



Housing, Homelessness and the National Care Service

A Joint Position

October 2021

The proposal for a National Care Service in Scotland represents a significant shift in the provision of public services for support and care in Scotland. The independent review of adult social care early 2021 stopped short of consolidating the critical links between housing, homelessness, health and social care. This consultation on a National Care Service presents a new opportunity to join the dots.

The housing and homelessness sectors have collaborated and consulted widely to determine:

- What opportunities are presented by the National Care Service to improve outcomes for people in housing need, including preventing homelessness from happening to people.
- What the potential risks, dilemmas, or unintended consequences might be to existing plans and structures working to ensure everyone in Scotland has a safe home.

This is a joint position from the Everyone Home Collective, the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and All in For Change.

What are the dilemmas?

Evidence tells us that around half of people who experience homelessness have no support or care needs beyond their need for housing, while a significant minority experience the most severe and multiple disadvantage. Hard Edges Scotland presented the case that this group are more likely to experience, and be negatively impacted by, public services and systems that are inaccessible, unavailable or difficult to navigate.

This means we need to be careful not to generalise homelessness within a National Care Service or simplify the experience as affecting a homogenous group of people. But this also needs us to address the fact that those most disconnected from mainstream and public services are people with multiple experiences that include homelessness, who have the most to gain from an improved, integrated and 'no wrong door' approach to care and support.

It is understood that the shared objective we all have for quality, integrated care and support can be challenged by issues at the level of systems, structures, culture, relationships – and at service level too. If today's issues are caused by structure or resource issues, changes brought about by the National Care Service must ensure the same silos and challenges are not simply replicated at a national level.

Finally, there is concern that Scotland's hard-won legislation and policy framework on homelessness could be diluted or confused within the new structure of community health and social care boards.

What are the opportunities?

The creation of a National Care Service presents an opportunity to leave behind the silos and stigma that often contribute to people experiencing homelessness struggling to get the care and support they need to live their lives. More than half of deaths among people who are homeless are drugs related, and the National Care Service presents an opportunity to prevent early mortality by joining up responses.

We want to build from these opportunities to ensure that the National Care Service contributes to better outcomes for people in housing need or crisis in Scotland.

What is our position? For the housing and homelessness sector, a National Care Service would be:

People Led.

The design, delivery and scrutiny of a National Care Service needs people with diverse life experiences, conditions and characteristics to ensure that it is fully fit for purpose – and it will be far better for it. This needs underpinned by principles describing best service for people receiving care and support, with this added to the current core principles and core data collection.

‘Getting it right for everyone’ is a strong guiding principle and the introduction of a single plan will be an incredibly important advance, including moving us forward in taking the ‘whole system’ approach to severe and multiple disadvantage that is urgently needed. This component must be elevated to fully match ambition and to prevent it being reduced to a lesser procedural process.

She’s not enough of
an addict

Not enough of a mental
health patient

Not enough of a
“criminal”, you know...

Just not enough of
anything to get a
package

Hard Edges Scotland



Home Centred.

Having a safe, secure, affordable home that meets your needs is essential for meeting any care and support needs. Housing associations and cooperatives, along with many homelessness services, would be a key route to service for many people and well placed to identify early when things are going wrong. The National Care Service should be developed with the social housing sector as an equal partner at a strategic and operational level, including the community health and social care boards – all aligned with the ambition of Housing to 2040.

Community is vital and especially for people who experience displacement, as a result of homelessness, prison or migration for example. Having positive relationships, social networks, a sense of belonging and meaningful activity all make a positive contribution to social and emotional wellbeing and can in some circumstances reduce dependency that stimulates demand on health and social care services. The perception and delivery of a National Care Service can be greatly enhanced with the expectation that it promotes and protects communities and community assets.

Preventative.

The National Care Service should be placed at the heart of identifying homelessness risk, putting in place the necessary care and support to prevent the household from becoming homeless – and aligned closely with Scotland’s developing approach to preventing homelessness, including new legal duties on public bodies across the country. And for young people, creating a consistent and seamless approach that enables a transition into adult or intermediary services in a way that reduces the number of young people who become homeless in Scotland, particularly as they transition away from local authority care.



Homelessness services have little power to command the wider support services that someone like Mary needs

Hard Edges Scotland



Rights-based.

Ensuring that Scotland's progressive rights to housing and support are protected and that duties and responsibilities to prevent and alleviate homelessness are clearly defined and regulated within new local structures.

Ambitions to align with a human rights-based approach must be inclusive of people with No Recourse to Public Funds, with clarity and commitment on scope provided.

Fairer.

The National Care Service should ensure seamless access to the range of care and support someone experiencing severe and multiple disadvantage may need. Reducing current barriers people may experience such as between mental health and addictions services, taking care to ensure that people have choice and control over services and how their personal information is shared.

Built on the principle of 'parity of esteem' to support the success of the cross-organisational and cross-sector working that will be essential to an effective National Care Service. It is important that the new public body does not simply replicate the unequal relationships that can contribute to the delivery of care and support that is not integrated or coordinated. This should include collaborative and ethical commissioning with longer and more flexible terms to be best for the person.

De-stigmatising.

A vehicle to align 'homelessness' supported accommodation within a broader social care framework, securing access to the longer-term housing and care that some people require, moving away from homelessness labels and temporary provision. This is an important policy priority that would transform the way settled housing options are provided for some people in Scotland experiencing homelessness.

Improving.

The National Care Service should provide an exemplar in openness and transparency and commitment to collaborative learning and improving.

Effective regulation and independent scrutiny protects all of us, and especially people affected by inequality and exclusion. This should include homelessness-related adult social care provision.

About The Collective



Everyone Home is a collective of 35 (and growing) third and academic sector organisations that have come together during the COVID-19 pandemic to protect the progress that's been made and the principles that must now guide the next steps.

Read our framework for going forward at www.everyonehome.scot and join us on social media at [#EveryoneHome](https://twitter.com/EveryoneHome)



Scottish Federation of
Housing Associations

We are housing Scotland

About SFHA

SFHA is the voice and membership body for housing associations and co-operatives with the ambition that everyone has a good home in a successful community, with a range of high quality, affordable, safe and accessible homes that meet people's changing needs and aspirations throughout their lives.



About All in For Change

All in for Change is led by a Change Team of people from across Scotland committed to ending homelessness. Strategic partners, reality-checkers and change-makers — the team's expertise comes with direct experience of homelessness, frontline responsibilities or both.

Homeless Network Scotland

16a Adelphi Centre, 12 Commercial Road, Glasgow G5 0PQ
0141 420 7272 | www.homelessnetwork.scot | hello@homelessnetwork.scot

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Registered Office: Adelphi Centre, 12 Commercial Road, Glasgow G5 0PQ. CEO: Margaret-Ann Brünjes