

**RCN Scotland's response to the Scottish
Government consultation on a Review
of the National Islands Plan for Scotland**

**[https://consult.gov.scot/agriculture-
and-rural-economy/national-islands-
plan-review-consultation/](https://consult.gov.scot/agriculture-and-rural-economy/national-islands-plan-review-consultation/)**

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Question 1

How much would you say you know about the current National Islands Plan?

Nothing at all

I have heard of it but know nothing about the content

I know a little about it

I know a lot about it

Question 2

Has the current National Islands Plan affected your life in any way?

Yes

No

Don't know

Please feel free to expand on your answer in the box below.

RCN Q1 and Q2 answers

To respond to this consultation, RCN Scotland gathered the views of members with experience of, and expertise in, the delivery of health and social care on the islands. In this response, when we talk about our members, and our members' views about the National Islands Plan, it is this expert group that we mean. We have not been able to undertake a large-scale survey of our members' views on the Plan. We also drew on our roundtable with nursing students and MSPs on student financing held on 6 September 2023¹ because the roundtable touched on issues relevant to this consultation.

Q1. There is no scope in the online Citizen Space consultation to expand on our answer to Question 1, so we do that here: RCN Scotland itself knows 'a little' about the current National Islands Plan but only one of our members had heard of it. None of the rest, and none of the non-member colleagues whom they asked, had heard of it. A revised National Islands Plan should be better publicised to those in health and social care, but it should also be clearly relevant to them, by addressing the issues that we raise in this response.

Q2. No members were aware of any effect or impact of the National Islands Plan on their lives or on anyone else's.

Question 3

Has the effect of the current National Islands Plan on your life been positive, negative or not at all?

Positive

Negative

It has not affected my life

Please feel free to expand on your answer in the box below.

RCN Q3 answer

This answer is based on the views of our members.

Question 4

What are your views on the content of the current National Islands Plan?

Positive

Negative

None

Please feel free to expand on your answer in the box below.

RCN Q4 answer

Our approach to this consultation

We cannot answer the multiple-choice element of this question because none of the three choices represent our position. We set that out below.

Scotland's first National Islands Plan ('the Plan') was published four years ago in 2019 under the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018. The Act requires Scottish Government to review the Plan within 5 years of its publication. We trust that our answer to the questions in this consultation will be used to inform that review and could lead to changes in the Plan.

The 2019 Plan includes 13 strategic objectives. Strategic objective 7 is "to improve and promote health, social care and wellbeing." Under this objective are 16 commitments which outline how Scottish Government and other stakeholders intend to achieve this objective.

The health, social care and wellbeing sectors are where RCN members work and where RCN has expertise. To date, RCN has not directly participated as a stakeholder in the various processes to do with the Plan and the Route Map, but we have 48,500 members in Scotland, and we believe that this supports an aspiration to be more closely involved as a stakeholder in future.

The nature of our expertise means that more detailed comments are mainly about strategic objective 7 but we also comment on overall progress to date and the other strategic objectives of relevance to our members:

- 3 Transport
- 4 Housing
- 5 Fuel Poverty
- 6 Digital
- 12 Education

Progress to date

We acknowledge that the Covid-19 pandemic may have derailed some of the Scottish Government's original intended approach to gauging progress. Our comments in this section of our response are made in that context.

The Plan itself refers to outcomes at various points throughout, but it is in the accompanying National Islands Plan Implementation Route Map 2020–2025 ('the Route Map')² that the intended outcomes are systematically set out. We understand that the work to put in place a robust system to measure progress

towards the outcomes is ongoing, as per the update on page 130 of the latest (2022) Annual Report.

We welcome these endeavours. We would be very keen to discuss with Scottish Government and other stakeholders how RCN can support them, including the best way to ensure that data on nursing can be used to gauge progress.

Strategic Objectives

The headline commitment under strategic objective 7 is to “work with NHS Boards, Local Authorities and HSCPs to ensure there is fair, accessible health and social care for those on islands.” This commitment can only be successfully delivered with the right workforce in place.

There are some references in the Annual Reports to workforce recruitment and retention in primary care and mental health, and to the island workforce across all sectors. But there is no substantial acknowledgement in the Plan, the Route Map or the three Annual Reports of the specific challenges of ensuring a sufficient workforce in health and social care for the islands. Nor are there any clear commitments to doing making sure that workforce is in place.

There is data on the workforce across health and social care that shows the challenges for the islands. Some illustrative figures and analysis are included as an appendix to this answer. Taken together the figures support the following five key points, which we hope a revised Plan will acknowledge and address.

1. There are no island-specific targets for health and social care workforce provision, or indicators for progress towards them, in the Plan or in its supporting and reporting documents. If the Plan is to “align... with and provide... a distinctive islands communities focus to existing policies and strategies that affect the lives and wellbeing of islanders” (the Plan, page 7) then it is vitally important to population health in the islands, now and in the future, that specific workforce actions are included in the next iteration to address this.

Addressing vacancies in island communities across all Agenda for Change bands in the NHS, and their equivalents in social care, will, be a critical element of those actions.

We do recognise that workforce challenges are a nationwide issue. But in island communities even a small number of vacancies can make services difficult to run safely. For example, NHS Shetland has 5 unfilled mental health nursing posts, but this represents a vacancy rate of 25% and will have a significant impact on the ability of staff to deliver services. The implementation of the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019 should support the determination of safe staffing levels across a greater range of services and the provision of staff to meet those levels, particularly in the NHS. RCN Scotland is aware that a lot of work still needs

to be carried out by Health Boards and care service providers to be prepared for the implementation of this important legislation in April 2024. A revised Plan should recognise this major change to health and care and should place a much greater emphasis on identifying and tackling the specific workforce challenges that exist in health and social care in the islands.

- “The jobs out here are unique and quite often expected to be broader than equivalent roles south. This isn't recognised well anywhere; pay, management understanding of full responsibility, time/job description; It's also not supported by any robust educational or continuing professional development programs and education for staff is often really poor and down to individuals to seek.” RCN member, Orkney.
 - “The lack of a full complement of Mental Health Nurses places huge pressure and increased workload on those staff that are there and has a problematic effect on ward capacity in acute services. It is especially difficult to properly deliver tasks that require the skills of a Registered Mental Health Nurse, and that cannot be carried out by others.” RCN member, Shetland.
 - “Training through the Open University (OU) should be used more widely to support recruitment of staff locally. A significant barrier at present is the poor staffing of the departments of those enthusiastic to train. To allow Health Care Assistants (HCAs) to undertake the OU degree in nursing managers should be provided with the funds to cover the extensive time their HCAs are off the ward on placement or study leave. If one person per year from a department wishes to begin their journey with the OU, the department could be reduced by almost four HCAs for a year. This creates difficulties in encouraging HCAs to begin training, as the department may be left insufficiently staffed. To then ask that HCA to wait for a year or two may result in them wishing to relocate to a department which may have more capacity, creating yet another vacancy for a HCA in the original department.” RCN member, Shetland.
 - “The biggest issue facing nursing in the islands is workforce. Recruitment is very hard and quite often even successfully recruited people can't find any housing.” RCN member, Orkney.
2. The different circumstances of each group of islands should be considered when setting health and social care workforce policy. For example, the Plan might be able to pinpoint what NHS Western Isles seems to have done successfully in terms of recruitment and retention from which other Health Boards could learn. A good example of why this might be useful is to do with the importance of anticipatory and preventative care, which the Plan itself highlights on page 44. District Nursing has a significant role to play

here but whilst District Nursing vacancy rates in the Western isles are currently zero, vacancy rates in Orkney are the highest in Scotland.

- “Despite the low vacancy rates, District Nursing is under a lot of pressure.” RCN member, Shetland.
3. NHS nursing sickness absence rates in the islands are above the national target. This poses a significant risk to safe and effective care, especially since absences are typically unpredictable. This also puts further pressure on existing staff working on the bank, and on agency spend. There must be a concerted efforts to bring rates down.
 4. Two of the island Health Boards are significantly ahead of the national percentage increase in the cost of bank and agency staff, with the third not too far behind. This suggests that employees are working excessive extra shifts via the bank and that agency staff are being used extensively to cover vacancies. This threatens safe staffing both in terms of the negative effect on staff of long hours and overwork and in terms of continuity of care, given the flux that characterises agency work. The situation is also unsustainable financially. We trust that the provisions of the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019 to do with ensuring safe staffing levels and with reporting requirements on agency staff, will, in time, reduce the need for extensive bank and agency cover, whilst also improving patient care. As per point one, a revised Plan should be contain clear actions to address this issue.
 5. Identifying how best to address recruitment and retention of NHS and social care staff should include directly gathering the views of nursing staff themselves, who have thought innovatively about the issue of island health and care. RCN Scotland’s Nursing Student of the Year 2023, who is from Shetland, is a great example of such a member of staff.³
 - “With a keen interest in neurology and recognising the limitations of opportunities on a small island, Lois applied for funding to travel to Glasgow for a placement and has already brought back her learning to her rural setting. Lois joined her NHS board Chief Executive to present a livestream on student nursing in remote and rural areas to encourage others to take up nursing as a career and has been supporting colleagues through her role on the Nurse Workforce Wellbeing Group of NES.”

We make some more detailed comments on commitments 3 and 4 of strategic objective 7 as they have been of particular interest to our members.

Commitment 3: Support the extension of NHS Near Me/Attend Anywhere, and other digital health initiatives, to reduce unnecessary travel and enable more care to be delivered on Islands.

We welcome the progress on Near Me as set out in the 2022 Annual Report on the Plan. But the information given is at the national level with no breakdown of how Near Me has progressed in the three islands since its rapid scaling-up during the pandemic. That scaling-up was evaluated in a report published in 2021.⁴ We are not aware of any evaluation of its progress since then. We trust that a more in-depth understanding of the progress of Near Me in the islands will come out of the Scottish Government's ongoing work on measuring progress overall.

- “Members have the impression that the use of Near Me peaked during the pandemic and has fallen back since. They are aware of instances of outer isles residents having been given in person appointments on main or other islands, which seem to our members as if they could have been a Near Me appointment.” RCN member, Orkney.
- “Near Me/Attend Anywhere has been a success and has very much improved access to care for a large group and range of patients.” RCN member, Shetland.
- “Near Me/Attend anywhere has been used for the last few years quite extensively in NHS Western Isles, and successfully on the whole, but it doesn't solve the problem of attracting consultants and the cost burden of the reliance on agency staff and locums.” RCN member, Western Isles.

Commitment 4: Work with stakeholders to develop propositions for a national centre for excellence in remote, rural and island health and social care.

We understand that the National Centre for Excellence in Remote, Rural and Island Health and Social Care is expected to launch in October 2023.⁵ From the information available we can recognise its potential to make a positive impact. On the NES website, there is some detail on the Centre's work,⁶ which says it will “develop a more highly skilled workforce”. We note that its work will “improve the capability of remote, rural and island Primary Care and community-based service delivery” and that it will focus on “Primary Care as an initial proof of concept.” It may be that the Centre will come to address most things to do with the remote, rural and island workforce. But if it is going to focus on primary care, in its first few years at least, it may not be able to go beyond that. This suggests that the responsibility for workforce in secondary and community care will not rest with the Centre, at least at first. But whichever entity has responsibility for what, the revised the Plan needs to reflect these responsibilities and clearly set out progress in the Annual Reports in the ways that we have outlined above.

Strategic Objectives 3, 4, 5, 6, 12

Even with the recent, and very welcome, pay rise for nursing staff in NHS Scotland and in GP practices, it can be expensive to live on a Scottish island. We do not need to rehearse here the detail of the challenges of island life under

strategic objectives 3, 4, 5, 6 and 12. These are not our areas of expertise. But to support our points about strategic objective 7 we do need to summarise them as general points. They are to do with a lack of available and affordable housing; increased petrol and diesel costs and the relative inaccessibility of some communities, making a motor vehicle the only option to reach them; the provision and cost of ferry and air transport to and from and in between the islands; domestic fuel price rises pushing even some working people into fuel poverty; off-electric and off-gas grid properties requiring expensive standalone oil-based heating systems; poor broadband coverage in some areas meaning that even if IT kit is provided to health and social care staff it cannot always be used consistently; and provision of education sufficiently locally so that working parents and other carers of children can manage their child care and their work responsibilities to ensure an appropriate work life balance.

It seems very likely that nursing staff won't seek jobs on the islands if they cannot find and/or afford a home; to rent or buy; afford fuel costs; get to and from the islands easily; secure a safe, accessible education for their children and access the internet consistently (at home and at work, the latter of which is a significant issue for community based staff and those who travel extensively as part of their job such as district nurses). Nursing staff who do have jobs already may find that they are unable to commit long term; for example, when they need to move from a small, rented flat to a larger family home.

Many of these matters are of concern across remote and rural Scotland, and even in urban areas; but they can take on a unique aspect in the islands. Alongside the issues we raise about strategic objective 7 they too must be addressed if the Scottish Government's ambitions in the current or a revised Plan are to have any change of being realised.

- "Housing is a huge problem in Shetland. It's a struggle to get and keep nursing staff due to the limited housing available. It seems that the houses owned by NHS Shetland are largely used for agency and medical staff. Perhaps an offer of six months accommodation for nurses new to the islands would provide a starting point for them and enable them to decide if island life is for them, and to house hunt from a secure position." RCN member, Shetland.
- "A recently published report by NHS Western Isles' Finance Director on the level of depopulation of the Western Isles⁷ identified barriers to population growth and attracting people to the islands including: "the lack of long-term rental and available housing properties on the Islands; the lack of childcare for the under 3s, lack of after school clubs and school holiday facilities; reducing school roles which has meant the closure of many rural schools and there being no school within walking distance for young children; as the population numbers drop this could affect the viability of plane links as this will increase subsidy on Public Service Obligation (PSO) routes and could affect the routes run without a PSO contract. This has already started becoming an issue in the Uists, Barra and Benbecula." The

report concluded that “If the depopulation and changes in demographics of the Islands continues unchecked then Health and Social Care Services will become unsustainable due to the increasing inability to recruit and the increase in requirements in terms of increasing acuity for complex treatment due to the aging workforce.” RCN member, Western Isles.

- “There are not enough electric charging points for electric vehicles which further limits transport options for workers.” RCN member, Western Isles.
- “People living on the Western Isles are totally reliant on Cal Mac ferries and Loganair flights. These services feel fragile to islanders and that fragility may discourage nursing staff from moving there.” RCN member Western Isles.
- “For nursing students, claiming back mileage back is difficult and funding is only available for public transport. Using public transport is often impractical / impossible in the islands (and in many remote & rural areas) and represents a barrier to taking up student nursing placements.” RCN member, round table.
- “The costs and availability of accommodation in the islands (and in many remote & rural areas) prevents students from taking up placements there. This is an issue for all students but especially for those students who may already have a family and so need larger and more expensive accommodation.” RCN member, round table.

The National Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care⁸

This document pledges to “develop a Remote and Rural workforce recruitment strategy by the end of 2024, providing a framework which will support employers to ensure that the Health and Social Care needs of people who live in remote and rural communities are met” (page 63). A revised Plan should be congruent with the proposals in this plan.

Appendix to Answer to Q4

NHS nursing

The latest NHS workforce data on the Turas system for nursing and midwifery refers to the period ending 30 June 2023.⁹ If we remove the data for the national and special Health Boards, the figures show an average vacancy rate for the fourteen territorial Health Boards, across all Agenda for Change (AfC) bands 2-9, of 8%. For bands 5 and above (registered nurses) the figure is 8.3% and for bands 2-4 (health care support workers and similar) it is 7.4%. For the three islands Health Boards the figures are as follows. Also shown is where this positions them in with respect to the other Health Boards, with one being the highest vacancy rate and fourteen being the lowest.

NHS Orkney

- Bands 5-9: 9.6% (5/14)
- Bands 2-4: 17% (1/14)

- Total: 11.7% (1/14)

NHS Shetland

- Bands 5-9: 7.4% (7/14)
- Bands 2-4: 4.1% (11/14)
- Total: 6.8% (9/14)

NHS Western Isles

- Bands 5-9: 5.2% (12/14)
- Bands 2-4: 3.4% (12/14)
- Total: 4.8% (12/14)

This illustrates a mixed picture in island communities, with the highest vacancy rates in NHS Orkney, while the rates in NHS Western Isles are below the national average.

Between 30 June 2019 to 30 June 2023, the total vacancy rate rose in two of these three Health Boards. NHS Orkney has gone from 10.5% to 11.7% and NHS Shetland from 6.1% to 6.8%. The rate in NHS Western Isles has fallen from 6.2% to 4.8%.

The data on sickness absence rates for 30 March 2019 to 31 March 2023 (the most recent date for which figures are provided) shows that all fourteen territorial Health Boards had sickness absence rates above the national target of 4% in 2019 and in 2023. Sickness absence rates are worse in 2023 than they were in 2019: NHS Orkney has the third highest sickness absence rate of the fourteen at 6.65%. In 2019 it was 4.62%. NHS Shetland has the lowest rate at 4.64% but this has risen from 4.29% in 2019. NHS Western Isles sits at fifth with 6.27% but this has risen from 5.53% in 2019.

When it comes to the use of bank and agency staff (added together) for the same period, 30 March 2019 to 31 March 2019, spend across all fourteen territorial Health Boards has risen by 138% (from £187mn to £445mn). In Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles the figures are, respectively, 576%, 745% and 111%.

District Nursing vacancies remain high with a national rate of 9.6%. The latest Turas figures show a 26% vacancy rate for District Nursing in NHS Orkney, which is not far off three times the national figure. District Nursing vacancy rates in NHS Shetland and NHS Western Isles are much lower (2.8% and 0% respectively) and this is very welcome, but these improvements are a relatively recent development with both these Health Boards having had a vacancy rate above 30% during the lifetime of the current Plan.

Social care nursing

The latest vacancy figures from the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) in its report 'Staff vacancies in care services 2022'¹⁰ show that of all care services, those reporting vacancies of all types, amount to 56% of services in Orkney (a

16% rise from 2021), 54% of services in Shetland (a 4% rise) and 45% of services in the Western Isles (a 5% drop). The fact that these figures are below the 2022 average of 61% is of little help to those services that cannot provide proper care as a result or to those service users whose care is compromised as a result.

These figures translate as WTE vacancy rate of 15.1% for Orkney (the highest in Scotland and a 5.2% rise on 2021), 11% for Shetland (third highest, 1% rise) and 8.9% for the Western Isles (drop of 0.9%, one of only around a third of local authorities reporting a drop in vacancies).

The overall whole time equivalent (WTE) vacancy rate for nursing is 17.4% in care services, up from 16.2% in 2021. Care homes for older people (16.1%) and care homes for adults (41.7%) had the highest rates of nursing vacancies.

The Western Isles is doing better, relatively speaking, than many other areas for which figures are given, with 50% of services reporting nursing vacancies, a drop from 100% in 2021, although the 2022 figures apply to only one service. According to the SSSC report (page 22) both Orkney and Shetland reported having no services employing nurses and so the vacancy rates for nursing for both are 0%. It is not clear whether 'nurses' means 'registered nurses' (equivalent to AfC Band 5 and above) or (other) 'nursing staff' (equivalent to AfC Bands 2-4). If it means nursing staff, it may be that SSSC registrants are acting in an equivalent role, and this is just a matter of terminology as between the NHS and care services. In any case, our comments above about the importance of NHS nursing staff, who are not registered nurses, applies equally to SSSC registrants employed in the care sector, many of whom are amongst our membership. It may be that care services in Orkney and Shetland rely on NHS District Nurses for their nursing needs and we know that the SSSC figures are not intended to give a complete picture of all health and care staffing arrangements. But if, say, Orkney relies on District Nurses for nursing in care, that makes its 26% District Nursing vacancy rate more of a problem.

Bearing in mind what we say about the importance of 'nursing staff', when it comes to services reporting that they find vacancies hard to fill, Orkney and Shetland are amongst the top four with 73% and 72% of services, respectively. The Western Isles sits at 50% which is fourth lowest in the table. The inability to fill vacancies is a concern. Of the various reasons given for this difficulty, it is also concerning to see that the three island groups make up the top-three of the thirty-two local authorities for 'too few applicants', which is the number one challenge in every local authority. It could not be plainer that this is an acute problem in the islands, and it may have something to do with the issues we highlight below to do with strategic objectives 3, 4, 5, 6 & 12. Either way, we agree with the SSSC's report when it says: "it's essential we continue to prioritise our work in attracting people into careers in social services."

"Social care is under huge pressure, and access to nursing can be a challenge given the low to non-existent provision of nursing within care services themselves." RCN member, Orkney.

“Delayed discharges from hospital wards continue to cause a shortage of beds in acute care. This is due to the lack of available beds in care homes, and the lack of staffing to cover care at home. The problem of poor staffing in social care is seen as “everlasting.”” RCN member, Shetland.

“We have a new care home in Stornoway which was built to replace two aging care homes, however, it has left us with nine care home beds and seven respite beds fewer than we had before! The houses with extra care beds (in the complex) have not been opened yet due to lack of staffing.” RCN member, Western Isles.

GP nursing

The latest data on GP nursing¹¹ does not cover every local authority area or break down the figures to be able to pinpoint issues at that level but with an overall (national) vacancy rate for general practice nurses 11.7% this suggests a likely problem in the islands too.

Question 5

In your opinion, has the current National Islands Plan made progress towards achieving its Strategic Objectives to address:

[In the consultation paper, the strategic objectives appear with boxes left to right meaning respectively ‘No progress’ – ‘minimal satisfactory progress’ – ‘progress’ – ‘progress exceeding expectations.’ RCN is not in a position to comment on all the strategic objectives but for those that we can comment on (3 to 7 & 12), we do so below, based on the data we have and member feedback].

Strategic Objective 3

Transport

minimal satisfactory progress

Strategic Objective 4

Housing

minimal satisfactory progress

Strategic Objective 5

Fuel Poverty

minimal satisfactory progress

Strategic Objective 6

Digital

minimal satisfactory progress

Strategic Objective 7

Health, Social Care and Wellbeing

minimal satisfactory progress

Strategic Objective 12

Education

minimal satisfactory progress

Question 6

There are 13 Strategic Objectives in the current National Islands Plan.

What is your opinion on the number of strategic objectives?

Just right

Too Many

Too Few

No opinion

Please feel free to expand on your answer in the box below.

Question 7

There are 134 commitments in the current National Islands Plan What is your opinion on the number of commitments?

Just right

Too Many

Too Few

No opinion

Please feel free to expand on your answer in the box below.

RCN Q7 answer

The Plan may benefit from having fewer than 134 commitments for the sake of making those that remain (or are added) more Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timebound (i.e., SMART).

Question 8

Overall, what do you think worked well in the current National Islands Plan?

RCN Q8 answer

RCN is not in a position to make an independent assessment of overall progress, using the Route Map indicators or otherwise, in the way that this question seems to envisage respondents may have been able to do. There does not appear to be any Audit Scotland reports on the progress of the Plan that could provide an independent assessment. This puts limits on the level of detail our response can contain.

Question 9

Overall, what do you think could have worked better in the current National Islands Plan?

RCN Q9 answer

RCN is not in a position to make an independent assessment of overall progress, using the Route Map indicators or otherwise, in the way that this question seems to envisage respondents may have been able to do. There does not appear to be any Audit Scotland reports on the progress of the Plan that could provide an

independent assessment. This puts limits on the level of detail our response can contain.

Question 10

Do you think there should be a new plan for the Scottish Islands?

Yes / No / Don't know

Please explain your reasons

RCN Q10 answer

We have expressed concerns about the existing Plan only in support of securing the best outcomes for island communities, including better access to sustainable health and social care services. This can best be achieved by having in place a workforce supply and skill mix that matches the health and care needs of those who live and work in the islands. We want to see a new Plan so that our concerns can be acknowledged and addressed by it. As a membership organisation, we represent the workforce, and so we are bound to focus on workforce issues. But it is important to note that our members -and everyone in the nursing profession - also rely on high-quality health and social care services.

Question 11

What would you like to see in any future or revised National Islands Plan?

Refresh the current National Islands Plan but keep the same format

A whole new plan is needed

Something else

Please feel free to expand on your answer in the box below.

RCN Q11 answer

In accordance with our answers to questions 4, 7 and 10, we would like to see a refreshed Plan, rather than a completely new one. It should address our key five points and contain realistic SMART objectives, with baseline figures, so that the islands can secure the health and social care workforce that they need.

References

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- ¹ <https://www.rcn.org.uk/news-and-events/news/scotland-nursing-student-finances-roundtable-060923>
 - ² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-plan-scotlands-islands/documents/>
 - ³ <https://www.rcn.org.uk/scotland/Get-involved/ScotlandNurseOfTheYear2024/StudentOfTheYear>
and
<https://www.rcn.org.uk/news-and-events/news/nurse-of-the-year-220623>
 - ⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/evaluation-attend-anywhere-near-video-consulting-service-scotland-2019-20-main-report/pages/1/>
 - ⁵ <https://www.gov.scot/news/enhancing-rural-healthcare/> and
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/programme-government-2023-24/documents/>
 - ⁶ <https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/63205>
 - ⁷ <https://www.wihb.scot.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Item-9.3.1-23-133-Appendix-1-Effect-of-Demographic-Change-on-the-Western-Isles-v2-BM-30.08.23.pdf>
 - ⁸ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-workforce-strategy-health-social-care/pages/0/>
 - ⁹ <https://turasdata.nes.nhs.scot/data-and-reports/official-workforce-statistics/all-official-statistics-publications/05-september-2023-workforce/dashboards/nhs-scotland-workforce/?pageid=9984>
 - ¹⁰ <https://data.sssc.uk.com/data-publications/30-vacancy-reports/331-the-2022-staff-vacancies-in-care-services-report>
 - ¹¹ <https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/general-practice-workforce-survey/general-practice-workforce-survey-2022/>