

By Email: hscs.committee@parliament.scot
Clare Haughey MSP
Convener Health, Social Care and Sport Committee
Scottish Parliament

UNISON House
14 West Campbell Street
GLASGOW G2 6RX
Tel: 0800 0857 857

www.unison-scotland.org.uk

22 October 2024

—
Dear Convener

Re: National Care Service (Scotland) Bill

Thank you for the opportunity for UNISON to give evidence to the Committee on 24 September.

I am writing with additional information for the Committee's consideration. This relates to the role of social work in assessing people's support needs, a process commonly known as 'Care Management'. Social work and social care are part of the same system; care users' experience of 'the system' is underpinned by Care Management and the role assigned to social workers to assess and access the practical support that people need. The Feeley Review overlooked this, and it has largely been absent from NCS bill discussions.

A new report from UNISON, [Care Management: Fit for purpose?](#) provides important insights into achieving improvements in care, viewed through the lens of social workers' views on Care Management. Its findings show that:

- social workers experience their current role as being about the gatekeeping of resources.
- they say decisions about care are being driven by budgets, rather than needs, with crisis management the norm in many parts of Scotland.
- social work staff feel they have no opportunity to be person centred and needs led, or to take a preventative, early intervention approach with service users.

This is the result of years of chronic underfunding and a managerialist turn in social work practice. We ask the Committee to consider the role of social work in Care Management:

- In the narrowest sense it is important to consider because the new rights to breaks for unpaid carers proposed in the bill will require social work assessments and increase demands on this workforce.
- More broadly, achieving the desired shift towards prevention and early intervention and transforming the experience of care users requires a radical change in social work practice, backed by resources, to enable a refocussing on relational work and community-based practice.

The report's findings underline why we need to prioritise investment in staffing and frontline services rather than structural change that risks diverting resources and adding to complexity. We note that this is the clear message now from a large body of stakeholders. This includes Social Work Scotland and SASW, with whom UNISON is working closely in developing a National Social Work Agency and a vision for social work.

I hope this is useful to the Committee in its deliberations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lilian Macer".

LILIAN MACER
Scottish Secretary