



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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Via email only

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Dear Cabinet Secretary

### **The impact of COVID-19 on care at home**

I am writing to you on behalf of the Health and Sport Committee to ask for action to be taken by the Scottish Government to ensure lessons learned in relation to care at home during the current pandemic are acted on quickly. In particular the provision of support and mitigation to lessen the impact on carers and those requiring care of the second wave of the virus.

Today the Committee has published the results of a recent survey conducted to gather views from recipients of care and carers on their experience of care at home during the current pandemic. The survey received over 700 responses, including 415 from family members of those receiving care and unpaid carers and 93 responses from individuals receiving care at home. A copy of our report on the survey responses has been included with this letter.

We heard from respondents about how hard and flexibly housing support and care at home staff have been working in order to keep delivering services. That said I am sure you will share the Committee's concerns in relation to unpaid carers and family members who were forced to 'step in' and feel they were 'left to get on with it'. You will note from our report that more than half of the respondents in receipt of care told us that their care was either reduced or stopped completely.

Continuity of care was a significant issue for many of those we heard from. Respondents told the Committee that changes to care and support services had a negative impact on the mental health and wellbeing of those in need of care. In

addition unpaid carers were experiencing additional pressure to ensure the provision of essential care and support.

The Committee heard further concerns about safety, and issues for staff relating to recruitment, training and workload. This included access to and appropriate use of PPE, testing of care staff and the additional pressure on staff due to new tasks required as a result of the pandemic.

Respondents called for more to be done to listen to the needs of those receiving care and to involve them in decision making. This includes more flexible spending of Self-Directed Support, a concern the Committee has heard throughout its scrutiny of social care.

The Committee appreciates the ongoing work seeking to make improvements for those experiencing and delivering care at home, and we welcome the recent Care Inspectorate report on this issue published in September. However, the Committee is concerned the recommendations within that report are primarily directed at Health and Social Care Partnerships. Problems with the distribution and allocation of funding, particularly for small providers and third sector providers of care, raised with us during our pre-budget scrutiny may prevent HSCPs being able to effectively address these recommendations.

We also agree with the Care Inspectorate report that the pandemic has 'exacerbated the significant challenges that already existed in the delivery of care at home and housing support in Scotland'. We have heard consistently from service users and carers that the way care is currently delivered is not working, and has worsened as a result of COVID-19.

However, there are some areas of the Care Inspectorate report that do not correspond with the messages in our survey results. We note that the Care Inspectorate work focused on decision making and partnership working, gathering views from Health and Social Care Partnerships and service providers. Our own work provides the, perhaps unique, perspective of carers and those in receipt of care. We hope that this can provide insight to gain a wider understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on care at home.

We would welcome an update on the progress made in relation to meeting the recommendations directed at the Scottish Government in the Care Inspectorate report. It would be helpful to our ongoing work in this area to have the update by end November.

Yours sincerely

Lewis Macdonald  
Convener, Health and Sport Committee