



National Carer
Organisations

NATIONAL CARE SERVICE POSITION STATEMENT

Background

The National Carer Organisations recognise the need for social care reform in order that Scotland's unpaid carers can be better and more consistently supported.

We welcomed the findings of the Independent Review of Adult Social Care and in particular the recommendations that it made in relation to key areas that are important to unpaid carers including the right to a break from caring, care home visiting, improved pay and conditions for the social care workforce, providing carer representatives on Integrated Joint Boards with a vote, and ethical commissioning. We were pleased to see these recommendations take shape in the National Care Service Bill and progress being made towards making new rights a reality.

While we recognise that the development of legislation takes time, we are concerned that the slow and protracted progress of the NCS Bill means that the reform needed by Scotland's carers is getting further and further away, and we know that carers can't wait.

We want to see more urgent progress being made on key provisions within the Bill which do not rely on primary legislation but instead could be brought in ahead of a National Care Service. This includes the Right to a Break from Caring, Anne's Law, and ending care charging.

Right to a break from caring

The Bill makes changes to the existing Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 in order to deliver a right to personalised short breaks support for carers who need it.

These changes will ensure that being able to take sufficient breaks from providing care is an identified personal outcome of every carer via their personalised support plan (i.e., Adult Carers Support Plan or Young Carers Statement) under the current Carers Act. As such, eligibility criteria will no longer apply to breaks from caring. If a carer is unable to take sufficient breaks, this will be recognised as an identified need for that individual.

This approach aims to ensure that carers receive the support and breaks they require, reflecting the health and wellbeing impact of breaks from caring and the value placed on the vital role carers play in the community. Existing powers can also be used for Ministers to maintain a national short breaks fund to enable easy-access breaks for carers who would benefit from a short breaks grant, but who do not require regular breaks from caring. Easy Access Breaks will not require carers to have an Adult Carer Support Plan or Young Carer Statement.

With less than 3% of carers accessing breaks through statutory support it is clear that a right to a break is needed. There is also growing concern in the sector about the sustainability of short breaks and respite services in the face of significant financial pressures, and carer's individual budgets being cut: meaning those who take a direct payment are faced with the dual challenge of having less money available to purchase services, and fewer services to choose from.

A new right can only fulfil its potential with the necessary investment, resourcing, commitment and leadership to develop a sustainable short break sector that can meet the diverse needs and circumstances of all carers. None of this is contingent on the development of a National Care Service.

The National Carer Organisation's position is that the right to breaks from caring is an essential component of the Scottish Government's commitment to improve social care support in Scotland. The Scottish Government must deliver on this commitment by investing in services for supported people and unpaid carers.

While there continues to be an under-investment in social care services, unpaid carers have had to fill in the gaps and undertake more intensive caring roles, to the detriment of their own health and wellbeing and the health and social care system as a whole.

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