

## Draft Response to Gillian Martin MSP

Dear Gillian

Thank you for the opportunity to attend the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee on 29 November 2022. I refer to your letter of 30 November setting out some additional questions and my views are set out below.

For the National Care Service (NCS) to be an investment in society, and to justify the disruption, risk and additional cost associated with the transition to an NCS, the Scottish Government (SG), care boards, and other stakeholders will require to place more emphasis on preventative activities. This will require a strategic re-allocation of resource to existing arrangements. It will require patience as the return on investment on preventative measures may take several years to come to fruition. It will require to afford local care boards maximum flexibility to develop solutions that are best suited to place. Too much national direction or a lack of flexibility could have no impact on local outcomes. At worst it could have a negative impact. It is important that an evaluation framework for the NCS is developed to ensure accountability of the SG and care boards. This will help demonstrate whether the NCS is having any impact on the delivery of better outcomes for our residents, and if not, help us to remedy the situation.

Aberdeen City has a strong focus on commissioning against need. The Community Planning Partnership (CPP), of which Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership (ACHSCP) is a partner, has carried out Population Needs Assessments. These in turn have informed the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) for Aberdeen. The LOIP has then informed the commissioning activity of CPP members, including ACHSCP. Our commissioning activity is therefore directly linked to the LOIP in a way that recognises our strengths, and which complements the strengths of our partners.

Arguably there is a 'mixed economy' in health provision as well as social care provision. Health services are delivered through a variety of private businesses including pharmacies, agency, General Practitioners, and dentistry. Our focus on addressing need in the city through our commissioning model seeks to provide the most effective services within our financial envelope to deliver the outcomes in the LOIP. Should the government move to enforce the direct provision of social care services, this would add even more disruption, risk, and cost to the system. Any such move would have to be supported by a clear evidence basis that the NCS would have the capability and capacity to deliver all services. That evidence base does not appear to exist.

Private enterprise plays a positive contribution in the social care market by helping to meet the need of our residents. We have a strong relationship with Bon Accord Care. It is an Arm's Length External Organisation of Aberdeen City Council, which provides social care services for the ACHSCP. As you're aware, we also have a strong relationship with the Granite Care Consortium. These relationships and others with private enterprise and the voluntary sector have developed because we and our partners have had the flexibility and autonomy to develop arrangements which suit our place and communities. They may not be as effective in other places. It is essential that local care boards have the flexibility to commission and procure services that meet the needs of their place. Any attempt to promote a 'one size fits all' approach may, as alluded to above, harm local outcomes. There is also a risk that providers will not participate in the local market if commissioning and procurement requirements imposed by the SG are overly restrictive. Local care boards should be given maximum flexibility to determine who is the most appropriate provider to deliver against a need in their area.

Scotland Excel seeks to promote a national and single approach, this does not always reflect the diversity of geography and demographics, as such contractual arrangements that suit the 'many'

may disadvantage the few to the extent that delivery is reduced. The additionality that Scotland Excel could bring in a partner in commissioning would be helpful, but needs to be led by local context, relationships and needs. Scotland excel could support with advice on the 'how' of procurement and commissioning, although many local authorities support very positively with procurement support.

If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely

Sandra MacLeod  
Chief Officer  
Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership