

Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland

Members Business S5M-20261 Briefing: Sustainable Development Goals in Scotland, On Target for 2030? 16 January 2020



Introduction

The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) welcomes the Members Business Debate S5M-20261 on the publication of “On Target for 2030?”, an independent snapshot review of Scotland’s progress against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹.

As authors of one of the two parts of the document on good health and wellbeing, the ALLIANCE encourages all MSPs to consider the independent report and its priorities for future consideration as the Scottish Government aims to achieve the seventeen Goals at the heart of the Agenda for Sustainable Development by 2030.

Section 3: Good Health and Wellbeing – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being

How well is Scotland doing?

Whilst progress in some areas is good (e.g. improving rates of maternal and infant mortality), and a strong policy framework around health and well-being is continually developed and built upon, Scotland’s health inequalities persist.

Scotland continues to have the highest rates of premature death for men and women in Britain, and the latest estimates indicate that the increase in life expectancy has stalled. In the more affluent areas of Scotland, women experience over 22 more years of good health and men experience over 23 more years compared to the most deprived areas. In 2017, suicide in young men increased for the third consecutive year, and drug-related deaths in Scotland have more than doubled in 10 years.

Regulatory bodies, including Audit Scotland and the Care Inspectorate, also report persistent problems in achieving policy goals (the ‘implementation gap’). It is also unclear whether small scale improvement programmes underway around the country will result in the larger shifts required to achieve positive changes at population level.

¹ <http://uwsoxfampartnership.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/On-Target-July-2019-Web-FINAL.pdf>

In the meantime, people continue to experience obstacles to fully realising their right to health and accessing the right support at the right time.

Is Scotland committed to achieving this Goal?

There appears to be a high level of policy commitment to achieving good health and wellbeing in Scotland, with health and social care making up a substantial proportion of the national budget.

- **The National Performance Framework (NPF)** contains a National Outcome – ‘We are healthy and active’ – with nine associated Indicators.
- **Successive Programmes for Government** have committed to a wide range of health and wellbeing initiatives targeting specific populations and service sectors.
- **The Chief Medical Officer’s annual report, Realistic Medicine**, consistently encourages health professionals to commit to a more personalised approach, and Scotland’s human rights based Health and Social Care Standards set out what people can expect when using health, social care or social work services in Scotland.
- The ongoing processes to **integrate health and social care** and imbue social care with choice and control for people accessing support are both underpinned by legislation.
- Positive priority setting in a diverse range of areas, such as dementia, cancer, free personal care, digital health and care, Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES), and more.

Future areas for consideration to meet the SDGs

Health and social care are high profile and often contentious issues in Scottish politics. Nationally and locally the narrative must be reframed so that strategic decision-making and action is based on evidence and outcomes rather than (short-term) political goals and reactive responses. Politicians across all parties and public sector officials could demonstrate substantial leadership here.

Our contribution to the document notes that the following areas should be key future considerations:

- **Women’s and girls’ health in Scotland** – the extent to which data gaps and bias impact on women’s and girls’ health in Scotland. This exploration should go beyond their reproductive and maternal health which has been the predominant focus of healthcare initiatives targeting women.

- **People with learning disabilities** – NHS Health Scotland notes that life expectancy for people with learning disabilities is shorter compared to the general population, often due to avoidable, preventable and manageable conditions.
- **Seldom heard groups** – Despite the duty to carry out Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs), other seldom heard groups continue to be disproportionately impacted by poor health and wellbeing outcomes. This includes disabled people, older people, members of the BME community, members of the Gypsy/Traveller and Roma communities, people who identify as LGBT+ and care experienced (young) people, amongst others.
- National and local government and health and social care agencies should **involve third sector organisations, communities and people** in free, meaningful and active decision making.
- Review and improve existing policy and address the implementation gaps.
- Make a meaningful shift in resources, as well as in language, towards **prevention and early intervention**.
- **Take an explicitly rights-based approach** in practice as well as in policy (e.g. apply the AAAQ and PANEL Principle frameworks).
- **Explore alternative ways of overcoming fiscal obstacles** (e.g. Human Rights Budget Work).
- **Future proof the health and social care workforce** (e.g. improve pay and conditions).

About the ALLIANCE

The ALLIANCE is the national third sector intermediary for a range of health and social care organisations. The ALLIANCE has over 2,900 members including a large network of national and local third sector organisations, associates in the statutory and private sectors, disabled people, people living with long term conditions and unpaid carers. Many NHS Boards and Health and Social Care Partnerships are associate members.

Our vision is for a Scotland where people who are disabled or living with long term conditions and unpaid carers have a strong voice and enjoy their right to live well.

Contact

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