

Briefing Paper



A National Care Service for Scotland Summary of our Response November 2021

Voluntary Health Scotland (VHS) is the national intermediary and network for voluntary health organisations in Scotland. We work with our members and others to address health inequalities and to help people and communities live healthier and fairer lives. This is a brief overview of [our response](#) to the National Care Service (NCS) consultation.

In the third and voluntary sector there is a keen willingness to engage with the process, and an eagerness for more in-depth conversations on specific areas of the NCS. However, many of our members found responding to this consultation challenging. The organisations we consulted support the principles of the proposals, but have questions about the detail. There is a clear need for further and improved engagement with the sector and the people it supports.

This is an ambitious timetable for such large-scale reform, meantime people in need of social care are being failed by the existing system and cannot afford to wait for fundamental failings to be resolved. Further progress on integration needs to happen in parallel to the development of the NCS. We also need to recognise that structural change will only get you so far, the principles outlined in these proposals will require cultural change, which takes time. The process as well as the goal must be to build a People's National Care Service.

Key points

- A number of our members **struggled to engage** with the process due to the scale of the consultation and its short timeframe. These missed voices and their service users must be heard in the next stage.
- The third and voluntary sector must be an **equal partner** in the design and delivery of services, and we strongly advocate that it has voting rights at the Community Health & Social Care Board decision-making table.
- For **prevention and early intervention** to be more than just rhetoric it needs to be coupled with a solid and sustained commitment to investment and implementation.
- The consultation proposes that other services, beyond those covered by the Independent Review of Adult Social Care, should be considered for inclusion. This could include children and young people's care, community justice, alcohol and drug services, social work and community health services. Members of our network are **reluctant to endorse these added elements without further information** and a much greater understanding as to the exact scope and implications. There needs to be specific engagement on these service areas with the third and voluntary sector.
- The consultation also proposes that elements of mental health services should be in scope. VHS recommends strongly that such a move must include a commitment to address the long-neglected and specific area of health and social service provision for people aged 65+ with a mental health condition other than (or in addition to) dementia. At present, care and support in these cases too often [falls off a cliff](#) on their 65th birthday. There needs to be **parity of service between older people with serious mental health conditions and other adults with a mental health condition**.

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