

## Royal College of Nursing Wales Suggested Priority Areas

On the 14<sup>th</sup> September at the National Assembly for Wales the Royal College of Nursing Wales will be launching its new campaign **Leading Nursing, Shaping Care**.

**Leading Nursing, Shaping Care** sets out the areas of nursing and health and social care policy that the Royal College of Nursing Wales sees as a critical priority for the Welsh Government, the National Assembly for Wales and indeed for the Royal College itself. They are:

### ➤ Implementing and Extending the Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act 2016

The 2016 Act was a historic first for patient care in the UK. The evidence is clear that nursing numbers and skills have a significant impact on patient outcomes including mortality. The Act protects patient lives and safety. The Royal College of Nursing Wales will be closely engaged with the Welsh Government's forthcoming consultation on the guidance that supports the implementation of this Act.

In addition a number of important suggestions have been made (including by the Health and Social Care Committee of the Fourth Assembly) about how this Act could be extended to safeguard patients in other areas including children, maternity and mental health inpatient care and care in the community. It is the view of the Royal College of Nursing that these potential areas should be seriously examined with a view to extending the Act as soon as possible. The Committee may well have a role in facilitating this examination.

### ➤ Investment in Nursing Education

The Government has taken the decision in England to abolish student nursing bursaries. The Royal College of Nursing has serious concerns that this will have a significant negative impact in the following areas:

- Ability of potential students to undertake nursing as a degree
- Viability of offering nursing as a degree for Higher Education Institutions
- Shortage of registered nurse affecting patient care in the NHS and independent sector
- Damage to sustainable workforce planning for healthcare professionals and health service planning and development.

The Scottish Government has ruled this option out in Scotland. The Welsh Government has taken no decision as yet.

### ➤ Nurse Leadership at Every Level

Nursing Leadership is a fundamental part of improving outcomes for people who receive care. Clinical Leadership empowers nurses to reflect on practice, improve care and adopt innovative approaches. Are there sufficient numbers of nurses with advanced and extended skills practicing in the community to provide the level of care required in Wales? What of specialist or consultant nursing numbers? As financial pressure increase on the NHS there is a pressure to stop appointing to these posts or reduce the number hours practitioners can work at this level. A national examination of the specialist and consultant nursing workforce in Wales is long overdue.

Interpersonal leadership should provide nurses with the ability to communicate with, trust and support each other. Organisational Leadership drives effective succession planning, the empowerment of the nursing workforce and the creation of a positive working environment. The lack of national succession planning for Nurse Director posts has left Wales vulnerable and reliant of recruitment from other UK nations.

### ➤ Value Nursing

There are many ways to recognise and celebrate the value of nursing as a profession. Foremost amongst these of course is are Fair Pay and Protection of Terms & Conditions. In addition there is the important area of access to continuous professional development (CPD). The NHS and other employers very often does not grant nursing the same access to CPD as medical colleagues and both patient care and personal professional development suffer as a result.

The first area of concern the Royal College of Nursing will be highlighting the sharp and alarming drop in numbers of District Nurses in Wales. If the decline in numbers continues at the current pace there will no District Nurses left in Wales within 5 years.

Is the role of the District Nurse valued? Is delivering healthcare in the community valued? If this is a concern to the Committee we would most strongly suggest an Inquiry is held into the demise of the District Nurse, community nursing in Wales or more broadly care delivered in the home.

## **Royal College of Nursing Wales comment on Committee Suggested Priority Areas**

### ➤ Integration of Health and Social Care services

We would agree this is a priority area for discussion. The national direction of travel is unclear to those in the service and discussion appears dominated by consideration of local government mergers rather than patient care.

### ➤ Waiting Times

Waiting times are a significant indicator of service efficiency. However any discussion of waiting times will invariably lead to discussion of factors that influence waiting times e.g. the workforce, capacity (both in the acute and community setting) and demand (leading to discussion of public health etc). The discussion then becomes very broad.

It may be more beneficial to the Committee therefore to either examine one of these factors specifically or to pick a specific areas e.g. orthopaedics. etc. to ensure a more focused outcome.

➤ Primary Care

We would agree this is a priority area for consideration.

- access to primary care
- quality of primary care and performance management
- the primary care team and workforce issues.
- interaction with acute or secondary care and with care in the community

➤ Efficiency within the NHS and modern management practices

This is certainly an important area to consider.

➤ Neonatal services

We would agree this is a priority area for consideration. The Bliss report earlier this year highlighted significant concerns over the provision of neonatal care across Wales including nursing shortages and lack of investment in the future workforce.

In addition there is significant remodelling of services underway in each Health Board which would benefit from a national perspective.

➤ Use of antipsychotic medication in care homes

This is an important area of consideration in its own right but potentially the Committee may also wish to consider the administration of medicine more generally which raises further areas of concern to patient care.

➤ Ambulance Services

It would be provident to follow-up on the similar Inquiry undertaken by the Health and Social Care Committee in the Fourth Assembly.

➤ Loneliness and isolation among older people

This is an important area to consider. In terms of organisations submitting the most useful evidence it would be helpful to be clear in terms of reference whether the Committee wishes to exclude or include related mental health issues such as depression and areas such as substance misuse.

➤ Gambling addiction

This is certainly an important area to consider.

➤ Sport and public health

If the potential Inquiry were widened to “public health and physical activity” the Royal College of Nursing would certainly recognise this a very important priority area for investigation.

Increasing participation in Sport is, of course, a significant part of increasing physical activity and thus public health. However physical activity understood more broadly (which would include leisure and work activities such as walking to work, gardening etc) is undertaken by the whole population and the public health challenge is to increase this whilst recognising that different approaches work best with different people. We would welcome the opportunity to contribute to such an Inquiry.

#### **ABOUT THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF NURSING (RCN)**

The RCN is the world's largest professional union of nurses, representing 430,000 nurses, midwives, health visitors, health care support workers and nursing students, including over 25,000 members in Wales. RCN members work in a variety of settings including the NHS and the independent sector. The RCN works locally, nationally and internationally to promote standards of care and the interests of patients and nurses, and of nursing as a profession. The RCN is a UK-wide organisation, with its own National Boards for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The RCN is a major contributor to nursing practice, standards of care, and public policy as it affects health and nursing.