

## The campaign for a new National Outcome to fully value and invest in those experiencing care and all those providing it.

To build a fairer Scotland, one that is more resilient to shocks like the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis we need a new National Outcome on care to be placed within an improved National Performance Framework (NPF). This will put care at the heart of the Scottish Government's vision for Scotland and help ensure we fully value and invest in **all** forms of care and **all** those who provide and experience it.

More than 45 organisations already back '[A Scotland that cares](#)', a unique campaign created by **Oxfam Scotland, Carers Scotland, the Scottish Women's Budget Group, Scottish Care** and **One Parent Families Scotland**. The breadth and diversity of supporters demonstrates strong support for adding this new National Outcome in the upcoming refresh of Scotland's existing Outcomes. Critically, the campaign will seek to amplify the voices of those directly impacted by care – either experiencing or providing it – at a time when the cost-of-living crisis is creating major new pressures.

### Key Messages

- The Scottish Government says their National Outcomes are designed to increase people's wellbeing, but a key ingredient is currently missing: **care and carers are almost invisible in the 11 existing Outcomes**.
- Now is the time to **change this by adding a dedicated outcome on care** during the legally required review of the National Outcomes and bolstering this **with robust indicators** to transparently track progress.
- **Everyone needs cared for at some point in their life**: as a child, in later life, or due to additional support needs. Yet, for too long, people who care for others, paid or unpaid, have been **under-valued and under-rewarded**, resulting in significant personal and financial costs for many individuals and their families.
- **Women provide most paid and unpaid care**. Its undervaluation is a cause and a consequence of gender inequality.
- **Care and poverty are intrinsically linked**. Addressing the undervaluation of paid and unpaid care work is vital to addressing poverty, with the impacts of caring responsibilities on an individual's income often acute.
- The **cost-of-living crisis will disproportionately increase financial hardship** for many carers.
- The **scale and depth of caring responsibilities** surged during the Covid-19 pandemic, and these are **expected to grow** as a result of Scotland's ageing population and changing demographics.

### The scale and unequal distribution of care

A significant proportion of Scotland's population experience or provide care, with – for example – three out of five of us becoming unpaid carers for people with additional support needs at some stage in our lives.<sup>1</sup> Estimates suggest there are: 839,000 adult carers; approximately 29,000 young carers; over 208,000 workers in the social care sector; and 138,000 single parents with dependent children.<sup>2, 3, 4, 5</sup> More widely, an estimated one in 25 people of all ages (231,925 people) were reported as receiving social care support and services at some point during 2020/21.<sup>6</sup> The undervaluation of care impacts people across Scotland.

It also impacts women the most. Care is a deeply gendered issue. In Scotland, as many as 70% of unpaid carers are women.<sup>7</sup> Women also make up 96% of childcare<sup>8</sup> and 80% of adult social care staff<sup>9</sup> – both sectors are characterised by low pay, poor working conditions, and job insecurity.<sup>10</sup> This unequal distribution of care work and its undervaluation can limit women's economic prosperity and undermine their health and wellbeing.<sup>11</sup>

Gaps in our understanding exist, but the impacts can be more pronounced for people from minority ethnic backgrounds, who are likely to do more hours of unpaid care work.<sup>12</sup> Linked to this, women from minority ethnic backgrounds are also more likely to be economically inactive and in low paid jobs.<sup>13</sup> At UK level, people from ethnic minority backgrounds are also over-represented in the child and adult social work workforces.<sup>14</sup>

*"I am anxious and scared of what our living costs will be in the coming months."*

An unpaid carer<sup>15</sup>

## **A new national outcome on care: what and why?**

The National Outcomes are designed to increase people's wellbeing, but a key ingredient is missing: care and carers – including parents and guardians of children, paid care workers, and unpaid carers for those with additional support needs – are nearly invisible in the 11 existing Outcomes.<sup>16</sup> The Scottish Government is legally required to consult on the National Outcomes every 5 years<sup>17</sup>, with the next review beginning in Autumn 2022, so now is the time for change.

Care should be fully considered within the delivery of every National Outcome. However, the lack of a dedicated Outcome fails to reflect the foundational importance of care to Scotland's society and economy or address the deep undervaluation of it. Over time, a dedicated National Outcome, placed within an improved outcomes framework, will help to change that by providing a strong focus for new, and sustained, policy and spending action.

We know that a range of actions have been taken or are planned in Scotland that have the potential to improve how we value and invest in care – such as reforms to social security entitlement for unpaid carers<sup>18</sup>, additional investment in social care<sup>19</sup>, the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill and plans for developing an all-year-round school-age childcare system.<sup>20</sup> The creation of a National Outcome on care is not a substitute for these, or other immediate actions, with urgent progress essential across many areas mentioned in this briefing. However, a dedicated National Outcome on care will set a path towards ongoing and transformative change, and its introduction would place Scotland among the first countries in the world to make such an explicit commitment.<sup>21</sup> Critically, it will enable us to meaningfully and transparently measure the progress achieved over time, using robust and cross-cutting indicators.

## **Our proposed national outcome and linked national indicators**

Academics at the University of the West of Scotland, conducting research for the UWS-Oxfam Partnership<sup>22</sup>, have worked with the 'A Scotland that cares' campaign, to develop a [blueprint](#)<sup>23</sup> for a new National Outcome on care. Published in November 2021, this research proposes a new outcome stating:

***'We fully value and invest in those experiencing care and all those providing it'.***

Crucially, this research also identified seven 'Beacon' National Indicators, and a range of sub-indicators, which should be used to monitor progress, in addition to capturing people's lived experience of care. We believe these Indicators and our proposed National Outcome statement should now be further tested – particularly with those with direct experience of care – and improved if necessary. Pending this, below, we provide headline evidence across our draft indicators, detailing why more must be done to value and invest in care in Scotland.

### **National Indicator 1: The quality of life of carers, care workers and those experiencing care**

The quality of life of carers, care workers and those experiencing care is vital to Scotland's society, but there are gaps in our understanding about how their quality of life is impacted by their experiences. This must change, so that more can be done to support people. However, while limited, the available data does provide some insights, with almost four in 10 people claiming they don't have a positive balance between care and other things in their life<sup>24</sup>, and many social care workers reporting they are under increased pressure working longer hours.<sup>25</sup>

Only 3% of unpaid carers benefit from the statutory right to breaks and carer support,<sup>26</sup> and it is estimated that 328,000 unpaid carers in Scotland are concerned for their own physical and mental health.<sup>27</sup> Carers are also more likely to report having a long-term condition, illness, or being disabled than non-carers – 63% of carers compared to 51% of non-carers.<sup>28</sup> We also know that unpaid carers, parents and guardians, but particularly young carers, need time away from their caring role to focus on other activities and education, yet too many report not having this, nor the money to "do or have nice things".<sup>29</sup>

The life-care balance of carers and the quality of life of those experiencing care, are also intrinsically linked to poverty. Over a quarter of the people in receipt of social care support live in the most deprived areas and unpaid carers in these areas are more likely to care for longer periods of time.<sup>30</sup> Research in England shows that parents and guardians in deprived areas are also less likely to access childcare services, with COVID-19 exacerbating existing challenges.<sup>31</sup>

***"I feel embarrassed for living in poverty... we go to work,  
we care for the kids, we put dinner on the table."***

**Leanne, aged 40, single parent<sup>32</sup>**

## **National Indicator 2: The quality of care for all**

We all need care at some point in our life: whether as a child, in older age, or due to ill health or additional needs – and the quality of this care is essential to wellbeing. Yet the proportion of people experiencing care who report negative care and support services has increased in recent years, with almost four in 10 people not able to rate their experience positively.<sup>33</sup> This trend must be reversed.

Commissioning in social care can be an important driver of care quality alongside other factors, such as challenges with staff recruitment and retention driven by low wages and poor conditions. Audit Scotland has found commissioning tends to focus on cost rather than the quality of care or the outcomes created for those experiencing care, and current procedures have led to competition between providers at the expense of collaboration and quality.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, while unpaid carers strive to deliver the best possible care, the support they receive is vital. Only 30% of unpaid carers feel positive about the support they receive. Crucially, people living in the most deprived areas are less likely to be receiving support, even when they believe they need it.<sup>35</sup>

While childcare and other forms of care will remain vital to all of us, in future, there will be more people in need of care, particularly older people. Ensuring care quality is maintained is therefore vital. Right now, around three-quarters (77%) of people who receive social care support are aged 65 and over, and around three-fifths (61%) are female.<sup>36</sup> The country's population is expected to age in the coming decades, with a substantial increase in the proportion of those over 65.<sup>37</sup>

***“Sometimes you look in the cupboard and you’re like ‘oh, there’s not much food in today.’”***

**Danielle, aged 16, young carer<sup>38</sup>**

## **National Indicator 3: The financial wellbeing of carers, care workers and those experiencing care**

The cross-cutting issue of care creates significant financial costs for many individuals and their families. Carers are more likely to live in poverty than non-carers (24% compared with 21%) and this is significantly higher for those who provide the most care (44% of adults who provide care 35 hours or more a week are in poverty). Furthermore, nearly half of all those living in poverty in the UK, are either disabled people or live in a household containing a disabled person.<sup>39</sup> Strikingly, 52% of unpaid carers report being unable to manage their monthly expenses<sup>40</sup>, and financial hardship can be particularly severe for young carers – with reports of food bank use common during the pandemic.<sup>41</sup>

85% of people who are ‘economically inactive’ due to caring are women.<sup>42</sup> During the pandemic, increased unpaid caring responsibilities impacted many women’s ability to undertake paid work, further threatening their financial security.<sup>43</sup> Estimates suggest that, if the hours of unpaid household and caring work undertaken in Scotland were paid at the average wage rate of equivalent paid jobs, their value alone is estimated at around £37 billion per year.<sup>44</sup>

The impact of childcare responsibilities on an individual’s income is also acute, with much higher poverty rates for those with children. While 13% of working age couples with no children are in poverty, this rises to 17% for those with them and rockets to 38% for working age single people with children, 92% of whom are women.<sup>45</sup> Recent evidence suggests financial hardship for single parents is becoming even more acute as the cost-of-living crisis bites.<sup>46</sup> Parent poverty is inseparable from child poverty which impacts almost one in four children in Scotland, some 240,000.<sup>47</sup> As such, tackling the drivers of parent poverty is essential if Scotland is to deliver upon our legal child poverty targets.

Paid work should be a route out of poverty, but often it is not. Low wages continue to permeate the social services sector<sup>48</sup>, and the costs of childcare do not filter through to the workforce, with low wages the norm.<sup>49</sup> Those on low wages are least able to absorb surging living costs, such as the rising fuel costs facing homecare staff.<sup>50</sup>

***“The majority of the population wouldn’t do it for  
£500 per day, never mind for what we get.”***

**Ann, aged 50, care home worker<sup>51</sup>**

#### **National Indicator 4: The voice and influence of carers, care workers and those experiencing care**

Too often carers go unheard. Those interviewed during UWS-Oxfam Partnership research<sup>52</sup> reported receiving low levels of financial support and feeling undervalued. Those with childcare responsibilities also struggle; only 49% of young women with children are confident that they will have enough childcare support over the next year.<sup>53</sup>

People who experience care do not always feel heard either. Almost four in 10 people (38%) feel service providers do not take account of the things that matter to them, and almost one in four have said they are not offered any choices about their care.<sup>54</sup> Other research has highlighted that disabled people overwhelmingly feel their voices must be part of the process of improving care policy and practice.<sup>55</sup> The views of those who experience care must be listened to.

Research undertaken with people who care for adults in care homes<sup>56</sup> also points to a lack of sectoral bargaining and worker voice, staff feeling under-valued compared with NHS workers, and a sense that a cultural shift is needed to better value those who need care and those who provide it. Only 19% of social care workers have their pay and conditions affected by agreements between employers and trade unions.<sup>57</sup>

#### **National Indicator 5: Access to education and training**

Vocational training and educational opportunities can be transformational, particularly in supporting people into decent and sustained work. Yet carers, care workers and those experiencing care who choose to enter education and training too often face significant barriers in accessing and sustaining it, resulting in worse outcomes for them and their families. Social security itself can be one such barrier, with those who are in full-time education or studying for 21 hours a week or more, ineligible for UK Carer's Allowance.

Single parents and unpaid carers, the majority of whom are women, have been described as largely "invisible" on employability programmes, with advisors and wider programme-design often unaware of their specific circumstances, needs and responsibilities. Holistic, flexible, and tailored approaches are essential to support carers into decent paid work and, crucially, to progress within it – thereby supporting them to increase their incomes.<sup>58</sup>

#### **National Indicator 6: The adequacy of funding for care**

Funding will, of course, be key to fully valuing and investing in all forms of care. Despite some modest increases in recent years, with a commitment to increase funding in Scotland by 25% over this Parliament<sup>59</sup>, more is urgently needed across social care and childcare services with huge challenges related to workforce pressures, increasing demand and slow progress on moving to preventative measures.<sup>60, 61</sup>

One consequence of a lack of funding is reduced accessibility to social care, or insufficient levels of it. According to the Feeley Review, an estimated 36,000 people do not have access to social care services that need it and to plug this gap would cost about £436m annually.<sup>62</sup> Further investment, coupled with changes to the way services are commissioned, is also needed to ensure fair work for social care workers.

These gaps also fail to take into account the spiralling cost of living crisis with warnings that this is pushing many social care providers to the edge of financial viability. As most care home and home care provision is paid for by the state, existential crises loom for many, with energy bills exponentially increasing and state funding remaining fixed.<sup>63</sup>

Beyond immediate need, Scotland's changing demographics and the associated projected increases in demand for social care mean that massive additional long term investment is also needed: over twice the total real-terms annual increase compared to the previous 10 years.<sup>64</sup> That will take long-term and substantial uplifts in funding, but should be seen as an investment in the Scottish economy, potentially creating double the jobs than if the same level of investment went into construction, coupled with the potential to positively impact the gender employment gap.<sup>65</sup>

As plans for the new National Care Service<sup>66</sup> take shape, adequate funding will also be key to ensuring high-quality care provision while delivering fair work for those working in the sector. It is also critical to recognise that a lack of funding in social care increases the level of unmet need, some of which will be met by unpaid carers; in too many cases, this results in adverse consequences for their personal and financial wellbeing.

Further funding will also be needed to build on the welcome expansion of entitlement to 1,140 hours of early learning and childcare for all three- and four-year-olds<sup>67</sup>, and eligible two-year-olds – 30 hours per week, term time – with calls for this to reach 50 hours per week for all children between six months and five years old.<sup>68</sup>

Finally, significant extra investment is needed to enhance support for unpaid carers of all forms, including through enhanced social security and employment support. The transition from UK Carer’s Allowance to Scottish Carers Assistance, due in 2023, must be undertaken carefully but eligibility must be expanded, and the value increased.<sup>69</sup> While the existence in Scotland of the Carer’s Allowance Supplement, and the additional Coronavirus Carer’s Allowance Supplements in 2020 and 2021, are positive, the value remains insufficient. At the same time, further support for low-income households with children is vital, despite the welcome increase to Scottish Child Payment<sup>70</sup>.

**National Indicator 7: The job quality of care workers**

Paid care work is too often associated with low incomes, poor working conditions and a lack of agency.<sup>71</sup> While the value we place on this overwhelmingly female workforce is low, our expectations of them are high. Social care work is described by the Fair Work Convention as “fulfilling, but not always fair”.<sup>72</sup> Despite stated commitments to ensure all social care staff are paid the Living Wage, thousands working in the wider care sector are still paid below the real Living Wage with recent pay rises only covering frontline adult social care workers, not childcare workers or ancillary roles.<sup>73</sup>

Yet job quality is about more than money. Many care workers also lack support, training, and career development. This not only makes it more difficult to attract and retain staff for employers but can also have serious consequences for people who access services.<sup>74</sup> Worryingly, almost a quarter of new social care staff leave within the first three months, and there are high levels of sickness and absence due to a variety of factors including stress and exhaustion.<sup>75</sup> Similar issues of staff retention characterise paid childcare jobs – for example, research shows the childminding workforce is declining<sup>76</sup>, and more broadly, that the main reason why early years workers leave their jobs is for higher pay.<sup>77</sup> Reports suggest significant falls in the number of childminders in Scotland, amid work quality concerns.<sup>78</sup>

This briefing was produced by Oxfam Scotland in support of the “A Scotland that cares” campaign.

While the contents do not necessarily represent the individual views of each organisation, the organisations supporting the “A Scotland that cares” campaign are detailed below.

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