



# 2024 Impact Report



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# Introduction

2024 has been a year of delivery, determination, and impact for the RCN Foundation. From launching our ambitious new strategy, **Ignite, Inspire, Aspire: Our Vision to Transform Lives**, to expanding our support in hardship, education and research, we have remained focused on improving the lives of nursing and midwifery professionals - and, by extension, the patients and communities they serve.

We responded to a marked increase in need across the UK, awarding over £200,000 in hardship grants, to individuals facing urgent challenges, making a tangible difference.

We also continued to invest in the future of nursing, supporting professional development from clinical training to PhDs. Applications for education support rose by 68% from the previous year, with a record 2,253 applications.

Our Benevolent Service continued to provide vital guidance to those in crisis, offering life-changing support in times of need.

Our programme of research and innovation grants continued to develop and grow. We launched our Learning Disability Nursing Programme **Inclusive Health – Enhancing the Lives of Individuals with Learning Disabilities**, a £300,000, three-year research initiative that includes studies designed to improve quality of life outcomes for individuals with learning disabilities.

We were also proud to fund the appointment of Professor **Claire Pryor as the UK's first Chair in Adult Social Care Nursing**, based at the University of Salford. This role will be instrumental in driving leadership and innovation in a vital yet under resourced sector.



In response to a rise in applicants disclosing experiences of domestic abuse, we commissioned a major two-year research study – **NAMED (Nursing and Midwifery professionals' Experiences of Domestic abuse)** – led by **Dr Alison Gregory**. The voices of nurses, midwives and healthcare support workers with lived experience of abuse will be studied to improve workplace policies and create more supportive systems.

We took significant steps to embed sustainability in our operations, approving our first **Sustainability and Environment Policy**.

Our digital fundraising efforts continued to grow, including our **Give Hope This Christmas** appeal in partnership with the Royal College of Nursing, which raised £3,500 in public donations to support nursing staff during the festive season.

We also strengthened our corporate partnerships. We were chosen as **Bird & Blend Tea Co.'s ChariTEA of the Quarter** and their creative campaign raised over £4,000 through online sales.

As we celebrate our 15th anniversary in 2025, we are proud of the impact we've made – and inspired by the work still to come. Thank you for your ongoing support. Together, we are building a stronger, more compassionate future for nursing, midwifery and the people they care for every day.



**Deepa Korea,**  
RCN Foundation  
Director



**Professor Dame Jane  
Cummings DBE, RN,**  
Chair of the Board  
of Trustees

# Our strategy

In early 2024, we launched our new five-year strategy, **Ignite, Inspire, Aspire: Our Vision to Transform Lives**. This strategic plan was shaped through extensive analysis of trends in health, social care, grant-making, and nursing research, and co-produced with input from a diverse range of nursing and midwifery professionals across the UK – including students, Healthcare Support Workers (HCSWs), and RCN Foundation Alumni.

Our new strategy builds on the Foundation's ongoing commitment to transformation – within our organisation, in the lives of the individuals we support, and in the communities we serve. Over the next five years, we will expand our impact across our three core areas: hardship, education, and research. This marks a bold continuation of our mission to create lasting, positive change.

A major strategic priority is the development of the RCN Foundation Centre for Compassionate Leadership in Nursing and Midwifery, which will



advance mental health and wellbeing support for the nursing and midwifery workforce. Work to develop the Centre's framework will begin in 2025, laying the groundwork for a dedicated space that promotes resilience, compassion, and strong leadership across the professions.



In another key milestone, in 2024 we signed the **Funder Commitment on Climate Change (FCCC)** – affirming our responsibility to integrate climate considerations into our funding practices.

This significant step signals our recognition of the urgent need to address climate change and our accountability as a funder to support sustainable and climate-conscious approaches in healthcare.

By joining the FCCC, we commit to collective action and collaboration with fellow funders to rise to the climate challenge.

# How your support helped

2024 saw the Foundation directly support **698** nurses, midwives and healthcare support workers through the award of hardship and educational grants in addition to the many hundreds of others impacted through the projects we funded.

We helped **576** members of the nursing and midwifery teams adapt to change or deal with pressures adversely affecting their financial situation, including many facing **extreme hardship**.

## Case study: Debbie's story

Debbie, a UK community nurse, was unemployed and recovering from mental health challenges when she applied for support. Having recently left her job and moved into supported housing, she used her final wages to pay off debts and was awaiting Universal Credit. She received a £200 grant and was also referred to

counselling and welfare services, which she described as life-changing support during a difficult time. "I'm forever grateful I reached out. The team's kindness gave me not just a grant, but hope - along with counselling and welfare support when I needed it most."

*Debbie, Community Nurse*

**698**

nursing and  
midwifery  
professionals  
supported  
through grants

**576**

hardship  
grants  
awarded



**2,135**

people  
signposted  
to additional  
services

Our online  
application tool  
calculated benefit  
entitlements for  
applicants totalling

**548,000**

122 education  
grants awarded,  
totalling

**£183,000**



**£4,524**

average annual  
benefit uplift for  
individuals





# Supporting individual members of the nursing and midwifery team

The Foundation continued to deliver a significant portfolio of education grants throughout 2024.

During the year, £183,000 in education grants was awarded to 122 individuals across the four countries.

From entry into nursing to postgraduate education, our grants fuel professional growth across the UK.



## Education Grants Impact 2024

**122** education grants awarded,  
totalling **£183,000**

Of the grants that were awarded, **12%** of these were awarded to those in high inequality areas

**55%** of grants were awarded to those wishing to undertake a post-graduate module

**80%** of grants were awarded to those in England, 11% in Scotland, 5% in Wales and 4% in Northern Ireland

**74%** of grants were awarded to those working in the NHS, 9% were awarded to those working in social care

**38%** of grants were awarded to those from the global majority

### Role type

**74%** Nurse

**11%** HCSW

**4%** Midwife

**11%** Student Nurse

### Course type

**PhD**  
1%

**MSc modules**  
55%

**Clinical skills**  
20%

**Pre-reg Nurses**  
11%

**Other**  
13%

**100%**

reported the grant enabled them to improve practice

**100%**

reported the grant enhanced their approach to holistic, evidence-based, person-centred care.

## Education Grant Programmes: 2024 Highlights

In a year marked by continued financial pressure across the health and care system, the RCN Foundation remained steadfast in its mission to support the professional development of nurses, midwives and healthcare support workers.

### RCN Foundation Professional Bursary Scheme (PBS)

Our flagship education funding initiative, the Professional Bursary Scheme (PBS), continues to provide vital support for the nursing and midwifery workforce. In 2024, we awarded **66 grants** – demonstrating our ongoing commitment to supporting those working in the most challenged areas of healthcare.

PBS prioritises professionals working in communities facing the highest levels of deprivation and health inequality.

One recipient noted: “My workplace is the 0-19 service, led by Specialist Community Public Health Nurses delivering the Healthy Child Programme. We serve one of the most deprived areas in England. My MSc dissertation explored ways to better support our workforce – something critical to retaining staff and reducing inequalities.”

This vital work is made possible by the generous support of donors including **The Grace Trust**, **DKMS**, **The Sydney Perry Foundation**, and many members of the public. Together, they are helping us build a more skilled, resilient and sustainable healthcare workforce where it’s needed most.

## RCN Foundation Into Nursing Grant

At a time when nursing vacancies are at an all-time high and the demand for qualified professionals continues to grow, the Into Nursing Grant supports the next generation of nurses.

In 2024, we awarded a total of **£22,500 to five aspiring student nurses** to help overcome financial barriers that might otherwise prevent them from starting or continuing their studies. These grants represent an investment in the future of the profession, ensuring more people can pursue a career in nursing.

“Securing the funding grant was invaluable as a contribution to my MSc costs. It also helped me fulfil my aspiration to work in Public Health to be able to influence and shape healthcare and tackle health inequalities in a more strategic role, after 20+ years of frontline nursing. It has also given me the confidence to research and tackle health challenges, with an academic/evidence-based view.”





## RCN Foundation Kidby Student Grant

Thanks to the Kidby Grant, ten student nurses across the Southeast of England received financial support in 2024, with a total of **£10,000** distributed.

These grants provided a lifeline for students experiencing financial hardship, enabling them to remain in training and fully engage with their studies. By reducing stress and boosting retention, this funding contributes directly to the development of a sustainable nursing workforce.



## RCN Foundation Leathersellers' Foundation Grant – Children and Young People's Mental Health

Children and young people's mental health (CYPMH) remains a strategic priority for the RCN Foundation. In 2024, in partnership with the Leathersellers' Foundation, we awarded **£12,728 in grants** to support nurses and midwives who are not CYPMH specialists but work regularly with children and young people.

One such recipient, Steve, a school nurse, used his grant to attend a specialist crisis intervention course. This training has enabled him to better identify and support students experiencing acute mental health trauma, directly improving care outcomes in his school community.



## RCN Foundation Olufunke Adeyeye Education Grant

Established in memory of Olufunke Adeyeye, a lifelong nurse and midwife who passed away in 2020, this grant reflects her enduring legacy of promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion in the profession.

A generous donation of **£20,000 from Olufunke's family** created a fund dedicated to supporting nurses and midwives from the Global Majority.

In 2024, the grant was awarded to **two exceptional recipients**, each using the funding to pursue specialist training that will strengthen their clinical and leadership capabilities.

Through this programme, we are not only supporting individual progression but also helping to build a more representative and inclusive healthcare workforce.



“ It has allowed me to improve my research skills and given me greater insight into the issues of recruitment and retention for midwives.”

## RCN Foundation Needlemakers Grant

Thanks to the continued support of the Worshipful Company of Needlemakers, we awarded **£13,553 to 11 recipients** in 2024. This funding enabled nurses and midwives to access training that directly enhanced their clinical skills and improved patient outcomes.

Among the recipients was Kelly, a Senior Midwife who completed a course in Management of the Person with Diabetes. This specialist training is now being applied in her practice with women in high dependency care bays where she is providing diabetic care along with insulin treatment via needles and syringes.



### “The catalyst to further my career”

Beth, now a specialist midwife for monogenic diabetes, received an RCN Foundation education grant to complete a prescribing module at the University of Surrey.

The course equipped her with essential knowledge and skills to become an independent prescriber, enhancing care for pregnant women with diabetes.

Her new role with the South East Genomics Medicine Service Alliance involves embedding monogenic diabetes testing into existing pathways.

Beth said, “Without the grant, I wouldn’t have been able to advance my career. It’s been the catalyst for my development and inspired me to aim for a master’s qualification.”



## Healthcare Support Workers

Healthcare Support Workers are vital to the delivery of safe, compassionate care. Often overlooked, they perform key roles on the frontline, yet many remain in lower salary bands with limited access to funded training.

The RCN Foundation is committed to addressing this imbalance by providing development opportunities that help improve care quality, boost retention, and support career progression.

**“ The RCN Foundation funding was like opening the door again for me. By the end of the course, I had massively improved my skills. It’s opened the door for me to do other further training that I am passionate about”**

Public Health Nurse – Health Visitor



## RCN Foundation LV= Education Grant

Launched on Nursing Support Workers' Day 2023, this bespoke programme – supported by our corporate partner LV= – **enabled nine HCSWs** to access development opportunities ranging from nationally recognised qualifications in health and social care to specialist training in areas such as phlebotomy.

“ It has given me more confidence to work in learning and development, I look forward to starting my journey as an early researcher in the new year as I focus on research projects and building my profile.”

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## RCN Foundation Kershaw Grant

Through the long-standing support of Dame Betty Kershaw, we supported two healthcare support workers in 2024.

- One **completed a Level 3 Diploma** in Health and Social Care, creating a pathway into nursing.
- The other undertook **advanced Aqua-natal course**, enhancing their skills and ability to provide a holistic, person-centred support to gestational diabetes, reduce blood pressure and helps with mental health.

These grants reflect our belief that investment in HCSWs is not only a matter of fairness, but a vital step toward building a more skilled, confident, and inclusive healthcare workforce.

In 2024, we launched the RCN Foundation Advanced Practice Learning Disability Scholarship.

Of the scholarships awarded to Registered Nurses Learning Disability (RNLD) working across social care and the NHS, three were made to individuals from each of the devolved nations, whilst two went to RNLDs working in England.



“ The overall impact of gaining the funding will be incredible. Once back in my old role I will be able to provide aqua-natal/post-natal classes for free to the Health Boards 5 areas from Newport, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Monmouthshire for pregnant women with or without a higher BMI.

To be able to provide free classes to women is brilliant and helps not only themselves but their families, as they start to feel fitter and healthier and that will be a domino effect on the rest of the family. We want a healthier Wales going forward and starting in these small communities will be amazing.”

Ffion, maternity assistant practitioner



## Hardship Grants

In 2024, the Foundation supported 576 members of the nursing and midwifery workforce facing severe financial hardship, awarding £206,000 in hardship grants. These grants helped individuals manage a range of challenges including the rising cost of living, physical and mental ill health, and caring responsibilities. Meeting these costs eased overwhelming stress and anxiety, which not only protected their physical and mental health but also restored dignity and stability at a time of crisis.

This timely intervention helped *keep nurses nursing* – enabling them to stay in the profession they love and continue caring for patients at a time when the healthcare system urgently needs a stable and supported workforce. In January 2024, we also launched a signposting hub, connecting individuals to trusted services for mental health, housing, finance, and addiction. A key feature is the affordability tool and benefits checker, which helps users identify unclaimed entitlements.

**The average amount that an individual was better off annually if they took up the benefits advice was £4,524. Our online application tool calculated benefit entitlements for applicants which totalled over £548,000 in 2024.**





## Benevolent Grants Impact 2024

**576** Grants awarded  
Annual budget **£206,000**  
Average grant **£358**

**40%** of recipients were non-RCN members

**67%** of grant recipients were in employment

Grants awarded helped with **40%** of estimated financial need

**36%** of recipients are living with a long term health condition – a 20% increase from 2023

### Role type

**72%** Nurse

**22%** HCSW

**3%** Midwife

**2%** Nursing Associate

**8%**

of grant recipients have no recourse to public funds because of their visa type

**£4,524**

The average amount that an individual was better off by annually if they took up the benefits advice



We continued our partnership with PayPlan, offering free, regulated debt advice to hardship applicants through:

- A bespoke service with a dedicated referral system and helpline
- 122 individuals referred
- Joint communications and advice sessions that received strong positive feedback

Through these combined efforts, the Foundation not only alleviated financial distress but made a tangible impact on nurse retention and wellbeing – ensuring that those who care for others are not left behind.



Anna is a midwife who approached us when she had recently left an abusive relationship, with her two-year-old daughter. The social housing property she was offered had concrete flooring which made it cold and hazardous.

Anna was working part-time but had recently taken sick leave on reduced pay due to mental ill health, so she was in debt as well as trying to cover the cost of setting up her new home.

After receiving a grant of £500 Anna told us – “Wow, thank you so much for this. It means such a lot for us to be able to finally get into our new home and be safe and settled. You really have made such a difference to our lives!”

“I was fleeing domestic abuse with my children, so we went from having everything to literally nothing. We were all sleeping on mattresses on the floor at the time. I got given a grant of £250 which I put towards bed frames for us. It does help me with PTSD, and I also have got fibromyalgia and sleeping on a mattress on the floor was increasing the pain.

The fact that it took away the stress of trying to put money together to get the furniture, especially for my children’s beds, it was a big help for my mental health, so I’m now slowly recovering and hopefully able to work again soon.”

Nurse who recently experienced domestic violence

## ShinyMind

A new partnership was launched with ShinyMind, a mental health and well-being app designed specifically for healthcare professionals.

The app offers a range of interactive tools and evidence-based resources to support emotional resilience, reduce stress, and promote personal and professional development.

In 2024, 196 nurses, midwives, and healthcare support workers were issued free access to the app as part of this initiative.



## Top presenting issues from grant recipients in 2024

Debt	73%
Mental ill health	33%
Physical ill health	31%
Unemployment	18%
Maternity or childcare issues	17%
Increased cost of living	17%
Relationship breakdown	14%
Domestic Abuse	13%
Homeless or housing problems	12%
Caring responsibilities	10%

*Please note that each applicant may have multiple presenting issues.*



# Highlights from our nursing and midwifery-led funded projects

## Driving Change Through Research and Innovation

In 2024, the RCN Foundation awarded a total of **seven research and innovation grants amounting to £974,895**, with completion timelines ranging from 12 to 24 months.

One longer-term project – the **RCN Foundation Chair in Adult Social Care Nursing** – is due for completion in 2029.

Additionally, **four previously funded research projects were completed** in 2024, demonstrating tangible impact on workforce systems, mental health, and nursing practice in care home settings.



## 1. Inside the Black Box: An Ethnographic Examination of Nurses' Professional Judgement in Nurse Staffing Systems in England and Wales, Cardiff University

**Project funded to investigate how nurses use professional judgement to make staffing decisions across NHS Trusts in England and University Health Boards in Wales.**

### **Impact:**

- Identified two types of professional judgement in staffing systems:
  - Local, ward-level intelligence by ward managers
  - Organisational insight by senior nurses drawing on experience and strategic priorities
- Revealed that although nurses manage day-to-day staffing risks, their insights are often excluded from Board-level staffing decisions
- Developed a Clinical Unit Staffing Assessment Template to support nurses in documenting professional judgement
- Produced academic publications, a policy roadmap, and policy briefs



## 2. National Care Home Nurses' Network, Queen's Nursing Institute

**Supported the establishment and growth of a national peer-led network for care home nurses.**

### **Impact:**

- Over 2,300 members now engaged in the Network
- Regular bi-monthly webinars promote professional development, resilience, and wellbeing
- Encouraged participation in research, policy development, and governance
- Some members now contributing to academic publications and national policy work
- Enhanced visibility and leadership opportunities for care home nurses



### 3. Digital CBT Tool for Non-Mental Health Nurses Supporting Children and Young People, University of Huddersfield and South West Yorkshire

University of  
**HUDDERSFIELD**  
Inspiring global professionals

**This is a continuation of a previous grant to identify a streamlined digital Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) tool for non-mental-health registered nurses working with children and young people.**

#### **Impact:**

- Contributed to the RCN Foundation's Children and Young People's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Toolkit
- Evaluated digital CBT apps; the Tellmi: Better Mental Health App was the only tool meeting study criteria
- Demonstrated that with minimal training, non-mental health nurses can effectively use Tellmi to support emotional wellbeing and enhance therapeutic relationships



- A proof-of-concept phase will now look to the tool across a number of organisations
- Plans underway to launch the app for free public access via the App Store and Google Play

#### 4. Huddersfield App for Mental Health Assessment (HAMHA) – University of Huddersfield

**Funded in 2023 to design and test a digital assessment app for children and young people's mental health, forming the foundation for the 2024 CBT project.**

**Impact:**

- Provided essential groundwork for identifying suitable CBT tools
- Demonstrated that digital tools can support and strengthen therapeutic engagement between nurses and young service users
- Supported ongoing innovation in digital mental health tools within nursing practice





**The RCN Foundation remains committed to funding nursing and midwifery led impactful, evidence-based projects in the UK that address pressing workforce, practice, and wellbeing issues across health and social care settings.**

Three further studies were also commissioned during the year, looking at health inequality, urgent care and access to practice placements in Scotland.

All of these projects address areas of need or gaps in provision identified through a scoping review that was co-produced with people with a learning disability.

The results of these projects will be available throughout 2025.



# Thank you to all our supporters

We are extraordinarily grateful to each and every individual, team, and organisation who have supported us during 2024. Every donation we receive, whether big or small, makes a real difference to the lives of hundreds of nurses, midwives, and healthcare support workers, and through them, patients and families. **Thank you.**



## We want to hear from you.

Feel free to contact us and see how we can help:

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