



**The Health and
Social Care
Alliance
Scotland
(the ALLIANCE)**



**Health, Social Care and Sport Committee
Pre-Budget Scrutiny 2024-25
ALLIANCE Response**

25 August 2023

Introduction

The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) welcomes the opportunity to inform the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee's pre-budget scrutiny for 2024-25¹. The ALLIANCE recognises the substantial pressure on Scotland's public finances resulting from both the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing cost of living crisis, and welcomes the Scottish Government's stated commitments to invest in health and social care.

The ALLIANCE believes that public spending decisions should take a human rights budgeting approach, prioritising services that enable people to realise their rights. It is particularly important that health and social care services are understood not as burdens, but instead as social and economic assets, investments in both people accessing services and the workers delivering them. In addition, we emphasise that spending on health and social care should prioritise preventative approaches which improve overall health and wellbeing whilst reducing costs and ensuring financial sustainability over the longer term.

Question 1: How would you see these planned budget increases meeting the various challenges facing health and social care over the next four years, including: addressing the treatment backlog; the planned creation of a National Care Service; cost and demand pressures in areas such as NHS pay, drug costs and demographic pressures?

The ALLIANCE welcome the continued importance put upon health, social care and social security through the Scottish Government's "three missions", and the recognition of widening health inequalities. As Scotland continues to deal with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis, additional expenditure in health and social care will be instrumental to addressing the challenges outlined above.

As part of the planned budget increases, we would encourage the Scottish Government to deliver on their pledge to end non-residential care charging



as an urgent priority. This is an issue that the Scottish Government could address rapidly, without needing to wait for the National Care Service to be implemented, and would be welcomed by many disabled people, people living with long term conditions, and unpaid carers who are struggling to meet rising charges at the same time as they have been hit with the rising cost of living. Ensuring more equitable access to social care will support health and wellbeing, reducing pressure on more costly crisis services.

The ALLIANCE are also aware that the Scottish Government are developing a strategy to address depopulation. Although we cannot comment fully on this in advance of the plan being published, in principle we agree that there must be a clear strategy in place to address depopulation. We recognise that addressing the impacts of depopulation may be further complicated by Brexit. Alongside several other organisations², the ALLIANCE have previously expressed serious concerns regarding the UK Government's approach to visas for health and social care workers.

We further expanded on these concerns in a response to the Migration Advisory Committee's consultation on the impact of ending freedom of movement³, noting that most social care roles are excluded from the UK's Health and Care Worker Visa and the risk that some EU nationals in social care wouldn't qualify for "settled status".

In addition to the widely recognised impact on public finances and demand for services arising from an ageing population, and the recruitment challenges posed by Brexit, this plan must also specifically account for service delivery in rural areas, many of which have already been experiencing ageing populations and depopulation, with resulting challenges in delivering health and social care services in particular. Supporting sustainable employment in these sectors within rural Scotland should be one of the priorities for any additional funding.

Question 2: Given the short-term and immediate pressures on the health and social care system, how can the Scottish Government take



the more radical decisions required around service redesign, or reducing/stopping existing services?

The ALLIANCE have long advocated for the Scottish Government to adopt a human rights budgeting approach, which is outlined in more detail by the Scottish Human Rights Commission, our partners in the Human Rights Budgeting Working Group⁴. The Scottish Government has the obligation, as the UK Government does, to respect, protect and fulfil human rights. How revenues are raised, how spending is allocated, and how they are used in practice are all essential to delivering on human rights obligations.

The principles of human rights budgeting go beyond simply the setting of the budget and can be applied to scrutiny, and we would similarly encourage the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee to apply the principles to their pre-budget scrutiny. Human rights should be recognised as a golden thread, relevant to all areas of government and parliamentary activity, and should be a focus for scrutiny every year.

In the context of the current pressures on funding for the health and social care system, this human rights based approach must inform any decisions relating to service redesign, reduction or removal. The Scottish Government regularly indicates its commitment to rights and has a duty to respect, protect and fulfil them. This commitment and obligation should be reflected in the budget and decisions about services.

As stated in our initial response to the Resource Spending Review Framework consultation in 2022⁵, plans to incorporate several international human rights treaties into Scots law offer an opportune time to embed human rights budgeting principles. In particular, decisions on public finances should have due regard to two of the key principles of progressive realisation of human rights, those of “non-regression” and “maximum use of available resources.”

In taking forward this and future year’s budgets, non-regression means the Scottish Government must ensure that any changes in spending do not



result in people's existing human rights, such as the rights to independent living and equal participation in society for disabled people, being eroded. Maximum use of available resources means the government has a duty to ensure that adequate funding is available to ensure the progressive realisation of human rights. It should therefore carefully consider how to use the tax and revenue powers it has at its disposal to maximise revenues, and pursue such approaches rather than automatically make cuts to services.

Public sector reform has the potential to significantly reduce financial pressures, but it must be undertaken with the aim of improving outcomes and upholding human rights, not simply cost-cutting. Failure to properly invest in public services, and in particular preventative services, may instead result in additional costs in the longer term. It is nonetheless clear that some services require significant reform, in particular social care.

The 'My Support, My Choice' research⁶, produced in partnership between the ALLIANCE and Self Directed Support Scotland, provides an overview of people's experiences with social care before the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated many existing issues. The final report highlighted issues including tightened eligibility criteria, inconsistency of implementation and infrequent but deeply concerning instances of lack of respect for people receiving care.

The creation of a National Care Service during this parliamentary term offers an opportunity to improve the lives and experiences of disabled people, people living with long term conditions, and unpaid carers. It will also be one of the biggest public sector reforms taken in recent decades, with significant financial implications. However, concerns have been raised about the process so far, and whether it has truly followed a genuine co-design model.

In moving forward with a National Care Service, the voice of lived experience must be fully heard and at the centre of a meaningful co-design process. Spending plans must be human rights based and recognise third



and independent health and social care organisations as equal and valued delivery partners, resourced by additional, sustainable, ongoing, and secure funding. In addition, it is important to reflect on the lessons learned from the slow pace of the health and social care integration agenda.

Question 3: Is there any evidence of longer-term thinking in budgeting for health and social care, either in Scotland or elsewhere in the UK or abroad?

Investment in preventative measures must be a priority for the Scottish Government. The long term financial benefits of preventative approaches are widely recognised, including in a recent paper by Public Health Scotland⁷, as lower cost early intervention can prevent deterioration of health and wellbeing that would necessitate more significant and expensive interventions later. However, we are unconvinced that sufficient resource has been committed to preventative spend in health and social care, and would urge the Scottish Government to make clearer commitments in this area. The only reference to prevention in the Scottish Government's Medium-Term Financial Strategy is limited to a £500 million investment in whole family wellbeing.

One key area of preventative spend in recent years has been the highly successful Community Links Workers programme. This programme, pioneered by the ALLIANCE in partnership with the Scottish Deep End Project starting in 2014, has grown from the initial pilot programme in seven GP practices across Glasgow to the ALLIANCE employing over 50 links workers across Glasgow and nine in West Dunbartonshire, with other providers also commissioned.

Many of the issues people raise with their GP are rooted in the wider social determinants of health, including low income, no or insecure employment, poor quality housing, and lack of community support. Whilst GPs can treat the medical issues that may arise from these situations, they are not capable of addressing the root cause. Links workers provide support and signposting to a range of services, including social security, food banks,



third sector and community groups, through the model of “social prescribing”. This integration between GP practices and a wider network of support and services helps enable a holistic approach to managing health and its social determinants.

The Scottish Government’s 2021-22 Programme for Government included a commitment that “by 2026, every GP Practice will have access to a mental health and wellbeing service, funding 1,000 additional dedicated staff who can help grow community mental health resilience and direct social prescribing”. However, links workers are not yet embedded across all Deep End GP surgeries in Scotland. Widespread establishment of CLPs on sustainable and long-term contracts, and more knowledge and experience of their usefulness, may go some way towards countering the health inequalities faced by people in the areas of highest socio-economic deprivation in Scotland.

In spite of the recognition of the importance of this model, at the time of writing around a third of the contracted hours for Community Links Workers in Glasgow is at risk of being cut⁸. Any reduction in provision in the name of short-term savings risks significantly higher costs in the longer term, as fewer people will be able to access the programme, heightening pressures on other aspects of primary care and widening health inequalities. In addition, the direct impact on the workforce will be significant, and the short-term nature of contracting and lack of job security are at odds with the Fair Work agenda, and are damaging to the wellbeing of staff.

Whilst acute and crisis services must continue to be funded adequately, failure to invest in preventative approaches increases demand on those services, with resulting costs to public finances and to individual health and wellbeing. The costs of allowing people to reach crisis point before they receive support can also be borne by seemingly unrelated services – for example, Police Scotland have reported a near doubling of call-outs for mental health related incidents between 2017 and 2022⁹. This emphasises the importance of a cross-cutting approach to and understanding of prevention across a range of government portfolios.



Question 4: Is the achievement of financial sustainability a realistic prospect in the face of continuing pressures around pay costs, treatment costs and rising demand?

The ALLIANCE do not consider that there is a conflict between financial sustainability, the costs of pay and treatment, and rising demand. Although we recognise the current pressures are severe and may be difficult to address in the short term, we are concerned at a narrative emerging which suggests that providing fair pay and delivering health and social care services are economic burdens, when they are in fact economic and social assets.

As assets, pay and conditions for the workforce and quality health and social care services which are free at point of use are worth investing in, and the Scottish Government should carefully consider how to deliver this investment. Whilst the ALLIANCE does not have a position on the specific rates and forms of taxation that should apply in Scotland, we would re-emphasise our consistent calls for a human rights based approach to public finances.

The ALLIANCE have nonetheless previously specifically highlighted Council Tax as an area of concern, including in both written¹⁰ and oral¹¹ evidence to the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee as part of pre-budget scrutiny last year. Council Tax is highly regressive by design and has only become more regressive in the three decades since it was introduced. The regressive nature of Council Tax, combined with the fact that local authorities can only set the Band D rate with all other rates being defined in statute as multiples of that value, significantly impacts the ability of local authorities to raise the revenues necessary to deliver public services in a fair and equitable manner.

A range of prospective replacements for Council Tax were investigated in depth through the Commission on Local Tax Reform in 2015¹², which included representatives from four of the five parties currently present in



the Scottish Parliament. Whilst the Medium-Term Financial Strategy states the Scottish Government's intention to further progress local tax reform, it is important that this is taken forward at pace. Given the existence of a prior evidence base in the Commission's report, the scale of financial pressures, and the increasingly regressive nature of Council Tax, legislating for a replacement in some form must not be delayed.

Such reform will be essential if local authorities continue to have a significant role in the funding and delivery of social care services, as the recent agreement between the Scottish Government and COSLA on accountability and the National Care Service suggests will be the case. Ensuring that local authorities have greater flexibility to raise their own revenues, and to do so in a more progressive way, will help ensure the financial sustainability of social care services. Local authorities should similarly adhere to the principles of human rights budgeting, with a model of commissioning being rights based rather than simply "ethical", terminology that has yet to be meaningfully fleshed out.

In addition, investing in social care has the potential to be at least partly self-funding, supporting people to realise their right to equal participation in society, whilst significantly increasing employment. The Scottish Women's Budget Group published a briefing in January 2023¹³ outlining a transformational investment in social care which would result in additional revenues equivalent to almost half (46%) of the required additional expenditure, whilst creating a total of 75,900 new jobs. Given the highly gendered nature of the social care workforce, investing in transforming social care would also help to address gender inequalities by improving pay and ensuring greater provision of paid formal care rather than reliance on unpaid informal care, also largely provided by women.

The ALLIANCE would urge spending on essential services including health, social care and social security to be protected and prioritised in this and future budgets. Spending in these areas supports wellbeing, reduces poverty, and helps to realise human rights.



In terms of funding these spending priorities, as stated in our response to a number of questions in this consultation, the ALLIANCE believe that the Scottish Government should carefully consider how best to use the tax powers they have at their disposal in order to raise the revenues necessary for essential public services. The ALLIANCE do not have a position on specific rates or forms of taxation that should apply but would nonetheless highlight the need for reform of Council Tax and local taxation in particular.

Question 5: How can or should any additional health and social care funding be directed to support alternative models of service delivery?

Scotland's third sector has a track record of innovation in service delivery, developing models and learning that can be applied more widely across the health and social care sector. This was evidenced particularly strongly in how the sector responded to the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic¹⁴. Despite this, the financial situation facing third sector organisations has been difficult for several years, particularly as a result of short term funding arrangements.

The contribution of the third sector to Scotland's people, society and economy remains unrecognised and undervalued. According to the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)¹⁵ as of 2021, there are over 46,000 third sector organisations in Scotland, with an estimated combined annual turnover of more than £8.5 billion. The sector is also a major employer – for example, SCVO estimates approximately 135,000 paid staff work in Scotland's voluntary sector.

However, the third sector has been put under significant pressure in recent years, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing cost of living crisis. SCVO's Third Sector Tracker¹⁶ found that by winter 2022, two-thirds of organisations reported shortages and issues with staffing and volunteers, and the same number were facing financial challenges. At the same time, 39% of organisations said they had difficulty planning for the future.



Given the vital role that the third sector plays in supporting people across Scotland, and the scale of the workforce, it is crucial that it is adequately funded by the Scottish Government. Although the Scottish Government has repeatedly stated it remains committed to carrying forward proposals on multi-year funding, there has been little to no visible progress on this for several years. The ALLIANCE strongly back the SCVO's 'Fair Funding for the Voluntary Sector'¹⁷ proposals and would urge the Scottish Government to act upon them as a priority.

Question 6: How should health and social care budgets be prioritised in this landscape of multiple frameworks and targets and which targets or outcomes should take precedence?

As noted elsewhere in our response, the ALLIANCE firmly believe that human rights should be at the forefront of all decision making and scrutiny processes. Decisions on prioritisation of frameworks and targets should be taken through a human rights based process, and the upcoming Human Rights Bill should formally embed this to the greatest extent throughout the public sector.

We also note that the Scottish Government has recently consulted on a review of the National Outcomes, which the ALLIANCE submitted a response to¹⁸. We agreed that the National Outcomes were broadly reflective of many of the key issues that should guide policymaking, but could be augmented by a National Outcome on Care, and that significant work was needed on the indicators relating to human rights in particular.

We also argued that there was work to be done in embedding the National Outcomes throughout the public sector, supported by consistent, in depth and disaggregated data. Given that the National Outcomes, and the National Performance Framework they are part of, are intended to be at the heart of the Scottish Government's vision and purpose, then alongside human rights, this should be one of the central reference points for determining which other frameworks, targets and outcomes to prioritise and how.



About the ALLIANCE

The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) is the national third sector intermediary for health and social care, bringing together a diverse range of people and organisations who share our vision, which is a Scotland where everyone has a strong voice and enjoys their right to live well with dignity and respect.

We are a strategic partner of the Scottish Government and have close working relationships with many NHS Boards, academic institutions and key organisations spanning health, social care, housing and digital technology.

Our purpose is to improve the wellbeing of people and communities across Scotland. We bring together the expertise of people with lived experience, the third sector, and organisations across health and social care to inform policy, practice and service delivery. Together our voice is stronger and we use it to make meaningful change at the local and national level.

The ALLIANCE has a strong and diverse membership of over 3,300 organisations and individuals. Our broad range of programmes and activities deliver support, research and policy development, digital innovation and knowledge sharing. We manage funding and spotlight innovative projects; working with our members and partners to ensure lived experience and third sector expertise is listened to and acted upon by informing national policy and campaigns, and putting people at the centre of designing support and services.

We aim to:

- Ensure disabled people, people with long term conditions and unpaid carers voices, expertise and rights drive policy and sit at the heart of design, delivery and improvement of support and services.



- Support transformational change that works with individual and community assets, helping people to live well, supporting human rights, self management, co-production and independent living.
- Champion and support the third sector as a vital strategic and delivery partner, and foster cross-sector understanding and partnership.

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¹ Scottish Parliament Finance and Public Administration Committee, 'The Sustainability of Scotland's Finances' (June 2023), available at: <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/current-and-previous-committees/session-6-finance-and-public-administration-committee/business-items/the-sustainability-of-scotlands-finances>

² The ALLIANCE, 'ALLIANCE and partners respond to post-Brexit plans for social care' (July 2020), available at: <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/news/alliance-and-partners-respond-to-postbrexit-plans-for-social-care/>

³ The ALLIANCE, 'ALLIANCE response on the impact of Brexit on adult social care' (October 2021), available at: <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/news/alliance-response-on-the-impact-of-brexit-on-adult-social-care/>



⁴ Scottish Human Rights Commission, 'Human Rights Budget Work', available here: <https://www.scottishhumanrights.com/projects-and-programmes/human-rights-budget-work/>

⁵ The ALLIANCE, 'Response to Resource Spending Review Framework' (March 2022), available at: <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/resources/alliance-response-to-resource-spending-review-framework-consultation/>

⁶ The ALLIANCE and Self-Directed Support Scotland, 'My Support, My Choice – People's Experiences of Self-Directed Support and Social Care in Scotland' (October 2020), <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/resources/my-support-my-choice-peoples-experiences-of-self-directed-support-and-social-care-in-scotland-reports/>

⁷ Public Health Scotland, 'The case for prevention and sustainability of health services' (July 2023), available at: <https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/the-case-for-prevention-and-sustainability-of-health-services>

⁸ The ALLIANCE, 'Funding crisis for the Glasgow Community Link Worker Programme – ALLIANCE responses' (August 2023), available at: <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/news/funding-crisis-for-the-glasgow-community-link-worker-programme-alliance-response/>

⁹ The Herald, 'NHS strain sees police first to mental health call-outs' (April 2023), available at: <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/23432444.nhs-strain-sees-police-first-mental-health-call-outs/>

¹⁰ The ALLIANCE, 'Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee Pre-Budget Scrutiny 2023-24 – Alliance Response' (September 2022), available at: <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Equalities-Committee-Pre-Budget-Scrutiny-2023-24-ALLIANCE-Response.docx>



¹¹ Scottish Parliament Official Report, Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee, 'Pre-Budget Scrutiny 2023-24' (October 2022), available at: <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/official-report/search-what-was-said-in-parliament/EHRCJ-25-10-2022?meeting=13946&iob=126407>

¹² The Commission on Local Tax Reform, 'Just Change: A New Approach to Local Taxation' (December 2015), archived at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20160303000220/http://localtaxcommission.scot/download-our-final-report>

¹³ Scottish Women's Budget Group, 'Towards a transformative universal adult social care support service for Scotland' (January 2023), available at: <https://www.swbg.org.uk/content/publications/Towards-a-transformative-universal-adult-social-care-support-service-for-Scotland.pdf>

¹⁴ The ALLIANCE, 'Community in Action publishes learning report' (April 2021), available at: <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/news/community-in-action-publishes-learning-report/>

¹⁵ SCVO, Research, available at: <https://scvo.scot/policy/research>

¹⁶ SCVO, 'Third Sector Tracker – Wave 5 Winter 2022' (March 2023), available at: <https://storage.googleapis.com/scvo-documents-evidence/0693z00000ZlyVUAAZ-Scottish-Third%20Sector%20Tracker%20-%20Wave%205%20Winter%202022.pdf>

¹⁷ SCVO, 'Fair Funding for the Voluntary Sector' (January 2023), available at: <https://scvo.scot/p/56732/2023/01/16/%e2%80%8bfair-funding-for-the-voluntary-sector>

¹⁸ The ALLIANCE, 'ALLIANCE responds to National Outcomes review 2023' (June 2023), available at: <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/news/alliance-respond-to-national-outcomes-review-2023/>

