

Parliamentary Briefing

National Care Service

The following briefing sets out COSLA's initial response to the publication of the Scottish Government's consultation [A National Care Service for Scotland](#) ahead of the debates taking place this week on the Programme for Government and on the Scottish Government's vision for health and social care in Scotland.

Key Points

- COSLA has significant [concerns](#) about the proposals that have been put forward in the consultation for a National Care Service – which in our view represent a direct attack on localism and on the rights of people to make, and benefit from, decisions taken locally.
- The expanded scope of the proposed National Care Service – which includes children's services, community justice services, alcohol and drug services and social work – represents a notable departure from the recommendations of the [Independent Review of Adult Social Care](#) with limited evidence provided to demonstrate that the centralisation of decision-making for these services will lead to better outcomes.
- Local Government has worked collaboratively with the Scottish Government and partners across Scotland to take forward at pace the key recommendations of the Independent Review of Adult Social Care to deliver high quality consistent adult social care services with human rights at the heart of them.
- We will continue to engage constructively with the Scottish Government on the proposals set out in the consultation to support the best outcomes for the people who rely on these essential services.

About COSLA

COSLA is the membership organisation for Local Government in Scotland. We provide political leadership on national issues and work with Councils to support and improve local services. Our vision, as set out in the [Blueprint for Local Government](#), is that Scotland's communities are sustainable, vibrant places to live, work and visit.

The leadership and value of Local Government has been demonstrated consistently in the response to COVID-19 and we continue to support the Scottish Government and partners across Scotland in the continued response to and recovery from the pandemic.

Background and Key Information

Following the publication of the Independent Review of Adult Social Care earlier in the year, Local Government has worked collaboratively with the Scottish Government and partners across Scotland to take forward key recommendations in the review. This is reflected in the subsequent [Joint Statement of Intent](#) published in March.

The recently published consultation represents a considerable expansion of the recommendations of the Independent Review of Adult Social Care. It sets out proposals for an extended scope for the National Care Service, which would include the following:

- Children's services
- Community justice services
- Alcohol and drug services
- Social work
- Elements of mental health services

There was no prior engagement with COSLA regarding the expanded scope set out in the consultation, which has substantive implications for the delivery of essential services to people across Scotland.

Should responsibilities for the above-referenced services be centralised in the manner proposed, it will represent one of the biggest public sector reforms in decades.

Issues for Consideration

The following issues have been highlighted by representatives from Local Government as part of our initial engagement and may represent areas to consider for the purposes of the upcoming debates.

Impact on local decision making - The formation of the National Care Service, as it is currently outlined, would have considerable implications for local decision making. The proposals appear to stand contrary to the outcomes of the Local Governance Review, the four pillars set out by the Christie Commission and the recent legislation on the European Charter of Local Self Government. COSLA remains committed to reform that ensures services are designed and delivered as locally as possible.

Impact for people using these services - Removing the statutory responsibility for the aforementioned services from Local Government would impact on the ability to deliver a joined-up approach across other essential services that impact on a person's health and wellbeing. The services proposed as being included in the National Care Service have wider linkages with areas such as housing, employability, education, public safety and protection. Indeed, the Scottish Government and COSLA had previously agreed that education and early learning and childcare should not be delivered separately from children's services, given the evident need for joined up delivery in these areas.

Funding of a National Care Service – COSLA has long called for [fair funding](#) for Local Government, highlighting the implications of reduced Council budgets to the delivery of essential public services. Between 2010/11– 2019/2020, total revenue funding for Local Government has fallen by 7.2% in real terms. Despite this challenging context, Local

Government has continued to prioritise spending in the areas covered by the proposed National Care Service. In this time, adult social care has seen a real terms increase of 14.8%, children’s services has seen a real terms increase of 9.43% and criminal justice social work has seen a real terms increase of 5.72%. The proposed centralisation of services, as set out in the consultation, does not provide an immediate solution to the underlying funding issues at play. Indeed, no costings are set out in the consultation relating to the development of the proposed National Care Service or with regards to how it would be funded.

Implications for the Local Government workforce - The proposals potentially have significant implications for large parts of the Local Government workforce. The consultation document is not explicit regarding the future employer status of staff working in the referenced service areas and whether this would be transferred to a National Care Service or the proposed Community Health and Social Care Boards. Further clarity is required to avoid any unnecessary uncertainty.

Further Engagement

If it would be of benefit to provide more information on any matter surrounding these proposals, COSLA’s Health and Social Care Spokesperson, Cllr Stuart Currie would be delighted to meet to discuss further. Please contact membersupport@cosla.gov.uk and we will set up a meeting at a time of your convenience.