

18 December 2025

Dear Ms Robison, Mr Gray, Mr Arthur, and Cllr Kelly

We are writing to you as organisations working across Scotland to improve Self-Directed Support through the implementation of Scotland's Self-Directed Support Improvement Plan¹. Our experience spans social care, social work, advocacy, independent support, Disabled People's Organisations, and unpaid carers, all of whom work in partnership with Scottish Government and COSLA towards a shared aim of improving Self-Directed Support.

As you decide local government settlements, the future wellbeing of thousands of disabled people, unpaid carers, and families hangs in the balance. These decisions will shape lives, communities, and Scotland's future. We urge you to make social care support a priority in your decision making.

Scotland has an aging population, and children and adults with complex needs are living longer lives. This is something to celebrate, and we need to ensure the right support is in place to enable all of Scotland's population to live good and full lives. Social care support is the backbone of healthy, flourishing communities. It enables people to live full lives in their own homes and communities, reduces pressure on the NHS, and supports economic participation. Yet, right now, social care is at breaking point.

Cuts and financial pressures have had devastating impacts on disabled people and unpaid carers. We hear daily from carers who report negative impacts on their mental and physical wellbeing, often putting their lives on hold or leaving work. Social workers face immense pressure, with the 'moral injury' described in the Setting the Bar report² exacerbated, and workforce shortages worsening³. Providers are struggling to remain viable, with many relying on reserves to break even and warning of closures if nothing changes⁴.

When social care is underfunded, the consequences ripple across the system:

- Hospitals overwhelmed by delayed discharges
- Families pushed to breaking point
- Community supports collapsing under the strain

We ask you to act now on these three priorities, because failure to do so will cost lives, money, and trust:

1. Investing in Social Care Support Saves Money in Health Services

Social care support is not a peripheral service; it is a vital part of our network of public services. When social care is well-funded and accessible, it prevents hospital admissions, shortens stays, and enables timely discharge. Our strong social care legislation - the Self-Directed Support Act -

¹ [Self-directed support: improvement plan 2023 to 2027 - gov.scot](https://gov.scot/self-directed-support-improvement-plan-2023-to-2027)

² [Setting the Bar: towards an indicative maximum caseload for Scotland's public sector social workers - Social Work Scotland](#)

³ [Overview of the Workforce Challenges in Scottish Local Government - Society of Personnel and Development Scotland](#)

⁴ ['It is apocalyptic': Scotland's entire care service faces collapse | The Herald](#)

promotes flexible, person-centred support delivered through choice and control. Investing in social care support is the most economical solution to reducing pressure on our NHS.

2. Investing in Prevention Saves Money and Improves Lives

The Scottish Government's Population Health Framework⁵ highlights that 80% of what affects health happens outside the health and care system and calls for a whole-system approach that includes housing, education, and community-led supports. Preventative support includes community connection, dignity, and belonging. Informal supports like lunch clubs, befriending schemes, and local voluntary organisations play a vital role in keeping people well and reducing demand on statutory services.

3. Investing in the Workforce Saves Money and Improves Outcomes

The social work and social care sectors are facing a workforce crisis. High vacancy rates, low morale, and reliance on agency staff are symptoms of a system that undervalues its people. Increasing salaries and reducing bureaucracy improves retention and reduces reliance on high-cost temporary staff. Better staffing levels lead to improved outcomes and safer support.

We also urge you to consider the clear asks set out in the COSLA manifesto⁶, the SASW manifesto⁷, and the Joint National Carer Organisations' manifesto⁸. These collectively call for sustainable funding, recognition of social work and social care as essential public services, and a commitment to supporting unpaid carers. Referencing these commitments will help avoid vague responses and strengthen the case for action.

Investing in social care is not just a moral imperative; it is a practical solution. Adequate funding reduces NHS strain, strengthens communities, and upholds Scotland's proud commitment to human rights and social care reform.

In this decision-making process for the local government settlements, it is critical to ensure that adequate and sustainable funding is made available for social care support. Without sufficient investment, the ambitions of the Self-Directed Support Improvement Plan cannot be fully realised, and people who rely on care and support will continue to face barriers to choice and control. **We are ready and willing to work with you to co-create solutions, not only to secure sustainable funding but also to explore innovative ways of using collective resources effectively.** By working together, we can strengthen social care, support unpaid carers, and ensure that Scotland's communities thrive.

Yours sincerely,

Jaynie Mitchell



Pauline Lunn



Ben Farrugia



⁵ [Scotland's Population Health Framework - gov.scot](https://gov.scot)

⁶ [COSLA Manifesto 2026 | COSLA](#)

⁷ [A secure future for Scottish social work | BASW](#)

⁸ [NCO Carers Manifesto | Carers UK](#)