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# Review of Nursing in the Community in Scotland: Baseline Study

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Key Findings and Next Steps

April 2009

# Nursing in the community now and in the future

The health needs of the population of Scotland are changing.

The coming decades will see a rise in the number of older people, many of whom will have a long-term condition, and a fall in numbers of people of working age.

Action is needed **now** to prepare a health care workforce to meet the challenges of delivering a community nursing service for people of all ages in the future.

With more and more health care being delivered at community level, it's vital that nurses in the community are organised, educated, and supported to provide the services communities want and need.

Community nurses recognise that change is necessary to meet ongoing health needs. They also recognise that while change is often challenging, it presents opportunities for personal and career development.

**The Review of Nursing in the Community** has proposed a **new service delivery model** for Scotland that aims to meet the challenges nurses face now, and will face in the future.

# Community – Future

The model, which is based on seven key elements of practice, is currently being piloted in four NHS board areas – NHS Borders, NHS Highland, NHS Lothian and NHS Tayside. The pilot will be formally evaluated through 2009-2010 to provide the evidence the Scottish Government needs to decide on the future shape of nursing services in the community.

As part of the evaluation process, a **baseline study** was carried out before the model's introduction in the pilot NHS board areas in order to gather information on the current role of community nurses and their views on the new model which will be tested. This leaflet highlights the key findings from this study and the Scottish Government's next steps following this baseline study.

# The baseline study

During 2008, an external research team led by Napier University, were commissioned by the Scottish Government to collect baseline data before the new model of community nursing was implemented in the four development sites. The research focused on the current role of community nurses and their views of the new model. The main findings from the baseline study were:

- Community nurses in the four development sites constitute a fairly experienced workforce. The mean age was 47 years and the average time spent working in the community was 12.5 years.
- The organisation of community nursing teams varied between, and within, health board areas and across disciplines.
- Community nurses in the sites specialised in certain areas of work, often along traditional lines. For example, more district nurses worked with older people, health visitors with mothers and young children and school nurses with school children.
- Community nurses' confidence to work across a range of areas was highly correlated to how often they engaged in these areas of work. Thus, those with low engagement, were less confident.
- Community nurses in the sites felt their roles were poorly understood and much of what they did was 'invisible'.
- In general, community nurses expressed mid range levels of satisfaction with their current role.
- Clients and their informal carers had positive experiences of community nursing services. Patients and carers tended to know about the community nurse with whom they had contact and they knew little about other community nurse roles.
- When asked about the new model, approximately one-third of nurses expressed at least some support for the proposed new model of community health nursing, and over half were unsupportive.
- Some participants considered the new model may work best in rural areas and could deal with staff turnover and shortages in rural areas.

# What happens next?

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The data from the baseline study will be used during the evaluation of the four development sites as the new model is implemented.

This will take place in two phases. Phase one will be an interim evaluation, which will provide early indications of how implementation is going during 2009. Phase two will provide a full evaluation report and will take place during 2010. This evaluation will be commissioned by the Scottish Government in the next few months but will be undertaken by an independent research team. The outcome of the evaluation will inform the future direction for the provision of community-based health care services and practice in relation to community nursing in Scotland.

It is hoped that many of the concerns highlighted during the baseline study will be lessened as ongoing implementation plans – which include formal education preparation, the development of leadership posts and an increasing recognition of the importance of flexibility within the model to meet local needs – are rolled out in the pilot sites.

Work is also underway to develop new approaches to communication which will keep community nurses up to date with the progress of the pilot. This leaflet has been sent to all community nurses in Scotland as a first step in ensuring better communication between nurses and the Review of Nursing in the Community.

# Want to know more?

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You can access a four page summary and the full report of the baseline study on the Scottish Government website at:  
**<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/Recent>**

You can also find out more about the Review of Community Nursing, including bi-monthly newsletters, on the Review website at:

**<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health/NHS-Scotland/nursing/review>**

If you would like more information, or have any questions about the new model of community nursing, please contact **[communitynursingreview@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:communitynursingreview@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)**

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