

## Royal College of Nursing Northern Ireland

### Supplementary evidence to the NHS Pay Review Body 2021 2022

#### Introduction

- 1 The Royal College of Nursing RCN is pleased to submit supplementary evidence to the NHS Pay Review Body NHSPRB in order to inform its deliberations on the 2021 2022 pay round This supplementary evidence should be considered in conjunction with the RCN s UK submission to the NHSPRB and with reference to the remit letter submitted by the Northern Ireland Minister for Health to the Chair of the NHSPRB dated 1 December 2020 As identified in the RCN s UK submission the RCN is seeking a pay uplift of at least 12 for all Agenda for Change staff for 2021 2022
- 2 The RCN notes that the Minister s remit letter references his recognition of the

3 As the NHSPRB is aware following this industrial action a framework agreement  
re



the preceding three months despite feeling unwell due to pressure from managers colleagues or themselves compared to 1 of all HSC staff It is important to reiterate that these are the Department of Health s own figures The staff survey also illustrated that 1 of HSC nursing staff often think about leaving compared to 3 of all occupations the principal reasons cited being not feeling valued and levels of pay The RCN notes that in response



- 13 The RCN has consistently highlighted over a number of years the absence of effective workforce planning for nursing with the impact of this manifested in high levels of vacant posts escalating expenditure on agency staff and an inability to advance the strategic transformation of the Health and Social Care service because of shortages within the community nursing workforce upon which the refocusing of services is largely dependent All of these issues have previously been noted by the NHS Pay Review Body yet none of them have adequately been addressed by the Department of Health One of the elements in the Minister's safe staffing framework published in January 2020 was the need to develop effective workforce planning This embraced a commitment to develop a costed action plan for the implementation of the health and social care Workforce

c 1 Although the Health Minister's framework on pay parity provided agreement on Agenda for Change pay increases for 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 as well as a refresh of the incremental Agenda for Change system there remain significant issues for the Department of Health and HSC employers to address

1 Nursing practice has developed considerably since the introduction of Agenda for Change some 10 years ago. However, HSC employers are often reluctant to rewrite job descriptions and re-match evaluate roles when staff have taken on additional responsibilities. This has led to nurses in Northern Ireland losing faith in

and above compared to other AFC staff groupings This is illustrated in the table below

**Table one whole time equivalent WTE and percentage of staff in each band March 201**





in figure 1 This pattern is also repeated in nursing and midwifery support posts across AfC bands 1

22 The Task Group report notes page 3 Many workshop participants expressed concerns a 1 po oncerTcc 1 2 TcET 1 2 o 1 r s 1 epeat 1di 1 po 1d c 1 2p





financial year to which they apply and that they are then not paid until February or March. This exemplifies the inadequate nature of budget setting and business planning that has characterised the HSC in Northern Ireland for too long. Awards should be agreed in advance of the financial year to which they apply and be paid with effect from the April salary date. This links to the commitment defined in the New Decade New Approach agreement to move towards multi-year funding settlements to facilitate more effective long-term planning in health and social care. No progress has subsequently been made in respect of this commitment.

### **HSC transformation**

- 31 The Department of Health evidence to the NHSPRB for 2020-2021 discussed the process of HSC transformation. The RCN has commented on many occasions in recent years how the process of transformation has been undermined by an approach to planning and budgeting, a failure to view transformation as anything other than an isolated series of projects rather than as a strategic system-wide refocusing, and in particular by the failure to underpin transformation by appropriate workforce planning. The restoration of the post-registration nursing education budget to its 200-200 level as one of the Minister's safe staffing framework commitments was welcomed by the RCN in this respect but is only one small step in the right direction. If transformation is to be delivered, it requires a significant expansion of, in particular, the specialist community nursing workforce in order to deliver the district nurses, school nurses, health visitors, learning disability nurses, and community mental health nurses, for example, who will deliver the new public health-focused early intervention and prevention services.

many occasions how this level of expenditure is unsustainable and reflects the absence of effective workforce planning for nursing in Northern Ireland

- 33 Excessive agency expenditure not only has significant financial implications for health and social care services but also impacts upon the quality of care continuity of care and the patient experience. The RCN is now participating in work with the Department of Health to address this issue. The implementation of the Minister's safe staffing framework will also help to mitigate the levels of expenditure but, as previously noted, the impact of this will take some years to be fully realised.

#### **Covid 19 pandemic pay and staffing**

- 3 As noted at paragraph 2 above, the Minister's remit letter to the NHSPRB references his recognition of the uniquely challenging impact coronavirus is having on the NHS and his commitment to continue to provide NHS workers with a pay rise. The full impact of the pandemic upon the nursing workforce in Northern Ireland has yet to be realised, let alone evaluated, of course. At this stage, all that can reasonably be stated is that the pandemic has simply amplified and clarified the impact of the nurse staffing shortages that existed before March.

- 3 The RCN hopes that the NHSPRB will find this supplementary evidence to be a helpful summary of the key nursing workforce issues in Northern Ireland that it may wish to consider in responding to the Minister's request. The RCN would be pleased to supply any further information that may be required.

January 2021

Publication code 00