



E : scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Sue Webber MSP
ecyp.committee@parliament.scot

Our Reference: 202200313489
Your Reference: National Care Service (Scotland) Bill

11 August 2022

Dear Convener,

National Care Service (Scotland) Bill

Thank you for your letter of 30 June 2022 requesting additional information regarding the work being undertaken to consider if children's services should transfer into the National Care Service (NCS). As you will be aware, the Education, Children and Young People Committee has now been designated as a secondary committee on the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill. I am very pleased with this news as it ensures there will be close consideration and scrutiny of the issues which will impact children and young people in regards to the NCS.

No decision has been taken on whether children's services will be included in the NCS. The establishment of the NCS will result in a change to the current children's services landscape and local partnership structures will require adaptation irrespective of the potential inclusion of children's services.

The Scottish Government recognise that a systematic review has not been carried out on children's services, as it has for adult social care, and that further work is needed to allow an informed decision to be made on whether children's social work and social care should transfer to the NCS. A formal review, like the Feeley Review, is not planned for children's services – instead we intend to gather evidence to understand the best delivery model for children's services. This model will be one which achieves improved outcomes for children and young people, and will help deliver our commitment to Keep The Promise.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot



We plan to build the evidence in two ways:

1. A programme of engagement with children, young people, their families and organisations which represent them.
2. An independent research project to consider current approaches to services in Scotland and beyond.

Programme of Engagement

Prior to Bill introduction and during the consultation period in late 2021, Scottish Government officials began a programme of engagement with key representative groups.

An event hosted by Who Cares? Scotland titled the “Bairn’s Supper” held in February 2022 provided an opportunity to work with Care Experienced people to explore the extent to which a National Care Service can #KeepThePromise. The theme of the event was Burns’ Night with the agenda resembling a Burns’ Supper menu where the courses were themes for discussion. The event allowed meaningful discussion and insight into the views of Care Experienced people, ensuring they are reflected in the development of a National Care Service.

A workshop with the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) on the NCS and children’s services took place on 2 July 2022. The workshop session provided an opportunity to collect evidence and insight into the views held by young people on how best to ensure consistent delivery of services to the most vulnerable children and families. A SYP survey has also been conducted, which included two questions regarding children’s services reform to understand how children prefer to access services.

A Young Scot online survey was launched early 2022 and collected the views of 111 children and young people. When asked what matters to you and your family, many responses focused around accessibility and quality, particularly of mental health services.

Officials are working with the Scottish Children’s Parliament to develop a suitable consultation exercise that will allow children between the ages of 8 and 14 to fully participate and provide views on the future of children’s services. Further work is also underway to ensure engagement is taking place with all relevant groups of children and young people who may be impacted by the NCS to ensure their voices are heard and included.

The gap between intent and lived experience will not be closed without active consultation and debate with children and young people, families, organisations representing them and the workforce. Officials will continue to seek out opportunities for meaningful engagement over the coming months and years.

Independent Research Project

The Scottish Government is commissioning independent research to ensure the decision made on children’s services is one which best meets the needs of children, young people and families. It is vital we understand whether transferring children’s services into the NCS is an improvement on existing models, or whether needs are best met by children’s services which remain outside the NCS. As some parts of Scotland have integrated children’s health, social care and social work services within their health and social care partnerships, whilst other parts of Scotland have not, the evidence base must

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot

include research undertaken in both integrated and non-integrated areas. Considering the different levels of integration across Scotland will allow close simulation of the delivery of services within and out with the NCS.

To ensure the independent research is a truly authentic endeavour, an Independent Steering Group for Children's Services Research has been established to oversee and direct the research project. Professor Brigid Daniel, Professor Emerita at Queen Margaret University, has been appointed by the Minister for Children and Young People as the Chair of the steering group. Professor Daniel has a wealth of knowledge and experience in conducting research in the field of social work, with numerous publications focusing on child protection and neglect. Wider membership of the steering group is currently being considered by Professor Daniel. The steering group will provide a final report upon completion of the research, which will include findings of the research, to Ministers.

The Scottish Government has committed that the NCS will be established by the end of this parliamentary session in 2026. The timeline for this research project has been developed to ensure decisions on the inclusion of children's services can be taken prior to the operation of the NCS. The research will take place in three stages over the next two years, concluding in Spring 2024.

The research will consider:

- national and international practices and delivery models
- the views of the workforce, children and young people and families accessing or delivering services
- the role of structures in better meeting the needs of children, young people and families, and delivering improvements in outcomes.

The steering group will provide regular reports at each stage of the work identifying key interim findings. The final report, which will bring together all findings and provide a robust analysis of the evidence, will be presented to Scottish Ministers and Parliament to inform a final decision on the potential inclusion of children's services within the NCS.

Consultation

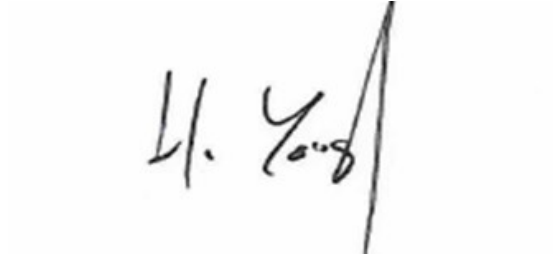
If the research indicates that (some or all) children's services should be included in the NCS, public consultation on the proposed transfer of functions will take place in line with the requirement in section 30 of the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill. This consultation will take place after the final research report is available and will ensure key partners and the public have an opportunity to have their say prior to any regulations being laid and any transfers taking place. The intention is that the research report will inform the consultation, and people can read and respond to the research report as part of the consultation. The report and consultation details will then be laid before Parliament alongside the draft regulations.

Thank you for considering these important matters. I hope that this information provides assurance that no decision will be made on the inclusion of children's services until further work has been undertaken to evidence which changes will deliver the best outcomes for our children, young people and their families. If you require any further information please do not hesitate to ask as both myself and officials look forward to working with the Committee on this transformational Bill.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Yousaf', written on a light-colored rectangular background.

HUMZA YOUSAF

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

Accredited
Until 2020

