

Julie Rintoul
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Population Health Directorate
Scottish Government
St Andrews House
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

9 December 2016

Dear Julie,

**RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT STATISTICS:
PROPOSAL FOR A NEW 'CARERS CENSUS'**

Social Work Scotland welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposal for a new "Carer's Census", intended to provide statistical information on carers assessments, support needs and plans, and services provided or arranged for carers. We agree that this information is needed to monitor the necessary increases in eligible demand and support that the new Carers Act is intended to achieve, alongside the more qualitative data on outcomes that we understand is also being planned.

Social Work Scotland acknowledges that family members and other unpaid carers provide the majority of care in Scotland and we continue to strongly support the policy intention of the new legislation to bring about better support for carers, including greater access to short breaks when needed. However, in common with most other stakeholders, we remain concerned that some aspects of new Act are yet to be fully funded. While there are some issues about the adequacy of the funding set out in the Financial Memorandum for short breaks, our biggest concern is that no funding has been identified to meet increased demand, resulting from the new Act, for replacement care for the person being cared for, in order to enable their carer to take a short break.

It is therefore important that the data collected in both the baseline year (2017-18) and annually from the implementation of the new Act on 1 April 2018 provides counts of assessments; eligible need for short breaks, for replacement care, and other support; and such support provided or arranged in the reporting period. The proposed data collection only does this in part:

1. The need for a short break, and the need for any replacement care, are not separately identified in the code lists for either *Carers Support Needs*, or *Carers Support Plan*. This means that we will not be able to distinguish those needs and plans which include short breaks without replacement care, from those where replacement care is needed.
2. Of these two data items, only *Carers Support Needs* is shown as included in the baseline data (shaded grey in the table on page 8 of the consultation paper), whereas baseline data is also needed on the *Carers Support Plan*, and on short breaks and replacement care provided or arranged in the reporting period (which are also not shaded in the page 8 table).

3. There is no data proposed on costs or spend. As you know, the data specification work was commissioned by the Carers Bill Financial Advisory Group, which you mention in the introduction to your consultation paper: “One of the original aims of the Finance Advisory group was to establish a baseline position in respect of current spend and related activity on adult and young carers (across LAs, NHS Boards, and Third Sector)”. If the intention is to obtain cost data from self-directed support data currently collected in the Social Care Survey, then further work is required on the cost definitions which in the SCS include contributions to personal budgets from the Independent Living Fund, from the carer themselves, and from any other third parties, thus making local government funding impossible to identify separately..

The data proposed therefore fall short of what is objectively required to measure increased future demand against the baseline year, and its cost. Nevertheless, even the data proposed will be very difficult to collect from local authorities, health and social care partnerships, health boards (where necessary), and third sector organisations providing assessment, care planning and support services to, for and with carers. Social Work Scotland acknowledges that it is very likely that respondents to the consultation will find serious difficulties in collecting the information. That is likely to lead to a still smaller core dataset which will simply mean that the impact of the new legislation in coming years on key carer support needs such as the provision of short breaks, and where necessary replacement care, will not be known.

What is to be done? It is essential that we recognise that the proposed “data collection” will take the form of a data extraction from the case information systems which organisations use to record information about the individual people – carers as well as service users – at assessment or review or when services are provided or arranged or change. Certainly in most if not all local authorities and health boards, such systems are focussed on service users, and in many cases the data collected about carers is more limited or marginal than it should be. The new Act places carers in the centre stage. It therefore has a big impact on case information systems: that impact needs urgently to be given a much higher profile with politicians, chief executives, chief officers, directors and other senior managers. It requires a workstream closely linked to the content and guidance being developed for the Adults Carers Support Plan and Young Carers Statement, and it will also require some dedicated funding to enable case information systems to be changed (additional fields, menus structures, reports), with appropriate liaison with the commercial social care information systems providers, and with due attention to practitioner recording.

Social Work Scotland is willing to be further involved in this work. We give permission for this response to the consultation to be shared with other Scottish Government policy teams; we also agree to this response being published with the other responses, without anonymity.

With best wishes,

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(Chair of Carers Data Short-Life Working Group)