

Unite the Union are calling on members of the Edinburgh Integrated Joint Board to drop the current bed based care proposals and open consultations with members of the public and care staff on the future of care homes in Edinburgh.

The second principle of the Scottish Government's Health and Social Care Standards is 'I am fully informed in all decisions about my care and support', yet the decisions in the bed based care strategy have been made without any consultation with the current residents of homes or Edinburgh citizens. Should the proposals be accepted, choice will be taken from Edinburgh residents, as they will be left without publicly-owned and operated residential care in their city — with the options to accept home-based care or to use a privately-owned care home. We appreciate that the remaining Council homes will offer nursing care, but these closures will see the loss of over 200 beds.

Home care is not a suitable option for all. Not all families can become carers. Not all citizens have families that can support them. And even if this were the case, residential care offers peace of mind and protection against social isolation and the consequent impacts upon mental and physical health.

We also question how this home care would be delivered. Would this also be by private providers? With a workforce under pressure to ensure visits are completed in tight timescales? A 15 minute visit hardly provides the level of social interaction residents of care homes currently enjoy.

As the pandemic has exposed, and as the Care Inspectorate results testify, for-profit care providers often provide a lower standard of care. Their staff often have poorer terms and conditions, higher turnover and no collective bargaining to ensure their voices are heard at work. As the current model for the National Care Service looks to disempower local authorities by focussing on commissioning services, Unite has a real concern this may lead to a race to the bottom, favouring cheaper providers, with dire consequences for care workers and citizens alike.

We need a model of care with the interests of people at its heart, not the interests of shareholders. We believe the citizens of Edinburgh must have the option of publicly owned and operated residential care homes.

Fundamentally, we believe that public services are best designed in conjunction with those that will use and deliver them, and this aspect has been sorely lacking in the original proposals and the subsequent discussions. The papers today show consideration for consultation, it is alarming to see the lack of appetite for engaging meaningfully with the public, and even more shocking to hear that the IJB can ride roughshod over Council and NHS policies designed to ensure citizens can have their say and to protect staff against forcing changes on them without consultation. Consultation is not a formality, but a key part of designing effective services and empowering workforces and communities.

With the recommendations of the Feeley Report looking to further empower IJBs, we share the worries expressed by COSLA, about their accountability and their relationship with local democracy. We call on the councillors at today's meeting to raise this concern with their colleagues in Holyrood.

We are concerned about the absence of alternative options in the Bed Based Care proposals.

We have been told that the four homes in line for closure are no longer fit for purpose. While recognising the homes may not be ideal, The Care Inspectorate reports have made no recommendations or requirements related to room size and the provision of en suites—in fact, no mention of these as points of concern. Recent inspections have commended the standards of care provided in these homes. Any discussion on the fate of these homes must first fully explore options to allow them to continue to provide this high standard of care.

We look forward to working with the EIJB on proposals
that puts people first,
that are informed by the views of Edinburgh citizens and our talented care staff and
that provide adequate detail to allow a considered conversation with the communities that these
homes are part
so we can have a future vision for care homes that works for the people of Edinburgh.