



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustie

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Social Care Collaborative Forum

Delivery Plan 2024/25

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1. Background and Context

Introduction

1. The values of social care recognise and respect the inherent worth of every individual. Social care is about supporting social wellbeing. Key areas of social wellbeing are relationships and belonging, independence and responsibility, purpose and meaning and safety and wellness. Social care services support these key aspects of wellbeing by promoting participation in family, social and community life, supporting choice and decision making, supporting people to live their lives in a way which has meaning and value to them and by supporting people to keep safe and well.
2. It is within this context that the Department of Health (DoH) is leading a programme of work on service improvement and the delivery of transformation in Health and Social Care. The proposals to reform adult social care sit within this broader framework of improvement and transformation. To support the adult social care reform programme, the DoH has established a Social Care Collaborative Forum (the Collaborative Forum) to provide vision, along with strategic advice and guidance on social care, and take forward agreed actions to support improvement and transformation.
3. As a strategic partnership, the Collaborative Forum comprises senior representatives from the statutory, voluntary and private social care sectors, along with representatives from the DoH, sector bodies and, as appropriate, other Government Departments.

Aim

4. The overall aim of the adult social care reform programme is to build a sustainable social care sector that enables people to live as independently as possible, safely, and in a way that as far as possible, reflects their ambitions for their quality of life.

Social Care Collaborative Forum

5. The purpose of the Collaborative Forum is to provide a formal mechanism for the DoH and representatives of the Social Care Sector (statutory, voluntary/community and private sectors) to work together as partners to build shared values and deliver improvements that will support and sustain social care now and into the future. The Collaborative Forum is based on the premise that social care is diverse and cross-cutting, while important to health, it increasingly should also involve engagement with other sectors such as housing and employment and the respective Government Departments.

6. The Collaborative Forum is working to implement proposals arising out of the consultation on the Reform of Adult Social Care and has a clear purpose to align the work of the Reform of Adult Social Care with the DoH strategic priorities for improvement and transformation in the HSC. This will ensure that the position and contribution of social care in the wider HSC system is both recognised and valued.
7. The Collaborative Forum recognises that the Health and Social Care system is under extreme pressure to respond to the needs of citizens. Workstreams have been established to deliver short, medium, and longer-term actions in response to these pressures, as follows:

Ref	Workstream	Lead responsibility
1	Maximising Capacity (Home Care/Care Homes)	Mark McGuicken (DoH Core) Ciara McKillop (DoH SPPG)
2	Workforce	Aine Morrison (DoH Core) Catherine Maguire (NISCC)
3	Enhancing Care in Care Homes	Mark McGuicken (DoH Core) Diane Spence (NHSCT)
4	Data, Research and Evidence	Ryan Williams (Connected Health) Declan McAllister (NISCC)
5	Communications	Agnes Lunny (Positive Futures) JP Watson (Domestic Care Group)
6	Commissioning and Contracting	Brendan Whittle (DoH SPPG) Gillian Traub (NHSCT)
7	Supporting Unpaid Carers	Mark McGuicken (DoH Core) Angela Phillips (Carers NI)
8	Supported Living	Mark McGuicken (DoH Core) Leslie-Anne Newton (ARC)

8. The Collaborative Forum is clear that the implementation of reforms in social care will take time and recognises the longer-term nature of some of this work.

Financial Context

9. The work of the Collaborative Forum is taking place within a significantly constrained financial context. As such, the workstreams are progressing activities within existing partner resources. It is acknowledged that while much of the proposed work for 2024/25 may be achieved through the reconfiguration of existing financial resources, others will require additional resources in order to fully implement. Where this is the case, appropriate business cases will be developed to enable participation in wider funding considerations.

Interdependencies

9. Interdependencies exist across the workstreams. The reporting mechanism in place for the workstreams will ensure the Forum discusses any proposed decision to ensure alignment of workstream outcomes.
10. Interdependencies also exist with other programmes of reform activity. This includes the work of:
 - The Social Care Fair Work Forum – in particular pay, terms and conditions across the social care sector;
 - The Children’s Social Care Strategic Reform programme – in particular the work to develop a social care skills mix within the Children’s workforce;
 - The ongoing work to develop and implement a new Learning Disability Service Model; and
 - The wider HSC Improvement and Transformation Programme:
 - Workforce Strategy;
 - Primary Care;
 - Urgent and Emergency Care;
 - Mental Health Strategy;
 - Integrated Care System for Northern Ireland; and
 - Digital transformation.

2. Delivery Plan 2024/25

Basis of Preparation

11. A lot of good work has taken place since the establishment of the Collaborative Forum in April 2023, primarily focussed on building relationships, putting in place appropriate governance structures and improving the understanding of the challenges facing the social care sector and the delivery of safe and effective social care.
12. Social care reform is wide ranging and multi-faceted. Furthermore, in the context of a constrained financial environment, it is not possible to take forward all the actions we would like. The activities that the Collaborative Forum will take forward in 2024/25 will therefore seek to maintain a balance between those actions aimed at delivering immediate improvements in the delivery of social care, and those actions that are longer term in nature but which are an essential component of building the foundations for longer term reform.
13. In developing the Delivery Plan for 2024/25, the following principles have been considered:
 - Implementing evidence-based improvements;
 - Implementing improvements which do not require additional funding; and
 - Monitoring outcomes and impact of improvements.
14. A range of other factors have been considered in shaping thinking around where our collective efforts should be focused during 2024/25. This has included the extent to which individual actions help in addressing the pressures across adult social care – whilst also taking cognisance of constraints to delivery, such as staffing pressures.

Key Themes

15. Taking all these factors into account, the Collaborative Forum's Delivery Plan in 2024/25 will be focused on the following areas:



Headline Actions

16. In support of these three key themes, the following headline actions for each workstream will be taken forward in 2024/25. These are summarised in **Table 1** below, and further detail is provided at **Annex A**.

Ref	Workstream	Headline Actions
1	Maximising Capacity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Develop and test new models of home care delivery. 2) Implement regional model on early discharge review. 3) Implement statutory digital home care solution across all Trusts. 4) Develop a revised regional brokerage system.
2	Workforce	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Publish and commence implementation of the Social Care Workforce Strategy. 2) Develop and publish the Social Care Career Pathways and Continuous Learning Framework. 3) Consider options for increasing international recruitment.
3	Enhancing Care in Care Homes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Develop and agree action plan for CPEA Paper 5 on Care Home Providers. 2) Develop and agree action plan for CPEA paper 6 on A Care Home Market. 3) Update and issue revised Care Standards for Nursing Homes and Residential Care Home Minimum Standards.
4	Data, Research and Evidence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Identify a road map for the delivery of Social Care Data, Research and Evidence. 2) Connect with key stakeholder datasets and continue to build on a Power BI social care intelligence platform. 3) Present a final workstream action plan set out under key themes to deliver on workstream outcomes.

Ref	Workstream	Headline Actions
5	Communications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Deliver Year 4 of the annual '<i>Social care – Making a difference</i>' campaign. 2) Evaluate Years 1-4 of the '<i>Social care – Making a Difference</i>' campaign. 3) Promote the work of the Social Care Collaborative Forum.
6	Commissioning and Contracting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Complete an early assessment of what is required contractually to facilitate Independent Sector (IS) providers to restructure (should they wish to do so in respect of VAT reclaim). 2) Complete review of the Care Home Contract and identify any interdependencies with the Care Home Standards, the 2010 Circular and the Charging for Residential Accommodation Guidance (CRAG). 3) On the basis of the review of the Care Home contracts, provide the HSC Trusts with a regionally consistent contract for them to utilise to secure care home placements from 2025/2026 onwards.
7	Supporting Unpaid Carers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Develop recommendations for an expanded Carers Register for Northern Ireland. 2) Develop recommendations on future information systems for unpaid carers. 3) Complete review of the 2006 Carers Strategy and develop recommendations on the future strategic policy direction for unpaid carers.
8	Supported Living	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Develop an evidence-based review of findings from supported living research. 2) Map existing services commissioned by HSC and Supporting People to consider reach, funding, impact and best practice. 3) Develop a shared definition for Supported Living. 4) Clarify the boundaries and interdependencies between tasks relating to personal care support and housing related support.

3. Reporting and Monitoring

Overview

17. Progress against the Headline Actions will be reported to the meetings of the Collaborative Forum in line with the programme governance arrangements agreed by the Forum.

End of Year Report

18. The Collaborative Forum will prepare an End of Year Report, outlining the key achievements and progress made during the reporting year.

Social Care Collaborative Forum – Headline Actions 2024/25

Workstream	Ref	Headline Actions	By when?	What will be different?
Maximising Capacity	1	Develop and test new models of home care delivery.	Mar-25	An outcomes-based model to replace the current time and task system, that helps to address the particular challenges of rurality.
	2	Assess the outworking of the Early Discharge Review pilot and roll-out agreed model across all Trusts.	Sep-24	The pilot has seen over 1,100 hours re-directed into the home care delivery to date; the regional roll-out will formalise the approach across Trusts with further additional capacity being realised.
	3	Finalise the roll-out of the statutory digital home care solution across all Trusts.	Dec-24	Additional capacity will be released within statutory home care provision which will be re-directed to alleviate unmet need and delayed discharge.
	4	Develop a revised brokerage system that will be implemented on a consistent basis across all Trusts.	Dec-24	Trusts will commission brokerage on a consistent basis which will allow independent sector providers to deliver additional home care capacity across Trust boundaries. This will significantly impact on current unmet need.
Workforce	1	Finalise and publish the Social Care Workforce Strategy.	Dec-24	Clearly understood aims and objectives for the social care workforce over the next 10 years.
	2	Develop and publish the Social Care Career Pathways and Continuous Learning Framework.	Mar-25	A Career Pathway and Continuous Learning Framework for the social care workforce that supports skilled practice by enabling practitioners to engage in career long learning and development.

Workstream	Ref	Headline Actions	By when?	What will be different?
	3	Consider the options for increasing international recruitment of social care staff and for better supporting those already in employment.	Mar-25	A robust understanding of NI's current international social care workforce and a plan for further support and possible expansion.
Enhancing Care in Care Homes	1	Develop and agree action plan for implementation of the recommendations contained within CPEA Paper 5 – Care Home Providers.	Dec-24	Greater accountability from providers, requiring appropriate workforce planning, strengthening regional oversight and clearly setting out the remit for monitoring quality in care home services.
	2	Develop and agree action plan for implementation of the recommendations contained within CPEA Paper 6 – A Care Home Market.	Dec-24	Greater transparency from the care home sector, leading to a focus on the consideration and development of forms of accommodation with support, with care and where continuing health care needs can be met.
	3	Review, update and issue revised Care Standards for Nursing Homes and Residential Care Home Minimum Standards.	Mar-25	Revised standards will incorporate learning from the pandemic and recommendations from the Commissioner for Older People Northern Ireland (COPNI) Home Truths Report/ CPEA Review recommendations/ Enhancing Clinical care Framework, ensuring homes meet the highest standards of care, and regulatory bodies are provided with the necessary framework to monitor performance.
Data, Research and Evidence	1	Identify a road map for the delivery of Social Care Data, Research and Evidence to support recipients of social care across Northern Ireland.	Sep-24	Clarity on the strategic aims/objectives in relation to social care data, and a clear understanding of roles/responsibilities across all sectors to deliver against them.

Workstream	Ref	Headline Actions	By when?	What will be different?
	2	Connect with key stakeholder datasets and continue to build on a Power BI social care intelligence platform.	Sep-24	Enhanced intelligence and analytics on social care service delivery and the registered social care workforce. This will be building on a current intelligence platform in place at the Social Care Council on an interim basis.
	3	<p>Present a final workstream action plan set out under key themes to deliver on workstream outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification and agreement of relevant minimum data sets and data gaps and an aligned research agenda for social care. • Exploring methods of connecting and collecting appropriate data sets in a central, secured warehouse for the provision of analytics and visualisations. • Agreeing data access agreements with relevant stakeholders to share appropriate data for analytics. • Agreeing technical workplan to create sustainable data collection, built in quality assurance and embedded analytics and associated forecasting methods to support current work force profiling and future workforce modelling and planning. 	Mar-25	<p>A set of agreed data definitions for Social Care with data set integration underpinned by signed Data Access Agreements.</p> <p>Identified digital integration of data sets to ensure a regular supply of data on a timely basis into the agreed data collection point.</p>

Workstream	Ref	Headline Actions	By when?	What will be different?
Communications	1	Deliver Year 4 of the annual ' <i>Social care – Making a difference</i> ' campaign.	Summer 2024 (Main campaign) Winter 2024 (Mini campaign)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater awareness and understanding amongst the public of the value of social care. • Social care is seen as a valuable career choice. • Social care workers who are reached by the campaign will feel more valued.
	2	Evaluate Years 1-4 of the ' <i>Social care – Making a Difference</i> ' campaign.	Mar-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater understanding of the value of social care in our community. • Social care is seen as a valued and professional career. • Increase in the numbers of people applying for social care roles and improvement in retention rates across the sector.
	3	Promote the work of the Social Care Collaborative Forum.	Ongoing to Mar-25	Greater awareness and understanding of the work of the Forum by the public, elected representatives and other Government Departments.
Commissioning and Contracting	1	Recruit Project Team comprising Project Manager and legal support.	May-24	Skilled resources in place to deliver on this complex legal and operational review.
	2	Complete an early assessment of what is required contractually to facilitate IS providers to restructure (should they wish to do so in respect of VAT reclaim).	Sep-24	A revised contract that will allow IS providers to engage with HMRC on VAT matters.
	3	Complete review of the Care Home Contract and identify any interdependencies with the Care Home Standards, the 2010 Circular and the CRAG.	Dec-24	A revised and updated care homes contract ready for pre-procurement assessment.

Workstream	Ref	Headline Actions	By when?	What will be different?
	4	Complete contract pre-procurement assessments and other actions required to address legal requirements (Rural Needs Assessment/ EQIA/ stakeholder engagement/ PPI/ GDPR).	Jan-25	A revised and updated care homes contract ready for procurement.
	5	Initiate contract procurement.	Mar-25	
Supporting Unpaid Carers	1	Develop recommendations for an expanded Carers Register for Northern Ireland.	Sep-24	An expanded and improved register will provide more information about unpaid carers in different localities and the data needed to improve service planning and development.
	2	Develop recommendations on future information systems for unpaid carers.	Sep-24	Better information will help improve services, support and other assistance, to help improve outcomes for unpaid carers.
	3	Complete review of the 2006 Carers Strategy and develop recommendations on the future strategic policy direction for unpaid carers.	Jan-25	Clearly understood strategic aims and objectives aimed at improving the lives of unpaid carers over the next 10 years.
Supported Living	1	Develop an evidence-based review of findings from supported living research.	Sep-24	This will improve planning and future delivery of Supported Living.
	2	Map existing services commissioned by HSC and Supporting People to consider reach, funding, impact and best practice.	Sep-24	Better information will help improve services, support and assistance, to allow vulnerable adults to live more independently within local communities.

Workstream	Ref	Headline Actions	By when?	What will be different?
	3	Develop a shared definition for Supported Living.	Dec 24	This will enable the development of proposals and recommendations to reshape how services are commissioned, regulated and delivered.
	4	Clarify the boundaries and interdependencies between tasks relating to personal care support and housing related support.	Mar-25	Better planning, delivery of services and clearer delineation of funding streams between health and housing will improve the service delivery for vulnerable adults.