

Briefing Paper



Briefing for Members Business Debate: [Longstanding Underpayment of Social Care Staff](#)

Voluntary Health Scotland Background:

Voluntary Health Scotland is the national intermediary and network for voluntary health organisations across Scotland. Our mission is to work to improve people's health and wellbeing by providing an effective national network for health charities and other third sector organisations actively supporting people's health and wellbeing. Our members and network include a range of medium and large condition specific organisations, smaller community organisations, as well as social enterprises. Voluntary Health Scotland is also the secretary of the Health Inequalities CPG.

Key point:

A pay inequity has been created between adult and children's social care services, as children's services have not been included in the recent pay uplift for social care workers.

- Children's social care workforce pay: £9.50 (Living Wage), (£9.90 from April)
- Commissioned adult social care workforce: £10.02 (from December), (£10.50 from April)

Background:

At the [latest meeting](#) of the Health Inequalities CPG an inequity was highlighted between the pay for children and adult social care workers. This appears to be the result of the Scottish Budget [announcement](#) which applies to adult services but not children's services: "To retain care workers and support better pay and conditions, local government will be required to deliver a £10.50 minimum hourly rate for adult social care workers in commissioned services, in line with the public sector pay policy."

This increase in pay is welcome but has left part of the sector behind. Social care workers in children's services have been facing the same pressures during the pandemic and are also facing recruitment challenges. The workforces in children's charities supporting disabled children and those with long term and/or life limiting conditions have faced what are arguably equally high levels of stress and challenge throughout the pandemic, but have not been recognised in the recent government announcements to improve pay and conditions.

Furthermore, children's social care services were also excluded from the [recent wellbeing fund announced](#) to improve staff wellbeing across the Adult Social Work & Social Care sectors.

The role is largely the same, the only difference is the age of the people being supported. At the CPG meeting, concerns were raised that this could have implications for the retention of staff in children's health and social care settings.

Case Study:

[PLUS Forth Valley](#) provides support for children and adults with disabilities. At the latest Health Inequalities CPG Susan Fullerton, CEO of PLUS Forth Valley, highlighted the impact this difference in pay will have on their services:

"In terms of impact to PLUS, 60% of our service delivery is focused on providing support to disabled children and their families. The other 40% is adults. We have a staff team of around 50 who work flexible across our organisation. This means that they may be

involved in group events with children, or home based support for adults, and anything in between. When our staff are working, we have 3 distinct job roles:

- Sessional workers who work at group events and have the support of a wider team when they are at work
- 1:1 workers who are required to lone work with a child or adult, in their home or in their community. They have sole responsibility when they are working.
- Event coordinator, as a lot of our work focusses on bringing children or adults together to reduce isolation and provide increased opportunities to spend time with peers, this role acts as the team leader for a group event, line managing the sessional workers, directing and planning the activity and taking overall responsibility for the individuals in attendance.

The job roles are based on the tasks required by the post holder. They are not based on the age of the individual they are supporting. Having consulted an external consultant who is supporting us with a job evaluation exercise, it is becoming clear that we are likely unable to pay staff different rates of pay for undertaking the same job role where the only differing factor is the age of the individual being supported.

Because we have a small team of staff who work flexibly for us, they are being paid less when they are supporting a child. This is not fair working practice. As a small charity, we are likely going to have to find the finances to increase the rate of pay for all staff so we avoid any employment claims from our staff team.

We currently have a waiting list of over 50 children and adults waiting to access our service. Demand is at an all-time high and we have delivered more support in this financial year than we did pre pandemic. However, there are still over 50 individuals unable to access the support they require. We used to recruit twice per year. Now recruitment for us is permanently open. We just can't recruit the volume of staff we require. This was an issue during the pandemic, however in the last 12 months it has become increasingly difficult to attract staff. The pay discrepancy adds to the complication of recruitment and retention."

Key questions:

- Are Ministers aware of this discrepancy in pay, what are the plans to remedy it?
- Are there plans to close the pay gap between adult and children's social care services?
- Was the potential impact on recruit and retention in children's social care services assessed?

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