



c/o RCN Scotland
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Ms Nicola Sturgeon MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
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29 May 2009

Dear Cabinet Secretary

Review of Nursing in the Community

As you know, staff side have had major concerns for some time now about the future of community nursing in Scotland. We would therefore appreciate an early meeting with you to discuss our concerns and find a way forward to meet the future needs of the service in Scotland.

The recently published Review of Nursing in the Community (RONiC) Baseline Study found that, among community nursing staff, almost two-thirds had little or no support for the RONiC model.

Our concerns about the Review of Nursing in the Community (RONiC) and the future of community nursing more generally focus on the lack of consistency, and fragmentation of services, which is developing across Scotland. Our members also have grave concerns about the loss of nursing expertise in relation to the needs of children, young people and the family health agenda.

The lack of consistency applies not only in those Health Boards where the RONiC model is being piloted. We are also seeing other Health Boards developing different approaches to the delivery of nursing care in the community in response to pressing local needs. At the same time, other parts of the community workforce, such as mental health nursing, are facing separate reforms.

All of the above are contributing to growing and deepening concerns about the future among clinical and nursing staff, which we would welcome the opportunity to discuss with you as a matter of urgency.

What is happening on the ground is already impacting education and recruitment into community posts. As you know, there is a worrying decline in postgraduate trainees in community nursing, with nurses unwilling to undertake the training for a role that could change or which may not exist in the future.

We also have grave concerns, shared by many practitioners, about the generic community health nurse role proposed under RONiC. We believe it is unworkable and will fail to meet the needs of patients in the future. Despite best efforts, no clarification has been forthcoming from the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) on its future position on the NMC register. We are also deeply concerned about the transferability of this new role and subsequent workforce mobility.

Given these concerns, as well as the delay to the full RONiC evaluation and the timescales involved in educating nurses for the future, we believe we have to act now.

We clearly appreciate the need for change and our members fully accept this. We believe, however, that the current model proposed under RONiC is no longer tenable and, under these circumstances, that the interim evaluation (up to December 2009) represents a waste of public money during this time of financial constraint.

The publication of the Royal College of Nursing's report into community nursing earlier this year, and aspects of the practice developed from some of the RONiC work in Lothian, for example, gives us the opportunity to develop a positive way forward and we would like to meet with you to explore how we can progress this and ensure that there is a sustainable future for community nursing, which meets the growing health needs of people in Scotland.

We look forward to your response. We would appreciate it if arrangements for a meeting could be co-ordinated through Karen Dickinson, PA to Norman Provan at the Royal College of Nursing Scotland, on 0131 662 6151.

Yours sincerely



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Bridget Hunter

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