

  
Adult  
and  
Health[Covid-19 - General](#)[Alcohol and Drugs](#)[Alzheimer's/Dementia](#)[Mental Health](#)[Other Health & Social Care](#)**Covid-19 - General**[Scottish Covid-19 Inquiry newsletter](#)

The Scottish Covid-19 public inquiry has issued its autumn/winter newsletter setting out the inquiry's progress to date. The newsletter notes that the health and social care impact hearings, which started in October 2023, will pause in mid-December and will resume in February 2024. This is to allow the UK-Covid Inquiry to hold its public hearings relating to Scotland. The newsletter also notes the initial listening project, Lets Be Heard, will close its engagement phase on 20 December 2023. The Chair of the inquiry has encouraged those who have not already taken part in the listening project to do so in the final weeks and share their experiences of the pandemic.



## Alcohol and Drugs

### [Drugs and alcohol workforce action plan 2023-26](#)

The Scottish Government has published its drugs and alcohol workforce action plan for the period 2023-2026. The plan sets out specific actions to address the challenges facing the drugs and alcohol workforce, including completing a workforce mapping exercise of the scope of the drugs and alcohol workforce across Scotland, improving drugs and alcohol workforce data, improving pathways into the drugs and alcohol sector, continue to support the additional annual recruitment of up to 20 additional Addiction/ Recovery Worker Training Programme trainees per year, and continuing to progress training opportunities.

## Mental Health

### [Highest level of Scots on welfare guardianship orders reported by MWC](#)

The Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland has published its latest report on welfare guardianship orders, noting that as of March 2023 there were 17,849 Scots living with a welfare guardianship order. This is highest level recorded and a 4.4% increase compared to 2022. In 2022/23, the Commission visited 205 people who are subject to welfare guardianship orders with 45.1% of these visits being to a care home.

## Other Health and Social Care

### [New report shows more people with learning disabilities using digital technology](#)

The Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities (SCLD) has published a report looking at how digital technology can transform the lives of people with learning disabilities. The findings from the report show that more people with learning disabilities are using digital technology since the pandemic and that using technology has had a positive impact on their life. However, the report also found that barriers around accessibility still exist for people with learning disabilities. It makes a number of recommendations for the Scottish Government, including to provide funding for learning disability digital inclusion coordinators across Scotland.

### [Equally Safe 2023 published](#)

A refresh of the Equally Safe strategy has been published by the Scottish Government and COSLA. Equally Safe, Scotland' strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls, was first published in 2014 and updated in 2016, with the most recent refresh committing to actions to prevent violence against women and girls before it occurs, supporting early intervention, and holding perpetrators to account. An [easy read version](#) of the strategy has also been published.



### [Accounts Commission outlines plans for reporting on IJBs](#)

Audit Scotland has published a blog on the pressures facing social care services and the action need to ensure the sustainability of the sector. Angela Leitch, Accounts Commissioner member, notes the recruitment and retention challenges facing the sector, and the challenges brought about by increasing costs. She highlights the work of the Accounts Commission in supporting improvement in the sector and notes changes in how social care issues will be reported on, including developing its yearly bulletin, which focuses on the financial position of Integration Joint Boards (IJBs), into an annual report that will look at how effectively IJBs respond to challenges in the community health and social care sector.

### [Update on National Care Service Bill](#)

The Scottish Government has written to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee to provide further details in relation to the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill, and [responded](#) to the Finance and Public Administration Committee's report on the Financial Memorandum for the Bill. The response to the Finance and Public Administration Committee's report includes an update to the Financial Memorandum and a copy of the latest Programme Business Case for the National Care Service (NCS).

### [Court rules UK government block of Scotland's gender reform bill as legal](#)

The Court of Session in Edinburgh has ruled that the UK Government acted lawfully in blocking Scotland's Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill. The Bill, which would make it easier for people to change their legally-recognised sex, was passed by the Scottish Parliament last year, however it was blocked from becoming law over fears that the Bill would impact on the 2010 Equality Act.

### [Findings from the Carers Census 2022-23 published](#)

The Scottish Government has published data on unpaid carers who were supported by local services during 2022-23. The recently published findings from the Carers Census show that there were 44,310 individual carers in 2022-23 which is a 5% increase from the previous year. It also notes that there was a "notable deprivation effect for unpaid carers supported by local services" and that the most widespread impact of providing unpaid care was on carers' emotional wellbeing.

### [Updated NHS Scotland National Access Policy published](#)

An updated NHS Scotland National Access Policy outlining a national approach for health boards to ensure equitable, safe, clinically effective and efficient access to services for their patients has been launched. The Policy states that Health Boards are required to ensure the delivery of waiting time standards, and includes a set of key principles and responsibilities for Health Boards. Each Health Board is also required to produce a Local Access Policy which outlines how the principles set out in the National Access Policy apply to their local services.



### [Progress report published on NHS Recovery Plan](#)

The Scottish Government has published an annual report for 2023 setting out the progress made on the NHS Recovery Plan 2021-2026. The report notes that in 2022/23 £8 million in funding was allocated to health boards to support recruitment of over 800 international nurses, midwives and AHPs, and a further £3 million in funding has been allocated to date in 2023/24. The report also notes the progress made around increasing the number of GPs in Scotland, stating that in 2022 Scotland's GP headcount was at a record high at 5,209.

### [SSSC 2022-23 annual report](#)

The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) has published its 2022-23 annual report. Highlights from the report note that over 300 people attended the online 'Continuing the Conversation' sessions in August 2022, over 5000 SSSC open badges have been awarded, and a new Registration open badge was launched.

### [Union leaders warn of impact of new immigration plans on social care](#)

Learning Disability Today (LDT) has highlighted concerns raised by union leaders regarding new plans to cut net migration. The new plans announced by the Home Secretary include preventing care workers from bringing family dependents to the UK and raising the minimum income for family visas to £38,700. LDT notes that union leaders have warned that the new plans will exacerbate the high levels of vacancies across the social care sector.

**Disclaimer**

This weekly bulletin is produced as an update on the key issues concerning adults and health.

Each item in the bulletin has a hyperlinked headline that will take the reader to the original source.

We collate items from our parliamentary and Scottish Government monitoring covering health and social care news from throughout the UK, and current research and policy development. We use a variety of sources for the bulletin, including alerts from [Newsdirect](#), [Community Care](#), [Children & Young People Now](#) and [ISD Scotland](#).

We aim to be representative rather than comprehensive, so we try to cover only the main Scottish stories, along with some stories from the rest of the UK. The purpose of the bulletin is to alert readers to items of interest. It should be noted that these items are the works of others and are neither authorised nor endorsed by the Care Inspectorate, with the exception of publications which are identified as Care Inspectorate publications.

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