



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Gillian Martin MSP
Convener
Health Social Care and Sport
Committee

By email only

Public Audit Committee
Room T3.60
The Scottish Parliament
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5 May 2022

Dear Gillian,

Social care briefing

On [3 March 2022](#), the Public Audit Committee took evidence from the Auditor General for Scotland (AGS) on the above [joint briefing by the AGS and the Accounts Commission](#). The Committee took further evidence on the briefing from the Scottish Government and COSLA at its meeting on [21 April 2022](#).

The Committee agreed to close its scrutiny of the briefing following the evidence session on 21 April. In doing so however, the Committee identified several issues that it believes would benefit from further scrutiny by your Committee in the medium to longer term, and agreed to draw these to your attention.

The pace of implementation of the briefing's recommendations

The briefing highlights significant problems with the current delivery of social care services. It states there is a serious risk to the delivery of care services by challenges such as—

- recruitment and retention issues in a workforce where staff do not feel adequately rewarded or valued;
- staff shortages resulting in care users' needs not being met;
- a focus on costs which impacts on the delivery of high-quality services leading to services which don't always work best for their users.

The AGS was clear in his briefing and in his evidence that the issues being faced by social care users and the social care sector overall cannot wait until the new National Care Service is in place, and that progress needs to happen urgently.

The Scottish Government and COSLA told us that they accept the recommendations made to them in the briefing and that, along with partners, they have begun to initiate action in many of the areas that have been identified as requiring change. For example, they have advised that an improvement programme is being developed and that there is a commitment in place from both the Scottish Government and local government to implement it at pace. While we welcome this commitment, we recognise the importance of addressing these issues as a matter of urgency and ask that you consider monitoring the pace of progress as part of your future work.

Funding

The AGS's briefing states that the Scottish Government has committed to raising social care funding by "at least 25 per cent in cash terms over the current parliamentary year, this should mean over £800 million of additional funding by 2026/27."

The briefing also states that the increase in national insurance contributions will provide an estimated additional £1.1 billion to Scotland, some of which will go towards funding social care by 2024/25. When we sought clarity on the future sustainability of social care services, we heard from the Scottish Government that further work is required to understand the nature of the demand, and how that demand can be met with a view to ensuring a preventative approach is incorporated in the future. We also heard from COSLA that while the 25% increase in funding is welcome, it was not sure whether "that will achieve more than we are achieving within the existing system".

We agree with the AGS that it is important that the additional funding for social care is used effectively to make the required changes to the provision of social care, and that social care does not continue to be funded and delivered in the same way. We therefore ask that you monitor the progress of the work that is being undertaken by the Scottish Government to ensure that the additional funding for social care is spent effectively. We also ask that when the Bill for the proposed National Care Service is introduced, that you give further consideration to how funding for social care is addressed in the accompanying Financial Memorandum.

Data gaps

The briefing states that an inability or unwillingness to share information, along with a lack of relevant data, means that there are major gaps in the information needed to inform improvements in social care. We heard from the AGS that this means that the

true picture of demand and unmet need is unclear. The Scottish Government confirmed during oral evidence that it has implemented a data improvement programme and is working with partners to identify the barriers to achieving improvements in the short term as quickly as possible.

The lack of key data was a common theme across several health-related audit reports considered by the Session 5 Public Audit and Post-legislative Scrutiny Committee. For example, on Self-directed Support and Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services. Earlier this year, the availability and quality of data was also raised as a concern in the AGS's NHS in Scotland 2021 report. During evidence on the social care briefing, the AGS was clear that "there is a need for data to be consistent, useable, transferable and based around people's needs as opposed to the concerns of organisations in the sector". We would therefore encourage your Committee to keep the Scottish Government's data improvement programme work under review.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Leonard". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**Richard Leonard MSP,
Convener**