

National Care Service (Scotland) Bill (Stage 2)

Health, Social Care and Sport Committee Call for views on draft amendments

Response from Crisis

September 2024

About Crisis

Crisis is the national charity for homeless people. We help people directly out of homelessness, and campaign for the social changes needed to solve it altogether. We know that together we can end homelessness.

Every year we work directly with thousands of people experiencing homelessness in Scotland in the Lothians and in eight other areas across England and Wales. We provide vital help so that people can rebuild their lives and are supported out of homelessness for good. We offer one to one support, advice and courses according to individual needs. We use research to find out how best to improve our services, but also to find wider solutions to end homelessness.

Social care, housing and homelessness and need for joined up support

Having somewhere safe to stay is one of the most basic physiological human needs (Maslow 1943). Where we live is central to our ability to live independently and well. The right home lays the foundation for many other human needs to be met, and can promote better health and wellbeing, reduce poverty, enable people to live independently for longer and sustain communities where people can thrive.

Therefore, as Crisis wrote in our response to the original National Care Service (NCS) consultation in 2021, “Any reorganisation of social care and health services must give close attention to how this is integrated with housing and homelessness services. A home is often the place where many of these services are delivered, and lack of an adequate home may hinder the delivery of services or lead to admissions into hospital, care or other institutions” as needs deteriorate and support needs increase. Losing one’s home is common, experienced by more than [1 in 12 people](#) in Scotland. [Over half](#) of homeless households have support needs, and some have some of the [most complex support needs](#) in our communities.

This is implicitly recognised throughout the consideration of the National Care Service Bill, for example, in consideration of living independently or living in a care home. But the importance of housing and home is not addressed in the bill.

This is exceptionally disappointing. We and other partners repeatedly called for a clear and explicit relationship between the proposed National Care Service and housing and homelessness services throughout stage 1 of the National Care Service bill scrutiny. And yet the amended version of the bill continues to ignore this crucial relationship between services.

In doing so, the proposed National Care Service will simply create new forms of disjointed and siloed working among public services. Failure to identify a clear relationship between housing and the new National Care Service may prevent individuals getting the support they need, and increase the use of high level social care support services.

New National Outcomes Framework

Furthermore, Scottish Government recently presented its revised National Outcomes Framework to parliament for [consultation](#). To meet its objective to “improve the wellbeing of people living in Scotland now and in the future”, this includes new outcomes on care and on having a “home that meets our needs”. Given the new focus on this in the proposed National Outcomes Framework, it would seem appropriate to ensure this is built into a new system for social care support across Scotland.

Part 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Bill and wider public service reform

Part 5 of the [Housing \(Scotland\) Bill](#), currently before parliament, creates a **shared public responsibility on a range of bodies to support people to remain in their own homes by identifying when problems are arising and addressing those issues**, so that they do not escalate and lead to people’s situations deteriorating and losing their homes.

The connections with a social care system which among other things seeks to enable people to remain living independently in their homes should be obvious. Indeed, many people who experience or are at risk of homelessness have social care needs or other support needs.

The bill will require relevant bodies, including Integration Joint Boards, or their replacement under a **National Care Service, to “ask” about a threat to housing, and to “act” within their functions to resolve or mitigate the threat**. They will also require them **to have regard to the need to prevent homelessness** and related guidance.

Therefore **it is imperative that the amended National Care Service Bill pays attention to the relationship with housing and homelessness services**. We recommend two ways this should be done below.

National Care Service principles

In the amended principles of the NCS, the third and fifth and sixth principles are:

c) services provided by the National Care Service are to be centred around early interventions addressing individual needs, recognising the diverse characteristics and circumstances of the individuals to whom the services are provided, whether those needs are (for example)—

- (i) best addressed by early interventions, including rehabilitation, that prevent or delay the development of care needs and reduce care needs that already exist,*
- (ii) best addressed by the provision of support for an individual living independently in the community*
- (iii) ongoing, increasing or increasingly complex,*

...

(e) opportunities are to be sought to continuously improve the services provided by the National Care Service in ways which—

- (zi) take account of the whole life experience (including any psychological trauma) of the individual,*
- (i) promote the dignity of the individual, and*
- (ii) advance equality and non-discrimination, and (iii) otherwise give better and further effect to these principles,*

(ea) services provided by the National Care Service are to protect and improve the safety of the persons to whom the services are provided

These principles cannot be delivered if someone does not have a safe and stable home.

The **foundational principles of the National Care Service must recognise the importance of a safe and stable home in achieving the other principles of the Service**, notably promoting safety, dignity, early intervention and independent living.

National Care Service charter

This principle should be drawn through to the NCS Charter. The draft NCS Charter is based around four principles. Two of these are:

Your support network, community and independent advocacy

You have rights to:

- *get support in a way that respects your private and family life*
- *involve your support network in your NCS support*

...

You can expect us to support you in a way that looks after the relationships that are important to you and help you to be part of your community.

...

Involvement, participation and choice

You have rights to:

- *be listened to and have your views respected and responded to*
- *be given relevant information to make informed decisions about your support in a way that you can understand and that meets your needs*
- *be involved in planning and decisions about your support and how it is delivered*

...

Implicit in these are assumptions and decisions about where people live and where they receive support, i.e. their home. This is usually the foundation for access to a support network and community. A change in where someone lives, through a planned housing move, a period of homelessness, moving into institutional care or other changes, will have a direct impact on the delivery of social care support, whether facilitating easier delivery of support (e.g. in supported accommodation) or hindering it through distance or lack of a home base altogether.

Therefore we recommend that the second right of the NCS Charter is amended to “Your home, support network, community and independent advocacy”.