

SCOTTISH LABOUR DEBATE ON DRAFT BUDGET - WEDNESDAY 25 JANUARY

Royal College of Nursing

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 providing members with learning and development opportunities. With over 40,000 members in Scotland, the RCN is the voice of nursing.

Transparency in Budget process

At a time when budgets and resources are stretched, and ever increasing demands are being placed upon Scotland's health care services, it is imperative that funding decisions are taken in a wholly transparent manner, and that their success can be scrutinised in a meaningful way.

As in previous years, RCN is frustrated at the limited information made publically available by the Scottish Government which makes analysis more difficult. RCN find itself unable to confidently match investment decisions to government priorities.

Shifting the balance of care

Scotland's health and care services are creaking at the seams. The need to shift care from hospitals to the community is widely acknowledged.

Scotland must look at different ways of delivering services to ensure that people get the care and support they need. Investment in nursing and other primary care staff to enable this to happen is key. It will also help to ensure that Integration Authorities are able to deliver the outcomes which have been set for them.

Investment in primary care and the primary care workforce will ensure that the NHS is put on a sustainable footing for the future whilst also meeting the Government's 2020 vision for care at home.

Shaping generations to come

In the RCN's 2016 manifesto Nursing Scotland's Future – Professional voices: practical solutions we asked that 'decisions are made to shape health and care for generations to come, rather than focussing on short-term goals'.

One of the ways RCN asked MSPs to support that goal is that they back the creation of a set of clear, consistent and transparent criteria to be used when they or government take any decision on health care funding.

This means that any investment, or disinvestment decisions would have to align with these agreed criteria. Having agreed principles would make the difficult decisions somewhat easier and certainly clearer for members of the public.

If Scotland continues to deliver care in the same way it does now, the demands on health care services will outstrip Scotland's ability to pay for them. Tough decisions on what to invest in or disinvest from will need to be made, in partnership with the public, with staff and across all political parties.

Further information sources

If you would like any further information please contact Sarah Atherton, Parliamentary and Media Officer, by email at sarah.atherton@rcn.org.uk or by telephone 0131 662 6172.