

## **RCN Scotland Response to Health, Social Care & Sport Committee Inquiry into Alternative Pathways**

*Inquiry context: When a person seeks healthcare their first point of contact is usually with a general practitioner (a GP, or family doctor). Our inquiry, however, is focused on other sources of healthcare that exist in the community, which we term*

*The aim of the inquiry is to explore how alternative pathways are being accessed and used in primary care, and to identify key issues and opportunities for improvement.*

**The Committee would like to hear stakeholders views on the following seven questions:**

**1) What is the current level of awareness amongst health practitioners and patients of the availability of alternative pathways to healthcare services other than seeing a GP?**

RCN members, from a range of settings, display a high level of awareness about the availability of alternative pathways. Awareness is especially high for staff working in for example in Deep End practices, such as in Craigmillar in Edinburgh and for staff whose roles have changed or been affected by the creation of new pathways or

pathways is often down to a lack of support or local structures, rather than a lack of awareness.

General Practice Nursing Forum has developed a range of [resources](https://www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/public-health/self-care/social-prescribing) [https://www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/public-health/self-care/social-prescribing]

The RCN is not in a position to comment on how well equipped GPs and receptionists are to signpost patients, though we have no evidence to suggest a lack of knowledge or understanding amongst primary care health professionals around referrals and alternative services. A longstanding challenge, which has been highlighted by the pandemic, is a need to recognise the breadth of provision in

[workforce-statistics/all-official-statistics-publications/07-december-2021-workforce/dashboards/nhsscotland-workforce/?pageid=5982](https://www.nhs.uk/workforce-statistics/all-official-statistics-publications/07-december-2021-workforce/dashboards/nhsscotland-workforce/?pageid=5982)].

In addition to these existing staffing pressures, the pandemic is expected to result in extra demands on primary healthcare professionals. As is widely recognised, the reduction in services, which continues almost two years into the pandemic, is resulting in people not getting the preventative or initial care that they need and is resulting in patients presenting with increased acuity, particularly in primary services.

[ONS estimates](#)

[\[https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/datasets/alldatarelatingtoprevalenceofongoingsymptomsfollowingco](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/datasets/alldatarelatingtoprevalenceofongoingsymptomsfollowingco)



