

Scottish Government debate: National Care Service

The Scottish Government is proposing significant changes to the way in which health and care services are delivered in Scotland at a time when services are seeking to recover and remobilise after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Nursing staff have been at the forefront of tackling the COVID-19 pandemic and the past 17 months have highlighted the unique value of nursing as a safety critical profession like never before. The nursing contribution to social care must not be overlooked and the impact of these proposals on community nursing must be properly considered and adequately resourced.

RCN Scotland is concerned that with such a significant proposal, policy makers do not lose sight of other priorities. For any health and social care reforms to be effective, the Scottish Government must first address workforce pressures by implementing the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019 and deliver fair pay for nursing staff working in all settings.

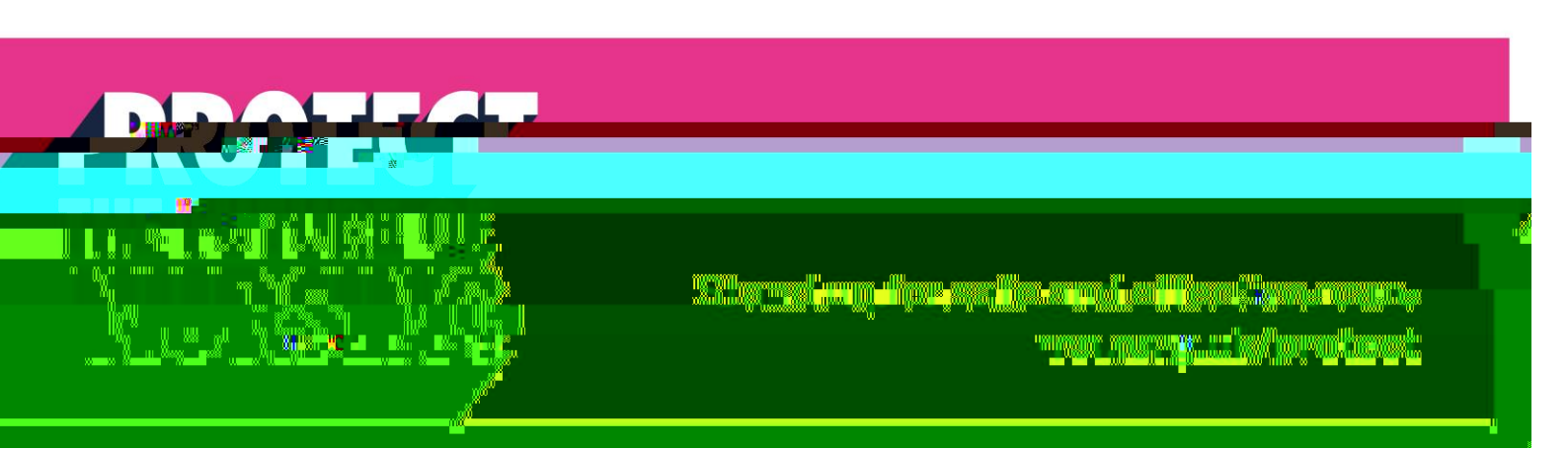
National Care Service unique value of nursing must be properly considered and adequately resourced.

Impact on Community Services

- Clearer proposals about the relationship between the NHS and the National Care Service are needed. The proposals represent the most significant reforms to both community health and social care for decades and will have a significant impact beyond, including on the wider NHS.
- Community Nursing was highlighted by the RCN's [Protect the Future of Nursing manifesto](#) as an area in particular need of greater resourcing and support. District Nursing in particular has a higher vacancy rate (6.8%) and a higher age profile (25% of District Nurses are over 55) compared to other nursing specialisms. The potential disruption to these services, which are already under pressure, should not be underestimated.

Workforce Pressures

- Recruitment of nursing staff in adult social care is a challenge. In Scotland, 18% of registered care services report having nursing vacancies and the level is significantly higher in care homes for older people, with 40% reporting nursing vacancies. As has been reported, we are also hearing from our members that recruitment is now even more challenging than these figures suggest.
- The RCN is concerned that these proposals will distract from and delay implementation of the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019. This Act is an opportunity to help ensure that care homes are supported to deliver safe, quality care to residents with increasingly complex health



Member feedback

- Members of RCN Scotland are able to provide their lived experience anonymously via a tool called Sensemaker. Since nurses have started using this tool, one of the most consistent themes of their experience is concern about staffing levels, including in social care. From July 2021 alone, the following stories were shared:
 - From a Registered Nurse working in a Care Home in Ayrshire & Arran: *"I have been the only*

