

The quarterly magazine for RCNSTUDENTS

the answer

Spring 2007

IN THIS ISSUE:

Students making a difference – be inspired at Congress 2007

Interviews – top tips to perfect your technique

The future's bright – for learning disability nursing

move forward

transform

develop

progression

innovate

change:

[tʃeɪndʒ] noun & verb

the act or an instance of making or becoming different

shape

shift

evolve

advance

changemakers
of the **future**



Royal College
of Nursing

be inspired
at Congress 2007

Student booking form 2007

Students' Day Tuesday 17 April 2007 **FREE ENTRY**

CHANGEMAKERS

RCN CONGRESS 2007 Nursing in the new health age

Please supply all the relevant information and tick the appropriate boxes

RCN student members For entry into Congress and the Exhibition, inclusive of all Congress sessions

RCN membership no. (if applicable) _____

Forms returned without a membership number cannot be registered for Congress.
If you wish to become a member please call RCN Direct on 0845 772 6100.

The Exhibition will be open from Monday – Wednesday inclusive.

I wish to attend RCN Congress and Exhibition on:- **FREE** for RCN students to attend

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15-19 April inclusive | <input type="checkbox"/> I will be attending the reception at 18:30 on Tuesday, 17 April |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sunday, 15 April | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monday, 16 April | <input type="checkbox"/> I will be attending the dinner at 19:30 on Tuesday, 17 April |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tuesday, 17 April – Students' Day | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wednesday, 18 April | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thursday, 19 April | |

Personal Details

Title _____ Surname _____ Forename(s) _____

Preferred mailing address _____

Postcode _____

Email address _____ University name _____

Mobile number _____

What is your nearest RCN office? _____

- I am attending Congress for the first time
- I wish to make use of the childcare facilities
- I am attending as part of a university coach party

Special requirements (wheelchair access, hard of hearing, partially sighted etc.) _____

Non RCN members For entry into the Exhibition excluding all Congress sessions

- I would like to register to attend the Exhibition

Please return your completed form to RCN Congress 2007 Registrations,
RCN FREEPOST CF3790, Cardiff CF23 8YZ

This form may be photocopied or is also available online at
www.rcn.org.uk/students. Additional copies can be requested by
contacting Lisa Heneghan (020 7647 3758, lisa.heneghan@rcn.org.uk)

**Closing date for postal registrations:
Wednesday, 4 April. After this date all
students should register in person at
the Harrogate International Centre.**

Editorial

Since getting involved with the RCN and the ANS, I have had the opportunity to meet nursing students from all over the UK. Without a doubt you are the most interesting and diverse people I have encountered, and there is certainly no such person as the 'average' nursing student! Yet we are a collective, strongly bonded by our desire to become nurses, with caring natures and ethical principles.

Unfortunately, however, these are not the only ties holding nursing students together. Financial hardship, long tiring placements and, most recently, the worry that there simply will not be a job at the end are all major and real causes for concern.

The ANS Executive is a passionate team of students and we are all too aware of the pressures of being a nursing student in today's climate. Continued activity from members of the ANS and the RCN is showing signs of success. In Scotland, students have a structured preceptorship course with the guarantee of employment at the end of the course; paid maternity leave is available to students in England and Wales; and in Northern Ireland the bursary course as a whole is under review. These changes have all involved RCN activity.

Nursing as a profession is changing. Fortunately changing is something nursing students are really good at – at the end of the day that is what we do, change into nurses over the three or four years we spend studying. As long as we continue to communicate well, look out for each other and take an active role in effecting change, we can ensure these changes are changes for the better.



“This year, RCN Congress is back in Harrogate on 15–19 April”

RCN Congress is just round the corner again and it is a great opportunity for all nursing students across the UK to get involved with the work of the RCN and to network with other nursing students and colleagues. In this issue, you can find out what Congress is all about, plus what's happening on Students' Day on Tuesday 17 April. Make sure you book your place online at www.rcn.org.uk/congress

I look forward to seeing lots of you at Congress. [ans](http://www.rcn.org.uk/congress)

Chris Brown is consultant editor of *the answer*

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the answer	Editorial Advisory Board
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To secure your place at Congress 2007, complete the form on the opposite page or book online at www.rcn.org.uk/congress

news

Making changes: update from the ANS

The ANS strategy continues to focus on the core concerns currently facing nursing students.

The Age Discrimination Act in 2006 sparked a major review of the bursary system and the results of a workgroup, which included the RCN, were published in January. Find out how this could affect you on page 11 or at www.nhsstudentgrants.co.uk

In January, Conservative Party Leader David Cameron MP continued the debate on guaranteeing jobs for newly qualified students. Although he stopped short of making any promises, it is encouraging that he is recognising the gravity of this problem. The RCN continues to lobby on the issues but further work is needed to keep jobs at the top of all political agendas.

Mentorship is still a major part of the ANS strategy because a good mentor is vital to the student experience. The NMC consultation published in August goes some way to providing the necessary guidelines but this will have to be continuously monitored to ensure all recommendations are being implemented. Read more at www.nmc-uk.org

The 'future of nursing' also remains high on our agenda because continuing changes in the NHS mean nursing and nurses will have to adapt to the changing workplace.

Following their meeting in January, the ANS is continuing work on all these issues and increasing its focus on lobbying those with the greatest influence.

Get in the zone!

Since going live in September 2006, the new look RCN Student Zone has received over 10,000 visits. The new zone keeps you up to date with all the latest news and issues affecting today's nursing students, and provides clear and easy access to all your member services.

The most popular pages have been library services and student support pages. From these you can link straight through to membership services such as the online library and downloadable publications. Also valued are the career guidance pages where you can find out about the RCN's career services and contact



professional advisers in the specialisms of nursing that you are studying.

Take a look on the zone to find out all the details about forthcoming events, such as Students' Day at RCN Congress in April – you can even reserve your place at Congress online today.

Take a look at www.rcn.org.uk/students

» And, register your email address using the new 'MyRCN' service online so that we can keep you up to date with all the latest membership benefits and services.

Thanks and farewell to Susan Watt



We would like to say a big thank you to Susan Watt for all her dedication and hard work for RCN students over the

last year. The support and advice that she has given during her secondment as RCN Student Adviser has been second to none, and the strategy for the ANS has developed greatly under her guidance. We wish her well as she returns to Scotland as RCN Education and Clinical Effectiveness Adviser. Many thanks once again for all your hard work and support, Susan.

...and RCN Student Adviser Gill returns!

A big welcome back to Gill Robertson, who returned as RCN Student Adviser earlier this year. Gill had been seconded to work on widening the RCN's membership to include health care support workers, but now she's back and eager to find out about what is happening out there for students.

To hear more from Gill
» turn to page 10.

news

Nominate your 'mentor of the year'

The RCN Practice Education Forum will be holding their annual conference on 2 October 2007 at the RCN's headquarters in London.

A £100 book token donated by Elsevier will be awarded to a practice placement mentor who has had the most significant impact on learning in practice for pre-registration nursing students.

To nominate your mentor of choice, state in no more than 100 words why they should be awarded this prize. Make sure you include their contact details at the end of the testimonial.

Email your entries no later than Friday 27 July 2007 to >> kimberley.leigh@stockport.nhs.uk

Nurses unite for the 'National Day of Action'



On Saturday 3 March, hundreds of RCN members joined forces with other union activists for a National Day of Action.

More than 20 marches, rallies and events were held around the country in a national protest organised by NHS Together, an alliance of health unions formed to 'support and protect' the NHS.

10 out of 10!

Celebrating ten years of nursing and midwifery programme delivery in higher education in Scotland 2006

Susan Hopkins, RCN Education Adviser, attended this excellent conference, which had an unusual but very effective format. Presentations by students, lecturers and practice education facilitators formed the basis of the day, introduced by Scotland's Chief Nurse Paul Martin. There were various sessions on topics including mentorship, student issues, placement issues and newly-qualifieds, and all sectors of Scotland were well represented.

The overall message was to promote partnership and sharing of good ideas across the higher and further education sector and placement and practice education providers. A consistent approach will ultimately benefit students and ensure the best patient care.

Ten years have been well spent in laying solid foundations for the next ten years ... and beyond!

For a full report visit >> www.rcn.org.uk/education



East and West Midlands members at the Birmingham rally

News in brief

Keep us up to date

Make sure you keep the RCN up to speed with all your personal details and your training completion date by logging onto 'MyRCN'.

Visit >> www.rcn.org.uk/myrcn or turn to page 13 to read more.

ANS conference: how did it go?

The annual ANS Conference was held on 2 March. It was a great chance for nursing students to network and find out about the latest nursing, midwifery and student issues. With the theme 'Nursing for the future', the challenges of adapting to a changing profession and how to become more active as a student were explored.

Read a full report of the day at >> www.rcn.org.uk/students

RCN welcomes new General Secretary

In January, Dr Peter Carter OBE joined the RCN as General Secretary. He is an experienced and respected senior figure within the NHS and has the vision and commitment to lead the RCN. He also is dedicated to helping students find jobs on qualification.

Hear more from Dr Carter, on page 7

Celebrating nurses

Make a note in your diary of International Nurses' Day on 12 May. As well as marking the anniversary of Florence Nightingale birth, it is a chance to celebrate the fantastic work of the nursing profession across the world.

With the RCN's support, events and celebrations will be going on in your area.

For the latest information, email >> rcncampaigns@rcn.org.uk

For full details and more images, go to >> www.rcn.org.uk/dayofaction

congress 2007

Changemakers

What's going on for students at congress 2007?



ANS Executive member and seasoned 'Congress man' Iain Kightley guides you through the biggest week in the RCN's calendar

Around 6,000 nurses will be descending on Harrogate in April for RCN Congress. It is one of the UK's largest nursing conferences and exhibitions, and is the RCN's main debating forum. By taking part, you can help influence the future policy and the RCN's work for the year ahead.

On the agenda this year, are a number of items that will be of particular interest to students, including:

- **Practice placements – can we find the time?** A discussion on how 2,300 hours of practice placement learning is sustainable in the current NHS climate; and
- **Cutting back on basics?** A discussion on the impact of NHS modernisation on essential training and education of health care staff.

In addition to the main business of Congress, you can attend numerous educational events, workshops and seminars on a range of topics throughout the week. There will also be a chance to find out more on the

Professional Development Framework which aims to make the RCN more equitable and accessible for all members.

Plus there is the exhibition to get round! The RCN Congress Exhibition is one of the largest nursing exhibitions in the UK and showcases the latest health care products and jobs. You can visit potential employers, watch product demonstrations and pick up some promotional materials on your way around.

For students, the main events occur on Tuesday 17 April – Students' Day.

The theme for Students' Day is *Changemakers of the future*, and we will be exploring the many changes and challenges currently facing students. New General Secretary Dr Peter Carter will be speaking at the Student Assembly on his thoughts and ideas on students as 'changemakers of the future'.

We will also have the chance to hear from some inspiring student speakers who have made a real difference.



Andrea Simpson (pictured left) is a midwifery student who has been campaigning for better student bursaries,

and Helen Boothman (pictured right) will be talking about her project to improve the student experience.



With such a busy day, you will want some relaxation and entertainment in the evening, so the Student Ball is just the ticket! Following the Student Reception, will be a masque ball (so bring your masks along) where you will be serenaded by tribute band *Beatles for Sale*. A free buffet dinner will be provided, after which there will be a disco so you can boogie the night away.

Buses are being organised to bring nursing students up to Harrogate for Students' Day. So, once you've booked to come to Congress, get in touch with your university or ANS contact to secure your seat on the bus!

It will be great to see you at Congress this year – let's make it the most successful Congress ever for students.

 ANS

Find out more about RCN Congress and book your place at www.rcn.org.uk/congress

of the future

A message from your new General Secretary

As many of you know, this will be my first Congress as RCN General Secretary. I have heard so much about the energy, passion and commitment that students put into Congress, so I am particularly looking forward to addressing you, the RCN's student members, at your Assembly on Students' Day.



Students are the lifeblood of nursing. The future of the nursing profession and the delivery of quality patient care depend on supporting, developing and finding work for students on qualification. This is a future that all of you deserve.

However, these are times of great challenge and change as we begin to see the real impact of NHS deficits. The RCN is working hard on your behalf to ensure you will each have work and a decent pension to see you through your life as a nurse. I urge you to continue to support the RCN's campaigns and to rest-assured that the RCN is here for you.

The theme for Students' Day is *Changemakers of the future*, which I believe is such a fitting title. Students have always been highly skilled at adapting to change, both in your courses as you juggle practice placements and cope with financial pressures, and outside your studies. So many of you are taking on extra roles within the RCN and beyond, and I know we will be hearing from some inspiring students at the Assembly.

I look forward to seeing and joining many of you on Students' Day.

Dr Peter Carter OBE

Students' Day: what's happening and when

RCN Congress takes place from Sunday 15 to Thursday 19 April with the exhibition running from Monday 16 to Wednesday 18 April. The week will be packed full of debates, educational events and seminars. Join your fellow students for Students' Day which takes place on **Tuesday 17 April**.

Key timings during Congress week

Congress debating sessions:	09.00–10.30 11.15–12.30 14.30–15.45 16.15–17.30
Exhibition opening times:	09.00–17.30 (closing at 16.15 on Wednesday)
Nursing Standard seminars:	10.30–16.15 (45 minute sessions)

The timetable for Students' Day

09.00–13.00	Congress debating sessions, educational events, exhibition viewing, Nursing Standard seminars Venue: Harrogate International Centre (HIC) and surrounding hotels
13.00–14.00	Student Assembly on 'Changemakers of the Future' Venue: Main Auditorium of the HIC
14.00–17.30	Congress debating sessions, educational events, exhibition viewing, Nursing Standard seminars Venue: Harrogate International Centre and surrounding hotels
18.00–19.00	Student Reception Venue: The Majestic Hotel <i>A free drinks voucher will be available on the day in a special edition of the answer</i>
19.00–20.00	Students' Dinner Venue: The Majestic Hotel <i>Dinner vouchers will be available on the day in a special edition of the answer</i>
20.00–01.00	Students' Ball, featuring tribute band Beatles for Sale Venue: The Majestic Hotel <i>Entertainment and disco open to all delegates</i>

The future is bright for learning disability nursing

Jim Blair and Martin Bollard explain why there has never been a better time to be a learning disability nurse

People with learning disabilities face many challenges, not least health inequalities. Learning disability nurses are extremely well placed to take up the challenge of ensuring that the health care issues of these individuals are addressed appropriately within mainstream and specialist services.

UK government learning disability policies aim to enhance quality of life and are based on themes of:

- empowerment
- social inclusion
- citizenship
- experiencing choices and making decisions
- obtaining the same opportunities as other people
- having the same rights as other people.

Using their skills, knowledge and attitudes, learning disability nurses are pivotal in enhancing the life experiences and health opportunities of people with learning disabilities.


However, recent findings of poor practice and health inequalities show that the themes are not always acted upon. The Healthcare Commission Audit and Inspection reports on Merton and Sutton (2007) and Cornwall (2006) identified a number of supported living settings that did not meet government standards of care, and found that staff were not given adequate training or appropriate guidance in how to deliver the correct care.

Similarly, 2006 Disability Rights Commission (DRC) investigations found that people with learning disabilities are less likely to be given some of the evidence-based treatments and health checks that are afforded to those without a learning disability (DRC, 2006). Through their work, learning disability nurses are well placed to address the issues across services and agencies to ensure that these concerns become everyone's business.

The number of people with a learning disability will rise by around one per cent by 2016, with greater numbers now surviving into adulthood and living longer into old age (DH, 2001). Despite this, they are more likely to experience major illness, to develop serious conditions at a younger age and to die of them earlier than other people without a learning disability. Learning disability nurses are in a good position to support individuals and their families through these life events.

The knowledge base gained through undertaking learning disability nurse education is essential in order to effectively advocate for the needs of people with learning disabilities and their families. However, the National Service Frameworks do not meet the needs of people with learning disabilities. For example, people with learning disabilities have roughly double the rates of gastrointestinal cancers, but lower rates of prostate, breast, lung and cervical cancers than those without learning disabilities (RCN, 2006). A key

component of a learning disability nurse's role is to be an effective agent of change and advocate better services.

Learning disability nurses possess an array of skills, including communication, advocacy, person-centred practice, teaching, campaigning and health enhancement, promotion and facilitation. This is combined with evidence-based interventions and the ability to network across different inter-professional practice and agency boundaries. Learning disability nursing students and those already qualified must take up the challenges that the reports have highlighted, to lead the way in making tomorrow much brighter for this group of people. 

References

Commission for Healthcare Audit and Inspection (2007) *Investigation into the services for people with learning disabilities provided by Sutton and Merton Primary Care Trust*, London: CHAI.

Commission for Healthcare Audit and Inspection (2006) *Joint investigation into the services for people with learning disabilities at Cornwall Partnership NHS Trust*, London: CHAI.

Department of Health (2001) *Valuing people: a new strategy for learning disability for the 21st century*, London: HMSO.

Disability Rights Commission (2006) *Equal treatment: closing the gap*, London: DRC.

Royal College of Nursing (2006) *Meeting the health needs of people with learning disabilities: guidance for nursing staff*, London: RCN.

Jim Blair and Martin Bollard are committee members of the RCN's Learning Disability Forum and are senior lecturers in learning disability nursing. To find out more on this subject, visit www.rcn.org.uk/learningdisability

career focus

Perfecting your interview technique

Sharon Phillips, a professional development facilitator and KSF coordinator, gives six steps to being the best candidate for the job

Step 1 – what, when and where?

Find out where posts are advertised, such as vacancy bulletins or web pages. Don't wait for posts to come to you.

Step 2 – the application form.

Read the application form carefully, noting the closing date and to whom it has to be returned. Complete the form in black ink, legibly and with no damage or soiling – it is a good idea to do a rough draft first. Ensure you give accurate, honest and factual information and be prepared to explain any gaps. If you are unsure it will arrive in time, hand deliver it.

Additional or supporting information should be about a page long. It is your opportunity to sell yourself by showing relevant experience as well as literacy competency.

Step 3 – academic work

You may be asked to submit a written piece of academic work, and the organisation will be looking at academic ability, grammar, spelling and literacy skills. Think laterally and ensure you answer the question in a way that the other applicants may not. You need to make yourself stand out.

Step 4 – preparing for interview

Preparation builds confidence so research the job and the expectations of the role. Consider any experiences you have had in your current post or during training, which you can bring to the new role.

Read up on the latest professional issues and research, and be prepared to talk about how issues affect practice, resources or individuals.



© StockByte

Always confirm your attendance in writing. Find out where the interview will be in advance, and try to arrive ten minutes early to give time to relax and compose yourself.

Step 5 – presenting yourself at interview

First impressions are lasting impressions so avoid wearing anything that could detract the interviewers' attention from what you are saying. Dress in smart, professional clothes with polished shoes, tidy hair, clean nails and, if you wear it, moderate makeup.

On entering the interview room, smile and greet the panel, making eye contact with each interviewer. Sit in a relaxed posture and project confidence with positive body language (see box).

Step 6 – The interview

Be friendly and smile, but avoid telling jokes or talking excessively. Speak audibly and clearly and maintain eye contact with panel members. Listen to the questions and pause before answering to give yourself time to put your thoughts into place. Answer the question and not what you think is being asked – if unsure ask them to repeat or rephrase. Be brief and to the point, avoid waffling and don't talk

Positive body language

- Hold head up
- Hold shoulders upright
- Keep posture erect
- Firm handshake
- Steady eye contact
- Open arms/palms
- Plant both feet on the floor

about other skills that do not relate to the question.

Think laterally and try to give examples to substantiate answers. Show enthusiasm to learning new skills and be positive in your responses.

After the interview

If you are successful, reply in writing to accept the post and inform them of the earliest date you can start. If you have not been successful, try not to be disheartened. Use this as a learning curve by asking the panel for interview feedback so you can learn for the next time. [ans](#)

For guidance on careers, preparing for interviews and help with applications forms and CVs, contact the RCN Career Service on >> 0845 408 4391

student matters

Your mission, should you choose to accept it...

...is to find out what is happening with students and newly qualified staff where you are

Recently back from a secondment, RCN Student Adviser Gill Robertson is doing some detective work to get the low down on the student situation in your area



The Royal College of Nursing is your organisation and is keen to act on your behalf on issues that affect you – but to do that we have to know what is going on out there.

As the eagle-eyed among you will have noticed I have been away for a year on secondment and have just returned as your student adviser. My real thanks go to Susan Watt, who did a magnificent job while I was away.

But to enable me to pick up the reins as swiftly as possible it would be good to hear from as many of you as possible about what is happening in and around your university or trust. I have lots of questions for you, including:

Intakes

Have you still got the same numbers of student coming into your school? Is there still (or was there ever) a March/April intake?

Jobs on graduation

How many of the latest graduates or diplomats got jobs? Did they get full time posts or fixed term contracts?

We know that many of you work as health care assistants or support workers to enhance your bursaries – are there still jobs available out there?

Placements and deficits

Deficits are having an impact in England, but we know that the situation in the other three countries is also changing.


When you are on placement alongside support workers, do they tell you they are no longer able to go on any training because of lack of money, or are things going on as normal?

Has anybody been taken off your course because their secondment has been discontinued?

No other nursing union offers you a dedicated student team so why not take advantage and use us to help resolve your problems. As your student adviser, I am committed to working on your behalf and to ensuring that your issues remain at the top of the relevant agendas.

Please contact me about anything that you think we, as the RCN, need to know – whether that's large or small, local or potentially national.

Also if you have local activities or student meetings planned, make sure you let us know, so we can promote them on the dedicated Student Zone or in *the answer*.

Keep talking to us ...we want to hear from you... oh, and this message won't self destruct until all the issues have gone! 

Get in touch:

Email me at gill.robertson@rcn.org.uk or call 07711 808 509 or 020 7647 3765.

Lisa Heneghan, our student administrator, can be contacted at lisa.heneghan@rcn.org.uk or on 020 7647 3758.



student matters

New benefits for students



© Photodisc

RCN Welfare Adviser Claire Cannings gives an update on changes to the bursary scheme, maternity allowances and housing expenses in England

we will update you as soon as they are announced. There are no reported changes taking place to funding in Wales or Northern Ireland at the present time.

Formalisation of the NHS Bursary maternity award

The current interim maternity award arrangements have now been formalised, and allow students to take a break from their studies for up to 45 weeks and may also allow them to continue to receive most of their normal NHS bursary payments and allowances.

The maternity award may now also include payment of the childcare allowance element of the NHS Bursary.

Guidelines have been issued to higher education institutions, so if you are having problems planning your maternity leave with your university refer to the Student Grants Unit for advice.

Changes to the age-related allowances within the NHS Bursary Scheme


From 1 September 2007, there will be changes to some of the allowances and rules which will affect new students who begin their training on or after 1 September 2007. These are:

- an increase in the basic allowance (£244 at 2006/07 rates)

- the introduction of a new means-tested parents' learning allowance (by extending the single parent learning allowance to all parents)
- the removal of the age-related element of the dependants' allowance
- a change in the definition of independent status
- an increase in the 'independent' threshold.

Existing and other NHS-funded health care professional students who begin training before the 1 September 2007 are not affected by the rules changes. They will continue to receive the NHS Bursary with the current allowances until they complete training.

Rent to become an allowable expense

Currently, when assessing entitlement to the parent learners, dependants and childcare allowances, mortgage payments are an allowable expense but rent payments are not. Ministers have now agreed that from 1 September 2007 rent will be a deductible expense and treated the same as mortgage payments. This will affect all eligible students (new and existing) receiving the NHS Bursary. 

The Department of Health has been working with a number of stakeholders, such as NHS Bursaries, higher education institutions and trade unions, including the RCN, to review and update the NHS bursary scheme in England.

This work has focussed mainly on ensuring that the scheme complies with legislation and regulations, but other areas have also been taken into consideration.

There is some very good news regarding maternity awards and positive changes to the way housing expenses are assessed. Brief details of the changes to the scheme are listed below.

There are some changes also taking place in Scotland; details of these changes have yet to be released but

For full details of how the changes will affect you personally, and to download the updated NHS Bursaries guidance, *Financial help for healthcare students*, visit » www.nhsstudentgrants.co.uk

council and regional roundups

Council roundup

Firstly welcome back to Benn Mott who has returned from his placement in Australia – the extra help with Council work is much appreciated.

Council's work in committees and stakeholder groups is ongoing. I have been to a number of meetings with the stakeholders involving the bursary changes as a result of the Age Discrimination Act. In February I visited the NMC to get involved in discussions around the work on the student passport.

I think that nursing and health care are going through some of the biggest changes since the inception of the NHS and

much of these changes involve nursing education. Maybe this is why our courses appear to be constantly changing! This is also reflected in the work that the RCN and Council are undertaking with the Professional Development Framework project, the branch review and the services offered to members through RCN Direct. These are all designed to increase involvement of RCN members in trade union activities and its professional services. We are certainly living in interesting times.



Andrew Hart
RCN Council

andrew.hart@rcn.org.uk



Benn Mott
RCN Council

bennmott@gedben.com

Regional roundups

Northern Ireland:

Thanks to the RCN's tireless efforts to highlight the issues faced by nursing students, the health minister, Paul Goggins MP, has called for a thorough review of all aspects of financial support for nursing students in Northern Ireland, including childcare support and the bursary system. The RCN will ensure the voice of the ANS is listened to during this process.

The formation of the five 'super trusts' in Northern Ireland is due for completion by early April. Contact us with news or concerns about how this affects training and the availability of jobs.

Finally, the Northern Ireland ANS is hosting a nursing student ball in May. Keep an eye out on campus for posters or email us for details.



Chris Brown
Northern Ireland

cbrown24@qub.ac.uk



Ross Mawhinney
Northern Ireland

rmawhinneyo2@qub.ac.uk

Scotland:

Firstly welcome to new student representatives Charlie Sloan and Sean Read. With a busy year ahead, it is nice to have a full team once again to ensure that the student issues are taken forward to the most appropriate audiences across the country and on a national and international level.

For those of you approaching qualification and registration shortly, I wish you all the best in your future careers. For those students who have just joined us and started their nursing programmes, welcome to what hopefully

will be one of the most successful years for RCN student members in Scotland.



Iain Kightley
Scotland

ikightley@btinternet.com



Charles Sloan
Scotland

charles.sloan@yahoo.co.uk

Wales:

Hi everyone! Thank you to all who attended the student forum last month and the student conference day in London.

We now look towards RCN Congress in Harrogate. Students' Day takes place on Tuesday 17 April and is well worth coming to. There will be loads of free goodies as well as the chance to see what the RCN is doing and to meet fellow nursing students from across the UK.

If you are interested, please contact your local branch for more information or either of us on the email addresses below.



Iain McDonald
Wales

hsuoc6@bangor.ac.uk



Chris Cooper
Wales

can_of_bliss@hotmail.com

East Midlands region:

Hannah Harwood is the new East Midlands ANS Executive member. Hear from Hannah in the next issue of *the answer*.

Eastern region:

Welcome to all new members, I wish you all the best with your studies. And to those of you who are about to qualify, congratulations and good luck for the future.

Congress is fast approaching and I hope

regional roundups

many of you have booked your places for Students' Day on 17 April. We have transport booked for the Eastern region, so please email me if you require a seat. I cannot emphasise how great an opportunity Congress is – it is one event not to be missed!

We are currently looking to recruit student stewards for the region. For more information please do not hesitate to contact me.



Sonia Vanner
Eastern

soniavanner@hotmail.co.uk

London region:

Thank you to all students who attended the student conference and to those who made this wonderful event happen. Now I want as many of you as possible to be part of RCN Congress. We are organising buses to take members up to Harrogate on Students' Day. To book your place, email, pamela.nelson@rcn.org.uk

The next London Student Forum meeting is 25 April, and is your opportunity to debate and express any concerns you may have. Let me know if you are interested in coming or if you would like to become more active within the RCN. Remember, without you, we cannot change the future of nursing.



Ayodele Tijani
London

joytij83@yahoo.co.uk

North West region:

I am delighted to have been elected to represent the North West region. Currently in my third year at the

University of Chester, I am studying for a degree in adult nursing and I have represented fellow nursing students at local level on the university's student representative committee for the last two years. I am very excited about being able to expand this role further. I am passionate about the issues nursing students face, such as financial constraints from inadequate bursaries and the current employment crisis.

Please email me if you have any questions or wish to raise any issues – I will do my best to help.



Jeannie Jones
North West

jeanniejones24@aol.com

Northern region:

Position vacant. For details about becoming the ANS representative for the region, contact gill.robertson@rcn.org.uk

South East region:

Lynsey Newton is the new South East ANS Executive member. Hear from Lynsey in the next issue of *the answer*.

South West region:

Sorry, we don't have an update for this issue. For information, please contact Mark Rickman directly.



Mark Rickman
South West

mark@markrickman.wanadoo.co.uk

West Midlands region:

Hello all. It's that time of year again and Congress is nearly here! Students' Day is an excellent opportunity for professional development and networking, not

forgetting the Students' Ball! If you would like to come, contact your local student activist or me for details of coaches.

Your West Midlands student activists have been busy collecting information on the jobs crisis and providing support where we can. Some hospital trusts in the area face an uncertain future and we have found that many students are concerned but optimistic.

If you would like to join the West Midlands student forum as an activist, please email me or contact the Birmingham office.



Victoria Harper
West Midlands

harpervictoria@hotmail.com

Yorkshire and the Humber:

Hi everyone, I'm your new ANS executive committee member. I'm a mental health nursing student and a newcomer to the RCN and the ANS.

After the tragic death of a patient in the care of Leeds Mental Health Trust, we need to continue to pressurise the government and foster public support to increase jobs for qualified nurses and to promote the best interests of the patients and service users.

I am very aware of the continuing fears and anxieties regarding job opportunities across our region. Let me know if this affects or concerns you – together we are stronger, and together we can make a difference.



David Baker
Yorkshire / Humber
proffles@gmx.net

Keep up to date with MyRCN

Get the most from your RCN membership, by making sure we have your most up to date personal details. You can now amend most of your details online via our new membership service, MyRCN, or you can write, ring or email the RCN with any changes.

As a student, one of the most vital pieces of data we hold is the date you are due to complete your training. This is when you transfer automatically to 'Fully newly qualified' membership and start on a new payment rate. So, to ensure we don't charge you on the higher rate too soon, it's important we have the right completion date for you.

At MyRCN, you can also register your email address with us, so we can keep you up to date with the latest news and offers keep you up to date with the latest news and offers. And opt in to our new Email Service so that, in the future, you can start receiving *the answer* and other RCN publications electronically when they become available in that format.

MyRCN is available from a link at the top of every page on the RCN website, or at www.rcn.org.uk/myrcn

real lives



Where are they now?

RCN Chair of Congress Jason Warriner updates us on life since the ANS

I did my nurse training in 1990 in Leeds and, since qualifying, have worked in a variety of settings. I am currently a clinical nurse manager and matron for

sexual health and HIV in London, which is an extremely busy but rewarding role. I also spend time in South Africa working on a project for children with HIV and AIDS. This has been an amazing learning opportunity, and makes you realise how lucky we are in the UK to have the NHS, despite all the challenges it faces.

In 2006 I was elected RCN Chair of Congress, having previously served as Vice Chair for four years. I initially became involved with the RCN as a student on the ANS Executive Committee and since then have been a steward, branch chair, regional coordinating committee chair and

Agenda Committee member. Spending time as an RCN activist has given me many skills around political awareness and lobbying, leadership and representing nursing. This has definitely helped my career progression, and I would advise anyone to serve some time as an activist.

The Chair of Congress role is a challenging and exciting one, and 2007 will be my 17th consecutive Congress, so I could be described as a bit of an addict!

Over the years I have seen and experienced many changes to nursing and health care, but what stands out for me is how adaptable and creative nurses are when challenged with change. As the 'changemakers of the future', I hope to see as many of you as possible at Congress. [ANS](#)

Letters

Dear Editor,

I saw in *Nursing Standard* that there had been a change to student bursaries in England and they were to get £244 more per year. This makes England's bursaries much higher than those in Northern Ireland. Is it so much cheaper to live in Ulster than England? I don't think so. I still have to feed and clothe myself on a very small amount of money. I would love to work in the summer but can't because I would never see my children. When is there going to be some equality about the money nursing students get?

A worried student, Ulster

Ed says:

The RCN Association of Nursing Students is very aware of the disparity in bursaries and it campaigns consistently to get the bursary level increased. We are in constant talks with the bursary units around the four countries. In Northern Ireland we understand that there is to be a review of all aspects of financial support for nursing students including childcare. Keep in touch with your local ANS reps for up to date information (see page 12) and be assured that we will never stop working on your behalf.



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a day in the life of...

Life



a day in the
of a community midwife

Deb Cowley, a community midwife in South Gloucestershire, gives us an insight into a typical busy day at work

08.30

Arrive at the clinic base. Ten midwives share six full time equivalent posts, caring for around 450 women in and around the Yate and Chipping Sodbury areas. As part of a teaching trust we often mentor students, and today I am working with nursing student Sally as part of her community placement. I check my messages and my diary for the day, before carrying out a quick antenatal check on a distressed woman who felt a sharp pain and has not felt her baby move since. All is well and she is reassured.

09.30

Today I am on call, so I take the emergency equipment and pager and set off with Sally for a busy morning of postnatal visits. Our first call is to a woman whose baby I delivered five days before. Due to our traditional model of community care, it is rare that I deliver babies from my caseload, so seeing this particular mum is a pleasure for us all. We take baby

Millie's neonatal screening test, weigh her and check mum over as well.

My last visit concerns me greatly. A three week old baby has been slow to feed and gain weight and has been vomiting back some feeds. I am worried by his significant weight loss and arrange for him to be seen in hospital.

13.00

Sally and I grab a quick lunch then go to the GP surgery where I run my antenatal clinic. We see eleven women ranging from 16 to 40 weeks' gestation. Sally helps with urine checks and blood pressure readings and I demonstrate how we palpate a woman's abdomen to monitor the size and position of the baby. She is keen to go on to study midwifery after nursing. With her energy and enthusiasm, thirst for knowledge and easy, relaxed manner I believe she will make a good midwife.

The pager goes off twice during clinic with calls that I can deal with over the phone. I take blood from several women and enter the consultations on the computer. I arrange a growth scan for one woman whose baby is measuring small, and then have a word with a health visitor of my concerns about some women's social circumstances.


17.00

Back at the office to answer a few more messages and fit in one more call before going home. No time again to read my accumulating emails so will just have to access them another time.

18.30

Following a hospital review meeting, I ring the children's hospital to enquire after the baby I sent in. Fortunately he has been admitted and is to have surgery tomorrow for pyloric stenosis. I comfort and encourage his tearful mother and tell her I will ring again tomorrow.

Midnight

Finally fall into bed, close my eyes and reflect on a busy but rewarding day. There should be no unplanned homebirths tonight and the pager has not rung, but you can never be certain... 

Interested in a career in midwifery? For support and advice, log onto www.rcn.org.uk/midwifery

All Congress delegates are invited to the

2007 RCN Congress Students' Ball

Students' Day, Tuesday 17 April 2007
8pm until late at The Majestic Hotel

Party the night away with tribute band
● **'Beatles for Sale'** followed by a disco!

Book your place at Congress 2007
www.rcn.org.uk/students



Royal College
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