

Professional Nursing Committee Report to Members – November 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 19 November 2024.
2. We were delighted to be joined at our meeting by Lucy Muchina, acting Deputy Chief Nursing Officer, who took some time to introduce herself and speak about her priorities in her new role.
3. Since our last meeting where Patricia Marquis, Executive Director of RCN England, briefed PNC on the strategic review of Congress we have submitted our collective response to the survey and look forward to hearing next steps ahead of proposals on the future of Congress being presented to RCN Council in Spring 2025.
4. Following our sign off of the [RCN position statement on healthcare provision for autistic people](#), this was published on our website on 4 November.
5. The report of our November meeting follows below.

Chair and Vice Chair's Update

6. Colin Baker and I updated PNC on our recent activity as Chair and Vice Chair including attendance at the Governance and Culture Reviews Joint Partnership Board. Colin provided an update on implementation of the recommendations arising from the reviews and we were pleased to note that 60% of the deliverables have already been completed.
7. We emphasised the importance of making this work more visible to Council and Committee members as well as the wider membership as there is a perception that little has been achieved. We think it is particularly important to promote this work to the new members of Council taking up post in January 2025.

Acting Chief Nursing Officer's Update

8. The Committee received an update on the activities and current key priorities of Lynn Woolsey, acting Chief Nursing Officer.

9. We heard that Dr Kate Kirk has now taken up post as the Associate Director: Workforce Academy thus completing the senior leadership team for the RCN Institute of Nursing Excellence. We are very much looking forward to meeting her at our next meeting in February.
10. We discussed developments at the NMC since publication of the independent culture review and shared concerns at the slow progress of improvement work in response to that review. Lynn briefed us on her participation in the oversight group established by the Professional Standards Authority to monitor the changes being implemented and assured us that the RCN will seek an early meeting with Paul Rees MBE when he takes up post as the NMC's interim Chief Executive & Registrar on 20 January. Later in our meeting we were joined by Sam Foster, Executive Nurse Director of Professional Practice at the NMC.
11. We were briefed on the current situation in relation to pre-registration nursing which continues to worsen with a number of nurse educators leaving the profession and the number of people studying to become nurses falling dramatically in every region in England. We returned to this later on our agenda with an update on RCN activity in response to this situation.
12. We noted that the UK government has launched a consultation for people to share their experiences of the health service and that the responses received will help to shape the government's 10-year health plan set to be published in Spring 2025. We have been encouraging our members to share their expert views to put nursing at the heart of the plan.
13. We heard that the Executive Team will be working with the new members of RCN Council to review progress against the RCN's 5-year strategy given that 2025 marks the halfway point. We agree that it feels like a good time to take stock.
14. We noted that following recommendations made by the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council two years ago, the [RCN is urging the UK government to take action and recognise COVID complications as occupational](#).
15. We also noted that on 5 November, Rose Gallagher MBE, the RCN's professional lead on infection prevention and control during the pandemic, appeared as a [witness in module 3 of the COVID-19 Inquiry](#) to answer questions on her previously submitted witness statement. As a core participant of the Inquiry, on 21 November the RCN also had the opportunity to question [Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care during the pandemic](#).

16. We heard that [recently released RCN analysis](#) shows that the number of UK-educated nursing staff leaving the NMC register within the first 10 years of joining has increased by 43%, including a 67% rise in those leaving within the first 5 years.
17. The RCN has responded in the media to Wes Streeting's plan to publish a league table of the best and worst performing hospitals in England and sack persistently failing managers. We agree that this is not the solution and that tables and rankings without addressing root causes could undermine public confidence.
18. We noted that a number of events would be taking place in the weeks after our meeting including the Learning Disability Nursing Workforce Summit on 22 November and the Nursing Support Workers conference to celebrate Nursing Support Workers Day on 23 November. PNC was represented at both of these events.
19. Additionally, RCN Wales celebrated its 11th [RCN Wales Nurse of the Year Awards](#) in Cardiff on 21 November.
20. We noted that since the General Election progress in relation to regulatory reform has been slow. The timeline for when each professional regulator will be looked at has been pushed back and is currently unclear.
21. This has also had an impact on the campaign to protect the title 'nurse' in law and it was acknowledged that this is not being seen as a priority by the new government, but the RCN is working with members of the 'Protect Nurse' campaign team to look at alternative mechanisms for achieving this outcome. Alison Paterson continues as the PNC member lead for this work.
22. Finally under this item, PNC was briefed on the RCN's decision to stop actively posting on X (formerly Twitter). We discussed the implications for elected members who hold personal accounts on X.

UK Staffing for Safe and Effective Care (SSEC)

23. As reported previously, the three key workstreams of the safe staffing programme, which sit within the Nursing Workforce Academy, are the introduction of Registered Nurse: patient ratios, ending 'corridor' care and the revision of the Nursing Workforce Standards. Work continues to streamline the RCN's work under this programme.
24. The Committee noted that I had chaired the meeting of the SSEC UK Ratios Steering Group that had taken place the previous week. Since that meeting a short pause in the work has been agreed to enable the new Associate Director of the Nursing Workforce Academy to review the workplan and timeline for the work. More detail will be brought to PNC in February, with a subsequent update to Council.

25. In relation to corridor care, work continues to influence change and lobby for mandatory reporting of patients receiving care in inappropriate settings. We noted that a timeline for the England-focused work was shared with the acting Chief Nursing Officer for review on the morning of our meeting.
26. We heard that a joint partnership approach is being taken to the three-year review of the Nursing Workforce Standards. We discussed this in more detail at our workshop on 16 January.

Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC)

27. We were pleased to be joined by Sam Foster, Executive Nurse Director of Professional Practice at the NMC, to discuss the recent independent culture review and the steps taken by the NMC to date to address the failings identified.
28. Sam shared a comprehensive presentation on her work at the NMC where she plays a critical role as the most senior registrant within the organisation. She set out very clearly the challenges and led a wide-ranging discussion on the improvements needed. The Committee recognised that the NMC was in the very early stages of significant change and that there was still a long way to go to establish the 'just and learning culture' required. We confirmed how vital it was for the RCN to work closely with the NMC in order to achieve and gain assurance on the improvement work underway.

RCN Institute of Nursing Excellence: Activism Academy

29. We received a presentation on the newly established Activism Academy and its priorities over the coming months.
30. We discussed plans to get more members engaged in the work of the RCN and heard about development of the RCN's activism strategy which we understand will be shared with RCN Council for sign off shortly.

RCN Employment Standards

31. We received a presentation on the '[RCN Employment Standards for Independent Health and Social Care Sectors](#)' (IHSC) and discussed the importance of ensuring that they align with the Nursing Workforce Standards.
32. While the Employment Standards set out what the RCN expects employers to deliver for their nursing workforce in terms of pay, terms and conditions in the IHSC, the Nursing Workforce Standards explicitly set out what must happen within all workplaces and settings to ensure the delivery of safe and effective patient care.

33. We recognised that the Nursing Workforce Standards had gained a lot of traction since their launch almost 3 years ago and it is important that both sets of standards are not seen in isolation and are very explicitly aligned.

Update on the EDI Strategy

34. We were delighted to meet Patricia Mbasani, Chief People Officer, at our November meeting and receive a presentational update from her on the new RCN Group EDI Strategy.
35. We noted the election of Mehvish Shaffi-Ajibola, External Adviser, as Vice Chair of the [EDI Committee](#) and that an external Chair with demonstrable experience of developing and implementing EDI strategies would shortly be sought.
36. We heard that the EDI team were working to turn the 37 strategic commitments in the EDI Strategy into an implementation plan with clearly assigned accountabilities and a robust governance structure through a programme board. We were pleased to see that work is progressing.

RCN Position Statement on the Decriminalisation of Abortion

37. We agreed at our meeting to recommend to RCN Council approval of the draft [RCN position statement on the decriminalisation of abortion](#). Council has since signed this off and it was published on the website on 3 December.
38. We spent some time discussing the communications and wellbeing plan for the position statement given the controversial nature of abortion. We were keen to ensure no members or staff were left vulnerable.
39. We noted that in addition to the new position statement, the RCN was also due to add its name to a joint statement supporting decriminalisation of abortion, alongside organisations such as the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the Royal College of General Practitioners, the British Medical Association, Unison and others. This was expected to be shared with a limited audience of MPs in early December.

Nursing Higher Education (Supply and Retention)

40. Guided by Charli Hadden, Policy Manager, we discussed the current challenges facing the higher education sector across all four UK countries, but particularly in England.
41. We heard that the RCN had been carrying out some investigative work on the impact on universities and its nurse educator members, the findings of which would shortly be published. We discussed the work to date to gather evidence and develop and test policy and received an overview of the RCN's key policy recommendations ahead of publication of the report.

42. We recognised the importance of widening access to nursing and supporting those who wish to join the profession but ordinarily would be unable to, perhaps due to poor exam grades. Additionally, we highlighted that there are Nursing Support Workers being prevented from following the Registered Nurse pathway due to the lack of funding available for employers to claim reimbursement for Nursing Associates training to become a Registered Nurse (NA 'top up' programmes).

RCN Forums

43. On the recommendation of the Forums Governance Group, PNC agreed to the disestablishment of the ENT-Maxillofacial Forum which had been struggling to recruit members to its steering committee for a number of years and had been inquorate since 2020.
44. Under this item, the Committee also agreed new terms of reference for Forum Steering Committees on the recommendation of the Forums Governance Group.
45. The key changes include moving the terms of reference into the RCN's new standard format and making clear the route by which Forum Steering Committees should obtain clinical expert advice and expertise on particular topics without the need to formally establish sub-groups.

PNC Risk Register

46. A regular item on our agenda is to review the PNC risk register. At this meeting we noted an update on our two existing risks around the Forums and Networks Review and influencing political decisions. We also noted an update on delivery of the RCN Institute which sits on the RCN Group register.
47. An internal audit has just completed to review implementation of the recommendations arising from the Forums and Networks Review. We are receiving a presentation on the findings of that audit at our next meeting in February.

Congress 2024 Agenda Items - First Report

48. We received the mid-term progress report on the 25 resolutions and matters for discussion arising from Congress 2024.
49. The majority of Committee members confirmed they were in contact with the staff leads for their items and had been involved in the work to date.
50. We look forward to receiving the final report on work arising from Congress 2024 in April.

Any Other Business

Professional Framework

51. We noted a possible delay to amendments to the new digital build 'This is Nursing' planned on the RCN website to bring together the different elements of the Professional Framework and are being kept updated on progress through Alison Paterson, PNC lead for the programme.

Nursing Support Worker Award

52. We noted an update on the proposal to introduce an NSW award as part of the suite of awards at Congress. This was not approved by RCN Council as it was recognised that with the exception of Fellowship, NSWs were already eligible for all of the other awards presented.
53. We are pleased that the Executive Team has committed to look at the possibility of introducing an England award as there is already an NSW award in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland given at their Nurse of the Year events.

Next Meeting

54. The next formal PNC meeting takes place via MS Teams on 6 February 2025.
55. Two in-person workshops also took place on 16 January 2025. The first was for the Committee to discuss the review of the Nursing Workforce Standards, the Professional Framework workstream on assistive and supportive roles, and review progress against our 2024 work programme.
56. That afternoon, we held a workshop with the RCN UK Students Committee at which we briefed students on the role of PNC and demonstrated to them where being an active member of the College can take you. We also talked to them about the role of country/ regional Directors and how their offices work and spent some time building relationships between the relevant Students Committee and PNC members of each country/ region.

Rachel Hollis FRCN
Chair, Professional Nursing Committee
rachel.hollis@reps.rcn.org.uk

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 November meeting were received from Oladunni Akinbulumo and Martha Gill.

Staff Attendance

Lynn Woolsey (Acting Chief Nursing Officer)
Lucy Muchina (Acting Deputy Chief Nursing Officer)
Caroline Clinker (Governance Adviser)
John Bryant (Head of Member Communications)
Antonia Borneo (Head of Policy and Public Affairs – UK & International)
Patricia Mbasani (Chief People Officer)
Harry Eccles (Head of Activist Engagement)
Stephanie Thornton (Employment Relations Officer)
Carmel Bagness (Professional Lead for Midwifery and Women's Health)
Charli Hadden (Policy Manager)
Natalie Zara (Executive Director of Governance)
Maxine Nunn (Performance, Risk and Assurance Manager)