

**British Geriatrics Society**  
Improving healthcare for older people

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Older People's Health Team  
Scottish Government  
Area GR  
St Andrews House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

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Dear Older People's Health Team,

### **Health and Social Care Strategy for Older People**

The British Geriatrics Society (BGS) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Health and Social Care Strategy for Older People. The BGS is the membership organisation for all healthcare professionals engaged in the treatment and care of older people across the UK. Since 1947 our members have been at the forefront of transforming the quality of care available to older people. Our vision is for a society where all older people receive high-quality patient-centred care when and where they need it. We currently have over 4,500 members across the UK, including more than 400 in Scotland.

#### **General comments**

The BGS is pleased to see this focus on older people's health and social care from the Scottish Government and notes that many of the priorities highlighted in the Strategy are already happening across Scotland. The Strategy highlights the importance of personalised, integrated care for older people which is what our members are constantly striving to provide to the people they care for.

The Scottish Care of Older People (SCoOP) Project<sup>1</sup> highlights areas of good practice across Scotland, showing what good healthcare for older people looks like. While the project shows that there is variation across Scotland, it also shows that in many parts of the country, the ambitions of this strategy are already well-embedded with healthcare professionals working to provide better care for the older population.

The Older People's Team may also be interested to know that the BGS is in the process of developing a blueprint for older people's care, showcasing what good age-attuned integrated care looks like. This project is underway and will cover wellbeing in later life, proactive and anticipatory chronic care, urgent community response, technology enabled ambulatory care, comprehensive acute hospital care, long term care, palliative and end of life care, population health, improving quality and value and integrated workforce planning. We intend to publish this document in the autumn and would be happy to discuss it with the team.

Patron HRH The Prince of Wales

## **Place and wellbeing**

Our members know that so much of keeping older people healthy happens away from healthcare settings and it is really positive to see the focus on this in the strategy. We are concerned, as raised in the consultation document, that many of the services that support people to stay healthy and independent are provided by small, local organisations who rely on short-term funding to keep operating. This means constant uncertainty for those providing the service as well as the older people using it. We urge the Scottish Government to consider whether these small organisations could be better supported on a long-term basis.

We are also pleased to see the focus in this section on loneliness and social isolation. We know that some older people experience loneliness and social isolation more than other age groups and that the COVID-19 pandemic will have had an impact on this with many experiencing a greater level of isolation over the last two years or having lost friends and loved ones during the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a considerable impact on older people and the impact on emotional and mental health will be long-lasting. It will be important for these issues to be central to decision making for the Scottish Government as it makes plans to move on from the pandemic.

## **Preventative and proactive care**

We are pleased to see such a focus on proactive and preventative care for older people. We know that outcomes are better for older people when action is taken at an early stage rather than waiting for a crisis situation. Early intervention is not only better for the individual but saves money for the NHS and systems as this delays or prevents more intensive treatment.

The BGS welcomes the focus in the consultation document on aspects of prevention such as podiatry and nutrition. BGS members are aware of the impact of these seemingly simple and common-sense aspects of prevention, as highlighted in our 2019 report *Healthier for Longer*.<sup>ii</sup> It is important however to note that some of these services are seen as easy targets for cost-savings when services are required to cut back. It will be important for the Scottish Government to continue to prioritise these services to ensure that older people have access to preventative care they need.

The BGS is very supportive of the importance placed on Anticipatory Care Planning. We know that it is very important for older people to have the opportunity to discuss and record what they wish to happen should their health deteriorate to a point that they are unable to communicate their wishes. It is important to note that Anticipatory Care Planning is a process rather than a one-off discussion and that plans should evolve over time.

We welcome the acknowledgment that older people from minority ethnic communities experience poorer health outcomes than other groups and would be interested to hear how the consultation process has engaged with these groups to ensure that this strategy works for older people from all ethnic backgrounds. We would also be interested to know how the views of other minority communities have been taken into account, such as older people from the LGBTQ+ community.

## **Integrated planned care**

BGS welcomes the focus on integration of care. We know that lack of integration can be incredibly frustrating to older people and can lead to delays and worse outcomes for patients as they wait for care packages. Integration between health and social care is

particularly important and as the consultation document highlights, there are examples of good practice across Scotland but this is not consistent.

While the following section of the consultation document discusses recovery from surgery, we would note that the document does not cover perioperative care of older people undergoing surgery (POPS). We know that an increasing number of people undergoing surgery are living with frailty and that focusing on perioperative care for this population can have a significant impact on their postoperative recovery. The BGS has worked with the Centre for Perioperative Care to produce the *Guideline for Perioperative Care for People Living with Frailty Undergoing Elective and Emergency Surgery*<sup>iii</sup> and would suggest that this should be considered for inclusion in the final strategy.

### **Integrated unscheduled care**

Despite best intentions, older people's healthcare is often unscheduled with emergency treatment either in primary or secondary care settings. The aforementioned guidance about perioperative care is as relevant to those undergoing emergency surgery as those undergoing scheduled surgical procedures.

Many BGS members in Scotland are involved in delivering Hospital at Home services, which are highlighted in the consultation document. We know that hospital can put older people at risk of deconditioning and developing hospital acquired infections. In addition, many older people appreciate the option of receive hospital level care at home. We are pleased that the Scottish Government recognises the benefits that Hospital at Home services bring to patients and services and we welcome the Government's ongoing commitment to such services. We would however urge the Government to be realistic in its targets for this type of care. Recent funding announcements have stated that the Government is aiming to double Hospital at Home capacity by the end of this year.<sup>iv</sup> BGS members in Scotland have suggested that this might not be realistic, especially given the current workforce crisis in health and social care and the challenges that some, particularly rural, areas face in establishing such services. BGS will be publishing a document to support members setting up these types of services in the coming weeks and would be glad to share this with the team when it is finalised.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Health and Social Care Strategy for Older People. If you have any questions about our submission or would like to arrange a meeting to discuss the points we have made in further detail, please contact our Policy Manager Sally Greenbrook at [s.greenbrook@bgs.org.uk](mailto:s.greenbrook@bgs.org.uk).

Yours sincerely,

Dr Rowan Wallace  
Chair, BGS Scotland Council  
Consultant Geriatrician, NHS Ayrshire and Arran

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- <sup>i</sup> Ellis, G and Myint, P, 2021. *Scottish Care of Older People (SCoOP) Project*. Available at: <https://www.bgs.org.uk/resources/scottish-care-of-older-people-scoop-project> (accessed 24 June 2022)
- <sup>ii</sup> British Geriatrics Society, 2019. *Healthier for Longer: How healthcare professionals can support older people*. Available at: <https://www.bgs.org.uk/resources/healthier-for-longer-how-healthcare-professionals-can-support-older-people> (accessed 23 June 2022)
- <sup>iii</sup> Centre for Perioperative Care and British Geriatrics Society, 2021. *Guideline for Perioperative Care for People Living with Frailty Undergoing Elective and Emergency Surgery*. Available at: <https://www.cpoc.org.uk/sites/cpoc/files/documents/2021-09/CPOC-BGS-Frailty-Guideline-2021.pdf> (accessed 24 June 2022)
- <sup>iv</sup> Scottish Government, 2022. *Hospital at Home*. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/news/hospital-at-home-1/> (accessed 24 June 2022)