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Transcription of presentation by Fiona McQueen, Chief Nursing Officer, Scottish Government

So, to the world you might be one person but to one person you might be the world. That's a saying that stays with me on any number of occasions but for support workers I think that is incredibly true. When we look at the business and the hurly burly of what's happening within our National Health Service, we worry about targets and we worry about numbers and we worry about the politics and we're worried about what the papers are going to say but, in reality, if we could talk to people who use our services, and we heard two wonderful stories just after lunch today, what you probably know, but I think it's worthy of me repeating it, and what some of you might not know, is how absolutely fundamental and essential the work of our support workers across the NHS is.

So, if we were to close our eyes and think of a world without healthcare support workers, what would our NHS be? In reality it would be a big fat nothing. Our doors would be locked, we would have no heating, our radiators wouldn't be fixed, there would be no food, we wouldn't be able to access laboratories, people wouldn't know when to come for appointments, our hospitals would be filthy and our practitioners wouldn't have the support to deliver clinical care that they so fundamentally and so essentially need.

So therefore, it's not an exaggeration when I stand before you as the country's chief nurse to say that without the work that you do every day, regardless of what's happening in your life, whether it's snow, whether it's problems with teenagers at home or problems with an older parent or relationship difficulties, the uniform goes on and out you go to provide that essential care to the people of Scotland. And at times it can be really, really frustrating, when the headlines are 'hospital's filthy', 'food's rubbish', 'never get an appointment', 'everyone's rude', but actually the price we pay for our National Health Service being a national treasure and being so valued by everyone is that when it goes wrong, then people hurt, so all of us who work within the service hurt when things don't go well, and our public, who love the health service so much.

And what's important, I think, about what we're doing in the NHS, and Shirley talked this morning about 'Everyone Matters', and in reality everyone does matter. It might not feel like it at times and I've seen some of the stickers that have suggested that we've got a way to go yet in terms of supporting

everyone to flourish so that you can do the best possible job you can do. We also are in a period of change. So, you don't have to look very far in terms of what's happening with Brexit, what's happening with the challenge the government has in terms of money and how much money there is to spend and the whole issue about health and social care integration and the change that those of us who have been around since the early 80s have seen many changes.

I always remember... the first National Health Service, the organisation I saw, I thought it was the actual first ever and that it was the only one that would ever happen but we constantly change. If we look back to where we were even five years ago, ten years ago, people are doing quite different things. At the core of what we do, of course, is supporting people to be healthy and increasingly there are many, many opportunities for support workers. Whether it's working as a community food worker or working to support families in the community, there are many opportunities and I would urge you to embrace these.

I also noticed... I think I got a sense that somebody would quite like to stay doing the job they're doing and that too is wonderful because we need stability. We need wisdom. We need people who know the business, who know the jobs and who are experienced and who become the go-to people and I'm confident there's many go-to people in this room. But we also need to know that what we do provide is an environment for people to flourish, to learn and develop, and days like today are incredibly important. Time that is set aside from putting your uniform on, out perhaps at half past five in the morning, to go and do whatever work that you do. But I think it is important that we do have a career framework so that people can be supported to do your job and be the very best you can be.

And if you want to then go on and work in a more senior position, get more qualifications, then I would expect the service to provide that support for you so that it's clear and not just accidental. So, what I would like to say is thank you. Thank you for actually making our health service work and for keeping us fed, warm, fixed, appointments running and for delivering that hands-on care. And I also recognise that the frustration, when you talk about our NHS, people automatically think of doctors and nurses, maybe healthcare support workers in the clinical setting.

But, as you know, and as I most certainly know, our NHS is a lot more than doctors and nurses and I think a challenge for all of you and some of you probably are very good at this, is that next time someone asks you what you do, you work in the health service or are you a nurse or a doctor, and then you say, 'You know, I'm only... I'm just a healthcare support worker'. Well, please take the just out of that and you are a healthcare support worker. You are absolutely the backbone, an essential component of our service delivery. We want you to flourish. We want you to be the best you can be and I know that you've also had a session in terms of how can you make sure that the improvements that you see, perhaps more than others, can actually be integrated.

So, on behalf of all of the patients who have written to me in both this role and previous roles who notice the quality of the service that's provided by everybody. So, yes, there's the

superficiality of you must be a doctor or a nurse if you work in the health service but, actually, the people of Scotland notice what you do day in, day out, no matter your personal circumstances, no matter the challenges that you face.

So, thank you for that. Well done. Keep going and keep making that huge difference that you make to people's lives. Thank you very much indeed.