



National Care Service

Consultation response from The Glasgow Third Sector Children, Young People and Families Citywide Forum

Introduction

The Glasgow Third Sector Children, Young People and Families Citywide Forum was established in 2017. It is open to all staff and volunteers working in third sector organisations in the city, with an interest in this area

The Citywide Forum provides a strong and collaborative voice to partner agencies to influence Children's Services across the city. It represents the voice of over 800 third sector organisations, with over 2,500 staff and 3,200 volunteers.

The Forum is governed by a steering group made up of members from a variety of third sector organisations across Glasgow working with children, families and young people and is supported by the GCVS Everyone's Children team. Over one hundred individuals from 75 organisations are actively involved in the steering group, subgroups and as representatives on groups with partner agencies.

We are pleased to have the opportunity to respond to this consultation. We have some general comments to make about ideas for a National Care Service, but our response focuses on the proposal to include Children's Services.

We consulted with the third sector in Glasgow to develop this response through an online event with Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector on the 30th September 2021. The event was well attended by individuals and organisations from across and outwith the third sector. The draft response was also discussed at a Citywide Forum steering group meeting.

General Comments

We support the ideas contained in the Independent Review of Care Services (the Feeley Review) and we think that they are also relevant to children's services.

We note Feeley's comment that the Christie Commission, back in 2011, said that there should be far more emphasis on prevention and early intervention and that local

community based services should be encouraged, funded, and supported to provide this type of support.

Whilst many challenges, barriers and gaps surrounding the potential inclusion of children's services were identified, some positives were also noted:

- The NCS provides potential for a universal service approach, to help alleviate the stigma of asking for help.
- Improved and continuous support for children with disabilities who are often left with little support whilst transitioning between services.
- Scope for a common language and wellbeing outcomes across all life stages.
- Potential for improved accountability for families should social care sit with Ministers (however, concerns that national accountability may not help families to access the support they need.)
- Positive ethos of the Feeley Review. Human rights approach is welcomed.
- Opportunity for enhanced collaboration across sectors and services.

Proposals to include Children's Services

The National Care Service consultation document does not give a lot of detail about the proposal to include children's Services in the National Care Service (NCS). It argues that as children's services are linked to the provision of adult services, it makes sense to include them in the National Care Service to ensure that there is a holistic family support service that retains links with education and early learning and childcare and works closely with the implementation of The Promise.

The Feeley Review also noted that adult social care services do not sit alone. They are linked to children's services. There are many children and young people in Glasgow with complex health conditions and additional support needs. Our consultation with young people for Glasgow's Children's Services plan highlighted the difficulties families face with the transition to adult social care services. We agree that transitions between children's and adult's services must improve, and so should joint working with other services such as transport, housing, education, and employment. There are also many young people in Glasgow who are young carers, and they need support and care too.

Consultation with children and young people

The proposal to create a National Care Service, and the change from Integrated Joint Boards to Community Health and Social Care Boards will have a significant impact of children's Services, whether they are included or not. It is important that this is well thought through and based on what children and families need.

Listening to the views of children and young people lies at the heart of Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), the UNCRC and the Promise. Participants at our consultation event were concerned about how children's services will fit into a National Care Service. There was widespread agreement that more information is required on how this will be achieved.

Many highlighted their concerns over a lack of consultation prior to the proposal of including children's services, with both professionals and with families, who will be affected by the potential inclusion. A failure to consult with those who work in children's services questioned whether the decision surrounding a potential inclusion was made in line with a children's rights approach. Individuals also expressed the importance of learning from frontline practitioners, as well as recognising the value of workforces. Some also highlighted difficulties in relation to a restricted timescale for consultation – voicing that a longer time period would have been preferred in order to give organisations more time to consult with staff and service users.

Ensuring that children, young people, and families' views are acknowledged and considered must be a priority during the implementation of the NCS. Over five thousand children were involved in the development of The Promise; to create a policy which reflects their needs and values – this promise must not be broken. Legislation going forward to implement the NCS must be grounded in these principles and strive to address the issues young people have identified. Furthermore, it is vital that a common language is used across services – ensuring that organisations and providers echo the same terminology and language of the Promise and UNCRC. Over 1,000 children and young people responded to the Glasgow Children's Services Plan consultation in early 2020; highlighting poverty and mental health as key challenges and issues which should be addressed.

Family Support

There was considerable support for holistic family support. The Promise identified that families should be provided with the support they need when they need it and not during crisis situations only.

Families are currently struggling to navigate their way through care services and have expressed the need for a more straightforward, user-friendly system. Publishing user-friendly guides could increase engagement, allowing service users to make the most of a new care system. The NCS must address this by offering a service which is easy to navigate, with no hidden complexities. This can be achieved by involving families throughout and beyond the consultation period. People often feel powerless with regards to decisions about their own social care; families want to feel a sense of ownership of this new service and not a feeling of dismissal. Stigma, gatekeeping, and eligibility were also identified as issues to be addressed going forward.

Losing integration of Children's Services

Different local authorities have created a range of models for their Children's Services. Some are part of Integrated Joint Boards, while others have chosen to align them with Education Services. In Glasgow, the Children's Services Executive Group includes social work, health, child protection, youth work and education (including Early Years). There were concerns that the new Boards would weaken the link with education services. This is very important as schools and nurseries provide the most frequent contact with children and families and the majority of children's social care staff are part of the Early Years' workforce.

Marginalisation of Children's Services

There was a concern that the National Care Service (NCS) would introduce a standardised approach which would not give the flexibility of the local approach to needs offered by the current models of integrated children's services. Intersectionality of need may also be overlooked by the big picture. One person can have many different needs. A lack of reflection on Children's Homelessness and Addiction Recovery services was also noted, with questions arising with regards to when additional financial inputs to meet the current need and demand will become available.

Children's services must not become a secondary consideration. Concerns were raised that children's services will become subsumed within a larger structure if included in the NCS. These services already require increased funding, particularly children's mental health services, however, many are fearful that priority will be given to adult services, leaving children's services an afterthought.

The importance of cultural change

"For Scotland to truly to be the best place in the world for children to grow up, a fundamental shift is required in how decisions are made about children and families."

- The Promise, page 7.

The Promise places emphasis on the *cultural* transformation, rather than the system or structural changes. Many people felt that there was no point in setting up a new structure if the culture remains the same.

Families are reluctant to raise concerns with social work due to negative and threatening perceptions and instead confide in third sector family support services. The importance of the third sector in relation to children's services was widely acknowledged during the event. The voluntary and community sector plays a critical role within children's services, a role which should be further recognised by increased investment in third sector staff and training – particularly post pandemic. We know that families have a huge amount of trust in third sector family support services and therefore, the sector must be recognised as a key partner.

The third sector has consistently highlighted the power imbalances that exist between themselves, public services, and dependent families.

Procurement and Commissioning

Anxieties surrounding commissioning practice are apparent amongst service providers. Concerns were raised with regards to how commissioning will impact local services should it become nationally driven. Many voiced the need for longer term funding for community health and social care services, to support innovation and enhanced service delivery. Fair pay was also noted as a particular worry. These issues need to be addressed regardless of any structural changes which take place.

We whole heartedly agree that there needs to be a transformational change in the way that we plan, commission, and procure social care support for all age groups. We need to work in partnership, not in competition and we need to ensure that the voices of those who receive

services are heard. Services should be co-designed with the people they are designed to support. We also agree that third sector organisations should be more involved in collaborative approaches to planning, commissioning and procuring social care support services.

Long term impacts of Covid

Covid has placed a huge strain on services, both during the height of the pandemic, and now, as restrictions ease. Many organisations are still in a state of recovery: with long waiting lists, continuous service adaptations and some closures still in place. Many are concerned that services will continue to suffer whilst the NCS is being implemented. The uncertainties surrounding Covid restrictions must be acknowledged, and implementation plans should be realistic, work towards achievable timescales and consider work-place restrictions. Concerns that future waves of the virus will affect children's services were also highlighted, as well as the importance of maintaining the wellbeing of our workforces – many of which have delivered crisis-centred support since the beginning of the pandemic. There are concerns that children are also experiencing a lot of change post-pandemic, and that this will introduce another huge shift.

Summary

The above provides a summary of the views of the third sector highlighted at our consultation event.

We are concerned about the proposed extension of the scope of the National Service on two fronts; first that children's services will be marginalised due to the need to focus on urgent reform of the adult care sector.

Second, we would like to see far more consultation with children, young people, and families, and the third sector organisations who support them.

The tone and language used to describe social care in this consultation is welcome – but with a strong focus on structures, restructuring and process, there is a real risk that we lose the essence of and vision in the Feeley Review. The emphasis must be on cultural transformation, including more collaborative approaches to planning, commissioning and procuring social care support services.