

National Care Service (Scotland) Bill Stage 2 call for views

Evidence submitted to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee 19 September 2024

This is a response to the Committee's call for views on Stage 2 of the Bill.

General comments

CIH Scotland is the professional body for the housing sector and we aim to ensure that everyone has a place to call home. Good quality housing and services are essential to good health and wellbeing for everyone and can reduce the need for more costly interventions. The proposed National Care Service (NCS) could change the way that services are commissioned and delivered for tens of thousands of people living across all housing tenures, whether living in the social housing sector or private housing.

Aids, adaptations, support and accessible housing can help people to live independently and prevent unnecessary admissions to hospitals or a move to a care home, and we know that homeless households are more likely to require emergency medical treatments, prescriptions and access to acute mental health and addiction services. We also know that access to the right health and social care services is essential to tenancy sustainment and preventing homelessness - a key priority for the Scottish Government. As such, it is essential that housing, health and social care partners are supported to work collaboratively together to secure better outcomes for individuals and provide better value for money.

As per our response to the [Stage 1 call for evidence](#), we agree with the aims of the NCS, to move from crisis intervention to prevention, provide personalised care and ensure consistent and continuously improving quality of services.

However, it is unclear how these ambitions will be achieved through the NCS, and we have concerns about the lack of consideration of the role of housing within the newly proposed structures. Failing to include housing in the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 was a missed opportunity, ten years on the NCS Bill presents an opportunity to correct this oversight.

Considering the proposed amendments already put forward by the Scottish Government, we are disappointed that the role of housing is still not reflected through the revised structures.

The importance of aligning specific services is set out below.

Tackling homelessness

The Scottish Government has committed to preventing homelessness wherever possible or providing support to help those who do become homeless to access a suitable permanent home as soon as possible. The ultimate aim is to end homelessness in Scotland.

Working towards these ambitions requires input from a range of organisations, this is recognised by the Scottish Government through the developing Homelessness Prevention Duty which will require named relevant bodies to take steps to support those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Our members have expressed concerns that without robust structures in place and clear, shared outcomes, the Homelessness Prevention Duty may become a duty to refer people into local authority homelessness services which are already under-resourced.

There is strong evidence to suggest that investing in preventing or addressing homelessness leads to long term financial savings, particularly in relation to Housing First ([Housing First Pathfinder evaluation](#)). The provision of health and social care services is essential to the success of Housing First and wider tenancy sustainment work.

[Our work with local authorities](#) assessing the progress and impact of Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans (RRTPs) suggests that there are many examples of good partnership working with health and social care, but that participation is inconsistent and often relies on local relationships rather than strategic oversight. This means that arrangements may be short term with partners withdrawing as their priorities change.

Long term commitment, including funding arrangements, from health and social care partners is required to tackle homelessness in Scotland.

Supporting people to live well

The Scottish Government has a long-standing commitment to support people to live well at home or in a homely setting for as long as possible. We know that most people would prefer to stay in their existing home but may need aids, adaptations, technology or support services to help them to do so. Others might benefit from a

move to a more suitable home. Both options require joint working and adequate funding.

A recent report published by the [Scottish Housing Day partners](#) highlights issues with the accessibility of existing homes and challenges of delivering new specialist accommodation.

For example, Housing with Care can provide enhanced care for people that need it within a residential setting, preventing more costly admission to hospital or a care home, or facilitating discharge and preventing people staying in hospital longer than they need to. While this model can improve outcomes for individuals and save money for health services, it can be difficult to deliver as the financial risk lies with the housing provider and short-term commissioning agreements mean that partners can withdraw at short notice.

An [independent evaluation](#) of partnership arrangement at a Housing with Care development in Forres showed significant benefits and resulted in a continuation of the contract for one year. However, despite the positive evaluation, the HSCP has since withdrawn showing the fragile nature of these relationships. The housing association has had to reconsider management and staffing of the development and remains financially liable.

The Housing Day report makes a number of recommendations, including the need for better partnership working and that housing should be formally recognised within the new NCS.

Proposed amendments to the Bill

In order to ensure that housing, health and social care services are aligned and working together to provide better outcomes and value for money we suggest the following amendments to the NCS Bill:

- The first section of the Bill sets out principles to underpin the Bill, this should include a principle that services should be designed collaboratively with all relevant stakeholders including housing. This will help to ensure that rights to adequate housing, appropriate care and support can be realised by everyone.
- Strategic housing partners should have a place within the revised Integration Joint Boards (Local Boards) - this should be specified in the Bill.
- The Bill should include a requirement for a collaborative approach to planning and delivering homelessness services, reflecting the Homelessness Prevention Duty being introduced through the Housing (Scotland) Bill 2024.



About CIH

The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) is the independent voice for housing and the home of professional standards. Our goal is simple - to provide housing professionals and their organisations with the advice, support, and knowledge they need to be brilliant. CIH is a registered charity and not-for-profit organisation. This means that the money we make is put back into the organisation and funds the activities we carry out to support the housing sector. We have a diverse membership of people who work in both the public and private sectors, in 20 countries on five continents across the world. Further information is available at: www.cih.org.

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