Health (Tobacco, Nicotine etc. and Care) (Scotland) Bill

Stage 2 Amendment on the provision of voice equipment: Call for Views

RCN Scotland

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Health and Sport Committee’s call for views on the Stage 2 amendment to the Health (Tobacco, Nicotine etc. and Care) Bill on Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).

The Royal College of Nursing is the world’s largest professional union of nurses, representing around 415,000 nurses, midwives, health visitors, nursing students and health care support workers, including around 40,000 in Scotland. Our members work across the NHS, third and independent sectors.

We welcome the amendment on AAC. It is crucial that all patients are able to communicate as fully as possible with staff wherever possible. This can improve patient safety, but importantly it can also ensure that patients are calmer and more confident in their care setting.

Such equipment can also enhance the independence of patients who have lost their voice or who have difficulty speaking. It is also crucial for patients’ dignity that they have the communication tools and equipment that they need.

Access to AAC equipment is also important for equality of access to services for those patients who have lost their voice or have difficult speaking.

Finally, we would add that provision of AAC equipment does help to ensure that patients receive person-centred care.

With those points in mind, we do support the proposed amendment. It is, of course, essential that patients and staff are given the training and ongoing support they need to use any and all equipment safely and to its full potential and we were pleased to see that reflected in the amendment as drafted.

Royal College of Nursing Scotland