HEALTH AND SPORT COMMITTEE

HEALTH AND CARE (STAFFING) (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM THE BRAIN TUMOUR CHARITY

Introduction

The Brain Tumour Charity is at the forefront of the fight to defeat brain tumours. We fund research, raise awareness and offer crucial information and support for anyone affected by a brain tumour. Brain tumours remain the biggest cancer killer of children and adults under 40.

The Charity welcomes the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Bill acknowledging its purpose to ensure the wellbeing and safety of patients. We hope that this Bill will help to contribute to improved outcomes for people affected by a brain tumour. We also would like to emphasise and recognise the hard work being done already by many staff across Scotland, dedicating their lives to assisting others, including members of our community.

We note that in the Scottish Cancer Patient Experience Survey 2015/16 (SCPES) only approximately half of respondents with a brain / CNS tumour reported that they had confidence and trust in all ward nurses. Equally, only 63% reported that they felt there were always or nearly always enough nurses on duty. We hope that this Bill will help to address these concerns by contributing to the implementation of safe staffing and adequate training.

Do you think that the Bill will achieve its policy objectives?

We believe that the Bill is a step towards its policy objectives and will help to enable these but that in isolation the Bill will not tackle the core issue of staff retention. The Bill must be introduced in parallel with a strong effort to support staff already working in the NHS, as well as continuing to make sure that working for the NHS in Scotland remains an attractive prospect.

It is also important to note that we do not yet know the impact that Brexit will have on the NHS and that all must be done to alleviate any negative impact that this may have on staffing levels.

Whilst we believe that this legislation is not enough in isolation, we also recognise that it represents a positive effort to work towards safe staffing in Scottish health services. It is therefore difficult to establish the extent to which the Bill will achieve its policy objectives.

What are the key strengths of:

Part 2 of the Bill?

This legislation identifies the concerns which have been raised by our community in relation to staffing levels across the NHS.

It is also promising that there has been an acknowledgement of the importance of ensuring staff are appropriately trained. It is essential that the Scottish NHS workforce are able to deliver the needs of patients in services across the region.

We also particularly welcome the inclusion of staff and patients’ views. This focus will ensure that patients remain the focus. It is crucial that patients are involved in decisions which directly affect them.

**Part 3 of the Bill?**

We appreciate the importance of ensuring that there are safe staffing levels in care services in Scotland. We welcome this section of the Bill as we recognise the strong link between NHS services and care services.

**What are the key weaknesses of:**

**Part 2 of the Bill?**

Whilst the legislation is a positive step towards safe staffing and effecting health and care delivery, we also accept that the strong focus on nursing and midwifery fails to acknowledge the broader nature of the sector. It is essential that staffing levels are safe across the wider NHS. We acknowledge, however, that this is a step towards introducing safe staffing in Scotland.

**What differences, not covered above, might the Bill make? (for example: will the Bill have any unintended consequences, will it ensure that staffing levels are safe, does the Bill take account of health and social care integration, how are ‘safe and high-quality services’ assured/guaranteed by the Bill?)**

As already noted, it is essential that the Bill is part of a broader picture to ensure that services in Scotland are adequately staffed to deliver high levels of care in safe environments for patients.

It is also important to emphasise that whilst ensuring that safe staffing levels are met is essential, this is only one part of ensuring patient safety. The legislation must be mirrored with a continuation of adequate funding across health and social care to prevent strain on services.

We hope that this Bill will act as a mechanism to improve patient safety. We believe that this Bill should be part of an effort to improve Scottish services whilst supporting the many healthcare professionals who already work hard in Scotland to deliver treatment and care to many.