



**CLIMATE ACTION  
AND THE SOCIAL  
CARE COLLECTIVE**



**Scottish Care**  
Voice of the independent care sector



# Climate Action and the Social Care Collective

## Roundtable Series - Report

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### Introduction

This report gathers learning from the Climate Action and Social Care Collective event series co-hosted by the Health and Social Care Academy (the Academy) a programme of the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) and Scottish Care to explore climate action in the context of social care.

Health and care data is limited in Scotland, and there is currently no disaggregation on CO2 emissions, however estimates indicate that the greenhouse gas emissions solely related to heating and cooling make the healthcare sector the fifth-largest contributor in the world.<sup>1</sup> In terms of action in Scotland, research is being done on the delivery of social care in a changing climate but there are currently no policy deliverables.<sup>2</sup>

Care provision is part of a mixed market economy, with both private and public sector delivering social care in Scotland. The sector is both affected by and contributes to climate change and action should be taken by a range of different bodies, including government, local authorities, health and social care partnerships and care providers to effect change. National attention must be urgently given to achieve a development strategy in social care which embeds sustainable environment concerns and supports inclusive climate action.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.iema.net/resources/blog/2019/10/21/healthcare-without-harm-carbon-footprint-of-healthcare#:~:text=The%20report%20conclusion%20was%20that,largest%20emitter%20on%20the%20planet>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2019/09/climate-ready-scotland-second-scottish-climate-change-adaptation-programme-2019-2024/documents/climate-ready-scotland-second-scottish-climate-change-adaptation-programme-2019-2024/climate-ready-scotland-second-scottish-climate-change-adaptation-programme-2019-2024/govscot%3Adocument/climate-ready-scotland-second-scottish-climate-change-adaptation-programme-2019-2024.pdf>

Some of the greatest health challenges we face —noncommunicable diseases (like cancer, Alzheimer’s and stroke), health inequalities, climate change, and health care costs—are highly complex. Promoting healthy communities, and in particular health equity across the population requires that we address the social determinants [of health] and be inclusive of the care sector.

For communities to understand how climate change affects their lives, stakeholders with experience in both sustainability efforts and the social care sector need to communicate to share knowledge and insights. Innovative solutions that create dialogue and informed decision-making, that work across traditional government policy siloes are required. The sector must support delivery of messages to stakeholders in a positive and effectual way as it is important to build positive dialogue to create action.

## The ALLIANCE and Scottish Care asks

The ALLIANCE recognises climate change is an area where climate action is required. This series calls upon recommendations from several calls in the ALLIANCE 2021 Manifesto about key actions that needs to be taken in the health and social care, including the creation of a £25m social care climate change innovation fund.<sup>3</sup> This series also aligns with the Academy’s ‘Five Provocations for the future of health and social care.’<sup>4</sup> In particular, the provocation ‘Emphasising Humanity’ is relevant to this discussion: “We need to emphasise the humanity and human rights of people accessing and providing support and services, to create relationships that enable people to flourish”.<sup>5</sup>

Scottish Care’s 2021 Manifesto included environmental sustainability in areas where we have the opportunity to affect change - in use of energy, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, food and procurement practices.<sup>6</sup> All of these have implications in social care and help support more sustainable lifestyles.



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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/equally-valued-the-alliance-2021-scottish-parliament-election-manifesto/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/resources/five-provocations-for-the-future-of-health-and-social-care/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/ALLIANCE-Academy-Provocation-Paper-Sustainable-Health-Care-COVID-19-Climate-Change-September-2020.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://scottishcare.org/scottish-care-manifesto-2021/>

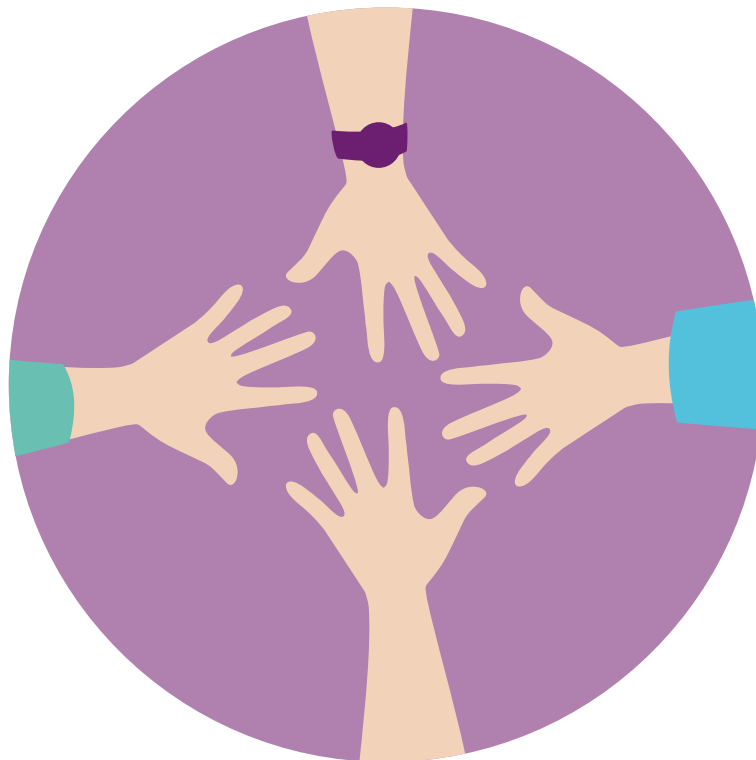
## About the event series

The purpose of the series was to discuss and explore the role that the social care sector must play in the context of climate action. This involved understanding what is going on in the sector regarding environmental sustainability, the barriers to climate action and what would help if the resources were readily available.

The series was promoted in newsletters, on social media and across ALLIANCE and Scottish Care networks. Delegates included those working in Scottish Government, local authorities, higher education, third sector, and health and social care including service providers.

The purpose of the series was to bring together individuals, organisations and sectors to build a network motivated to call for change and take action.

Speakers involved in the series presented from different perspectives and highlighted the need for climate action to sit within the wider context of radical and transformational change. Discussions were framed from the perspective of taking an assets-based approach.



Name of event	Date	Main themes	Speakers	Hot Report
<b>Climate Action and the Social Care Collective Roundtable 1</b>	11/08/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the social care context.</li> <li>• Exploring the challenges for the social care sector.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Christine McGregor, Scottish Government</li> <li>• Anna Beswick, Sniffer</li> <li>• Katie Gallogly-Swan, Scottish Women's Budget Group</li> </ul>	Hot Report 1 <sup>7</sup>
<b>Climate Action and the Social Care Collective Roundtable 2</b>	15/09/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate innovation</li> <li>• Solutions focused</li> <li>• Cross collaborative action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kenneth Watt, British Red Cross</li> <li>• Christine Owen, People Powered Results (PPR), Nesta</li> <li>• Bev Knight, Redeem Exchange</li> </ul>	Hot Report 2 <sup>8</sup>
<b>Climate Action and the Social Care Collective Roundtable 3</b>	20/10/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate Action and Social Care Principles.</li> <li>• Wellbeing economy.</li> <li>• Social care and net zero</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lukas Hardt, WEALL Scotland</li> <li>• Allan Crooks, Zero Waste Scotland</li> </ul>	Hot Report 3 <sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Climate-Change-and-Social-Care-Collective-Hot-Report-1.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Academy-Climate-Change-and-Social-Care-Collective-Hot-Report-2.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Academy-Climate-Change-and-Social-Care-Collective-Hot-Report-3.pdf>

## Format

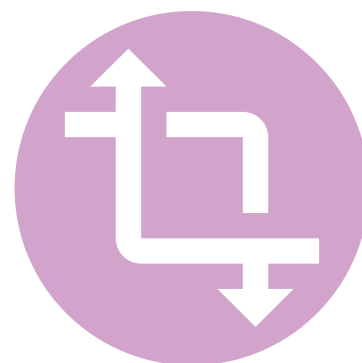
The event series was held online facilitated by a chair. The session included presentations by a panel of 2-3 speakers, questions and answers and space for breakout discussions to give participants the chance to delve deeper into the discussion, provide their perspective and insight. Short 'hot reports' were produced after each event to provide an overview and key emerging themes.

## Findings

While there no one expert, there are many in the sector who are keen to learn more and engage. Over the course of the series, it was clear that based on capacity and engagement there are many other issues in the sector that take precedence to climate action in social care.

### Transformational change - shifting the narrative

It is clear climate change isn't at the forefront of social care. Current pressures within the sector, the complex landscape of the COVID-19 pandemic and implications of Brexit all take priority. Current considerations refer to established issues including workforce recruitment and retention which link to wider systemic issues.



We are at a “point of shift within social care,” said Christine McGregor, Unit Head at the Directorate for Mental Health and Social Care at Scottish Government. Speakers and participants highlighted the opportunities available following the publication and recommendations of the Independent Review of Adult Social Care in the proposed creation of a National Care Service (which was out for consultation throughout the duration of the roundtable series). Discourse acknowledged that climate change was absent in the consultation document.

As part of the series, we heard from Lukas Hardt, Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEALL Scotland) who spoke about the Wellbeing Economy in terms of social justice on a healthy planet. He highlighted that the social care sector plays a dual role in contributing to our economy (£3.4 billion) as well as serving important human needs.<sup>10</sup> Reforming the economy is a climate action, as improving how people are valued in turn promotes a more equitable society.

Katie Galloghy-Swan from Scottish Women's Budget Group highlighted how care and the care sector is historically and still undervalued. She emphasised that the social

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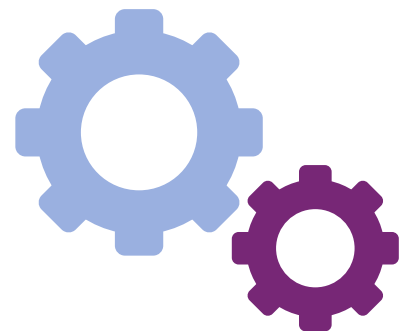
<sup>10</sup> <https://data.sssc.uk.com/data-news/15-announcements/175-the-economic-value-of-adult-social-care>

care sector is predominately (83%) made up of women in “low paid, understaffed and precariously contracted jobs.” In 2019, the Fair Work Convention published Fair Work in Scotland’s Social Care Sector report which looked at change and reform required to enable a sustainable workforce.<sup>11</sup> The report discussed how the undervaluing of social care is linked to the status of women’s work and must be addressed (e.g. tackling the gender pay gap). There is a need to invest in care in a way that helps to tackle the gender divide, rather than perpetuate it. This involves shifting our perception of the economy, how we measure growth, consider all forms of work and protect workers' rights.

Until we change the way we view, deliver and value social care and its workforce, there will be obstacles to taking climate action. A shift in perception of social care is required; it is an investment, not a cost. Transformation is required across society, not just within the social care sector, to enable greater support and commitment for climate action. Christine Owen from the People Powered Results team at Nesta outlined the need to use collaborative and innovative ways of working to achieve results, such as with place-based approaches – person-centred, bottom-up ways to meet the unique needs of people. Given the range of causes, a joined-up, place-based approach is necessary to tackle the complex causal pathway of health inequalities.

## Commissioning and procurement

There was recognition throughout the series that that the role of commissioning and procurement needs to be better understood and more joined up to understand how different sectors are connected and play a role in the delivery of care and support.



Many concerns in sustainability in social care circle back to longstanding issues of insufficient funding available and the undervaluing of social care. Improvements to the commissioning and procurement processes would be beneficial to implement long term change.

There was recognition of a challenge for the workforce and providers to take responsibility for implications of climate change when they have no control over commissioning and procurement. Christine McGregor spoke about [internal] work being undertaken by Scottish Government to enable better understanding of the climate change targets that social care has to meet and by when, citing recognition that there are challenges in driving and enabling change. In subsequent sessions, participants exhibited strong interest in exploration of the role and responsibility of commissioning and procurement bodies in creating the conditions to achieve the objectives outlined in the Heat in Buildings Strategy, among other strategies that aim

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.fairworkconvention.scot/our-report-on-fair-work-in-social-care/>

to hit Net Zero targets. This was also discussed by Allan Crooks from Zero Waste Scotland, who spoke about the need to address people, places, kickstart investment with long term market and regulatory frameworks that provide economic opportunity to support the sector.

Environmental sustainability must be recognised as of equal importance for both commissioning authorities and for providers and staff and should ideally be a costed component in social care support commissioning and procurement.

## Workforce

Participants spoke about the contribution the sector makes to the economy and its role as a source of employment. Katie Galloghy-Swan highlighted that when considering potential vehicles for change like the Just Transition, the sector is largely neglected from the discourse. The care sector is relatively low carbon emitting and therefore helps provide green jobs.



Changing the narrative surrounding social care will have implications for the workforce. Building a sustainable sector requires investment. This means providing appropriate pay, terms and conditions as well as training and development opportunities. Participants commented that a large proportion of the workforce are in poverty and suggested that we need to move towards a workforce that better supports workers where climate change is embedded. Providing support would give the workforce the time and space to get involved in conversations about climate change and take action.

Participants expressed that the workforce needs to feel empowered and supported to get involved in participatory processes. For example, it was proposed that it would be good to hear thoughts on health and safety managing climate related risks (e.g. adverse weather) and thinking about more sustainable and safe practices. Participants mentioned that the voice of the workforce features as part of the Fair Work Convention report and can play a role in exploring problems and identifying solutions.

Impact consideration must be applied to the workforce and those in receipt of care and support through a human rights and equal access perspective. Climate effects such as extreme heat, air pollution, flooding and food insecurity can disproportionately affect vulnerable groups and result in significant health threats.<sup>12</sup> An intersectionality approach to health (inclusive of social care) would be supportive of rights-based approaches to population health. This would take into consideration protected characteristics and particular groups at risk.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/climate-change/vulnerable-populations>

## Aware and informed

Action needs to take place now. It was felt that responsibility should sit primarily with government rather than with individuals. However, for meaningful change to happen, buy in will be required at every level. For example, a bottom-up approach could help influence government to provide better resourcing. Throughout the series we heard that there is real appetite to get involved and be 'ahead of the curve', but collaboration and leadership is required to drive change forward.



One participant commented:

"There's not a lack of interest in climate change but there's a need to have a conversation on it and recognise what needs to be done... [there are] challenges in reaching out and making climate change relevant to individuals and communities."

Greater understanding of climate change, the implications it will have on the sector and across society, is necessary to support action. This was outlined by Anna Beswick from Sniffer Scotland. Anna spoke about climate resilience, adaptation, and the impact of a changing climate, not least on the more vulnerable people in society. Learning to live with the unavoidable impacts, barriers to action are and how to empower people to take action are all key elements to embedding climate action in policy and practice.

We heard that people need to understand the benefits of acting against climate change. Making the connection between activity and impact would encourage people to prioritise climate related activity. People need guidance and support before they are pushed. It was suggested that it would be helpful if providers were able to access a central information hub which provided information and examples of good practice as well as links to current government initiatives.

## Sustainable PPE and waste

A theme commonly discussed by participants was the need to invest in clinically safe and environmentally friendly personal protective equipment (PPE) and other equipment. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic the consumption of PPE has increased significantly, leading to the use of more single-use plastic. Lateral flow tests as well as the packaging medications are contained were also discussed as areas of waste.





One participant questioned:

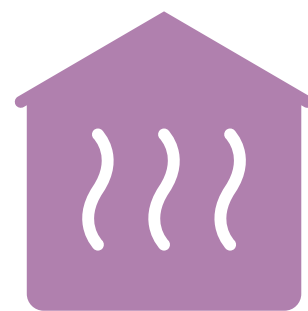
“If the response to the pandemic [had] reduced environmental mitigations?”

This suggests a need to invest in plastic free and more sustainable options that are safe, sterile and accessible to everyone as noted by Bev Knight from Redeem Exchange.

Participants also spoke about the role that health and social care suppliers need to play to make their supplies more sustainable. Attendees expressed that it was important the rights, needs and preferences of those receiving care are at the heart of all measures to reduce environmental impacts.

## Buildings and heating

Kenneth Watt from British Red Cross spoke about the increasing risks of heatwaves to vulnerable populations as this will be significant in terms of excess deaths on older and more vulnerable people. The overall impact on health services will exacerbate underlying health inequities, therefore [improving] heating efficiency, costs and service cover are all areas where consideration to more vulnerable people must be given; energy efficient and effective heating is essential in every home. In care homes and housing situations where the individual is elderly or has certain conditions, heating can be a matter of life and death.



Heating efficiency in care homes is the most crucial factor in protecting residents while staying within budget. Installing energy-efficient boilers, effective wall and roof insulation where possible, and double glazing will all help keep the heat in. Opportunities to improve the residents' standards of living often go directly against desires to reduce spending and heating is no exception. However, favouring one over the other will result in either a poor reputation for the care home and a lack of quality in the care they provide to residents or severe budgeting problems.

## Transport

The transport sector is a major contributor to Scotland's emissions. During the series we heard of the importance of striking the right balance, reducing emissions whilst protecting people's rights in the process of taking climate action. Discussion focused on how to create more sustainable national and local public transport options. Additionally, how social care staff can be supported to access electric cars, particularly for those staff delivering care at home.



Participants suggested that policy agendas needed to be more joined up. The 20-Minute Neighbourhood concept was highlighted as an initiative that could reduce transport demands.<sup>13</sup> For example, if more services were available locally then this could lead to a reduction in those receiving care having to travel (often by car) to get the support they need.

Food was highlighted as another significant emitter. There were calls to consider food miles and the emissions from both agriculture and retail and for recognition that the social care sector does not sit in isolation, interacting with a range of other sectors. As a result, there was the understanding that a joined-up approach across different sectors is required to ensure that meaningful climate action is taking place. This invokes of the idea behind Health in All Policy approaches to public policy, wherein sectors systematically take the health implications of decisions into account, seeking synergies and avoiding harmful health impacts to improve population health and health equity.<sup>14</sup>

## Recommendations

These are outlined in [Appendix A](#).

The principles are recommended for Scottish Government to adopt in order to develop actions that can concretely be taken forward to deliver social care in a changing climate. Subsequently, a set of nine actions were developed to embody the principles. The actions were co-created by individuals with a range of experience and expertise in accessing and delivering social care.



<sup>13</sup> <https://www.climatechange.org.uk/research/projects/20-minute-neighbourhoods-in-a-scottish-context/>

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.who.int/social\\_determinants/publications/health-policies-manual/key-messages-en.pdf](https://www.who.int/social_determinants/publications/health-policies-manual/key-messages-en.pdf)

## Conclusions

Embracing a commitment to change that is driven from a rights based, person-centred perspective will pave the way for action and implementation that is meaningful and just. Achieving radical and transformational change is a collective responsibility and fair representation of the social care sector must be part of the priorities of the Scottish Government. Bridging the gap between principles, action and the changes that need to happen in the wider system will involve changes to law, policy and practice. As citizens, we are connected to social and political systems and within the sector we will continue to demonstrate how incorporating social care in the climate debate must be a priority.

Furthermore, we must ensure those that are most affected by the effects of climate change stand to benefit the most from improvement which can be supported through balancing funding in the sector and empowering the voices of those who receive and deliver care and support. This relates back to longstanding inequities in health and social care services.

The series was the beginning of what we hope should be a continuous effort and conversation to improve the sustainability of the sector – both financially and environmentally – to achieve a more equitable sector that supports individuals to live independently for as long as possible.



## About the ALLIANCE

The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) is the national third sector intermediary for a range of health and social care organisations. We have a growing membership of over 3,000 national and local third sector organisations, associates in the statutory and private sectors, disabled people, people living with long term conditions and unpaid carers. Many NHS Boards, Health and Social Care Partnerships, Medical Practices, Third Sector Interfaces, Libraries and Access Panels are also members.



The ALLIANCE is a strategic partner of the Scottish Government and has close working relationships, several of which are underpinned by Memorandum of Understanding, with many national NHS Boards, academic institutions and key organisations spanning health, social care, housing and digital technology.

Our vision is for a Scotland where people of all ages who are disabled or living with long term conditions, and unpaid carers, have a strong voice and enjoy their right to live well, as equal and active citizens, free from discrimination, with support and services that put them at the centre.

The ALLIANCE has three core aims; we seek to:

- Ensure people are at the centre, that their voices, expertise and rights drive policy and sit at the heart of design, delivery and improvement of support and services.
- Support transformational change, towards approaches that work with individual and community assets, helping people to stay well, supporting human rights, self-management, co-production and independent living
- Champion and support the third sector as a vital strategic and delivery partner and foster better cross-sector understanding and partnership

## About the Health and Social Care Academy

The Health and Social Care Academy (the Academy) is an ALLIANCE programme that helps drive positive and radical change in Scotland's health and social care, through the voice of disabled people, people living with long term conditions, and unpaid carers. The Academy's 'Five Provocations for the Future of Health and Social Care' was created based on the vision from the Think Tank of Scottish senior leaders from across the public sector, third and independent sector leaders, and people who use health and social care services.



## About Scottish Care

Scottish Care is the membership organisation and the representative body for independent social care providers in Scotland.

We represent just under 400 organisations - almost 900 individual services, delivering residential care, nursing care, day care, care at home and housing support services.



Membership covers private, voluntary sector and employee-owned provider organisations. It includes organisations of varying types and sizes, single providers, small and medium sized groups, national providers and not-for-profit voluntary organisations and associations.

Members deliver a wide range of registered services for older people and those who access care and support with long term conditions, learning disabilities, physical disabilities, dementia, or mental health needs.

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## Appendix A

### Principles

As rights based organisations, we want a fairer, more equitable society that supports people to feel incentivised to participate in conversations that foster productive dialogue and can support climate issues. The following principles are recommended for Scottish Government to adopt in order to develop actions that can concretely be taken forward to deliver social care in a changing climate:

- **Human rights and equalities:** Recognise that climate change is one of the greatest threats to human rights and guarantee a rights, intersectional and equality based approach for individuals who work in and receive care and support in a changing climate.
- **Person-centred:** Ensure the rights, needs and preferences of people receiving and delivering care are at the heart of discussions surrounding climate impacts and action. Individual choice must be central to policy, practice, and delivery.
- **Sustainable and resourced:** Investment in social care supports a greener, more sustainable sector. In turn, the sector must be well-resourced to ensure that any environmental commitment is underpinned across the sector.
- **Collective, joined up and interconnected:** Develop cross-sectoral, collective, and joined up approaches that enable meaningful, sustainable, and long-lasting change to take place with understanding that the social care sector does not sit in isolation.
- **Valuing care:** Enable the highest potential of the social care workforce by supporting empowering and valuing the workforce for the distinct work they do. Prioritise investment in the workforce through improved salaries, upskilling and retaining talent and investing in their health and wellbeing.
- **Participation:** Empower, recognise and value the voices of those delivering and receiving care in decision making processes.

### Calls to Action

The following set of nine actions were developed from roundtable discussions to embody the principles. The actions were co-created by individuals with a range of experience and expertise in accessing and delivering social care.

### Awareness

Explicitly incorporate the Net Zero vision and other sustainable policy actions into social care to uphold an intersectional, equality and human rights-based approach to deliver social care in a changing climate.

To achieve Net Zero and a climate ready care sector, collaborative and joined up approaches will be required across sectors.

### **Investment**

Create a £25 million climate emergency innovation fund for independent and third sector social care organisations to take climate change action.

### **Workforce**

Support the social care workforce through appropriate pay, terms and conditions. The workforce contributes approximately £5.1 billion to the Scottish economy annually. Care must be valued as an investment, not a cost. The care sector creates sustainable jobs and must be invested as part of the Just Transition.

### **Commissioning, tendering and procurement**

Incorporate environmental sustainability as a costed component in commissioning, tendering and procurement.

### **Research and impact**

Undertake research to understand the full extent of the adaptation needs of the social care sector. Research should be shared with policymakers and providers to understand and assess the impact that environmental measures (e.g. buildings, heating and transport) will have on tackling climate change.

### **Information**

Provide funding for the sector to work with experts to produce guidance on how the sector can operate at Net Zero. Develop a knowledge sharing platform to share this guidance, information, resources and good practice on how providers can become more sustainable. Personal Assistants and their employers should also be able to access this information.

### **Sustainable PPE and waste management**

Invest in clinically safe, environmentally friendly PPE and alternatives to single-use plastics used in the sector. Target reduction of waste and carbon emitted from the sector through adopting a circular economy approach.

### **Buildings and heating**

Fund the sector to retrofit care services with sustainable, cost-effective options so

that buildings, heating infrastructure and places are resilient to the effects of climate change. This funding should be available to day service providers as well as residential care facilities.

## **Transport**

Guarantee sustainable investment in accessible and affordable travel for people who access and deliver care services, to reduce the impact of transport on climate change. Invest in route planning software which works with care planning software to reduce travel time while simultaneously ensuring continuity of care and support.