



SUPERNUMERARY OR NOT?	P6
MEN IN NURSING	P8
ALWAYS THINK SEPSIS	P12
SURVIVING NIGHT SHIFTS	P16

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SPRING 2018

FOR NURSING STUDENTS ACROSS THE UK



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WELCOME

3



Hello and a warm welcome to this issue of *RCN Students*. It's a challenging time for the nursing profession, yet your incredible work continues to inspire others and strengthen the image of nursing.

I've recently become registered in the adult field of nursing and started full-time employment in an acute hospital setting. I want to reassure every single student nurse out there that you are doing a fantastic job. If you give your best you can never truly fail at being a great nurse. Keep at it – that registration day is closer than you think!

The RCN is moving forward with the times and we now have a vibrant and easily accessible website featuring student stories from across the UK: www.rcn.org.uk/studentmag. If you're interested in writing for *RCN Students*, email us: studentsmagazine@rcn.org.uk

The RCN Students Committee has been hard at work creating the most diverse and inclusive students programme for this year's RCN Congress in Belfast. We will also be celebrating the 50th year of students being part of the RCN – a hugely historical moment. If you're not going to Congress, keep up to speed with all the action online: www.rcn.org.uk/congress

Charlotte Hall
Chair, RCN Students Committee
Student Member of RCN Council

Contents

Student update.....	4-5
Supernumerary or not?.....	6-7
Men and nursing.....	8-9
Reason to smile.....	10-11
Sepsis awareness.....	12-13
Talk through the taboo.....	14-15
A hard day's night.....	16-17
Your RCN.....	18-19

Story to tell?

If you've got a story to share, or there's a topic you'd like to see covered in a future issue, why not get in touch? Email studentsmagazine@rcn.org.uk

Did you know *RCN Students* is online? Read unmissable student stories, advice and guidance on the go, anywhere, at any time. And it's not just *RCN Students*, all our member magazines are there too – including *RCN Bulletin*. www.rcn.org.uk/magazines

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NHS pay deal



How students can get involved in the RCN consultation

The NHS pay deal for England, announced in March, is very positive for students. It provides a rise in starting salaries for newly-registered nurses from £22,128 to £23,023. The changes also see band 5 staff progress through incremental points quicker, so your pay would increase by nearly 22 per cent over three years to almost £27,000.

The deal proposes changes to current NHS contracts of employment, not future contracts, so students are not able to vote in the consultation.

However, if you're working as an HCA and employed on an Agenda for Change contract in the NHS in England, you will be eligible to take part in the vote. You'll need to update your membership record with your workplace and NHS employer and can do this by calling 0345 772 6100 and selecting option one, or by emailing membership@rcn.org.uk

You will need to have your RCN membership number to hand. After doing this, you'll be able to vote in the online consultation until 5 June at www.rcn.org.uk/nursing-pay

Student members not eligible to vote can still get involved by spreading the word about the deal and helping fellow students and NHS staff understand the benefits it will bring to newly qualified nurses in the future.

Postgraduate funding under threat

The Government has announced plans to remove NHS funding for postgraduate pre-registration nursing students in England

This follows the removal of funding and introduction of tuition fees for undergraduate nursing students in England, which was intended to increase numbers. However, it failed to do so and over the last two years applications to nursing courses have fallen by 33%.

At a time when the nursing workforce is in crisis, the

postgraduate route offers a significant opportunity.

Education providers estimate that many postgraduate courses could expand by around 50% if more funding were available.

Lauren Bryant, adult nursing PGDip student at King's College, says: "Nursing generally attracts more mature students, especially on the postgraduate diploma, who are more likely to have other financial commitments and responsibilities. It simply wouldn't have been feasible for me or many of my course

mates to go back to studying without the financial support of the bursary."

The RCN is calling on the Government to immediately stop plans to cut this postgraduate funding while a review of post-18 education is carried out. Parliament is expected to debate the issue in the coming weeks and the RCN will be proactively briefing parliamentarians.

Please ask your MP to sign the early day motion (EDM) opposing the cuts: <https://rcn.eaction.org.uk/lobby/postgradbursary>

The three R's

The RCN has published a suite of resources to encourage nursing staff and students to "rest, rehydrate, refuel" during shifts. The resources are part of a campaign designed to make members think about the consequences of not looking after themselves while on shift. It highlights

the safety-critical decisions they have to take, and how dehydration, for example, affects concentration and cognitive function. It also emphasises that breaks at work are a necessity, not a luxury. See pages 16-17 for tips on night shifts. Download 3Rs campaign resources from www.rcn.org.uk/rest-rehydrate-refuel

NMC standards



New standards set to launch soon

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) has approved new standards of proficiency for registered nurses and standards for education and training. These will be formally launched in May, but are available to view in the NMC March Council

papers on the NMC website at <https://tinyurl.com/yd7qthjk> (see pages 35-80).

The RCN consulted widely on the proposals to inform its response to them. It is supportive of their aims. The standards will come into effect from January 2019 for all future student programmes.

What I'm thinking...



Sala Khulumula
Student nurse

My passion in life is to be a voice for the voiceless. For those marginalised by society, scared to speak up or who cannot speak up. Being a young, black, African woman, I've had so many labels and my voice silenced for one reason or another. Opening my mouth allows me to give freedom to others.

Being a student panel member for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) has given me the opportunity to raise the banner for all students and has helped build my confidence and people skills. The TEF, which sits under the Office for Students, aims to identify and reward excellence within the teaching environment and act as a decision making tool for potential students. With the current changes across higher education and the scrapping of the bursary in nursing in particular, it's crucial students are getting their money's worth.

My work on the panel has shown me that our voices are being heard and making a real difference. Students are the heart of higher education and we must make sure it functions effectively. Visit www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/tef

Supernumerary or not?

A recent RCN Students Facebook group discussion highlighted a common issue when the health service is stretched to breaking point



Has anyone else been told on placement that you're not going to be a student today, you're going to work as an HCA because they're short staffed? And how have you overcome it?

The response to this post varied, with some comments suggesting the student just get on with the job and others recommending they refuse and report it to their mentor. So what should you do if you find yourself in a similar situation?

The official line

The NMC's 2010 *Standards for Pre-registration Nursing Education* are very clear. They say: "Programme providers must ensure that students are supernumerary during all practice learning. Supernumerary means that the student will not, as part of their programme of preparation, be contracted by any person or body to provide nursing care."

Essentially this means students should not be counted as part of the

workforce, at least from a practical perspective, while on placement, and should not be asked to work as such. There are good reasons for this as Gill Coverdale, RCN Professional Lead for Education, explains.

"If a student is on placement, they are accruing the hours required to enable them to register as a nurse with the NMC. An employer cannot re-designate these hours. If a student works as an HCA then those hours do

How to raise a concern



The RCN guidance for helping students get the best from their practice placements says:

"If you are concerned about any placement area, notify the service manager, your mentor and your personal tutor as soon as possible, either during the placement or immediately following it. Discuss your placement experiences with your personal tutor and

explain why you had an unsatisfactory experience.

"Agree on the actions that will be taken to inform the appropriate people, for example the higher education institution and service link managers. It is important you follow the correct channels of communication already established."

📄 Read the full guidance at tinyurl.com/yb6uk2xu



not count towards the registration requirement so these would have to be completed at another time. What's more, working as an HCA and being a student on placement are two different functions with different requirements and responsibilities."

Gerry O'Dwyer from the RCN's employment relations department

Did you know?

The RCN is calling for new legislation that guarantees safe and effective nurse staffing. It comes after more than 30,000 members responded to a survey last year that provided a snapshot of their experiences on the last shift they worked. More than half said there were fewer nursing staff on shift than planned. Find out more and get involved at www.rcn.org.uk/safestaffing

adds that for an employer to ask a student to work as an HCA they would need to have employed them on particular terms, set them up to be paid and checked their DBS status. "This should not be done 'on the hoof' or in retrospect," he says.

Pushing back

If you find yourself in this situation, you should remind whoever is asking you to work as an HCA of your supernumerary status and you are there as a student on placement. If they don't withdraw their request you should tell your mentor and university as soon as possible.

While refusing such a request from a registered nurse or other member of staff might be daunting, it's important to remind them of the arrangements for your placement and the need to complete your required hours as planned.

Just remember to approach the issue as politely and professionally as possible.



Working as an HCA and being a student on placement are two different functions

Breaking barriers

As RCN Congress gets set to debate ways to recruit more men into nursing, we look at what some universities are doing to address the profession's gender imbalance

The good news is the number of men in nursing is rising. The bad news is not by much – up from 10% of registered nurses in 2014 to 11% in 2016.

So what, you might ask? Men's dominant role in other industries suggests that professions where women form the majority offer some balance. In nursing, however, that argument is perhaps less persuasive.

At Congress in May, one agenda item will call on the RCN to attract more men into nursing. The thinking is that the workforce should match the profile of the population.

Steering clear

Stereotypes, low pay and perceptions of care-giving as "women's work" are among the suggested reasons why men have steered clear. They weren't allowed to join the professional register until the 1950s and their numbers have grown only slowly since. It wasn't until 1960 that men were able to join the RCN.



Some universities are stepping up efforts to broaden nursing's appeal. Edinburgh Napier University, for example, has run recruitment events with a focus on encouraging men to apply.

Queen's University Belfast works with schools in an attempt to make nursing more appealing to boys. Professor Donna Fitzsimons, Head of the School of Nursing and

Midwifery, says the university has also introduced the "multiple mini interview" (MMI) format, which uses several assessments and case-based scenarios to assess candidates' suitability.

"I think we all recognise that good communication, caring and empathy are equally distributed but sometimes women can feel

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The workforce should match the profile of the population

more comfortable exhibiting those skills than men," she says. The MMI approach is designed to better assess such interpersonal qualities.

Patient choice

Coventry University has tried a different approach. Last year, the university announced funding of £30,000 to support 10 male students in subjects where they were under-represented, including nursing.

This bursary gives the men £1,000 in each year of their course and, says Rob James, Academic Dean of the university's faculty of health and life sciences, is one of several schemes to address diversity in academic programmes – attracting more women into engineering, for example.

Of the £1,000 bursary, he says: "Part of it is the principle of gender imbalance but on top of that there's evidence that some patients prefer to be treated by a man and some by a woman. So it's also about increasing patient choice."

RCN member Sean Moore, in the first year of his nursing degree, is among the bursary recipients.

Sean's interest in nursing began with hospital work experience at school. He then worked for several years as a health care assistant and continues to do bank work as an HCA to support himself. He says the bursary cash makes a real difference. "It's not going to buy the world but it allows me to concentrate on my placements and exams because I don't have to do as many shifts as an HCA."

Read this and other student stories online at www.rcn.org.uk/studentsmag

Visit www.rcn.org.uk/congress

What I'm thinking...



Shaun Martin
First-year nursing student

During my placement in a nursing home one resident asked why I left the army to be a nurse. I thought this was strange but I just explained I had never been in the army.

On medication rounds I was paired with a female nurse. When some residents were asked by both of us to take their medication they could be quite rude to the nurse but not to me.

It seemed some residents were treating me differently because they saw me as someone I'm not. Twice when I entered residents' rooms, I was referred to as "Doctor".

The world has progressed in phasing out traditional roles, but some of our older generation have not moved on and I've learned to be much more aware of the generation gap. Nothing has changed how I feel, though. If anything, I'm even more determined to become a nurse.

Share your thoughts. Email studentsmagazine@rcn.org.uk

Reason to smile

Few people like going to the dentist, but for some the experience can cause great anxiety. One student nurse has been helping people with learning disabilities overcome their fears



Credit: Sarah Barnes

“I can’t imagine doing anything other than being a learning disability nurse,” says Tyler Payne, who was named RCN Wales Student Nurse of the Year 2017.

Tyler, now in the final year of her nursing degree, is committed to working with people with learning disabilities after her own personal experience. “My mum died when I was quite young and I’ve been a carer, along with my dad, to my big brother who has autism and

learning disabilities. He’s my best mate and my inspiration. Seeing how far he’s come and how he’s overcome things is why I was drawn to this area of nursing.”

Tyler has helped run a youth club for people with learning disabilities in her home town in Carmarthenshire for years. And more recently, she designed a dental desensitisation kit for people with a phobia of dentists, which also contributed to her RCN award win.

The idea started after a placement with a community team where staff were using a desensitisation tool which improved the number of blood tests they had been able to get from patients with learning disabilities. Tyler’s second year assignment was developing health promotion and this was where her idea for a desensitisation kit came in.

“It’s common that people with learning disabilities, and especially people with Down’s Syndrome, are prone to having



Tyler with her brother

dental health conditions and anxiety about the dentist,” says Tyler. “I visited a local dentist who confirmed that people with learning disabilities do have more issues accessing dental care and are scared of going.”

Tyler took simple dental implements; a cup, latex gloves and dental tools, and also filmed the journey to a dentist so that someone could see the inside of a dental practice, from the corridor to sitting in the dentist chair. “I did a voice-over for the film, which also has text, so someone will have a very clear idea of what happens when they visit.”

Tyler put the film on a USB stick shaped like a tooth and together with the dental instruments she had the beginnings of her kit. “I tried using it myself with someone with learning disabilities and it worked really well.”

The tools help people to get familiar with what is used at the dentist and the film talks through what will happen to ease anxiety.

“The kit isn’t just for people with learning disabilities, it can be used for anyone with a phobia of the dentist. It cost £7 to put together the kit, which is much less than a hospital admission and general anaesthetic if a problem becomes severe.”

Tyler has been using one kit so far, but hopes the idea will be picked up by other trusts who can invest in it as a preventative measure.

As for the future for Tyler, after she graduates later this year, she has a job lined up working with in-patients who have learning disabilities and associated mental health and physical health issues.

“I know it’s something that gets said a lot, but I just want to work in an area where I can make the most difference,” she adds.

The RCN says...

“This is another example of learning disability nurses doing what they do best. We cannot afford NOT to invest in learning disability nurses like Tyler, they will be very much needed to support the health and social care of people’s increasing needs in the future.”

Ann Norman, RCN Professional Lead for Learning Disabilities

“

I can’t imagine doing anything other than being a learning disability nurse

Download *The Needs of People with Learning Disabilities: What Pre-registration Students Should Know* from www.rcn.org.uk/publications

Always think sepsis

Nursing student Katie Dutton reflects on how a near-fatal scrape with sepsis inspired her to increase awareness of it

Two years ago I contracted sepsis while in hospital being treated for a kidney infection and nearly died. It was a pivotal moment in my life, solidifying my desire to become a nurse. No more doubts, this was what I wanted to do. I even applied for the access to nursing course from my hospital bed.

My story begins when I was transferred from one hospital to another for my treatment and around this time my PICC (peripherally inserted central catheter) line got infected. Within a week I started to hallucinate, I had no idea where I was, and my temperature was 40.1C. The last thing I remember until I got better was waiting in a theatre thinking I was going to die.

Fear and hope

I was panicky and suffered with anxiety for a long time afterwards, terrified I hadn't actually been properly cured of sepsis and it was going to come back. The recovery was difficult but in time I got fully better. Despite it being



Credit: Redpix Photography

a horrific experience I was determined not to let it beat me and to make an example of it. I feel incredibly lucky to be alive and am passionate about fighting to improve sepsis care.

As a student nurse I feel I now have a better understanding

of how understaffed many hospitals are and how mistakes can be made. As students we can learn as much from bad practice as from good practice and I want to use what I learned from the experience to help make things better for others in future.

“

We can learn as much from bad practice as from good practice

Earlier this year, fellow student Kylie-Ann Johnson and I led a sepsis awareness event for more than 100 nursing students at our university – De Montfort University in Leicester. It included a talk from a sepsis nurse and highlighted how to spot and prevent sepsis. We were overwhelmed by how popular it was.

The university is now making it an annual event. Many students said it made them feel more confident about spotting the signs of sepsis, which is exactly what I hoped for. It would be great if other universities catch on to the idea and it inspired more sepsis awareness events.

Fresh faces

Student nurses are the fresh faces of the NHS. We have to be confident going out into practice and being able to recognise sepsis. It's so important to me that students – and all nursing staff – are up to speed on the condition. We all need to be thinking “is this sepsis?” on a regular basis. This is how we can help save lives.

The thing with sepsis is that it needs to be treated fast – antibiotic treatment should ideally start within an hour of diagnosis to reduce the risk of serious complications or death. For this reason nursing staff and students can play a key role in helping prevent cases like mine happening by helping spot the signs early on.

I'd encourage other students to hold similar events if they feel passionately about something – not just sepsis. The first thing I did was to approach the module



Katie in hospital

leader to sound them out and it developed from there. If you believe in something, you should just go for it. Ask the questions, be proactive. Students can often lack confidence but just think how many good ideas there are out there that with a little encouragement could be turned into reality.

What is sepsis?

Sepsis is a condition that arises when the body's response to an infection causes it to attack its own tissues and organs. According to the UK Sepsis Trust, (sepsistrust.org) every 3.5 seconds someone in the world dies from sepsis.

🕒 Visit www.rcn.org.uk/sepsis

14 EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Talk through the taboo

Nursing student Catherine Hind has created resources to help health care staff support people in distress. Here she writes about how vital it is to keep having the difficult conversations

When I started studying to be a nurse I naively expected to receive guidance on how to provide emotional support – especially for people who are extremely distressed, suicidal or self-harming.

I quickly found this was not the case. As a mental health nursing student and a volunteer for the Samaritans for more than three years, it's an area I am passionate about.

The numbers speak for themselves. The Samaritans report that there were 6,639 suicides in the UK in 2015 and according to the Royal College of Psychiatrists, one in 10 people self-harm. With these figures on the rise there is an obvious need to reduce stigma, raise awareness and provide appropriate support.

Through conversations with student nurses from fields other than mental health I've come across many who say they don't have much experience of supporting someone in distress and so the idea can make them feel quite anxious.

I've also encountered registered nurses, advanced health care practitioners and doctors who say that even though they can often recognise when an individual is in distress, and they want to help, they don't always know what to say and they lack confidence in this area. There's a fear of making things worse.

The worry is that this can lead health care staff to avoid the issue. What's clear is that this in no way comes from a reluctance to help, but from misconceptions and anxieties around despair and how to approach it.

Taking action

In my role as a Student Quality Ambassador (SQA), a position that exists in the North West of England to champion good care, I was inspired to start a project to help people support others' emotional wellbeing.

The project has grown with support from my university – the University of Cumbria,

and my local Samaritans branch. It is split into two sections – the emotional support guide, which is an electronic resource, and guidance sessions that use observed roleplays.

The guide and the session both emphasise that you don't need to be an expert to support someone with their emotions. Providing emotional support simply means accepting people in a non-judgemental way and taking time to listen to how a person feels about a difficult part of their life.

The session has now been rolled out into acute care and is currently run quarterly at Morecambe Bay NHS Trust for all staff. Feedback has been extremely positive and I hope the project continues to grow and support students and health care staff to keep having the difficult conversations.

Everyone needs a chance to talk, especially if they are very distressed, and it's often a relief for the person just to be heard by someone.

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You don't need to be an expert to support someone with their emotions

View the guide at <http://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/3105>

A hard day's night

The reality of delivering 24-hour health care means many nursing staff are required to work night shifts. Student nurse Chloe Taylor shares her top tips for surviving them

1 Prepare yourself

Try to get some good sleep the night before to make sure you are as well rested as possible. If my shift starts at 9pm, I try to have a two-hour nap in the afternoon. Remember to keep your room cool, dark and put your phone away to reduce distractions. Only use it for your alarm if needed.

2 Bring snacks

I find small healthy snacks work best as a big meal can make me feel sleepy. They allow me to gain sparks of energy during a night shift, especially when I start having my 4am crash.

3 Stay active

Resist the temptation to sit down during the quieter periods. Instead – keep on the move. Trust me it helps!

4 Get to know your patients

Night shifts can be a valuable time to introduce yourself to patients, look through their medical notes and check in with them. If some of my patients are still in their chair waiting to go to bed, I like to help the health care assistants get them prepared.

5 Check and review care plans

Between answering call bells, new admissions and a busy nursing station, it can be quite hard to find the time to review care plans. With the whole night ahead, why not use some of the time to review them and ensure they're all up to date and everything is in order? It will earn you brownie points and improve your knowledge and confidence.

6 Practice skills

Night shifts are a good opportunity to ease your way into management. If you're starting off, just ask the mentor or staff nurse you're with for the night if you can have a go at managing a patient or two. Once you've tackled this you may want to ask for more the following night.

7 Remember H₂O

I love a coffee but the most important thing is to stay hydrated as this can help with alertness. Make sure you drink a lot of water to get you through the night.

8 Reflect

As a student you could consider using the quieter times on shift as an opportunity to reflect on your current placement and document your learning.



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Small healthy snacks are best as a big meal can make you feel sleepy

i Safety first

The RCN has guidance on the occupational health and safety of shift workers called *A Shift in the Right Direction*. It offers advice on all aspects of shift work including preparing for a night shift and what nursing staff should expect from their employers.

Regarding getting home safely it says: “The end of a night shift is recognised as a high-risk period for car accidents – particularly

towards the end of a few back-to-back shifts. If you are dependent on a car to get you to and from work then be vigilant to the risks of fatigue. If you do feel yourself falling asleep at the wheel then pull off the road if it is safe to do so and have a short nap.

“Avoid driving for a long period or a long distance after a period of night shifts or long working hours. While it may be tempting to travel directly to visit family and friends and spend your days off with them, it would be advisable to have a rest or sleep first and travel later in the day.”

Access *A Shift in the Right Direction* (pub code 004286) at www.rcn.org.uk/publications

A conversation with... 



Lucy Mason
RCN Professional Nursing Committee

Where do you work?
I'm currently finishing my third year in children's nursing at the University of Birmingham. I'm due to graduate in August and then I hope to work in neonatal intensive care.

Why did you want to get involved with the RCN Professional Nursing Committee?
The RCN has such a prominent and busy trade union side, particularly in recent times, and its professional side isn't always represented as well as it could be. I wanted to help develop this.

What does the committee hope to achieve?
The committee is made up of people from all different areas and specialties and there's going to be a big focus on promoting and developing the RCN's professional work. As for my role, I hope I can be a fresh pair of eyes and be representative of newly registered nurses and students who aren't yet necessarily within a particular specialty but have a general interest across all professional issues.

What are you looking forward to at Congress?
The debate on staff having water bottles in clinical areas has really caught my eye! It's something I've actually struggled with before on placements, not being able to have a water bottle with me. We teach self-care to our patients but then don't practise it ourselves. For me, seeing nurses hydrate themselves is a great way to act as role models in this regard, rather than something that should be considered "unprofessional".

Set to thrive

Alongside the Professional Nursing Committee (see left) there is also the newly formed Trade Union Committee. This committee is also accountable to RCN Council and will make decisions on its behalf on all the trade union functions and activities of the RCN. Your student representative is Katharine Youngs (pictured right). Look out for an interview with Katharine in the next issue. Visit www.rcn.org.uk/governance

Making a difference



Do you want to develop influencing skills while doing your nursing degree? Why not consider becoming an RCN Student Information Officer (SIO)? SIOs are nursing students who work closely with the RCN to support and share information with fellow nursing students. It's a role you can do without having to take vast amounts of time away from your studies, but has wide-ranging benefits. Go to www.rcn.org.uk/get-involved-student

Your RCN Students Committee


Representing you



Charlotte Hall (Chair)
Student Member of Council




Lucy Mason
Professional Nursing Committee Member



Katharine Youngs
Trade Union Committee Member


Country and regional representatives



Laura Bird
Eastern



Kelly Hitchcock
East Midlands



Georgina Ledwith (Vice Chair)
London



Lyndsey Firth
Northern



Mark Lavery
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Northern Ireland




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Ellie Jolley
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Beth Salmon
South East



Jodie Ashford
South West




Alice Duncan
Wales



Matthew Thomas
Wales



Sophie Lynn
West Midlands



Rhys Mood
Yorkshire & the Humber

What does the committee do? 

The RCN Students Committee is run by students for students, and makes the student voice heard on the issues that matter to you. The committee reports directly to RCN Council – the RCN's governing body, which provides leadership and direction for the organisation, helping to shape the future.

Get in touch 

Contact your student committee representative via students@rcn.org.uk