

## **Scottish Parliament Health and Sport Committee**

### **Inquiry into corporate governance**

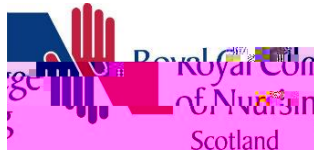
**February 2018**

Health and social care in Scotland is becoming increasingly complex in an ever-changing landscape with governance structures in flux. The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) is clear that there needs to be open and transparent systems of governance embedded from frontline staff to the different levels of governance of health care services now in operation or emerging in Scotland. Structuring governance frameworks in this way will ensure there is clarity of accountability and that the voices of clinical staff underpin decision-making. The RCN believes this is critical to the quality of care and services, as well as ensuring the safeguarding of high standards for people receiving care and appropriate decisions on resourcing.

The 2018 report by the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh and the Good Governance Institute also Gove TJph4(l)t62.024 481.838

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) is the world's largest professional organisation and trade union for nursing staff, with members in the NHS, independent and third sectors. RCN Scotland promotes patient and nursing interests by campaigning on issues that affect members, shaping national health policies, representing members on practice and employment issues and providing members with learning and development opportunities. With over 40,000 members in Scotland, the RCN is the voice of nursing.

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and Integration Authorities.”<sup>1</sup> The RCN supports this call. Furthermore, the quality of care provided will be impacted if significant steps are not taken to ensure robust governance and decision-making frameworks are in place that manage the challenges of integrating local, regional and national planning.

### Financial pressures

The RCN has consistently stated that, given the pressures and demand on health services in Scotland, difficult decisions will have to be made in regards to allocation of resources. Importantly, we argue that these decisions must be made together with the public and with staff.

On the issue of allocation of resources, the RCN has repeatedly raised concerns about the unintended consequences of insisting that NHS Boards make significant savings while balancing their books on a strictly annual basis, without consideration of the longer-term picture of investment and change that boards are being asked to deliver. There are also notable tensions between some Integration Authorities, NHS Boards and Local Authorities on the sums being delegated and the way savings are being managed and applied. There are significant pressures on governance bodies to ensure sustainability at this time.

### Prioritisation and governance of performance

At a time when budgets and resources are stretched, and ever increasing demands are being placed upon Scotland's health and care services, it is imperative that funding decisions are taken in a wholly transparent manner, and that their success or otherwise can be scrutinised in a meaningful way.

In order to aid transparent funding the RCN is seeking absolute clarity from the Scottish Government on what its key priorities are so that health and social care services are able to plan and budget accordingly. At present there is a confused market of HEAT targets, standards, outcomes, regulatory frameworks, strategic priorities and guidance. All of these can be seen to determine priorities and are pulling service providers in different, often competing, directions.

Though this has received some attention recently, there is more work required to change the current approach and to ensure that performance measures work together to improve the outcomes of everyone who needs to use a health care service. The RCN previously submitted work to the committee in 2016 on *Measuring Success* and believes that this work could continue to help support a shift that would impact positively on effective governance of health care services.

In addition, our work in looking at decision making on health care has repeatedly demonstrated that issues of financial sustainability have dominated the decision making debates of governance bodies, often omitting entirely discussions on the clinical implications,

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<sup>1</sup> Audit Scotland,

