Integration of Care[2]

The RCN has been developing two resources[3] to support staff in providing good end of life care, one with a particular focus on the sensitive issues relating to nutrition and hydration, and the other on the wider issues of end of life care. Both resources are applicable in end of life care across the UK and have been informed by a review commissioned by the RCN and by the results of an RCN survey on end of life care. We hope these resources will inform the elements required in any proposed framework which will provide guidance for staff.

Seven day services
Patients should not have to wait for a weekday to have specialist palliative care assessments carried out. Ensuring that people have timely access to high quality, person-centred, safe and effective palliative care when they need it, regardless of the day of the week, requires a whole system approach. This means focusing on community services, as well as hospital services, and looking at multi-professional models of care that maximise the potential of different professions to meet the needs of patients and improve patient outcomes out with core Monday to Friday services. The proposed framework must ensure that people entering the last stages of life do not experience a poorer service out of hours. The outputs of the out of hours primary care review and the 7 day task force must clearly reflect a commitment to improved palliative care, though they are likely to report before the Scottish Government framework is complete. Influencing of these is required now. The RCN is leading work for the primary care group on models of out of hours care for people requiring palliative care.

Care home sector
In the future the care home sector will also need to adapt to better care for an ageing population with more complex needs including palliative care. The RCN, along with other key stakeholders, joined with the Scottish Government and COSLA to form the Taskforce for the Future of Residential Care in Scotland[4]. Its recent report makes a series of recommendations including: