

Cross-Party Group on Colleges and Universities

Thursday 16 January 2025 1pm

Minute

Present

MSPs

Liz Smith MSP
Roz McCall MSP

Invited guests

1. Anne Campbell, Vice Principal of Skills and Enterprise, Ayrshire College.
2. Professor Susan Dawkes, Dean and Professor of Nursing and Cardiovascular Health, Edinburgh Napier University and Chair of the Council of Deans of Health Scotland.

Non-MSP Group Members

Aimee Logan, Universities Scotland
Alan St Clair Gibson, University of Aberdeen
Andy Shanks, University of Edinburgh
Andy Witty, Colleges Scotland
Calum McNairney, Scottish Funding Council
Catherine Mahoney, Edinburgh Napier University
Chris Kennedy, Unite the Union
Claire Vekic, Colleges Scotland
Frances Johnston, University of Edinburgh
Professor Frank Sullivan, University of St Andrews
Gary Ross, EIS
Gavin McWhinnie, Office of Liz Smith MSP
Georgia Marks, UCAS
Heather Sloan, Universities Scotland
Helen Raftopoulos, Scottish Funding Council
Isabella Williams, Office of Pam Duncan-Glancy MSP
Jason Miles-Campbell, Jisc
Jenny Young, Office of Michael Marra MSP
Joanne Buchan, Colleges Scotland
Professor John Blicharski, University of Dundee
Jules Griffin, University of Aberdeen

Keith Robson, Open University in Scotland
Kirstine Hale, Skills Development Scotland
Linsdey Alexander, University of Strathclyde
Mark Wilkinson, The Data Lab
Matthew MacIver, University of the Highlands and Islands
Murdo Mathison, Universities and College Union
Nathan Tyler, West College Scotland
Niall McGeechan, NUS Scotland
Philip Bale, University of Aberdeen
Rachel Currie, NUS Scotland
Rachel Treglown, Universities Scotland
Raymond McHugh, University of Strathclyde
Sinead Griffin, Scottish Funding Council
Thomas Feige, Edinburgh Napier University
Tom Hall, Colleges Scotland

Apologies

Judith McClure
Paul Little, City of Glasgow College
Mary Senior, Universities and Colleges Union

Welcome and Introduction

Ms Smith welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the topic of the meeting: role of HE and FE in supporting the NHS.

Presentations

Anne Campbell, Vice Principal of Skills and Enterprise, Ayrshire College.

- Ms Campbell outlined the recruitment challenges faced by the health and social care sector and how colleges can help support skills planning to meet workforce needs, the different areas of the NHS the college sector supports through the course provisions in colleges, and number of students studying these courses.
- Highlighted SWAP (Scottish Wider Access Programme) and how colleges support the NHS workforce through progression to undergraduate courses through SWAP with access to nursing, paramedic science and other courses.
- Spoke on upskilling the current workforce to meet the demands of the NHS, upskilling Band 3 senior healthcare support workers to become Band 4 assistant practitioners.
- Concluded by discussing how colleges could support NHS more effectively, including by removing barrier to increase articulation to Year 2 from HNC to reduce duplication of funding and shorten the learner journey.

Professor Susan Dawkes, Dean and Professor of Nursing and Cardiovascular Health, Edinburgh Napier University and Chair of the Council of Deans of Health Scotland.

- Outlined the current workforce in the NHS and the shortfall of the recruitment targets the NHS is facing, and how universities can help address this through innovative programmes and partnership working with stakeholders for possible regional delivery of programmes, articulation, to maximise current and source new pipelines for recruitment and lifelong learning.
- Spoke about the challenges facing universities with student recruitment in social care and how these challenges could be solved. Examples included: funding following the student, national campaign to attract applicants, culture and support for health and wellbeing of staff and students.
- Continued presentation by outlining how universities support NHS research such as the research into spontaneous coronary artery dissection (SCAD) and how it affects the heart. Professor Dawkes noted that funding for research led by nurses, midwives and allied health professionals has fallen, meaning universities are doing more with less.
- Professor Dawkes detailed some specific initiatives taking place at Edinburgh Napier University such as the Health and Wellbeing hub that supports staff, students and the wider community to lead healthy lifestyles and develop graduate attributes.

Question and Answer

Professor Frank Sullivan, University of St Andrews

- ScotGEM has been attracting more people to become generalists in the rural areas and the first cohort have graduated. Scot Gem looks to recruit doctors and other professionals approaching retirement from other parts of the UK to teach students. There is a need more generalists to take pressure off hospitals.

Keith Robson, Open University in Scotland

- Nursing provision grown significantly in last four years, aimed at those working in health and social care to upskill to become nurses. Combining working with studying. High levels of retention of students who enroll on the course. Partnering with the NHS to determine how to meet the demands of the health service.

Liz Smith MSP

- Statistics presented by the speakers show not enough nursing staff to meet demand. Which of the initiatives on attracting people to the profession, what is / are the most effective?

Professor Susan Dawkes, Edinburgh Napier University

- How we portray these professions and change the dialogue is key. Media perceptions of hospital care and nursing has not been helpful. A national campaign would be helpful to outline the opportunities the healthcare profession can provide to students and staff.

Anne Campbell, Ayrshire College

- Not seeing diminishing enrolments in colleges for nursing. HNC Healthcare practice placement, which is mandatory, understand what the profession entails.

Georgia Marks, UCAS

- UCAS in England have supported campaigns with data and insights and are exploring how a campaign to attract recruitment through clearing can work in Scotland. How do you see a national campaign working in Scotland?

Professor Susan Dawkes, Edinburgh Napier University

- UCAS support would be welcomed. Multifactorial issue on recruitment such as support for young people in making future career choices and how support is delivered.

Kirstine Hale, SDS

- Careers advice and services should be individually led as part of the previous careers review process. Has there been engagement with the skills review on how the partnership approach told by Anne can aid in skills planning?

Anne Campbell, Ayrshire College

- The one Scotland approach is very important in building relationships and creating consistency with colleges, NHS boards and universities.

Roz McCall MSP

- Aware that the partnership approach with care settings and businesses in local communities is an issue in Fife. How much of a problem is it if we don't get business partnerships, creating staffing concerns?

Anne Campbell, Ayrshire College

- There are particular challenges around this. There are inconsistencies in regions but there is a willingness and good practice in colleges to create consistency.

Alan St Clair Gibson, University of Aberdeen

- Negative commentary around the NHS and healthcare has been a factor in deterring people from entering the sector. How can we manage this commentary?

Professor Susan Dawkes, Edinburgh Napier University

- A national campaign would help this commentary. There are some professions that are well perceived such as paramedic science and midwifery.

Anne Campbell, Ayrshire College

- Keen to work on a national campaign that shows skills pathways is key.

John Blicharski

- Creating career pathways from the senior phase needs more focus and increased outreach. Historic bias on nursing being for women must end to showcase the profession is for everyone.

Catherine Mahoney, Edinburgh Napier University

- Echo support there is too much negativity around the NHS and there is work to do nationally to change this. Is there a programme similar to ScotGEM for nursing to bring practicing nurses nearing the end of their career to move into teaching students?

Anne Campbell, Ayrshire College

- Organise one pathway to careers event between three local authorities and bring schools to the college to address the promotion of careers pathways, including NHS.

Professor Susan Dawkes, Edinburgh Napier University

- Multiskilled professionals are something already being considered across nursing, midwifery and allied healthcare professionals. Have to be bold, redesign services for the future. Rethink of education and how this aligns with future healthcare needs.

Conclusion

Ms Smith closed the meeting by thanking speakers for their contribution and insightful questions from members. She stated the next meeting will be later in the year.