

Letter sent to: Kate Forbes MSP, Ash Regan MSP
and Humza Yousaf MSP

RCN Scotland
42 South Oswald Road
Edinburgh
EH9 2HH

Colin Poolman
Director

Telephone: 0131 662 6131
Email: colin.poolman@rcn.org.uk
Date: 27 February 2023

Dear

RCN Scotland priorities for the next First Minister

As a candidate to be the next leader of the SNP and First Minister of Scotland, I am writing to you to outline a number of priority areas that RCN Scotland believes the Scottish Government must focus on in order to address the challenges facing Scotland's health and care services. The system is in crisis and, given the urgency of the situation, I thought it would be helpful to briefly outline the actions that we believe are needed to tackle the situation in a sustainable way.

RCN Scotland called for the new Nursing and Midwifery Taskforce, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, as we believe the current crisis requires stakeholders to come together with the Scottish Government to identify how we can support our existing experienced nurses and make nursing a career of choice once again. The Taskforce should make recommendations in a range of areas that can improve the sustainability of the nursing workforce including career progression, flexible working and support for student nurses. It is vital that the work of the Taskforce continues to be led by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care and that this work proceeds at pace.

With over 4,600 registered nurse posts unfilled in the NHS alone, work must continue to grow the domestic nursing workforce. As well as continuing to increase the number of funded places for nursing students, RCN Scotland is also calling for the development of, and investment in, alternative pathways into a nursing career.

We welcomed the Scottish Government's timetable for implementing the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019 and are working with officials and stakeholders to prepare for implementation. Ahead of implementation, the Scottish Government must address the ongoing level of investment that will be required to tackle nursing vacancies and ensure that health and care providers can meet their safe staffing duties. Long term health and care workforce plans, based on demand and population need, are required to ensure long-term nursing supply.

RCN Scotland is also calling for the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill to be paused. We share the desire to improve the quality and consistency of social care and health services across Scotland, but it is entirely unclear how the current Bill will achieve this or address the serious challenges within a sector that is in crisis. We are therefore calling for the Scottish Government to take the time to engage with stakeholders - including staff working at all levels within the social care and community health sectors - and develop detailed plans for reform prior to taking forward legislation.

Ultimately the next First Minister and Scottish Government must ensure that nursing is seen as an attractive and rewarding career. You will be aware that RCN Scotland is to consult members on the new pay offer for staff working in the NHS on Agenda for Change terms and conditions from Scottish government. The consultation will open at 10am on Tuesday 28 February and close at 9am on Monday 20 March.

I hope that, if you are successful in your leadership campaign, you will commit to working with RCN Scotland to protect the future of nursing and build a sustainable workforce to meet Scotland's needs.

Yours sincerely



Colin Poolman
Director

**Royal College of Nursing
of the United Kingdom**
20 Cavendish Square
London W1G 0RN
Telephone:
+44 (0) 20 7409 3333
RCN Direct 0345 772 6100
rcn.org.uk

President
Sheilabye (Sheila) Sobrany
RGN PG Cert HE MA HE
SFHEA

**General Secretary &
Chief Executive**
Pat Cullen

The RCN represents nurses and nursing, promotes excellence in practice and shapes health policies

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE®
We invest in people Silver