

News release

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Disabled people and carers call for new model of social care support

Scotland's social care support system increasingly risks cracking under the strain, as demand rises and funding fails to keep pace, to the potential detriment of thousands of disabled people and their families.

Responding to these concerns, today (Wednesday 27 July) sees the launch of a Statement of Ambition on the future for social care, along with a call for the urgent establishment of a national independent Commission to explore the development of new approaches to funding a system that will support those who need it to live their lives to the full.

That's the view of a coalition of 16 Scottish organisations, representing disabled people and older people, women, care providers, paid and unpaid carers and the voluntary sector, who are calling for urgent action by national and local government and policymakers. Others including academics, trade unions, politicians, local authorities, care providers and professionals also share those concerns on the future of social care funding.

Their [Shared ambition for the future of social care in Scotland](#) was launched in Edinburgh today (27 July) urging the Scottish Government and local government, care providers to work alongside disabled people and carers towards a wholesale review of what social care support is for and Scotland's system of funding it for the future.

Scotland spends £3.9 billionⁱ a year on social care support, yet for many reasons a lot of disabled people are go without support, beyond basic washing and dressing, to support them to work, study, contribute to their communities and lead a normal life, while carers – both paid support workers and unpaid family members – and service providers are often report that they are struggling to cope, which impacts on the quality of care they can give.

[Independent Living in Scotland](#), the report's authors believe that April's introduction of health and social care integration offers a timely opportunity to establish an independent Commission to examine the best way to fund the social care support that meets the needs of current and future service users and their carers. Those who signed up to the report say that any review of social care support should look at what it should achieve for society and Scotland's prosperity as well as individuals and should recognise it as an infrastructure investment in the social and economic well-being of Scotland.

The Scottish Government has already introduced positive initiatives such as Self-Directed Support, which aims to ensure that service users have a choice of how they access the support they need, and they have a track record of engaging with disabled people and carers and voluntary organisations to design these changes. The organisations behind the report hope that their ambitions will supplement such initiatives and make their aims more achievable in the future.

Chief Executive Officer of Inclusion Scotland, Dr Sally Witcher said: "The introduction of health and social care integration marks a seismic shift in the way health and social care services are delivered. It would therefore be timely to establish an independent Commission to have a thorough examination of the best way to fund social care support and ensure it plays a full role in enabling people to really live their lives, rather than just stay alive.

"Such a Commission would be collaborative and would be helpful to national and local government and disabled people themselves. We hope to have the opportunity to make a constructive contribution to the development of a new, effective way forward, starting by articulating our shared ambition for social care support and using this to inspire and galvanise widespread action."

Independent chair of the Scottish Independent Living Coalition Dr Jim Elder-Woodward, OBE, said: “Disabled people seek a life, not a service. This is about human rights. Disabled people are paying the price, along with their family carers. Carers, both paid and unpaid, are mostly women, so it’s also a gender issue.

“Underfunded social care support leads to isolation and deprivation for disabled people and prevents them from having dignity and choice and control over their own lives and participating in the civic and social life of society as full and equal citizens. Good social care support is also key to the success of the current integration of health and social care services in Scotland, otherwise there will be even more delayed discharges from hospital and repeat admissions, which is damaging both socially and economically.”

Social security – including disability and carers’ benefits – is being devolved to the Scottish Government. The report authors say this provides Scotland with a golden opportunity to develop a national system of genuinely joined up, person-led financial and practical support. But they also warn the new devolved budget should not lead to a “benefits gold rush” used to plug gaps in social care support funding and that the ongoing integration of health and social care support must not lead to basic support that is limited to “healthcare in the community”, at the expense of disabled people’s independent living.

Florence Garabedian, CEO of disabled people’s organisation Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living (LCiL), said: “It is with great concern that we increasingly witness very narrow eligibility criteria which allow people only the bare minimum of support, or deny them it altogether. We see them, and their families, struggle to live decent lives. If we want Scotland to live up to its ambition to be a fairer country we must all be ambitious for social care and commit the resources that will enable people to empower themselves, create systemic change, and build a better society for all.”

Claire Cairns, Network Coordinator, Coalition of Carers in Scotland, said: “There are 759,000 people in Scotland providing unpaid care to family members and friends, more than the entire health and social care workforce combined. While this is often a positive choice made by disabled people and their families, there is increasing pressure on people to take on caring roles and to care for longer hours, often without adequate support. Carers are predominantly women and many end up giving up employment to care full time. Disabled people and their families need to be able to choose what support works best for them, whether this is paid or unpaid care, or both. This can’t happen without more investment in social care.”

The **Shared Statement of Ambition** is part of a wider civic society dialogue hosted by the Independent Living in Scotland project and supported by Inclusion Scotland, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, Self-directed Support Scotland, Coalition of Carers in Scotland, VoX Scotland, Glasgow Disability Alliance, Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living, Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living, Engender, Disability Agenda Scotland, Learning Disability Alliance Scotland, Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland, IRISS, Scottish Care and Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland.

Notes to editors

More information, including case studies, from Carol Stewart, info@carolstewartpr, 07944 060322.

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Independent Living in Scotland

The Independent Living in Scotland project (ILiS) was set up in to support the progression of disabled people’s human rights. It is funded by the Scottish Government as part of a wider initiative to deliver equality and human rights for disabled people in Scotland. The project is hosted by Inclusion Scotland. **www.ilis.co.uk**

ⁱ Scottish Government figures for social care 2013-14

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/03/5885/downloads>