

Scotland's Care Crisis and the National Care Service



Scotland's social care sector faces a crisis this winter. The number of days lost to delayed discharges from hospital has increased by 32% in the last year, unmet care needs are increasing, and providers face huge issues with the recruitment and retention of staff.¹ This is likely to lead to increasing concern from your constituents who need care, their families and those who deliver care.

In its current form, the National Care Service Bill will do little to alleviate this crisis. Moreover, the Bill undermines local accountability; fails to address fundamental issues of ownership in the sector, and risks further outsourcing and undermining of Fair Work. Without immediate action to address these issues, increase pay and improve working practices, the sector will fail to meet the needs of Scotland's most vulnerable.

The STUC is calling for the withdrawal of the Bill in order to focus on the immediate crisis.

Immediate Action to Address Scotland's Care Crisis

Alongside a rethink of the Government's National Care Service proposals, there is a need for **immediate improvements** for workers in the sector. The trade unions representing Scotland's social care workers, UNISON, GMB and Unite, are calling for:

1. Mandatory minimum wage of £15 per hour for carers and significant increase for other care staff such as domestics
2. Pay parity with the NHS across the whole wage structure
3. Full sick pay from day one
4. Increase mileage payments
5. An end to cuts in current care at home packages.
6. The introduction of sectoral bargaining

Without these changes, Scotland risks avoidable deaths this winter.

A Truly Transformative National Care Service

The 2021 Independent Review of Adult Social Care (the Feeley Review) declared that "if we want a different set of results, we need a different system." Yet neither the Feeley Review or the Scottish Government's NCS proposals advocate substantive changes to who actually provides care. The Bill provides a framework for a national care service but fails to articulate the detail of how this service will be structured or delivered in any way that suggests it differs from the current model. While there is widespread agreement that Scotland's care service needs reform or overhaul, the Bill, as proposed, does not address the key issues that undermine the provision of social care, namely: lack of funding to support the provision of quality care, the leakage of public money into profit making companies and the absence of Fair Work and sectoral collective bargaining.

¹ <https://spice-spotlight.scot/2022/09/28/nhs-and-social-care-over-winter-2022-23/>

STUC research, [Profiting from Care](#), published earlier this year clearly shows that the quality of care provision, conditions for workers and value for money are all reduced by the provision of services by for-profit providers.²

Key findings from the research include:

- Nearly 25% of care homes run by big providers had at least one complaint upheld against them in 2019/20, compared to 16% in the rest of the private sector and 6% in homes not run for profit.
- In older people's care homes, staffing resources are 20% worse in the private sector compared to the not for profit sector.
- Over the last six years, the public sector has paid on average £1.60 more per hour to care workers than the private sector.
- £28 of every £100 received in care home fees leaks out of the most profitable privately owned care homes in the form of profits, rent, payments to directors and interest payments on loans. While not all of this extraction is illegitimate, it compares to only £3.43 of every £100 for the largest not-for-profit care home operators.
- A growing concentration of residential care provided by large for-profit companies leaves care residents and workers at the mercy of market failure.

Given this evidence, the Scottish Government's current approach of being 'ownership neutral' in the design of the NCS is untenable.

Subject to consultation, the Bill proposes transferring local government functions and staff to care boards. These functions may then be further transferred or outsourced. This puts the pay, conditions and pensions of 70,000 workers at risk, alongside the democratic accountability and financial sustainability of local government.

The Bill does not address the issue of collective bargaining, which is one of the key solutions to improving Fair Work and supporting the recruitment and retention of staff in the sector.

Without these significant changes, on local accountability, on profiteering and on collective bargaining the STUC, and Scotland's care unions UNISON, GMB and Unite the Union, cannot support the NCS Bill in its current form.

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² <https://stuc.org.uk/files/Reports/Profiting-from-Care-Report.pdf>