

The Professional Nursing Committee (PNC) works to provide oversight and governance to the professional work of the RCN. We do so through a work plan that addresses our Royal Charter objects to ‘*promote the science and art of nursing and education and training in the profession of nursing*’ whilst promoting ‘*the advance of nursing as a profession in all or any of its branches*’ (and the) ‘*professional standing and interests of members*’. This brief report reviews progress across our planned work programme for 2024.

Summary of 2024 PNC Work Programme

Workstream	KPI
Education, learning & development	Complete programme for bringing the ELD Strategy into the underpinning structure of the Institute
Research Strategy	Publication of RCN Research Strategy to underpin the Institute
Staffing for Safe & Effective Care	Harness 4 country, political and across sector support for the RCNs position that ratios save lives.
	Review and reissue Nursing Workforce Standards.
Professional Framework	An overarching UK Professional Framework for Nursing is co-created and published.
Regulatory Reform	The RCN position is developed in preparation for NMC regulatory reform
	Lobbying to protect the title ‘nurse’ in law in the UK
Forums and Networks	Recommendations within the Forums and Networks review are implemented.
Congress items where PNC provide Governance Lead	Items from 2023 and 2024 Congress

Education Learning and Development

The final phase of the ELD Strategy (development of a centre of excellence) has become a key element of the Institute of Nursing Excellence. Education is part of the underpinning structure of the Institute, led by Professor David Clarke, Associate Director for Education.

Professor Jane Ball, the Director of the Institute, has joined several of our meetings since she joined the college, to ensure that we are sighted on the development of the Institute. She has introduced PNC to the Associate Directors of the Academy as they have come into post, and we have heard their priorities and proposed work plans.

Research and evidence are fundamental to the ethos of the Institute. The RCN Research Strategy was signed off in 2024, and is currently being reviewed by Professor Ball, and Research Professional Lead Ada Hui prior to publication, to ensure alignment with the wider Institute plans.

Staffing for Safe and Effective Care

The 'Staffing for Safe and Effective Care' programme remains the Committee's highest priority in our policy work and is of particular importance given the unsustainable pressures our members are facing in all sectors of health and care, and the risks to both patient safety, and staff safety and wellbeing. The work to advocate and lobby for the sustainable expansion of the nursing workforce, for demand led workforce planning, and for accountability for that workforce to be enshrined in legislation continues across all four countries of the United Kingdom.

One of the main elements of this work is the establishment of 'safety critical red lines' below which staffing levels should never fall. This has led to a focus on the need for a minimum ratio of patients cared for by a registered nurse. Following the international Safe Staffing summit at the end of 2023, which brought together national and international experts to present the evidence behind the case for ratios, further events were held in the first half of 2024 to harness four country, cross sector and political support for this position. It was one of the key priorities in our General Election Manifesto. Find out more on the RCN ['Safety critical nurse-to-patient ratios' page](#).

The RCN Nursing Workforce Standards continue to gain traction across many different health care settings, and as they were first published in 2021, they have been reviewed in 2024. The aim of this review was to update and strengthen the Standards, to promote their use, and to look for opportunities to gain further endorsement. There has been significant engagement in the review from a range of members, committees and entities, and staff members and teams from across the RCN, and all 4 countries. The process is almost complete, and we hope to publish the updated Workforce Standards ahead of Congress 2025.

The final workstream within the Staffing for Safe and Effective Care programme of work has been the focus on ending Corridor Care, which built momentum from the time of Congress onwards, with the publication of a first report, and declaration of a 'state of emergency' by Professor Nicola Ranger. At the end of December members were asked to respond to a short survey about their experience of providing care in the wrong setting. Thousands responded, confirming 'corridor care' is widespread across the UK. [The report of this survey](#) in January of this year, which included the unedited voice of members, was a further opportunity to raise and challenge this situation.

Professional Framework

Work is progressing well across our workstream to develop an overarching UK-wide Professional Framework for Nursing. 2024 saw the culmination of the workstream on [levels of nursing practice](#), with publication of the new definitions and standards for enhanced and consultant level nursing practice, and the revised definition and standards of advanced level practice. 2024 also saw the start of a new workstream, collaborating with the Nursing Support Worker Committee, to bring the same consistency of approach to define and set standards for supportive and assistive nursing roles. This will include assistant practitioners and registered nursing associates. The workstream on career frameworks is almost complete. The intention is for the three workstreams which together make up the Professional Framework will come together in a suite of new digital resources on the website in 2025.

Regulatory Reform

The change of government, and legislative timetable, along with events at the NMC meant that the expected timescale for regulatory reform for nursing did not materialise. The timeline for when each professional regulator will be looked at has been pushed back and is currently unclear. This has impacted on several workstreams within this broad heading, including anticipated regulation of Advanced Practice, and lobbying to protect the title 'nurse' in law. We are working with members of the 'Protect Nurse' campaign team to look at alternative mechanisms for achieving this outcome, which was included as one of the RCN Manifesto Priorities.

Forums and Networks Review

The professional forums make an important contribution to the professional work of the RCN. PNC remains committed to the recommendations of the Forums and Networks Review and monitors their implementation. The majority of actions are now complete, including a new process to establish and disestablish forums, a process that has been asked for by RCN members for a number of years. An internal audit of the review was undertaken towards the end of 2024, and we anticipate receiving the report early in 2025. The Chairs of the Forum Governance Group, and the Forum Chairs Committee meet with PNC on a twice-yearly basis to provide updates from the forums and raise any issues for discussion.

Collaborative Working

The strength of the RCN is in its twin functions, as professional body and Royal College, and special Trade Union. As one of the two principal committees of the RCN, accountable to our governing Council, we work closely with colleagues on the Trade Union Committee and the two committees meet together twice a year to progress areas of joint working. The Chair of the Trade Union Committee and I both attend Council, to ensure that Council are updated on our work, and so that we can contribute to their deliberations and decision making.

PNC remains inextricably linked to other governance committees within the College to ensure a 'joined up' approach to our work. The committee is represented on the committee which is overseeing the changes in governance and in culture arising from recent external reviews, and on the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

We have begun to explore further opportunities for collaborative working with both the Students Committee, and the Nursing Support Worker Committee, to address the key professional issues that affect these key constituencies within the RCN membership.

Each year, following RCN Congress, the Council allocates items from the agenda to either PNC or TUC for governance oversight of the work to be undertaken in relation to Resolutions passed, or Matters for Discussion where it is agreed that work should be done. Members of the two committees then take responsibility for each individual item, working with the staff lead, the proposer and seconder of the item, and other key stakeholders. These items become a part of our workstream for the year, so in 2024 we

were working on some items from 2023 Congress, and some from 2024. Many of the 2024 Congress items will remain part of our work programme in 2025.

Report on selected items from 2023 Congress – the full report on all items available: <https://www.rcn.org.uk/Professional-Development/publications/councils-report-to-members-on-congress-2023>

Item	PNC Lead	Outputs
Corridor Care – Resolution That this meeting of Congress asks Council to lobby the government to completely abolish corridor care and ensure that the respect and dignity of patients is upheld.	Aquiline Chivinge	Corridor care Royal College of Nursing
Incident Reporting – mfd That this meeting of RCN Congress asks RCN Council to explore the culture around incident reporting and the impact on members	Alison Patterson	RCN Position on Incident Reporting Royal College of Nursing
Nursing Associates – mfd That this session of RCN Congress discusses the impact of and direction of the Registered Nursing Associate role.	Rachel Hollis	New/updated position statements: RCN position statement on the role and scope of practice of the Nursing Associate Royal College of Nursing RCN position on registered nurses and nursing associates working in maternity services across the UK Royal College of Nursing
Nursing Support Workers- mfd That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses the availability of courses and resources for Nursing Support Workers	Tracie Culpitt	Update of resources: Nursing Support Workers Professional Development Royal College of Nursing
Suicide Prevention and Awareness – resolution That this meeting of Congress calls on Council to lobby for the implementation of an evidence based, integrated suicide prevention programme for the nursing workforce across the UK	Tim Grace & Ray McMorro	Report published 2024 Understanding the factors underpinning suicidal ideation amongst the UK nursing workforce from 2022 to 2024 Publications Royal College of Nursing
Healthcare Provision for Autistic People: That this meeting of Congress urges RCN Council to lobby health care providers and commissioners to mandate appropriate and sufficient provision to avoid inappropriate placement for autistic people	Mary Codling	RCN position on the health inequalities autistic people face in accessing health and social care services and the potential role of the nursing workforce in addressing these Royal College of Nursing

2024 Congress Items Allocated to PNC

Item	Title	PNC Lead	Output
1	That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses how the RCN's Definition of Nursing can be utilised to demonstrate the value of nursing.	Alison Paterson	Ongoing work – Professional Framework
11	That this meeting of RCN Congress supports the principles of assisted dying.	Colin Baker	Work continues across the four countries and the crown dependencies to monitor the progress of legislation and ensure that the RCN is consulted alongside the BMA.
13	That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses whether the title registered nurse in learning disabilities remains appropriate for contemporary practice.	Mary Codling & Ray McMorrow	An RCN Learning Disability Nursing Workforce Summit was held in November 2024 to bring together key stakeholders and support development of a UK wide strategy for LD nursing.
16	That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses what safeguards are required to protect against nurse substitution across all settings.	Alison Paterson	
17	That this meeting of RCN Congress asks Council to demand governments undertake work that improves patient flow, care and safety in all settings	Ray McMorrow & Aquiline Chivinge	
18	That this meeting of RCN Congress requests that RCN Council support the calls for the decriminalisation of abortion across the UK.	Martha Gill	Position Statement published: RCN position on decriminalisation of abortion in England, Wales and Scotland Royal College of Nursing
E28	That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses the impact of cost improvement programmes on newly qualified nurse recruitment	Martha Gill & Alisha Brown	
E29	That this meeting of RCN Congress calls on RCN Council to lobby governments to ensure we have a nursing educator workforce for the future which will protect and invest in the degree route into nursing	Oladunni Akinbulumo	The RCN hosted listening events with members, and a roundtable event with external organisations to discuss the challenges facing the nursing educator workforce.