

RCN HEALTH+ CARE

 Royal College
of Nursing

FOR HEALTH CARE SUPPORT WORKERS ACROSS THE UK

SPRING 2015

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LEADING THE WAY
IMPROVING PATIENT CARE

Consistently caring p6
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Claiming tax relief p14



I LOVE GOING TO CONGRESS TO GET AN UPDATE ON HEALTH CARE ACROSS THE UK AND TO HEAR ABOUT ALL THE GOOD WORK THE RCN IS DOING FOR HCAs AND APs



HCA Maive Coley, who represents the East Midlands on the RCN Health Practitioner Committee



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Welcome

Hello and welcome to all health care support workers (HCSWs) in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. There's plenty to look forward to over the coming months, including RCN Congress. I do hope some of you get the chance to experience it. Congress is educational and inspirational with lots of up to date topics for you to debate and discuss.



The huge annual event hosts a different line-up this year with new RCN President Cecilia Anim, new Deputy President Professor Rod Thomson and new Chair of Congress Stuart McKenzie, with BJ Waltho as Vice Chair. I must take this opportunity to thank our amazing former president Andrea Spyropoulos. Andrea is an inspirational nurse and leader who has continuously fought for the issues that matter to HCSWs.

Inside this issue of *Health+Care* we take a look at the new Care Certificate (page 6), there's a spotlight on women's health (page 8) and you'll find advice about raising concerns at work (page 12) and how the RCN can support you.

Brenda McIlmurray

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

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There's more to RCN membership than you may think.

Visit www.rcn.org.uk/xtra to find out how you can get discounts on a range of everyday essentials. Used regularly, you could recoup the cost of your membership.

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www.rcn.org.uk/direct

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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.

Congress is coming

HCAAs and other nursing staff from across the UK will come together at RCN Congress in June to learn about the latest developments in health and care. Free to attend, Congress offers educational sessions, a huge exhibition and the chance to hear lively and passionate debates on current nursing issues. This year the event is being held in Bournemouth between 21 and 25 June. Visit www.rcn.org.uk/congress



Nominations open

At Congress in June, nominations open for a health practitioner member seat on RCN Council. Could you fulfil this vital role? Council members are at the forefront of RCN activity, helping to guide organisational decisions and strengthen nursing as a profession. This role is essential to the governance of the College, both as a trade union and professional organisation. The RCN urges you to stand and give HCA and AP members a voice. Look out for details at www.rcn.org.uk/elections

Raising concerns

The RCN has welcomed recommendations in a review of how to create an open and honest culture in the NHS. The report's author, Sir Robert Francis, said there should be a named guardian in every trust to provide support and advice to whistleblowers. See page 12 for more.

HCA BME pioneer

RCN Health Practitioner Committee Member Maive Coley has been recognised in the *Health Service Journal* (HSJ) top 50 list of black and minority ethnic (BME) pioneers. The HSJ supplement celebrates the outstanding contributions of health care professionals from BME backgrounds. Maive is the first health care assistant to have completed the Mary Seacole Leadership Programme after hearing about it at RCN Congress. "I applied because I was looking to lead my team to achieve better outcomes for patient care. I wanted to develop leadership skills that would reflect the values of the NHS," said Maive.

Your learning



RCN Library and Heritage Services host a number of learning events, training sessions and exhibitions throughout the year. The RCN has libraries in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Visit www.rcn.org.uk/library to find out what's going on near you.

Get involved

Health+Care is your magazine and we rely on your ideas to shape the content. Have you got a story you'd like to share? Email the editor sophie.lowthian@rcn.org.uk. Let us know what you think about the magazine by filling in the survey on the back page of this issue. You could win an iPad mini!

Pay campaign



The RCN's fight to secure a fair pay deal for all nursing staff continues, with the *What if?* campaign moving up a gear. As *Health+Care* went to press RCN members working for the NHS in England were voting on whether to accept a new offer from the Government, which includes a one per cent consolidated pay rise. Meanwhile, members working for selected NHS employers in England and Northern Ireland have been recording and claiming for any unpaid excess hours they work to highlight instances where their contractual rights are not being met. Visit www.rcn.org.uk/whatif for the most up to date information on the RCN pay campaign.

Sleep-ins

Recent case law has established that sleep-ins are covered by the National Minimum Wage (NMW), currently £6.50 an hour for those aged over 21. If a worker is expected to sleep-in at their workplace then these hours are deemed as working hours and should be paid, on average, at a minimum of NMW over the pay period. The same is true of workers who undertake mandatory training outside rostered hours.

The RCN continues to campaign for a living wage to underpin fair pay for all members wherever they work. If you think your average hourly pay is dropping below the NMW, you may be entitled to a pay rise and back pay. Call RCN Direct on **0345 772 6100**.

Your vote counts



You have a real opportunity to influence the outcome of the general election on 7 May

To help members decide where to place their cross on the day, the RCN has launched *Nursing Counts*, a manifesto calling on the new government to address three key areas. These are to:

- **Improve nursing care**
The RCN is calling for safe staffing levels and access to training and environments where staff concerns are listened to.
- **Value nursing**
The RCN wants fair pay for nursing staff, an end to downbanding and a focus on the future of nursing.
- **Invest in health and care**
This means no more cuts to nursing, increased community resources and workforce planning around patient need.

To make sure you can vote in the election you must be registered on the electoral roll before 22 April. If you live in England, Scotland or Wales you can register online. If you live in Northern Ireland you can register to vote through the Electoral Office.

✓ vote

Download the RCN's manifesto from **elections.rcn.org.uk**

Consistently caring

Stephanie Aiken, RCN Head of Education, and Tanis Hand, Professional Lead for HCAs, explain the Care Certificate

What is the Care Certificate?

The Care Certificate will be implemented in England from the end of March 2015. It is a set of standards that have been developed for support workers to demonstrate that they have gained the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to provide high quality and compassionate care and support. It covers 15 topics that are common to all health and social care settings including personal development, equality and diversity, communication, and fluids and nutrition.

Why is it being introduced?

Studies have shown that the training and education of support workers has been inconsistent, with some receiving very little preparation before caring for the most vulnerable patients and clients. The certificate aims to reduce this inconsistency and also to recognise the value of support workers in health and social care.

How will it change care?

There is clear evidence that a person who has been trained and assessed as competent will provide higher quality care. The certificate focuses on the attitudes and behaviours required to give care in a compassionate way as well as the core skills and knowledge needed from the start.

I am an HCA in England. How will it affect me?

From April 2015, if you move to a new workplace your employer will



You may wish to look at how you meet the standards

be expected to ensure that you meet the standards of the Care Certificate within the first few months of starting. All support workers who are new to health care will be expected to achieve the certificate before they work unsupervised.

While it is a key component of induction, it does not replace employer induction specific to the environment in which practice will take place. Once the certificate has been successfully completed, it will be transferable between roles and employers.

I'm not moving workplaces so what do I need to know?

You need to be aware that your new colleagues will be undertaking training and assessment on the standards as you might be asked to be involved in supporting and supervising them. Experienced HCSWs may become buddies and/or assessors for new colleagues. You may wish to look at how you meet the standards and check your portfolio is up to date.

Why is it England only?

The Care Certificate was commissioned by the Department of Health in England, and does not apply in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. Because health is devolved to these nation's parliaments and assemblies, each has a different structure in place for the education, training, support and development of HCSWs.

Visit www.hee.nhs.uk/work-programmes/the-care-certificate-new

Find out more about professional issues for HCSWs across the UK at www.rcn.org.uk/hcaregulation

How has the RCN been involved?

The RCN has called for standardisation of training and education for HCSWs for many years and has been involved in the Care Certificate's steering group from day one. Recently, members of the RCN Health Practitioner Committee (see page 15) met with the project leaders to provide feedback and ask questions about the emerging standards.

Your learning

The RCN's acclaimed learning resource *First Steps* was initially launched in February 2011 using Scotland's HCSW induction standards as its framework.

The RCN has recently performed an in-depth evaluation of *First Steps* and is building on its content to include more of the Care Certificate standards which will be relevant across the UK.

Visit www.rcn.org.uk/firststeps



A step forward

"I like the introduction of the Care Certificate. I've been trying to promote HCSWs having some formal training for some time. I think it's a really good foundation for all HCSWs," says assistant practitioner Shane Byrne.

Helping to shape caring



The RCN has been involved in the Shape of Caring review, commissioned by Health Education England in partnership with the Nursing and Midwifery Council. The review builds on recent high-profile reports which have made recommendations for the education and training of nurses and HCSWs. Three of the key themes relate to HCSWs – exploring how the role is valued, access to education and training, and career pathways available.

Above and beyond

A role in fertility is full of highs and lows. Health care assistant Charlene McCarthy describes the challenges and rewards



I always make a point of saying hello

I've always enjoyed working with women. I am currently a senior HCA and egg donation co-ordinator in a fertility clinic in the independent sector. My first job of the day is to prepare theatre and ensure everything is clean and tidy, and the equipment is sterile. I can then concentrate on the patients.

I always make a point of saying hello to everyone who comes through the door. Seeing a familiar face helps put patients at ease and it's clear they really appreciate the continuity of care. I always try to be there at the beginning and end of someone's journey.

Busy days

Mornings are fairly structured, either spent assisting with egg collection or embryo transfer or both. When assisting with egg collection I change the test tubes and it's crucial I don't let the eggs overflow in the tube. In the afternoons I participate in nurse consultations and assist the nurse in running through treatment processes and potential side effects.

The most rewarding aspect of my role is the baby visits. Every month patients

are invited back to bring their newborns in – it's so great when they finally have their little ones. It means so much to get to know the families.

It can be difficult when you build a rapport with a patient and by their fourth or fifth attempt they haven't conceived. It's also extremely tough when a first scan doesn't find a viable pregnancy.

Last year I was awarded funding from the RCN Foundation through an RCN Health Care Assistant Award. I put the money towards an introductory counselling course. It helped me develop my listening skills and reflect on different situations. People like to have a chat, and some need to have a cry, so I need to be a good listener.

I do lots of charity work and I'm the charity co-ordinator at work. We tend to fundraise for things like Fertility Awareness Week. I like our patients to know we go above and beyond what is expected of us – it gives them a little hope and shows that we really do care.

Resources for you

Download *An RCN Training and Education Framework for Fertility Nursing* from www.rcn.org.uk/publications

Join the RCN Fertility Nursing Forum at www.rcn.org.uk/myrcn

Find out about RCN Foundation awards for health care assistants at www.rcnfoundation.org.uk/how_we_can_help/bursary_schemes

Zero tolerance

What is female genital mutilation and what can you do to help put a stop to it? Sophie Lowthian reports

The RCN is encouraging health care support workers to further their knowledge of female genital mutilation (FGM) to help eradicate the practice.

The World Health Organisation defines FGM as “all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons”.

Carmel Bagness, RCN Professional Lead for Midwifery and Women’s Health says: “FGM is a form of abuse perpetrated against women and girls. It is a violation of human rights and it is illegal in the UK.”

No health benefits

She says the practice, which is usually carried out on young girls between infancy and 15 years of age, has no health benefits and can lead to severe illness and even death in girls and women. “There is growing awareness about FGM and an ongoing strategy in the UK to eradicate it. We are all responsible for knowing more so that we can contribute to changing attitudes to this debilitating abuse.

“It is important that HCSWs working with girls and women have some understanding of this practice and the negative impact it can have,” adds Carmel. “Make sure you are up to date on safeguarding processes in your area and recognise your responsibilities in referring any worries. If you have any concerns speak with your manager, the nurse or midwife you are working with.”



RCN President Cecilia Anim says: “This is about cruelty and abuse of human rights. We must work together to put a stop to this heinous practice. All nursing staff across the UK can help stop this dreadful crime by reporting instances of FGM.”

Email carmel.bagness@rcn.org.uk for more information.

Tackle it together



“I’ve heard a lot about FGM in the media and wanted to find out more. I found the RCN publication really useful and plan to share it with the people I work with. All of us working in health and social care need to understand what FGM is so we can help tackle it together,” says Lorraine Hicking-Woodison, assistant practitioner and member of the RCN Health Practitioner Committee.

Download *Female Genital Mutilation: An RCN Resource for Nursing and Midwifery Practice* from www.rcn.org.uk/publications

A warm welcome

Tom Metcalf speaks to an RCN member who has played a pivotal role in improving patient experience at a community hospital

Bethan Turner, an assistant practitioner at Dolgellau and Barmouth Hospital in rural North Wales, is aware that going into hospital can be a daunting experience.

Some people find that a visit to hospital is bewildering and unsettling. It's such a different world from their home environment, with staff in various uniforms coming and going, often using medical terms that are difficult to understand.

"We kept getting questions from patients about jargon they overheard," says Bethan. "They didn't know who all the different people on the ward were, so there was an identification issue as well. Some of them didn't even know they could bring mobile phones into the hospital. We were supposed to be providing patients with information and they weren't getting it."

Path to success

Bethan, a former health care support worker, successfully completed her Assistant Practitioner Level 4 qualification last year.

As part of the course she was required to produce a health care promotion package on a subject of her choice, which gave her an idea.

"My manager and I agreed the ward information packs at the hospital were really out of date. I saw an opportunity to develop them and provide patients with pertinent information on what they could expect during their time here," explains Bethan.



I'm inspired
by those
around me

Bethan took it upon herself to develop a welcome pack for patients and their families, introducing them to the hospital setting.

The pack includes information on what to bring to hospital, what to expect on arrival, and who everyone on the ward is. There are also details of the daily ward routine, visiting hours and infection control procedures.

The pack is currently being produced and Bethan hopes it will be available this spring in both English and Welsh. A copy will be placed by each bed on the ward.

A prototype has already been used around the hospital and has been welcomed, not only by patients. "Staff and students are also using the pack and it's proving to be a useful induction tool," Bethan adds.

Senior staff at Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board have even seen the pack's potential as a template for all wards in North Wales. "That was a shock," says Bethan. "I thought it was quite simplistic, but a colleague told me it has the Ronseal effect – it does exactly what it says on the tin!"

Bethan's work has also been recognised by the RCN. She was awarded the HCSW Award in the RCN in Wales Nurse of the Year Awards 2014.

"It's nice to be recognised for putting my head above the parapet," she says. "I'm inspired by those around me, especially the patients. I've also been overwhelmed by the support from my colleagues. They've given me the bit between my teeth."



Bethan presenting the welcome pack

Bethan has also been involved in the outpatient unit's *Healthy Heart* campaign, which promotes a good all round healthy lifestyle. Due to the rural location of the hospital – it's more than 50 miles from the nearest acute general hospital – Bethan believes it is important to promote health among the local population.

“Their vision is to take the *Healthy Heart* programme into the community,” she says. “We need to reach out to those who may not currently have access to it. It's something I hope to assist the outpatient department with in the future.”

Tanis Hand, RCN Professional Lead for HCAs and APs, says:



“Sir Robert Francis QC, in his report into failings in care at Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust, highlighted the issue of identification of HCSWs and recommended that staff members should be clearly identified by their uniforms and badges.

“People need to understand who the different members of staff are, and who can do what. Bethan's idea to create a really practical resource to help people feel less bewildered when entering the hospital setting will help to make every patient's experience more comfortable.”

A cause for concern

Josie Irwin, Head of RCN Employment Relations, highlights the steps HCSWs should take if they witness wrongdoing at work

1 Assess the situation

It can sometimes be hard to know whether a situation should be raised as a concern. You should be guided by the question: has the situation caused harm or distress or, if you let the situation carry on, is it likely to result in harm or distress? If the answer is yes, you need to take action.

2 Act on it early

Don't wait for a problem to develop. Access your local raising concerns or whistleblowing policy which should detail who you should raise your concern with. If in doubt, raise the concern with your manager or a senior colleague as soon as you can.

3 Contact the RCN

Call RCN Direct on **0345 772 6100** or contact your local RCN representative to ask for help with raising concerns and speaking out about patient safety. The RCN will provide you with moral support and act as a sounding board to check whether you are doing the right thing in raising a concern, and doing it the right way, as well as advice on next steps.

4 Know your rights and responsibilities

It's the responsibility of everyone working in health care to be aware of the importance of preventing and eliminating wrongdoing at work. Your employer has a duty to escalate your concerns and if they do not, the RCN can help.



5 Keep a note of it

Ensure you keep clear and accurate records and notes of your concerns throughout the process in case you need them for future reference. Also make sure to write down every conversation you have and retain all correspondence.



Don't wait for a problem to develop

RCN representation

The RCN recently represented health care assistant member Jo*, who was working in a non-NHS nursing home and raised concerns over the safety of residents due to the conduct of a registered nurse.

Jo's concerns were that the nurse slept for most of the night in a closed room with the chair against the door from the time of the evening medication until the following morning's medication. Jo was also asked to administer the medication for the registered nurse. On questioning this, the nurse told her to place it in the bin if the resident had not taken it.

After reporting her concerns to the home manager, Jo was given a letter to say that allegations of poor care had been raised against her and she was dismissed. When Jo contacted the RCN she was supported with an appeal. The appeal was successful and her dismissal was overturned. The RCN then facilitated a meeting with Jo and her employer who praised her for raising concerns and informed her that the two staff involved no longer worked for the organisation. Full pay and continuous service were agreed and Jo has now returned to work in a safe environment.

**the member's name has been changed*

RCN members are entitled to legal advice and, in appropriate circumstances, representation if any dispute arises during the course of employment.

Your duty



If you work for the NHS, all employees have a contractual right and a duty to raise genuine concerns they have with their employer about malpractice, patient safety, financial impropriety or any other serious risks that they consider to be in the public interest. This is set out in section 21 of the *NHS Terms and Conditions Handbook*. Additionally:

- in **England**, the NHS Constitution and handbook includes a pledge to support staff who wish to raise concerns
- in **Scotland**, staff are covered by a nationally agreed Partnership Information Network (PIN) policy on whistleblowing
- in **Northern Ireland**, staff are covered by the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority whistleblowing guidance
- in **Wales**, the Health Care Inspectorate Wales has produced a document called *Concerns and Complaints about Health Services in Wales* which covers NHS services and independent health care settings.

Download the RCN publication *Raising Concerns: A Guide for Members* from www.rcn.org.uk/publications

Make your claim

Tax relief means you pay less tax, so you end up with more money. But is claiming your tax as simple as it sounds?

“If someone said they would give you £43 to fill in a quick form, wouldn't you jump at the chance?” asks Claire Cannings, RCN Welfare Adviser. “But when the RCN welfare service speaks to members about their financial concerns the service finds that only a small percentage of employed HCSWs are claiming the tax relief available to them.”

Claire explains that £43 is the average annual tax relief for basic rate taxed HCSWs who pay RCN subscriptions, who need to wear a particular type of shoe for work, and who have to clean their own uniform. “The figure is even higher if you subscribe to *Nursing Standard*. Not only that, but if it's your first time applying you can claim tax relief on the current year and the previous four years,” she points out.

How do I claim tax relief?

Fill in a tax relief form and send it to HMRC, PAYE and Self Assessment, PO Box 1970, Liverpool L75 1WX. All RCN members receive this form in their annual membership pack, or it can be downloaded from the RCN website. To make a claim for a previous tax year, contact RCN Direct on **0345 772 6100**.

Visit www.hmrc.gov.uk/incometax/how-to-get.htm

The RCN Welfare Rights and Guidance Service provides advice on state benefits and tax credits, ill-health and disability, debt advice, charitable funding and housing problems. Call **0345 408 4391**.



Helping James

James, an HCSW from Scotland, approached the RCN welfare service for advice as he was struggling to pay the increased costs of transport to and from work.

Looking at James' payslips, the RCN welfare team discovered he had never claimed any tax allowances despite having worked as an HCSW on an NHS ward for six years. He contacted RCN Membership Services, who sent him a form confirming his RCN subscriptions over the past three years and his flat rate allowances for shoes and uniform cleaning. He submitted the form to HMRC and as well as getting his tax reduced for the current year, James received a cheque for £132 for his backdated tax allowances.

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 in influencing RCN policy at a national and local level.

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Judith Page
Wales

Nominations for the HP Council seat will open at RCN Congress this year. Congress is a great opportunity to meet your committee members. Visit www.rcn.org.uk/congress

Want to get in touch?
Contact your representative via
governance.support@rcn.org.uk



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Share your views and you could win an iPad!

Please fill in the survey below or online at www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/rcnhealthcaremagazinesurvey to tell us what you think about *RCN Health+Care* magazine. The RCN is passionate about communicating with its HCA and AP members and wants to make sure its communications are useful, informative and relevant.



1. On first impressions do you like the magazine?

Yes No

2. Do you find it useful?

Yes No

3. What is your overall impression of the content?

Poor Average
 Good Excellent

How would you improve the content?

4. What is your overall impression of the design?

Poor Average
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How would you improve the design?

5. Does the magazine help you learn more about the RCN and its services?

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7. How often should it be sent? (select one)

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8. Any other comments or suggestions for future topics?

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(Only RCN members are eligible for the prize draw)

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Your personal information will only be used for the purposes of the prize draw.

The survey closes on 5 July.

Return your survey to **Sophie Lowthian, Royal College of Nursing, 20 Cavendish Square, London W1G 0RN**, or fill it in online, and find full terms and conditions at www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/rcnhealthcaremagazinesurvey

The winner will be notified by 31 July.



Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary