

Key messages from the RCN Northern Ireland Board meeting

17 February 2025

- 1 In her opening remarks, the Board Chair welcomed new Board member Lidia Teague to her first Board meeting, and RCN Executive Director of Governance Natalie Zara.
- 2 The Board received a further briefing from the Associate Director, Employment Relations and Member Services on the 2024-2025 Agenda for Change pay award in Northern Ireland. The Board noted that the Health Minister had recently announced payment of the full 12 months of the award, backdated to 1 April 2024. He confirmed that this ensures the maintenance of pay parity with England and that the arrears will be paid in March 2025. The focus of the RCN pay campaign in Northern Ireland now falls on the 2025-2026 award, as well as taking forward existing priorities to secure fair pay for nursing, such as through the job evaluation process and lobbying for a separate pay spine for nursing within the Agenda for Change framework.
- 3 The Board received and discussed two presentations from the Executive Director of Governance, firstly on defining member involvement and being a member-led organisation, and secondly on the current status of the RCN branch review.
- 4 The Board received, discussed and approved a series of quarterly governance assurance reports covering the fourth quarter of 2024. These comprised: the performance highlight report; an updated RCN Northern Ireland risk register; a summary report on the delivery of the Board's operational plan during the quarter; and an operational performance data report. Various matters were raised by Board members for clarification and information, subsequently being addressed by staff. The Board also received, discussed and approved its new 2025 operational plan.
- 5 The Board received a briefing on the public inquiries in relation to health care issues currently taking place in Northern Ireland. These comprise: allegations of the abuse of patients at Muckamore Abbey Hospital; Southern Health and Social Care Trust urology services; neurology services in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust; proceedings related to hyponatraemia; as well as the UK Covid-19 public inquiry.
- 6 The Executive Director gave a detailed verbal update on a range of key professional issues. These included: the introduction of the Right Care, Right Person model in Northern Ireland; mental health nursing workforce, education and registration issues; concerns over nursing support worker staffing shortages; professional regulatory issues; the RCN's focus on addressing and eliminating corridor care; the Being Open framework and duty of candour; health and social care transformation and acute hospital service reconfiguration; and a review of district nursing.
- 7 The Board received, noted and duly approved progress reports on the various RCN Northern Ireland branch operational plans for the fourth quarter of 2024. The Board also received and noted the 2025 RCN Northern Ireland branch operational plans.
- 8 The Board received a verbal report on the progress of the developing arrangements for RCN Congress 2025, which will be held in Liverpool from 12 to 15 May.

- 9 The Board received a verbal report on consultation responses that are currently being progressed. The Board agreed to establish a task group to develop a response to a new consultation, from Eóin Tennyson MLA, on banning conversion practices, in relation to which he intends to table a Private Members' Bill in the Assembly.
- 10 An update from the Associate Director, Nursing Policy and Practice on the work of the RCN Northern Ireland Nursing Policy and Practice Department was received and noted, along with a 2024 year-end report from the RCN Northern Ireland networks.
- 11 The Board noted and endorsed the latest update reports received from RCN Council, the Trade Union Committee, the Professional Nursing Committee, the UK Reps Committee, the Nursing Support Workers Committee and the Student Committee.
- 12 The Board also received and noted update reports from the Board Chair and the Executive Director.
- 13 The next quarterly meeting of the RCN Northern Ireland Board will take place on Monday 19 May 2025.