

What should safe staffing look like in Scotland?

The RCN believes that there are a number of issues which any Scottish legislation must address:

The legislation must do more than just repeat in a Bill that NMWWP tools are to be used.

- It has already been directed to use the tools. But this being in place to meet patient need.

Principles about quality and positive patient outcomes must be included in the legislation.

- Having the right staff, with the right skills, in the right place is about patient care. Safe staffing is not just about using workforce tools or allowing affordability to dictate how many nursing staff are needed.

The legislation should be strong enough to ensure that organisations which fail to meet safe staffing requirements are held to account.

- Scotland has a legal 12 week Treatment Time Guarantee for patients, but more than half of all NHS boards missed this in 2015-16, and faced no real penalties for doing so. The safe staffing legislation needs more teeth than this.

Safe staffing must address real time patient safety and quality challenges, and help effective long-term workforce planning. These are both issues which affect patient safety.

NMWWP tools cover over 98% of NHS nursing environments. The legislation should cover all these areas from the start.

- A phased approach risks skewing budget and resources towards areas which are covered by safe staffing laws.

People deserve the same levels of safety and quality, no matter who delivers nursing care.

- The Bill must make it easy to extend legislation to new settings . such as care homes . and help the push to develop new workforce tools that work outside the NHS.

Data is important but professional judgement from nursing leaders at ward/team level must be a core component.

- Any safe staffing law must recognise and require professional judgement, and nursing team leaders must be supported to be able to input their judgement effectively.
- Clinical data from sources such as care quality dashboards should be used.

Workforce planning should be transparent - organisations delivering health and care should be required to regularly publish how they are managing