

Scottish Government

27<sup>th</sup> November 2009

Dear Colleague,

### **Draft Quality Strategy for Scottish Government Health Workforce**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the above draft strategy.

Skills for Health is the Sector Skills Council for the UK health sector. Our role covers all healthcare employers including those in the National Health Service (NHS), independent and voluntary sectors. We are part of a UK network of Sector Skills Councils covering 85% of the UK economy. Our strategic aim is to develop a skilled, flexible and productive workforce for the whole health sector in all UK nations, to raise the quality of health and healthcare for the public, patients and service users. The delivery of this aim is reflected in our Statement of Purpose and Strategic Intent, which accompany this response.

Skills for Health welcomes this draft Quality Strategy, its aims and underpinning principles. Staff across the NHS in Scotland will be key to the successful delivery of the strategy and we note and welcome the proposal to ensure that the actions set out in 'A Force for Improvement' will be aligned to the priorities and commitments in this strategy. Delivering the strategy will require a workforce that can flex to local need. In support of this, Skills for Health promotes a competence based approach to workforce planning and role design. By focusing on the competences that make up a role, rather than on the role itself, new ways to address patient and service needs can be identified.

Skills for Health supports the aim to provide care that is people centred with an emphasis on supported self care, shared decision making and relationship-based care. Achieving this will require a new relationship between staff and patients, one in which patients are able to exercise choice and control based on the provision of good quality information. Staff will need to acquire not only new skills and competences but will need to apply existing skills in a different way. The challenges facing the workforce in working in this new and different way should not be underestimated. It will require a change in culture across the whole of the system; the workforce; NHS organisations and patients themselves.

We welcome the emphasis given in this draft strategy to effectiveness and a reduction in inappropriate variation. The competence based approach to workforce

design and development taken by Skills for Health can support the reduction of such inappropriate variation in the workforce through defining clear outcome-focused standards. The ability to easily describe such standards will:

- support a shift in the balance of care
- ensure that the best care is provided consistently in the right place by the right person, while at the same time ensuring patient safety
- innovations in service delivery

In particular Skills for Health has undertaken a significant programme of work aimed at supporting the development of the workforce for long term conditions through:

- Suites of competences for a range of long term conditions including diabetes, coronary heart disease and allergy
- New roles and new ways of working based on the transferable currency of national workforce competence and national occupational standards

We support the commitment made in the draft strategy to develop the training and assessment approaches which will support staff to acquire the skills they need and would welcome the opportunity to work with the Scottish Government to achieve this.

To support the design and development of training that meets service needs we have developed a set of Learning Design Principles. These principles guide the development of learning packages based on service and employer need. They are based on national workforce competences and provide employers with the flexibility to commission training which supports new and different ways of working.

On page 29 there is a proposal to establish a Quality Alliance and infrastructure to support the implementation of the agreed strategy. This is no reference to any costs for this infrastructure, however employer feedback suggests that the way forward would be to build on existing arrangements within current Scottish Government divisions and the NHS in Scotland. There are well established clinical governance processes and resources to support the monitoring and implementation of Quality initiatives that can be harnessed. It is noted that the draft strategy (page 29) proposes to review HEAT targets and ensure Alignment to quality indicators. An assessment of the resource implications of this review may assist with the identification of resources to support the Quality Alliance. NHS: QIS has a key role in monitoring clinical effectiveness and standards of patient care so the implementation of the agreed strategy will need to be clear on how this role aligns to the Quality Alliance. There is a need for clarity that avoids potential for overlap and duplication.

Further information on Skills for Health and our range of work can be found at [www.skillsforhealth.org.uk](http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk)

Yours faithfully



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