

# Scotland's Nursing and Midwifery Taskforce



## Influencing for positive change

Member briefing on the  
Nursing and Midwifery Taskforce report



Royal College  
of Nursing  
Scotland

# Introduction

The Ministerial Nursing and Midwifery Taskforce was set up because of pressure from RCN Scotland to address Scotland's nursing workforce crisis.

The Taskforce has now made 44 recommendations for action. As a central member of the Taskforce, RCN Scotland helped shape each and every one of these recommendations. Taken as a whole, these recommendations are ambitious and, if implemented well, will help develop a sustainable nursing workforce for the future.

Each group of recommendations have been laid out to achieve ten key outcomes. You will see that these outcomes are ambitious and if achieved, would represent significant improvement for nursing staff. We will judge whether or not the Taskforce has been successful against these outcomes.

At the beginning of our work with the Taskforce, we published [Scotland's Nursing and Midwifery Taskforce – Our Priorities for Action](#), which set out the areas for action that we believe should be included in the Taskforce recommendations. While not everything we called for has been recommended by the Taskforce, the majority of these priorities were ultimately reflected in the final Taskforce recommended actions. The rest we will be pursuing through other means and continuing to make the case for change. RCN Scotland was also successful in pushing for recommendations which went beyond these priorities, as the thinking of the Taskforce developed.

Publication of the recommendations is just the first step. Now the focus must be on implementing these actions in a sustainable and meaningful way, fully funded and fully resourced, and not just added to business as usual. Plans for an implementation group to oversee this work are already underway, which was one of our key asks. We will play a key role on the implementation group to ensure the Scottish government commits to fully funding these ambitious actions to achieve positive change for Scotland's nursing workforce.

The work of the Taskforce was divided into four subgroups, focusing on Wellbeing, Culture & Leadership, Attraction & Retention and Education & Development. RCN Scotland was represented on each of these groups and chaired two of them.

This briefing is a summary of the RCN's most significant achievements, including some of what we anticipate will be the most impactful outcomes and recommended actions.

You can read the full report on the [Scottish government website](#).



# Wellbeing

You have told us clearly that feeling undervalued, concerns around low staffing levels and workplace pressures are key reasons for wanting to leave the nursing profession.

We emphasised to the Taskforce the impact of staff not getting breaks, excessive workloads and low staffing levels, on staff wellbeing and patient care, and this has been reflected in the recommended actions

## Key outcomes:

- Employers have ensured that the conditions are in place for staff to maintain their own wellbeing by creating a working environment that adequately balances the needs of staff with the needs of the people they care for.
- Staff are engaged in the setting of staffing levels and skill mix that will reflect international evidence to enable the consistent delivery of high-quality person-centred care in an environment that promotes the wellbeing of staff.

## What RCN Scotland secured from the Taskforce:



Employers will have to have appropriate staffing levels and the systems in place so staff are able to take contractual and statutory breaks to which they are entitled.



In addition, the Scottish Government is set to develop mechanism to ensure staff have all their essential needs met whilst at work, including core aspects of need such as physical needs, physical safety, emotional safety and psychological safety.



We know that too much time is being spent on non-clinical aspects and so the Scottish Government is to review paperwork requirements to establish which can be removed to allow nurses to focus their time on direct clinical patient care.



RCN Scotland also pushed for Scottish Government to review the predicted absence allowance in all staffing level tools to ensure it is reflects non-clinical aspects or roles including a realistic levels of absence.

# Culture and leadership

All too often, workplace culture is having a negative impact on staff retention as you do not feel safe to raise concerns. We called for recommendations that will enable all workplaces to develop a compassionate and psychologically safe culture.

One of our key asks was for a 'Culture Audit' to determine what good culture looks like and what is needed to create collaborative and compassionate workplaces. This recommendation has been adopted, in the form of culture assessment tools, and support will be put in place for teams to carry them out and implement required changes.

On leadership, we were clear that professional nursing leadership is an essential contributor at all levels of health and care and that nurses should be able to influence decisions on how care is structured and delivered.

While not a recommended action, we will continue to call for the protection of time to lead for Senior Charge Nurses and their community equivalents and for these leadership roles to be non-caseload holding.

## Key outcomes:

- Employers will respond to feedback from staff and manage difficult situations that staff encounter during the course of their work through formal and informal mechanisms.
- Employers will ensure that staff are encouraged by supportive leaders who have undertaken training and understand the qualities required for the role.

## What RCN Scotland secured from the taskforce:



A new culture assessment tool is set to be developed to be used by teams in a psychologically safe way, across all health and care settings. Teams will be supported to carry out the assessments and implement required improvements.



Organisations and employers will commit to sustaining compassionate leadership, which evidence shows must be a critical component of every nurse and midwife's role.



Employers must ensure that nursing staff have protected time for a model of supervision which meets the individual's needs. This should include restorative supervision, peer support, and reflective practice.

# Attraction and Retention

Put quite simply, Scotland does not have enough nurses and too many experienced and valuable nursing staff are leaving the profession. Taken as a whole, the Taskforce recommendations amount to a nursing retention strategy, which we have been calling for, but crucially, only if implemented fully and properly resourced.

More must also be done to encourage people to consider a career in nursing and, once they are nursing students, to support their progress towards registration. We welcome the commitment to look at alternative entry routes into nursing and also to consider the barriers preventing people entering the profession. We are clear that this must include consideration of the financial support offered to students.

## Key outcome:

- Nursing and midwifery careers are attractive, flexible and accessible for new entrants and existing staff.

## What RCN Scotland secured from the taskforce:



Scottish Government to commission an evidence-based and evaluated career marketing campaign that accurately represents and promotes the roles and range of career opportunities available in nursing.



Alternative pre-registration degree education models, including blended and distance learning and alternative entry routes into nursing are to be developed. These must include blended and distance learning, part-time routes, earn as you learn, apprenticeship models and fast track routes.



A significant achievement is that Scottish Government has committed to review the package of student financial support to ensure nursing students are able to complete their studies, as part of work to identify barriers to attracting candidates.



# Education and Development

Education and professional development are essential for patient safety and are also a professional regulatory requirement for registered nurses.

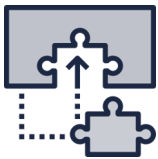
We welcome the focus both on nursing support workers and on how to better support continued professional development for all nursing staff.

While not included in the recommended actions, we are clear that nurses and nursing support workers in all health and care settings need to have protected time for continued professional development and will continue to call for this to be realised.

## Key outcome:

- Staff are supported to develop their skills and knowledge to support their career progress and choice.

## What RCN Scotland secured from the Taskforce:



A comprehensive review of practice learning to identify potential gaps in education provision, supervision, and IT infrastructures and understand the future requirements.



The Scottish Government will explore the benefits and challenges of introducing regulation and standardised education in Scotland for nursing support worker roles to better enable progression to the Registered Nurse role.



The development of a structured approach to integrated clinical, academic and research appointments with clearer career pathways and job descriptions including clinical academic roles.

# Keeping up to date on progress

We will update members on the work of the implementation group and progress in turning the recommendations into positive change for you.



Make sure your details with us on [MyRCN](#) are up to date so you can continue to receive emails from us.



Check out [our website](#) for updates.



If you have any questions about this briefing, the work of the Taskforce or implementation of the recommendations, please contact us by email at [PolicyScotland@rcn.org.uk](mailto:PolicyScotland@rcn.org.uk)



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