Consultation Response

Date: 2nd March 2023

Title: RCN Scotland response to Care Inspectorate consultation on staffing method framework

1. Background

1.1 The Scottish Government has commissioned the Care Inspectorate to consult with a range of people and stakeholders about a staffing method for use in care homes for adults. This is to prepare for the enactment of the **Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019** in 2024.

1.2 Following consultations with a range of adult care homes and key stakeholders, the Care Inspectorate have developed a staffing method framework. The framework has been tested in 15 care homes during 2022. Feedback was collected during the testing phase that supported the continual development of this, including from RCN Scotland.

1.3 More information about the Framework can be found here.

2. Consultation response

Q1 Is the staffing method framework easy to understand?

- **Yes**

Q2 Is there anything that would make the staffing method framework even better?

- **Yes**

If yes, please specify:

The language in the framework is accessible and clear, which is why RCN Scotland's answer to the previous question is 'Yes.' However, there are a few areas which could be improved.

It is not clear how the various parts to the framework interact with each other, whether they all have equal importance and whether they all need to be considered as part of the framework. We presume that the intention is for all areas of the framework to be considered as part of an overall staffing method approach.

Under the staff feedback section, the framework could state that staff are 'enabled and actively encouraged' to share meaningful feedback on staffing in the service and

be clearer how staff feedback is responded to. One of the guiding principles of the Act is to be 'open with staff and service users about decisions on staffing.' The current wording that 'consideration is given' could go further, making it clear within the framework that staff concerns will be recorded, responded to within an agreed timescale and will form part of service improvement planning. It would also be best practice for staff to receive feedback in written form. This approach would ensure that a record of staff feedback exists. This in turn will provide reassurance to staff and support a structured way to feed into improvement processes.

The RCN has published [Nursing Workforce Standards](#) which apply across health and social care and are relevant to the section on guidance and research. The RCN has recently appointed 12 Lead Nurses for the Independent Health and Social Care Sector and are working to ensure the standards meet any differences in country wide approaches particularly in relation to language used.

We would welcome inclusion of the RCN in the list of relevant guidance and research.

Q3 Is there anything that should be removed from the staffing method framework?

- **Yes**

If yes, what should be removed?

In the staffing levels and vacancies section, we would suggest the wording around volunteers needs to be changed. Volunteers have a significant role to play in complementing and supporting the workforce, but they are separate and should not be 'counted' as part of the workforce or unintentionally used to mitigate the risks associated with high vacancy levels and retention challenges.

Q4 Could using the staffing method framework help when making decisions about how staffing is organised in a care home service?

- **No**

If no, please explain?

The staffing method framework has the potential to assist when making decisions about how staffing is organised in a care home service. Along with the development of relevant workforce planning methodologies/tools.

Q5 Do you agree that the Care Inspectorate needs to develop a staffing method for use across all adult and older people's care homes in Scotland?

- **Yes**

Q6 What are the benefits in having a single staffing method framework for care homes in Scotland?

The staffing method framework has the potential to assist when making decisions about how staffing is organised in a care home service. Along with the development of relevant workforce planning methodologies/tools.

Q7 What are the barriers in having a single staffing method framework for care homes in Scotland?

A single staffing method framework for all care homes is seeking to cover a wide variety of settings and a wide variety of staffing groups. This means that the framework will be high level but is unable to provide detailed quantitative information on staffing levels across all settings. While we think this is appropriate for an overarching framework such as the common staffing method within the NHS in Scotland which is underpinned by a range of methodologies and tools that are relevant to specific settings. As explained previously, we do not think that a single staffing method or tool should or can be developed that will be relevant for the different settings within the sector.

Q8 Is there any further information you would like to tell us about the staffing method framework?

With any staffing method it is important that resident/patient outcomes and quality of care are evaluated. The structure of care in care homes includes registered nurse staffing levels and skill mix as important characteristics; these in turn impact processes of care which then impact resident outcomes this may include use of antipsychotics, incidence of falls and pressure ulcers.

The need for any staffing method to consider the role of the Registered Nurse within care homes.

Role differentiation in care homes can become blurred. Without considering the unique role and contribution of team members, it can be difficult to see the influence of specific staff members (e.g., registered nurses) on the quality of care experienced by the residents. However, a review of the literature by Dellefield et al (2015)[1] demonstrated that most of the studies included in this review consistently reported that higher Registered Nurse staffing numbers and higher ratios of Registered Nurses in the nursing skill mix are related to better care home quality.

The presence of registered nurses in a care home, for residents with nursing needs, is essential for continuous monitoring and assessing those residents' health and wellbeing. They are the core of the assessment process for continuing health care. As autonomous practitioners, their clinical skills are used to recognise and anticipate problems, take action when a person's condition is deteriorating, and avoid

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[1] Dellefield ME, Castle NG, McGilton KS, Spilsbury K. The Relationship Between Registered Nurses and Nursing Home Quality: An Integrative Review (2008-2014). Nurs Econ. 2015 Mar-Apr;33(2):95-108, 116. PMID: 26281280.

unnecessary hospital admissions. Registered nurses are key to managing acute and chronic illness, making decisions around the management of long-term conditions, and delivering complex interventions in emergency or crisis situations. As the health needs of care home residents become more complex, nurses within care homes require specialist knowledge to manage the care of these residents and to liaise with, and engage, other health professionals in ensuring the needs of care home residents are met and to minimise 'avoidable' transitions to acute care.

The 2019 Act allows the Care Inspectorate to develop staffing methods which must 'include the use of staffing level tools designed to provide quantitative information relating to workload and quantitative or qualitative information relating to professional judgement in order to assist in determining the appropriate staffing levels for a care service.'

For the avoidance of doubt, RCN Scotland is not of the view that the creation of a staffing method framework in itself meets the requirements of a staffing method as defined by the Act. We hope that the creation of this framework is the first step in the process of developing staffing methods and staffing models which provide the information required to make decisions around staffing.

As evidenced in our 2022 Nursing Workforce report[2], there is a long-term trend of increasingly complex clinical need among people using social care services, including care home residents. Yet data from SSSC shows that this increasing need is not being met by increasing numbers of registered nurses in care homes. The development of a staffing method framework and greater enablement of staff to raise concerns about staffing must not go ignored and must help identify the need for greater investment in and recruitment to the registered nurse role within care homes to ensure the workforce reflects this increasing clinical need.

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[2] https://www.rcn.org.uk/About-us/Our-Influencing-work/Policy-briefings/sco-parl-nursing-workforce-in-scotland-report-290322