



Royal College
of Nursing
Scotland

Member update on RCN Scotland's work on

Staffing for safe and effective care



**SAFE STAFFING
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RCN Scotland continues to work to influence and shape plans for the implementation of the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019 ('the Act') which will come into force from 1 April 2024.

In this briefing, we let you know about our engagement with the Ministerial Nursing and Midwifery Taskforce and share more detail of our work to ensure Scottish government and key stakeholders are working to address the needs of the nursing workforce ahead of implementation of the Act.

We're always interested to hear directly from members to help shape our policy work. If you'd like to know more or want to get involved, please email us at policyscotland@rcn.org.uk

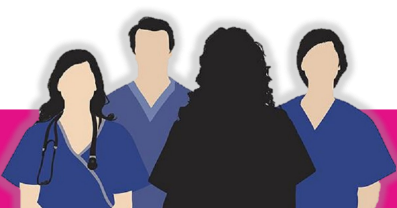
What have we been doing since our last update in October 2023?

Meetings with Scottish government ministers and officials (including the Chief Nursing Officer and Cabinet Secretary), and MSPs

The Ministerial Nursing and Midwifery Taskforce (NMT)¹ has been meeting since the spring of 2023 and RCN Scotland is a key member. The four main themes of the NMT are being taken forward by four subgroups:

1. Attraction: recruiting and retaining the workforce to rewarding careers in nursing and midwifery,
2. Culture & Leadership: reinforcing a positive ethos and safe environment for nursing and midwifery, led by the professions.
3. Education & Development: ensuring relevant lifelong learning and clear career pathways for nursing and midwifery.
4. Wellbeing: embedding safe staffing and manageable workloads across nursing and midwifery.

Informing the work of all four subgroups is a national Listening Project, which is gathering views from across the nursing and midwifery workforce, including people who may have retired from the workforce and those who may wish to pursue a career in nursing or midwifery. Through our RCN Scotland Director and Associate Director – Nursing, Policy and Professional Practice, we co-chair two of the four subgroups and we represent our members on all four sub-groups. We want to see the NMT recommend actions in these areas that will be as important to safe staffing as the HCSA. The subgroups have reached the stage of discussing potential recommendations. We hope to see these firmed up in the first half of 2024, with a view to submitting them to Scottish Ministers then setting out a clear action plan to deliver change.



Our Director for Scotland, Colin Poolman, meets regularly with the Cabinet Secretary for NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care. Our senior staff meet regularly with the Chief Nursing Officer's team in Scottish Government. Safe staffing is one of the many issues that they discuss.

Winter Pressures

Significant pressures is being experienced across our health and social care services. Members have been raising particular concerns regarding unsafe practices especially in relation to patients receiving care in non-clinical areas. We have been supporting members to raise these patient safety concerns locally and have escalated to Nurse Directors and Scottish government.

Parliamentary Debates and Committees

We made the case for safe staffing in our briefing to MSPs on what we wanted to see from the Scottish Budget for 2024-25².

Media Coverage

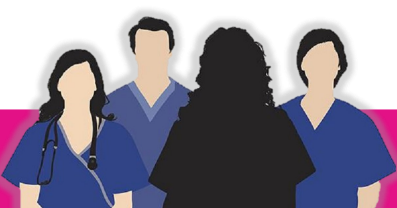
We continue to highlight safe staffing in our media work wherever it is relevant. In recent months we have had coverage on STV News, ITV News, BBC Radio Scotland, and in the Scottish Sun, Herald, the Dumbarton Reporter, the Nursing Standard, the National, Nursing Times, STV Online and Mail Online.

Research Reports and Surveys

In mid-December we published a review of progress on the recommendations we made in our 2023 Nursing Workforce in Scotland report³. This illustrated that the workforce challenges affecting health and social care remain as acute, if not more so, than when we published our workforce report in May 2023. At every available opportunity, we continue to press for meaningful, sustainable, and fully funded proposals to tackle persistent nursing vacancies, improve retention and expand domestic recruitment.

Membership of stakeholder groups

We continue to actively take part in various safe staffing groups as outlined in our previous briefings⁴.



Where are we now?

We will continue to support members to understand what implementation of the HCSA will mean and how to make use of the HCSA to support safe staffing, but we know that the HCSA, significant as it is, it is only one part of the safe staffing picture.

What comes next?

Through taking part in the NMT we will push for actions that we believe are necessary to ensure staffing for safe and effective care. The act of nursing and the profession of nursing are themselves inherently stressful. It is unacceptable to say to nursing staff that it is their individual and personal responsibility to be more resilient when so many of the further pressures placed on them are to do with the way systems and services are organised and operated. We especially want to see actions coming out of the NMT that tackle situations where the ways that health and care services and systems are planned and arranged compromise safety and effectiveness.

We are pressing for a decision from Scottish government on the implementation of the reduced working week, protected time for learning and review of band 5 nursing roles which were agreed in the 2023/24 pay deal. These three elements will have an impact on safe staffing through improved working conditions and recognition of the clinical skills and knowledge within the Band 5 nursing workforce.

The Scottish Government has published an analysis of the responses to its public consultation on the draft guidance to the HCSA, to which we responded in September 2023⁵. We will use this analysis, to see if there are any further changes to the guidance that we need to lobby for.

The Test and Learn phase of the Scottish Government's implementation plan will continue until April 2024. We will review the lessons it will have for all of us about effective implementation of the HCSA.

By the time of our next briefing, in Spring 2024, the implementation of the HCSA will be upon us. RCN will be considering how we can best work with our members to gauge the success of implementation and understand what impact the HCSA is having on the provision of safe and effective care.

In 2023, we published quarterly updates on our Safe Staffing work. Please see the References section of this document if you'd like to read our past briefings⁶.

Our regular member updates let you know about our most recent safe staffing work and explain what we'll be doing next. We're always interested to hear directly from members to help shape our policy, parliamentary and member engagement work. If you'd like to know more or want to get involved, please email us at policyscotland@rcn.org.uk





References

¹ Royal College of Nursing Scotland (2023) Ministerial Nursing and Midwifery Taskforce <https://www.rcn.org.uk/scotland/Influencing-On-Your-Behalf/Ministerial-Nursing-and-Midwifery-Taskforce> (Accessed on 21 December 2023)

² <https://www.rcn.org.uk/About-us/Our-Influencing-work/Policy-briefings/sco-parl-scottish-budget-2024-25> (Accessed on 21 December 2023)

³ <https://www.rcn.org.uk/About-us/Our-Influencing-work/Policy-briefings/sco-parl-nursing-workforce-in-scotland-review-of-progress-dec23> The 2023 Nursing Workforce in Scotland report is here: <https://www.rcn.org.uk/About-us/Our-Influencing-work/Policy-briefings/sco-parl-nursing-workforce-in-scotland-report-030523> (Accessed on 21 December 2023)

⁴ Links as per reference 1.

⁵ Royal College of Nursing Scotland (2023) RCN Scotland's response to the Scottish Government consultation on the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019 Statutory Guidance <https://www.rcn.org.uk/About-us/Our-Influencing-work/Policy-briefings/sco-pol-hcss-act-guidance-sep-2023> (Accessed on 21 December 2023)

Scottish Government Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019 - draft statutory guidance: consultation analysis <https://www.gov.scot/publications/consultation-health-care-staffing-scotland-act-2019-draft-statutory-guidance-analysis-responses/> (Accessed on 23 January 2024)

⁶ Royal College of Nursing Scotland (2023) Member briefing on Safe Staffing: Our 2022 work and next steps <https://www.rcn.org.uk/scotland/-/media/Royal-College-Of-Nursing/Documents/Countries-and-regions/Scotland/2023/Member-Briefing-Safe-Staffing-April-2023.pdf> (Accessed on 21 December 2023)

Royal College of Nursing Scotland (2023) Member briefing on Safe Staffing: July 2023 Update and next steps <https://www.rcn.org.uk/scotland/-/media/Royal-College-Of-Nursing/Documents/Countries-and-regions/Scotland/2023/SS-Member-Update-July-2023.pdf> (Accessed on 21 December 2023)

Royal College of Nursing Scotland (2023) Member briefing on Safe Staffing: October 2023 Update and next steps <https://www.rcn.org.uk/scotland/-/media/Royal-College-Of-Nursing/Documents/Countries-and-regions/Scotland/2023/SS-Member-Update-Oct-2023.pdf> (Accessed on 21 December 2023)

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