



2025 Impact Report

Supporting and strengthening
nursing and midwifery across the UK



IMPACT AWARDS

Celebrating nursing and
midwifery excellence

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Contents

Supporting nursing and midwifery when it matters most	5
Introductions	6
Supporting people through crisis	8
Investing in education to improve care	10
Building the future workforce	12
Research, innovation and quality improvement	13
Celebrating 15 years of impact	18
Beyond the numbers	19
Looking ahead	20
Thank you to all our supporters	21





Supporting nursing and midwifery when it matters most

The RCN Foundation is an independent charity supporting nurses, midwives, healthcare support workers and nursing students across the UK. We invest in education, research and innovation, and provide hardship support to members of the nursing and midwifery community facing financial difficulty. Through this work, we strengthen nursing and midwifery and improve the health and wellbeing of the public.

In 2025, the RCN Foundation celebrated an important milestone: 15 years of supporting and strengthening nursing and midwifery across the UK. Since our establishment in 2010, we have remained committed to helping individuals overcome hardship, develop professionally, generate new evidence and improve care for patients and communities.

Across the UK, the nursing and midwifery workforce continues to face significant pressures. Rising living costs, workforce shortages, increasing demand for healthcare

services and widening health inequalities have created challenges at every stage of the workforce journey. Against this backdrop, the Foundation continued to provide practical support where it was needed most.

Whether helping an individual through financial crisis, supporting a nurse to gain new qualifications, funding research to address health inequalities or enabling frontline teams to improve care through quality improvement projects, our work made a meaningful difference throughout 2025.

Introductions

The RCN Foundation's 15th anniversary provides an opportunity both to celebrate our achievements and to reflect on the continuing importance of our work.

For 15 years, the Foundation has supported nurses, midwives and healthcare support workers at key moments throughout their careers and lives.

We have invested in education, funded research and innovation and provided support to those facing financial hardship. Throughout that time, we have remained focused on improving health and wellbeing through investment in nursing and midwifery.

This Impact Report demonstrates not only the breadth of the Foundation's work, but also the depth of its impact. Behind every statistic is an individual whose confidence, wellbeing, career or circumstances have improved because of support received from the Foundation.

During 2025 we continued to expand our reach and influence.

Demand for hardship support increased significantly, our education programmes supported more professionals than ever before, and our research portfolio continued to address some of the most important issues facing health and social care today.

The Foundation's success is only possible because of the generosity of our donors, supporters, partners and volunteers. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, thank you for helping us make a difference.



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

2025 has been one of the most significant years in the Foundation's history. As we celebrated our 15th anniversary, we took the opportunity to reflect on how far the Foundation has come since its launch in 2010, while remaining firmly focused on the future.

The need for our support continues to grow.

Throughout 2025 we saw increasing numbers of nurses, midwives and healthcare support workers seeking assistance. Applications for hardship support increased by 56%, highlighting the ongoing financial pressures affecting the workforce. At the same time, demand for education funding remained exceptionally high.

We know that investing in professional development strengthens confidence, advances careers and improves patient care. Every education grant awarded represents an investment not only in an individual, but in the communities and patients they serve.

We also continued to build our profile as a funder of nursing and midwifery-led research and innovation.

Our projects are helping to address health inequalities, improve workforce wellbeing, strengthen learning disability nursing and develop evidence-based solutions that benefit both professionals and patients.

As we look ahead to the next fifteen years, our ambition remains clear: to continue supporting and strengthening nursing and midwifery so that everyone can benefit from high-quality compassionate care.



Deepa Korea MBE
RCN Foundation Director

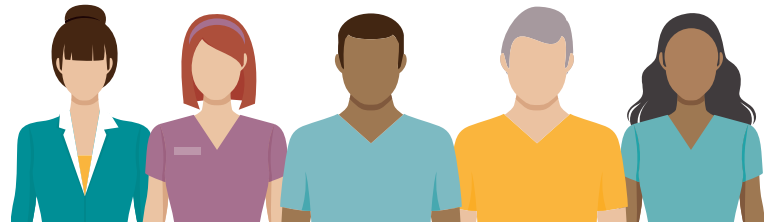
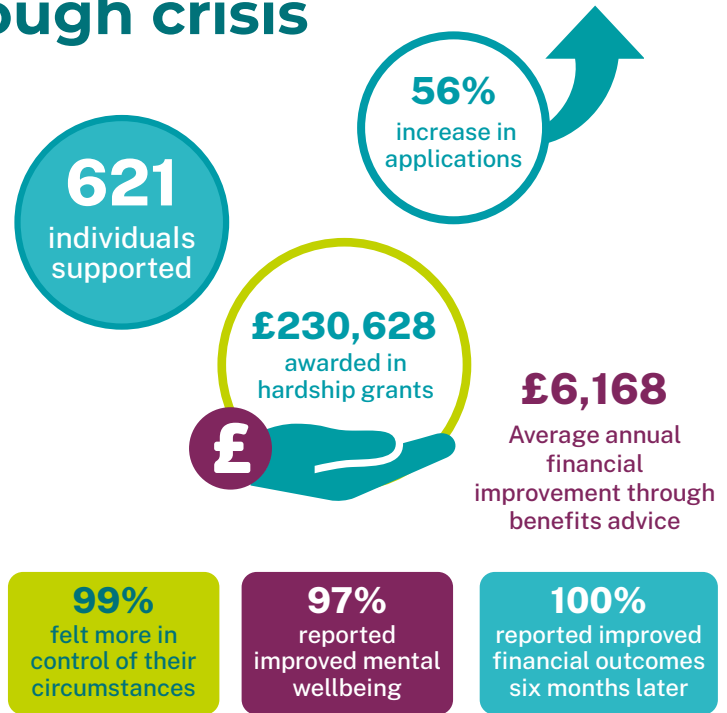
Supporting people through crisis

Hardship support

Financial hardship continues to be one of the most pressing challenges facing the nursing and midwifery workforce.

In 2025, the Foundation saw a significant rise in demand for support as individuals faced debt, ill health, caring responsibilities, housing insecurity and unemployment. Applications for hardship support increased by 56% compared with 2024, reflecting both growing financial pressures and greater awareness of the Foundation's support services.

Nearly two-thirds of hardship grant recipients were working but experiencing in-work poverty, demonstrating the financial pressures affecting the workforce. In response, the Foundation awarded 621 hardship grants worth £230,628. Through the Benevolent Service, applicants also received information, guidance, signposting and welfare advice.



Maria's story

“I would have been homeless”

Maria, a healthcare support worker, approached the Foundation after unexpectedly losing her job.

As she was working under a skilled worker visa, she had no recourse to public funds and could not access many forms of statutory support. With rent payments due and limited income available, she faced the prospect of losing her home.

The Foundation awarded Maria a hardship grant of £500. The grant enabled her to keep up with her rent while she looked for permanent employment and provided vital breathing space during a period of uncertainty.

Maria said: “The grant came in when I needed it the most. It was a big relief for me because I lost my job at the time I received the money. The grant was used to pay my rent – I would have been homeless if not for the help I received.”



Investing in education to improve care

Education grants

Education remains at the heart of the Foundation's work.

Access to learning, training and professional development is essential to building a confident, skilled and resilient workforce capable of meeting the evolving needs of patients and communities.

Every education grant represents an investment in both a healthcare professional and the patients they support. By developing specialist skills, leadership capabilities and advanced practice expertise, recipients improve care across the UK.

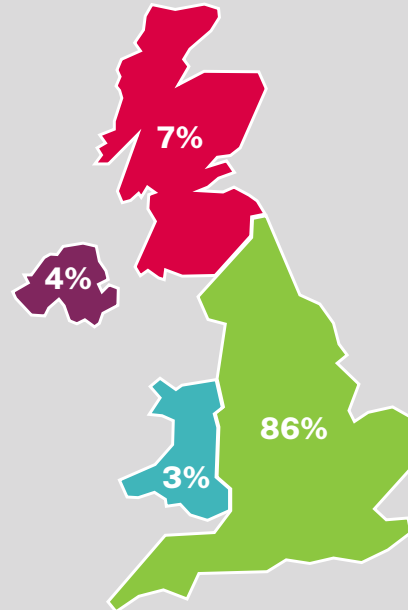
RCN Foundation programme	Grants
Professional Bursary Scheme	73
Next Generation	27
Into Nursing Programme	15
Needlemakers Grants	4
Leathersellers' Foundation Grants	6
LV= Healthcare Support Worker Education Grants	19
Conference	3
Rae Bequest	2
Marcia Mackie	1
Olufunke Adeyeye Grants	2
Total	152



Location of grant recipients

Grants awarded to individuals:

Together, these programmes helped remove barriers to education and create opportunities for professional growth and development.



Building the future workforce

Through the Into Nursing Programme and Next Generation initiatives, the Foundation continues to support aspiring nurses who may otherwise face barriers to entering the profession.

Equity and access

44%

of education grant recipients were from the Global Majority.

20%

of education grants were awarded to people working in areas experiencing high deprivation and health inequalities.

Beth's story

“The catalyst to further my career”

Beth, a specialist midwife, received support from the Foundation to complete her prescribing qualification.

The funding enabled her to become an independent prescriber and expand her clinical role supporting women with monogenic diabetes during pregnancy.

The qualification enhanced her knowledge, increased her professional confidence and improved access to specialist care for patients.

Beth described receiving the grant as: “The catalyst to further my career.”

Today, she continues to apply those skills within specialist services, contributing to improved patient outcomes and more efficient pathways of care.

Research, innovation and quality improvement

**Turning evidence
into better care**

**Research and innovation are critical
to improving practice, informing
policy and delivering better
outcomes for patients.**

During 2025, the Foundation
awarded more than £415,000 in
research and innovation funding.

By supporting nurse and midwife-led
research, the Foundation ensures
that solutions are grounded in
frontline experience and focused on
real-world challenges.



Research and innovation funding 2025

Learning Disability Nursing/ Health Inequalities	RNLD Contribution to Reducing Health Inequality and Improving Health-Related Quality of Life Outcomes for People with a Learning Disability (University of Wolverhampton)
Urgent and Emergency Care/ Learning Disability Nursing	Urgent Care Access Now (UCAN) Study (Keele University) careLeD Tool – supporting people with a learning disability to access urgent and emergency care
Learning Disability Nursing	Annual Health Check Models Across the UK (Liverpool John Moores University)
Learning Disability Nursing/ Workforce Development	RNLD Perceptions of NMC Registration and the Future of Learning Disability Nursing (University of Salford)
Urgent and Emergency Care/ Learning Disability Nursing	Co-designed Toolkit for Equity of Access and Outcomes in Urgent and Emergency Care (Ulster University & Western Trust)
Learning Disability Nursing/ Workforce Development	Practice Placement Models for RNLD Students in Remote and Rural Scotland (Edinburgh Napier University)

Internationally Educated Nurses and Midwives	Research on Internationally Educated Nurses and Midwives' Support and Experiences in the UK (RISE)
Domestic Abuse	Nursing and Midwifery Professionals' Experiences of Domestic Abuse (NAMED)
Neurological Rehabilitation	Young Adult Rehabilitation Network Scheme (YARNS) study
Adult Social Care Nursing	RCN Foundation Chair in Adult Social Care Nursing Research Programme (University of Salford)
Workforce Development Children and Young People's Mental Health (CYPMH) and Emotional Wellbeing Programme	Supporting Children and Young People's Emotional Wellbeing MOOC (University of York)
Maternal and Neonatal Health	Listen, Understand, Act: Addressing Race Inequalities Across Maternal and Neonatal Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive health programme

One of the Foundation's flagship research initiatives continues to be its Learning Disability Nursing Programme.

The programme supports work aimed at reducing health inequalities experienced by people with learning disabilities and strengthening the evidence base underpinning learning disability nursing.

Research completed during 2025 included:

- development of the CareLeD urgent care tool supporting access to urgent and emergency care
- studies exploring the contribution of Registered Learning Disability Nurses (RNLDs) to addressing health inequalities and enhancing health-related quality of life outcomes for people with a learning disability
- work focused on increasing equity of access to healthcare services

- research into practice placement models across remote and rural Scotland.

These projects are already influencing practice, improving accessibility and helping to ensure individuals with learning disabilities receive better health outcomes.



Spotlight project



Improving access to urgent and emergency care

The UCAN (Urgent Care Access Now) project, led by Keele University, sought to improve access to urgent and emergency care for people with learning disabilities.

Co-produced with individuals who have lived experience, the project developed the CareLeD digital tool.

The resource helps people with learning disabilities prepare for urgent healthcare situations and better understand what to expect when accessing services.

The project has already increased awareness among healthcare professionals and is helping to make healthcare services more accessible and inclusive.

New for 2025

The Quality Improvement (QI) Grants Programme was established as a strategic priority within the Foundation's Ignite, Inspire, Aspire strategy following consultation with nurses, midwives, healthcare support workers (HCSWs) and maternity assistants (MAs).

The programme recognises the central role of quality improvement methodologies in supporting evidence-based practice and enhancing patient care across health and social care settings.



Patient safety

Fall prevention

Postnatal care

Health
inequalities

Learning
disabilities

Pressure ulcer reduction

Celebrating 15 years of impact

In 2025, the Foundation celebrated 15 years of supporting and strengthening nursing and midwifery.

Since 2010, we have:

Supported more than **11,000** nursing and midwifery professionals through hardship and education funding

Awarded nearly **£4 million** in research funding

Supported **79** nursing and midwifery-led research projects

Invested in education, innovation and workforce development across the UK



Beyond the numbers

During 2025, the Foundation continued to strengthen its reach, influence and ability to deliver impact. Alongside our grants, programmes and research, we invested in the partnerships, profile and relationships that help us support nursing and midwifery across the UK.

Continued development of the Centre for Compassionate Leadership in Nursing and Midwifery

Strengthened fundraising activity

Expanded partnerships and collaborations

Increased engagement through digital communications and events

Received **national recognition** for its contribution to nursing and adult social care



Chief Nurse Adult Social Care Award

Looking ahead

Demand for our support continues to grow. As health and care services face increasing pressures, investment in nurses, midwives, healthcare support workers and students remains essential.

The RCN Foundation will continue to respond to financial hardship, create educational opportunities and invest in research, innovation and evidence-based improvements in care.

Looking ahead, we will build on this work through the launch of the RCN Foundation Centre for Compassionate Leadership in Nursing and Midwifery, bringing together evidence, learning and expertise to support compassionate leadership and cultures across health and care.

We will continue to develop our maternal and neonatal health and wellbeing programme, working to understand and address racial inequalities and support improvements in the

experiences and outcomes of Black and Asian mothers, babies and families.

We will also increase our focus on sustainability and the impact of climate change across UK healthcare, exploring the role nursing and midwifery can play in developing more sustainable services, responding to the health impacts of climate change and helping to build a healthier and more resilient future.

Together with our supporters and partners, we will continue to respond to the challenges facing nursing and midwifery today, while investing in the ideas, evidence and people that can shape better health and care for the future.



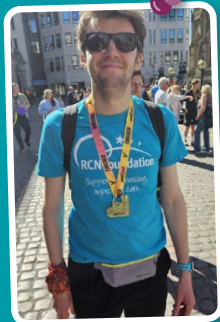
Thank you to all our supporters



Everything in this report has been made possible through the generosity of our donors, partners, trusts, foundations, fundraisers, volunteers and supporters. Because of your support, we are able to respond to need, create opportunity and improve care across the UK. Thank you.



The Sidney Perry Foundation



THE GRACE TRUST



We want to hear from you.

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

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