



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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CC:

Jeane Freeman MSP,  
Cabinet Secretary for  
Health and Sport

11 November 2020

Dear Peter

### **Delivering care at home and housing support services during the COVID-19 pandemic**

The Committee has asked me to write to you to acknowledge and welcome the above Care Inspectorate report published in September. We appreciate the important ongoing work seeking to make improvements for those experiencing and delivering care at home. We would also like to highlight our own work with recipients of care and carers on their experience of care at home and housing support services during the pandemic. A copy of our report has been included with this letter.

We note the Care Inspectorate inquiry focused on decision making and partnership working, gathering views from Health and Social Care Partnerships and service providers. Your report states that 'listening to people who experience care will be essential to gaining a full understanding of the impact of COVID-19 and what we can learn from this'. With over 700 responses to our survey, including 415 from family members of those receiving care and unpaid carers and 93 responses from individuals receiving care at home, we hope that our own report can provide such insight to aid that understanding.

You will note that what we heard from respondents is in line with many of the key messages highlighted in your report. Our survey heard that housing support and care at home staff worked hard and flexibly in order to keep delivering services, that disruption to and suspension of daily activities impacted on the health and wellbeing of people who experience care and carers, and that there have been good examples

of the use of technology to create alternative approaches for the delivery of care and support.

We also agree that the pandemic has further exposed the complexity of, and problems associated with funding and individual budgets for care at home and housing support services.

However, there are some areas where the views we heard from service users and unpaid carers do not correspond with the messages in your report. While as you state some respondents, for safety reasons, did decline their usual supports in favour of family members, most respondents told us that unpaid carers and family members were forced to 'step in' and 'provide all the care' due to a lack of support being offered or because of a lack of contact from care providers. The key theme that came through was that people were being 'left to get on with it'. This is of real concern to the Committee, especially when one of the major issues raised as being of most importance to our survey respondents was continuity of care.

We also note from your report that the recommendations are 'key areas for consideration by all partners as we continue to respond to the current pandemic and plan for the future'. However, we would suggest that a greater level of urgency is required to address these issues given that we are now in the second wave of the virus.

We further note the recommendations are primarily for HSCPs and not for government. We are concerned that problems with the distribution and allocation of funding, particularly for small providers and third sector providers of care, that have been raised with us during our pre-budget scrutiny may prevent HSCPs being able to effectively address these recommendations.

We also agree with your 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 loud and clear from service users and carers that the way care is currently delivered is not working, and has worsened as a result of COVID-19.

While we recognise the future planning and improvement of these services is a long-term effort, we would like to see more urgent action taken to ensure better support and mitigation during the current pandemic. To this end, we would welcome an early response and update on the progress that has been made in relation to the recommendations contained in your 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