

## INTEGRATION DEBATE, THURSDAY 19 MARCH 2015

### What's left to do?

With a year to go until health and social care across Scotland is required to be fully integrated, there are a range of issues that need to be addressed.

The nursing profession – from nurse leaders through to frontline staff – embraces the concept of integrated health and social care: improving patient care is central to the ethos of nursing.

That is why RCN Scotland has been so active in shaping the plans for integration in Scotland. For instance we have represented the profession as the legislation was developed and scrutinised and have subsequently represented the profession on the various working groups set up by the Scottish Government. We are delivering a programme of engagement, funded by the Scottish Government, with nurse leaders to explore the implementation of integration and are holding a 'Shared Care' inter-professional conference in April. We are working to equip our workplace reps to shape plans for integrated care in their local areas.

Our work has allowed us to identify the issues that we think should be addressed for MSPs to be confident that plans to integrate health and social care will indeed improve care for the people they represent. These issues are:

- Quality and safety are key principles for integration. They must now be written explicitly into commissions for providing services, whoever is delivering them.
- Nurses are to be appointed to the governance bodies for integration. Voting members of boards now need to take into account advice from nurses as they commission services.
- Even amongst senior nurses involved with developing local partnership arrangements there is significant confusion about the practical implementation of care and clinical governance arrangements to provide assurance of, and accountability for, the quality and safety of services. Together with the Scottish Executive Nurse Directors we have provided the Scottish Government with a checklist of issues that we think the local integration schemes should address to ensure robust governance of care. We hope this will assist the Scottish Government in their evaluation of these schemes as they are submitted.
- To ensure consistency across all the different settings in which health and social care is provided, when the long-awaited revised National Care Standards are published they need to be implemented in all settings to allow continual improvement to take place.
- As local partnerships focus on the services they provide to address the specific needs of their local populations, there is a risk that planning of integrated services will result in services provided at a regional or national level becoming fragmented or under-resourced.
- The concept of locality planning is new and has so far been overlooked. We think it should genuinely be the driving force of local service design so we are now assessing how nursing is being given the opportunity to play its part at the most local levels.
- How integrated services are going to be paid for while budgets – in particular local authority social care budgets – are under growing pressure is a significant concern.
- As integration bodies strive to care for more people, with more complex conditions, in the community, we will require nurses with high levels of skill to be located in the right places to deliver care to those who need it. However, a significant proportion of the current community nursing workforce is close to retirement. We need the right nurses with the right skills to be employed as part of a truly integrated workforce, working together to provide high quality care.
- It will only be possible to provide safe and efficient integrated care if the IT systems of everyone providing that care is also integrated. This has been a problem across the NHS and social care for a long time and it is not clear how it is going to be resolved by April 2016.
- Over the next 2 – 3 years, the integration joint boards need to invest in time and support for staff to learn new ways of working with colleagues from across the full spectrum of health and care providers. This investment is central to the success of integration.

For more information on RCN Scotland's work on health and social care integration:

<http://www.rcn.org.uk/aboutus/scotland/scotlandintegration>