



Our Vision for a National Care Service

UNISON has a longstanding position in favour of a National Care Service (NCS) and remains firmly committed to its establishment. Our vision is of a National Care Service delivering adult community, domiciliary and residential services within a fully integrated system of care, from community based preventative support in the community through to support for complex care needs in people's homes or in residential and nursing care, in full synergy with the NHS and other public services.

Principles of a National Care Service

A National Care Service must mirror the founding principles of the NHS. Our vision of a National Care Service is of:

1. **A public service free at the point of use coordinated locally** by democratically elected councils.
2. **A fully funded service** resourced sufficiently to guarantee timely, preventative, rights-based care and universal and equitable access to care services of the highest standard.
3. **A not-for-profit** public service with a commitment to both reversing for-profit outsourcing of care and restoring a public service ethos. There will be an end to the market in care, to the contracting out model, and to the competitive tendering of care as a commodity.
4. **A service that empowers care-users** as partners in decisions about their own care and ensures their voice in improving care systems and services.
5. **A service that values its workforce**, provides fair work, fulfilling careers and parity of pay, pensions and T&Cs across social care based on local government SJC, NHS Agenda for Change and sectoral collective bargaining.
6. **A service committed to tackling inequality and discrimination** in all aspects of its functions.

Key Features of a National Care Service

Shifting the balance of power – for care users and care workers

Our vision of a National Care Service will:

- Be resourced sufficiently to make rights-based care and the empowerment of care-users realisable in practice. Care-users will have access to independent advice, advocacy, and enforcement to make rights in social care a reality.
- Guarantee an effective voice in the workplace for social care staff through trade union recognition and consultation with workers.

- Ensure that local services are planned and designed through a grassroots process of engagement with care-users, informal carers, families and communities, care workers and the NHS.

Rewarding work, and a valued workforce

Our vision of a National Care Service will:

- Ensure social care is an attractive, rewarding and fulfilling career choice offering high quality jobs with accredited career pathways linked to pay.
- Provide parity of pay and conditions across the sector through local government SJC, NHS Agenda for Change and sectoral collective bargaining. Fair work and improved status will be the norm for all care workers.
- Have equality as a core objective. In-sourcing and levelling up will benefit women as well as black, migrant, and other minority groups of workers currently most prone to exploitation and whose voices are least represented.

Delivery by and through local authorities

Our vision of a National Care Service will:

- Be based upon nationally agreed standards and inspection, employment conditions and resourcing but co-ordinated locally by councils using directly employed staff and the best of the not-for-profit third sector. Local government delivery provides democratic governance and closer integration with social work, housing, homelessness, other preventative services and local communities. Councils will plan provision based on collective need in their area and ensure decisions are made both as close as possible and accountable to care-users.
- Involve the reinvigoration of local democracy. The design, organisation and delivery of care services must become more participative of, responsive, and accountable to care-users. The more the market system is replaced, the easier it will be to rebuild a public service ethos within social care and replace the dominant 'care-as-a-commodity' culture.
- Ensure that decisions are based on needs not budgets and informed by those who use and work in services. People's needs are complex and decisions about who best delivers services is likely to differ from service to service, and area to area (urban, rural, island); whether that is direct delivery by local authorities, or delivery through a voluntary sector provider (large or small). A co-production approach to service development with the voluntary sector and service user organisations will replace the market.
- The role of central government in the National Care Service will be to coordinate standards and inspection, regulate as needed to ensure consistency and fairness, ensure effective workforce planning, provide access to efficient procurement mechanisms and to ensure funding commensurate with these principles.

UNISON Scotland believes a National Care Service based on these principles will have the support of care users, social care workers and the wider public. We are ready to discuss our vision with the next First Minister: we need a National Care Service that is truly on a par with the NHS. Nothing less will do.