

To: HSCS.committee@Parliament.Scot

19 December 2022

Dear Gillian Martin MSP,

Follow-up to attendance at HSCS Committee, 15 November 2022

Thank you for the invitation to speak to the Committee regarding the National Care Service Bill. I include below a response to follow up questions from the Committee.

Workforce pressures and demographics

Q: How could meaningful co-design and consultation with the social care workforce be ensured throughout the development of the National Care Service? Are you involved in any co-design work?

A: As it currently stands, the co-design process is far too complicated. There are over 20 different groups feeding into the Bill. Many of these groups have overlapping roles and aims which is counterproductive. When we asked the Scottish Government for further details on the different groups, it took several weeks for this information to be provided which is worrying as the Scottish Government did not have this information readily at hand. The process is therefore needlessly burdensome and time consuming.

To make co-design simpler, the groups must be cut down and streamlined so that needless pressures are not put on those organisations feeding into the Bill and so it's easy to assess the progress that is being made.

Ministers must also commit to regular one-to-ones with trade unions so that each has the opportunity to put forward their perspective and priorities.

Transfer of functions and staff

Q: What factors should be considered to ensure that the social care workforce is suitably supported and informed during the transition process?

A: Generally speaking, there needs to be greater clarity and transparency from the Scottish Government on what a NCS will entail. The current Bill simply provides a framework which means they are being asked to take a leap of faith. Co-design is ongoing and important, but more details are required for workers to understand the implications of a NCS on them, their terms and their conditions.

The Scottish Government must understand and be willing to engage with the networks that trade unions already have with the workforce. This is the most effective line of communication. A direct point of contact between trade unions and the Minister's office would be helpful for us to raise any issues we have and have them responded to in a timely manner and for the Scottish Government to communicate with workers.

Funding, finance and profit

Q: What are the potential benefits and risks of transitioning from local authority level responsibility for social care funding to centralised budgeting?

A: A benefit is that there is a larger pool of finances on which to draw. However, the associated risk of this is that it requires the Scottish Government to fully utilise the powers it has at its disposal to provide the revenues

required. The recent Scottish Budget did not fully utilise the tax raising powers of the Scottish Parliament which casts doubt on social care being adequately funded so that the workforce are valued and services are properly funded.

Q: What scope is there for the National Care Service to be delivered as a public service, similar to the NHS, given the very different nature of the social care sector compared to health? What challenges might be faced with such an approach and how might these be overcome?

A: Given the extent of private sector involvement in the care sector, it would take a considerable amount of time and investment for a NCS to match the NHS in structure and full public sector provision. This should be a long-term aim. However, the most pressing matters in care are the pay, terms and conditions of staff. Improving these will not only benefit the workers, but it will benefit those being cared for and the sector generally by ensuring staff are recruited and retained within the sector. In this respect, social care can become like the NHS through sectoral collective bargaining and the implementation of national minimums in staff contracts e.g. pay, sick pay, holiday entitlement etc.

Simplifying job roles will also be beneficial. For example, currently HC-ONE have 27 job roles in a care home. Given the thousands of employers in care, job roles and structures are needlessly complicated and are being used to drive down wages. Clear lines of progression and standardised job roles, similar to that of the NHS, are required.

Training and research

Q: What qualities are required in a good social care worker? Do you feel that current qualification and training requirements reflect and develop those qualities?

A: The qualities of a carer cannot be taught. They come natural to those in the profession which is why so many tolerate so much from poor employers. Employers know this and use this to push care workers. The efforts of care staff at the depths of pandemic are apparent.

Q: Does the Bill as introduced include sufficient provision for appropriate, consistent training opportunities for social care staff?

A: No. The role of trade unions in identifying and agreeing training for social care staff must be recognised within the Bill. The Scottish Government via the NC must commit to forming a robust training and development programme for all social care workers in conjunction with trade unions and professional bodies and guarantee that all staff will either undertake training on employers' paid time or that the NCS will provide a guaranteed hourly rate of pay for any training undertaken by workers and cover all additional expenses incurred. Unless this is provided, staff who are already underpaid will find it difficult to turn down shifts to take on training which will improve service provision.

Q: How could the Bill's commitment to social care research be realised in practice? What benefits and challenges might be presented when engaging the social care workforce in research?

A: The social care workforce have endured two years of hell and still haven't been properly recognised or remunerated for their work. Many have been victimised by regulatory bodies. There is therefore a lack of trust within the workforce and willingness to engage with employers, regulators and



governmental bodies. Trade unions are therefore vital to ensure the voice of social care workers are heard.

Sincerely,

Cara Stevenson
Officer for the Women's Campaign Unit
GMB Scotland