

A National Care Service for Scotland: consultation

Response from Paths for All

We welcome the opportunity to comment on this consultation. Our response is shaped by our aim, as an organisation, to significantly increase the number of people who choose to walk in Scotland - whether that's for leisure or walking to work, school, the shops or to a nearby public transport hub. We want to create a happier, healthier Scotland where increased physical activity improves quality of life and wellbeing for all. We work to develop more opportunities and better environments not just for walking, but also for wheeling, cycling and other activities, to help make Scotland a more active, more prosperous, greener country.

We generally support the recommendations of the Feeley review (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/independent-review-adult-social-care-scotland/>) and we can see potential benefits from the proposals for a National Care Service set out in the current consultation.

The Feeley review made recommendations that include a new paradigm for care where there is a rights-based approach, social care is seen as an investment, there is an emphasis on prevention and independent living is supported.

Regarding the current proposals (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-care-service-scotland-consultation/>), we agree that the establishment of a National Care Service (NCS) may be able to:

- achieve consistency across the country, and drive national improvements,
- ensure strategic level integration with the NHS that promotes preventative care and reduces the need for hospital stays,
- sets clear national standards and terms and conditions for the commissioning and delivery of services; and
- vitally bring national oversight and accountability to ensure that all individuals universally have access to the services needed.

Our detailed comments mostly relate to the chapter on: **Improving care for people** but have some relevance to **Commissioning of services**.

National Care Service

Overall, the aim of the new service should be to make life better for people receiving care and we support a person-centred approach – with person centred outcomes – drawing on lived experience.

This is a wide-ranging consultation with many detailed questions. In responding we have taken a more general approach as we consider that this better reflects our involvement in this area of work and our thinking on how things could be approached in future.

Several people have said to us that they are not sure the consultation is easy to engage with for users / families / staff – and there will no doubt need to be considerable further consultation with these groups. This should include input from people with lived experience.

There are also concerns over the impact of major change, and the resulting upheaval and uncertainty on areas of work that are currently working well.

Prevention better than cure – preventative spend and social prescribing

We support the reallocation of more resources to preventative spend as recommended in the Christie Commission a decade ago and supported by proposals in this consultation. The principle of spend a little now to save more later has never been more relevant. Preventative spend is all about investing in curing causes, rather than the financially unsustainable model of endlessly treating symptoms.

We agree that increased emphasis on prevention should be the primary focus of health & social care reforms. The role of the third sector and local health “creators” in preventative health needs to be resourced and recognised in the National Care Service.

Health and wellbeing should start, and be nurtured, in the community and this links to all themes of the work of Paths for All.

[Social prescribing](#) is focusing on people, place and purpose and moving away from the assumption that prescription of medicine is always the answer to fixing problems. There is a need for community based and person focused activities to be available and accessible across Scotland. From Health Walks to gardening clubs to dance classes, the third sector can support our NHS to achieve a happier, healthier Scotland.

We have supported a range of projects that promote social prescribing. For example, we awarded funding to Dundee Volunteer and Voluntary Action (DVVA) for partnership work helping GPs and other health professionals prescribe green health activities delivered by Dundee’s third sector to patients. [Green Health Prescriptions](#) have been issued which link to the green health directory holding around 60 weekly activities. Our [expert lecture](#) in 2018 focussed on social prescribing.

Movement for Health, a coalition of charities facilitated by Paths for All, sees the need to resource and strengthen the national leadership of social prescribing. Working with its membership the coalition identifies the role of leisure trusts and how significant they are to help communities be healthy and happy. These facilities and community programmes need to be invested in to ensure they can meet the needs of their communities. Those living with long term conditions benefit from these community services, when these facilities closed due to Covid-19, the deconditioning and increase in pharmaceutical demand clearly shows the impact losing leisure trusts would have. There is good evidence in this Public Health England report on deconditioning and impact of Covid-19 on people 65+

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-wider-impacts-on-people-aged-65-and-over>

On the need for more commitment to resourcing prevention

- *A sustained emphasis on wellbeing and a real, properly funded and resourced long-term commitment to prevention would go a long way to alleviating the rising tide of pressure on health and care services, not to mention its benefits for employers and employability, for the economy, for the environment, for the justice system, and for individuals and communities – particularly those which have been deprived and overlooked for far too long.*

Professor Paul Gray (chief executive of NHS Scotland, 2013-19 and NHS Scotland Director of Primary and Community Care from 2005-2007) <https://reformscotland.com/2021/10/a-critical-moment-for-health-and-care-paul-gray/>

The recently published key findings and recommendations from the Royal Society of Edinburgh's Post-Covid-19 Futures Commission [Coming out of Covid-19: reimagining Scotland](#) recommends:

- *The Scottish Government should reaffirm and recommit to the principles of the Christie Commission and work with delivery partners towards their implementation across public services and beyond, with business champions engaged to support the approach.*
- *The Scottish Government should set up a public service transformation partnership to actively promote the principles and experience of social prescribing from around Scotland and beyond, offer connections and development opportunities for people who want to work collaboratively, and act as a testbed for new ways of working.*

Walking offers a huge preventative spend opportunity. There are numerous economic benefits associated with walking including reduced costs to the NHS through reduced chronic ill health, and improved productivity due to reduced sickness absence and reduced mortality and morbidity among people who are currently irregularly active.

Investment (SROI) evidence shows a return of approximately £8 for every £1 invested in health walk and path development projects. These benefits can deliver cost savings for health and social care services.

Mainstreaming physical activity

The new National Care Service could play a valuable role in promoting physical activity for both staff and people who need social care support in a range of settings.

A systems approach is essential to understand all the key drivers (positive and negative) and links between these drivers. The new service could act to emphasise the interconnections across policy areas and reduce “silo thinking”. It could bring about greater policy alignment and buy-in from a range of stakeholders – beyond the “usual suspects”.

Part of this approach could be to establish a formal, standardised social prescribing programme that promotes physical activity, and in particular walking, as a core element of treatment and care.

The desired outcome would be increased confidence in, knowledge and uptake of physical activity opportunities by those who would benefit most – resulting in improved population health, resilience, and reduction in long term healthcare costs.

The service could also work to help embed active travel and public transport into the culture and everyday operations of public, private and third sector organisations in the care sector.

National Walking Strategy

The National Walking Strategy is relevant to the aims of proposed change in social care. <http://stepchangescot.scot/>

The vision of the NWS is for: A Scotland where everyone benefits from walking as part of their everyday journeys, enjoys walking in the outdoors and where places are well designed to encourage walking. Several themes and outcomes are relevant to social care.

- *Delivery Theme 1. Walking supports Health and Wellbeing*
There is a clear need for everyone to work together to promote more physically active lives and health and social care professionals can play a key role.
Outcome 1.3: Walking increasingly used to promote good health, prevent ill health and manage long-term conditions by Health and Social Care Partnerships.
- *Delivery Theme 3. Walking supports Communities*
Outcome 3.1: Increase the number of Community Planning Partnership’s (CPPs), Health and Social Care Partnerships and Joint Health Improvement Partnership’s (JHIPs) developing polices which support a better walking environment and increase participation
<https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/mediaLibrary/other/english/final-walking-strategy-action-plan-10-sept-2019.pdf>

Walking also helps deliver on individual National Outcomes within the National Performance Framework (NPF) and supports the delivery of the Scottish

Government's Active Scotland Outcomes Framework, and the Long-term Vision for Active Travel in Scotland.

The role of the third sector in relation to social care

We generally consider that the Scottish Government should expand its support for, and use of, Third Sector organisations in relation to social care.

The Third Sector offers excellent value for money. Third Sector organisations are generally streamlined organisations. They have a statutory duty through the Charities Act to deliver on their charitable purposes, not to deliver profits for shareholders.

In the context of social care, ethical commissioning could help ensure effective local delivery. There is very much a place in this for the Third Sector as these organisations are often well placed to hear people's lived experience.

Third Sector organisations are more likely to deliver good results for a variety of reasons. They are more trusted by the public because their activities and communications are not perceived to be driven by power or profit motives. They are in direct contact with people in their localities and thus know more about the specific local circumstances, capacities and needs. This closeness brings understanding of the needs of service users and communities. A new report from The Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) suggests that trust in Scottish charities is on the increase.

https://www.oscr.org.uk/media/4280/599187_sct0421394204-001_oscr_sector-overview-report_final.pdf

Third Sector organisations are more likely to drive forward new ideas and change. They are smaller and nimbler than government bodies. Operating outside of the social and economic 'mainstream', they can invent and establish alternative practices and infrastructures which can then become the source of behaviour change. Often, they can develop effective solutions by directly involving local actors through bottom-up, democratic processes, making new social norms more embedded in local communities.

During the pandemic, as statutory services began to shut down and stop, the Voluntary Sector stepped up, adapted, and filled the gaps in an impressive way. Investing in the Third Sector is investing in civic structures that build resilience to pandemics, climate extremes and economic downturns.

Two examples of how the third sector can mobilise quickly and effect change at a local level come from Paths for All's Smarter Choices Smarter Places programme.

<https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/active-travel>

- Within a month of lockdown Inverclyde Community Development Trust was supplying refurbished bikes for NHS workers and shop workers who could no longer get to work due to restrictions on public transport.

- Similarly Getting Better Together in Shotts had reshaped its services within days of lockdown so that it could make bikes and bike maintenance available to key workers and others impacted by the reduction in public transport.

Health walk projects also adapted the support they offered in response to the pandemic. For example, Highland Third Sector Interface - Think Nature Health Walks Project – response to the pandemic:

During the first lockdown when we couldn't meet as a group for our walks I kept in touch with the walkers and walk leaders by email and telephone, having at least fortnightly contact with each walker. This contact identified issues of isolation and practical problems such as financial difficulties and obtaining shopping. I was able to provide information and direct walkers to possible solutions. The support provided through this contact eased the sense of isolation felt by group members. Maintaining our links and relationships helped people to return to the walks when the restrictions eased. Having already established friendships, a network of support also grew between some of the walkers themselves with regular telephone contacts and assistance with obtaining, for example, shopping.

Tongue Walking Group

On the third sector:

- *...this will also operate to the further detriment of third sector and private sector providers, who are already under represented in decision making; treating the third sector as a disposable contractor while calling them partners is the worst of all possible worlds.*

Professor Paul Gray (chief executive of NHS Scotland, 2013-19 and NHS Scotland Director of Primary and Community Care from 2005-2007) <https://reformscotland.com/2021/10/a-critical-moment-for-health-and-care-paul-gray/>

The role of Paths for All in relation to social care

Paths for All engages with policy development at national level, but our work mostly supports changing people's lives at local level. We have extensive local networks and partnerships – for example with NHS, Local Authorities, leisure trusts, community groups and other third sector organisations.

Our way of working emphasises locally relevant projects and partnerships supported within a national framework.

This approach works in many parts of Scotland but not in all areas – a National Care Service could help set standards, encourage partnership work, and share best practice. The new body should support local solutions that meet local needs, whilst delivering national outcomes. It should reach all populations and all geographies in Scotland.

Relevance of Paths for All's work

We promote walking – but it is more than “just a walk”. Our work emphasises:

- Keeping people well
- Prevention
- Independent living
- Addressing isolation

[Scottish Health Walk Network](#)

Our 650 health walks support 1000's of people every week to improve their health and wellbeing while becoming more connected in their community. The impacts of this simple, low-cost intervention are huge.

Making new friends, appreciating nature, building stamina, feeling healthier and enjoying a chat - just some of the reasons why people love Health Walks

<https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/news/news-post/walking-back-to-happiness>

Many of our health walks projects also promote Strength & Balance exercise along with regular walking to support people to live independent lives as they age. Paths for All build capacity in the Scottish Health Walk Network to do this, through training and resources. For example: <https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/walking-for-health/wfh-success-stories/wfh-story/volunteers-build-their-skills-with-virtual-strength-and-balance-exercise-classes>

[Care About Walking](#)

We have worked with care home residents and staff in Perth and Kinross to develop a suite of accessible resources that encourage moving more and increasing daily physical activity.

We are working on the integration of physical activity into the culture of care homes - along with the University of Stirling, we are investigating how care home residents are supported to be active as part of their day-to-day routine. This work is also being tested with people receiving care at home services in Perth & Kinross.

<https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/news/news-post/Care-home-staff-and-volunteers-required-for-physical-activity-survey?s=03>

We have been awarded funding to expand our award-winning Care About Walking project with care homes in Perth and Kinross.

<https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/news/news-post/funding-to-help-care-home-residents-to-sit-less-and-move-more>

[Strength & Balance](#)

Regular walking plus strength and balance exercises provides the key to an active, happy, and healthy older age.

Our programme was developed with expert input from Glasgow Caledonian University. It consists of 14 simple exercises that will improve strength and balance and reduce the risk of falls in adults.

We help staff promote strength and balance exercises and short walks in health and care settings. <https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/walking-for-health/strength-and-balance/health-settings>

Our strength and balance resources are freely available, but uptake is not the same everywhere. The new service could make this type of resource available more widely, share best practice and replicate the programme more widely whilst reducing duplication of effort. How this is delivered will need to adapt to local needs as these will vary across the country

[Dementia Friendly Walking](#)

We are working with our Scottish Health Walk Network to make our Health Walks more accessible to people living with dementia.

We have created a Dementia Friendly Accreditation which recognises the positive changes put in place by Walking for Health projects to make their Health Walks accessible to people living with dementia. Projects working towards the accreditation can access a range of tailored support from Paths for All including Dementia Friendly Walk Leader training, small grants, resources, and networking opportunities.

[Dementia Friendly Environments](#)

Outdoor spaces can have numerous positive effects for people living with dementia. We are working with partners to develop more accessible environments.

Our Dementia and the Outdoors Guidance Note shares advice and considerations when developing more accessible outdoor spaces. The new service could help promote this approach in care settings, and more widely, across the country.

[Cancer friendly walking](#)

Together with Macmillan Cancer Support, we are supporting people living with cancer to take their first steps to being active. These Health Walks support people affected by cancer to become more active by walking.

[Workplace Walking](#)

We support workplaces to walk more and feel the difference. This can include staff in care homes or other care related settings.

Our [Step Count Challenge](#) is a fun, sociable way of encouraging teams of five to walk more by tracking and recording their daily step count.

[Smarter Choices, Smarter Places](#)

Increasing levels of active travel can bring huge benefits to our communities, health, and environment.

Our Smarter Choices, Smarter Places programme aims to encourage people to change their behaviour to walk, wheel or cycle as part of their everyday short journeys.

It aims to encourage people to change their everyday travel. Grants are available to encourage people to use buses and community car clubs for longer journeys; walking and cycling for short journeys, and home-working to replace daily commutes.

Our [Community Active Travel Grants](#) fund increases people's knowledge about sustainable transport choices available to them. It aims to meet local need within a national framework

[Movement for Health](#)

We facilitate and manage the development of Movement for Health, the new Physical Activity and Long-Term Conditions Coalition.

Movement for Health focuses the role of physical activity in preventing many common diseases and improving the health and wellbeing of people living with health conditions.

Over one million people in Scotland are living with limiting long term conditions, such as arthritis or heart disease, and 46% of these people are inactive - twice that of the rest of the population.

Paths for All initiated the development of Movement for Health and are managing the coalition. We have championed the role of physical activity, particularly walking for prevention and management of health conditions for many years. We recognised that in Scotland there could be a stronger collective voice in relation to this agenda and are pleased to have secured membership from 15 other leading health charities and other key partners.

<https://www.movementforhealth.scot/>

The new service could support the Movement for Health coalition to expand work supporting physical activity, sport and recreation providers to create more and better opportunities for people with long term conditions to be more active. Physical activity and sport could be made increasingly welcoming, appropriate, and safe for people living with long term conditions. A network offering peer support and information to health care professionals and people living with long term conditions could be provided through the Movement for Health's website and educational programming.

Evidence

Paths for All have an aim to increase the evidence base and share learning to make the case for increased walking and active travel.

Our [Walkipedia](#) website signposts users to the key sources of information and evidence relating to walking, pedestrians, and active travel. It provides quick access to relevant legislation, policies, strategies, guidance, research websites and statistics as well as to organisations, detailing their programmes, initiatives and toolkits that have been developed.

Our [National survey](#) of attitudes and barriers to walking in Scotland has provided an updated picture of the Scottish adult population's participation and attitudes to walking, updating information last collected in 2014 and complementing other sources of information such as the Scottish Household Survey and Scotland's People and Nature. We have worked with NatureScot on a [programme of research](#) to track changes in the Scottish population's outdoor visit behaviour and engagement with the outdoors during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Background

Paths for All is a Scottish charity founded in 1996. We champion everyday walking as the way to a happier, healthier Scotland. We want to get Scotland walking: everyone, everyday, everywhere.

Our aim is to significantly increase the number of people who choose to walk in Scotland - whether that's for leisure or walking to work, school, the shops or to a nearby public transport hub. We want to create a happier, healthier Scotland where increased physical activity improves quality of life and wellbeing for all. We work to develop more opportunities and better environments not just for walking, but also for wheeling (wheelchair), cycling and other activities, to help make Scotland a more active, more prosperous, greener country.

Our work supports the delivery of the Scottish Government's Active Scotland Outcomes Framework, National Walking Strategy and the Long-term Vision for Active Travel in Scotland, community and workplace health walking, path network development and active travel policy development. We are a partnership organisation with 29 national partners. Our funders include the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland, NatureScot, The Life Changes Trust, and The Robertson Trust.

If we want to get significant numbers of people more active, then walking is of overwhelming importance – as both a recreational activity and as part of everyday life. This is particularly the case if we want to get inactive people more active.

We have no objections to our comments being made public and would be pleased to discuss them further.

Paths for All

November 2021

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