Your guide to RCN London

Royal College of Nursing
London

London... so many opportunities and challenges for nursing

London's population

- More than 7.5 million people live in the capital
- A third of the population are from ethnic minority groups, speaking more than 300 different languages
- The fastest growing population is the over 60s

London's health

- Life expectancy in males varies from 71 in the most disadvantaged areas to 88 in the wealthiest
- Childhood obesity is high – with 21% of 11 year olds at risk
- Immunisation levels in London are 10% below the England average – only 8 in 10 children receive the MMR vaccine
- Teenage pregnancy rates are at 51 per 1000 15-17 year olds compared to 42/1000 across England

Challenges to London's health care

- The NHS in London faces a £5bn shortfall in income over the next five years
- Based on NHS London estimates services face real term cuts of £5bn by 2017.

RCN London – representing nursing in the capital

- The RCN has 52,000 members across London working in the NHS, the independent sector and education. They work in every healthcare setting – from hospitals to community health, from GP practices to nursing homes and from mental health facilities to prisons.
- RCN London represents registered nurses, health care assistants and nursing students.
- More than 750 cases involving RCN members are currently open in London, covering employment, professional and other issues in the workplace.
- RCN London has 250 activist members, acting as RCN stewards, safety representatives and learning representatives.
- RCN London covers every London borough through its five sector teams, with 16 regional officers and five administrative officers.
- RCN London has 10 branches which co-ordinate local services for members. They are also represented through the London Regional Board and through two London region members on the RCN's governing Council.

Nursing: a frontline service for all Londoners

Bernell Bussue, Regional Director RCN London

With 52,000 nurses and health care assistants in membership, RCN London has a unique understanding of the role of nursing in the capital. London has a vibrant and diverse population with a variety of different health needs.

Anyone nursing in the capital has many opportunities open to them but also considerable pressures. And never more so than now. Healthcare in the capital and across England is experiencing major financial constraints accompanied by wholesale reform of the way the NHS operates. The challenge for nurses and nursing is to continue to deliver the best care for our patients whilst feeling confident about our own futures. That is where RCN London comes in.

We are concerned at the scale and pace of reform in the health service, and the risk that highly skilled nursing staff may simply walk away from the work they love or in some cases may be made redundant.

Particular issues for nursing in London now include the future of public sector pensions, already low for many nurses, the freezing of nurses' pay, the widespread risk of redundancy and the loss of strategic nurse leadership.

What RCN London provides is a strong voice for nursing, putting all these issues and more before government ministers, MPs and other key policy makers. It also gives support and advice to its members, both on employment and professional issues and represents them in the workplace.

For more information on RCN London go to our dedicated pages at www.rcn.org.uk

Royal College of Nursing
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Representing 52,000 members across the capital

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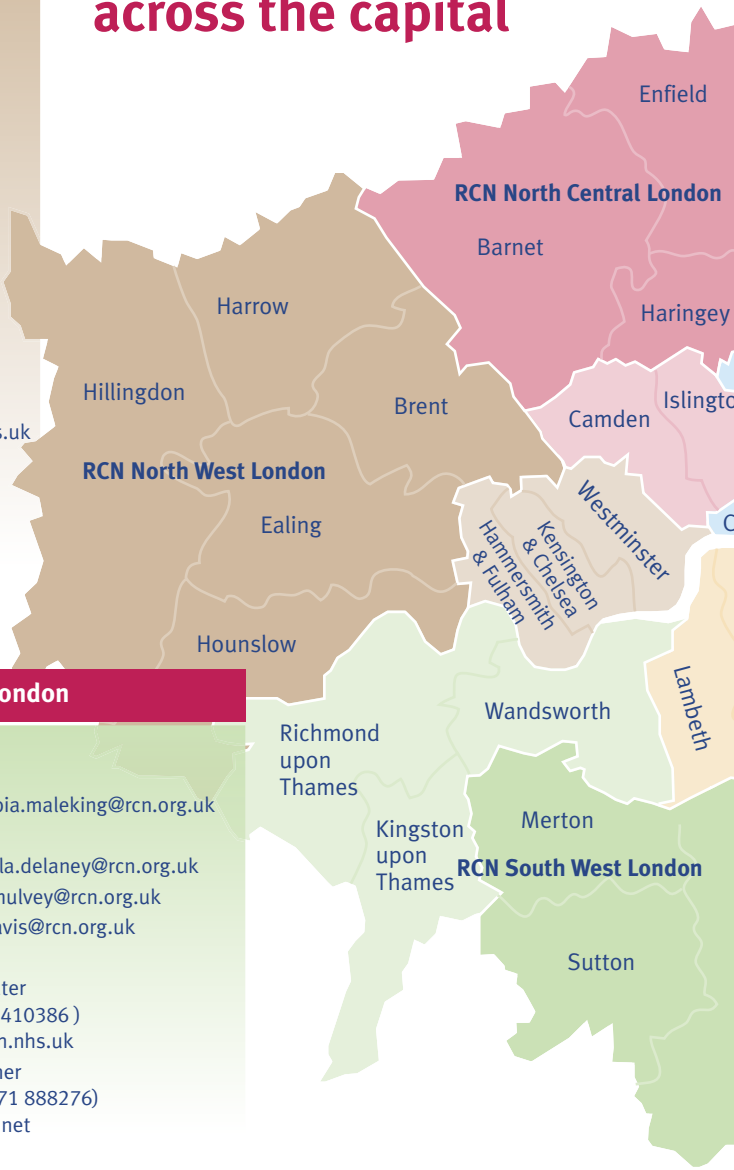

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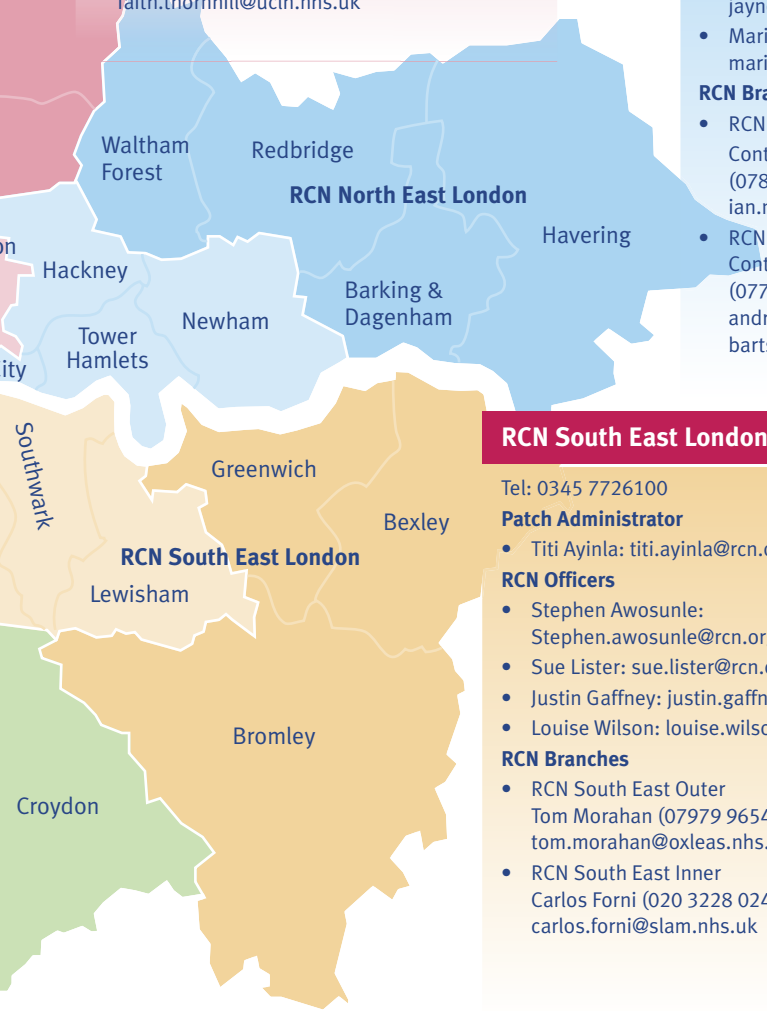

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RCN London: Support when it's needed most

"I was called to a disciplinary hearing by my Trust. I had previously been disciplined over a similar issue and had been promised extra training. This had never happened.

"I felt it was unfair of my employer and I asked RCN London what I could do. The RCN officer attended the hearing and challenged the Chair of the panel saying that I had been 'set up to fail'. The Chair agreed, and the disciplinary action was dropped.

"I have also received the training I needed in the first place. Thank you RCN. "

(Nurse, mental health trust, east London)

"I am a newly qualified registered nurse and work for a large company which runs a number of nursing homes. The company alleged that I had failed to write down the results of a swab taken from a patient's leg ulcer and I was called to a disciplinary hearing.

"I contacted the RCN and the officer was immediately concerned about the allegation as, being an experienced nurse, she knew that it takes around seven days to culture a swab and get the results. A doctor has to then prescribe any necessary medication.

"The RCN officer represented me and said that it was entirely inappropriate to expect me to record swab results immediately. My employer dropped the allegation and no further action was taken. I was very grateful for the nursing expertise of the RCN."

(Nurse, independent nursing home, south London)

"My employer was concerned at my sickness record and I was told that I could face dismissal if my sickness absence did not improve.

"I called RCN London and told them that I had an ongoing long term illness. The RCN officer called my manager and the HR department and requested that I be referred to Occupational Health as a matter of urgency. The RCN also asked that the employer call a case conference to discuss my health and possibly make adjustments to my work pattern.

"At the case conference the RCN argued that I was protected under the Equality Act (formerly the Disability Discrimination Act) and that my employer was legally obliged to make 'reasonable adjustments' to my work pattern and work environment. Occupational Health agreed and my employer took the advice of OH and the RCN and dropped the disciplinary. I was overjoyed."

(Nurse, acute trust, south west London)

The right help at the right time

RCN Council: Two regional board members, Andy McGovern and Ian Norris have been elected to represent London on the RCN's national governing Council. Council agrees the national priorities for the RCN.

London Regional Board: Board members are elected by the branches to agree the priorities for RCN London and monitor its performance.

Branches: RCN London's 10 branches represent members across inner and outer London.

Every branch elects RCN representatives in the acute, community or the independent sector. The branch is the first port of call for all concerns members have in their workplace. On occasions the branch will liaise with RCN London officers who cover their sector, and can also access support such as legal advice.

Help in the workplace: who to contact

Employment: A network of RCN stewards both in hospitals and the community represent members on employment issues in the workplace and ensure fair treatment. They prepare and present cases on behalf of members and work closely with RCN regional officers.

Health and Safety: RCN safety representatives represent the health and safety interests of RCN members at work and negotiate improvements on their behalf.

Professional development: RCN learning representatives provide guidance and support for members keen to develop professionally. They help members in finding the most appropriate training and qualifications to develop their careers in nursing.

Legal services: RCN London has a legal team which specifically supports members in London. This includes legal advice and representation on any matter of law which occurs in a member's employment. The RCN also provides personal injury compensation and indemnity cover for all members.

Find your RCN branch contact on pages 4-5 of this guide.

The RCN London Regional Board

Representing RCN members across London

(*Back row*) **Mike Smith** (SW London Outer Member), **Andrew White** (Stewards Committee Member), **Sue Howkins** (NW London Inner Member), **Ian Norris** (Council Member), **Maureen Graham** (RCN London Board and Committee administrator), **Alison Telfer** (RCN London Development Officer), **Karen Barrett** (Safety Representatives Committee Member), **Lisa Oluyinka** (Regional Member), **Tom Morahan** (SE London Outer Member), **Karen Sanders** (SE London Inner Member, Learning Representatives Committee Member).

(*Front row*) **Barbara Walters** (Regional Member), **Chris McDonnell** (Vice Chair), **Andrew McGovern** (Chair, Council Member), **Bernell Bussue** (Regional Director, RCN London), **Sue Tarr** (RCN London Operational Manager), **Ursula Gallagher** (Regional Member), **Neslyn Watson-Druee** (Regional Member).

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