

Professional Nursing Committee Report to Members – March 2024

1. This report reflects work done by the Professional Nursing Committee since our last report and an update from our meeting on 19 March 2024.
2. We also had the pleasure of meeting with the Trade Union Committee on 20 March 2024 for our second joint meeting of the year.
3. Our joint session with the TUC provided the opportunity for discussion on topics of shared concern, notably our work on safe staffing and the consultation on a separate pay spine for nursing. This consultation generated an impressive level of response from RCN members and we discussed the draft of the RCN position which recognised that nursing staff working for the NHS are currently not well served by Agenda for Change.
4. Whilst we recognised that a separate pay spine for nursing could bring significant benefits to the profession, there was also some caution with regards to potential risks to terms and conditions and other benefits of AfC. The RCN has now submitted its formal [consultation response](#) which has been published online.
5. We also received an update at our joint meeting on development of the RCN Institute of Excellence and the progress to date on establishing the five academies which will sit underneath the Institute umbrella.
6. Following discussion at PNC the day before, we discussed with our TUC colleagues the RCN position statement on Nursing Associates in light of increased evidence of the substitution of Registered Nurses by registered Nursing Associates and continued concerns with regards to inappropriate role expansion. We recognised that this was an area where there were some key questions with regards to employment issues as well as professional concerns. We agreed that there is a need to strengthen our current position, and this is now going through the process of redrafting following insightful input from both committees.
7. The report of our 19 March meeting follows.

Chief Nurse's Update

8. Professor Nicola Ranger, Chief Nurse, briefed us on the RCN's current activity. The Committee discussed its increasing concern at the significant drop in applications to nursing degree programmes, alongside high university attrition rates. This led to a discussion on the public understanding of the role of a nurse and perceptions of nursing as a career choice.
9. We were briefed on the headline findings of the RCN's recent employment survey where nearly 90% of respondents cited improved pay as 'what would make the biggest difference' to them. Additionally, the survey showed that among those considering or planning to leave their job, the vast majority are looking for a completely different job outside nursing which we believe is a worrying indication of the level of dissatisfaction among nursing staff.
10. We were pleased to hear that work is in train to celebrate the value of nursing, whilst recognising the poor working conditions being endured by nursing staff.
11. Ahead of discussion on the RCN's position in relation to Nursing Associates at the joint meeting the following day, we also acknowledged the lack of funding available for employers to claim reimbursement for Nursing Associates training to become a Registered Nurse (NA 'top up' programmes).
12. Following a presentation on the draft RCN Research Strategy at our last meeting, we heard that PNC comments had been taken into account in the final version which will now be launched at the [International Nursing Research Conference](#) taking place in September. We look forward to receiving the final strategy for approval shortly.
13. Additionally under this item, we considered [Professor Nicola Ranger's blog](#) on the website reflecting on the issues facing nursing globally and the solutions to meet those challenges in the UK.

Congress 2023 Items

14. We received an update on work arising from Congress 2023 following circulation of the mid-term progress report in February.
15. The final report was presented at RCN Council in April following PNC meeting again with Trade Union Committee colleagues on 9 April to feed in any final comments.

RCN Institute of Excellence

16. Professor Nicola Ranger and Dr Nichola Ashby, Deputy Chief Nurse, shared a detailed update on progress with development of the RCN Institute of Excellence and set out the agreed remit of each of the five academies beneath the Institute umbrella. We were also briefed on the Institute business case objectives for 2024.
17. We heard that an announcement was imminent on the successful applicant for Director of the Institute and received an update on recruitment of the Associate Director posts for each of the academies. We were delighted at the subsequent announcement of the appointment of [Professor Jane Ball FRCN](#) to the post of Director.

Committee Work Programme

18. Following a discussion on the role of PNC in relation to the Institute, we discussed how to align the PNC work programme to the development of matrix working across the College and Institute. We recognised that much of the work overseen by PNC was woven into plans for the Institute to strengthen the RCN as the 'voice of nursing'.
19. We identified our key workstreams in 2024 as inputting to the consultation on a separate pay spine for nursing, continuing development of the Professional Framework, and Staffing for Safe and Effective Care (to include work on Nursing Associates and substitution). The Committee also has a governance role in overseeing the professional elements of the RCN Institute.
20. We also received a report on the outputs of the workshop that RCN Council had taken part in in January 2024 looking at risk appetite (the mechanism for balancing risk and return) and noted the current iteration of the PNC risk register.

Learning Disability Nursing

21. We were joined by Jonathan Beebee, Professional Lead for Learning Disabilities, to discuss concerns about the declining number of Registered Nurses in Learning Disabilities (RNLD) and student learning disability nurses. We discussed the suggestion that a clear UK-wide strategy for learning disability nursing was needed to attract, train, and retain RNLDs given the shift in support for people with learning disabilities over the last 40 years.
22. We spent some time considering the data on the reduction of numbers of learning disability nurses, and shared examples of the complexity of the role and how it had changed over time. We supported plans for a national summit on learning disability

nursing, to be convened by the RCN, and look forward to a discussion on the Congress agenda in June 'redefining learning disability nursing'.

RCN Forums

23. We were delighted to be joined by both Bridie Kent, Chair of the Forums Governance Group, and Paul McAleer, Chair of the Forum Chairs Committee, to receive comprehensive updates on the work of both of those groups.
24. Together, Bridie and Paul highlighted the huge amount of work the forums have achieved over the last year and the vital contribution they continue to make to the professional voice of the RCN.
25. We were also updated on planned changes to the governance rules currently affecting the effective functioning of the forums which were subsequently agreed by Council in April, to encourage and support member engagement and involvement. The forums will be promoted at Congress and a third World Café event is planned to continue to raise the profile of the forums and promote member engagement in their work.

UK Staffing for Safe and Effective Care (SSEC)

26. Safe staffing remains our most critical workstream. Building on the outcomes from the [international safe staffing summit](#) in December we looked ahead to the second summit which took place the following week. This summit brought together nurses with operational responsibilities for the nursing workforce to hear from some of the same experts in the field. It was an excellent day which continued the work towards gaining the support of the profession in the development of our position of establishing safety-critical registered nurse:patient ratios across health and social care.
27. At the request of PNC (and others) most of the keynote talks from the December meeting are now available in full [on the RCN website](#). Former PNC member Professor Alison Leary's recent William Rathbone lecture was also shown at the summit and received extremely positive feedback. Alison's lecture is available [on the QNI website](#).
28. Additionally, under this item, Professor Nicola Ranger reported back on her attendance at the International Workforce Forum in Stockholm in February which was jointly hosted by the Joint Virtual Swedish Nurse Organisation (JSNO) and the International Council of Nurses (ICN). At this event, she had had the opportunity to join senior nursing colleagues from around the world to discuss the issues facing the nursing profession globally. As well as being a

delegate, Nicola was there to present on safe staffing, highlighting the critical situation in the UK and the urgent need for action to ensure a maximum number of patients per registered nurse for the benefit of patient safety.

29. We also received an update on corridor care and the work in train to address the increased normalisation of this in all its many manifestations. We discussed plans for the listening events taking place on 20 and 27 March for RCN members and wider nursing staff to tell the College about their experience of current working conditions across the UK, in every health and social care setting.

Substitution

30. We had an initial discussion on the RCN position on Nursing Associates ahead of a more in-depth discussion at the joint PNC/TUC meeting the following day.
31. We noted that the Queen's Nursing Institute (QNI) had also now published its position statement on '[the safe and effective deployment of Nursing Associates in community nursing settings](#)' and considered the current position with regard to NAs in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland as well as the NMC's current stance with regard to regulation of the role. We are clear that the NA should not be seen as a substitute for the Registered Nurse.
32. Additionally, PNC discussed the RCN position in relation to Medical Associate Professionals and the apparent inclusion of some Registered Nurses (such as surgical care practitioners) in commentary relating to these roles. We further discussed this at our committee workshop the following day. During our two days of meetings a further position statement was drafted, discussed, and reviewed [and has now been published](#).

RCN Foundation Update

33. Finally, we welcomed Deepa Korea, Director of the RCN Foundation, and Sarah McGloin, Head of Grants and Impact, to our meeting to give us a presentation on the RCN Foundation Strategy 2024-28 including how this was developed, an overview of the Foundation's purpose and values and its strategic aims.

Next Meeting

34. The next formal PNC meeting takes place via Teams on 15 May 2024.

Committee Membership 2024

Rachel Hollis (Yorkshire and the Humber – CHAIR)
Colin Baker (South West – VICE CHAIR)
Oladunni Akinbulumo (North West)
Alisha Brown (Student)
Aquiline Chivinge (East Midlands)
Mary Codling (South East)
Tracie Culpitt (Nursing Support Worker)
Donna Gallagher (Northern Ireland)
Martha Gill (Scotland)
Tim Grace (Northern)
Sonia Henry (London)
Raymond McMorrow (West Midlands)
Carolyn Middleton (Wales)
Alison Paterson (Eastern)

Apologies for the March meeting were received from Carolyn Middleton, Martha Gill and Sonia Henry.

Staff Attendance

Professor Nicola Ranger (Chief Nurse)
Lynn Woolsey (Deputy Chief Nurse)
Dr Nichola Ashby (Deputy Chief Nurse)
Jonathan Beebee (Professional Lead for Learning Disabilities)
John Bryant (Head of Member Communications)
Christine Callender (Head of Nursing Practice)
Caroline Clinker (Governance Adviser)
Deepa Korea (RCN Foundation Director)
Sarah McGloin (Head of Grants and Impact, RCN Foundation)
Maxine Nunn (Performance, Risk and Assurance Manager)
Wendy Preston (Head of Nursing Workforce)

Rachel Hollis

Chair, Professional Nursing Committee

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