RCN response to National Voices’ consultation on the
Principles of Care and Support Planning

Introduction:

With a membership of over 410,000 registered nurses, midwives, health visitors, nursing students, and health care assistants, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) is the voice of nursing across the UK and the largest professional union of nursing staff in the world. RCN members work in a variety of hospital and community settings in the NHS and the independent sector. The RCN promotes patient and nursing interests on a wide range of issues by working closely with the Government, the UK parliaments and other national and European political institutions, trade unions, professional bodies and voluntary organisations.

The RCN welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence on the principles of care and support planning. Nursing staff play an integral role in care and support planning, and often are the professional lead in the process. Over the years the RCN has been engaged with policy development in this area, and more recently the RCN has been a participant in a meeting hosted by Arthritis UK discussing self care and care planning at which National Voices presented theses draft Principles.

Care and support planning is a vital component in the development of effective, seamless patient journeys and experience. At their best, care and support plans help to:

- develop person-centred, co-produced, and/or where possible person-led, care pathways in partnership with the patient, carer or family member, and relevant care and support professionals.
- prevent care needs’ escalation and anticipate care and support gaps.
- understand and accommodate the holistic care and support needs of a person.
- coordinate care, by recording a patient’s care and support needs in one place.
- enable the regular review of care and support needs.

However, the current care and support planning process poses some significant challenges and is a time-consuming, bureaucratic and complex process. Despite best intentions, the policy has not translated into a process which helps patients, carers or staff simply navigate, understand and coordinate the care and support needs of an individual. As a result care plans have not been offered consistently or widely across the country. In addition they are often confused with treatment plans which are separate.

The RCN therefore broadly welcomes National Voices’ principles and believes that they will be useful tool for simplifying the process and for developing a common understanding for all involved in planning. Below we have responded to the specific consultation questions and have identified some points to consider in the further development and dissemination of this work.
1. **Is there any aspect of care and support planning that you would like to see included in the principles or the online tool?**

The RCN believes that it is important that the care and support plan is a living tool, which is regularly reviewed and tailored according to the needs of the individual, and not a cumbersome, tick-box process. To a large extent these principles help reflect this, but a sentence stating it would be helpful so that those developing the process and related forms do not revert to replicating the current, formulaic and lengthy plan templates.

- A Specific reference to Learning Difficulties and the additional support individuals may need should be considered
- Suggestion that these are relevant to Children and Young People especially those in transition
- Some reference to the ways these might be developed and used e.g an APP or electronically depending on individual need

2. **Are the principles clear and easy to use? If not, how could they be improved?**

Yes they are clear – the background and content of the online tool will be fundamental in underpinning the implementation of the principals

These principles apply to health and social care but it may be helpful for the removal of any doubt, that this is explicitly stated.

3. **What information would you like to see included in the online tool to help put the principles into practice?**

If care and support planning is to be meaningfully undertaken, staff must have adequate time to support their patients in carrying it out. It would therefore be helpful to highlight that sufficient staff resourcing into this process is key. It will help ensure that all needs are fully considered and planned for, so that they do not escalate or develop as a result of plans that were rushed due to time pressures.

The various needs’ assessments that have been undertaken for the individual concerned (be they health, social or wider local authority assessments) should be referenced as useful information to help understand need.

- Clarification of the difference between the care and support planning and a treatment plan
- Emphasis on the central role of the patient as a partner
- Clear guidelines about the role of the coordinator and how they are pivotal to this working
- Some examples of the paperwork and key questions e.g. from the Year of Care/House of Care
- How the care plan needs to be shared – IT connectivity
- Care plan needs to cover all conditions not one for each and all professionals need to be part of the process

4. **How else we can share the information included in the online tool with as many people as possible?**

The success of person-centred care and support planning is dependent on shifting the patient, their carer or family member and staff culturally. Despite some progress, the public and staff are still used to a system that delivers care and support for the patient, and not a system that is tailored to the choices that patients make about what they want from their care and one that helps them to live empowered and fulfilling lives. To address this challenge staff training will be key, not simply for overcoming the professional cultural barrier that exists in some places to delivering person-led care, but also as their frontline role will be part of the solution to sensitively overcoming any patient resistance to change.

- Link from partner's websites.
- Articles in nursing and medical press with weblinks.
- Local Radio and press???
- Specific Patient organisations and charities as well as National Voices
- Cards with principals on and posters with web link