

# Activate

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News, views and support for RCN activists



## RCN members in Scotland and Wales will have their say on NHS pay deals in their countries

The Scotland consultation is now open and runs until 15 August. In Wales a consultation will launch following an extraordinary meeting of the RCN Wales Board on 1 August.

### The deal in Scotland

The Scottish Government and joint health trade unions announced a proposed three-year pay deal for NHS staff in Scotland on 25 June.

Details of the proposals, including a pay calculator, are available on the joint union website at [www.nhspayinscotland.org](http://www.nhspayinscotland.org)

The proposed deal means that the majority of NHS staff will receive a 9% increase over three years. There will also be restructuring of existing pay bands with a reduction in the number of pay points.

The proposal includes plans for further negotiations on four areas of reform to terms and conditions. These are:

- policy on the management of sickness absence
- organisational change and protection of earnings
- utilisation and application of TOIL
- appraisal and incremental progression.

Members employed by the NHS in Scotland can vote, find out about workplace meetings and learn more about the deal at [tinyurl.com/Scotland-pay](http://tinyurl.com/Scotland-pay)

### The deal in Wales

RCN Wales has been involved in talks with the Welsh Government and joint health trade unions in Wales since the announcement of the England deal. An agreement has now been reached on a proposed three-year pay deal for NHS staff.

Story continues on page 3

## The NHS at 70



### Some of our reps reflect on their role in the NHS workplace

“The landscape of the NHS is constantly changing. Without reps, there’s a risk that processes wouldn’t be followed properly and staff would be left unsupported. These can be quite difficult times for staff and we’re there to support and protect them.”

**Lee Fretwell, steward (pictured)**

“Reps bring so much to the NHS. Their additional input into education, representation and partnership working is invaluable.”

**Dionne Daniel, learning rep**

“As my trust has grown, I’ve seen the need for partnership working become more and more important. Staff side needs to run smoothly and function well no matter who is managing our services.”

**Jayne Greenop, steward**

“Before I became a rep, I was a burnt-out nurse. Now I’m motivated to make my trust a better place to work.”

**Jeremy Davies, learning rep**

Turn to page 4 to read what RCN President Cecilia Akrisie Anim has to say about activists in the NHS

## Prison guidance to be updated to protect nursing staff from spice



### Following pressure from the RCN, the prison service will review guidance to better protect nursing staff from exposure to drugs like spice

The decision to update the guidance comes after RCN members reported suffering from the effects of inhaling fumes from spice and other psychoactive substances.

As previously reported in *Activate*, nursing staff are often first on the scene when patients need emergency care and current guidance suggests they are expected to enter cells before smoke has

cleared. The effects can last for hours, leaving staff unable to drive home after shifts.

At a meeting with the RCN, Michael Spurr, head of the prison service, agreed to work with the College to update guidance so it reflects the reality of clinical staff dealing with unpredictable and dangerous psychoactive substances.

Ann Norman, RCN professional lead for prison nursing, said: “This meeting is the first step on the road to improving conditions for dedicated nurses and health care assistants who are putting their safety on the line in the course of their duties.

“We will be working closely with the prison service to ensure the safety of prison staff is properly accounted for in the revised guidance.”

**Want to find out more?** Visit *Activate*’s new online platform to read a member’s account of why spice is such a huge health and safety risk for prison staff at [www.rcn.org.uk/activate](http://www.rcn.org.uk/activate)

## Reps to monitor staffing levels in Wales

### A new toolkit, developed in collaboration with reps for reps, is helping to monitor safe staffing levels in Wales

Two years ago, after lobbying by RCN activists and members, the Welsh Government introduced the Staffing Levels (Wales) Act 2016. Since then the RCN has been working closely with reps across Wales to help them understand the requirements of the act and see what support they need.

The act was implemented in April this year and reps are working in partnership with their employers to make sure they are meeting the required staffing levels and that they’re effective.

The toolkit, which covers each section of the act, will help to identify any gaps in the implementation of the act so these can be raised appropriately with employers.

Alison Goodfield, Activist Support and Development Facilitator and Senior RCN



Officer, said: “It’s not just about compliance; we want to monitor how effective safe staffing is and the difference it makes to the working lives of nurses and health care support workers. Getting this right is ultimately about patient safety.”

Currently the act only covers acute medical wards but work is underway to extend this to cover mental health, community and children’s services.

All reps in Wales should have received a copy of the toolkit. If you need one, or have any questions about it, email [alison.goodfield@rcn.org.uk](mailto:alison.goodfield@rcn.org.uk)

## Countries consult



### Cover story continued...

If accepted, the majority of NHS staff in Wales will receive a 6.5% increase over three years. There will also be restructuring of existing pay bands with a reduction in the number of pay points.

The RCN has welcomed the announcement, however, it says that the deal is only the

beginning and the fight for better pay and conditions will continue.

Members employed by the NHS in Wales should expect to hear more about the deal and the consultation over the coming weeks. The RCN website also has regularly updated information at [tinyurl.com/RCN-Wales-pay](http://tinyurl.com/RCN-Wales-pay)

### Northern Ireland

With no Assembly, no Executive and no public sector pay policy for 2018-2019, the Department of Health in Northern Ireland has stated that it is unable to commit to any undertaking in relation to pay. The RCN is currently working with the Department of Health and the other health trade unions in scoping what a pay deal for Northern Ireland might look like under these circumstances. Find out more at [tinyurl.com/Northern-Ireland-pay](http://tinyurl.com/Northern-Ireland-pay)

## Value of reps



All staff joining the RCN will hear first-hand about the value of reps.

The RCN's corporate induction programme now includes an RCN rep session where new staff learn about the contribution reps make to supporting members in the workplace. The sessions are a direct outcome of the current work to recognise and acknowledge the value of reps.

## First payments in England

Members employed by the NHS in England will receive their 3% uplift in July's paypacket, however backpay will not be paid until August.

Making the necessary changes just as the school holidays start is proving challenging. Backpay to 1 April with any incremental progression that happened during April to August will be paid in August.

In the first instance, any queries about payslips should be referred to your payroll department. Members can also use the pay calculator at [www.rcn.org.uk/nursingpay](http://www.rcn.org.uk/nursingpay)

to see how the deal affects them. Remember to read straight across the table. Also the amounts are what staff will earn by April 2019 – the calculator is not sensitive enough to take account of every individual incremental date.

The Government also announced that it will provide funding to reflect the pay deal in organisations that deliver NHS services. These are likely to be those commissioned via CCGs with contracts that replicate Agenda for Change terms and conditions. However, clarification of this is to be provided by the Department of Health and Social Care.

## RCN elections

Vote for me

There's still time to nominate yourself to stand in the RCN's upcoming elections.

## A fair culture

A guide, published by NHS Improvement and endorsed by the RCN, encourages managers to treat staff involved in patient safety incidents in a consistent, constructive, and fair manner.

*A Just Culture Guide* takes the reader through some questions that help clarify whether there's something specific about an individual that

needs support or management, or whether the issue is wider.

"This guide will be a useful reference for reps in England who are supporting members involved in patient safety investigations," said Kim Sunley, RCN National Officer. Visit [tinyurl.com/justcultureguide](http://tinyurl.com/justcultureguide)

You only have until 20 July to nominate yourself for the role of RCN President or Deputy President and nominations for the RCN UK reps committees close on 30 July. All RCN country and regional boards are holding elections too and nominations close on 7 September. For more information visit [www.rcn.org.uk/get-involved](http://www.rcn.org.uk/get-involved)

## Defending our NHS



*“Without activists, who would make sure the voice of nursing is heard?”*

### As the NHS turns 70, RCN President Cecilia Akrisie Anim reflects on the role activists play in keeping the NHS alive

A couple of weeks ago, I had the privilege of speaking to thousands of people who'd all come together for the “Our NHS is 70” rally in London. We were marching to celebrate our extraordinary health service – but also to defend it.

I've worked in the NHS for more than 40 years and I've been a steward and safety rep for about 20. I've seen a lot of changes in that time; some worrying and some beneficial. However, the one thing that doesn't change is the passion of our activists and the difference they make to members.

Without activists, who would make sure the voice of nursing is heard? Not just by governments and policy-makers but in the workplace too. You are the ones who sit down with management and other unions and work in partnership to get the best for our members. In a workplace that's constantly facing change, staff can feel unstable or worried, and sometimes things do go wrong. Without you, who would our members go to for support?

The NHS delivers amazing, patient-centred care to millions of people but none of that would be possible without the amazing nursing staff who deliver that care. Activists are the people who defend the NHS every single day because they make it possible for those staff to do their jobs and keep the NHS alive and patients safe. I would march for the NHS time and time again, and I know that you would too.

## ASK AN ADVISER



### Incorrect pay



### What should members do if they're paid incorrectly?

Underpayment and overpayment can happen for various reasons; administrative errors, shift changes, a disgruntled ex-employer. Whatever the reason, being underpaid or overpaid can often come as a shock and, occasionally, it can take time to resolve. In both cases, it's important for the person to carefully check their contract, payslip and any relevant policies. They should also discuss the issue with their human resources (HR) and payroll teams.

Employers usually act reasonably and cases of incorrect pay can be resolved without the need for RCN support.

Make sure you signpost members to our new guidance which can be found on the RCN website. For underpayment, visit [tinyurl.com/rcnunderpayment](https://www.rcn.org.uk/direct/tinyurl.com/rcnunderpayment) and for overpayment, visit [tinyurl.com/rcnoverpayment](https://www.rcn.org.uk/direct/tinyurl.com/rcnoverpayment)

The guidance includes a step-by-step process to follow and letter templates with examples. It also indicates when someone should call RCN Direct for support.

**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



### Championing diversity

I've recently taken on the role of Head of Diversity and Inclusion at my trust. The work is remarkably different to my previous role as an A&E nurse but the overall purpose remains the same; delivering outstanding patient care. Although I'm not on the frontline, my role now is to enable others to deliver the best care possible.

Equality and diversity is the golden thread. For care to be outstanding it must be person-centred. If you treat everyone as an individual then they will get better quicker. The same goes for staff.

I've been an RCN diversity champion for more than 10 years so I know that championing diversity is the key to making sure staff bring their whole self to work. People feel accepted and they come into work without fear.

In this role, unlike my work in A&E, there's no instant impact. I'm looking at the big picture and working to change culture and people's mindset. It's a lot like activism. There's a long way to go but I can already see positive things starting to happen. For me, my biggest achievement in the role so far has been introducing two new policies; a trans equality policy to support patients and staff and an assistance animal and therapy dog policy.

As activists, it's so important that we champion diversity in everything we do so we can empower nursing staff to deliver the best care for their patients.

**Stuart Young, RCN activist**

### Was Mr Smith a worker?

There are three categories of employment status; employee, worker and self-employed. Workers have fewer employment rights than employees but more than those who are self-employed.

A recent ruling by the Supreme Court highlights that even though someone may be labelled as self-employed, the situation in which they are working could mean they're actually a worker and therefore entitled to more employment rights. The case of Mr Smith, which has featured in the national press recently, may be of interest to members who may be mistakenly under the impression they are self-employed when legally they are workers.

Mr Smith, an engineer, claimed that he was an employee and worker of Pimlico Plumbers Ltd between August 2005 and April 2011 and pursued an unfair dismissal, holiday pay claim and a discrimination complaint. However, Pimlico Plumbers maintained he was self-employed. The Employment Tribunal found that Mr Smith wasn't an employee but he had been a worker so he could pursue parts of his claim.

Following appeals from Pimlico Plumbers Ltd, the case reached the Supreme Court which ruled that even though Mr Smith filed tax returns on the basis that he was self-employed, the Employment Tribunal was still right to find he was a worker.

Some of the factors contributing to this decision included the fact that Pimlico Plumbers were obliged to offer Mr Smith work if it existed and he was required to make himself available for up to 40 hours, five days a week. Pimlico Plumbers also had control over Mr Smith's vehicle, uniform and payment terms so they weren't a client or customer of Mr Smith's business.

**Joanne Galbraith-Marten**  
RCN Head of Legal  
(Employment)



## Go home healthy



**Work is a major cause of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) and employers have a legal duty to reduce the risk**

*“We don’t like to make a fuss”*

The RCN UK Safety Representatives Committee has debated some of the risk factors for MSDs with experts from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as this issue is especially relevant for nursing staff.

Debbie Hammill, Yorkshire & the Humber representative on the committee, says members are very good when it comes to caring for their clients, but not as good at looking after themselves. She works in a large community trust and has concerns about the pressures nursing staff are experiencing every day. Together with the health and safety manager, she’s now addressing the issue, often raised as a result of injuries at work.

Debbie says: “Nursing staff aren’t always able to access equipment that is, or should be, available to them. They’re so busy working with lengthy client lists and are often expected to carry a large amount of necessary things with them.”

“We don’t like to make a fuss, we struggle with looking after ourselves with no break times, no time for food or drink. This is something the RCN’s 3Rs campaign (see box right) is addressing.”

She adds: “There’s a big focus on the pressures on nursing staff working in the hospital trusts, but the pressures on those working in the community mustn’t be forgotten or ignored if we’re to avoid the long-term consequences.”

### Protecting employees

Now the committee is promoting the HSE’s *Go Home Healthy* campaign which aims to tackle the high levels of MSDs across all sectors, but especially in health care. With nine million working days lost each year due to MSDs, the campaign website encourages employers to protect their employees and offers advice and useful resources to help.

“By sharing information about this campaign, safety reps can help ensure employers are aware of their obligations to protect staff,” says Debbie.

### Nurse inventiveness

RCN member Linda Harris features in the *Go Home Healthy* campaign. Working in a leg ulcer clinic, Linda found she had to spend long periods of time kneeling on the floor, and would have to maintain a flexed and twisted body posture while cleaning or dressing patients’ legs.

She and the nursing team developed a prototype for a height-adjustable trolley and footbath. Their Harris Trolley is now in production and allows leg ulcers to be bathed and dressed at a height that is suitable for the patient and the nurse.

Sheila Marriott, RCN Regional Director, East Midlands, says: “This invention shows the value of empowering frontline nurses in how patient care is designed as well as delivered. In this case, the result is a win-win because patients have a good care experience and nurses can practise more comfortably and reduce the risk of sustaining injuries.”

To read more, visit [tiny.cc/harristrolley](http://tiny.cc/harristrolley)

### Further information

- Find out more about the *Go Home Healthy* campaign at [tinyurl.com/go-home-healthy](http://tinyurl.com/go-home-healthy) and [tinyurl.com/hse-msd](http://tinyurl.com/hse-msd)
- Read about the RCN Rest, Rehydrate Refuel (3Rs) campaign at [www.rcn.org.uk/rest-rehydrate-refuel](http://www.rcn.org.uk/rest-rehydrate-refuel)

## It starts with reps...

**Our Value of Reps project has shown how important it is for reps to have the right resources so they can learn, develop and carry out their roles**

But it's also highlighted that reps need to be involved in co-designing these resources from the beginning.

Maggy Heaton, UK Stewards Committee member, explains: "People tend to forget that nursing staff work different shifts and aren't usually at a desk for long periods of time but reps have first-hand experience of this. We need to make it as easy as possible for reps to access and digest information."

Maggy was part of a group of reps who helped to co-design the RCN's GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) online training. The group was asked what they wanted to see and then the training package was developed with this in mind. The group tested the training and changes were made until both the group and RCN staff were happy that it was fit for purpose.

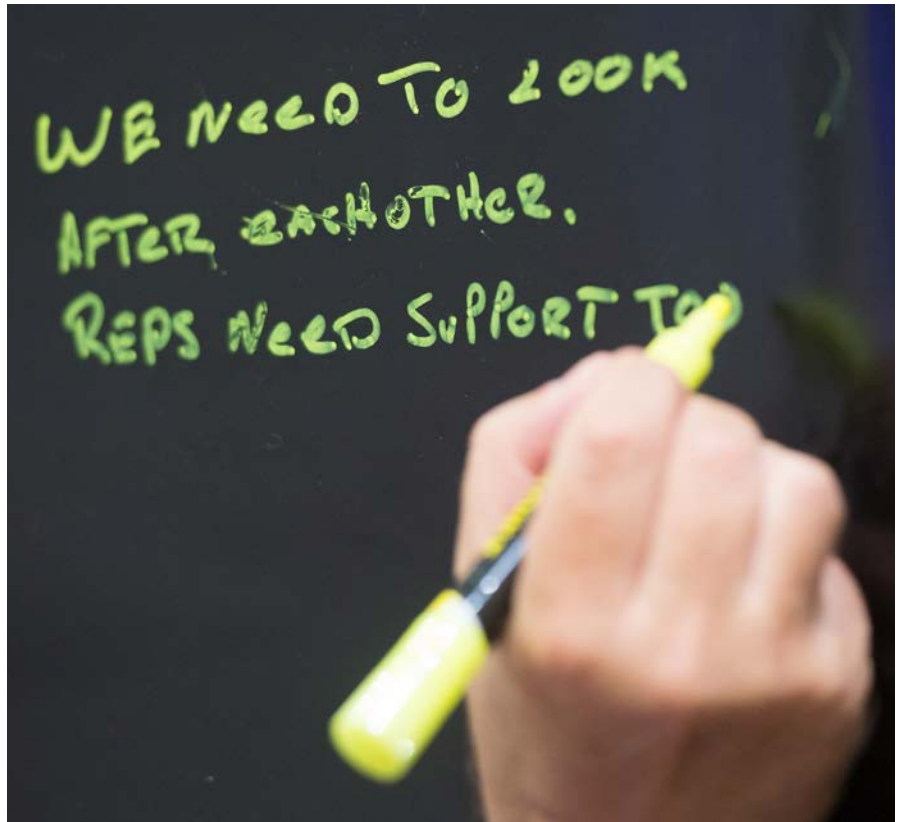
"I thought it was important that it wasn't too serious," says Maggy. "Due to the requirements of GDPR, the training is quite lengthy but it isn't boring. It's scenario-based and takes you through the journey of someone preparing for Congress indicating when they would need to consider GDPR. I think that most reps will be able to identify with the scenarios shown and our input as reps has helped with that."

### Equal partners

"If resources are going to be truly useful, reps need to be working as equal partners with RCN staff," says Sue Antrobus, RCN lead for learning and development. "This doesn't just mean we ask reps to review or test things – although that's important too. We want reps to shape the purpose, design and delivery of our resources."

Sue's team has been using events like Congress and the UK joint reps conference to gather ideas from larger groups. These were then taken forward with smaller groups.

Sue says: "We've worked with RCN changemakers and asked for volunteers in *Activate* which we'll continue to do. There's lots



*"Reps need to be working as equal partners with RCN staff"*

to get involved in. The UK reps committees are supporting us so we can prioritise areas that need more resources."

Maggy is keen for others to get involved: "I always encourage new reps to do something like this. Being a rep is rewarding but it's like everything else, you only get out what you put in and this is a great way to do something really positive."

### Get involved

Over the last few years, reps have been central to the work on a number of RCN publications, including *The Value of Reps* and *Rest, Rehydrate, Refuel: A Resource to Improve the Working Environments for Nursing Staff*.

We're looking for reps to help develop a resource about the role of reps in improving the quality of supervision and assessment of learners in the workplace. If you'd like to be involved, email [Emily.spencer-rigby@rcn.org.uk](mailto:Emily.spencer-rigby@rcn.org.uk)



# NOTICEBOARD

## You've got mail



**Tired of logging in to the reps portal just to check if you have any new emails? From next month, we're making it easier**

Following feedback from reps, an email alert system is being added to the RCN reps portal. It will let you choose to receive a notification to your home or work email account when an email is waiting in your RCN inbox.

From 6 August, when you first login to the portal, you'll see a prompt box asking you to enter an email address of your choice. The notification won't contain any sensitive data so you don't have to choose a secure account.

Once you've done this, you'll receive email notifications at 1pm or 5pm every day if there's a new email in your RCN inbox. If you use the reps portal regularly and don't want to receive these alerts, you don't have to; simply close the prompt.

We're aware of some of the limitations with the current RCN reps email system and we're working on developments to improve them.

## Book your place at the UK Joint Reps Conference

**Have your say at our bi-annual national conference for reps**

You have until Sunday 29 July to book your place at the RCN's UK joint representatives' autumn conference. All RCN reps can apply for one of their region or country's allocated places.

The two-day conference, which is taking place in Gateshead from Thursday 18 to Friday 19 October, offers you the chance to share your thoughts and learn more about key nursing employment issues and RCN campaigns.

It's also a great opportunity to network with other reps from across the UK.

If you're a rep, you should have received an email with information about how to apply online. If you haven't received an email, or you have any



questions about the conference or application process, please email [jointrepsconf@rcn.org.uk](mailto:jointrepsconf@rcn.org.uk)

**Closing date for applications:** Sunday 29 July  
**Venue:** Hilton Newcastle Gateshead, Bottle Bank, Gateshead NE8 2AR  
**Date:** Thursday 18 to Friday 19 October

## A night for nursing

**Do you or your employer want to help raise funds to support the training of student nurses in Bangladesh?**

The RCN Foundation is hosting an extravagant evening of colour, spice and entertainment in aid of the RCN Foundation President's Fund.

The event is taking place on Thursday 22 November at the RCN's London Headquarters.

Tickets are £65 each or £500 for a table of eight. Call 020 7647 3645 to find out more or to make a booking. Visit [www.rcnfoundation.org.uk](http://www.rcnfoundation.org.uk) to find out more about the RCN Foundation's work.

## Tools of the trade



A new NHS Employers' briefing provides an update on the progress being made to address the 10 key issues having an impact on nurse recruitment and retention in the NHS. Read *Factors Affecting Nurse Supply: An Update on Progress* at [tinyurl.com/nursesupply](http://tinyurl.com/nursesupply)

Acas has produced a new guide and factsheets outlining key areas where religious or belief discrimination can occur. These areas include recruitment, time off for religious reasons and dress code. Download the guide and factsheets at [tinyurl.com/acas-discrimination](http://tinyurl.com/acas-discrimination)

The Labour Research Department's booklet *Law at Work 2018* clearly explains important areas of employment law enabling reps and individuals to identify their legal rights. Take a look at [tinyurl.com/LRD-booklet](http://tinyurl.com/LRD-booklet)

A recent report from the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work explores interventions, policies and practices to support successful return to work for cancer survivors. Download *Rehabilitation and Return to Work After Cancer* at [tinyurl.com/work-after-cancer](http://tinyurl.com/work-after-cancer)