Dear Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY CARE WORKFORCE

Thank you for your letter of 1 December 2016, which responded to work which the Committee has been undertaking on the social and community care workforce.

As you will know, we consider this subject is one of the most important issues we have scrutinised. We have been struck by the dedication and commitment shown by workers in this sector to provide good quality care to some of society’s most vulnerable people. We are keen to ensure the issues raised with us regarding the value placed on those working in this sector and issues concerning the terms and conditions of their employment are addressed.

As such we welcome the information provided in your response on the activities being undertaken by the Scottish Government.

We would, however, wish to raise some additional points on which it would be helpful to get further information or clarification.

1. Your letter states that you are providing more than £500 million additional funding over three years (2015/16 to 2017/18) directly to Partnerships to support new ways of working. How are you evaluating these new ways of working?

2. In your response you referred to research that has been commissioned on the public understanding of the sector with a view to informing a social services strategy for 2015-2020. We would be grateful for further detail on this research. Who is conducting the research and when it is expected to report? Is it anticipated there will be any events or a publicity campaign to improve public perception of social care workforce?
3. You spoke at the Scottish Care National Care Home Conference in November 2016 on the value the Scottish Government place on the social and community care workforce. Are there other events or opportunities the Scottish Government is using to promote this workforce to other aspects of the health sector to assist in ensuring parity of esteem is achieved for social care workers?

4. In our original letter we sought a response to how framework contracts can be designed to be more responsive to client needs. In your response you refer to best practice guidance on procurement that was published in March 2016 and Public Contracts Regulations which came into effect in April 2016. How are you monitoring and assessing whether the new guidance and regulations are ensuring appropriate services are being provided for clients?

5. We had raised with you the question of what action could be taken to make the re-assessment process more responsive to needs. We had heard concerns regarding the length of time it can take for authorities to respond to changes in circumstances. Your response referred to the Practitioner Guidance in support of the self-directed support legislation, however it would be helpful if you could clarify if this guidance addresses the specific concerns about time delays.

6. In your response you referred to a process of reforming the National Care Home Contract, which is currently underway. We would be grateful for information regarding the timescales for this reform process.

7. Your letter states that the Scottish Government was yet to receive a request from trade unions calling for collective bargaining for the sector. Are you considering initiating such discussions?

8. Further to the evidence you gave to the Committee on the Scottish Government’s draft budget, we would wish to establish a clear understanding of how the living wage will apply in relation to workers doing a sleepover shift. Please could you provide a practical example of how this would work for an individual in this position.

9. Your response mentioned NES will be supporting one NHS Board with the development of their community Clinical Healthcare Support Worker staff and this is likely to involve social care as well. You indicated this work was currently under development and I would be grateful for information on the timescales for its completion.

10. The Committee has an ongoing interest in the impact of Brexit on NHS workforce planning. Your response indicates the Scottish Government intends to collect workforce data to improve its understand of the numbers of non-UK EU citizens working in social services in Scotland. We would be grateful if you could keep us informed of your work in this area.
We would be grateful for your response on these points and we would appreciate a response by 3 February 2017.

Yours sincerely

Neil Findlay MSP,
Convener of the Health and Sport Committee