

Humza Yousaf MSP  
First Minister  
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Dear Humza,

Many congratulations on your confirmation as Scotland's new First Minister. We look forward to continuing to work positively with you and your government to tackle the challenges facing our health and care services and ensure that Scotland has the nursing workforce it deserves.

Whilst the recent vote to accept the NHS pay offer ends the immediate threat of strike action by RCN Scotland members, as you are aware, a significant minority of our members voted to reject the offer. The chronic staffing shortages and low morale that led to the overwhelming strike mandate are still very real, and the close vote in our ballot is a demonstration of our members' continued frustration and concern about the nursing workforce crisis facing Scotland's NHS.

Much more is required for nursing staff to feel valued and your commitment to reform Agenda for Change is welcome and now must deliver to make nursing a career of choice once again. The framework must be modernised to recognise the clinical skills and expertise of nursing staff and further improvements to pay, terms and conditions are needed in the years ahead.

Since we wrote to all of the SNP leadership candidates last month, the latest NHS workforce statistics show that over 4,000 registered nurse posts are unfilled, impacting on the safety and quality of patient care and putting even more pressure on staff.

Your announcement of the new Nursing and Midwifery Taskforce is very welcome, and we look forward to the first meeting early next month. We are clear that the Taskforce must be led by the new Cabinet Secretary and that its work needs to proceed at pace, delivering funded, timely, meaningful, and sustainable actions that make a positive difference for the nursing profession. As well as developing a retention strategy, the Taskforce must consider as a priority how to grow the domestic nursing workforce and expand the routes into nursing.

We are continuing to work with Scottish government officials on the implementation of the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act. Ahead of implementation, there is an urgent need to 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.

The delay to the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill is welcome, as are your recent comments about reviewing the funding for social care and engaging further with stakeholders. We are calling for your new ministerial team to take time to engage with stakeholders and develop detailed plans before taking forward legislation. We believe the focus should be on tackling the workforce crisis in social care and community health. Services must have the right numbers of staff, with the right skills, in the right place and that needs to start with increased investment and improving pay, terms and conditions in the sector.

We would like to request a meeting with you to discuss the Scottish government's support for Scotland's nursing staff and your plans for health and social care recovery and reform. We understand that your diary will be very busy but would appreciate a meeting as soon as possible. We would also appreciate it if you could support a meeting with the new Cabinet Secretary ahead of the first meeting of the Nursing and Midwifery Taskforce as we believe it would be beneficial if we could have an initial meeting ahead of the Taskforce.

We look forward to continuing our constructive engagement with you and your new ministerial team to protect the future of nursing and build a sustainable workforce to meet Scotland's needs.

Yours sincerely,



Julie Lamberth, Chair, RCN Scotland Board



Colin Poolman, Director, RCN Scotland

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