

Activate

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News, views and support for RCN activists



Huge support to scrap the cap

Activists will lead the way as RCN members up the ante in the next round of pay protests

RCN members and supporters are set to take part in even bigger pay day demonstrations a month after taking to the streets to protest against the 1% cap on nursing pay. Last month large demonstrations took place outside the Department of Health in London, the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh and outside NHS offices and hospitals in more than 30 UK towns nationwide.

Just a day after the protests, a proposal to scrap the public sector pay cap was narrowly defeated in Parliament. Public sector pay remains in the news with key members of the cabinet indicating they would support scrapping the cap. The Chancellor says he is sticking to the austerity plan, but the RCN has vowed to keep up the pressure as we prepare our evidence for the pay review body round which is just beginning to hot up.

RCN General Secretary Janet Davies said: "It's welcome that the Government has said it will listen to the pay review body's evidence but it must also act on it. The RCN will play its part in showing ministers how they can address the real-terms loss of earnings – worth £3,000 a year - since 2010."

At the beginning of the month the Nursing and Midwifery Council revealed an increase in the number of nurses and midwives leaving the professional register, while at the same time, numbers joining have slowed down. The figures also show more British nurses are moving to work abroad. The RCN said that patients are paying the price for the Government's failure to plan for the future.

"Theresa May can't wait months to lift the pay cap and bring people into nursing. She must take action to reverse this trend immediately," Janet added.

Read more inside and visit www.rcn.org.uk/scrapthecap

Your conference

At a time when reps are being called on to be more active than ever, the next RCN Joint Representatives' Conference is a chance to develop your skills and exchange knowledge and ideas with peers.

Reflecting on the Summer of Protest, it will celebrate the difference reps make across the UK. It will also look at how reps can stand together to continue to build strong and positive change.

An email invitation is being sent to all reps. Each region or country office is responsible for the allocation of places at the event.

The next conference will be held at the Jury's Inn Milton Keynes on 19 and 20 October.

If you have any enquiries, please email jointrepsconf@rcn.org.uk

Recognising your value



A new publication will showcase the contribution RCN reps make in the workplace to employers and others who might not be aware of the positive difference that reps can make. It will also show members who might be interested in becoming a rep that they could become part of a community who are a real force for change.

Reps from all over the UK helped shape the publication at a special event at the RCN's London headquarters in June.

Participants were interviewed, filmed and photographed talking about what being a

rep means to them, and how they've been able to support members facing a variety of challenging circumstances.

“Our aim was to highlight the really positive work and achievements of reps working locally, particularly as a lot of the Government rhetoric around unions isn't very positive right now,” said organiser Mairead O'Siochru, RCN Learning and Development Quality Assurance and Improvement Lead. “We can provide countless examples of how RCN reps work in partnership with their employers to make their workplaces better for staff and the patients they care for.”

Among those participating was learning rep and steward, Jeremy Davies, from Wales, who said: “It was so energising to meet all these people who had faced a multiplicity of circumstances and addressed them successfully.”

Another participant, Nasreen Rafiq, a steward in the West Midlands, added: “Many people mentioned their RCN family, friends and people who support them. It is exactly that for me, and I know who I can turn to for support.”

The Value of Reps – In Our Own Words will be launched this autumn.

Role descriptors made more practical

Revised descriptions of the RCN representative roles are being sent to reps in a desktop pyramid-shaped resource. The role descriptors are now grouped under the five headings of the active representation model (signposting, organising and campaigning, supporting and/or representing, questioning and influencing and underpinning activities), making them easier for reps to work with. The link between reps and their UK representative committee members has also been strengthened.

The summary versions of the role descriptors and case studies now illustrate the three roles in practice. It's hoped these will be less daunting for prospective reps and will help reps when they talk about the roles.

“This is a really eye-catching way of sharing what RCN reps do and what they can achieve. You can use it when you are speaking to your employer about the value of RCN reps in the workplace, and to help you to recruit new reps,” said Karen Sanders, Chair of the RCN UK Learning Representatives Committee.



Over the coming months reps will start to see a range of initiatives to increase the recruitment of RCN reps, recognise their achievements and give them the resources and skills they need.

The role descriptors are reviewed every two years as part of the RCN's curriculum review process. A group of reps from the UK representative committees carried out the review. Take a look at the full versions of the role descriptors at www.rcn.org.uk/get-involved/rcn-reps

Proud to be inclusive



Members are taking part in events throughout the UK to celebrate lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) culture and pride.

RCN rep Billy Nichols went to the inaugural Flintshire Pride with colleagues and fellow RCN members from his health board.



“A number of members came to see us and said: ‘I’m in the RCN and I’m really glad you’re here supporting the LGBT community and making yourself visible,’” said Billy.

He added: “I think rural Pride events

are even more important than those in cities, where there’s already a big and visible LGBT community. Rural Prides send a message of inclusivity to the community.”

Billy is keen to encourage other activists to get involved with Pride, whether they’re LGBT themselves or not. “These events send out a message that it’s ok to be who you are,” he said. “From a nursing perspective equality and inclusion are not just important because it’s part of our code of conduct, but because every patient deserves to feel safe and respected in our care.”



This was the first time a Pride event had taken place in Flintshire, but it was so successful it’s already been confirmed for next year.

Find out more about meeting up with other RCN members at Pride events across the UK at www.rcn.org.uk/proud. If you’re posting photos on Twitter or Instagram, use [#ProudRCN](https://twitter.com/hashtag/ProudRCN)

Reps’ film

A new film shows a day in the life of an RCN rep and the difference reps make to members’ lives. RCN steward Alex Scott, who features in the film, said: “I hope the film will inspire others to step into rep roles which present fantastic opportunities for personal and professional development. I also hope that it will help organisations to realise the value of working in partnership.” Visit

www.rcn.org.uk/reps-hub for the five-minute version. A shorter version is available at www.rcn.org.uk/become-a-rep

Will service

RCN members, family and friends can now access a wills service. While many providers offer template wills, the RCN’s new service offers members time with a legal professional who will tailor-make a will to meet their individual needs. For more information, including details on fees, visit www.rcn.org.uk/get-help/legal-help

Last chance to stand for new committees

You only have a few more days to put yourself forward for two new RCN committees.

The deadline for nominations for the RCN Trade Union Committee is Monday 24 July at 4.30pm. The successful candidate will have a passion for trade unionism and will have been involved in campaigning, representing members, and negotiating better pay, terms and conditions.

“As a member of the committee you’ll shape the UK’s future nursing workforce and make a difference to your colleagues’ working lives,” said Chair of RCN Council Michael Brown.

Nominations for the RCN Professional Nursing Committee close on Tuesday 29 August. “If you have the experience and want to make a difference, don’t miss out on these unique

opportunities to be one of the first members of the committees, working at the very highest level within the RCN,” added Michael.

Visit www.rcn.org.uk/elections



NMC consultation

Members have a chance to shape what the future of nursing education will look like by coming along to one of a series of workshops where they can inform the RCN’s response to the NMC consultation on standards for nursing education. This is an important opportunity to help ensure the RCN’s response reflects the views of a wide range of health care professionals. www.rcn.org.uk/education-workshops

'We must not back down'



Pay protests have made a huge impact, says RCN President Cecilia Anim

The RCN has hit the headlines in the last month with our *Scrap the cap* campaign dominating media outlets throughout the UK. While it's been brilliant to see our badges on politicians' lapels and our posters and banners all over the national news websites and social media, what's really impressed me is how members have got behind this really important campaign.

The reason we've been so successful is because we are right. The 1% cap means nursing staff can no longer afford to stay in the profession and scrapping student funding means people can no longer afford to join it. The public are getting behind us because they know the way NHS nursing staff are being treated is a national disgrace.

There's no doubt that activists have been central to this campaign. I want to thank you for all you've done in getting the message out there and encouraging members, some of whom have never been willing to protest before, to get involved.

We're still getting mixed messages from the Government but the momentum is with us. I can't wait to see what happens at our next national protest day on 27 July. I urge you to get out there and make your voices heard. It's time for us to be strong, bold and courageous. We must keep up the pressure and not back down until we get fair pay for members and a safe environment for patients.

"The way nursing staff are being treated is a national disgrace"

ASK AN ADVISER



Hot stuff



When is it too hot to work?

The recent hot weather has made for some uncomfortably warm workplaces. The question is – when does hot become too hot? There isn't a clear cut answer. There are legal minimums but not maximums.

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 simply say temperatures should be reasonable. And reasonable means different things to different people.

The Health and Safety Executive advises that if a significant number of people are complaining about the temperature, the employer should carry out a risk assessment using their thermal comfort checklist (<http://tiny.cc/hsetemp>).

Access to drinking water is also part of the regulations. Employers should especially consider how they can support mobile workers, ensuring they have somewhere accessible where water bottles can be topped up.

Read *Working in the Heat* at www.rcn.org.uk/reps-hub

For more information, speak in confidence to an RCN Direct adviser any time between 8.30am and 8.30pm, 365 days per year.

RCN DIRECT
www.rcn.org.uk/direct
0345 772 6100

View from the frontline



The NHS leadership programme

As an employee in the private sector, it may come as a surprise to some to learn that I've recently completed a 12-month NHS leadership programme with the Open University. It was hard work but it has helped me tremendously in all sorts of aspects of my work. I've worked in many different leadership roles, including as a ward sister, but this was a great opportunity to brush up my skills.

The main thing I took away from the experience was being able to reflect on myself as a leader. I've asked myself if I'm actually listening to what people are saying and this has really helped me develop my people skills. I've looked back and thought about whether I could have listened better. That, in particular, has helped me recently in supporting my colleagues with revalidation.

The course covered a lot about using people's skills and how we can empower staff and members. One of the things I learnt was that I'm not just here to do everything myself. It's about asking if there's anything I can help with, rather than telling people what to do.

I would recommend the course, through the Open University or the NHS, to anyone who wants to polish up their leadership skills. It really has helped me on a very practical level and I've been able to use what I learnt in many of my roles, including that as East Midlands representative on the RCN UK Learning Representatives Committee.

Visit www.rcn.org.uk/leadership

Marva Duncan, RCN learning representative

LEGAL UPDATE



Paid annual leave



Once someone has left a job, can pay be claimed for leave they didn't take? In *King v The Sash Window Workshop Limited*, the Advocate General gave an opinion on this important issue.

Mr King was employed as a salesman from June 1999. He was only paid commission and never paid for annual leave. He was dismissed in October 2012.

The Employment Tribunal awarded Mr King compensation for both unpaid and untaken annual leave during the course of his entire employment.

Leave entitlement

His employer appealed that decision in respect of the annual leave that Mr King was entitled to but didn't in fact take.

The Employment Appeal Tribunal allowed the appeal so Mr King took his case to the Court of Appeal.

The Court referred the matter to the Advocate General who concluded if Mr King was unable to exercise his right to paid annual leave, then an allowance is due to cover the full period of employment.

Helpful case

This is an important decision for workers who do not exercise their statutory right to annual leave because they wouldn't be paid for this time off.

This case shows a worker doesn't need to ask first before it's paid. Also, if there's no adequate facility to take annual leave, the entitlement carries over.

This opinion is also helpful for self-employed contractors, who are in fact workers with corresponding statutory employment rights.

Joanne Galbraith-Marten
RCN Head of Legal (Employment)

How to....get involved in the Summer of Protest

Why now?



Pay for NHS nursing staff has been capped since 2010. At the same time, the cost of living has gone up, meaning a real-terms pay cut of 14%. The pay cap not only leaves members struggling financially, it devalues nurses and nursing.

New figures published by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) show an increase in the number of nurses and midwives leaving the register, while at the same time, numbers joining have slowed down. This has resulted in an overall reduction in the number of nurses and midwives registered to work in the UK.

And because there are not enough nurses, patients cannot get the care they need.

We need to build public support to put pressure on the UK Government to scrap the cap on public sector pay.

Our Summer of Protest is not industrial action. We are campaigning to put pressure on the Government to scrap the cap. We want members, the public, and the media to understand why it's important to support our campaign and stand up for nursing staff and for patients. If the Government doesn't listen members may be asked about taking industrial action in the autumn.

TOP TIP: Ask members to send a message on a campaign postcard to their MP (there are 50 in your campaign pack and you can order more by emailing publications@rcn.org.uk).



“Underfunding the NHS is a political decision. It’s not acceptable to say there isn’t enough money”

Josie Irwin, RCN Head of Employment Relations

Where do I start?

- Talk about the pay cap.
- Raise your profile.
- Take part in local events.
- Spread the word on social media.
- Keep in touch with other members.



TOP TIP: Wear your scrap the cap badge at all times.



Use your campaign pack

The RCN's campaign pack has been sent to all activists, including pay champions. It's where you'll find all the facts, resources and background information you'll need.

TOP TIP: Practise saying the facts out loud – it might seem a little embarrassing, but you can quickly build up your confidence. Get someone you know and are comfortable with, to practise with you.



Quick wins

- Be visible – wear your badge, put up posters and tell everyone you are an RCN activist and pay champion.
- Get members to update their RCN details at www.rcn.org.uk/myrcn – it's essential that we have up to date information about our members. It is also a great way to start a conversation.
- Get on social media. You can learn how to use Twitter by reading the RCN's Twitter guide www.rcn.org.uk/publications (publication code 005031). If you're new to Facebook, try this guide: www.gcflearnfree.org/facebook101/getting-started-with-facebook/1/

TOP TIP: Use [#scrapthecap](https://twitter.com/scrapthecap) in your posts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Scrap the cap!

What's happening near me?

Keep an eye on the RCN website for details of all the local events taking place at www.rcn.org.uk/nursingcounts/scrap-the-cap/events



NOTICEBOARD

What is special class status?



Special class status (SCS) allows particular groups of nurses and midwives to retire at 55 without a reduction in their pension. It's only available to those who were employed in the NHS before 6 March 1995.

SCS can be lost if a nurse takes an employment break of more than five years or changes to a role that does not have the special status. The employer determines if a nursing post attracts SCS.

"Members with SCS who change jobs must always check in advance with their employer, or prospective employer, to ensure that their new role retains SCS status. It's not enough that a job has 'nurse' in the title," said Gerry O'Dwyer, RCN Senior Employment Relations Adviser.

"Posts can be advertised for an individual with clinical experience, but that experience could be from any of the health professions. These posts are unlikely to qualify for SCS," he added.

If members have a problem with their SCS, they should discuss this with their employer. If the situation cannot be resolved, advise them to contact their local RCN office.

Tools of the trade



Occupational Health: The Value Proposition, cites evidence that occupational health support for staff is the most effective way of managing long-term absence. Visit www.som.org.uk

Emergency health care workers, who in their normal work undertake exposure-prone procedures (EPPs), should have the same health clearance and be managed in the same way as hospital-based staff who perform EPPs. Read more at <http://tiny.cc/epps>

New research has analysed the risks of workplace injury arising from epilepsy, diabetes, mental health disorders, impairments of vision and hearing, disorders of balance, and

certain drug treatments known to effect brain function. Visit www.iosh.co.uk/medication

A TUC report, *Mental Health and Employment*, says employers are not making adequate changes to enable people with mental illnesses, anxiety or depression to obtain and remain in work. Read more at <http://tiny.cc/equalemploy>

Law at Work 2017 explains key areas of employment law from the perspective of unions and workers. Visit <http://tiny.cc/lawatwork17>

If you have any queries about this information, please email RCN Library and Archive Services at rcn.library@rcn.org.uk

Have you had outstanding customer service?



Members are encouraged to nominate RCN staff members for the Members' Award for

Outstanding Customer Service. It's a chance to recognise great service received from an RCN staff member and to publically thank them. If your nominee is shortlisted you will both be invited to an awards night being held in London on 23 November. Nominate at www.rcn.org.uk/members-award-for-customer-service by 15 August.

The RCN staff awards and ceremony are fully funded by our sponsors, enabling the RCN to celebrate all staff do while protecting members' subscriptions.

Medisa is proud to sponsor the Members' Award for Outstanding Customer Service. Medisa is an online catalogue providing medicines information, educational resources and patient support materials across multiple practice areas.

For more information visit www.medisa.com

Webchatting your way to advice

Please tell members there's a new way to get support from the RCN.

Online webchats are a great way to get advice on issues such as notice, pay, Agenda for Change, annual leave, contacts and terms and conditions.

Webchats are just one of many ways members can get help. Staff at RCN Direct can check statements, and give prompt feedback to help members comply with employer or agency requests.

There's also a lot of practical and relevant advice at www.rcn.org.uk/get-help.

Alternatively members can use the RCN's online contact form or

speak to an RCN Direct adviser on 0345 772 6100, in confidence, seven days a week, 8.30am-8.30pm.

To give feedback on the online help available to members, visit www.rcn.org.uk/get-help

