

Resource Spending Review Framework Consultation RCN Response 3 March 2022

Q1. In Chapter 1 we have identified three priorities to guide the Resource Spending Review process:

- To support progress towards meeting our child poverty targets
- To address climate change
- To secure a stronger, fairer, greener economy

Setting these as priorities helps us consider where spend should be targeted and redirected. Do you agree that our resource spending should focus on these? We welcome your views on these three priorities for this Resource Spending Review.

Insofar as it appears to us that health and social care is primarily included under 'To secure a stronger, fairer, greener economy' and given the extensive references to health and social care throughout the Spending Review Framework Consultation document, we are comfortable with the prioritisation proposed. In particular, the very size of NHS Scotland as it currently stands, in terms of cost to the Scottish Budget; size of workforce and purchasing power; coupled with similar matters as they may relate to existing non-NHS health and social care services and any new National Care Service, makes it impossible to conceive of health and social care occupying anything other than a central position in the Resource Spending Review process.

Q2. In Chapter 2 we have identified the primary drivers of public spending over the Resource Spending Review period including:

- Changing demographics
- Demand on the health service
- Public sector workforce
- Inflation

We welcome your views on these and any other public spending drivers you think we should consider.

N/A

Q3. In Chapter 2 we have identified the growth of the public sector workforce as a key driver of public spending. How can we use policy interventions to maximise the value achieved from the public sector workforce in the effective delivery of public services, while ensuring the sector is an attractive, rewarding place to work? We welcome your views on this.

N/A

Q4. In Chapter 3 we have identified a number of ways in which we will be exploring how to get best value out of Scotland's public spending, including:

- Improving cross-government collaboration
- Public service reform
- Prevention and invest to save initiatives

- **The public sector workforce**
- **Better targeting**
- **Targeted revenue raising**

We welcome your views on these, and other ways to maximise the positive impact of public spending.

We feel it is appropriate to respond to these three questions together, with some straightforward points:

The primary concerns of our members are their capacity and ability to deliver the right safe and effective care in the right place at the right time and to be paid a fair wage for doing so.

These concerns are simply not currently being addressed by Scottish Government in any meaningful way. This is unequivocally plain from vacancy rates, which have, every quarter of every year, for many years now, repeatedly shown unacceptable shortfalls in the workforce currently required for safe and effective care before increased demand for such care (and so an increased demand for workforce) is even considered. These shortfalls are now at record levels. Problems with recruitment amongst the nursing workforce in all health and social care settings and the testimony of our members reinforce the extent of Scottish Government's failure to date. For example: nurses' testimony gathered by RCN Scotland using the SenseMaker® tool include these comments:

"The staffing levels are dangerously low. The nurse-to-patient ratio is too high. Mistakes are being made; things being missed. People are not getting adequate care"

"We were short staffed all week, we are unable to provide safe and effective care to patients and I feel patients are being neglected. I did not get a break and I was on 3x12 hour nightshifts in a row. I have escalated issues several times and feel nothing is being done."

"Staff from critical care being used to staff areas like wards and receiving units whilst leaving the critical care floor short staffed. Morale at all-time low. Most of staff have never worked in wards as a staff nurse and are not comfortable taking a caseload, unfamiliar with the ward routines and protocols."

Our members' concerns will not be addressed by more of the same type of rumination on service configuration as is suggested by question 4, which since 1999 has (albeit with a few limited exceptions, like the more extensive adoption of technology enabled care) made little or no significant change to service users' lives. There have been many strategies and plans for health and social care from successive Scottish Governments; the impacts of which, for the public, remain at best obscure and at worst unidentifiable. What is needed now is extensive action to implement the reforms that have long been identified as necessary.

The bottom line is that if Scottish Government wants to meet its own stated priorities in respect of health and social care services, as expressed in the Resource Spending Review Framework in terms of:

- addressing demand on the health service
- maximising the value achieved from the public sector workforce in the effective delivery of public services while ensuring the sector is an attractive, rewarding place to work and
- getting best value out of Scotland's public spending

then it must address workforce vacancy, recruitment, retention, sufficiency, capacity and pay issues by:

- Implementing its own ground-breaking safe staffing legislation, the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019, still not commenced, which could, if properly implemented and embraced, ensure a step change in the provision of the right safe and effective care in the right place at the right time.
- Paying nursing staff, including Agenda for Change staff, the fair wages for which, in recent months, they have reasonably asked and campaigned.

Any 'attractive, rewarding place to work' (as per question 3) is one where staff are fairly paid and can do the job that they are employed to do rather than constantly firefighting the problems that result from under-staffing and under-resourcing. In the light of the results from Scotland of the recent RCN employment survey, in which an astonishing 61% of nursing staff in Scotland said that they were thinking about leaving their current post,¹ no Scottish Government Minister or official can claim that the health and social care is currently an attractive, rewarding place to work or that serious change is not required for it to become so.

Q5. In Chapter 3 we have shared that we will be conducting an equality assessment of the Resource Spending Review's findings. We welcome your views on any particular equality and human rights impacts which we should consider in the context of the priorities (question 1) and primary drivers of public spending (question 2) we have set out.

In the RCN Scotland manifesto for the 2021 Scottish Parliamentary election², we called for "The recommendations of the Expert Reference Group on COVID-19 and Ethnicity to be implemented in full, with prioritisation across government departments." In the Programme for Government 2021-22 the Scottish Government committed to this implementation on pages 15, 33 & 50.³ These recommendations must be implemented with respect to the Resource Spending Review process just as much as they must be with respect to any and all other processes attendant on the execution of the Scottish Government's responsibilities.

Q6. In Chapter 3 we shared that this Resource Spending Review is taking a consultative approach to ensure that we engage with people and organisations across Scotland as we develop multi-year financial plans. Our intention is to use the Resource Spending Review to continue the Scottish conversation on public spending going forwards. We welcome your views on how best to continue our engagement with people and organisations after the Resource Spending Review.

Any such consultative approach should be inclusive and accessible and use language that the general public can understand, rather than technical and financial language that is only accessible and understandable to professional stakeholders. This is a longstanding issue. It is important for proper accountability that the Scottish Government were to address the problem so that citizens are able to

¹ <https://www.rcn.org.uk/news-and-events/news/rcn-scotland-employment-survey-260122>

² [Protect the Future of Nursing | Royal College of Nursing \(rcn.org.uk\)](https://www.rcn.org.uk/protect-the-future-of-nursing)

³ [A Fairer, Greener Scotland: Programme for Government 2021-22 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/programme-for-government-2021-22/pages/1-100.aspx)

understand the Scottish Government's financial documentation and therefore understand its finances and the decisions based upon those finances.