

Activate

Vol 13 No 7 March 2019

News, views and support for RCN activists



Campaigning for change

Reps unite to work out a strategy for getting members engaged in RCN work

A packed agenda at the RCN joint reps conference in Leeds saw member engagement in the spotlight with reps asked to suggest solutions for getting members fired up about current campaigns.

Safe staffing proved a hot topic, with progress on the campaign for legislation in all parts of the UK dominating discussions at the two-day event.

RCN President Anne Marie Rafferty (pictured above) kicked off day one describing the energy in the room as “fizzing” and demonstrating her enthusiasm for helping drive the campaign.

“I believe this is a totemic moment in the history of the RCN,” she said. “The work we do now, not only to shape safe staffing in each of the four UK countries, but by driving member engagement, will have an impact on our colleagues and their patients for the next 100 years.

“It’s becoming clearer to me just how important you, as reps, are and will be to every part of our campaign. For you are the boots on the ground, the eyes and ears of the RCN, so vital to gathering and sharing information, mobilising your power to unlock the change that members want to see.”

Acting RCN Chief Executive Dame Donna Kinnair reiterated the importance of reps in delivering change. “Safe staffing is our priority, not just for 2019, but for the years ahead. Achieving UK-wide legislation won’t be easy. But together we can, and we will, do this.”

Next steps on how the three-year NHS pay deal is being implemented in England, Scotland and Wales were also discussed. Each country is moving into the second year of the deal.

Not so though in Northern Ireland, where members are considering seeking RCN Council’s permission to ballot on industrial action following the unilateral imposition of a one-year deal.

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The pay deal in Northern Ireland is proving detrimental to some members who are now earning less due to increased pension contributions.

“We don’t know what, if anything, members will get for 2019,” said Operations Manager Pat Cullen, who was recently appointed Director of RCN Northern Ireland and will take up post on 1 May.

“Our members are totally frustrated about the widening pay gaps between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK and the inability for us to influence due to the current political impasse.”

On the second day of the conference, steward Colleen White from Northern Ireland spoke about the impact of the high nurse vacancy rate and poor pay.

Her speech brought delegates to their feet, with reps taking to Twitter to pledge support for Colleen and her colleagues.

Read the full story at rcn.org.uk/activate

Jersey members improved pay offer

The RCN has opened a ballot for members in Jersey to decide if they want to accept a new pay offer after members rejected a “final” offer from the States in January. The deal would mean pay parity for nurses and midwives by 2020, an improvement on 2023, which was the original offer. The ballot closes on 26 March.

Safe staffing law in Scotland edges closer

Safe staffing legislation in Scotland has moved a step closer after the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Bill passed through the second stage of the parliamentary process.

The RCN says the bill represents an opportunity to get staffing levels right so that patients always receive safe and effective care.

Last month, during stage 2 of the bill’s passage through the Scottish Parliament, more than 130 amendments were tabled, many of which were inspired by RCN Scotland’s *Ask for More* campaign.

The amendments covered important issues including embedding a strong professional voice in the legislation, time for continuing professional development, and placing a responsibility on the Scottish Government to ensure an adequate supply of nurses for the NHS.

One in 20 nursing and midwifery posts in NHS Scotland is currently unfilled. The *Ask for More* campaign highlights the impact of these nursing shortages as well as member and public support for the chance the bill offers to make a real difference.

The bill now moves to stage 3 where any final amendments are considered and MSPs decide whether it should become law. Supporters of *Ask for More* are asked to email their MSP ahead of the debate using the automated tool on the campaign webpage: tinyurl.com/ask-campaign

Theresa Fyffe, RCN Scotland Director, said: “Nurses and health care support workers in hospitals, community teams and care homes are stretched to breaking point. The nursing profession is in no doubt that Scotland needs this legislation.”

‘Window of opportunity’ to influence changes to legislation in England

A consultation has been launched on proposals to update the Health and Social Care Act so that NHS England and NHS Improvement can work together to deliver the aims of the Long Term Plan.

As it stands, there is no mention of the nursing workforce in the proposed legislation. The RCN insists this must change.

“We have a window of opportunity to make a difference here, to make those in power realise that no improvements can be made without addressing the severe shortages of nursing staff,” said Patricia Marquis, Director of RCN England.

“There must be responsibility and accountability for safe nurse staffing enshrined in law. We must speak loudly now to get our voices heard.”

At a fringe session at the recent joint reps conference (pictured), members suggested ideas for how to influence policy makers about the need for changes to legislation to include accountability for the nursing workforce.



Face-to-face meetings with NHS chief execs and flash mobs were proposed, as well as a social media campaign and celebrity endorsement for the campaign aims.

Whatever happens next we’ll need your help. Watch this space for action you can take. Visit rcn.org.uk/safestaffing

RCN Congress fringe promises rich mix of topics



Race equality, widening entry routes into nursing and the future of learning disability nursing are among the broad mix of subjects to feature in fringe events at RCN Congress.

This year Congress returns to Liverpool, running from 19 to 23 May. As ever, a full programme of seminars, talks and interactive sessions will run alongside the main debates.

Attendance can count towards revalidation, and offers many personal and professional development opportunities.

The John Goodlad Lecture, named in honour of a former RCN labour relations officer, will be delivered by London Fire Commissioner Dany Cotton. She will share experiences of trauma among fire officers who attended the Grenfell fire, including tackling the stigma that often surrounds asking for help.

A panel discussion hosted by the RCN Professional Nursing Committee will ask whether the College can be effective as both a professional body and a trade union. And an event focusing on the RCN safe staffing campaign will hear how members across the UK have been mobilised to achieve the campaign's goals.

Clinical issues are covered too. Among them, helping children and families through gender identity issues, the subject of a session hosted by the RCN Children and Young People Staying Healthy Forum.

Explore the full programme at rcn.org.uk/congress

Pay deal year two

The second year of the NHS pay deal for England will begin on 1 April 2019. We want members to understand what implementation of the second year of the deal means for them. Acknowledging the complexity of the deal and our miscommunication about the deal last year, we want to encourage you to use the “pay journey tool” produced by NHS Employers.

This shows how the basic pay of individual staff will change during transition to the new Agenda for Change pay structure. Go to tinyurl.com/nhs-england-pay-journey-tool

1 April also marks the start of year two of the NHS pay deals in Scotland and Wales. For the latest information about NHS pay in Scotland, go to tinyurl.com/nhs-scotland-pay. Members working for the NHS in Wales should go to tinyurl.com/nhs-wales-pay

Get ready to celebrate in a big way

The UK's Biggest Nursing Party, to be held on Nurses' Day, is just two months away and now is the time to start planning celebrations.

Nurses' Day takes place on 12 May, the birthday of Florence Nightingale, and each year it offers an opportunity to highlight the remarkable difference made by nursing staff around the world.

This year, the RCN is encouraging members to see how their celebrations are part of a much bigger national nursing party and is giving them the materials to hold an event in their workplace.

The day will still provide a chance for members to talk about their work and the challenges they face but will also offer an opportunity for them to enjoy themselves.



Photos and videos of parties will be shared on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram using #NursesDay.

For information and ideas about how to promote your Nurses' Day party, see rcn.org.uk/nursesday

NHS staff survey

Results from the 2018 NHS staff survey are out now. Reps who work for the NHS in England should be looking at their organisation's results to see how their workplace is doing. The data is useful in helping to identify trends, such as bullying or poor staff engagement.

It's now much easier to read and review your results with an online tool that allows you to select individual questions and see how your results compare to previous years and to similar organisations. Visit nhsstaffsurveys.com/Page/1056/Home/NHS-Staff-Survey-2018/

Editorial



Your new Chair of RCN Council Sue Warner says her priority is making sure the campaign for safe staffing across the UK succeeds

I'm sure you've heard lots of people say it, and that's because it's true – activists are the backbone of the RCN. You help to achieve an incredible amount for the wider membership, the RCN and nursing as a profession.

As your new Chair of RCN Council, I want you to know that I recognise how valuable activism is in both arms of the College: the trade union side and the professional side. Council's role is to set the strategic direction of the RCN but without you the improvements we want to see for nursing staff and patient care wouldn't become a reality.

As we continue our campaign on staffing for safe and effective care across the UK, activists will be leading the way in getting our message out there.

During the RCN's *Scrap the Cap* campaign, I stood alongside many of you protesting outside hospitals and meeting with MPs. I'll be there now, making sure those with the power to deliver change listen to the voice of nursing as we tell them that safe staffing levels must be enshrined in law and we need investment in the nursing workforce now.

Did you know you can now watch RCN Council meetings online?

Members have always been able to request to attend the open sessions of RCN Council meetings but now you can watch these online from anywhere, either live on the day or at a time that suits you. Just visit the link below and log in. The next RCN Council meeting is taking place on 9 and 10 April. rcn.org.uk/rcn-council-meetings

ASK AN ADVISER



The NMC register



Advice on maintaining registration

Entry to the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) register, and maintaining registration, is straightforward for most nurses and midwives. But RCN Direct does receive calls from members who have:

- issues with admission to the register because of a health or caution/conviction matter
- lapsed from the register due to failed payment or revalidation
- worked while lapsed from the register.

The RCN has three new guides that cover issues with admissions to the register, dos and don'ts and practising while lapsed.

We know that members often make mistakes when applying for admission and readmission, and sometimes they don't explain issues fully to the NMC. Incomplete information can lead to long delays. Our guidance provides helpful hints and tips – but is not meant to replace or supersede the NMC's information.

Read the guides at rcn.org.uk/get-help/nmc-issues

For more information, speak in confidence to an RCN Direct adviser any time between 8.30am and 8.30pm, 365 days per year.

RCN DIRECT
www.rcn.org.uk/direct
0345 772 6100



View from the frontline



Jonathan Beebee

Learning disabilities: raising the profile

This year marks 100 years of learning disability nursing, and the RCN Learning Disability Nursing Forum will be celebrating and working hard to enhance the profession's profile. But we face serious challenges, including the steep decline in applicants to study learning disability nursing who were hit hard by the withdrawal of the student bursary in England.

We also know from the 2016 RCN *Connect for Change* report that the number of learning disability nurses employed by the NHS declined by a third in five years. This creates a new question. There are about 17,500 learning disability nurses on the register but only 3,500 of them work in the NHS. If we have no data on where the others are, how can we plan ahead?

At RCN Congress 2018 I tabled a resolution calling on Council to act to preserve learning disability nursing. One of the outcomes is a short animation we're producing aimed at 15 to 24-year-olds explaining why learning disability nursing is such an exciting career.

We've also been working with agencies such as Health Education England and the UK Learning Disabilities Consultant Nurse Network.

And at Congress this year we've got three fringe events focusing on learning disability nursing. And that's really positive.

Jonathan Beebee is an RCN Learning Disability Nursing Forum committee member

Random drug testing at work

In *Ball v First Essex Buses Limited*, an employment tribunal determined whether a bus driver was unfairly and wrongfully dismissed for failing a routine drug test.

Mr Ball had more than 20 years' unblemished service but was dismissed for gross misconduct in July 2017. He had failed a random drug test, which proved positive for cocaine.

Mr Ball was 61 and had diabetes. He denied having taken cocaine and alleged his saliva sample had been contaminated accidentally because he had handled bank notes. He provided two hair follicle tests that were negative but the respondent – his employer – refused to accept those findings. Mr Ball submitted two appeals. Both were unsuccessful.

Applying what are known as the Burchell principles for misconduct dismissals, his employer needed to show it had an honest belief that Mr Ball was guilty of the offence, that there were reasonable grounds for sustaining that belief, and that it conducted a reasonable investigation into the incident. Finally, it needed to establish that dismissal was a reasonable response.

The employment tribunal found the employer had not conducted a reasonable investigation as it failed to consider the hair follicle tests. It determined that dismissing Mr Ball was not reasonable. Therefore, he was unfairly and wrongfully dismissed, and was awarded more than £37,000 in compensation.

This useful example shows that drug testing at work is not an open-and-shut issue, and employees should be given the opportunity to challenge test results to ensure a reasonable investigation takes place.

Joanne Galbraith-Marten
RCN Head of Legal
(Employment)



How the RCN 3Rs initiative protects staff wellbeing

Busy nursing staff need encouragement to rest, rehydrate and refuel. RCN resources can help reps drive home the message

Nutrition and Hydration Week falls this month, and with it comes an opportunity to highlight the serious effects of failing to eat and drink enough.

Three million people are at risk of malnutrition in the UK, many of them already vulnerable because of poor health. Reversing the effects of malnutrition and dehydration adds to the burden on care services.

But it's not only patients who are at risk. The RCN's *Rest, Rehydrate, Refuel* (3Rs) initiative grew out of concerns raised at Congress two years ago that nursing staff were missing breaks because of short staffing.

The initiative, part of the RCN's *Healthy Workplace, Health You* campaign, outlines steps members can take to help themselves – for example, raising the issue with their line manager if they feel unable to take their breaks.

Among the 3Rs resources there are guidelines for reps to help them make a case for workplace improvements. The guidelines highlight statutory requirements placed on employers and draw on an RCN safe staffing survey which found that nearly 60% of members did not get to take sufficient breaks on their last shift.

Also included are quick wins – practical measures that safety reps and nurse leaders can introduce to ensure problems are avoided.

One RCN member who's already making a difference is Lisa Reavette, a sister at Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust.

She has always encouraged proper breaks but noticed that staff, herself included, were finding it increasingly difficult to find time to eat and drink adequately.

“During Nutrition and Hydration Week last year, I noticed hydration stations on Twitter and decided to put one in an accessible area,” Lisa says. Sliced fruit was added to a large water dispenser placed alongside cordial and cups, with signs inviting staff to “stop and take a drink”.



“Staff bring in snacks, drinks and food to encourage others to refuel”

“When I posted my initiative on Twitter the RCN 3Rs initiative was brought to my attention and that made the issue feel even more important. I had more evidence to support and promote my initiative.”

She printed off 3Rs posters to place by the hydration station, sensing that doing so would encourage more staff to understand the importance of regular drinks. Other wards followed her lead.

Encouraged, Lisa arranged a more convenient staff room. Previously, team members had been reluctant to leave the ward for breaks because they felt colleagues, already under pressure because of staff shortages, would be further stretched.

A year on, the hydration station is still well used, Lisa says. “And we’ve developed a staff hamper, where staff bring in snacks, drinks and food to encourage others to refuel.”

She adds: “The 3Rs initiative helped as it clarified what we should be doing but often neglected to do. We felt that if the RCN was encouraging us to rest, rehydrate and refuel then it must be right.”

Read about the RCN 3Rs initiative and download resources at tinyurl.com/ybh36m5n

Nutrition and Hydration Week runs from 11-17 March.
nutritionandhydrationweek.co.uk

Extra protection for terminally ill employees

RCN reps are supporting a campaign that seeks to ensure staff with a terminal illness aren't forced out of work

“Very little persuasion was needed,” says RCN steward Michael Hayworth. “It was signed off pretty quickly.”

He's talking about the TUC's *Dying to Work* campaign and the charter that employers are asked to sign pledging extra employment protection for staff who are terminally ill.

Dying to Work calls for terminal conditions to be made a “protected characteristic”, meaning that employees facing the end of life should not be dismissed because of their condition. Campaigners argue that such protection offers terminally ill workers some extra peace of mind. It also allows them the dignity, security and normality that come from being in employment.

As interim chair of staff side at University Hospitals of Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust, Michael asked managers to support the charter. They did so without hesitation, he says.

Changes planned as a result include looking to extend sick pay for terminally ill employees and offering additional training for managers so they can give the best support.

“If a member of staff wants to work to their final days and is able to, then why not?”

Michael first became aware of *Dying to Work* when a staff side colleague alerted him to its aims. “I was immediately grabbed by the idea,” he says. “If a member of staff wants to work to their final days and is able to, then why not? To me, that's good for the employer and it's good for the employee.”

He adds: “We're a big organisation, like a lot of NHS trusts, and we should be able to accommodate these staff. We care for patients who are dying so why can't we show the same dignity and respect to our own employees?”

Of course, not everyone with a terminal diagnosis will want to keep working. But for those who do, either for financial reasons or as a distraction from their illness, *Dying to Work* says many find their organisations are either unsympathetic or put up barriers that prevent them continuing in work.

RCN National Officer Kim Sunley says: “It's only right when staff members, including nurses, become patients that the health service and their employer does everything to support their health, including their financial wellbeing.

“Worrying about money is the last thing someone needs when facing a diagnosis of a terminal condition.”

A number of RCN reps have already driven sign-up to the charter in the East Midlands, West Midlands and North West regions. A wide range of public organisations and private companies have signed the charter, giving extra protection to well over 800,000 employees.

To date, no-one in Michael's trust has needed the security that the charter offers. Even so, he encourages other activists to find out more about the campaign.

“They need to read up about it,” he says. “They need to talk to their union colleagues and get their organisations to support it as soon as they can.

“You don't know who's going to need it – or when.”

Read more about the aims of the *Dying to Work* campaign at dyingtowork.co.uk where you can also learn about the charter and five simple steps to take to encourage sign-up by your organisation.



NOTICEBOARD

Vote in your region



LEAD GOVERN INSPIRE

A number of vacancies on the Eastern, East Midlands, South West and Yorkshire & the Humber boards remain after the 2018 board elections.

Each regional board has varying requirements and constraints, linked to the current composition of that board. For example, in the South West, there's one vacancy for a four-year term of office and two vacancies for two-year terms of office. As there are three candidates standing and three vacancies, all of the candidates will be elected to the South West board. The election the candidates are contesting is to determine terms of office.

In the Eastern region, there are three vacancies for four-year terms of office and one vacancy for a two-year term of office. As there are two candidates and four vacancies on the Eastern Board, Evaline Omondi and Sarah Seeley have been elected unopposed for terms of office to 31 December 2022.

Find out more about the election procedure and the candidates in your region at rcn.org.uk/boardelections

Voting closes on Monday 25 March.

Gloving it

Glove Awareness Week is coming, and activists have a vital role to play in raising awareness of skin health and appropriate glove use. The week runs from 29 April to 3 May and precedes World Hand Hygiene Day on 5 May.

Hand dermatitis is an occupational hazard for nursing staff. It can be painful and debilitating and may require the nurse to move out of clinical areas because of the risk of infection. It can be caused by inappropriate glove use. RCN resources to help promote proper glove use are available online at tinyurl.com/rcn-glove

They include leaflets and posters as well as guidance for health care staff on glove use and preventing hand dermatitis.



Reps can also use the RCN Portal for Online Design to create RCN-branded posters for their workplace. Log into the RCN reps hub and find the "Resources to promote the RCN" link in the section "Quick links for resources".

Practice-based learning resources

New resources on practice-based learning are available on the RCN website.

Revised education standards introduced by the Nursing and Midwifery Council last year mean changes to practice-based learning, including the replacement of mentors and sign-off mentors by practice supervisors, practice assessors and academic assessors. The dedicated webpages on the RCN website help clarify roles and responsibilities, and offer links to relevant resources.

Jean Christensen, RCN Professional Lead for Education, said: "Active members have an important role to play in raising awareness of the new standards, particularly learning reps and student information officers. Reps are crucial to producing a good practice learning environment by increasing understanding of the new standards and their implications."

Access the practice-based learning resources at rcn.org.uk/practice-based-learning

Tools of the trade



The Government has published a framework to help employers record and voluntarily report information on disability, mental health and wellbeing in the workplace. It invites organisations to provide data on the percentage of staff who consider themselves to be disabled or have a long-term physical or mental health condition: tinyurl.com/dwp-framework

The arbitration service ACAS says mental ill health costs employers in the UK £30 billion every year through lost productivity, recruitment and absence. For more information, a link to

new ACAS guidance and details of further support see tinyurl.com/acas-mh

A cross-government suicide prevention plan focuses on how social media and new technology can identify those at risk of suicide. It also addresses the increase in suicide and self-harm among young people: tinyurl.com/prevention-plan

NHS Employers has produced a new guide that provides an overview of the nursing associate role: tinyurl.com/yxeuzvnt