

## **Royal College of Nursing response to the proposed amendments to continue the suspension of restrictions on return to work**

With a membership of close to half a million registered nurses, midwives, health visitors, nursing students, health care assistants and nurse cadets, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) is the voice of nursing across the UK and the largest professional union of nursing staff in the world.

### **1. Do you agree or disagree that the temporary pension easements should continue beyond the planned expiry on 31 October 2022?**

- 1.1. The RCN agrees that the temporary pensions easements should continue beyond the planned expiration date on 31 October 2022.
- 1.2. The NHS is facing a staffing crisis both in terms of recruitment and retention. As such, any measure that has the potential to increase the available workforce is in the interests of both staff and patients.
- 1.3. Many RCN members currently benefiting from extended pensions easements have anecdotally advised the RCN they will reduce working hours or leave NHS employment if the suspension of restrictions ends.
- 1.4. The RCN believes continued suspension of return-to-work restrictions to be necessary to ensure staff and patient safety. Further, the RCN would welcome a further consultation on the abolition of all return-to-work restrictions.

### **2. Do you agree or disagree that the continuation of the easements until 31 March 2023 is a reasonable length of time?**

- 2.1. Although the RCN welcomes the extension of easements, we do not agree that continuation to 31 March represents a reasonable length of time.
- 2.2. Many RCN members currently benefiting from pension easements have expressed concern about the piecemeal approach to easement extensions. In the RCN's view, such an approach presents significant challenges in planning and budgeting for both postholders and local service managers.
- 2.3. The RCN believes that continuation of easements to 31 October 2023 provides more reasonable planning time for postholders and local managers. Further, the additional timescale provides an opportunity for the department to consider a further consultation of abolition on return-to-work restrictions.
- 2.4. The RCN believes future consultations regarding the continuation of easements should be issued no later the 6 months before the scheduled



reintroduction of return-to-work restrictions. Later consideration of extension presents significant planning challenges to postholders and local managers which can easily be avoided.

For further information, please contact:

Chris Musgrave, National Officer Team Leader, Employment Relations Department

[chris.musgrave@rcn.org.uk](mailto:chris.musgrave@rcn.org.uk) 020 8253 9180.