

As a voting member at Congress, you'll be representing up to 1,000 of your colleagues at the most important agenda-setting event in the RCN's calendar.

But Congress will be different this year. Due to the pandemic we have had to make changes, and we have to be responsive to the ever-changing situation.

The Congress fringe and exhibition will take place online only.

The main Congress agenda, the resolutions and matters for discussion, will be online but voting members will also be able to attend in person in Liverpool.

The following will be able to attend in person in Liverpool or, if they prefer, attend online.

- Voting members from branches and forums
- All members of the UK Learning Reps, UK Safety Reps and UK Stewards Committees
- Students Committee members
- Nursing Support Workers Committee members
- Council
- Trade Union Committee members
- Professional Nursing Committee members

The online platform we have chosen allows for a mix of online and in-person participation in speaking and voting.

This is a very new way of working, so please bear with us as we try and emulate the usual Congress experience as best we can.

Please note – if, unfortunately, we are not allowed to have people attending in person due to changes in Government restrictions we will switch Congress to a fully virtual event.

How will Congress work for voting members?

Registration

Voting members from branches, forums, and members of the Nursing Support Workers Committee, the Students Committee, UK Learning Reps Committee, the UK Safety Reps Committee and the UK Stewards Committee, should, along with all other members, register to attend Congress on the RCN website when registration opens at the end of June.

At this stage you will not need to tell us whether you are attending in person or online.

Allocation of voting rights and how to register to attend in person

In July, the chairs of the voting entities (such as the forum steering committee and branch chairs as well as the chairs of the representative committees listed above) will be sent information about how to allocate their voting member rotas. As in previous years this is done online.

Once the Chair has allocated the rota voting members will receive an email asking them to login to My Congress if they wish to attend in person in order to amend their attendance type.

Under the My Votes section you can see what sessions you have been allocated votes for.

My votes
Your votes have been allocated as:

Voting for	Sat AM	Sat PM	Sun AM	Sun PM	Mon AM	Mon PM
Cardiff and the Vale	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
Advanced Nurse Practitioner Forum	✓	✓	X	X	X	X

In the My Attendance section there is a button to request physical attendance, after clicking this button you will be asked to select the days you will be attending Congress in person and if you have any additional individual requirements.

Please click on the blue “Request physical attendance” button if you wish to attend in person.

My attendance
You are currently registered to attend Congress 2021 as a **Voting Member** and your reference number is **505073**. You have booked to attend:

Attendance type: **Virtual**

- ✓ Saturday 18
- ✓ Sunday 19
- ✓ Monday 20

≡ REQUEST PHYSICAL ATTENDANCE **✎ AMEND MY ATTENDANCE DAYS/EVENT REQUESTS**

X CANCEL MY BOOKING

After confirming the days you will be attending in person and any individual requirements, please click on My Congress to return to your homepage where you will then be able to submit your travel and accommodation form.

▲ As a voting member you can [use this form to submit your travel and accommodation request](#).

Swapping voting members

Once the Chair has allocated the voting sessions (am or pm) your voting delegate “ticket” on Hopin will automatically be activated for the sessions you are registered to vote.

If you wish to swap at a later date you should contact the Events Registration team on **02920 546 460** or email congress.bookings@rcn.org.uk or, during Congress itself, go to the Registration desk in the venue or contact the online Helpdesk on Hopin, our online platform.

Please note you can only swap voting members for whole morning or afternoon sessions. During Congress we will only be able to swap you at lunchtime, early morning before Congress starts, or at close of play each day.

You should always discuss swapping voting members in advance with your Chair.

Voting and speaking

All voting will take place online, even if you are attending in person and are in the main hall.

To vote you will need to access the Hopin platform on a device such as a smartphone, tablet or laptop. You can do this via a web browser or by downloading the Hopin App.

If you are attending online you will be identified as an online voting member through the registration process and instructions will be given to you on screen as you view Congress.

We will do our very best to support voting members with this technology and there is a space on the registration form to indicate if you have any special requirements.

But please bear in mind there could be things beyond our power – for example, if you are an online delegate living in an area with limited internet connections.

To speak in a debate, be it online or in person, you will need to join a speaker queue via Hopin. As usual the queue will be managed by the Chair and Vice Chair of Congress and they will let you know when it is your turn to speak.

If you are attending online you will need to make sure your device has a camera and microphone if you wish to speak.

We will provide more guidance nearer the time on how voting and speaking will work and there will be help on hand during the event.

We're also organising several "How Congress Works" sessions prior to Congress and will be encouraging voting members to join. It would be great if everyone could be as prepared as possible beforehand. This will save time and minimise disruption to the debates.

Proposing and seconding debates

Don't forget that debates must be proposed and seconded by voting members registered for the session in which the debate is happening.

Resolutions must have a proposer and a seconder. Matters for discussion only need a proposer.

Travel and accommodation for those attending in person

Once the travel and accommodation form is submitted we will make the necessary arrangements for you to ensure you get your travel tickets in good time.

This year, in recognition that some members may feel uncomfortable travelling by public transport, we are suspending the requirement to obtain authorisation to travel by car and claim mileage/parking.

We will arrange hotel accommodation and, in most cases, voting members from each entity will stay in the same hotel. We can book accessible rooms if available – there is a section on both the registration form and the travel and accommodation form to indicate if you have any special requirements.

Please arrange your own parking either at the hotel or at the venue and ensure you keep your tickets/receipts so you can claim back the cost.

If Congress does have to switch to a fully virtual event please keep hold of any travel tickets as we may be able to claim a refund.

All expenses should be claimed in line with the Expenses policy – guidance on this is attached with this document.

The venue and COVID-19 security

Congress will be held at the Exhibition Centre Liverpool – this is next door to our usual venue (the Arena). The Arena was not available for the September dates.

We will be working within Government guidelines and respecting the venue's own COVID-19 measures.

We have based our plans on the guidelines in the England roadmap at 17 May 2021 which stipulate no more than 1,000 people, or 50% of the total capacity, at an indoor event.

The Exhibition Centre Liverpool capacities are based on one metre social distancing and allow for approximately 1,000 people in total. This is enough capacity for all those members listed above plus our contractors and staff.

Only members who are registered voting members for the session that is taking place at the time will be guaranteed entry into the main hall. Voting members who are not registered for a particular session may come into the hall for that session if capacity allows. However, this may have to be done on a first-come, first-served basis.

Live streams of lunchtime and evening fringe events will be available to view at “watch events” in the conference centre. However, to join fringe events interactively to ask questions and join in the chat you will need to join via the online platform on a device.

Given the uncertainty around COVID-19 we will issue further guidance nearer the time – this may include requirements for testing before accessing the venue, continued wearing of face masks etc.

However, it may also mean that we can allow more people into the venue and will let members know if that is the case nearer the time.

As the leading nursing organisation in the UK we will be taking a cautious and responsible approach.

Social events

There will be no organised social events organised at Congress this year. Congress is a friendly and inclusive event but we recognise it can be a lonely experience for some delegates.

We are arranging a buddy scheme for any first-time delegates/solo delegates should they wish to meet in small groups outside of Congress hours.

Your responsibilities as a voting member

Don't forget that as a voting member you play an important role at Congress. So make sure:

- You are familiar with the whole agenda and the background to each debate – you can find that on the website here: rcn.org.uk/congress
- Discuss the agenda with other members in your entity – find out their views and feelings on the subject
- Make sure you are in touch with the other voting members in your entity – and agree your voting strategy
- You are there – be it in person or online – at the times you are scheduled to vote
- Speak up – Congress is a fantastic opportunity to get your voice heard. And don't be shy. You will soon discover that everyone who takes to the microphone, even first-time speakers, receives a very warm welcome.
- Share your experiences with other members after Congress. For example, attend a branch meeting and talk to other members about the issues raised in the debates,
- Create a profile on Hopin using the link sent to you a week before Congress. Whether you're attending onsite or from home, you will need to use Hopin to vote, join a speaker queue, join fringe events, view the exhibition and interact with fellow delegates via the chat or networking feature.