

## **RCN Mental Health Forum - Annual Report 2024**

### **Introduction**

We are the Mental Health forum of the Royal College of Nursing, and as such, our role is to represent mental health nursing and all things mental health within the broader family of the RCN. Co-production is central to everything we do, producing resources for your professional development and campaigning for better policy locally and nationally.

This end-of-year report of the Mental Health Forum demonstrates the various projects and workstreams in which the steering group and colleagues have engaged over the past year. Our work this year shows how we are an environment for forum members to network, share ideas, inform, and influence practice, research and education while lobbying and developing national policy and legislation.

As you will see below, we have again had another busy and productive year and have managed to complete a number of pieces of work with forum colleagues in the RCN.

### **Membership of the forum**

Total number 14215 of which 11102 are first choice members which is an increase on the previous year.

### **Reflections on 2024**

This has been another busy and productive year for the forum, with steering committee members attending a variety of meetings and events to ensure the mental health nursing voice continues to be heard.

In particular colleagues have attended an Anti-Racism summit, Nursing Support Workers conference to show our support for nursing support worker colleagues.

As mentioned in our previous report the work that was initiated by our Lived Experience reference group in collaboration with the RCN Women's Health Forum, Nursing in Justice and Forensic Health and Midwifery forum has now been completed. This resource is titled 'Sexual and Reproductive Health Competency Framework for Caring for Women in prison' and can be found here [Sexual health in prison nursing | Publications | Royal College of Nursing](#)

We also held our first listening exercise with you as our members, and we thank all those who took the time to join us on this occasion. We heard what you had to say, which included comments that there is a need to ensure we host more of these events and ensure that we hear from you as our members, and we will continue to hold these events over the next year or so.

Steering committee members are also currently working with the Nursing Times to create an article focussed on prescribing, which it is hoped will be published in the new year.

In addition, we had another busy RCN congress in 2024, which presented us with an opportunity to not only meet and vote as a steering committee. It was also a great opportunity to meet with existing forum members and talk to them about areas of focus they believe the forum should be looking at going forward.

### **A special welcome**

We are delighted to say that whilst we have seen some movement in the forum steering group which led to vacancies on the forum, we have been successful in recruiting to both these vacancies and so welcome Dan Warrender and Georgie Callard onto the forum.

Our current chair is also stepping down as of the end of December 2024, and so we welcome a new chair and vice chair to the forum. Laura Daukintis will take over as Chair and Zeba Arif is to take up the Vice chair role.

I am sure this will lead us into a new period of growth and development for the forum and for you as members of the forum, so that we can continue to work together to not only improve the experiences of mental health nurses' day today. Also to look at ways in which we as a forum can continue to ensure mental health nurses can continue to grow and develop and provide high quality evidence-based care to patients.

### **RCN Mental Health Forum Global Majority and Ethnic Minority (GEM) Sub committee**

The RCN Mental Health Forum Global Majority and Ethnic Minority (GEM) Sub-Committee, continues to grow, and chaired by Dr Ann Mitchell. The group continues to articulate the diversity and intersectionality of the lived experience of GEM members within the mental health forum and across the four nations that the RCN represents in order to influence the development of nursing practice and policy.

This committee continues to meet virtually every two months. It has facilitated a series of webinar listening events in 2024 to provide a safe space for forum members to join and discuss sensitive matters occurring in practice. The members who attended found these events thought provoking and cathartic. They would like to see more of these webinars in 2025 and keen to support the varied forum committee activities and library events.

## **Congress 2024**

As in previous years we had a positive congress 2024 and due to being able to provide attendance every day of congress, we ensured that mental health was on the agenda each day of congress.

However, we do need your support for congress 2025, as we now will have 12 voting places for congress 2025, and this presents a unique opportunity for you as our forum members to speak as the mental health forum, and use this voice to shape the work of the RCN for the following year.

In previous years we have asked forum members to apply for these places so that we can ensure we are being representative of our membership at congress, and next year will be no exception to that.

However, this year we do expect anyone that is successful and allocated a voting place to take up that place at congress, failure to do so will mean that any such members will not be asked to represent the forum in the future.

## **Future work**

Whilst we have had a busy year this year, we want to ensure that 2025 is even more productive and positive. We already have ideas of areas we will cover as a forum and these are outlined below:

- We are going to submit a funding bid in collaboration with the RCN CYP forum looking at the recommendations of the [NCEPOD - Mental Healthcare in Young People and Young Adults \(2019\)](#) and aligned reports, so we can better understand if this is an area where need is being met. Or if there is lobbying needed from the RCN to understand why such recommendations are not being achieved.
- We are going to work with the new MH CYP Professional Lead to ensure that there is greater collaboration across our forums in meeting the needs of this group of people. As the MH forum we would expect to be closely involved with this work
- Due to increased concerns which we are hearing re the variability of prescribing practice amongst CYP in terms of prescribing, we intend to undertake an FOI across all CAMHS services across the UK to understand this situation better. Also to see what is needed from the RCN to reduce such variability and increase patient outcomes.
- We are also hearing that whilst nurses continue to take in greater levels of responsibility and accountability, in particular as nurse prescribers, we are seeing the remuneration packages for such nurses continue to decrease. We will undertake with yourselves as our members to scope this out and undertake relevant action.
- As part of this work, we will look in particular at the field of addictions, where there are high numbers of nurses who are prescribers and clinical leads, but of

who little is known in terms of pay and conditions, we will do this work in collaboration with IntNSA.

- We are working with the Nurses in Management and Leadership Forum to develop work re developing a safeguarding risk assessment for mental health services.
- We are also in the process of working with CYP, Older People and the Learning Disability forums to host a conference titled - 'when legality doesn't meet reality' – which will focus on key legal issues faced by nurses on a regular basis.

So, it looks as if 2025 will be a very busy year and we look forward to updating you all as this work progresses.

Ellie Gordon  
Chair of the RCN MH forum

Professional Lead – Ben Thomas