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3 February 2015

Mr David Rees AM  
Chair  
Health and Social Care Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff  
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Dear David Rees

### **Inquiry into GP Workforce in Wales**

We understand that the Health & Social Care committee is currently undertaking an Inquiry into the GP workforce in Wales specifically examining;

- barriers to GP recruitment and retention;
- whether the commissioning and delivery of medical training currently supports a sustainable GP workforce; and
- the actions needed to ensure the sustainability of the GP workforce.

There can be no doubt that some regions of Wales are really struggling to recruit sufficient numbers of GPs and this is an important area of policy for the Committee to address.

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*Mae'r RCN yn cynrychioli nyrsys a  
nyrsio, gan hyrwyddo rhagoriaeth  
mewn arfer a llunio polisiau iechyd*

*The RCN represents nurses and  
nursing, promotes excellence in  
practice and shapes health policies*

*Mae'r Coleg Nyrsio Brenhinol yn Goleg Brenhinol a sefydlwyd drwy Siarter Frenhinol ac Undeb Llafur  
Cofrestr Arbennig a sefydlwyd o dan Ddeddf Undebau Llafur a Chysylltiadau Llafur (Cydgrynhoi) 1992  
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established under the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.*

Accessible primary care services are vital, both to the improving the health of the public and ensuring the effective operation of secondary care services (including emergency care). GP surgeries are at the heart of the primary care system and their sustainability is essential.

The RCN are sure Committee members are well aware that GP surgeries must work closely with Community Pharmacy, Colleagues in Secondary Health Care and the Community Nursing Service, in order to deliver effective care to the patient. However they may be less aware that even a 'traditional' GP surgery is an effective multi-disciplinary team led by the GP and including practice nurses and health care support workers and increasingly pharmacists.

Practice Nurses undertake a huge range of tasks, addressing public health, travel health, the management of long-term conditions and cervical cytology. Registered nurses can undertake a two year postgraduate course to become Nurse Practitioners and would be senior nurses within the practice responsible for nurse led clinics, minor illness, triage, supplementary or independent prescribing.

The Welsh Government published its plan for a primary care service in Wales up to March 2018 and the Ministerial states clearly:

At a time of such pressures we have to use the clinical skills and abilities of all members of the primary care team to their maximum. No GP should routinely be undertaking any activity which could, just as appropriately be undertaken by an advanced practice nurse, a clinical pharmacist or an advanced practitioner paramedic. No advanced practice nurse should routinely be undertaking activities which could be, equally successfully, be undertaken by a healthcare support worker.

This approach means that considering GP recruitment – and assuring potential future GPs of a modern and effective working environment needs to be considered as part of a wider professional workforce plan.

The Royal College of Nursing believes that in some areas it will be suitable for the Welsh Government to develop primary care centres/surgeries which employ salaried GP and nurse practitioners. There is considerable evidence that advanced nurse practitioners benefit patient care and at the same time support the GP in providing a more effective service. Nurses who can independently prescribe can speed up

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patient care considerably and also strengthen the clinical accountability for prescription. Based in general practice specialist nurses and nurse consultants should be able to lead diagnostic clinics with the ability to admit directly to hospitals

The Committee may be particularly interested in the primary care projects currently being developed in ABMU to support GPs including a Chronic Conditions Nurse, a Continence Service and development of training for practice nurses and a course for advanced nurse practitioners.

I hope this information and perspective is useful to the Committee in its deliberations on the GP workforce and I look forward to results of your Inquiry in the hope it will stimulate a wider discussion on mechanisms for improving primary care.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Tina Donnelly', written in black ink.

**TINA DONNELLY**  
**DIRECTOR, RCN WALES**