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5 April 2022

Dear Officers of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Vegetarianism and Veganism,

### **APPG Inquiry Report: Respect for religious and philosophical beliefs while eating in care**

Thank you for your letter of 2 March 2022 regarding the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) Inquiry Report, '*Respect for religious and philosophical beliefs while eating in care*'. I am grateful that you have taken the time to write to me regarding this important topic and recommendations relating to care services in Scotland. I welcome the findings of the report and would like to assure you that everyone in Scotland has the right to safe, compassionate care which meets their needs and respects their rights, including respecting individuals' values and beliefs while eating in care.

### **Recommendations for the Care Inspectorate**

I note that the inquiry did not recommend amendments to Scottish legislation to protect the beliefs of those in care, however, changes were recommended to the wording of the Care Inspectorate's Quality Framework for Care Homes for Adults to include a clear reference to the concept of 'religious' and 'philosophical' dietary needs. The Care Inspectorate is currently considering this recommendation and reviewing the wording of Quality Indicator 1.3 as the report recommends. Once this has been finalised, they will be sending updated guidance to inspectors.

Turning to the recommendation that all care establishments should place in their meal preparation areas a poster outlining the basic rules of what can and cannot be eaten or used in food or drinks prepared for people following a vegetarian or vegan diet. The Care Inspectorate would expect people and staff to be aware of different dietary needs and requirements and in particular they would expect kitchen staff to have clear guidance on food procedures and dietary requirements. They are currently considering this recommendation to ensure that individuals' rights and needs are fully respected and dietary requirements followed appropriately across all care services in Scotland.

### **Regulation of social services workforce**

I also note the recommendation for regulating the training that care workers receive regarding the cultural, religious and dietary needs of those receiving care. The social services workforce is regulated by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). All workers must have, or attain, an accredited qualification at the minimum of a SVQ at SCQF level 6 qualification and follow the SSSC's Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers.

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The National Occupational Standards Navigator (NOSN), SVQ at SCQF level 6 qualification and 'Working with carers' support individuals to meet their domestic and personal needs and teaches the individual how to:

- Support individuals in the preparation of food that meets their nutritional and dietary requirements and support the individual/key people to understand the individual's dietary and nutritional requirements in terms of food and drink.
- Support the individual and key people to identify healthier food and drink options that meet the individual's dietary requirements.
- To carry out a role in the preparation of food and drink to meet the individual's nutritional and dietary requirements.
- Contribute to reviewing the arrangements for meeting the individual's nutritional and dietary requirements.

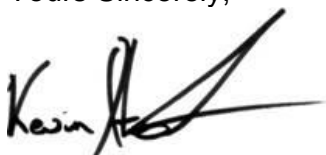
Under this qualification, social work students also learn the rights to work and setting requirements on equality, diversity, discrimination and human rights. They also learn about the individual's cultural and language context.

The Code of Practice for Social Service Workers sets out clear standards of professional conduct and practice that social service workers must meet in their everyday work. The Code of Practice document can be found here - [Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers - Scottish Social Services Council \(sssc.uk.com\)](https://www.sssc.uk.com). Workers are responsible for making sure they meet the required standards and that nothing they do, or do not do, harms the wellbeing of people who use services. The Code is part of the wider package of legislation, practice, standards and employers' policies and procedures that social service workers must meet. We expect social service workers to meet the standards in the Code and action might be taken if registered workers fail to do so.

In addition, the SSSC Code of Practice sets out the responsibilities for employers in the regulation of social service workers. Employers are responsible for making sure they meet the required standards and support their workers to meet the standards set out in the Code for Social Service Workers. The Care Inspectorate takes the Codes of Practice into account during inspections of services and may take action to support improvement or require change if providers fail to meet the required standards. By setting clear standards of professional practice and behaviour, the Codes are an important part of regulating and improving the quality of care for people who use services. The Codes clearly sets out what we all should expect from social service workers across Scotland.

Once again thank you for taking the time to write to me and I hope this letter provides answers to your questions. I share your vision that everyone should receive safe and good quality care that is provided with dignity and respect. I welcome further work on this with all relevant partners to ensure that everyone's rights and beliefs are fully respected across care services in Scotland.

Yours Sincerely,



Kevin Stewart

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