Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

36th Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), Tuesday, 28 November 2023

Healthcare in Remote and Rural Areas Inquiry: Evidence session with academics

Note by the clerk

Background

1. This is the second oral evidence session of the Committee's inquiry into remote and rural healthcare.

2. The Committee has agreed that the aim of the inquiry should be to consider the views of remote, rural and island communities, and the workforce, with a view to informing future Scottish Government policy in this area, including the Scottish Government's Remote and Rural Workforce Strategy and the development of the National Centre for Remote and Rural Health and Care.

3. The Committee has already undertaken two consultation exercises for this inquiry – one using the Your Priorities platform and a more targeted call for views using Citizen Space. World clouds which describe the main themes highlighted through these consultation exercises are provided at **Annexe A**.

4. In October 2023, the Scottish Government and NHS Education for Scotland (NES) launched the National Centre for Remote and Rural Health and Care. NES states that the goal of the Centre is to:

   - support the delivery of improved care for remote, rural and island communities across Scotland

   - reduce remote, rural and island health and wellbeing inequalities

   - achieve this through focused work on improving the sustainability, capacity, and capability of remote, rural and island primary care and community-based workforce and service delivery

   NES is leading work to establish the Centre and has said that the initial focus of the Centre will be on the provision of primary care and community services.

5. The Scottish Government published a [Health and social care: national workforce strategy](#) in March 2022. It sets out the vision for the Health and Social Care Workforce as follows:

> "A sustainable, skilled workforce with attractive career choices and fair work where all are respected and valued for the work they do"

This included a commitment to developing a Remote and Rural workforce recruitment strategy by the end of 2024. It is intended that this will provide a framework which will support employers to ensure that the Health and Social Care needs of people who live in remote and rural communities are met.
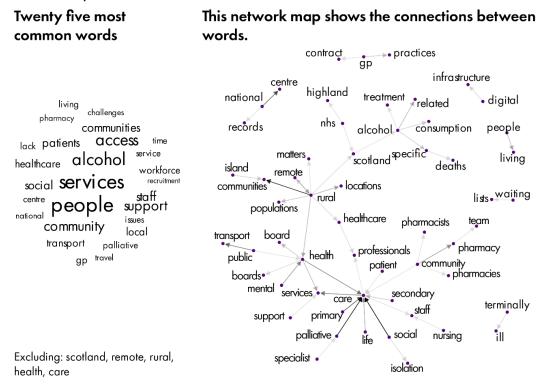
Today's meeting

6. At the meeting Members will hear from representatives from academics with expertise in rural sexual health, nursing, geriatric care, delivery of rural healthcare and wider issues impacting healthcare in rural and remote areas.

7. The following academics will be giving evidence:

- **Dr Rebecah MacGilleEathain –** Research Fellow in the Division of Rural Health and Wellbeing at the University of the Highlands and Islands. Her interests include sexual and reproductive health of young people in remote and rural areas.

- **Professor Annetta Smith –** Non-Executive Director at NHS Eileanan Siar and former Professor of Nursing/Head of Department at University of the Highlands and Islands. Previous research interests include older people care and access to remote and rural healthcare and education delivery.

- **Dr Stephen Makin –** Geriatrician with clinical practice at Caithness General Hospital and clinical research fellow at the University of Edinburgh. Interests include delivery of healthcare to frail and elderly patients in remote and rural areas.

Clerks to the Committee

23 November 2023
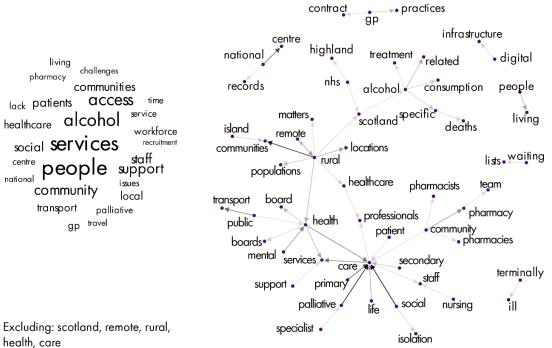
ANNEX A: Infographics showing main themes raised in the call for views

Are there any immediate issues unique to remote and rural communities which the National Centre will need to focus on to improve primary and community care in these areas?

Twenty five most common words

This network map shows the connections between words.

Excluding: scotland, remote, rural, health, care

Are there any immediate issues unique to remote and rural communities which the National Centre will need to focus on to improve primary and community care in these areas?

Twenty five most common words

This network map shows the connections between words.

living pharmacy challenges
communities
lack patients access time
healthcare alcohol service
social services workforce recruitment
centre people staff support
national community issues local
transport palliative
gp travel

Excluding: scotland, remote, rural, health, care

contract → practices
gp
national centre highland treatment related infrastructure digital
records nhs alcohol consumption people
matters scotland specific living
island remote
communities rural locations deaths
populations healthcare lists waiting
transport board pharmacists team
public health professionals pharmacy
boards patient community pharmacies
mental services care secondary terminally
support primary staff
palliative life social nursing ill
specialist isolation

What specific workforce related issues should the strategy look to resolve?

Twenty five most common words

This network map shows the connections between words.

development team
gp access communities
local retention patients
services mental
lack workforce issues
training staff social nursing
people service
provide support time roles
healthcare recruitment housing
community strategy
delivery pay

Excluding: scotland, remote, rural, health, care

delivery
service home
provision quality social
public specialist
staff care palliative
affordable mental health workforce
housing community recruitment
professionals nursing boards rural retention
healthcare locations remote communities
issues lived island
key experience practice
gp

4