

Professional Nursing Committee Report to Members – July 2024

1. This report reflects work done by the Professional Nursing Committee since the last report to Council and an update from our meeting on 16 July 2024.
2. We were delighted to be joined at our meeting by the RCN Institute leadership team including Professor Jane Ball, Director of the Institute, and three of the new academy Associate Directors. We look forward to getting to know them and working together over the coming months. We were pleased to hear that there has been an appointment to the role of Associate Director of the Nursing Workforce Academy and so that team of the Institute is now complete. We look forward to reviewing plans for the Academies.
3. The report of our 16 July meeting follows.

Update from the General Secretary and Chief Executive

4. We were pleased to be joined at the start of our meeting by Professor Nicola Ranger who we congratulated on her appointment as the RCN's permanent General Secretary and Chief Executive. Whilst we are delighted by this appointment, we will miss her as our Chief Nursing Officer, and Executive Lead for PNC. We thanked her for the significant impact she has had on our work, and the College.
5. Nicola gave us some highlights of her early days in her new role, and meetings or contact with key stakeholders, including in the new government, and other Royal Colleges. She updated us on the RCN's post-election priorities and how the College would be engaging with the new government to address key issues such as the normalisation of corridor care.
6. We also discussed the [RCN's response to the independent culture review of the Nursing and Midwifery Council \(NMC\)](#). We welcomed the RCN call for immediate and ongoing action, and supported the approach being taken by Nicola in working with key stakeholders in looking at how the RCN can help to drive the essential improvement with our professional regulator. We recognised the need for this work to ensure that nursing is regulated as a profession in its own right, and not amalgamated with other health care professions.

PNC Risk Register

7. We reviewed our risk register and noted the addition of a third risk around student membership and support which covers the risk in the delivery and development of the Students Committee, ambassadors and student membership of the college.
8. We remain concerned about the decline in student nurse numbers and, with reduced applications reported again by UCAS, with the consequential impact on universities. We know that many universities are offering educators voluntary redundancy (and indeed making some redundant) despite the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan committing to doubling student numbers by 2030. We plan to work more closely with the Chair and members of the Students Committee to address these issues. We were assured that following submission of an emergency item to Congress on this topic, the Chair of the Education Forum would be involved in work being undertaken with regards to the education workforce.

Chair and Vice Chair's Update

9. For the first time, the whole of PNC was able to attend Congress this year. It was great for us all to be able to hear the debates and take part in events on the learning and wellbeing programme. We were able to cover almost all sessions relevant to the work of PNC. Later in our meeting we shared our reflections on Congress and discussed any learning for 2025.
10. Colin Baker, Vice Chair, provided feedback following his attendance as part of the RCN delegation at the [European Federation of Public Service Unions \(EPSU\) 11th Congress](#) which took place in Bucharest, Romania in June.

Deputy Chief Nursing Officer's Update

11. We were updated on the current key priorities of Lynn Woolsey and Nichola Ashby, our Deputy Chief Nurses.
12. This included an update on development of the RCN Institute of Nursing Excellence and on implementation of the recommendations arising from the Forums and Networks Review which is nearing completion.
13. The slow progress on the implementation of the review is one of the longest standing items on our risk register and we were pleased to see an improving picture with regards to the professional forums. We recognise that there is still a lot of work to do in relation to networks.

14. One of the recommendations which I have been lobbied on many times is the lack of a clear process for establishing and disestablishing forums. PNC reviewed and agreed the new process, which was subsequently approved at the July Council meeting.
15. We received an update on issues relating to students including the review into nursing and midwifery students' practice learning requirements across the UK announced by the NMC in January, and discussed reports we are hearing of a lack of NHS vacancies for newly registered nurses.
16. As noted above, we will be working more closely with the Students Committee in the coming weeks and months to address issues relating to nursing education. We had planned to meet in a joint workshop with the Students Committee the day after our meeting, to discuss some of these issues. Unfortunately, it was a difficult time of the year for our student colleagues, and so this has been delayed until the new year.
17. We noted that the RCN would be responding to the NHS Job Evaluation Group consultation on proposed revisions to the job evaluation matching profile for nursing and midwifery bands 4,5 and 6.

Reflections on Congress

18. We reflected on the success of Congress 2024 and scheduled an additional meeting in August to agree Committee leads for each of the items RCN Council has allocated to PNC.
19. As reported above, PNC members attended many of the learning and wellbeing events to hear further from members with regards to several of our key workstreams and I very much enjoyed chairing the Mona Grey lecture and listening to Professor Jane Ball's presentation on the role of research evidence and ratios.

Public Affairs Team Update

20. We welcomed Liam Beattie from the Public Affairs Team to give us a post-general election update on the results across the UK, the new parliamentary make up and the latest happenings in Westminster.
21. He set out the key dates over the coming weeks, including the King's Speech, and highlighted the key actions for the RCN and how the RCN will seek to influence the new government.

Assisted Dying Update

22. Following the debate at Congress, we were joined by the Chair of the Pain and Palliative Care Forum to discuss the current position across the UK with regards to assisted dying.
23. We discussed the challenges of the work underway with regards to assisted dying which we all recognise as a complex position across the different jurisdictions of the UK and the Crown dependencies, with legislation or consultation at different stages. We also recognise the sensitivity of different views across our membership, as highlighted in the Congress debate this year and the concerns which this raised.
24. We noted that the UK-wide steering group which aims to influence policy and legislation as it develops and review the RCN's existing guidance for members had met the previous week. We acknowledged that the RCN is not currently proposing to move away from its neutral position on assisted dying.

Position Statement on the Role and Scope of Practice of the Nursing Associate

25. Following much discussion previously at PNC, we reviewed an updated version of the RCN's position statement on the role and scope of practice of the Nursing Associate. This has been strengthened and the RCN's position made clearer amid continued concerns with regards to inappropriate role expansion.
26. Subject to minor amendment, we approved the position statement, which was subsequently approved by RCN Council with further minor edits.

Position Statement on Nurses and Registered Nursing Associates in Maternity Care

27. We also agreed, subject to a few amendments, the RCN's position statement on nurses and registered Nursing Associates in maternity care.
28. PNC previously agreed to the development of this position statement in recognition of the fact that the roles of registered nurses and Nursing Associates in maternity care are unclear with the role of registered nurses in postnatal wards often becoming blurred with that of the midwife. The position statement is intended to clarify the opportunities and limitations of both roles in maternity services, drawing on scope of practice.

29. This position statement has now been formally reported to Council and published on the RCN website [here](#).

Position Statement on Healthcare Provision for Autistic People

30. We discussed a draft position statement on healthcare provision for autistic people and had a number of comments on this. We have asked that work be carried out to further develop the statement and expect it to come back to PNC for approval in September.

UK Staffing for Safe and Effective Care (SSEC)

31. The three key workstreams of the safe staffing programme, which sit within the Nursing Workforce Academy, are ratios, ending corridor care and the Nursing Workforce Standards. We received a detailed update from Lynn Woolsey, Deputy Chief Nurse, on progress with regards to each workstream and discussed next steps. The implementation of the RCN Institute will be instrumental in driving this work forward.
32. I continue to co-chair the SSEC UK Ratios Steering Group.
33. We noted that work to review and update the Nursing Workforce Standards has started and will pick up momentum after the 2 August when there will be a celebration of the Workforce Standards Champions.

Next Meeting

34. The next formal PNC meeting takes place via MS Teams on 17 September 2024.
35. We have also scheduled a special meeting to take place on 14 August to agree the Committee leads for the Congress items allocated to PNC.

Rachel Hollis FRCN
Chair, Professional Nursing Committee

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 July meeting were received from Alisha Brown and Mary Codling.

Staff Attendance

Professor Nicola Ranger (Chief Nurse)
Lynn Woolsey (Deputy Chief Nurse)
Dr Nichola Ashby (Deputy Chief Nurse)
Antonia Borneo (Associate Director of Policy & Public Affairs, UK & International)
John Bryant (Head of Member Communications)
Christine Callender (Head of Nursing Practice)
Caroline Clinker (Governance Adviser)
Patricia Hughes (Associate Director: Nursing Practice)
Emily McWhirter (Associate Director: Leadership)
Maxine Nunn (Performance, Risk and Assurance Manager)
Wendy Preston (Head of Nursing Workforce)
Jonathan Whale (Personal Assistant to the Deputy Chief Nurse)
Marcus Wooton (Associate Director: International)
Natalie Zara (Executive Director of Governance)

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