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Convener  
Education, Children and Young People Committee

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Dear Convener,

I am writing to you to provide further information following the Committee evidence session on the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill on 23 November, which I attended with the Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care. I would like to thank you for your detailed scrutiny of the Bill and your commitment to ensuring the needs of children and families are carefully considered throughout.

During the session, the Committee asked how many children's social workers were proposed to move to the National Care Service (NCS).

Firstly, I would like to reiterate that no decision has been made on the inclusion of children's services in the NCS. The potential transfer of children's social workers will be part of broader consideration of whether children's services should become part of the NCS, in the context of ongoing development and co-design of the NCS.

Secondly, I can confirm that decisions on staffing will be taken during the process of planning for establishment and constitution of local care boards. Once the structure and governance of care boards and their localities have been decided, decisions about the employment of staff can be discussed with local authorities. It is by no means a foregone conclusion that staff will need to transfer their employment. It remains the Scottish Government's position that new local care boards will work collaboratively as part of the NCS and in partnership with the NHS, local authorities, and third and independent sectors to improve support locally and nationally.

The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) publishes Social Services workforce data annually. The latest available data suggests there were 2,861 registered social workers working exclusively in children's social work, in 2021. However, it is difficult to provide an exact headcount for the number of social workers working in children's services as we know there are other registered social workers who do not work exclusively with children's services. We are continuing to work with a number of partners to accurately establish the size and composition of the workforce.

The Committee asked how many kinship care payments would need to be increased to a higher level to achieve consistency and the cost of doing this.

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Scottish Government officials have met regularly and continue to meet with COSLA officials to try and come to an agreement on the implications and resourcing requirements associated with a Scottish Recommended Allowance for children in kinship and foster care. Key areas of discussion have included methodology and models of distribution where a range of approaches have been explored. The conversations have been constructive, yet challenging, given the wider financial environment and because the Scottish Government is operating with a fixed budget and limited fiscal powers.

At this stage, I am unable to provide the Committee with detailed costs or timescales for delivering the Scottish Recommended Allowance, but I will keep members updated with any progress made. I will continue to explore all available options with partners on this issue.

The Committee also asked what the additional cost would be for restructuring the NCS to include children’s services.

The [Financial Memorandum](#) outlines in Table 2 (set out below) estimated current costs of children’s services which could be transferred to the NCS (if it is ultimately determined that children’s services should be transferred). The Financial Memorandum is based on a number of assumptions and states further work is required with our partners to rigorously assess cost forecasts.

**Figures from Table 2, page 9 of the Financial Memorandum on the costs of children and families social care services (previous years and future projections):**

2019-20	2020-20	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
£992m	£1,032m	£1,084m	£1,186m	£1,298m	£1,363m	£1,432m	£1,505m

With regards to national ongoing running costs, the Financial Memorandum refers in paragraph 38 to the Bill providing powers for the Scottish Ministers to become responsible for social work and social care support for adults, children, and relating to the justice system. However, as set out in the Policy Memorandum, further work is required to consider the risks and opportunities, and costs and benefits of the transfer of services for children and justice, and the transfer may be phased over a longer period. Since no decisions have yet been taken on such phasing, the figures in Tables 5 and 6, on page 12 of the Financial Memorandum assume that the NCS will take on the full range of services from the start.

With regards to transfer of functions and additional costs for Care Boards, the figures also assume that the NCS will take on the full range of services. As noted in the Financial Memorandum, this could involve up to 75,000 employees across social work and social care, but a decision on this will be the subject of co-design with stakeholders and local authorities.

I hope this information sufficiently responds to the issues raised by the Committee in the evidence session. Please do not hesitate to ask if the Committee has any further queries on the Bill.

CLARE HAUGHEY

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