

Briefing on social care priorities for the Health, Care and Sport Committee

June 2026

The Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland (CCPS) represents not-for-profit providers of care and support. As a membership organisation we work strategically and collaboratively to Inspire, Influence, Involve and Inform.

Our members provide support for people with diverse needs, including older people; children, young people and families; disabled people; people experiencing poor mental health; people living with alcohol or drug dependence; people with dementia; neurodivergent people; survivors of domestic abuse; people experiencing homelessness or insecure housing; and people involved with the justice system.

This briefing sets out the urgent pressures facing Scotland's not-for-profit social care sector and suggests questions for Committee scrutiny in 2026-27.

Key messages

- **Social care enables Scotland's people to thrive**, supporting them to maintain independence and connection to family, community, work and education.
- **Social care is fundamental to Scotland's wider public service system and has much to offer** – effective public service reform needs a strong sector.
- **The sector is under acute and increasing strain**, putting service provision, jobs and supported people's outcomes at risk.
- **Current funding does not reflect the true cost of delivering support**, undermining sustainability, Fair Work and accessibility to good, timely services.
- **Workforce pressures are intensifying**, driven by uncompetitive pay funded by government, short-term service contracts and limited career progression.
- **Many people can't get the support they need, when they need it**, increasing reliance on expensive, acute interventions.
- **This can be turned around**. The Committee has a key role in delivering scrutiny to drive improvement towards a **sustainable, effective, rights-based**

system of care and support that can re-set the social contract with people in Scotland.

Social Care Matters

One in 23 people need social care support each year in Scotland¹ to thrive, live independently, and enjoy life with connection, dignity and purpose. When resourced well, social care provides:

- **Preventative, community-based support**, keeping people well at home and out of expensive institutional settings, like hospital wards.
- **Life-saving interventions** in community settings to people in critical need, such as with people in mental health crisis or older people experiencing frailty.
- **Support to Scotland's estimated 722,000 unpaid carers**² – both adults and children – so they can also live good and fulfilled lives.

Social care's impact on the wellbeing of individuals, families, communities and the Scottish economy is significant. The majority of this support is delivered by non-public sector commissioned providers³. Our sector could do so much more to drive public service reform rooted in prevention, efficiency and joined-up services.

The current system is under immense pressure

After years of underinvestment, demand for support and rising delivery costs are outstripping any increases in funding that have been made available⁴. Evidence from a recent CCPS member survey⁵ reveals the scale of the risk for commissioned providers. Over 50 responding organisations:

- Estimated that over 8,500 beneficiaries would be negatively impacted by reductions in support over 2025-26, including just under 1,000 under-18s, and
- Expected to lose nearly 830 posts in 2025-2026. Over half of actual losses at the 6-month point came from the front line
- Over half of responding organisations were using charitable reserves to reach financial balance by mid-year; a third were using more reserves than expected.

¹ Public Health Scotland, (2025) [People Supported Through Social Care Services 2023-24](#)

² Scottish Government (2026) [Scotland's Carers update release: June 2026](#) Scottish Government (2026) [Scotland's Carers update release: June 2026](#)

³ SSSC (2025) [WorkforceDataReport2024_211125.pdf](#), Page 24, Table 9

⁴ Fraser of Allander (2026) [Setting the scene: Scotland on the eve of the 2026 Election](#)

⁵ Unpublished (November 2025).

When the last parliament's Health, Social Care and Sport Committee reviewed implementation of Scotland's flagship Self-Directed Support (SDS) Act, it concluded that "...an unsustainable social care sector with restrictions on available providers, how services are commissioned and procured, and the financial systems and models of care currently in place is hampering the effective implementation of SDS"⁶.

In addition, despite commitments to deliver Fair Work in 2019, this has not been delivered in practice and significant disparities in pay remain. In 2026, government funding to pay a trained and regulated frontline support worker in a commissioned social care service is still more than **£3,000 less** than for an unregulated NHS support worker in a comparable role. Sectoral Bargaining has the potential to lead the commissioned care and support sector towards a funded settlement that delivers parity – but an agreed approach is still to be finalised.

In the end, it is people who need support who are losing out. In May 2026, over 6,800 people were waiting for a social care needs assessment. Those assessed as qualifying for a care package were awaiting a combined total of nearly 30,000 hours of support each week⁷. Many people no longer get support at all unless their needs are deemed "critical". Unless action is taken this situation will only worsen.

We can no longer afford to waste taxpayer's money, or people's wellbeing, on systems that don't deliver. Audit Scotland, for example, has estimated that over £440 million was spent on delayed discharges from hospital in 2024-25 alone, with insufficient social care provision a primary driver⁸. A different allocation of existing funding to invest in activity that supports independence in the community could make an enormous difference, both to people and the government's finances.

The need for fundamental social care reform is even more pressing now than when Derek Feeley published his [social care review](#), as we emerged from the worst of the COVID pandemic. Despite promises to deliver these recommendations, three years of the last parliament was wasted in bitter debate on a National Care Service Bill that never came to pass. CCPS is now looking to our new parliament, and members of this and other key Committees, to rise to the cross-party challenge of driving transformation that will meet need and fund social care like it matters; because it does.

Key questions for Committee consideration

- How can national and local government be held to account effectively for their respective responsibilities in ensuring the availability of a rights-based, quality system of social care and support for all who need it?

⁶ [Post-legislative scrutiny of the Social Care \(Self-directed Support\) \(Scotland\) Act 2013: Phase 2](#), page 2

⁷ Public Health Scotland (2026) [People requiring a social care assessment and care at home services 26 May 2026](#)

⁸ Audit Scotland (2026) [Delayed discharges A symptom of the challenges facing health and social care](#)

- What needs to change in this parliamentary term to ensure the allocation and distribution of taxpayers' funds can meet support needs, enable people to thrive at home and in their communities and avoid costly crisis interventions?
- How can effective workforce planning for a sector of more than 211,000 social care staff⁹ be delivered nationally to ensure a skilled and trained professional workforce is recruited, retained, developed and valued?
- How are sectoral bargaining promises progressing effectively to deliver a genuine move to parity with the public sector in pay, terms and conditions for staff in commissioned services?
- How can the Committee be assured that the social care sector (commissioned providers, supported people and unpaid carers) is afforded equal value with public sector partners in both the design and delivery of public service reform?

A shared opportunity: working together

Drawing on the insight and solutions from our membership, and our long-standing reputation in policy development, CCPS is keen to work constructively with the Committee as it commences work. To speak with us, please contact Alice.Tooms-Moore@ccpscotland.org

⁹ SSSC (2025) [Scottish Social Service Sector: Report on 2024 Workforce Data](#), p68.