



## Scottish Government Debate: Independent Review of Adult Social Care

UNISON is the largest trade union in Scotland, and the largest union among Scotland's care workforce. We represent over 10 000 members delivering social care in the public, private and third sectors, both care at home and residential care.

The report is critical of the market-based approach to commissioning and cites UNISON's [Ethical Care Charter](#) as a route to driving out profit motive and delivering Fair Work standards across the various types of care.

The report carefully reflects the workforce issues to be addressed if we are to have a quality, rights-based service, with universally applied standards of Fair Work.

For too long the care system has been weighted towards price and profit. A National Care Service, with the NHS as its inspiration, would make quality of care and Fair Work its focus.

The report is rightly critical of the function of Integrated Joint Boards and we welcome recommendations for reform, under the direction of a National Care Service Board, incorporating all parties, together with the proposed sector wide body addressing specific workforce issues.

The review highlights the structural challenges in the social care sector that inhibit workers ability to collectively bargain for improved pay and conditions. The proposed improved training, standards, pay and fair working conditions would not only improve the quality of care but also support investment in the economy.

Our care system is broken – this is not a result of the pandemic. The system was already broken, the pandemic merely made ignoring this fact unavoidable. We welcomed the announcement of the review chaired by Derek Feeley and within the report there are many fine principles and welcome, indeed overdue, recommendations. There are though ideas and recommendations contradicting those which could drive progress. The report is clear that “We need to build partnerships not market-places” yet announces that the role of the proposed NCS is to oversee an “actively managed market”.

It is welcome that there is a strong emphasis throughout the report on improving staff conditions, and an entire chapter on Fair Work. The report is correct in linking improvements in the treatment of the workforce with improving the standards of care (Let's not forget that to get even the most basic of sick pay provision for many carers has taken emergency legislation). Rapid implementation of all of the recommendations of the [Fair Work Convention's report into social care](#) is urged (Recommendation 42). The body established to do that should also create national sector level collective bargaining on terms and conditions. This should include national job evaluation programme – as well as sick pay, time off and travel time. (Recommendations 42 to 48) All of this will be warmly welcomed by UNISON members working in care.

A national body taking responsibility for workforce planning and development, and initiatives to raise quality and standards would be a useful development. There are legitimate questions though around the Care Inspectorate and SSSC will becoming part of the proposed NCS. which will be therefore both an inspectorate and a regulatory body.

The report urges a change in thinking about care; that it should be seen as an investment in society rather than a cost on society, be based on relationships rather than transactions, enabling rights rather than managing need, and produced via collaboration rather than competition and markets. These themes tie in

with UNISON's ideas for [care after covid](#). While the themes overlap what the Report of the review recommends as being a 'National care Service only goes as far as the interim measures we believe as necessary to move towards a National Care Service.

It is absolutely right that in a scenario whereby we still have Integrated Joint Boards (IJB's ) that they should; demand people with lived experience, unpaid carers, local communities, providers and other professionals are routinely involved in the design of services(Recommendation 32), that arrangements for commissioning and procurement of services, must include requirements for financial transparency on the part of providers (Recommendation 36), that there should be establishment of core requirements for ethical commissioning to support the standardisation and implementation of fair work requirements (Recommendation 34).

There are however serious questions as to whether a system that the review wishes to see –“We need an approach that builds trusting relationships rather than competition. We need to build partnerships not market-places.” will be delivered by a set of reforms which aim at creating “an actively managed market”.

The National Care System which is proposed – does not itself deliver care and is predicated on maintaining the purchaser/ provider split that so much effort went into removing from the National Health Service. This purchaser-provider split, part of the whole provider-neutrality mentality is inextricably bound up with free market ideology and the discredited theories of 'new public management'. On a direct level, it approaches service delivery without the thread of feedback which providing services gives employers.

The recommendations are also contradictory in seeking greater local involvement in service design- urging care providers to work more closely with Local Authorities yet recommends removing powers and responsibility from councils and consequent further erosion of local democracy.

The observation by the review that “There is clear evidence that social care support is not a drag on our resources; it creates jobs and economic growth. It enables people who access care and support, and their carers, to seek and hold down employment themselves.” (p88) is very welcome. Investment in care should very much be seen as a part of economic recovery from Covid. We advocate a Community Wealth building approach to economic recovery and the 'care economy' is part of that. Rather than being seen as a cost to the public purse, care could be viewed as a burgeoning sector. A source of stable well paid employment injecting demand into local economies.

The report endorses the idea “for a pause button to be pressed on the current procurement system to support the move from a competitive process and culture to a collaborative approach.” P74. Like the review we believe this is an idea with some merit. It would allow for IJB's and others to begin planning for the workforce improvements that are the start of any process of renewal. It would also allow them to review and update their strategic plans to shift towards the better approach outlined in the Review's report. Doing this could begin to deliver needed improvements while the wider questions – about the extent to which care should be provided for profit and the structures of a National Care Service are being discussed.

#### **For further information contact**

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