

Climate Change and Social Care Collective – Hot Report 3



On October 20th 2021, the Health and Social Care Academy (a programme of the ALLIANCE) and Scottish Care held the final event of the 'Climate and Social Care Collective' roundtable series.

The roundtable was focused on short, medium and long term objectives as it relates to climate action in the social care sector to help determine where immediate priorities should lie and how we can most effectively share our set of principles and calls to action to share with stakeholders following COP26.

The event was chaired again by Scottish Care's National Director, Karen Hedge, who set the scene and placed the discussions within the wider context of transformational change.

Our first speaker was Lukas Hardt, Policy and Engagement Lead from the Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEAll Scotland). Lukas spoke about what social care means in a wellbeing economy and what social justice looks like on a healthy planet. A wellbeing economy is comprised of four main principles – purpose (what is the economy designed to do and whether it is fit for purpose), preventative (an economy designed to deliver things the first time round), pre-distribution (wages and income that reflects social value people bring to the economy) and people-powered (change built on meaningful participation and community-organising). He highlighted how social care serves important human needs; it is a sector with relatively low carbon intensity and creates [green] jobs yet doesn't get the growth it should, related to its' constant undervaluing. Reforming the economy is a climate action, as improving how people are valued in turn promotes a more equitable society.

Our second speaker was Allan Crooks, Programme Manager, Energy and Low Carbon Heat from Zero Waste Scotland. Allan discussed current regulation structures, policy outcomes in areas relevant to social care (such as transport, buildings, waste) and how they relate to circular economics, the need to offset residual emissions in the sector, and current outcome indicators. We must address people, places, kickstart investment with long term market and regulatory frameworks that provide economic opportunity to better support the sector. There are several government delivery programmes such as cash back projects and small and mid-size enterprise (SME) loans available as support mechanisms to help deliver Scotland as a low carbon country. More of this information can be found in Scottish Government's Net Zero Strategy as well as in Zero Waste Scotland's Support Services page.

During the Q and A session, panellists were asked about the cultural shift required to have a society where health, wellbeing and sustainability is better understood and valued, encouraging cross-sectoral buy-in to address such broad issues such as transport and energy, and how to make information more accessible when learning where you can make an impact.

Examples of knowledge sharing platforms included NHS portals where good projects and procurement sit. While there would be definite interest and buy-in from the sector to adapt examples from other sectors to social care, it raised questions about how to accomplish this when the sector requires other conditions be met, not least on issues of recruitment and retention, fair pay, and contracts. We want to set achievable standards in a sector (where procurement is largely market driven) with cross-sector buy-in. It needs to be easier for the sector to incorporate sustainable practice without sole pressure on individuals.

In our breakout discussion groups, we asked attendees to comment on the set of principles, co-written by the ALLIANCE and Scottish Care, that we believe Scottish Government should adopt in order to develop actions that can concretely be taken to deliver social care in a changing climate. These included:

1. **Human rights and equalities** – Recognise that climate change is one of the greatest threats to human rights and guarantee a rights, intersectional and equality based approach for individuals who work in and receive care and support in a changing climate.
2. **Person centred** – Ensure that the rights, needs and preferences of people receiving and delivering care are at the heart of discussions surrounding climate impacts and action. Individual choice must be central to policy, practice, and delivery.
3. **Sustainable and resourced** - Investment in social care supports a greener, more sustainable sector. In turn, the sector must be well-resourced to ensure that any environmental commitment is underpinned across the sector.
4. **Collective, joined up and interconnected** – Develop cross-sectoral, collective, and joined up approaches that enable meaningful, sustainable, and long-lasting change to take place with understanding that the social care sector does not sit in isolation.
5. **Valuing care** - Enable the highest potential of the social care workforce by supporting empowering and valuing the workforce for the distinct work they

do. Prioritise investment in the workforce through improved salaries, upskilling and retaining talent and investing in their health and wellbeing.

6. **Participation** – Empower, recognise and value the voices of those delivering and receiving care in decision making processes.

A narrative commonly heard is that individuals need to be more proactive in offsetting their carbon footprint or taking action to help reduce their environmental impact. While climate-conscious individual choices are important, it is not nearly enough. We need collective action at every scale – from local to national (to global) – because private individual actions don't create change at a sufficient rate to affect the problem in a timely manner.

Radical and transformational change is required. Bridging the gap between principles, action and the changes that need to happen in the wider system will involve changes to law, policy and practice. As citizens, we are connected to social and political systems and within the sector we will continue to demonstrate how incorporating social care in the climate debate needs to be a priority.

More information about the development and purpose of the roundtables can be found in Hot Report 1 and details of the second event on innovation and solution in Hot Report 2