

RCN

HEALTH+ CARE

FOR HEALTH CARE SUPPORT WORKERS ACROSS THE UK

AUTUMN 2015



FORWARD THINKING
INNOVATIONS IN CARE p10

Living wage p6
End of life care p7
First steps p8
Career pathways p12

RCNXtra just got better!



How will you use RCNXtra?

With fantastic discounts from more than 3,000 of the UK's top retailers, you can save on everything from groceries, nappies and pet food to big ticket items like mobile phones, computers and holidays. You can also collect WOWPoints – loyalty points which can be redeemed on your future purchases. You can access this for free as part of your membership. Simply sign in using your membership number and start using the benefits today!

Xtra benefits. Xtra easy.

Register now at www.rcn.org.uk/xtra



Royal College
of Nursing

Welcome

Another RCN Congress has come and gone and work has already begun on Congress 2016 (www.rcn.org.uk/congress), taking place in Glasgow. I am so proud of our health practitioner members and their hugely positive contribution to the debates and atmosphere. Check out the RCN archive webcasts at www.rcn.org.uk/congress2015 to watch the debates that shape our work for the coming year.



I am honoured to have met Karen Todd and Michael Moreland who won the HCSW category in the RCN Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year Awards 2015. Read about how they influenced positive change in their workplace on pages 10-11. Inside this issue, there's also a focus on career development (pages 12-13) and the RCN's revamped online resource, *First Steps* (pages 8-9).

Did you know 2016 is the RCN's centenary? It's time to start thinking about how we can promote the developing role of the HCSW. It's set to be the perfect opportunity to celebrate some of the amazing work taking place across the UK.

Brenda McIlmurray

RCN Health Practitioner (HP) Council Member
RCN HP Committee Chair



Do you have a story to share?

RCN *Health+Care* is your magazine and we rely on your ideas to help shape the content. Have you got an experience you'd like to share with fellow health care support workers? Let us know by emailing sophie.lowthian@rcn.org.uk

Contents

News round-up	4-5
HCA issues in focus	6-7
Reflection resource	8-9
HCA innovations	10-11
Career development	12-13
Staying safe online	14
Your HP committee	15

RCN Direct

If you need RCN help or advice, please call RCN Direct on 0345 772 6100 (or 00 44 20 7647 3456 from overseas). Lines are available 8.30am-8.30pm, seven days a week, 365 days a year

www.rcn.org.uk/direct

Editor: Sophie Lowthian

RCN Professional Lead for HCAs

and APs: Tanis Hand

Production: Mark Kalaher

Design: Cameron Ross

Published by:

Royal College of Nursing

20 Cavendish Square

London W1G 0RN

T: 020 7647 3931

W: www.rcn.org.uk/hca

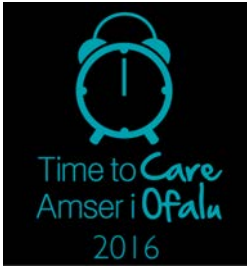
E: hca@rcn.org.uk

Publication code: 005 027

Cover image: Harrison Photography

Please note throughout the magazine we use abbreviations HCA (health care assistant), AP (assistant practitioner), and HCSW (health care support worker) to cover all those in health care support worker roles.

Time to care



RCN Wales is launching its *Time to Care* elections campaign for the 2016 National Assembly elections at a special event on 22 September. The campaign's priorities, which have been shaped by RCN members, include ensuring staff who deliver personal care in people's homes have the time and training to carry it out with dignity and respect. Politicians will be urged to pledge their support for the priorities in advance of polling day next May. Find out more at www.rcn.org.uk/wales

Get organised

The deadline to request an RCN pocket diary is Thursday 1 October. The pocket diary works on an opt-in basis. If you'd like one, you'll need to register to receive it through MyRCN at www.rcn.org.uk/myrcn. Tick the opt-in box which is at the bottom under "My details". Once you've opted in you will not need to do it again and will receive one every year.

Get vaccinated

The RCN strongly advises all nursing staff to have the flu vaccine. "This is to protect staff, but primarily their families and patients," said Helen Donovan, RCN Professional Lead for Public Health. "Wherever you work, your employer is required to arrange for you to be vaccinated." Keep an eye out for how to get your flu vaccine this autumn. Visit www.rcn.org.uk/truth_about_flu

Accountability



Whether you are a health care assistant or assistant practitioner, the principles of both delegation and accountability will be important to you and your patients. The RCN has updated guidance on these vital topics which reflect the Nursing and Midwifery Council's (NMC) new code of conduct. What was originally a leaflet and pocket guide has been combined into one small handy booklet, *Accountability and Delegation: A Guide for the Nursing Team*. Check out the accountability pages of the RCN website and find out more by visiting www.rcn.org.uk/hcaaccountability

Women's health

HCA and AP members are eligible for 40 per cent off the fee of the RCN Women's Health Forum conference, taking place on 6 November at RCN headquarters, 20 Cavendish Square, London. The event will include keynote presentations, talks and panel discussions that will explore recent advances in areas of women's health and share the latest research and updates in this field. Find out more and book online at www.rcn.org.uk/womenshealth15

Shape of caring

The RCN has been surveying members about their views on the *Shape of Caring Review* which was commissioned by Health Education England (HEE) in partnership with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC). The review makes 34 recommendations that aim to help ensure nurses and HCAs receive consistent, high quality education and training throughout their careers to enable them to deliver high quality care. The RCN will be collating feedback for consideration in its response to HEE and to inform current and future work. Keep an eye on the RCN website for an update.

Unsocial hours

A resolution urging RCN Council to challenge any proposal by the UK Government to scrap or undermine unsocial hours payments was passed with an overwhelming majority at RCN Congress. Brenda McIlmurray, RCN Health Practitioner Council member (see story to the right), said nursing staff in the lower bands would be particularly affected if these payments were scrapped. "I have grave concerns for my peers," she said. "We need to show leadership and be bold in telling the Government to keep its hands off our pay." Watch the debate, and catch up with the rest of the Congress action at

www.rcn.org.uk/congress2015

Celebrations ahead

In 2016 the RCN celebrates 100 years since its formation. Plans for a range of events and projects are already taking shape and will be announced over the coming weeks and months. It will be a time to celebrate the RCN's past and present achievements as well as look ahead to the future. Jewellery, greetings cards and commemorative badges are available to purchase at www.rcn.org.uk/rcn100. There is a special discount for RCN members.

Forward together



Brenda McIlmurray has been elected unopposed to the Health Practitioner (HP) seat on RCN Council

Brenda, from Northern Ireland, has been representing the RCN's HCA and AP members across the UK since 2012, when she was the first ever HCA to be elected to RCN Council in the new HP seat.

"I believe HCAs are the backbone of the nursing workforce and as such should be heard, and more importantly, understood," said Brenda, who has been an HCA for 18 years. "HCAs are joining the RCN in growing numbers because they see that the RCN provides support and resources specific to our needs. HCAs need a strong, powerful voice on Council and I look forward to continuing to be that voice, representing the interests of my peers in the four countries."

The RCN Health Practitioner Committee (see page 15) reports directly to RCN Council through its dedicated HP Council members and provides a platform for HCAs and APs to influence RCN policy at a UK and local level. The newest member to join the committee is Lynda High who represents the Northern region.

The new term of office will run for four years from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2019

The cost of living

Clare Jacobs, RCN Employment Relations Adviser, answers your questions on proposals for a National Living Wage

What's changing?

A new National Living Wage of £7.20 an hour for over-25s has been proposed by the Government from April next year, set to rise to £9 an hour by 2020. It will apply to part-time and full-time workers.

The minimum wage will remain in place for workers under 25. The current National Minimum Wage is £6.50 an hour for those aged 21 and over. As of 1 October this is set to rise by 20p to £6.70 an hour.

Isn't there already a living wage?

Yes, but this is only used by employers on a voluntary basis as set out by the Living Wage Foundation. The proposed Government changes are less than the current Living Wage Foundation recommendation of £7.85 an hour and £9.15 in London, but would be mandatory for employees over 25.

How will this affect me?

If you are aged 25 or over and currently earn less than £7.20 an hour you will be eligible for a "top-up" in wages from April next year.

What is the RCN doing?

We will be responding to the consultation on the proposed National Living Wage. Where we have joint relations we are working with National Minimum Wage employers to negotiate for the Living Wage Foundation's recommended living wage as a minimum to underpin fair pay and career structures.



The RCN wants members to be valued



So it's all good, right?

Well there are some challenges. The RCN is concerned about pay differentials – the difference in pay between roles – getting narrower and that employers will cut costs by not paying staff for things like worked breaks, handovers and holidays. The RCN also wants to see opportunities for career progression and members to feel valued and properly rewarded for their dedication and hard work.

What can I do?

Start to consider your own pay, terms and conditions. Download *Fair Pay in the Independent Sector* from www.rcn.org.uk/publications. Call RCN Direct on 0345 772 6100 if you need advice.

Caring to the end

New RCN resources aim to help HCSWs and nurses deliver high quality care to adults at the end of their lives

An RCN survey in 2014 revealed profound concerns about end of life care in the UK. One of the challenges that repeatedly came to the fore, alongside a lack of time, was the need for more education around caring for people who are dying.

Fast forward to the present day and the RCN has developed resources, using feedback from the survey, to help nursing staff deliver the care they would like to people who are dying. The resources are especially timely as the same issues relating to poor care were identified earlier this year in the Ombudsman's report, *Dying without Dignity*.

Key principles

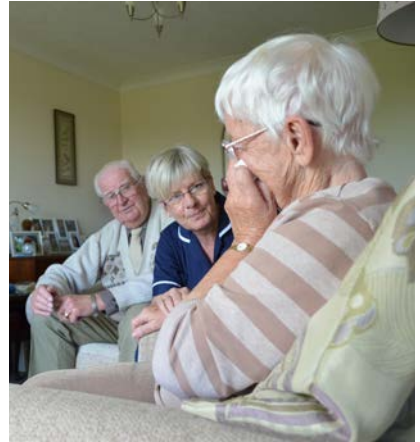
There are two resources – both are online and include audio and case studies. The first focuses on nutrition and hydration, the second on the key principles of end of life care. They cover communication, advance care planning, symptom management, difficult conversations and bereavement.

HCSW and RCN Health Practitioner Council Member Brenda McIlmurray was part of a working group consisting of HCSWs, nurses and students that helped to ensure the relevance and usefulness of the resources.

“For health care assistants doing the majority of hands on care these resources are so useful – they challenge you to think of the difficult conversations you sometimes need to have and how you might approach these with more confidence. They cover all aspects of care,”



The resources cover all aspects of care



Key messages

- Dying is a natural process.
- One size fits all decision making is morally wrong.
- Respond to each person compassionately even if they are not your direct responsibility. This applies to the person at the end of their life, those close to them and their carers.
- Check that each person's understanding reflects what they have been told.

Visit www.rcneolnutritionhydration.org.uk and www.rcnendoflife.org.uk

Workshops

The RCN and the National Council for Palliative Care have worked on a series of workshops on end of life care. The next one is in Cardiff on 28 October, and then London on 15 December. Visit www.rcn.org.uk/events

A step ahead

Incorporating reflection into everyday practice can sometimes prove a bit of a challenge. Lynne Pearce reports

“Some HCSWs lack support to be able to reflect effectively and achieve the best results for them,” explains Karen Dutton, who is a workplace education facilitator at Cumbria Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. “But through learning more about how to do it properly, it becomes a very powerful tool that can really enhance learning and development.”

To improve support for HCSWs, RCN learning rep Karen ran face-to-face workshops based on the RCN’s learning resource *First Steps*. Since it was first launched in 2011, this has proved to be the most popular of the RCN’s online learning resources, reaching up to 1,000 people a day.

Now a new version builds on the success of its predecessor, incorporating a wider range of topics, improved access from smart phones and tablets – and more opportunities for reflection.

Even better

“It’s a fantastic resource,” says Tanis Hand, RCN Professional Lead for HCAs and APs. “We’ve taken everything that users have told us they think works well and then added to it, making it even better. We know that there is a real lack of learning resources for health care support workers. This is one of very few that’s quality assured – and it’s free.”

With around half-a-dozen HCSWs taking part each time, Karen’s workshops provided a taster of how *First Steps* might help them. “We wanted to encourage people to become familiar with it and increase their



The resource is really good quality



confidence using it,” she says. Accessing the resource on individual PCs, participants began by doing the self-assessment, so they could identify any gaps in their knowledge.

“We then spent time on areas they told us would be most useful for them,” Karen continues. “The one section everyone wanted was reflection, so we ran a practical session on this. Some participants shared their own experiences, which they found empowering, while the rest of the group could see at first hand the real benefits of that reflection.”

Among those on the course was health practitioner Kerry Hine, who is based at Keswick Hospital. She shared an



unfortunate personal experience with the group and was supported to reflect upon it. “I witnessed a patient falling and they died two weeks later,” she explains. “Even though I knew that there was nothing I could have done that would have changed anything, I was still very upset. Using *First Steps* really helped me to reflect on the experience, expressing what I felt about what had happened.”

The revised resource coincides with the introduction of the new Care Certificate for HCSWs, which was launched in April. “We’ve made sure that *First Steps* maps to the codes of conduct and standards in all the UK countries,” says Tanis. “Employers will find *First Steps* useful to supplement their own induction training.”

In Cumbria, Karen is encouraging those doing the Care Certificate to use *First Steps*. “The resource is really good quality and now it’s been enhanced even further to make it more user friendly,” she says. “One of the real values is that you don’t have to tackle it from start to finish. You can just go in and do something on an aspect of care where you feel a bit rusty or need some help.”

Kerry agrees. “I started doing *First Steps* a year ago now, but I go back to it regularly. I find it really helps to refresh my learning, especially on aspects of care that aren’t an everyday part of my role. The information is vast and it’s all very interesting, easy and straightforward to use. I’d recommend it to anyone.”

What’s in the new version?



- A new reflective resource at the end of each section, including a diary, which can be built into a portfolio.
- More information on caring for people with mental health issues and disabilities.
- Documents mapping *First Steps* to each UK country’s code and standards.
- Extra clinical skills, for example, information on assessing skin.
- Plus all the previous features users enjoyed, including the search facility and a quiz.

Access *First Steps* at www.rcnhca.org.uk

Challenging the status quo

Susan Embley speaks to two nursing auxiliaries who have received an RCN award for improving patient care

Colleagues and friends Karen Todd and Michael Moreland were both working on the surgical ward at Antrim Area Hospital when they decided to improve working practices during shift handovers.

Karen, who has worked in health care for 15 years, says: “During handovers, we’d be sitting in with the nurses as they go through different notes for the patients. Both Michael and I thought that a lot of it wasn’t relevant to our work, for example putting intravenous drips (IVs) in and discussing patient follow-ups. We thought it would be a better use of our time, especially during the early shifts, if we were out on the ward helping patients with their breakfast.”

Although effective nursing handovers are fundamental to patient safety and continuity of care, they can present challenges in delivering care during the handover period. Both Karen and Michael realised that patients weren’t necessarily getting assistance with their breakfast if they needed it during time spent in an office during a shift handover.

With the help of their ward sister, Karen and Michael decided to design a shift handover form specifically for HCSWs. The idea was that by using the form as a handover tool, HCSWs would no longer have to attend the full handover. Karen and Michael considered the safety issues relating to the handover and established what information the nursing auxiliaries or HCSWs required.

They worked with the staff on the ward to make sure the form was being used properly. “The nurses could add what



The new system meant we could get onto the ward a lot quicker

they needed to the form to update us, which could be put into the computer and printed out on the form for us to use,” explains Karen. The form has a general template outlining when the patient had surgery, their mobility assistance requirements, mental health, infection risk and nutritional and elimination needs. The system was piloted over a two-month period and then formally evaluated.

Smooth and efficient

“The new system meant that we could get onto the ward a lot quicker and help patients with their breakfasts if they needed it,” says Michael, who has been an HCSW for more than three years. “The form has also been useful in making notes about patients and their preferences. For example, a man on the ward wouldn’t eat his porridge as he was being spoon-fed. His wife told me that if I just gave him marmalade on toast, he’d be happy to eat that himself, so I made a note of it on the handover form,” he added.

The new system has been shown to benefit staff and patients alike and is being developed to be used on other surgical wards across the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

Due to the success of Karen and Michael’s idea, the pair won the Health Care Support Worker category for the RCN Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year awards in May. Michael, who left his role at Antrim Area Hospital to start a new job in Belfast at the same time as receiving the award, says: “It was a brilliant feeling to leave my post on a high. It’s a great team and we all do a great job, but to be recognised and



nominated was nice. Sometimes people are scared by change and I would have people coming up to me asking me about this form we've created, but once others learned how easy it was, it's not such a scary change for them."

The judging panel commended Karen and Michael for the insight they displayed into the patient experience, the collaborative nature of their working, and the genuine difference they have made to patient safety and care.

Karen says: "I was delighted we won. It was so nice to go to the ceremony and feel appreciated for the work you do. To other HCSWs who have an idea that they think could work, I would say go for it!"



It is so nice to feel appreciated for the work you do

Awards ahead

Do you know a health care assistant who has made an outstanding contribution to patient care? If so, you could nominate them for an RCNi award.

The 2016 RCNi Nurse Awards will be open for nominations in October, and there is a category dedicated to HCAs, assistant practitioners and other staff in support roles.

The process is simple, and you can even nominate yourself.

Keep an eye out for further information at rcni.com/newsroom/nurse-awards, in *Nursing Standard* and in *RCN Bulletin*.

Open to opportunity

Two health care support workers describe how they have made the most of development opportunities at work



There is always more than one pathway

Ben Padfield is a clinical lead for unregistered practitioner development

For five years I was a health care support worker at Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust, where I developed a passion for supporting and empowering adults with mental health issues. During this time I became involved with quality improvement in my team using the Department of Health's *Essence of Care* framework to benchmark fundamental care standards.

Alongside care delivery, I've always been interested in service improvement. I've led projects to improve communication and interpersonal skills, as well as trust-wide programmes to implement *Essence of Care* and dignity strategies. I eventually became a facilitator for *Essence of Care* and dignity across the whole trust, and the experience I gained in this role had a big influence on my career.



I believe an empowered workforce makes for better care

My current role as clinical lead for unregistered practitioner development has enabled me to use my frontline experience as an HCSW to influence the direction of unregistered practice across the organisation.

We have recently been exploring how unregistered practitioners can support students on placement, and I'm currently creating a series of short films highlighting the motivations, values and skills of unregistered practitioners.

I believe an empowered workforce makes for better care. HCSWs can sometimes feel as though they are at the bottom of the hierarchy, but there is always more than one pathway.

Nothing is impossible. My advice is to trust your instincts, recognise your own value, and remember that there are more opportunities available than we often realise.

Don't hold back if you spot an opportunity to develop and progress

Nicky Coote works for a local authority as a smoking cessation practitioner

I started working as a junior, then senior, health care assistant in general practice and was there for eight years before I moved into a smoking cessation role in 2011. It's a role which has provided me with loads of development opportunities and has even led to me becoming a trainer for the Royal Society of Public Health.

I've been lucky as my GP practice has always been highly involved in my education. I have grabbed opportunities to take on new responsibilities and completed training in, among other things, spirometry, administration of flu vaccinations and vitamin B12 injections.

To other HCAs looking to upskill themselves I'd say it's important to think about your training needs and raise these at work. It's no good resting on your laurels if you believe you can offer more. If you spot an opportunity, don't hold back. Never be put off by thinking that you're "just an HCA", as you are a fundamental member of the health care family.

I've approached the RCN Careers Service at various stages in my career when I've needed some guidance. I've always found it really helpful. The staff are knowledgeable and pragmatic, and advised me on what I could and couldn't do when expanding my practice.

Cathy Taylor, RCN Careers Adviser, says:

There are so many possibilities for today's health care support workers. If you are working as a health care assistant you might want to stay in that role or progress to an assistant practitioner role. Whatever your role or career ambitions, it's important your learning needs are addressed so make sure you keep in regular communication with your manager, and make the most of support from your employer.

If you need some guidance, the RCN Careers Service provides confidential advice on writing CVs, interview skills, career planning, and professional development.

Visit www.rcn.org.uk/mss to find out more.



Never be put off by thinking that you're just an HCA

Nicky's tips for success

- Don't be complacent about your learning – take every opportunity to develop and complete courses.
- Practise reflective learning, getting clinical supervision where you can.
- Be adaptable, confident and focused.
- Enjoy what you are doing because you are helping people who really need your skills.



Staying safe online

Used wisely, social networking has many advantages. Andrew Greasley from the RCN's digital team shares his top tips

1 **The benefits**
The people, places and organisations that matter to you are on social media. It's a great way to meet other nursing staff and raise awareness of the difference you make. But remember, you must take some precautions when you post.

2 **The basics**
Be wary about posting comments that could be perceived as bringing your patients, profession, regulator or employer into disrepute.

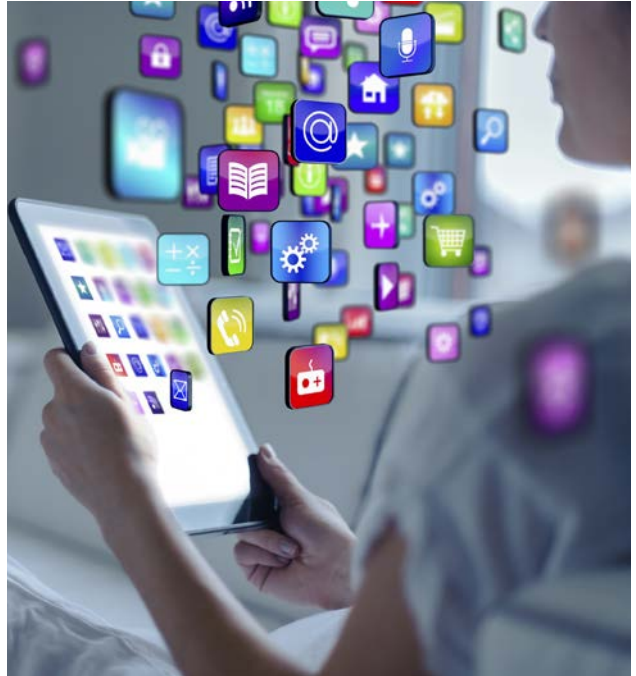
3 **Keep it clean**
Remember, anything you post on social media can be seen and shared by others. Don't post anything that may be considered insulting, threatening or offensive.

4 **Protect patients**
Don't compromise your patients' privacy. Posting anything that helps identify them online will get you into trouble.

5 **No film or photos**
Pictures and videos are great, but including patients and colleagues in your posts could be perceived as irresponsible and a breach of privacy.

6 **Keep it professional**
Work time is for work. Using gambling websites or apps, for example, is inappropriate.

7 **Check the policy**
If your employer has an IT or social media policy, make yourself familiar with its contents.



8 **Everything is public**
Even if you think your social media settings are secure, you still can't control exactly who sees your posts.

9 **Protect colleagues**
Remind colleagues about the risks, and report any inappropriate behaviour to your manager. The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) provides guidance on using social media responsibly. Visit www.nmc-uk.org/guidance

10 **No going back**
You can delete a tweet or a Facebook post, but it might be too late. People can share your content without your permission and screenshot any mistakes you make.

 /royalcollege
ofnursing
 @theRCN

Your RCN Health Practitioner (HP) Committee

Representing the RCN's health care assistant (HCA) and assistant practitioner (AP) members across the UK

The committee reports directly to RCN Council through its dedicated HP Council members and provides a platform for HCAs and APs to influence RCN policy at a UK and local level.

COUNCIL MEMBERS



Brenda McIlmurray (Chair)



David Cardwell

COUNTRY AND REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES



David Herring
Eastern



Vacant - appointments taking place
South West



Maive Coley
East Midlands



Vacant - appointments taking place
West Midlands



Tracie Culpitt
London



Vacant - appointments taking place
Yorkshire & the Humber



Lynda High
Northern



Dennis Greer
Northern Ireland



Tom Palin
North West



Brian Murphy
Scotland



Lorraine Hicking-Woodison
(Vice Chair)
South East



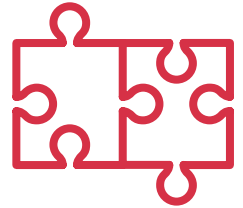
Judith Page
Wales

For opportunities to get involved, visit www.rcn.org.uk/appointments

Contact your representative via governance.support@rcn.org.uk



If undelivered please return to: RCN Direct, Copse Walk, Cardiff Gate Business Park, Cardiff, CF23 8XG



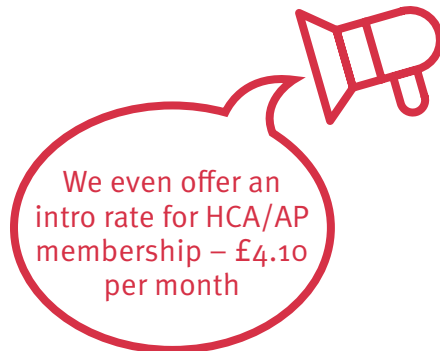
We're stronger together

We are passionate about supporting health care assistants and assistant practitioners.

Spread the word and tell others like you.

Together we can ensure your voice is heard and that you're better connected with your nursing colleagues.

www.rcn.org.uk/join



We even offer an
intro rate for HCA/AP
membership – £4.10
per month



Royal College
of Nursing