
NATIONAL CARE SERVICE PROPOSALS

Submission by The Salvation Army



Love God
Love Others

AUGUST 20, 2024
THE SALVATION ARMY - SCOTLAND OFFICE
12a Dryden Road - Edinburgh EH20 9LZ

The Salvation Army is a major provider of services in Scotland, with a network of residential centres for people experiencing homelessness, as well as Housing First, resettlement and floating support programmes helping service users integrate into their communities. These services and programmes frequently engage with public health services in providing support for people experiencing issues of mental health and addictions. In addition, The Salvation Army in Scotland also runs two care homes, and engages with people experiencing challenges in mental health and addictions through a network of 70 community churches (or “Corps”) throughout the country, extending from the Borders to the Shetland islands.

In addition to the wealth of practical experience and expertise resulting from these frontline activities, The Salvation Army has also partnered with the University of Stirling to set up a research centre looking into substance use, with a related MSc postgraduate degree (information at [Salvation Army Centre for Addiction Services and Research | About | University of Stirling](#) and [MSc Substance Use \(Online\) at University of Stirling \(postgraduatesearch.com\)](#)). First established in 2017, the partnership with the University of Stirling was instrumental in developing the Scottish Drug & Alcohol Strategy, which has since been extended to operations throughout the UK and Ireland territory of The Salvation Army.

The Salvation Army therefore has a direct interest in the current proposals to establish a National Care Service (NCS) in Scotland. The following observations draw on the expertise and experience of frontline staff in the Homelessness services department, the Addictions services team, and Older Peoples’ Services, which will be most directly affected by the associated changes.

The Salvation Army is broadly supportive of the proposals and intends to engage constructively with the proposals and indeed with the NCS once it is in place. We believe that the proposals have the potential to significantly improve current service delivery: the sharing of information between the NCS and NHS could enhance support, the allocation of individuals to appropriate care may be quicker if the process is implemented thoroughly and there are sufficient services, and individuals could benefit from greater wrap-around support, especially if the proposals are modified to allow for dual diagnosis, in line with the recommendations of our recent “Breaking the Cycle” report (see [BreakingTheCycle_digital.pdf \(salvationarmy.org.uk\)](#)).

We are however concerned that the transition to the NCS presents particular challenges which will need to be addressed if these benefits are to be realised. Given that there have been a number of recent changes regarding processes for accessing health, addiction, and mental health services and for accessing related benefits, there is a danger that another big change may create confusion. We are concerned that the transfer of services might result in people “slipping through the gaps” and being missed, with also a reduction in the level of support currently needed and provided. The Salvation Army believes that a clear communication strategy and detailed action plan must be developed and rolled out before implementation begins. It will be especially important to ensure that changes or increases in bureaucratic processes do not place further obstacles in the way of those seeking support.

While we applaud the intention to put people at the centre, and empower and enable the social care workforce, especially those on the frontline, The Salvation Army is concerned that the proposals do not sufficiently articulate how this is to be accomplished. The proposals need further development to ensure an explicit focus on setting the required culture, relationships, and behaviours. In this connection, NCS local boards should ensure a wider range of representatives, instead of limiting the numbers of people with

experience of the care, carers, third sector, as is currently the case. This would ensure a broader perspective and be more co-productive, as well as ensuring a wider pool of people able and willing to assist on care boards.

The Salvation Army also finds that the aim of a person-centred approach conflicts with the limitations on dual access to services. We have often found that residents in our lifehouses (residential hostels), or in supported housing experience significant difficulties in accessing addiction and mental support services. The recently published “Breaking the Cycle” report therefore recommends that no-one should be denied mental health support on the basis that they are using drugs or consuming alcohol, and we are deeply concerned that the proposals state that services would only look at one aspect.

The Salvation Army is also deeply concerned that the proposed National Care Service might increase the disparity between commissioned third sector workers, who are already paid less than their colleagues in statutory provision. Any further disparity will intensify the stress placed on an already fragile sector which is experiencing a staffing and recruitment crisis with poor pay and conditions, with negative effects on the stability of service provision. We therefore urge that this disparity be addressed, to ensure that the NCS is not undermined by the collateral effects of the proposals, which risk setting very unstable foundations

Finally, The Salvation Army is concerned that vital services we currently work with might no longer continue to engage with us, with services being transferred to use on a bigger scale. This may be a particular danger with services provided by “special care boards” if their responsibilities are not anchored in a specific geographical location. We fear that this may result in negative impacts on continuity and consistency of care, and urge that the structuring of the proposed NCS allow sufficient latitude for boards to maintain established local partnerships.

In closing, we reiterate The Salvation Army’s desire to engage constructively with these proposals. We would be happy to give evidence in person to the committee, and members are welcome to visit our centres and programmes to find out more and discuss the issues further.

Edinburgh
20th August 2024