



Royal College
of Nursing



2022

REVIEW OF THE YEAR



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Welcome

This annual review is an opportunity for us all to reflect on what we, as the royal college representing more than 500,000 people in nursing, achieved in 2022. It's also a chance for us to consider what we've learnt, think about what we'd do differently, and lay the foundations for discussions around what needs to change to drive success going forward.

Nursing remains at the top of the professional, political and public agendas, and with this comes a great deal of responsibility. By making the headlines on an almost daily basis, we are leading the way in upholding our vital, safety-critical, educated profession and ensuring it remains seen as one of the cornerstones of a healthy, supported society.

One of nursing's strengths is its ability to evolve and adapt, and overcome the challenges thrown our way. We lead rather than follow and will challenge the status quo when things simply aren't right or just; our campaign for fair pay led by your Trade Union Committee is proof of this. Likewise, the ongoing work led by our Professional Nursing Committee in supporting you to continue delivering safe patient care and upholding the status and reputation of nursing is ever evolving.

Our focus as the world's largest professional body and trade union representing nursing is predominantly on the work we do to support you in your role. However, we also remain committed to challenging our own internal and governance processes and structures to support the transformation we must undergo to grow and remain fit for purpose and focused on the future.

You are at the centre of every decision we make, and the contents of this Annual Review, looking back at 2022, reflect the work you help us achieve. Whatever your role, your specialism, sector, location or background, we recognise your value, expertise, knowledge and experience.

Nursing continues to influence policy decisions made by UK governments; it leads the way in improving the public's health, advocates for patients and service users and provides many people with a voice.

Our profession is fundamental to patient safety, health outcomes and how people feel about their experience of using health and care services.

We will not stop until nursing receives the recognition it deserves through fair pay, safe staffing and improved employment terms and conditions for all.

It is a privilege and an honour to represent you. Thank you.



A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Pat Cullen."

Pat Cullen
General Secretary & Chief Executive



A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Sheilabye Sobrany".

Sheilabye (Sheila) Sobrany
President

Timeline of key events in 2022

JANUARY

- We made our written evidence submissions (UK-wide plus Northern Ireland and Wales supplementary evidence) to the NHS Pay Review Body (PRB).
- 12 new lead nurse posts created within the organisation to support the independent health and social care sector.

FEBRUARY

- RCN Council approved the UK Organising Strategy.
- In Wales, we launched a report and tie-in film celebrating nurse ward managers.
- We published *Staffing for Safe and Effective Care: State of the nation's labour nursing market 2022* - examining workforce data from January 2020, through the pandemic to early 2022.



MARCH



- We supplemented our January PRB submissions with UK-wide oral evidence.
- We published our first report on the *Nursing Workforce in Scotland*.

APRIL

- The RCN Wales public petition to extend the Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act 2016 exceeded its goal of 10,000 signatures.
- We held an online UK Joint Reps Conference.
- Our Valuing Nursing Summit in Scotland brought members together to speak directly to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care and the health spokespeople from the main political parties.
- RCN members working for Sue Ryder were dissatisfied with proposals for new pay scales and a change to unsocial hours and overtime rates. The results of an RCN survey persuaded the employer to make changes to its offer which were accepted.

MAY

- We held a 'collective bargaining for the independent sector' workshop with key stakeholders across the UK.
- Direct NHS pay negotiations with the Scottish government began.
- Public exhibition in RCN HQ library in London: "A History of Care or Control? 100 years of learning disability nursing".
- RCN Scotland Nurse of the Year Awards launched as part of Nurses' Day celebrations.
- RCN Wales launched a report on progress implementing the Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act 2016. The report received multiple mentions in the Welsh Parliament.
- The RCN surveyed members employed by Care Quality Commission to gather evidence for a 2022 pay claim.

JUNE

- RCN Congress in Glasgow.
- We published our Last Shift Survey report.
- RCN Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year Awards.
- Our lobbying results in the publication of a timetable for implementation of Scotland's safe staffing legislation.
- The Welsh Parliament's Petitions Committee recommended RCN Wales's safe and effective care petition for a parliamentary debate.
- RCN members employed by The Huntercombe Group rejected a 2% pay offer for care support workers and 3% for nurses.
- RCN members employed by Four Seasons Health Care, including those employed by brighterkind, rejected a pay offer worth an average of 4%. Following negotiations to attempt to improve this offer, it was subsequently imposed by the employer.
- RCN members employed by CareTech Coveberry accepted a pay offer worth an average of 6.1%.



JULY

- The PRB recommends a £1,400 consolidated uplift for staff working on NHS Agenda for Change terms and conditions in England, with this increased for those at the top of Band 6 and all points of Band 7 to ensure that their uplift equalled 4%.
- RCN Council made the decision to ballot NHS members for industrial action.
- RCN Wales launched a report on what leads to success in retaining nursing staff.
- RCN members employed by Marie Curie rejected the employer's latest offer in a consultative ballot.
- The RCN, together with the three other unions recognised by Care Quality Commission (CQC), submitted a joint pay claim on behalf of all CQC employees seeking a 2022 pay uplift of 5% above inflation.
- 83.1% of RCN members on the Isle of Man rejected a pay deal.

AUGUST

- Materials were produced for industrial action and made available for order on the online RCN Shop. We received 1,335 orders between 8-31 August and sent out 137,985 products.
- RCN Northern Ireland joins the rest of the UK in biggest ever nursing strike ballot. Members did not receive a pay offer due to absence of a functioning Northern Ireland Executive.
- The pay offer from the Scottish government was rejected by our members.
- The RCN surveyed members employed by Marie Curie and resumed negotiations with the employer seeking to improve the offer members rejected in July.



SEPTEMBER

- The Welsh Parliament debated RCN Wales's petition on extending the Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act 2016. At an event with members and politicians, RCN Wales launched a report with its latest estimate of the nurse vacancies in NHS Wales – a figure not published by the Welsh government.
- RCN members and staff jointly provided expert feedback on their experience and journey through RCN Learn. This proved invaluable feedback ahead of the 'soft' launch.
- To mark the Prime Ministers first PMQs, out-of-home (outdoor) advertising launches throughout Westminster.
- RCN members on Guernsey rejected the three-year pay deal offered to them by The States.

OCTOBER

- NHS industrial action ballot goes live, with out-of-home advertising across the UK and an open letter for the public to sign online which is also published in newspapers.
- Thousands of voting volunteers recruited to get out the vote, in UK-wide mobilisation effort.
- The DHSC agreed members' pension contributions will be based on actual salary, thereby removing the disadvantage for members working part-time.
- A three-month digital recruitment campaign commenced in October 2022, targeting nursing staff who work outside the NHS.
- The IHSC Partnership Board agreed to set up a new workstream, looking specifically at the needs of general practice nurses.
- The October conference in Manchester was the largest-ever RCN UK Joint Reps Conference, with 225 reps attending.
- Guerrilla light projection stunts across North and South Wales highlighted linked pay/safe staffing messages to the public.

NOVEMBER

- NHS industrial strike ballot results announced.
- We paused an announcement of strike dates in Scotland as the Scottish government agreed to further negotiations and made a revised offer on NHS nursing staff pay.
- Key staff members met with a group of GPN clinical directors to discuss opportunities to work together.

DECEMBER

- Two days of strike action for NHS members across England, Northern Ireland and Wales.
- Members in Scotland reject revised NHS pay offer from Scottish government.
- RCN Learn was fully launched to all members in December 2022 by the ELD Programme.
- Hundreds of NHS reps completed *Preparing for Strike Action* training.
- Launched public donations to strike fund and raised £160,000 by the end of the year.



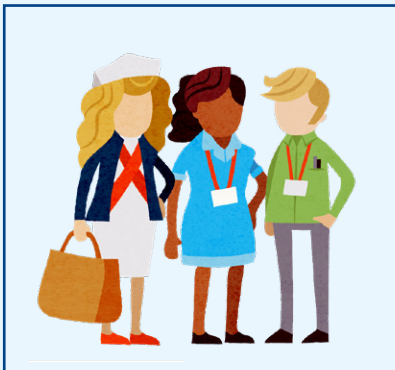
Our achievements in 2022

OVERALL MEMBERSHIP OF AROUND 500,000



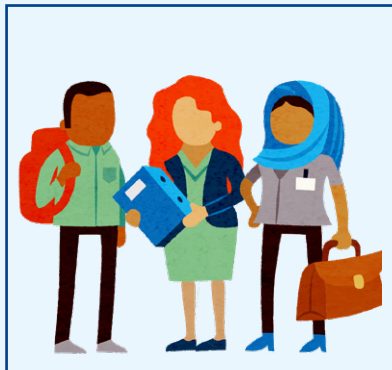
>455,000

Registered nurse



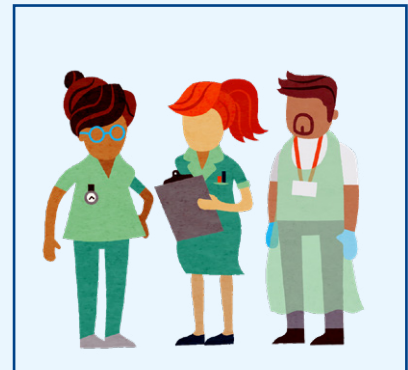
>36,000

Student



>34,000

Nursing support worker



17,962

Northern
Ireland

50,101

Scotland

427,551

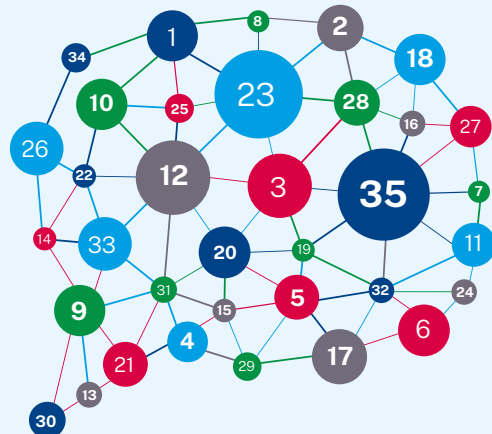
England

30,255

Wales

MEMBERSHIP BY REGION

FORUM MEMBERSHIP




See [page 44](#) for details of our forum membership

35 FORUMS

202,105 MEMBERS





31,483
orders for free campaign materials were made through the RCN shop

515,772
products despatched

92
publications added to the RCN website



56,229 Calls

5,539 Web chats

28,210 Emails


EMPLOYMENT ADVICE

...which led to 26,574 referrals through to region and countries.

988 Stewards

498 Learning reps

309 Safety reps



RCN staff and stewards across the UK managed approximately **3,510** cases involving **3,700** members in employment matters.

Total reps: 1,795

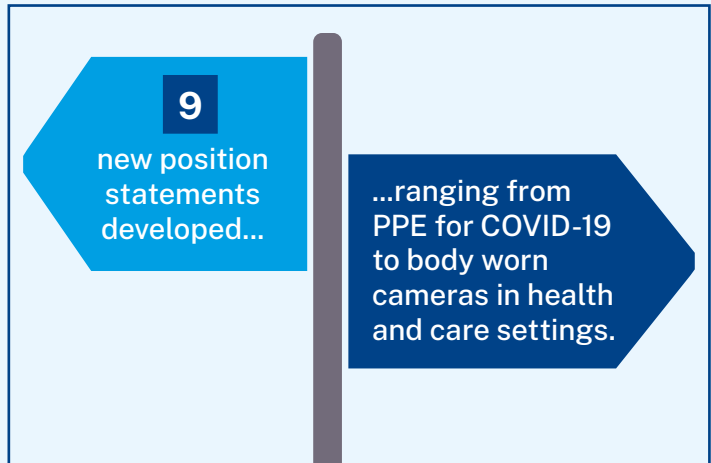
MEMBERSHIP SUPPORT

3,400 Calls

171 Web chats

157 Emails

Overall, Member Support Services provided **3,728** sessions



LEGAL



Recovered in compensation for members by our in-house legal team

(the figure recovered in respect of personal injury claims by our agent solicitors and RCN Law)



Recovered for members by our in-house employment legal team

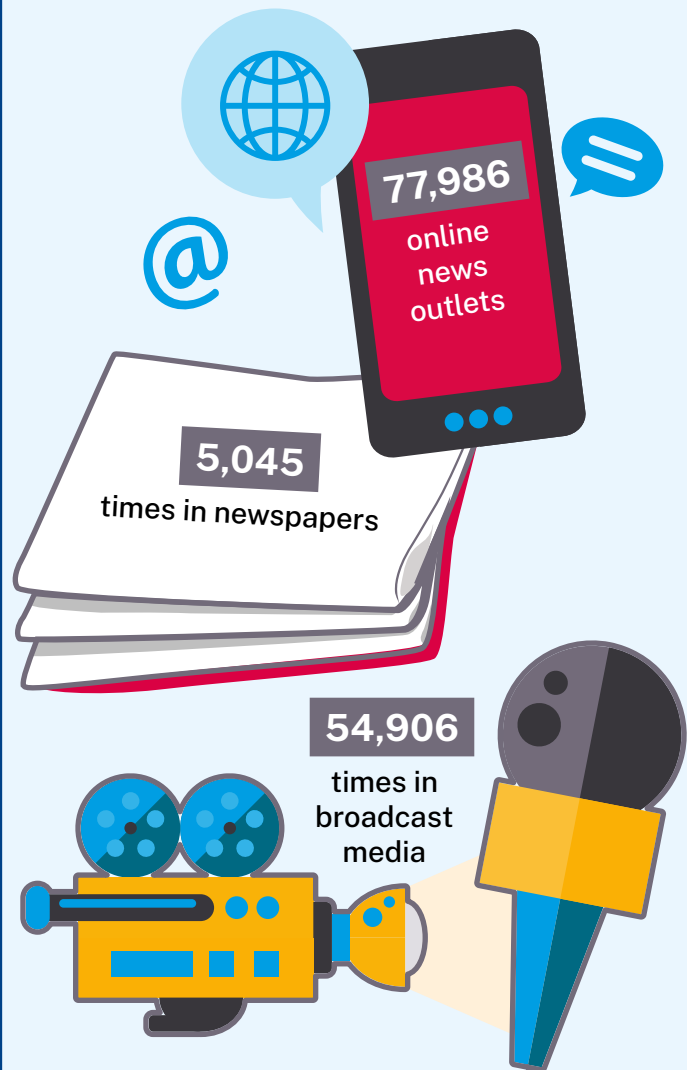
4,299 referrals

21 Employment Tribunal claims submitted

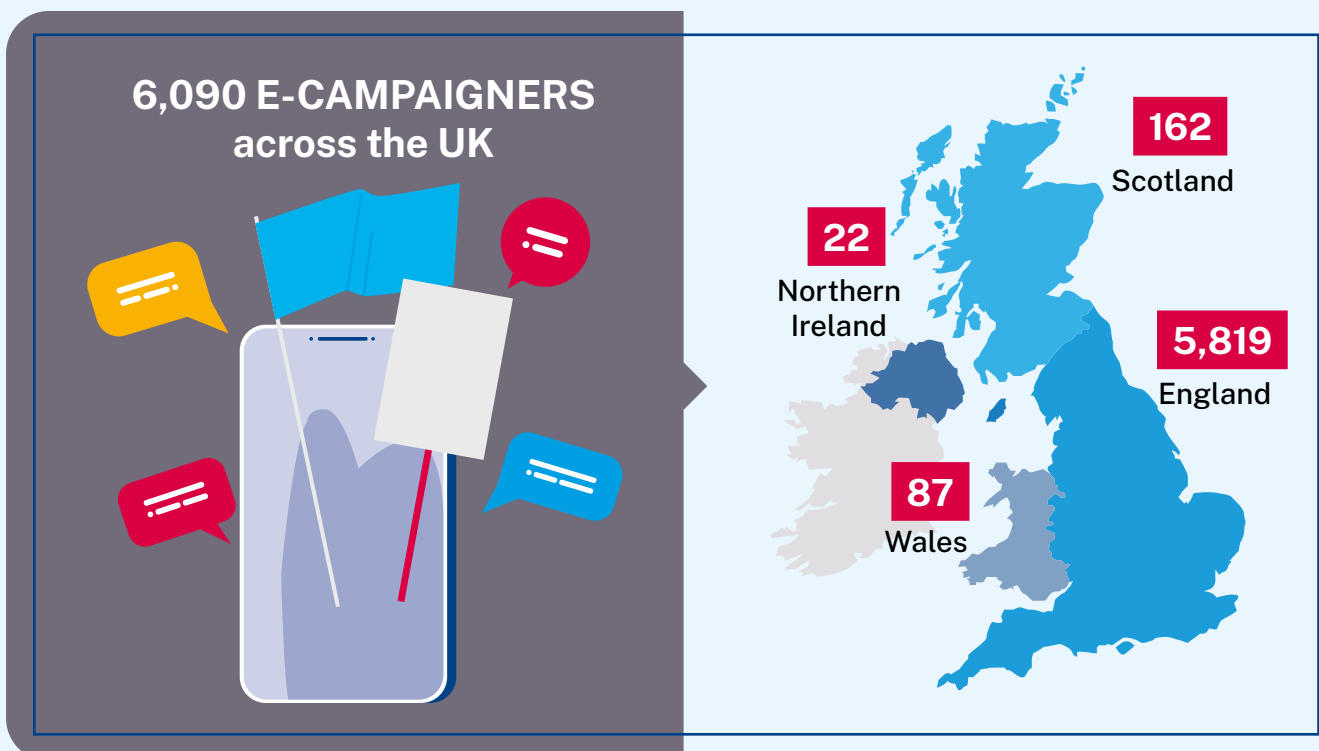
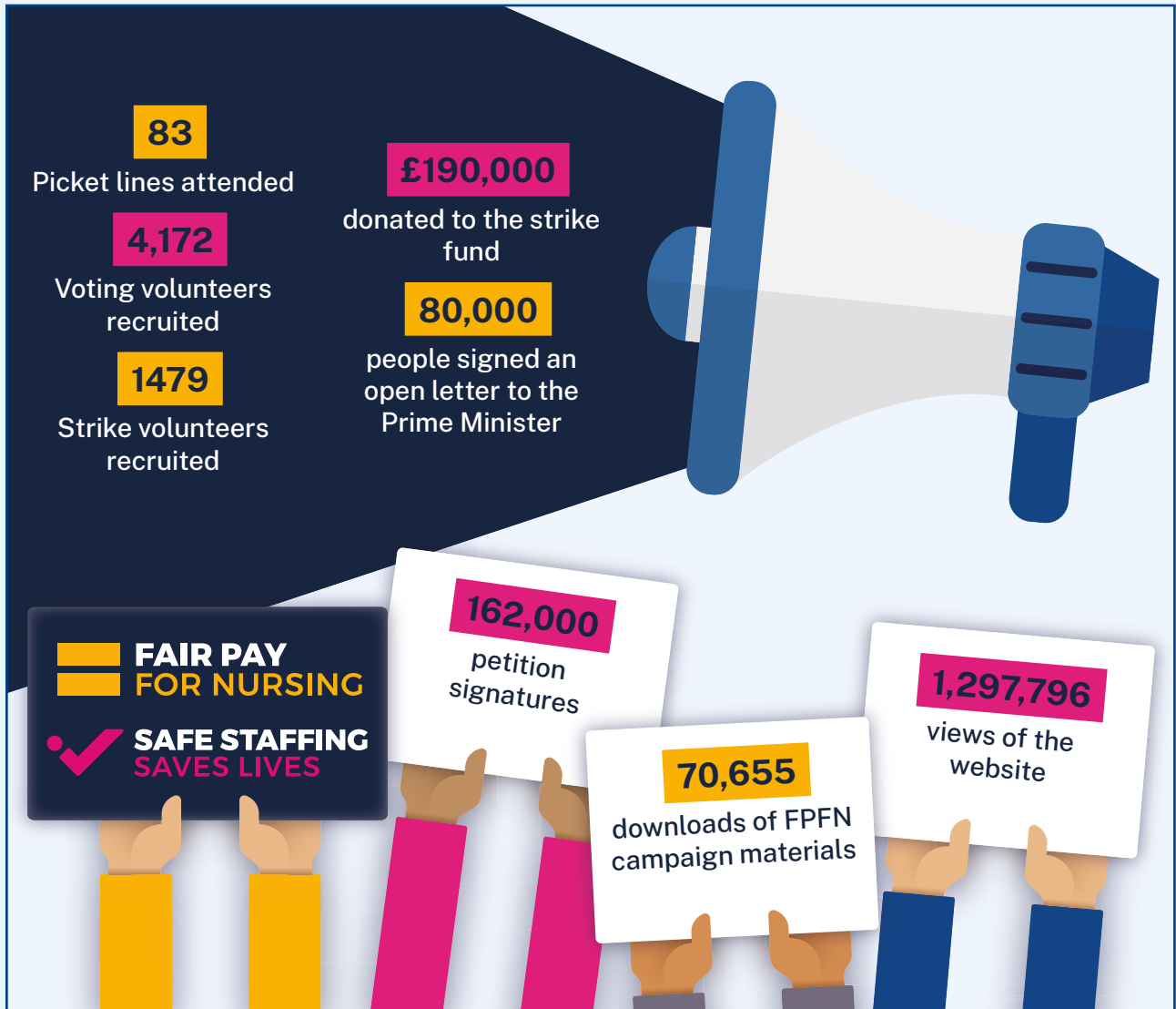


1,475
fitness to practice referrals dealt with by the in-house regulatory legal team

In the UK, in the final quarter of 2022, our Fair Pay for Nursing campaign was covered in:



MEDIA



RCN goals and priorities for 2022



Back in January 2021, we identified key pieces of work for the College to focus on, and in April of that year, we announced our “Big 5” priorities. We continued with this work during 2022 alongside the RCN 2022 Stability Plan. This plan was our blueprint for bringing about the improvements and progress required to ensure our continued success and presence for the nursing workforce. The plan sets out three goals (covering 29 priorities) to help us achieve our vision.

The Big 5 priorities

1. Develop a unique organising model.
2. Deliver our Fair Pay for Nursing (FPFN) campaign.
3. Deliver our Staffing for Safe and Effective Care (SSEC) programme.
4. Deliver the RCN and RCNi’s Education, Learning and Development (ELD) strategy.
5. Deliver the RCN’s Independent Health and Social Care (IHSC) strategy.

Goals of the RCN 2022 Plan

1. Amplify the voice of nursing ensuring our members are represented at every table where decisions are being made that impact on their professional lives.
2. Achieve positive cultural change and empower our staff – placing equality, diversity and inclusion at the heart of all our decision making and upskilling our staff.
3. Enhance our member offer and services – leveraging education, data, evidence and research to create high quality, evidence-based standards that reflect contemporary nursing.

This document details work carried out by the RCN during 2022, aligning them with the Big 5 priorities.

1. Develop an organising model unique to the RCN



Introduction

In February 2022, RCN Council approved the UK Organising Strategy after extensive engagement with Council members on the Programme Board, as well engagement with members and staff and a review of lessons learned from previous organising projects. Recruitment of the core Organising Team was finalised (seven full-time roles in total), with each organiser assigned to regions and countries as well as key areas of UK work such as international nursing staff or the independent sector.

This phase was crucial in ensuring we developed a sustainable organising programme, and created the necessary structures, knowledge base and culture change to transform our approach to member engagement.

Four key workstreams

The following workstreams were identified and approved in spring 2022.

1. Creating pathways for organising activity

This bottom-up approach focuses on identifying organising opportunities with members and frontline RCN staff. It starts with local issues – engaging members who are directly affected and builds structures in the workplace that lead to collective wins. While there was an opportunity to address an array of concerns, we saw this pilot focusing heavily on safe staffing and associated issues (such as mileage, break rooms, etc).

2. Targeting a strategic employer

This top-down approach focuses on how we, as a College, can influence health and social care. To maximise resources and capacity, organising unions will often look to set an example by targeting an influential employer that sets the tone and employment practices for an entire industry. Using an organising approach and establishing a sustainable member structure in a key target, can often create a domino effect leading to other employers following the industry influencer's agreement. This pilot has been earmarked to work with the Independent Health and Social Care Programme Board and development is expected to begin in 2023.

3. Organising around a campaign

This was always earmarked for NHS pay, with the objective to look at how to build the

capacity to act (such as mobilising for a ballot and targeted actions) around a large campaign issue and win. While this was expected to be a longer-term piece to deliver engagement throughout all four countries, most of the Organising Programme Team shifted their focus almost entirely onto this pilot from July 2022 when Council made the decision to ballot members for industrial action across the UK in the autumn.

4. Digital member engagement

This stream of work started as a six-month pilot specifically to look at how digital member-to-member engagement could be embedded into our structures supporting member engagement. It gained significant momentum from 2022 with the team focusing on tailoring, rolling out and delivering extensive member engagement via ThruText, a peer-to-peer texting software enabling us to have thousands of simultaneous text message conversations through a centralised, trackable system.



Activity in 2022

RCN Congress in Glasgow, at the beginning of June, marked the launch of the organising programme to the wider membership. The event was very successful, and we were in contact with 170 members who attended fringe events and visited our stand in the Get Involved area of the exhibition.

Between August and December 2022, the Organising Programme Team successfully reallocated all programme staff to the *Fair Pay for Nursing* campaign and recruited and co-ordinated another 15 organisers across the UK to mobilise members and staff on the ground. This contributed to the highest turnout in an RCN ballot in our 106-year history. We recruited 4,172 voting volunteers and 971 strike volunteers, two volunteer schemes set up to get members active on the NHS pay ballot and action. In addition, we successfully embedded ThruText at scale as a member-to-member communication tool. We trained over 270 members and staff to use it, enabling them to reach out to hundreds of thousands of members in scope of industrial action. The team delivered training for 128 staff and almost 500 members across all regions and countries on having conversations about striking, building confidence, and skills in these groups to broaden member engagement. Lastly, organisers developed and supported on-the-ground tactics across the UK, during both the ballot and strike phases of the campaign. The RCN Students Committee has been working with students from across the UK to support members in industrial action; whilst the RCN education team has worked closely with colleagues to support the delivery of local strike committees, sharing regional and national expertise.

In parallel, the programme team successfully appointed a learning and development consultant to advise on next steps for an RCN Organising Learning Programme in 2023. The Social Innovation Partnership, a social impact consultancy, was also appointed to evaluate the RCN Organising Programme and work has started to ensure we learn from experience as soon as possible to build a sustainable organising approach for our members.

While not all planned activities were delivered in 2022, the focus on the NHS pay campaign from the summer onwards enabled the UK Organising Programme Team to realise key benefits set in the UK Organising Strategy.

- We will have active members across the whole scope of our membership and the profession.
- We will have developed sustainable structures which will develop active engagement and workplace leaders, creating high levels of membership participation.
- Nursing staff will:
 - own the narrative around nursing and what it means
 - hold the power to direct the agenda, shaping the future of nursing and health care
 - have the power to improve their lives, those of their colleagues, their patients, and their communities.
- We will create a culture where members:
 - believe they are agents for change in their workplace and beyond
 - feel greater ownership of the RCN structures and will actively engage across all areas of the College
 - learn and grow together.



Looking ahead

In 2023, the UK Organising Programme will be reviewed in order to ensure it delivers across in following areas:

- influencing and supporting the NHS pay/industrial action campaign
- targeting a key employer, with the top-down approach, to create best practice within that sector
- updating the UK Organising strategy, integrating learning from 2022 including from the *Fair Pay for Nursing* campaign, and our five-year strategy
- resuming the delivery of activities beyond NHS Pay, such as the *Safe Staffing* campaign and independent health and social care focussed activity
- progressing activities to embed organising into long-term RCN structures (team organisation, systems, processes)
- exploring a member organising role and sustainable structures at workplaces with an intent to offer a pathway into existing leadership and representative roles and structures (such as the rep, branch officials, committee chairs).
- continuing to develop and deliver, in conjunction with other professional and trade union learning and skills development offers, the RCN Organising, Learning and Development Strategy.
- publishing the first UK Organising Programme evaluation.

2. Ensure the successful delivery of the RCN's *Fair Pay for Nursing* campaign



Introduction

For the first time in our 106-year history, members across all four countries voted in the strongest terms to progress industrial action, and the UK Pay Programme has been at the forefront of driving this action forward. Industrial action comes against the backdrop of ten years of chronic underfunding of the nursing workforce, with nursing vacancies reaching an all-time high, and the pressures placed on our members increasing at an unprecedented rate. It is vital that pay, terms and conditions are front and centre of the conversation in addressing these problems, because it is only through sustained investment in nursing that a solution to the current nursing workforce crisis will be found.

Following a pause in Scotland's planned industrial action whilst members were consulted on a new offer, members in England, Northern Ireland, and Wales took co-ordinated strike action at the end of 2022. However, strike action was one of many priorities for the UK pay programme throughout the year. We began the year by expanding the focus of the UK Pay Programme beyond balloting on NHS pay, allowing us to improve pay, terms and conditions for all members working in both the NHS and independent health and social care sectors, across all four countries and Crown dependencies, at all stages of career journeys. Six objectives underpinned this renewed programme aim, each of which are reported on below.

- Securing improved pay for members working in the NHS.
- Securing improved pay for members working across independent health and social care sectors.
- Strengthening terms and conditions for members in both NHS and independent health and social care sectors.
- Maximising understanding of, access to, and take up of job evaluation as a tool for achieving improved pay, terms and conditions.
- Influencing to develop strengthened pay progression journeys.
- Developing a five-year plan for pay, terms and conditions.

The *Fair Pay for Nursing* branding was refreshed and updated moving into 2022, with *Fair Pay for Nursing* serving to provide the public facing 'brand' of the activities of the UK pay programme.

Fundamental to the delivery against these objectives was our members' leadership. Our members were central to the UK Pay Programme's governance structures and forged close partnership working with RCN boards, members of Council and the Trade Union Committee, and UK Pay Programme staff.

NHS Pay - Positioning and influencing

In January, we made our submission to the NHS Pay Review Body (PRB). The UK-wide, and Northern Ireland and Wales supplementary submissions, made the case for urgent action to address the nursing workforce crisis and the long-term reduction in the value of nursing pay. The claim included a restorative pay increase of 5% above inflation (RPI), based on evidence that demonstrated overwhelmingly a workforce in crisis as well as additional measures to promote the recruitment and retention of nursing staff. These measures included implementation of national recruitment premia and national retention premia.

In its report back to government, the PRB recommended a £1,400 consolidated pay uplift for staff working on NHS Agenda for Change terms and conditions, with this increased for those at the top of band 6 or all points in band 7 to ensure that their uplift equalled 4%.

RCN Council responded robustly to the unsatisfactory award made in England with a decision to rapidly move to a statutory ballot. Wales followed suit within days and in the absence of an award, Northern Ireland did the same. In the same period, initial direct negotiations with the Scottish Government took place in Scotland between May and June, resulting in an offer that was rejected by members. Consequently, all four countries progressed to a statutory ballot which was initially planned for September but was delayed due to the death of our patron, HM Queen Elizabeth II, resulting in it running from 2 October to 6 November.





Members voted overwhelmingly in favour of industrial action, which commenced in December 2022. The Scottish Government, following further negotiations, made an improved offer to members in Scotland which the board rejected, prompting the Scottish Government to re-open negotiations once again. While these negotiations commenced, strike action was postponed in Scotland.

We also conducted indicative and consultative ballots with members working for Manx Care, which is responsible for the delivery of the National Health and Care Service on the Isle of Man. In Guernsey, pay negotiations reached the stage of a multi-year offer being made for public sector workers. A consultative ballot was conducted, and next steps are being considered.

Our role in pay also includes pensions, which was central to the scope of the UK Pay Programme in 2022. We secured a key commitment from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) following the implementation of the McCloud remedy, the result of the landmark legal decision which confirmed the existence of age discrimination in public sector pensions. The DHSC consulted on possible solutions and adopted a deferred choice mechanism, allowing members a choice at the point of retirement to address pension benefit shortfall between 2015-2022. The DHSC accepted the position put to it by the RCN and other health unions that the delays to the introduction of deferred choice mechanism placed members currently considering retirement at a detriment because they would be required to retire without an accurate pension benefit calculation. Following this acceptance, the DHSC is working on a further option for members to exercise their pension choice much earlier than planned.

Significant improvements within the NHS pension scheme were secured as part of the planned member contribution changes. Previously, member pension contribution rates were based on whole time equivalent salary, which disadvantaged part-time workers who paid additional contributions without an increase to their pension benefit. The DHSC accepted our position and agreed from October 2022, members' contributions would be based on actual salary, thereby removing the disadvantage for part-time workers. Additionally, as part of the same reforms, the DHSC accepted our representations on removing the 'cliff edge' members faced when near the top of a contribution tier. Previously, if members' pensionable pay exceeded a contribution tier in-year a contribution shortfall was created. From October 2022, all contribution tiers increased in line with Agenda for Change pay awards, dramatically reducing the potential for future 'cliff edge' scenarios.

We have also been at forefront of calling for an extension to abatement relaxation within the NHS pension scheme. Abatement rules were suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic as a means of increasing the available workforce as retired members could return to service without a reduction to their pension benefit. Although welcome, the suspension is not the solution to the ongoing recruitment and retention crisis in the NHS. However, as a result of our lobbying alongside other health unions, the DHSC agreed to a further extension of the suspension of abatement to March 2025. This move provides more employment opportunities for retired members, increases the available workforce whilst ensuring significant experience and expertise is not lost.

We joined other public sector unions in seeking a judicial review following the government's decision not to pass on pension savings identified as part of the 2016 pension valuation. Current pension rules require that savings beyond the 'cost-cap floor' are passed on to members in the form of reduced pension contributions and/or increases to pension benefit. As 2022 ended, the pension valuation for 2020 commenced and on completion, we anticipate further savings will be identified. The outcome of the judicial review will determine the legality of the government's actions in respect of pensions savings.

We evolved the FPFN branding to sit firmly within the same brand architecture as the safe staffing campaign, making it more recognisable than ever that the fight for fair pay is one for safer working conditions. The two campaigns saw an increasing amount of integration, demonstrated at key milestones including launching the last shift survey, the one-year anniversary of our *Nursing Workforce Standards*, new economic research from



**FAIR PAY
FOR NURSING**



**SAFE STAFFING
SAVES LIVES**

London Economics and outdoor publicity at RCN Congress. This positioning work has left members, the public and media in no doubt about the safe staffing values at the heart of the FPFN campaign.

Independent health and social care pay

Our pay-related activity in the independent health and social care (IHSC) sectors remains twofold: the delivery of pay, terms and conditions negotiations with key independent sector employers, including dispute resolution as required, along with influencing activity to shape the long-term national agenda for pay in the IHSC sectors. Pay negotiations and consultations were conducted on behalf of members at several large employers, including Marie Curie, Four Seasons Healthcare, Huntercombe Group and CareTech/Coveberry.

We are only able to enter collective bargaining for those employers where we have recognition agreements in place. This presents a challenge as we represent members working for over 25,000 different employers across health and social care. That's why another priority for 2022 was the development of medium and long-term solutions, seeking to influence in the IHSC sectors through sector-wide collective bargaining forums, with forums established for each area operating within the IHSC sectors.

We also continued to seek to improve the pay, terms and conditions for members employed by general practices. This key part of the nursing workforce is vital in the delivery of NHS primary care but almost all are employed by general practices and as such are not employed on full NHS terms and conditions. We sought ring-fenced funding to ensure the pay, terms and conditions of GP nursing staff at least match the NHS equivalent and will continue further action across the UK to improve the employment terms and conditions of our members in this sector.

Strengthening terms and conditions

Activity to strengthen terms and conditions continued throughout 2022: in the NHS this has predominantly been exercised through the NHS Staff Council, whilst in the independent health and social care sectors this has been exercised through direct influencing and bargaining with employers.

In 2022, an additional bank holiday was agreed by the UK Government to mark the Queen's Jubilee. As such, activity in the early part of the year included influencing to ensure appropriate allocation and payments were in place relating to NHS staff working, or not working, the Jubilee Bank Holiday.

The cost of living increased dramatically in 2022 as inflation soared. Accordingly, mileage allowance rates became an issue which was given significant attention at a national level. Agreements on NHS mileage allowance were reached nationally in Scotland and Wales, with the RCN in England pursuing and securing the implementation of local agreements in relation to mileage. Activity on this has continued into 2023.



Job evaluation

Activity on job evaluation was another focus throughout 2022, with a strong and clear position taken by the RCN that members have a real opportunity to influence their own pay through progression of job evaluation review cases. Accordingly, the UK Pay Programme sought to bring job evaluation onto a stronger footing throughout 2022, with this activity continuing into 2023. This commenced with the establishment of the RCN Trade Union Committee Job Evaluation sub-group, to ensure that the member voice is held central to the development of job evaluation plans and activity. This sub-group oversees the development of a range of job evaluation resources, which are due to be launched with members in 2023. The resources will empower individual members to progress job evaluation reviews themselves and case studies where such action has been successful remains an important campaigning tool.

We have also submitted evidence to the NHS Staff Council Job Evaluation Group: and we have been the lead union in developing this evidence. The submission made the case that nursing roles having changed significantly since the initial introduction of the NHS Agenda for Change Job Evaluation Scheme and the associated pay bands. The submission maps evidence drawn from current practice against banding profiles and the NMC competencies, demonstrating a compelling case for an adjustment to be made to member pay based on a widespread increase in responsibility and complexity of duties within the nursing workforce.

Pay progression

Pay progression was identified in 2022 as a priority for long-term shaping and influencing, both within the NHS and across the IHSC sectors. In the NHS, long-term positions were established in relation to Band 2 to Band 3 and Band 5 to Band 6 run-through and progression, and this was reinforced by the National Nursing Profiles Review evidence submission as outlined in the job evaluation section of this review. Activity in this area continues and as we work to see run-through and progression frameworks adopted within NHS pay, Terms and Conditions.

In the IHSC sectors, pay progression activity is contingent upon the employer. We have a long-term focus to develop and support pay progression in the IHSC sectors and to use the pay bargaining mechanisms already in place to support this. Activity in 2022 focused on working towards our long-term position and identifying and using the levers available to influence long-term pay progression frameworks.

Organising and mobilising members in the campaign for fair pay

Our staff and members were mobilised to unprecedented levels in 2022, benefiting from our structural drive toward organising as well as campaigning efforts in preceding years. Members mobilised and self-organised before, during and after the statutory ballot to ensure our mandate was achieved and as part of this, thousands of members were recruited to become voting volunteers and strike volunteers. Many more members received training to use the peer-to-peer texting platform, ThruText, and new campaign materials including leaflets, guides and workshops on having persuasive conversations about pay. A large range of campaign literature and merchandise was also produced.

These efforts were supported by several marketing campaigns. These included billboards and bus stop advertising in every corner of the UK, newspaper adverts, several letters from the General Secretary to our members, and consistent digital advertising on Google, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn. It also involved a robust email and

SMS marketing campaign for bespoke member segments and several new campaign actions that helped to identify, build and ultimately deepen members' engagement in the campaign. A temporary brand was also developed and deployed to distinctly identify industrial action related activity from the rest of the campaign.

The media campaign saw us dominate the news and consumer slots for months. **In the final quarter of 2022 and first few weeks of 2023 when strikes continued, our campaign was covered across the UK in 77,986 online news outlets, 5,045 times in newspapers and 54,906 times in broadcast media.** Members continue to be the most effective storytellers in the campaign, and spoke regularly to broadcast media, and contributed to video content at the heart of our ongoing social media campaign. We continued to set the news and political agenda, with our General Secretary & Chief Executive appearing on many political news programmes and the campaign was covered extensively in diverse media outlets including on several front pages, and consistent prime time slots.

The public were also mobilised in 2022, particularly in relation to strike action. Within a matter of weeks, we raised £190,000 in donations to our strike fund and 80,000 people signed an open letter to the Prime Minister. On two days alone, when our first strikes took place, our main social media accounts gained over 10,000 followers and our four primary hashtags created 7.5 million impressions and triggered 271,000 engagements. The nursing profession ranked consistently well in our polling to test sentiment, with over two-thirds backing nursing strikes and the proportion of public support being consistently higher than that enjoyed by other professions.

The evidence underpinning our calls for *Fair Pay for Nursing* was also enhanced with newly commissioned research and reports launched, covering vast ground from the government's inefficient spending on agency and bank workers to the real terms fall in NHS pay compared to other sectors.

Looking ahead

To support the expanded focus of the UK Pay Programme as it moved into 2022, activity was ongoing to develop long-term positions for our pay, terms and conditions activity. *Valuing and Investing in Nursing and Nursing Support Workers: A Five-Year Plan for Pay, Terms and Conditions 2022-27* set out an ambitious vision for where member pay, terms and conditions should be by 2027, including commitments to a starting salary of at least £36,000 by 2027 and the adoption of the position that nursing support worker wages should be above the Real Living Wage due to their skilled work. The five-year strategic plan establishes 34 objectives for pay, terms and conditions as set over the short, medium and long term, and covers seven separate areas:

1. NHS pay, terms and conditions
2. IHSC pay, terms and conditions
3. job evaluation
4. pay progression
5. pensions
6. long-term pay positioning
7. a new area of activity which will seek to understand and address the ethnicity pay gap.

As we moved into 2023, activity focused, activity will focus on implementing the five-year plan and delivering our long-term vision for valuing and investing in nursing.

3. Ensure the successful delivery of our Staffing for Safe and Effective Care (SSEC) programme



Introduction

As an organisation, the need for us to be both proactive and reactive continued, as the focus on fair pay and staff staffing continually evolved and strike action became a reality. The industrial disputes provided opportunities to highlight the impact of pay on safe staffing levels and a huge amount of work was completed in relation to our SSEC programme objectives.

1. To deliver our overall approach to staffing for safe and effective care work (including implementing the RCN's five principles) through leadership of country campaign groups.
2. To have in place evidence and knowledge that will support our position.
3. To continue to harness support for our position on staffing for safe and effective care, from members, the public, stakeholders and politicians.
4. To use UK safe staffing as a vehicle for our member engagement strategy.
5. To drive change which enables staffing for safe and effective care in every health and care setting, regardless of provider.
6. To empower and enable members and their colleagues in their workplace to feel psychologically safe to raise staffing level concerns related to quality and safety and deliver key campaign messages on an ongoing basis..

England

We proposed key amendments to the Health & Care Act 2022 on its journey through Parliament, including an ask for workforce assessment and workforce accountability to be part of the legislation. Influencing for this included briefing Baroness Watkins to enable her support of the amendments in the House of Lords and a public and member call to action to email their MP, in which all MPs were reached requesting that they support the amendments. Unfortunately, despite this pressure, the legislation was passed without the amendments, demonstrating a lack of government willingness to meaningfully take on safe nurse staffing levels issues.

The England SSEC programme looked at other non-legislative opportunities to embed safe staffing within health care, with particular emphasis on the RCN Nursing Workforce Standards. This included the recruitment of a professional nurse lead for workforce who has hands on experience of using the RCN *Nursing Workforce Standards* to effect change in their own workplace. As a result we have developed:

- a *Nursing Workforce Standards* checklist for use by our staff, reps, members and nurses to use to assess the safe staffing issues in the workplace
- a standards champion role
- accredited standards training for band 7 nurses
- RCN staff workshops on how to use the standards to challenge in their areas.

We also worked with Allocate, the software owners of Datix, Safer Nursing Care and Healthroster, to look at ways of making these tools more easily used and interrogated by nurses for safe staffing issues.

We were successful in obtaining a place at the table of the Royal Colleges consultation panel for Getting It Right First Time (GIRFT), a national programme across England, designed to improve the treatment and care of patients through indepth review of services, benchmarking, and presenting a data-driven evidence base to support change.

Early in 2022, regional activity focused on safe staffing issues, which resulted in successful member-led campaigns at the Royal Free in London, Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, and a West Midlands dialysis unit.





Wales

The RCN Wales *For the Full Team* campaign included several innovative actions, including light projections highlighting safe staffing on iconic Welsh landmarks and a public call to action to sign a petition to extend the Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act 2016 establishment methodology duties into more clinical areas. In April, this petition achieved the 10,000 signatures needed to ensure a Senedd parliamentary debate, which took place in September. At the same time, we published our *Nursing in Numbers* (rcn.org.uk/Professional-Development/publications/wales-nursing-numbers-english-pub-010-524) report and our members met with more than two-thirds of sitting Members of Senedd Parliament to discuss safe staffing at an event in the Senedd.

A ward manager report and celebratory film was launched in February, showcasing that great nursing leadership brings improvements in patient care and reduces adverse incidents and therefore ward managers need to be supernumerary.

Other reports and evidence were published throughout the year, including the Parliamentary launch of our Nursing Retention Report, our Progress and Challenge 2 Report on the Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act 2016. Evidence was submitted to Health Education and Improvement Wales on nursing education commissioning and mental health workforce planning.

Scotland

We mounted a campaign of sustained pressure on the Scottish Government to influence progress with the Health and Care (staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019, including:

- a round table between RCN members and Members of the Scottish Parliament
- publication of RCN Scotland's *Nursing Workforce* report
- attendance by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport at an RCN Congress Q&A event in Glasgow

Following this pressure, the Scottish Government announced a timeline for implementation of the Act. It set out a 21-month programme of work ([rcn.org.uk/scotland/-/media/Royal-College-Of-Nursing/Documents/Countries-and-regions/Scotland/2022/HCSA-Implementation-Timetable-June-2022.pdf](https://www.rcn.org.uk/scotland/-/media/Royal-College-Of-Nursing/Documents/Countries-and-regions/Scotland/2022/HCSA-Implementation-Timetable-June-2022.pdf)) which will see the Act come into force from April 2024.

During the last few months of 2022, we received updated chapters of the guidance for the Act and provided rigorous comment to all fourteen chapters within a very tight timescale, to ensure it clearly and accurately reflected the legislation.

Also, as a result of our influencing work during the year, there was an increase in the proposed number of student places for adult, learning disability and mental health nursing students.

Northern Ireland

Work on the implementation of the *Delivering Care Framework* continued during 2022. A new oversight board was set up to monitor progress, with our Northern Ireland Director representing us on the board. Due to the suspension of the Northern Ireland Executive the pace of work has been slower than expected. However, we raised our concerns and meetings have taken place with all political parties to discuss safe nurse staffing levels.

We also worked as part of the Nursing and Midwifery Task group (NMTG) workforce sub-group, chaired by our Northern Ireland Director. The work of this group included:

- the publication of a retention report and implementation plan
- the development of a paper on legislative “asks” and expectations in collaboration with other unions
- the recruitment of new nurse consultant and advanced nurse practitioner posts
- the development of a new perioperative framework.



Communications

Communication activity on staffing for safe and effective care was prolific throughout 2022. Starting off with the *Unsustainable Pressures* campaign, moving on to Congress and then into industrial action balloting and activity, outputs included:

- Explainer videos of the *Nursing Workforce Standards* to celebrate their anniversary.
- A pocket guide to the *Nursing Workforce Standards* for members and reps.
- Four pay and safe staffing special *Nursing Matters* podcasts.
- The alignment of *Fair Pay for Nursing* and *Safe Staffing Saves Lives* branding and messaging, with a vast array of social media messaging making the strong connection between pay and safe staffing highly visible.
- The delivery of cross-platform digital content to promote and further embed the standards and encourage engagement.
- Publication of member case studies on our website.
- A campaign of NHS intranet adverts on our *Nursing Workforce Standards*, with 30 NHS trusts in England targeted and 350,210 impressions delivered.
- The launch of the *Last Shift Survey* report at Congress with its key findings displayed on digital screens.

Policy

A key part of 2022 work for our SSEC Policy team was the launch of a survey to members asking them to report on their last shift, resulting in a report based on 20,000 responses showing that eight out of 10 shifts were not staffed safely. This led to peers in the House of Lords discussing the unsustainable pressures on nursing.

We also worked on a UK-wide retention strategy, bringing together work from across the four countries. As a result, we developed our position on retention practices and issues.

Nursing

Importantly for the UK SSEC Nursing workstream, 2022 saw the one-year anniversary of the launch of our *Nursing Workforce Standards* and focus on their implementation continued, with the development of a country and setting-specific online presentation for members and nurses. Our Nursing Workforce Standards were also the focus of the Mona Grey lecture at Congress in June.

As an addition to the *Raising Concerns* web resource, our nursing and communications teams worked to produce accessible form of words that members could “copy and paste” into incident reporting formats.

The RCN *Nursing Workforce Standards* were also the focus of the Mona Grey lecture at RCN Congress in June.

Looking ahead

The very clear message from our members throughout the campaign of industrial action has been that safe staffing matters a lot to them. The SSEC programme will be working to continue harnessing this sentiment throughout 2023.

Plans include:

- the development of a process to gain the endorsement and adoption of the *Nursing Workforce Standards* by organisations such as the Care Quality Commission and Nursing and Midwifery Council, etc
- mapping all currently available UK professional guidance in relation to nurse-to-patient staffing
- an RCN Scotland workforce report
- an RCN Wales care home project
- submission of commentary to the first draft of Northern Ireland staffing legislation
- launch of our summaries of England GIRFT reports, to support our reps and members in knowing what good practice for safe staffing looks like in specialist areas in their workplace
- implementation of our plan to harness the momentum of voting and strike volunteers for further SSEC activity.

4. Implement and deliver the RCN and RCNi's Education, Learning and Development (ELD) strategy



Introduction

We have a long history of supporting nursing staff with continuing professional development (CPD). Our ELD strategy has been designed for all those supporting and delivering nursing care within the UK health and social care system. Importantly, this strategy meets our Royal Charter mandate 'to promote the science and art of nursing and education and training in the profession of nursing'.

At the heart of our strategy is a culture of lifelong learning, based on collaboration with our members, representing a diversity of perspectives in all we do, where the views and beliefs of others are respected.

RCN Learn

Building on these principles, to position us as a leading source of education, RCN Learn was fully launched to all members in December 2022 by the ELD Programme.

RCN Learn is an online space hosted on our website which offers easy access to the learning and education our members need. It presents quality-assured learning resources from the RCN and RCNi in one dedicated place.

It includes resources and topics of interest to nurses, midwives, students, health care assistants, nursing associates and nursing support workers and is accessible by our members, registered users, and subscribers to RCNi plus.



The ELD Programme worked in partnership with the Professional Nursing Committee and staff across the Group to develop and deliver the work. Forums, Fellows and expert members from country and regional boards supported the development of RCN Learn and informed key decisions, through user testing and expert feedback.

The ELD Programme will continue to work with members to identify learning opportunities, partnerships and develop further UK-wide resources, ensuring learning and development are at the heart of what our members want and need. The resources provide inclusive online and face-to-face programmes to support career development.

Our members and staff provided expert feedback on their experience and journey through RCN Learn. This proved invaluable feedback ahead of the soft launch, which took place in September, with an email to all members, along with a large social media campaign. The campaign consisted of an explanatory video of RCN Learn, adverts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, press releases, internal communications to staff, a webinar for students and blogs.

Members informed the development of further resources, which are now hosted on RCN Learn. Online modules launched in 2022 include:

- Pre-habilitation
- Every nurse an e-nurse.

RCN Professional Services

Throughout 2022, our UK-wide education teams successfully updated and delivered our professional leadership offer across health and social care. Further learning opportunities were developed which included a module on rehabilitation, as well as three modules in partnership with Coventry University, on infection prevention and control, leadership to improve physical and mental health, and sustainability.



For the seventh consecutive year the Royal Brompton Hospital commissioned our Compassionate Care programme. We also supported bids to Health Education England (HEE) for Psycho-Social Interventions (PSI) and to update and review the Green Light Toolkit (ndti.org.uk/resources/green-light-toolkit).



RCN Library and Archives

Here for you

Our library and archive service welcomed members back into the library six days a week providing a space to research and access face-to-face library support, figures show over 2,000 visitors used our London library in 2022. We launched our 'Relax and recharge with RCN libraries' initiative, inviting members to visit our wellbeing areas which offer members free hot drinks and a space to relax, recharge and get online.

Achievements

Our library reached its centenary milestone. A poster visualising the timeline of the library's development won the Health Libraries Group prestigious 75th birthday prize. In collaboration with Cengage Gale, 22 historic journals were digitised and are now accessible globally. In January, the library launched a new exhibition on *A History of Care or Control? 100 Years of Learning Disability Nursing*.

The library team launched library support clinics to meet members' needs as diverse as accessing online articles or getting pointers on using databases. 2022 also saw the new archive catalogue go online enabling searching of this extensive and important collection of nursing history material.

RCN ELD Strategy

Our Library and Archive Service ensured that all courses were supported with reading lists, information literacy sessions, and self-service learning content, including delivering 28 sessions for the Developing Leadership Programme. The library continued to contribute to the development of new courses through our evidence services and underpinning the teaching and learning with key aspects of information literacy.

RCN Forums

In May, we launched our first public exhibition since before the pandemic. *A History of Care or Control? 100 Years of Learning Disability Nursing* was a collaboration between our Learning Disability Nursing Forum and History of Nursing Forum. A series of accompanying hybrid events exploring learning disability nursing past and present attracted more than 650 attendees, with special events and an Easy Read version of the exhibition targeted at adults with a learning disability. Our Fellows public events – *In Conversation with Nursing Pioneers* – both reached more than 120 attendees from across the general public, raising awareness of the contributions of RCN Fellows to nursing policy and mental health care.

COVID-19 Inquiry

The Library and Archive Service worked closely with our legal services team to prepare for the Scotland and UK COVID-19 inquiries. Our archive team has been gathered a wide range of electronic and print resources from the beginning of the pandemic to ensure we are fully prepared to give evidence. This material will also be central to our upcoming COVID-19 exhibition, *Unmasked*, set to launch in summer 2023.

Looking ahead

We will be launching a portfolio for members who are required to revalidate with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) during 2023. A portfolio for members who do not need to revalidate with the NMC portfolio will follow later in the year.

We will also be undertaking work on our research strategy, supported by the RCN Research Society, with two webinars for members scheduled.

NHS England has commissioned us to undertake the development of the Professional Nurse Advocate Standards for Education in England, which will be launched in Spring 2023.

5. Implement and deliver the RCN's independent health and social care strategy



Introduction

The independent health and social care (IHSC) sectors are an integral focus of our organisational transformation and a central part of our business. Achieving this integration will require co-ordination, constant focus and oversight, to embed this solid commitment across the organisation.

The IHSC Strategy is overseen by the IHSC Partnership Board, which met every six weeks during 2022. Adopting a co-production, co-design approach, the board includes two Council members, a member of the Professional Nursing Committee and the Trade Union Committee, alongside our staff, to enable collaboration and a seamless progression of work. This member/staff partnership is fostered throughout all stages of work, with expert members sitting on each of the workstreams.

Background

The overall aim of the IHSC Strategy is:

“The RCN will understand and engage with independent health and social care (IHSC) better so we can more effectively represent and support our members. Their value and contribution will be recognised and amplified through the RCN as the voice of nursing, and through fair and equal representation and active participation from branch to Council. Through better knowledge, understanding and representation our improved tailored membership offer will be explained with clarity and in language familiar to members in IHSC. RCN services should be of the same standard for all our members.”

Activity during 2022

We developed a dedicated section of the website for members who work across social care and independent health services which can be found at: rcn.org.uk/employment-and-pay/nursing-across-social-care-and-independent-health-services As new resources were created the website continued to be a welcoming, inclusive, and vibrant hub of content. A fixed-term 12-month digital resources co-ordinator post was successfully recruited to, to support this work.

To ensure this work is embedded across the whole of the organisation, a significant investment was approved by Council in January, to create 12 new independent health and social care lead nurse posts in our teams in Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and in each of the nine England regions. This gave us the ability to create a network of skilled, knowledgeable staff who can inform, influence and lead in developing excellence in independent health and social care within the College. These lead nurses have engaged with members, employers and stakeholders within their countries and regions and at a UK-wide level, they have engaged with external organisations to ensure that the College – as the voice of nursing – contributes towards key policy decisions at the highest level.

Three training courses in Northern Ireland specifically designed for members working in IHSC were RCN accredited and delivered, and a pilot delivery of one of the programmes Leading in a Crisis took place across the four countries to see how learning and expertise can be shared throughout the UK for the benefit of our members.

In Northern Ireland, a new award was created specifically for IHSC members at the RCN Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year Award. This was fully sponsored and had a significant number of applicants. Nominations across all categories from IHSC were increased, with 18 people shortlisted across a total of 12 categories. There were six winners, including both the winner and runner up in the main RCN Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year Award.

Also, in Northern Ireland we were able to get some significant pay awards for GP practice nurses whose employers had not passed on the Department of Health uplift for two years.

Analysis of member contact with RCN Direct in 2022 shows that 7.3% of these were from members working in nursing agencies, and they face a different set of challenges to those of our overall membership. The IHSC Strategy Partnership Board was set up to drive improvements in the way we recognise, interpret, and respond to data such as this.

A project plan for this work was agreed, beginning with a discovery phase, *Creating a Unique Selling Point (USP) for agency nurses*.



A suite of SMART key performance indicators (KPIs) has been developed and approved at the June 2022 IHSC Partnership Board.

	Objective	Key result
1	To achieve parity of representation across the RCN	The make-up of governance structures reflects the proportion of IHSC members in RCN membership by December 2025
2	To achieve parity of representation across the RCN	The make-up of accredited representatives and forum members reflects the proportion of IHSC members in RCN membership by December 2025
3	IHSC members feel valued	Entries submitted to (and winners of) RCN Nurse of the Year Awards (UK, NI, Scotland, Wales) reflect the proportion of IHSC members in RCN membership, by December 2025
4	IHSC members feel valued	Nominations submitted to (and winners of) RCN Awards reflects the proportion of IHSC members in RCN membership, by December 2025
5	IHSC members engage with us and participate more actively in our activities	Members who work in IHSC and NHS settings access Library and Archive Services in a proportionate way, by December 2025
6	IHSC members engage with us and participate more actively in our activities	Members buying Professional Services programmes reflects the proportion of IHSC members in RCN membership, by December 2025
7	IHSC members feel represented	The output of IHSC-specific content across our digital, magazine and media channels reflects the proportion of IHSC members in RCN membership, by December 2025

The SenseMaker® tool continued to be a vital resource and has run in Northern Ireland and Scotland, with several reports focusing on IHSC members. We used the tool to capture our member stories and emotional state with them sharing their day-to-day experiences and prioritising what was important to them at the time and this allowed us to track changes in how they were feeling. The tool is being rolled-out across the rest of the UK.

A three-month digital recruitment campaign commenced in October 2022. Early results indicate this to be an effective way of recruiting members from IHSC.

In May, we held a workshop entitled *Review and Renew Approach to Collective Bargaining* (IHSC), with key stakeholders across the four countries of the UK. Following discussion of the results of the workshop, the IHSC Partnership Board agreed to link with the *Fair Pay for Nursing* (FPFN) strategy and the Organising Strategy to develop a set of pay, terms and conditions principles for IHSC. This continues to be led by the FPFN Programme Board.

In October, the IHSC Partnership Board agreed to set up a new workstream, looking specifically at the needs of general practice nurses. Key staff members met with a group of general practice nursing clinical directors in November to discuss opportunities to work together, and a set of actions has been identified.

We worked in partnership with RCNi to build foundations for their offering for IHSC, in particular, agency nurses. A monthly recurring meeting has been established to maintain this going forward.

We also re-established links with contacts from across the IHSC sectors and we are feeding into key areas such as the Health Education England (HEE) Strategic Framework Review, the Chief Nurse Advisory Group, and Delegated Healthcare Interventions Stakeholder Group. The IHSC transformational lead is a member of these groups and will continue to push for our representation on relevant groups.

Our work in Scotland to influence the Scottish Government's plans for a National Care Service (NCS) continued during 2022. Billed as the biggest reform since the introduction of the NHS, the proposed NCS will impact on nursing staff in both community health and social care services. Legislation to create the NCS was published in June. We have been clear that, while the current system is unsustainable and needs to improve, now is not the right time to be embarking on an expensive and disruptive structural shake-up. In evidence to the Scottish Parliament's Health, Social Care and Sport Committee, we raised concerns about the lack of detail within the legislation and the continued need to recognise the role of nursing in social care.

Looking ahead

Our lead nurses will contribute on our *Nursing Workforce Standards* work to ensure the voice of IHSC is included.

We will ensure representation from IHSC at RCN and external events. In 2022, the IHSC transformational lead took part in a workshop with England's Chief Nurse for Adult Social Care at our sustainability nursing conference, and two panel sessions at the Care Show in October, at the NEC in Birmingham. We are working towards a vision of IHSC representation in all applicable RCN events and have started conversations with the events team around this.

We are working closely with the marketing team to shape its plan for 2023, including a calendar of activities and attendances at key sectoral events throughout the year.

We will establish a working group with agency nurse members to workshop key areas of concern and create a clear plan for short-, medium- and longer-term goals.

We will continue to engage with the Member Category Support Group to ensure IHSC is represented in decision-making around RCN membership category changes.

We will look to establish new best practice standards for terms and conditions in the IHSC sectors, to ensure that those members working for small employers have their information available to them which will advocate for their own pay, terms and conditions as required.

RCN representatives



Introduction

Reps are at the forefront of our ability to win change for members. 2022 proved to be a busy but effective year for our reps, as they continued to defend members' terms and conditions, advocate for their learning, health and safety needs, and lead industrial action in the NHS and the independent sector.

Building a stronger rep community

In 2022, we welcomed hundreds of members to new rep roles. The last six months of the year saw record levels of interest from members in becoming workplace reps, meaning that in the future we can extend the visibility and impact of reps for the benefit of all of our members in all settings.





Joint Reps conferences

We held two UK Joint Reps conferences in 2022 – one in April (online) and another in October (in person).

The October conference in Manchester was the largest ever RCN UK Joint Reps conference and saw 225 reps come together from across the UK to ignite the power of reps and build a strong future for change. The programme addressed the central role reps would play in the forthcoming strike action, but also included sessions about rep activity in the independent health and social care sector, tackling racism in nursing and on job evaluations.

Whilst at the October conference, we launched several publications (see next page) and recruited 44 more Changemakers (see page 43).

Strike action training

Hundreds of NHS reps attended Preparing for Strike Action training in November and December. Workshops were run to help RCN reps in the NHS prepare to be part of their local Industrial Dispute and Strike Action Committees and to support the work of those committees in considering derogation requests from employers. Another learning programme was delivered for those reps and other activists stepping up to lead effective and safe picket lines.



Publications for reps

Work-related stress resources

We worked with reps and staff to co-produce a range of resources for members, reps and nursing managers on work-related stress.

- *Stress and you* webpage for members:
rcn.org.uk/Get-Help/Managing-stress/Stress-and-you
- *Stress resource for reps* webpages and *pocket resource*:
rcn.org.uk/reps-hub/Stress-resource-for-reps
rcn.org.uk/Professional-Development/publications/stress-pocket-guide-uk-pub-010-143
- *Stress resource for managers* webpage:
rcn.org.uk/Get-Help/Managing-stress/Stress-resource-for-managers

We also worked with reps and staff to develop a number of additional pocket guides for reps.

- *Flexible Working: a guide for RCN reps*:
rcn.org.uk/Professional-Development/publications/flexible-working-a-pocket-guide-uk-pub-010-341
- *Neurodiversity: supporting neurodiverse members and creating inclusive workplaces*:
rcn.org.uk/Professional-Development/publications/neurodiversity-supporting-neurodivergent-members-uk-pub-010-399
- *Stewards' Pocketbook*:
rcn.org.uk/Professional-Development/publications/stewards-pocketbook-uk-pub-010-187

RCN Changemakers

RCN Changemakers are a community of reps who:

- have stepped forward and made a commitment to share their stories, ideas and energy in ways that motivate and inspire others to be changemakers in their own workplaces
- work in collaboration with RCN staff and others, using a co-creation approach, to develop new resources for reps and members drawing on their experience and expertise.

During 2022, our rep changemaker community increased by 40% from 124 to 172 learning reps, safety reps and stewards.

Looking ahead

In 2023 all the signs point to the community of RCN reps growing – and with it we want the opportunities for support, solidarity and learning to grow with it.

In January, the new UK Learning and Development Pathway for RCN reps launches. This is the culmination of a two-year improvement project, co-designed by reps and staff, to help new reps become more effective in their roles.

We will be preparing to launch the Activist Academy, a new home for all the learning and development reps and other activists need. We'll be looking especially at how to improve the learning offer available to more experienced reps.

In addition to this, reps can expect:

- new rep recruitment initiatives
- continued online learning on a variety of topics
- more conferences for our representatives
- continued up-to-date guidance and support.



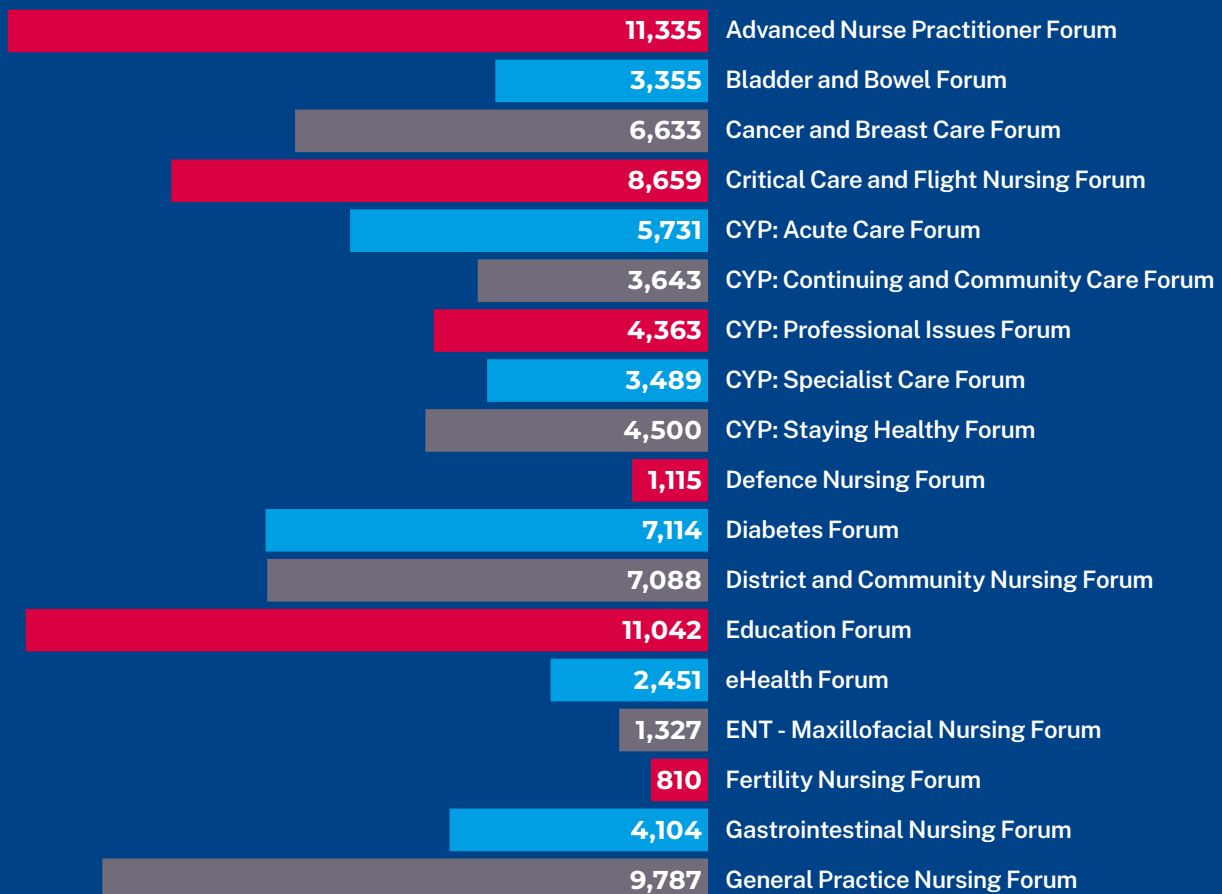
RCN forums



2022 saw another growth in membership in our UK professional forums. Over 200,000 members from a diverse range of nursing and midwifery disciplines across health, social care and education settings are registered with at least one of the 35 forums.

Our forums continued to make a vital contribution to our professional activity. They have taken a lead in setting clinical standards and guidance relevant to their specialist area of expertise to support practice, developed educational and other learning resources, and have taken steps to influence nursing policy and standards or care.

Forum membership figures as at 31 December 2022



The legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges of clinical work continued to have an impact on members' capacity to progress and complete some of the work planned. However, despite these ongoing challenges, they have demonstrated their resilience, commitment, and determination to develop and promote nursing practice; this is reflected in the vast array of work forum members have undertaken during 2022.

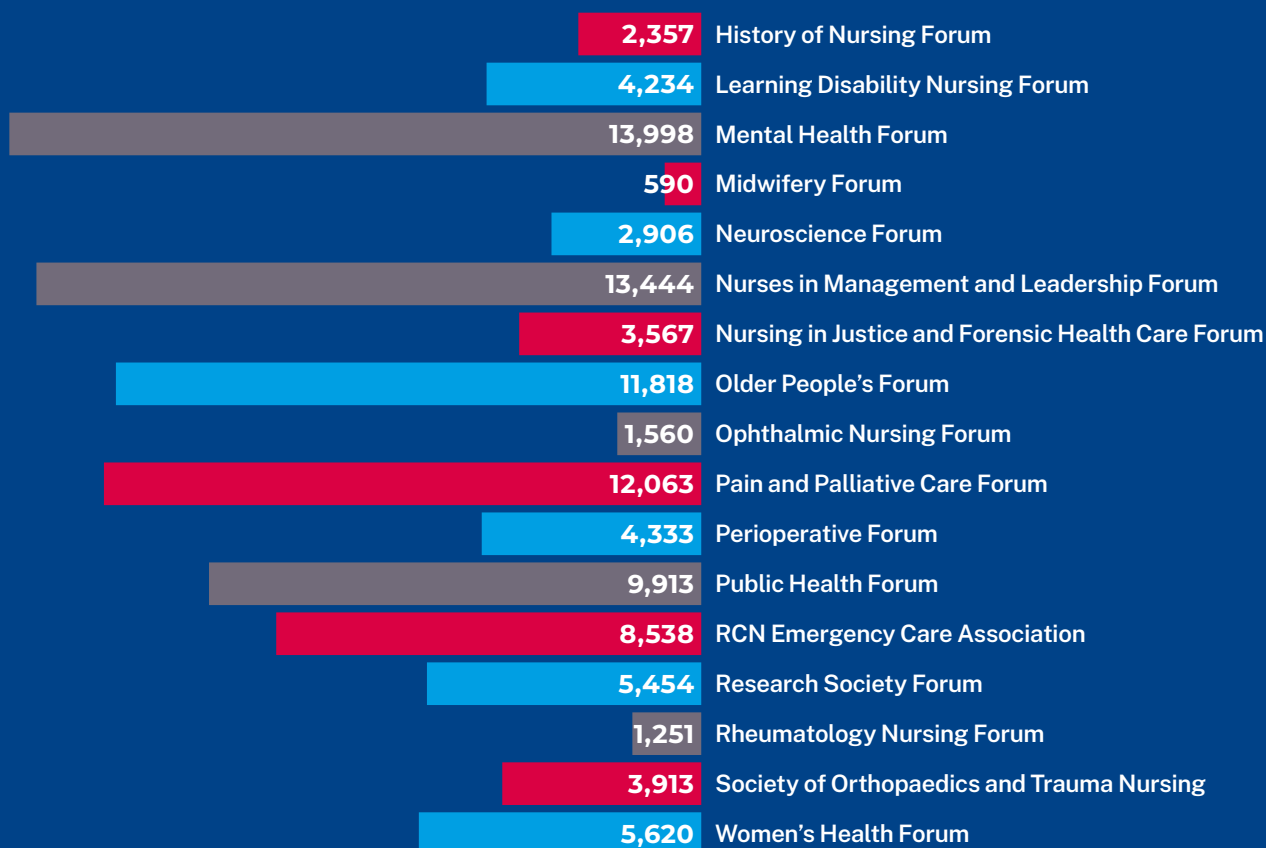
Events

Although some of the large in-person events, such as exhibitions, that we have been accustomed to seeing did not take place in 2022, the forums continued to deliver many online events throughout the year to support learning and improvements in care.

In April, the Education Forum successfully delivered the annual two-day national conference and exhibition online.

Some online events attracted in excess of 150 attendees and an international as well as a national audience; a reflection of the level of interest in the subject matter being presented and the value members place on these events.

The annual International Research Conference, led by the RCN Research Society, took place in person in September. It included a wide range of inspiring concurrent sessions, symposia and posters provided by some of the international delegates from Europe and as far as New Zealand, Australia and America.



Increased awareness of the mental stress that is being experienced by the nursing and other health care professionals has led to a greater recognition of the need to embrace a more collaborative approach to support the workforce. The Mental Health Forum, as part of the 'One Voice' collaborative hosted an online event, 'Distress here and now; thriving in adversity', to raise the issues around the level of mental distress across the health and social care workforce and outline ways in which it can be addressed.

Publications

Many forums actively progressed the development or review of clinical and professional resources. As a result, and with the support of funding from the Forums Governance Group (FGG), there were several publications published throughout the year.

The all-forum project on the review of the clinical supervision literature that had started in 2021, *Thirty Years of Clinical Supervision, where are we now and what next?*, was published in the Journal of Advance Nursing. This review was used as the evidence to underpin the RCN position statement on clinical supervision, published in October.

Transition from Fertility to Maternity Care, developed jointly by the Fertility Nursing and Midwifery forums, was published in September to provide guidance on care to midwifery and nursing staff caring for patients as they transition from fertility to maternity services.

The Society of Orthopaedics and Trauma Nursing published its updated guidance on *Pin Site Care* and a consensus guidance on *Peripheral Neurovascular Observations for Acute Limb Compartment Syndrome*.

Influencing activity

Throughout 2022, forum members seized opportunities to influence nursing policy and practice standards through representation activity at both national and local levels and through their contribution to clinical/professional consultations.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) meeting related to specific clinical areas, for example diabetes, has been a valuable forum for our members to represent the RCN and influence and advocate advancing nursing knowledge and professional practice. Members also met with government ministers to raise some of the challenges in nursing and midwifery care, provide evidence and propose solutions to influence change.

Congress

Each year, the professional forums play a vital role at Congress; Congress 2022 was no different. The forums led and contributed to resolution items and matters for discussion, which helped to shape some of the professional work that will be taken forward in 2023. In addition, they collaborated with others to create contemporary content for the health and wellbeing programmes that they were responsible for delivering.

One of the standout events at Congress 2022 was the World Café event that was hosted by the forums for the first time. The event was very well attended and helped to raise the profile of our forums through greater awareness of the range of forum activity and the opportunities for collaboration, as well as facilitating engagement with the wider membership.

Forums and Networks Review

In May, RCN Council agreed the report and recommendations of the Forums and Networks Review, which was subsequently published. A number of the operational recommendations identified were progressed and completed. Progress with the development and implementation of the broader and more widespread recommendations have been unavoidably delayed. Towards the end of 2022, an Executive Director of Nursing was appointed. The Forums and Networks Review remains a top priority for the Director of Nursing who is committed to leading the implementation of the recommendations during 2023, which will be reported into the Professional Nursing Committee.

Looking ahead

Work will continue to look at how the function and contribution of the forums can be optimised and further supported to raise the profile and champion the professional work in the College and to advocate for nursing and improvements in practice.

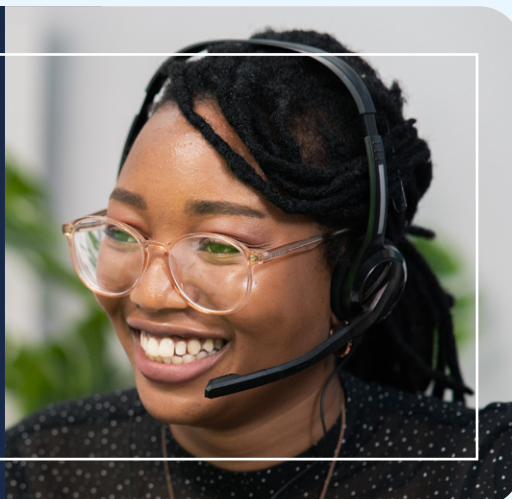
Delivery of the recommendations from the Forums and Networks Review will be a key priority. A process will be established to ensure forums are able to contribute and advise on the developments and implementation.

As the implementation of the Education, Learning and Development (ELD) strategy is rolled out and becomes embedded in practice, the interface with the ELD and the Forum Governance Group process for considering and agreeing member requests for the development of new resources, will need to be reviewed. Managing the transition so that the forums can continue to contribute to the development of professional resources are not deterred by the processes will be important.

Additionally, work will continue to ensure the forum outputs are better aligned to the education, learning and development priorities identified, and developed with the robust quality assurance framework agreed.



Here for you: RCN advice, support and representation in 2022



In addition to the workstreams detailed within this review, we have also included updates from our Advice Team at RCN Direct, our Creative, Publishing and Production Team in Communications, and the Parliamentary and Policy Teams within Nursing.

Providing expert advice and support

Throughout 2022, we provided vital information, guidance and support to our members all over the UK. RCN Direct (RCND) continued to offer help and advice over the telephone and through online channels. Our country, regional, Employment Relations and Legal teams represented members with case work and provided expert assistance where needed.

Across the year, RCND handled 95,617 member contacts across all channels. 38.5% of these were referred to other RCN departments (country/region, Legal, MSS or Nursing) for further support.

Our Advice Information Co-ordinators continued to triage social media posts relating to our main accounts. In 2022, we handled 233,682 posts in total.

In June, we introduced our virtual assistant (VA) to support members within finding information online. From June to December, our VA had 9,224 conversations.

During the first quarter of the year, we continued to see high levels of COVID-19 calls with vaccination queries accounting for 33% of our COVID-19 contact over this period. Although COVID-19 content reduced across the rest of the year, we continued to receive contact about long COVID. This was particularly notable from July to August.

Since September, we received 4,925 calls to our industrial action line. The main reasons for the calls were queries on ballot papers, derogation, strike benefit, taking part in picket lines, and non-members asking about joining.

Our Employment Relations and regional/country teams provided advice to members on various issues with disciplinary, ill health and contractual issues accounting for over 50% of referrals.

Our Legal Team primarily supported members with NMC/regulatory issues which made up 67% of legal referrals. The other top reasons for legal referrals were for support with criminal/police and coroners/fatal accident inquiry issues.

New resources for members

2022 was another busy year for the Creative, Publishing and Production (CPP) Team, who published almost 100 publications on our website. A number of these publications were nursing guidance, including:

- *Transition from Fertility to Maternity Care*
- *Eyes Right: Helping Non-ophthalmic Health Care Professionals Deliver Quality Care Safely*
- *Neurodiversity Guides for Employers, Managers, Staff and Students.*

In addition to these, the CPP Team also worked on the materials for the pay ballot and subsequent strike action, including mailings to members, design and production of beanie hats, placards, flyers, leaflets, posters and other communication activities. The team also worked closely with regions and countries to deliver stock to our offices throughout the UK.

Alongside our pay commitments, work continued as usual for this team, as they worked to support the organisation with recruitment and retention materials and collateral for Congress and our *Nurses' Day*, *Pride in Nursing*, and *Nursing Support Workers' Day* campaigns.

Nursing workforce recruitment and retention

In March, we launched a survey giving nursing and midwifery staff across the UK the opportunity to share their experiences of their last shift at work. The survey gave insight into the unsustainable pressures faced by staff across the UK. The findings were published in a report which was launched at Congress.

In November, we published a second report, highlighting how successive UK Governments have failed to tackle the nursing workforce crisis and called for the right numbers of registered nurses and nursing staff with the right skills in the right place, at the right time to ensure the delivery of safe and effective care.

Both reports were mentioned by Parliamentarians in the Westminster Parliament, quoting data and findings from these reports, and *Nursing Under Unsustainable Pressure* received a dedicated debate in the House of Lords. The findings from the *Last Shift Survey* report were quoted in Holyrood and a parliamentary motion was lodged highlighting the findings from the November report.

In July, we launched our report, *Retaining Nurses in the Profession: What Matters? As a direct result of this RCN Wales report, we were asked by the Minister for Health and Social Services to work with Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) to develop a retention plan and were asked to present the findings of the report to the NHS Wales Health Board Directors of Nursing and HEIW. Following this engagement, the Welsh Government published a National Implementation Workforce Plan and one of the actions within this plan was to deliver a nurse retention plan by April 2023, drawing on the findings of the our retention report. We were also invited to sit on the HEIW nursing retention task and finish group responsible for delivering the nurse retention plan. .*

In Northern Ireland, 2022 saw the successful lobbying, and subsequent co-production of the nursing and midwifery retention strategy and implementation plan for Northern Ireland.

Ethical international recruitment

We submitted evidence to the Health and Care Select Committee inquiry into the social care workforce, highlighting the use of excessive repayment clauses. As a result the committee made strong recommendations for the NHS to undertake a review of its recruitment

processes to ensure that international health and care staff are not subject to punitive repayment clauses in their contracts.

In August, the Department of Health and Social Care published an updated code of practice for the international recruitment of health and social care staff. The code set out the policy for international recruitment in the UK, devolved administrations adhere to the principles of the code but hold their own codes to reflect the different organisational structures in each nation. We influenced the drafting of the new guidance and secured several key changes including guiding principles on repayment clauses and the information that employers and recruiters are required to provide to candidates.

Cost of living

The cost of living crisis formed a significant portion of the zeitgeist over 2022 and engagement with governments across the UK included calls for supporting nursing staff on financial support and living costs. This included a call for nursing staff to be supported in paying for rising fuel costs ahead of the Spring Statement (Budget) during which the Chancellor announced a cut to fuel duty.

Pensions abatement

Pensions abatement has been an issue of concern for many members nearing or in retirement. We supported a number of actions throughout the year to lobby for pensions rule relaxation which occurred during the pandemic to be made permanent including around abatement rules. This included raising this through parliamentary questions and in meetings with UK Government ministers. In the Autumn of 2022, the then Health Secretary, Therese Coffey, announced a number of measures aimed at retaining staff, which included 'implementing permanent retirement flexibilities' and extending existing temporary measures to allow staff to return or stay returned into the service from retirement.

Submissions and evidence

In 2022, a total of 93 of submissions were made across all four countries to UK Government, UK and devolved parliaments' health system consultations and calls for evidence. This included a number of RCN recommendations being taken up by parliamentary committees. For example the UK Parliament's Health and Social Care Committee agreed with our recommendations on a variety of issues including workforce planning strategy, including calling for workforce projections; greater investment in the mental health workforce; and greater recognition of general practice nursing in the delivery of primary care.

This work also included supporting members to give oral evidence to select committees including our former President Denise Chaffer giving evidence to the Health and Social Care Select Committee on workforce retention and recruitment in May, which was reported in the press. RCN Council member for London and mental health nurse, Carol Webley-Brown gave oral evidence to the Joint Committee on the draft Mental Health Bill in November and RCN UK Deputy Director of Nursing, Lisa Elliot gave oral evidence to the House of Lords Public Services Committee inquiry on access to emergency services.

Legislative lobbying in Westminster Parliament

2022 was a busy year for us in the Westminster Parliament with 92 mentions in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. This spanned us being praised for the publication of the *Nursing Under Unsustainable Pressure: Staffing for Safe and Effective*

Care report and support for policy calls on UK Government accountability for workforce planning and supply in law as part of our lobbying on the Health and Care Act.

The Health and Care Act passed into law in April. The intention of the legislation was to integrate health and care services and lead to several changes to the health system. It presented a landmark opportunity to address structural issues and embed more collaborative working across health and social care. We were clear about the opportunity to embed government accountability for workforce into this legislation. We lobbied heavily on this Bill, both individually and as part of a major coalition of over 100+ health and care organisations, on a number of areas including safe staffing and nursing leadership. Our members were involved in direct engagement throughout the passage of the Bill which culminated in them sending over 10,000 emails to MPs at the final stages of the Bill. A key amendment for us during the passage of the Bill sought to secure better workforce planning by mandating the regular publication of independent assessments of current and future health and care workforce numbers. Although this was not secured during the progression of the Bill, continued lobbying secured this commitment from the Chancellor, Jeremy Hunt MP, in the Autumn Fiscal Statement. We expect the modelling to be made available with the forthcoming NHS Workforce Plan in Spring 2023.

The Professional Qualification Bill became an Act (law) in April. The legislation sought to clarify recognition of professional qualifications across borders following the UK's exit from the EU. The RCN lobbied on this legislation and was successful in influencing changes which protects and guarantees professional regulators' autonomy; and requirements for governments to consult with professional regulators before including mutual recognition agreements as part of trade deals. Both changes were key in ensuring patient safety was protected by ensuring that professional regulators maintain the right to decide who is fit to practise – regardless of any trade agreements that are made.

Northern Ireland lobbying

Northern Ireland has not had a functioning government since before the May 2022 Assembly election. In advance of this election, we developed a member-led manifesto and associated campaign, which focused on safe staffing, valuing nursing, and tackling health inequalities and building a sustainable future. Throughout the year, we collaborated with a range of other health organisations, particularly the medical royal colleges, in highlighting the negative impact of the continuing political crisis upon the health and wellbeing of the people of Northern Ireland.

We campaigned successfully for the development of a nursing and midwifery retention strategy and implementation plan for Northern Ireland, which was then co-produced by the Department of Health and the RCN, prior to publication in 2022.

In addition, we provided detailed oral and written evidence in lobbying successfully for the passage of the Hospital Parking Charges (Northern Ireland) Act 2022 and the Abortion Service (Safe Access Zones) Bill (Northern Ireland) 2023.

Scotland lobbying

In 2022, we continued to influence the drafting of statutory guidance to support the implementation of the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019. The majority of our proposed changes to the guidance were accepted. Our calls for the Scottish Government to publish a timetable for implementing the Act were also successful. Following a meeting between members and the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care at Congress, the Scottish Government committed to fully implement the Act from April 2024.

Influencing work included a focus on mental health policy and law reform, reflecting our 2022 policy priorities for Scotland, and a response was submitted to the Scottish Government's consultation on plans for a new Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Scotland.

We actively engaged with the Scottish Government on plans to develop a National Care Service (NCS), calling for clarity on the co-design process that is intended to help flesh out the detail of the framework NCS Bill. We successfully called for the Bill to be paused to enable further stakeholder engagement and for the detail of the plans to be developed.

Following our members debating and subsequently passing a resolution at Congress in 2022, which called on RCN Council to lobby the UK Government to support the introduction of safer injecting facilities across the UK, RCN Scotland responded to the Scottish Government consultation on a proposed Drugs Death (Prevention) (Scotland) Bill and will continue to engage as the Bill progresses.

Welsh Government lobbying

On safe staffing, we secured over 10,000 signatures on a Senedd/Welsh Parliament petition to extend Section 25B of the Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act 2016 to community and inpatient mental health settings. The ability to achieve over 10,000 signatures demonstrated a significant level of public support and shared ambition to ensure the delivery of safe and effective care is a priority for the Welsh Government. Due to the number of signatures obtained it was recommended by the Petition Committee for a plenary debate in the Senedd. The debate demonstrated the strength of support for the Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act 2016 by members from all political parties. During the debate, the Welsh Government set out the barriers for the extension of Section 25B, namely a 'nursing shortage'. In response we suggested recommendations to overcoming the barriers.

A debate was secured in the Senedd on nursing pay, in which we were mentioned more than 28 times, by all main political parties, demonstrating the visibility of our members and the pay dispute.

We have long called for transparency in data, particularly around registered nurse vacancies and Wales remains the only nation in the UK not to publish this data. We sought to publish this data using information contained within health board papers and when necessary, Freedom of Information requests. In 2022, we established the number of registered nurse vacancies had increased from 1,917 in 2021 to over 3,000 in 2022. Since publishing this data, the Welsh Government has committed to publishing the official registered nurse vacancy data by June 2023.

Thank you



RCN Council would like to thank the external advisers to all RCN Group committees, for the very significant expertise, knowledge and commitment they bring to the work of the RCN Group.

We would like to thank all the members who have played an active role in the organisation in 2022, including all our learning representatives, safety representatives and stewards, board, branch and committee members, and all those who have taken part in campaigns, and all our events. It really does make a difference.

We would like to express our warmest thanks to the companies listed below, for their substantial support in 2022. The same thanks go to all the other companies, groups and individuals - far too numerous to list here – who help to make our work possible.



We would also like to thank Rachel Armitage, Managing Director of RCNi and Deepa Korea, Director of RCN Foundation, the boards and trustees of RCNi and the RCN Foundation and all of their staff for their tireless work for the RCN Group.

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