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Convener
Public Audit Committee
Scottish Parliament

18 March 2022
By email

Dear Convener

Social Care briefing

I welcomed the opportunity to participate in the committee's consideration of our social care briefing on 3 March 2022.

I committed to provide further information on three topics:

- Eligibility criteria
- Good practice in social care training
- Additional £500 million funding to local government

Eligibility criteria

Discussions touched on variation in eligibility criteria, and whether councils were collecting data, how that linked to unmet need and whether data was comparable or consistent across the whole of Scotland. The Scottish Government has published some information on [eligibility criteria and waiting times](#) by council area. However, the latest data is only up to 2018 and it does not quantify unmet need. The committee may wish to seek further information on this from the Scottish Government or COSLA.

In our 2016 Social work in Scotland [report](#) (pages 25 to 27), we highlighted that the proportion of people aged 65 and over receiving homecare had fallen and councils had changed their eligibility criteria to reduce the number of people who qualified to receive support to balance their budgets. Most councils at that time no longer provided services in the two lower risk categories (low and moderate risk), meaning that only individuals classed as high priority (substantial or critical risk) were receiving social care services.

The [Independent Review of Adult Social Care](#) also highlighted that the current approach to setting eligibility criteria means that people must be in critical need and at a crisis point to access social care support. In addition to not meeting the needs of everyone requiring some level of support, it means there is a lack of focus on prevention and early intervention, and few resources targeted at providing a little support to prevent the crises from occurring in the first place. The report points to analysis suggesting that in 2018/19, older people had 20 per cent fewer unplanned admissions to hospital in the six months after receiving homecare support than in the six months prior.

Good practice in social care training

Reference was made to a previous evidence session on Scotland's colleges, including evidence from the principal of Edinburgh College, who set out some of the more innovative approaches the college is taking to address the increasing demand for a social care workforce.

We do not have information on other innovative approaches across Scotland's college sector, however the committee may wish to contact the following:

- Scottish Funding Council
- Skills Development Scotland
- John Rafferty, Assistant Principal for Health and Wellbeing, Glasgow Clyde College who spoke at the Next Steps for Adult Social Care event held on the 26 August 2021. He referred to a workforce development fund, covering the social care sector. He also spoke of the challenges impacting on college training for social care, including:
 - extent of digitally excluded students
 - comparison between the perceived flexibility offered by the SQA and lack of flexibility from the SSSC
 - the barriers to social care qualification in comparison to qualifications in health disciplines – more hoops through SQV, SSSC registration, assessed in workplace
 - social care services and training not valued or seen as an attractive career.

Additional £500 million funding for local government

The committee was interested in how much of the increase of £500 million in overall funding allocated to local government in 2019/20 was used for social care commissioning purposes. The annual accounts of public bodies do not split expenditure down to the level of social care expenditure in a consistent way across authorities and we have highlighted the difficulty of tracking funding streams in several reports. This includes our following the pandemic pound work and the difficulties tracking Covid-19 funding, which we will be reporting on in our upcoming report on Scotland's financial response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Our recent briefings on [Supporting businesses through the Covid-19 pandemic](#) and [Drug and alcohol services](#), also both highlight the difficulty of following where money for specific purposes has been spent and what difference it has made.

The Accounts Commission's [local government financial overview](#) reported that although there was a cash increase of £0.5 billion to local government in 2019/20, reductions over the past seven years were still larger than in other areas of the Scottish Government budget. Funding from the Scottish Government to local government between 2013/14 and 2019/20 decreased by 4.7 per cent, in real terms, while other Scottish Government revenue funding only fell by 0.8 per cent. Nearly half of the increase in funding in 2019/20 was to fund the expansion in early learning and childcare. It is not clear what the remainder was spent on, but councils also faced a budget gap of £0.5 billion in 2019/20 (see pages 9 to 14 of the LG financial overview report).

Not linked directly to the additional funding provided to local government, but another source of information that provides some context in terms of overall trends in expenditure in adult social care, is an annual Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) overview report produced by the Improvement Service. The [LGBF overview report](#) for 2020/21, indicates that adult social care expenditure increased by £209.3 million between 2019/20 and 2020/21, a 5.9 per cent real terms (see Table 1 on the next page copied from page 19 of the report). Note that this information is not subject to external audit.

Table 1: Real Change in Revenue Expenditure Since 2010/11 (£000s)

	Scotland 2010/11	Scotland 2019/20	Scotland 2020/21	% Change from 2019/20 to 2020/21	% Change from 2010/11 to 2020/21
Education	£4,802,311	£5,200,755	£5,453,389	4.9%	13.6%
Looked After Children	£466,305	£536,828	£530,292	-1.2%	18.8%
Adult Social Care	£3,073,919	£3,540,172	£3,749,473	5.9%	22.0%
Culture and Leisure	£615,556	£458,844	£449,748	-2.0%	-26.9%
Environmental Services	£831,627	£725,282	£722,202	-0.4%	-13.2%
Roads	£695,773	£533,409	£519,338	-2.6%	-25.4%
Planning	£148,352	£110,910	£109,599	-1.2%	-26.1%
Economic Development and Tourism	£413,026	£330,334	£360,682	9.2%	-12.7%
Central Support Services	£943,503	£683,118	£690,895	1.1%	-26.8%

Note: Real terms expenditure trends in this table apply the average measure of inflation as set out by SPICE. In the remainder of the report, GDP deflators as provided by HMT are used to provide consistency with our previous approach.

Note: Table 1 includes expenditure covered by the LGBF measures. While the LGBF measures reflect the significant areas of Local Government expenditure, there are some minor areas of spend excluded, which accounts for differences with Scottish Government published expenditure data. All trends represent gross expenditure, except Residential Social Care which are based on net expenditure.

I hope that committee members find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Boyle
Auditor General for Scotland