

From COSLA Health and Social Care Spokesperson, Cllr Paul Kelly



2nd December 2022

Gillian Martin MSP
Health, Social Care and Sport Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH9 1SP

Via email - Gillian.Martin.msp@parliament.scot hscs.committee@parliament.scot

Dear Gillian,

Across Scotland, councils are fundamental in providing support around mental health and wellbeing, neurodiversity, learning disability and dementia, both through universal and targeted services. The future of these services is of great importance to Local Government and the communities we serve.

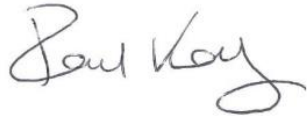
COSLA leaders are aware of a stakeholder engagement exercise currently being undertaken by the Scottish Government Mental Health Directorate to test the assumption that services that may or must be delegated to the Integrated Joint Boards should form part of the National Care Service (NCS), and to develop their understanding of community health. I am writing to reiterate our concerns around the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill process which are brought in to sharp focus by the approach being taken to these pivotal services.

The current engagement and consultation processes are fragmented, poorly timed, unclear, insufficient, and unlikely to support good system design. This issue will be compounded by the problematic use of secondary legislation, and the minimal opportunity within this for scrutiny and change. It is essential that any reform of pivotal services, such as mental health services, is afforded appropriate consideration and scrutiny. This is not supported by the current process.

There are also a number of specific risks relating to the incorporation of these services in the NCS including the potential for the prioritisation of clinical need, medicalising mental health, undermining human rights safeguarding and public protection and adding additional complexity to transitions. This could serve to undermine progress in recent years, particularly around prevention, 'no wrong door', universal support and reducing stigma which we have collectively sought to achieve. It is unclear how these significant issues will be given due consideration.

We would urge the committee to consider implications of poor process and its potential impact any resulting structural change as it reaches its conclusions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P' and a long, sweeping underline.

Councillor Paul Kelly
COSLA Health and Social Care Spokesperson