

## Professional Nursing Committee Report to Members – May 2024

1. This report reflects work done by the Professional Nursing Committee since the last report and an update from our meeting on 15 May 2024.
2. Since we last met, we have attended RCN Congress at the ICC in Wales. I am delighted that all members of PNC were able to attend to listen to the debates alongside Council and our colleagues on the Trade Union Committee, and we look forward to the deliberations and decisions of Council on workstreams arising from these debates.
3. PNC members further attended many of the Learning and Wellbeing events at Congress to hear further from members with regards to several of our key workstreams.
4. I was delighted to be able to Chair the Mona Grey lecture, where Professor Jane Ball gave an exceptional presentation “making the value of nursing evident – the role of research evidence and ratios”.
5. The report of our 15 May meeting follows.

### Chair’s Update

6. Under this item we noted our approval by email of a request from the Society of Orthopaedic and Trauma Nursing to become the [Trauma and Orthopaedic Nursing Forum](#). This now brings all the forums into alignment as there are no longer any called a society which previously caused confusion as it suggested they were separate to the other forums and not part of the RCN.
7. I updated the Committee on progress with the review of our terms of reference as part of the ongoing review of the RCN Scheme of Delegation. We noted that further discussion will take place after the July meeting of Council.
8. I fed back to the Committee following my attendance at the European Federation of Nurses Associations (EFN) General Assembly in Brussels in April and subsequently wrote a [blog](#) about my experience. We noted that our Vice Chair, Colin Baker, will also shortly be attending the European Public Service Union (EPSU) annual Congress taking place in June in Bucharest, Romania.

9. Additionally, I was delighted to chair the session with the [Secretary of State for Health and Social Care](#) at RCN HQ on 10 April for members to share their views on the current challenges facing the nursing profession.

### **Corridor Care**

10. We welcomed previous Committee member and PNC lead on corridor care, Sally Young, back to our meeting to provide an update on the work taking place to address the increased normalisation of corridor care in all its many forms. Sally has remained involved in this work since her term on the Committee came to an end in December 2023.
11. We noted that this workstream had now been integrated into the Staffing for Safe and Effective Care (SSEC) programme of work and that Sheffield University was commissioned to conduct two rapid reviews – one on nurse and patient experiences of overcrowding, boarding and corridor care, and one on media coverage and impact internationally. Both of these reports were shared and discussed at the meeting.
12. We received feedback from the corridor care roundtable event that took place with a range of stakeholders at RCN HQ on 22 April and were pleased to hear that other organisations were keen to work collaboratively with the RCN to address this.
13. The [RCN's report on corridor care](#) was launched during Congress week and reveals that more than 1 in 3 (37%) nursing staff working in typical hospital settings delivered care in inappropriate settings, such as corridors, on their last shift.

### **Suicide Prevention and Awareness**

14. We received a detailed update on the work of the RCN Suicide Awareness and Prevention Congress Programme to promote and implement an evidence-based, integrated suicide prevention programme for the nursing workforce. This includes enhancing equity in access to opportunities and support for marginalised groups, reducing the stigma surrounding mental health and suicide, and moving organisational and team-level culture towards civility and compassion.
15. We noted that suicide prevention has already been embedded as a core framework in the RCN's psychosocial interventions programme and that the RCN supported the development of suicide prevention guidance and curricula with the NHS (England & Wales).

16. The RCN has commissioned a deep dive into RCN data to explore and understand the factors influencing suicidal thoughts among UK nursing staff and inform development of an action plan, and cross-academy work to equip RNC reps to support the implementation of any relevant guidance. We noted that the RCN will host its second suicide prevention summit at HQ on 11 September 2024, focusing on research, data, and collaboration and anticipate that PNC will be represented at this event.

### **Political Influencing**

17. We added a late item to our agenda to receive a briefing on the work of the public affairs team following the Executive Team and Group Audit Committee decision that the 'influencing political decisions' risk should remain on the PNC risk register and not sit on the Group register. This was great timing, as the announcement of the General Election followed very soon after our meeting.
18. We discussed the key political events happening in the UK in 2024 alongside the current political context across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and the latest public polling findings. We heard more about what would be included in the RCN's now-published [General Election manifesto](#) and how the RCN intends to raise the voice of nursing in the run up to the election, including how members will be asked to participate in what we intend to be a 'nursing election'.

### **Chief Nursing Officer's Update**

19. We were briefed on behalf of Professor Nicola Ranger, Chief Nursing Officer, on the RCN's current activity. This included an update on the position in Jersey, Scotland and the Isle of Man with regards to assisted dying and the anticipated call for this to be legalised across the UK in the coming months. The RCN currently holds a [neutral position](#) on assisted dying following a consultation with members. We looked forward to hearing more from members at Congress on this sensitive and complex issue.
20. We also received an update on the 'Introduction to Clinical Research Programme' funded by NIHR and designed in collaboration with King's College London. This programme is hosted on the [NIHR Learn](#) platform and comprises six online research modules which are in keeping with RCN, national and international strategies to prioritise research knowledge, skills and application to improve patient outcomes. We recognised the importance of this resource and the collaborative work between the Research Forum and RCN staff that has supported its development.

21. The programme is intended for nurses and midwives, with wider relevance to the nursing workforce, to improve awareness, knowledge and skills around research processes, methods and considerations.
22. Under this item we also 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.
23. We also discussed again our concerns regarding the decline in student nurse numbers and consequential impact on universities given that we are now hearing reports that universities are being forced to offer their educators voluntary redundancy despite the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan committing to doubling student numbers by 2030. This was subsequently highlighted at Congress.
24. We recognise the need for significant investment in nursing education over the coming years and will be discussing this further at a joint workshop taking place with the Students Committee on 17 July.

#### **Committee Work Programme 2024**

25. Following discussion at our last meeting on our key workstreams for 2024 we discussed progress to align our work programme to the development of matrix working across the College and Institute.
26. We also discussed progress to date against each of the workstreams not featuring separately on our agenda and reviewed the PNC risk register.

#### **RCN Position on Nursing Associates**

27. Following discussion at the meeting in March and also at the joint Professional Nursing/ Trade Union Committee workshop the following day, it was noted that work was underway to strengthen and make clearer the RCN's position on Nursing Associates amid continued concerns with regards to inappropriate role expansion, particularly in light of recent comments from the NMC with regards to the scope (or parameters) of Nursing Associates beyond the point of registration. We also agreed on the need to update our position on Registered Nurse substitution as discussed below, a review which will be informed by the debate on this topic at Congress in Newport.

## **Nursing Support Workers Education**

28. We were joined by the Professional Lead for Nursing Support Workers, Ofrah Muflahi, to give an update on progress relating to the matter for discussion at Congress 2023 to 'discuss the availability of courses and resources for Nursing Support Workers'.
29. We noted the outcome of the internal review of available resources for Nursing Support Workers and discussed the findings of the excellent secondary research conducted by external organisation, Research by Design, which found a need to increase and improve access to learning opportunities, to improve the quality of learning opportunities and to improve ease of navigation of the learning landscape for Nursing Support Workers.
30. We recognised the need to showcase more prominently how NSWs can progress to become Nursing Associates (NA) and then Registered Nurses (RN) if they so choose and highlighted again our concerns regarding the lack of funding available for employers to claim reimbursement for NAs training to become an RN (NA 'top up' programmes). A call for improved access and funding will form part of our updated position statement on Nursing Associates.

## **RCN Position on Preserving Safety and Preventing Harm - Valuing the Role of the Registered Nurse**

31. We discussed the need to review the RCN's position statement '[preserving safety and preventing harm – valuing the role of the Registered Nurse](#)' which states the position of the Registered Nursing Associate in England is specifically intended to support the role of the RN and should never be used as a substitute for an RN post.
32. While we recognised that the RCN has recently reiterated its position on [RN substitution](#), we agreed that both of these publications needed to be strengthened and made clearer. We also agreed that the title of the position statement should be changed to avoid any confusion.

## **Position Statement on Incident Reporting**

33. We discussed and approved, subject to minor amendment, the RCN position statement on incident reporting to support delivery of safe and effective care.

## **UK Staffing for Safe and Effective Care (SSEC)**

34. Following the international safe staffing summit in December and the second summit that took place in March, we looked forward to the next event taking place on 20 May which provided the 4 country CNOs with the opportunity to present and share their country approaches, developments, and achievements in relation to safe staffing.
35. I co-chaired the first meeting of the SSEC UK Ratios Steering Group on 22 May. This will be one of the three key workstreams of the 'safe staffing' programme, alongside corridor care, and the Nursing Workforce Standards.
36. We went on to discuss the next steps in the review of the Nursing Workforce Standards which are now three years old and noted that it has been agreed that RCN employment standards will be included in the next iteration of the standards to ensure that they are relevant to those working in independent health and social care.

## **Next Meeting**

37. The next formal PNC meeting takes place at RCN HQ on 16 July 2024 and will be followed by a workshop with the Students Committee on 17 July 2024 and attendance at the RCN Annual General Meeting.

**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 May meeting were received from Alisha Brown, Martha Gill, Tim Grace and Carolyn Middleton.

## **Staff Attendance**

Professor Nicola Ranger (Chief Nurse)  
Lynn Woolsey (Deputy Chief Nurse)  
Dr Nichola Ashby (Deputy Chief Nurse)  
Christine Callender (Head of Nursing Practice)  
Caroline Clinker (Governance Adviser)  
Charli Hadden (Policy Manager)  
Stephen Jones (Head of Nursing Practice)  
Ofrah Muflahi (Professional Lead for Nursing Support Workers)  
Maxine Nunn (Performance, Risk and Assurance Manager)  
Wendy Preston (Head of Nursing Workforce)

**Rachel Hollis**  
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