

## RCN Forum Annual Report 2024

**Forum Name:** Women's Health

### **Introduction:**

The Women's Health (WH) forum covers a wide range of conditions and complements the work of other forums, enabling plenty of opportunities for collaborative work. We aim to provide women's health nursing expertise to the RCN and help shape national policy. All forum activities align with the RCN strategy, including working across the UK, taking account of the requirements in each of the devolved countries.

### **Membership of the forum**

Total forum number: 5848 an increase of 7.54% in the last 12 months.

Social media engagement has also increased, we had 1,853 X followers (before disengagement) and our Facebook page now has 1380 members of whom 260 have actively engaged with the group during the year.



### **Committee membership – no vacancies**

Ruth Bailey (Chair)

Charlotte Deakin (Vice Chair)

Michael Nevill

Victoria (Tori) Heppell

Esther Kuria

Cyzel Gomes (1 year term covering maternity leave)

Emma Ayling (Maternity leave returned October 2024)

Katharine Christopher (Maternity Leave)

The Forum continues to benefit from the support and expertise of RCN Fellows Debra Holloway and Wendy Norton, who both undertake a significant amount of work on behalf of the forum.

### **Supporting the Forum:**

Carmel Bagness, Professional Lead for Midwifery and Women's Health

Megan King, Project co-ordinator.

### **Reflections on 2024 (Outputs and outcomes)**

The forum met in February 2024 to discuss strategy and agree a workplan. Guided by the strategic aims of the Governments' Women's Health Strategy, we agreed to prioritise health needs of vulnerable women, campaign for the RCN membership to back the call for decriminalisation of abortion care, build on the success of our December 2023 RCN conference and extend our profile through the use of social media, blogs, webinars and collaborations.

The forum has had an incredibly productive and successful year, and the following report outlines the breadth of activities that we have engaged in.

### **Projects Completed in 2024**

Trauma informed Care [Trauma informed care | Clinical topics | Royal College of Nursing](#)  
Women's Health Inclusion and Diversity Digital Pages [Equality diversity and inclusion in women's health | Clinical topic | Royal College of Nursing](#)

Ultrasound Education for Nurses working In Fertility Care [Ultrasound Scanning in Fertility Care | Publications | Royal College of Nursing](#)

Sexual and Reproductive Health Competencies for Nurses and Midwives caring for Women in Prison and launch webinar [Sexual and Reproductive Health Competency Framework for Nurses Caring for Women in Prison | Event | Royal College of Nursing](#)

### **Projects in Progress**

- Increasing the uptake of Cervical screening in disabled women and autistic women. The guidance is currently in press, due for publication at the end of the year.
- Pregnancy Loss Guidance with Midwifery and Fertility Nurses Forum is due to be completed in spring 2025.

### **Webinars and Conferences**



The Women's Health Conference 2023 took place in December and was attended by nearly 100 delegates. The highly successful and well evaluated event had as its theme *Inequalities in Women's Health - seizing the cusp of change* and benefitted from presentations from forum members Emma Ayling, Katharine Christopher, RCN fellow Debby Holloway and RCN President Sheilabye Sobrany.

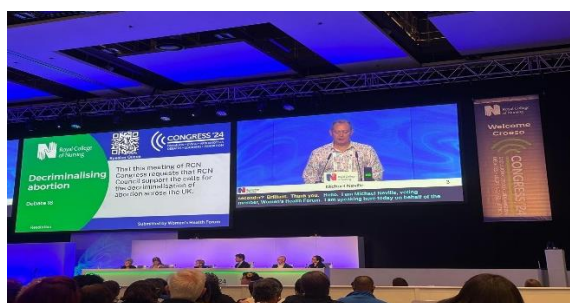
The forum has presented a successful webinar to launch the SRH competency framework for caring for women in prison on collaboration with the Justice and Forensic Nursing forum. This framework was presented at the BASHH conference in 2024.

Vice-Chair Charlotte Glynn presented an update on abortion care at the British Society of Abortion Care Providers conference in October 2024. Debra Holloway and Ruth Bailey contributed to the *Menopause, beyond the foundations conference* in November 2024.

The forum will host its annual conference in December 2024, the programme includes presentations by forum members, a live debate, and an address from Dame Lesley Regan the Women’s Health Ambassador for England.

### Congress 2024

Micheal Nevill successfully presented a Congress resolution calling for the RCN to add its support to the campaign for the decriminalisation of abortion. After robust debate, the item was passed to Council for action, who mandated the Professional Nursing Committee to create a new position statement. The *decriminalisation of abortion position statement* was agreed by Council November 2024 and is due to be published and distributed in early December.



The forum collaborated with the Management and Leadership Forum event on the *Definition of Nursing* which explored practical ways for members to use the updated definition of Nursing.

The three Voting members, Ruth Bailey, Cyzel Gomes and Michael Nevill contributed to the World Café Forum event, singing in solidarity, networking at regional events and speaking on the podium.

### Collaboration with other stakeholders

Stakeholder	Activity	Outcome
Queen’s Nursing Institute	Forum members presented webinar on Long Covid and Women’s Health	Evaluated very well- Shared RCN resources invited to attend event in 2025
Royal College Obstetricians and Gynaecologists	Contributed to NHS E Summit on outpatient transformation in OPD. Forum members contributed to expert reference group representing Nursing in primary and secondary care	<b>Contributed to RCOG publication:</b> <a href="#">Waiting for a way forward   RCOG</a> Attended launch at Parliamentary reception
National Institute Health Services Research	2 Forum Fellows stakeholders on policy research unit, designing study into commissioning for women’s reproductive health	

Stakeholder	Activity	Outcome
Abortion Talk	2 forum members contributing to pilot and evaluation of pre-reg abortion care education	Pilot and evaluation planned for 2025
RCOG Clinical Quality Assurance Group (CQAG)	1 forum member Represents RCN on the development of patient information	To publish evidence based patient information
RCOG Genomics	1 forum member to represent the RCN, committee meets quarterly	To develop curriculum on genomics in Obs, and Gynae Identify implications for practice.
Sensitive disposal of pregnancy tissue	1 forum member working with anthropologist from UCL to participate in knowledge exchange workshops to develop best practice.	Reviewed research findings, identified best practice, to inform update of national guidance.

## Forum Highlights

We are proud of the projects we have completed, and our ongoing commitment to marginalised women and our key achievement in updating the RCN position statement supporting the decriminalisation of abortion through our resolution at Congress which goes to Council for approval in November 2024.

We are also delighted that our forum committee member Charlotte Glyn was awarded RCN Forum member of the year, and our former chair and RCN Fellow Debra Holloway was awarded MBE for services to women's health.



## Engagement with wider membership

In 2024 the forum has established and supported the development of a Gynaecological Nurses clinical leadership network. Led by forum member Emma Ayling, it now has 180 members and meets 6 times a year to discuss policy and listen to a variety of speakers presenting on women's health. The network has its own social media accounts and serves as a network to the wider community.

The forum supported the RCN campaign to get the vote out in response to the NHS pay award. The forum chair participated in walking the wards with the RCN General secretary in September 24.



## Women's Health Forum Blogs 2024

Pregnancy Loss Review	Emma Ayling <a href="#">Pregnancy Loss Review   Blog   Royal College of Nursing</a>
Listening Event - the Hughes report	Esther Kuria <a href="#">Listening event on the Hughes Report publication   Royal College of Nursing</a>
PMDD	Lisa Higgins <a href="#">Premenstrual dysphoric disorder   Blogs   Royal College of Nursing</a>
How can patient blood management improve women's health?	Clare Cook <a href="#">How can patient blood management help improve women's health and wellbeing   Blogs   Royal College of Nursing</a>
Decriminalising abortion	Michael Nevill <a href="#">Decriminalising abortion A call for healthcare reform   Blogs   Royal College of Nursing</a>
The power of Nursing Voice in the general Election	Ruth Bailey & Joanna Holland <a href="#">Brighton and Hove Hustings Blog   Blogs   Royal College of Nursing</a>
Miscarriage in Film	Tori Heppell <a href="#">Impacting more accurate accounts of miscarriage in film and television   Blog   Royal College of Nursing</a>

### New ways of working

In 2025, the forum hopes to introduce its first Instagram account and is planning to use the members communication centre to update the wider forum on its activities.

### RCN Publications

The following publications have been updated: <https://www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/Womens-health/Publications>

- RCN Position paper: Conscientious Objection
- RCN Position statement on Nursing Associates and cervical screening.
- Clinical Nurses Specialist in Early Pregnancy Care
- Clinical Nurse Specialist in Endometriosis
- What is Endometriosis
- Managing the disposal of pregnancy remains
- Making sense of Women's Health
- PMS/PMDD Factsheet

### Representations

In addition to the ongoing collaborations and projects listed above the forum committee members supported the following events:

- NHS England 1<sup>st</sup> Women's Strategy Health Summit January 2024
- Launch of Hughes Report- redress for pelvic mesh and valproate February 2024
- Centre for reproductive rights: Abortion Law Reform summit April 2024
- Visit to Bronzefield Women's Prison April 2024
- RCN Political summit with Secretary of State for Health April 2024 [Secretary of State for Health and Social Care hears concerns of nursing staff | News | Royal College of Nursing](#)
- Hosted Visiting Professor and Pre pre-registration students from Baylor University USA, July 2024
- Parliamentary Launch "Waiting for a Way Forward" November 20

### Contribution to All Party-Parliamentary Groups

The forum continues to actively engage with the All-Party Parliamentary Groups for Women's Health, Menopause and sexual and reproductive health.



### Publications in Nursing Press

[Managing the menopause and work: support for nurses | Nursing in Practice](#)

[Supporting access to intrauterine contraception | Nursing in Practice](#)

[Managing weight gain in menopause – what can GPNs do to help? | Nursing in Practice](#)

### Contribution to consultations/policy development

The forum contributed to NICE consultations on updating guidance for Menopause and Endometriosis, both published in November 2024.

### Project Plans for 2025

- Publish and launch guidance for cervical screening for disabled women and autistic women.
- Publish pregnancy loss guidance.
- Contribute to Cancer Nursing Forum Gender affirming care seminar
- Submit items for Congress 2025
- Launch Instagram account
- Develop Joint RCN/BMS Menopause and long covid guidance.
- Develop Joint RCN/FSRH SRH Career framework pathway.
- Host WHF annual Conference 2025

And much more!

Prepared by: Ruth Bailey, Chair RCN Women's Health Forum November 2024