaping Our Worlds Together, launched in April 2019 and is Scotland's forum for improving lives. It is hosted by Age Scotland and funded by the Life Changes Trust.

We bring together people affected by dementia, and organisations who are interested in working for change, to look at how we can improve policy and practice across many different areas of life.

About Dementia believes that people affected by dementia, including people living with dementia and unpaid carers, are in the best position to say what is and isn't working and how to do it better.

Further information

Contact the Age Scotland Policy, Communications and Campaigns team:

policycomms@agescotland.org.uk

0333 323 2400

Twitter [@agescotland](https://twitter.com/agescotland)

Facebook [/agescotland](https://www.facebook.com/agescotland)

Linkedin [Age-Scotland](https://www.linkedin.com/company/agescotland)

www.agescotland.org.uk

www.age.scot/AboutDementia