

CARING FOR ALL

A NATIONAL CARE SERVICE FOR SCOTLAND

POLITICAL BRIEFING FEBRUARY 2022

The Scottish Government has announced its intention to create a National Care Service, in part to recognise the sacrifices made by the people of Scotland during the pandemic. This clearly echoes the creation of the National Health Service to recognise the sacrifices citizens made during the second world war. If Scotland's National Care Service is created without that level of ambition it will represent a betrayal of the sacrifices which have been made – and current plans do not have that level of ambition.

That is why Common Weal set up a Care Reform Group which has now published its blueprint for a National Care Service (NCS). *Caring For All: a National Care Service for Scotland* is a plan which is comprehensive and ambitious but realistic and achievable. It reveals that at any given time about one in five people in Scotland need care or support (not including children without additional needs) but that about 85 per cent of them do not get any support with care. At any given time about two million people in Scotland either give or receive care and, over our lifetimes, every single one of us will be one of those people. Shortchanging them would surely be unthinkable.

The report is a very substantial document produced by a team of care experts over a period of 18 months. Its key conclusions are as follows:

- Care is the glue which holds society together and the vast majority of care is informal, citizens looking after family and friends. But sometimes informal care goes wrong or isn't enough and in these circumstances people need formal care support.
- But care services are currently in a critical state and not fit for purpose – underfunded, rationed, fragmented, centralised, top-down and risk averse. Staff are undertrained and underpaid, morale is low and turnover high
- To fix this Scotland needs an all-ages, comprehensive, not-for-profit National Care Service which is free at the point of need
- While coordination, strategic planning, financing and the delivery of a range of support services (along with political accountability) must take place at the national level it must be organised and delivered at the local level through local authorities
- To make care accessible it should be delivered through Local Care Hubs where, exactly like GPs' surgeries, anyone with need can make an appointment and discuss their needs with a professional and either get services on the spot or be referred on to them where necessary
- While human rights matter in care, if rights are not matched with resources, responsibilities and relationships, they won't result in change

- Relationships are crucial because care is a relationship-based activity so care workers must be publicly trusted and respected and be allowed to support people, not be constantly enforcing rules on them. This cannot happen if staff turnover is high, they're insufficiently trained and not allowed to make day to day care decisions with those they care for
- That means staff must be trusted as professionals and the top-down, risk-averse bureaucracy of the current system must be stripped away
- There should also be a 24-hour national phone line for emergency care issues (like NHS 24) and emergency response services to people's houses (like a 'care ambulance')
- Part of a National Care Service should be dedicated to reducing the need for care by taking a 'public care' approach to encouraging a society which creates less need for care in the first place and by supporting informal carers
- Early interventions to prevent care needs getting worse is also crucial
- All of this combined would create a revolutionary 'womb to tomb' service that everyone would access at some point in their lives, from parenting support at conception through to end-of-life residential care and anything in between, from addiction issues to incapacity to housing needs to psychological services

The vast majority of care is informal care provided

by family or friends, but it is inevitable that sometimes that care will go wrong or become too much to cope with. This is where a NCS must step in and provide support. It will never be possible for the public purse to fund absolutely every additional care need, but it is realistic to expect sufficient investment to make a solid start on a National Care Service worth the name.

The Scottish Government has committed £800 million to increasing staff pay and will receive more than £1 billion in Barnett Consequentials from the National Insurance rise which is being used to fund care in England and Wales. Combined and added to existing resources that creates a realistic basis for an ambitious care service. One local authority in England replaced 27-pages of tick-box bureaucracy with the single sentence "don't break the law, don't blow the budget, do no harm" and stripping away the ridiculous amount of bureaucracy placed on care workers would be the equivalent of another substantial investment of cash. Properly training and retaining staff would have the effective impact of more investment as properly trained staff would prevent small care problems escalating into big ones. Getting care right will, in time, significantly reduce 'failure demand' as recommended by the Christie Commission, saving further public money. Any remaining gap is best dealt with by care professionals negotiating with those who need care to provide a realistic package of support which both can agree to.

This is how Scotland can afford to have the ambition it needs if it is to start a National Care Service worth the name. **Failing to do so will rightly bring the condemnation of the millions of people now and in the future who will be let down by anything less than this.**

Further information

A full copy of the report and a summary copy of the report are both available on the Common Weal website at www.commonweal.scot/care-campaign

If you have remaining questions about the proposals you should email them to hello@common.scot and we'll answer them

If you would like an in-person briefing by a member of the Care Reform Group, email hello@common.scot and we'll arrange it