

# Activate

Vol 12 No 1 September 2017

## News, views and support for RCN activists



Scrap the cap!

### The fight goes on to secure fair pay for nursing staff after the Government scrapped the 1% cap on wage increases for prison and police officers

Responding to reports that there would be scope for “flexibility” over public sector pay rises more widely from next year, RCN Chief Executive & General Secretary Janet Davies said campaigning would not cease until the cap has been lifted explicitly on nurse and NHS pay.

“This puts another nail in the coffin of the public sector pay cap but it must be scrapped in full. These vague signals are not enough,” said Janet.

The announcement came just a week after thousands took part in the RCN’s biggest ever pay rally in Parliament Square in London. A huge crowd heard from passionate speakers

including actor and campaigner Sir Tony Robinson, members, staff and comedian Rob Delaney as the College upped the ante to demand an end to the crippling cap on NHS pay.

RCN President Cecilia Anim told protesters they’d sent a message to the Government that it couldn’t ignore. “Today we have told them loud and clear: we will not give up. Let’s show the Government our voice is getting stronger and we’re not going to go away. Nursing matters. We matter.”

Teifion Woodward, a staff nurse from south Wales, said: “We’re all feeling the pinch because of the pay cap but it’s wonderful to see such solidarity. We all want to stand together.”

To coincide with the rally, an event was held in Westminster for MPs to meet RCN members and understand the effects of ongoing pay restraint. Read more on pages 2, 3 and 4.

# RALLY ROUND-UP

## Government sidesteps vote to scrap the cap



A heated debate in the Commons last week saw the Government back away from a vote, which called on them to end the public sector pay cap in the NHS.

The opposition debate, put forward by the Labour Party, saw passionate speeches from MPs of all political parties, many referencing compelling statistics provided by the RCN on the impact of pay restraint on recruitment, retention and morale.

Though the Government stuck firmly to its line on greater 'flexibility' with regards to public sector pay rises next year, in anticipation of a defeat, they refused to be called to a vote.

The pay cap for hardworking NHS nursing staff remains in place.

## 'Everyone has worked so hard'

No one could miss Jeni Watts and her home-made badges at the rally. "I got involved in craftivism [craft and activism] to give something back to other pay champions. I wanted to put a smile on their faces," she said.

Jeni says being a pay champion has been a really positive experience and she's made many friends. "But I wish Theresa May would come and work with me for the day and see the realities I face," she added.



## "The dream of nursing has become a nightmare" What Lorraine Scaiffe told her MP



## "Enough is enough. We're not paid for the responsibility we have." Charlotte Jones



## Joint union pay claim

The RCN has joined 13 NHS trade unions to demand the Government scraps the 1% public sector pay cap, increases NHS wages to match inflation and starts to restore lost pay.

The group said ministers have been interfering in the normal pay setting process for NHS staff since 2012 and have asked for pay rises to match inflation in addition to an £800 consolidated lump sum.

They state the pay award must be fully funded, without cuts to services or jobs to pay for it, helping to secure the future of the NHS by making it a more attractive place to work.

## "You are the lifeblood of the NHS. You are the heart of our nation when it's suffering. When we're confronted by pain, disease and death it's you who care for us." Sir Tony Robinson



## "Stop destroying our NHS. Invest. Invest. Invest." Christine Edwards Jones



## What MPs said

Away from the deafening roars of the rally, MPs from all parties were invited to speak to Council members about the devastating effects of ongoing pay restraint at an RCN event in Westminster

“The pay cap is penalising people. This is about recruitment, retention and morale. If you’re not paying people properly, you’re not respecting them.”

**John McDonnell, Shadow Chancellor and Labour MP for Hayes and Harlington**



*John shows his support*

“There’s simply no excuse for the Government continuing to impose real terms pay cuts on hardworking public servants. Years of wage stagnation and inflation are leaving our nurses worse off.”

**Caroline Lucas, Co-leader of the Green Party and MP for Brighton Pavilion**



*Caroline meets members*

“This has reached a crucial point. Nurses have to be a priority if we’re serious about retaining our experienced staff and improving services in the NHS. Staff are our number one asset.”

**Maria Caulfield, Conservative MP for Lewes**

## Promise to remove Scottish pay cap

As RCN members from Scotland protested in London, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon pledged to lift the 1% cap on public sector pay in Scotland. “The pay cap, although never desirable, was necessary to protect jobs and services. However, with inflation on the rise, it is not sustainable,” she said. In the same week new NHS workforce data confirmed that one in 20 nursing and midwifery posts in NHS Scotland is unfilled – the highest number of vacancies ever reported.

## The public are with us

More than half the public surveyed for the RCN by YouGov said they are willing to pay more tax to make the NHS safer.

In addition, more than 70% of voters said the NHS now lacks adequate nursing staff. A similar proportion believe nurses are underpaid for their work, including a majority of Conservative voters.



*Public support in London*

Janet Davies, RCN

General Secretary, said: “The public can see the shortage of nurses for themselves. Ministers are significantly out of touch with public opinion. They should heed this warning, scrap the pay cap and help to recruit thousands more nurses for a safer NHS.”

## What now?

Activists are asked to keep up the pressure on politicians in this next stage of the campaign by meeting face-to-face with MPs in their constituencies. (Read more on page 4).

In addition, the RCN will have a presence at the forthcoming Labour and Conservative Party conferences, as the College works to gather cross-party support for its priorities. This year the focus will be on the Scrap the Cap campaign and making the case for safe staffing legislation.

Gordon Lees, Chair of the RCN Membership and Representation Committee, will be going to the Conservative Party conference this year and says attending these events is a chance to influence politicians.

“It’s an opportunity for me as a member to meet MPs and attend high-level roundtable discussions with other organisations,” he says.

“The RCN does a lot of work before and during the conference to arrange one-to-one meetings with key MPs. These are particularly useful for getting our messages across, getting them on board and furnishing them with information they might not otherwise receive.”

## We must keep up the pressure



### RCN General Secretary Janet Davies looks to the next stage of our campaign

Our Summer of Protest is over, but what huge progress we've made. The Government's announcement that there will be public sector pay rises from next year is heartening but it's just not enough.

We cannot afford to relax. It's essential to keep up pressure on the Government. And pay champions are more important than ever as we begin to wage a political campaign in the run-up to the autumn Budget.

We'll be delivering the postcards you've been collecting over the summer to local MPs. But it's important that members talk directly to local politicians to make our case in person. The tale of an individual is so much more compelling than statistics or anonymous anecdotes. We're putting together resources to help you support members to make those meetings; not just the logistics of setting up an appointment, but how to share stories to get our message across.

We must also prepare for the worst. If nursing staff don't get what they deserve, we will move to considering industrial action. To prepare for this, we need to get our members ballot-ready. We need to make sure their details are correct on our database; in particular their postal address and place of work. If we don't make every effort to make sure our data is correct any ballot could be discounted. We'll share resources with you to help support this. We need your help to win over local MPs and prepare our members for action.

*"We cannot afford to relax"*

## ASK AN ADVISER



### Reference accuracy



#### What should you do if an employer gives an inaccurate reference?

Employers owe their employees and ex-employees a duty to use reasonable skill and take care to ensure a reference is accurate.

Prospective employers may also rely on the reference being correct. An employment reference should be an accurate and balanced reflection of the individual's time in employment.

A reference may be negligent in law if it's unbalanced or contains statements that are untrue. There may be a legal claim if the employer has given a negligent statement that subsequently causes loss, such as a job offer being withdrawn.

Often a conversation with the author of the reference is all that's needed to resolve the situation. Reps should highlight the errors in a reference, along with the legal position. A new reference should be supplied.

More information on references is available at [www.rcn.org.uk/get-help/rcn-advice/references](http://www.rcn.org.uk/get-help/rcn-advice/references)

**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](http://www.rcn.org.uk/direct)  
**0345 772 6100**

## View from the frontline



### Menopause matters

For too long the interests of women going through the menopause have been ignored in the workplace. We need to develop our knowledge around the issue to help older women in the workforce feel less isolated. Other professions, such as the police, already have support groups in place where matters, such as what a uniform is made of, and whether reasonable adjustments can be made, are addressed.

Not all GPs have the time or facilities to discuss treatments available and I know that in my area there are no menopause-specific clinics. It's a life-changing event, but there's not enough information out there.

I've organised a staff menopause group with the aim of increasing awareness, gathering resources and supporting each other, but this is just the start. Next I'd like to find out what other trusts have in place and I'm discussing with my officer the best way to influence policies. I've already presented my views to the staff health and wellbeing group and I plan to go to the working longer group next.

If we value the older workforce, we must encourage people to stay in work. Perhaps we need to think creatively about the type of job and the working hours older women undertake? The nursing workforce is getting older and organisations must start to look at how to retain and give opportunities to these employees.

Sue Williams, RCN steward

## LEGAL UPDATE



### Have you made a will?



How many times have you thought "I must make a will" and then simply not got around to doing it? You're not alone. Almost 60% of people in the UK don't have a will.

Yet it's so important, as making a will means you have control over what happens to your belongings should the worst happen. It also gives you the chance to

provide for loved ones and take the stress away from those already dealing with your loss by knowing your wishes are carried out.

By making a will you can:

- ensure your assets are shared according to your wishes
- choose who you want to be your executors to administer your property and possessions
- preserve your assets for your family and future generations
- potentially mitigate any inheritance tax and/or care fees
- protect your estate from third party costs such as care home fees
- choose guardians who should look after your children, if you have them.

### RCN service

The RCN can help. Please tell members that RCN Law provides a fast, efficient and friendly will-writing service at a discounted fixed fee for RCN members – starting at as little as £80 + VAT – with very competitive rates for family and friends too. Unlike other providers who offer wills based on a template, RCN Law will provide expert legal advice to ensure your will is tailored to meet your specific needs. Once the will is finalised, RCN Law can also provide free secure storage.

Read more about wills, probate, trusts and lasting power of attorney at <http://tiny.cc/wills>

**Victoria Peal**  
Head of Legal (Commercial) and Solicitor

# GET ACTIVE

## STPs: don't leave it too late

### Why now?

If you and your colleagues are delivering care in England, whether you're employed in the NHS or independent sector, it's likely your working arrangements could be affected by sustainability and transformation plans (STPs).

They're being developed as a way of implementing the NHS Five Year Forward View for England (2016-2021).

The programme aims to bring together local health and care leaders, organisations and communities to develop plans for their areas that improve quality, health and wellbeing and make efficiency savings.

Each of the 44 plans for health and social care services is at a different stage. But what's certain is that members, reps and staff are or will be dealing with change in structures, systems and working arrangements, wherever they're based.

### The RCN position

The RCN supports the aims of STPs, but only if the reality matches their ambitions.

- STPs could help improve the health of the nation if they prevent ill health, join-up services and deliver care in more appropriate settings. However, the RCN fears they may be used as a smokescreen for savings, and that services may be cut without good alternative arrangements being made.
- The plans may mean changes for staff who may have to work across sectors or different organisations. These could offer opportunities, such as new roles and more autonomous working. But if financial considerations come first, the plans could result in unsafe nurse staffing levels and skill mixes.
- The RCN will oppose any reduction in the number of registered nurses because of the impact this would have on patient care.
- Many STPs are being rushed through without proper consultation with staff and local communities. This must change.



### STPs must provide assurances:

**There must be clear evidence to support changes**, including how STPs will improve patient safety, quality of care, workforce and finance. Equality impact assessments are also essential.

**The plans must be made public** and shared with staff, unions, reps and local communities. Early and meaningful engagement is needed.

**Involve nursing staff** because they know what works best for the services they deliver and the people they care for.

**Plans must be properly funded.** We support efficient care delivery but must see evidence that improving care is the priority.

**Service redesigns** must show how resources will be re-used in other parts of the health and care service.

**There must be no significant closure of services** without a clear plan for delivering patient care in other ways.

**Each plan must have a workforce strategy** that deals with staffing levels, skill mix, training requirements, transfer and protection arrangements. It must be discussed and agreed in partnership with staff and their reps.

**Each plan must give staff security** in relation to their employment status, continuity of employment, terms and conditions, pension entitlement and training needs. This must be developed in partnership with staff and their reps.

**Equality must be properly considered and recorded.** An evidence-based equality analysis means better quality decisions can be made on behalf of communities.

## Get prepared



You're the face of the RCN and you can represent members in the development and implementation of plans, with the support of RCN staff.

- Understand the implications for members locally. Visit [www.rcn.org.uk/stps](http://www.rcn.org.uk/stps)
- Read your local plan carefully. Does it provide assurance about the areas we've highlighted? Who are the decision-makers and stakeholders?
- Identify next steps and ways of working. Where are they in terms of planning and implementation? How are the decision-makers engaging with unions? How and when are they consulting?

## Get active

- **Get involved.** Seek out key stakeholders. This could be through your joint consultative and negotiating committee, a planned consultation event, or getting yourself invited to a relevant meeting.
- **Ask questions.** Use your *Ask. Listen. Act* booklet ([tiny.cc/asklistenact](http://tiny.cc/asklistenact)) to get started. *Integrating Health and Social Care Across the UK: Toolkit for Nursing Leaders* ([tiny.cc/integratedcare](http://tiny.cc/integratedcare)) will also be helpful.
- **Talk to members.** Many members are unfamiliar with the terminology or high level strategic discussions, but most directly affected will have heard about changes. Keep talking to members, capture their learning and share yours with them.
- **Work with your officer.** You have the RCN's full support. Your regional office will be sharing intelligence and experiences with their colleagues nationally.

## Around the UK

Integration in health and social care is an explicit policy goal of all UK governments.

- **Northern Ireland** has had an integrated health and social care service since 1974.
- In **Scotland**, all adult social care, community health and some hospital services were integrated in 2016. In some parts of Scotland, children's services are being integrated too.
- The **Welsh Government** is committed to integrating health and social care. Proposals for local government reform, which encourage regional level commissioning, will facilitate this.



## Act now and work together

### Rachel Morris, RCN steward took urgent action

Working with other reps and unions I've set up and currently chair a county-wide staffside council to work with other health and social care unions to make sure staff and patients' views are considered.



Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) announced changes that will have an impact on secondary health partners across the STP footprint. We've been led to believe that staff at NCC have not been fully consulted on changes.

The Northamptonshire STP has been rated as 4 – needing significant improvement – so we've no time to lose. We've invited the local workforce lead to our next meeting along with local HR directors and the lead for Health Education East Midlands.

We need to work together. We must protect patients, ensure the services are fit for purpose, and protect national terms and conditions.

## Find out more

- Five Year Forward View: [www.england.nhs.uk/five-year-forward-view](http://www.england.nhs.uk/five-year-forward-view)
- Next Steps on the NHS Five Year Forward View: [tiny.cc/5yearforward](http://tiny.cc/5yearforward)
- Health and Social Care Integration (England) House of Commons Briefing Paper: [tiny.cc/integrationbriefing](http://tiny.cc/integrationbriefing)
- NHS Social Partnership Forum: [www.socialpartnershipforum.org](http://www.socialpartnershipforum.org)

# NOTICEBOARD

## Vote now

You only have until noon on Wednesday 4 October to vote in the RCN Trade Union Committee elections. The Eastern, East Midlands, London, Northern, Scotland, South East, West Midlands, health practitioner and student seats are being contested. The candidates in the five other seats have been elected unopposed. Visit <http://www.ersvotes.com/rcntuc17> to vote.

Nominations are now open for four members to sit on the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) Council and voting for the RCN Professional Nursing Committee opens on Monday 9 October. Visit [www.rcn.org.uk/elections](http://www.rcn.org.uk/elections) for more details and for further information about other RCN elections taking place.

## Diverse stories

Nursing diversity will be celebrated and previously untold stories revealed in a RCN exhibition in London next month. It will include contributions from deaf nursing staff, the experiences of black, Asian and minority ethnic members working in the UK, as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) nurses. *Hidden in plain sight: Celebrating nursing diversity*, opens on 11 October at RCN headquarters. Book your free tickets at <http://tiny.cc/diversityevents>

The exhibition launch will coincide with the RCN's annual reception to celebrate Black History Month taking place at RCN headquarters. Email [diversity.team@rcn.org.uk](mailto:diversity.team@rcn.org.uk)

## Tools of the trade



*More Than "Women's Issues"* shines a light on reproductive and gynaecological health issues affecting many women of working age. Download it from the Work Foundation website at <http://tiny.cc/womensissues>

*Time Off for Trade Union Duties and Activities* is an updated LRD booklet which explains reps' legal rights and the new legal reporting duties placed on public sector employers. Visit <http://tiny.cc/facilitytime>

The TUC has produced a new national minimum wage guide to help advisers

and reps ensure low-paid workers' rights are protected. Read *Enforcing the National Minimum Wage – A Practical Guide* at <http://tiny.cc/minimumwage>

Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust has released a case study looking at how they have improved staff engagement. Read it in full on the NHS Employers website at <http://tiny.cc/staffengagement>

**If you have any queries about this information, please email RCN Library and Archive Services at [rcn.library@rcn.org.uk](mailto:rcn.library@rcn.org.uk)**

## Get set for safety



Safety reps are encouraged to get the European Week for Safety and Health at Work, starting on 23 October, in their diaries. This year's event focuses on the health and safety of an ageing workforce. It's an ideal time to get the safety message across by carrying out inspections

and encouraging members to consider their personal health and safety at work.

Last year safety reps embraced the campaign. Safety rep Billy Nicholls ran a joint stand with his employer and promoted the RCN's *Healthy Workplaces* materials. He's getting ready to run another event this year.

Find out more at European Week for Safety and Health at Work at <https://osha.europa.eu>

Download the NHS Employers age awareness toolkit from <http://tiny.cc/ageawareness>

## Belfast calling



It's time to get organised for next year's Congress, which takes place at the Belfast Waterfront Arena. If you're interested in being funded to attend Congress as a voting member,

apply now at [www.rcn.org.uk/congress/about/funding-to-attend-congress](http://www.rcn.org.uk/congress/about/funding-to-attend-congress) as applications close on 1 November.

Branch, forum and UK representative committees can put forward resolutions and matters for discussion up until the closing date of 2 January. After that you can still submit emergency items right up until the end of Congress. Applications are already open for Congress fringe events and also close on 2 January.

**Congress 2018 takes place between 12 and 16 May. Visit [www.rcn.org.uk/congress](http://www.rcn.org.uk/congress)**