

National Care Service (Scotland) Bill (Stage 2) – Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

Response submitted by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health: September 2024

About us

The **Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH)** is responsible for training and examining paediatricians. The College has over 19,500 members in the UK and internationally and sets standards for professional and postgraduate education. We work to transform child health through knowledge, research and expertise, to improve the health and wellbeing of infants, children and young people across the world.

7. What is your view of the Scottish Government's proposed approach to addressing the areas of further work outlined in the Minister's covering letter?

Inclusion of children's services

Tend to oppose

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We acknowledge the current differences that exist between children's services within integration authorities and the Minister's wish to include children's services across all boards within the National Care Service (NCS).

RCPCH Scotland do not want to see any additional barriers created with the introduction of a new structure, especially for young people with ongoing health needs who are transitioning from children to adult services. Young people going through the transition to adult services are often at risk of experiencing poor health outcomes when their transfer is not appropriately supported and coordinated. However, we need further information and evidence on how the NCS will improve services and how it will assist with the complex transition from children to adult services for young people, their families and carers.

In the Minister's letter, Ms Todd states:

I want any changes to children's services to build on existing good practice, preserve vital links across children's services, develop links between children and adult services, and further

support, rather than distract from, work to drive improvement. Opportunities also remain to ensure that the final decision on children's community health services aligns with the inclusion of local authority children's services.

We are concerned with the lack of clarity on the proposed system and how its structures will impact children and young people and the professionals working in this area. The needs of children and young people and the services that they require are different to an adult based service. A service that is proposing to take responsibility for improvement across community health and care services, must consider the needs and rights of children as different from those of adults.

RCPCH would like further information on how the Scottish Government plans to capture existing good practice and develop links between children and adult services. We would also like a commitment from Scottish Government to further consultation with all relevant stakeholders including children, young people and their families and carers as well as the professionals that care for them. This is the only way to ensure that the NCS is truly child centred and meets the needs of children and young people.

9. Do you have any other comments on the Scottish Government's proposed draft Stage 2 amendments to the National Care Service Bill

The creation of a system that connects services and creates a pathway for individuals accessing care throughout their life has the potential to produce consistent levels of care across Scotland. We remain concerned, however, at the lack of detail on children's services, the potential impacts on service users and the child health workforce. The Stage 2 amendments have not addressed these concerns.

RCPCH Scotland responded to the Scottish Government consultation on the National Care Service in 2021 and many of these concerns remain, especially around the need to engage with children and young people using children's services. Our members have previously raised concerns about how the NCS will affect community child health services, acute services and the paediatricians who work across these services.

More recently, certain RCPCH members working within community paediatrics have raised concerns around the scarcity of resources to support families, the lack of timely access to services such as CAMHS, as well as long waiting lists with insufficient staff for the clinical workload. These services require greater investment and support, and it is unclear how the NCS will assist with these ongoing issues.

Key Points

- We require greater overall clarity and information on the proposals to include children's services.
- We urge the Scottish Government to carry out further consultation with children, young people, and the professionals working across children's services.
- We urge the Scottish Government to carefully consider the repercussions of including children's services in this way for children and young, their families and the professionals working across these services.
- We would like further information on whether a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment has been carried out on the amendments proposed by the Minister and, if so, what the results of this were.

For further information please contact:

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