

RCN Scotland briefing – Good Food Nation Bill – Stage 1 Report

RCN Scotland supports the intention behind this legislation and the aspirations behind becoming a ‘Good Food Nation’. Access to healthy, nutritious food and improved availability and awareness of good food have clear public health benefits. NHS Scotland and individual health boards have an important role to play in ensuring access to healthy food for everyone who use their facilities.

RCN Scotland provided [written evidence](#) to the Rural Affairs Islands and Natural Environment Committee and ahead of the Stage 1 debate, we would like to emphasise two points:

Missed opportunity

- This Bill appears to us to be a missed opportunity in terms of improving access to good food on NHS estates for patients, their families and in particular, for staff.
- Nursing staff have a key role in managing nutrition and hydration to support the quality of care and patient experience. Adequate nutrition and hydration not only assists with recovery from trauma, surgery and disease, but also promotes wound healing and prevents infection.
- RCN Scotland has repeatedly called for steps to be taken to ensure nursing staff can access appropriate break facilities, healthy food and water in workplaces.
- As health care professionals, nursing staff may sometimes feel motivated to meet the needs of others before themselves.
- As key deliverers of health care and support, nursing staff in turn need to be supported to be as healthy and well as possible. Access to good food has implications not just nursing professionals' own health and wellbeing, but also because on workplace productivity.
- As it currently stands, the Bill would do little to improve access to healthy food for NHS staff and would benefit from explicit provisions stating that the plans need to consider access to good food for staff.

Need for clarity around financial costs

- RCN Scotland agrees with the conclusion of the Stage 1 report that a revised financial statement is presented to Stage 2 setting out the costs associated relating to the implementation of the Bill.
- As referenced in the [Stage 1 report](#) we questioned the assertion that the Bill will only result in negligible costs to health boards noting if that is the case, it does beg the question what is the purpose of this legislation?
- We agree that Health Boards should be able to use existing systems to avoid duplication of work, as suggested by NHS Board Chief Executives, however remain of the view that if no “significant additional activity” will be required by this Bill, it will not achieve meaningful change.

- If additional costs will fall on Health Boards, either in terms of the preparations of the plans or in ongoing implementation of these plans, it is essential that Health Boards are adequately resourced to meet these additional costs.
- If the Bill was expanded to include reference to access to good food for staff of relevant authorities, including Health Boards, this would also have significant implications in terms of ongoing costs associated with the implementation of the Bill which also must be adequately resourced.

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) is the world's largest professional organisation and trade union for nursing staff, with members in the NHS, independent and third sectors. RCN Scotland promotes patient and nursing interests by campaigning on issues that affect members, shaping national health policies, representing members on practice and employment issues and development opportunities. With over 40,000 members in Scotland, the RCN is the voice of nursing.

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