

Activate

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News, views and support for RCN activists



Members to vote on important resolution at Extraordinary General Meeting

The RCN's communication of the NHS pay deal for England will be discussed at the EGM with members to vote on their confidence in the RCN leadership either in person or by proxy

The EGM has been called following a petition by 1,017 RCN members to discuss the communication of the 2018 NHS pay deal in England and the process surrounding the dissemination of information about it.

The signatories of the petition called for a vote of no confidence in the current leadership of the RCN and for RCN Council to stand down.

Members can now cast their vote on a resolution relating to this by either attending the EGM in person or by casting their vote by proxy.

Members were sent an email about how to vote by proxy by Electoral Reform Services (ERS) on 6 September. Casting a vote by proxy means members can ask someone attending the EGM to vote on their behalf. They can either instruct their proxy how to vote or ask them to decide for them. Members do not need to attend the EGM to cast a vote.

The initial findings of an independent external review into the RCN's communication of the 2018 NHS pay deal for England have been published to help inform discussions at the EGM.

The full review, carried out by the assurer services division of ERS, will provide an independent account of the RCN's activities around the pay deal and will take two to three months to complete. It will identify where things went wrong and provide recommendations as to what the College can change. The RCN has committed to implementing the recommendations and publishing the review in full.

In the meantime, the interim independent external review report can be found at rcn.org.uk/egm where you will also find the complete wording of the resolution, along with statements from the members who proposed the EGM and RCN Council setting out their respective positions on it.

The EGM is being held on Friday 28 September at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre from 11am. If you will be attending, please register to attend by 19 September. If you're not able to attend, please complete an online proxy vote. The deadline is Wednesday 26 September. The meeting can also be watched live online by logging into the members' area of the RCN website at rcn.org.uk/myrcn

Change at the top



Dame Donna Kinnair is now Acting Chief Executive & General Secretary of the RCN after Janet Davies stepped down from the role at the end of August

Dame Donna is a widely respected executive nurse with more than 30 years' experience.

She has held a number of high-profile strategic roles across the NHS and joined the RCN in 2015 as Director of Nursing, Policy and Practice.

RCN Council asked Donna to act-up in the leadership position after Janet Davies parted ways with the College by mutual agreement.

Donna said: "It is a privilege to hold this office and I do not underestimate the work we must do. My eyes are firmly fixed on what's happening in the lives and workplaces of our members.

"I look forward to the campaigns we will fight together to make nursing the profession we all wanted to join, and to keep on inspiring the nurses of tomorrow."

To read more visit tinyurl.com/rcn-exec

Scotland safe staffing – Ask for more

You can help gather support for staffing levels which can deliver safe and effective care by getting behind the RCN in Scotland's new safe staffing campaign

In May, the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament.

Throughout autumn, as Members of the Scottish Parliament undertake their initial work on the bill, the RCN in Scotland will be campaigning hard, asking for more for nursing so that patients receive excellent care – and you can help.

The campaign is asking for people to sign up to show their support. You can do this by entering your details online or if you work in Scotland,

look out for information stands in your workplace and fill in a postcard. Visit rcn.org.uk/askformore

Please ask your colleagues and friends to sign up too. Campaign posters are available to download from the website.

RCN Scotland Director, Theresa Fyffe, said: "This is an opportunity for change. The message is that the right legislation can help to ensure that nursing teams have the right staff to provide safe, effective and quality care."

Follow the campaign on Twitter [@RCNScot](https://twitter.com/RCNScot) and, if you're using social media to show your support, don't forget to include a link to the website and use the hashtag [#askformore](https://twitter.com/askformore)

New Chair and Vice Chair of Congress

BJ Waltho and Michael Brown are our new Chair and Vice Chair of Congress

BJ Waltho will be leading the biggest event in the nursing calendar as she takes on the role of Chair of Congress. Helping her to conduct Congress business will be Michael Brown, former Chair of RCN Council.

BJ, who has more than 40 years' experience as a nurse and has been Vice Chair of Congress since 2014, said: "I am honoured to be taking on this important role and working with the Agenda Committee ensuring that members' voices are heard and Congress reflects current issues in nursing."



Next year Congress will take place at the ACC in Liverpool from Sunday 19 to Thursday 23 May.

Find out more and register your interest at rcn.org.uk/congress

Congress 2019 - Applications for voting members

You have until Wednesday 17 October to apply to represent your branch or forum at next year's Congress in Liverpool.

Any member can apply to be a voting member for their branch or first choice forum at Congress. It's a great opportunity to play an active role in the RCN as voting members sit in the main hall during Congress debates and vote on resolutions.

If you're a voting member, the RCN also books and funds your travel and accommodation, and covers expenses (in accordance with the RCN's expenses policy) for the times you're registered to vote. To apply, or to find out about other sources of funding available through your country or region, visit rcn.org.uk/congressfunding

Make your vote count

Election candidates for RCN President and Deputy President have been confirmed

Eleven members have put themselves forward for the prestigious roles. They are Sue Hill, Celia Manson, Marion Mason, Professor Anne Marie Rafferty CBE FRCN, Robert Sowney FRCN and Professor Rod Thomson FRCN for the role of RCN President. And Liz Brasnett, Yvonne Coghill CBE FRCN, Paul Watson, Jeni Watts and Dr Sue Woodward FRCN for the role of Deputy President.

The successful candidates will hold office for two years from 1 January 2019 and will succeed outgoing President Dr Cecilia Akrisie Anim CBE and Deputy President Professor Rod Thompson FRCN.

Find out more about each of the candidates by tuning into the livestreaming of a hustings event on Tuesday 9 October or register to attend the event in person at rcn.org.uk/hustings-2018

Look out for your ballot papers

All current RCN members can vote and will receive ballot papers in the post from 11 October. Your ballot papers will arrive in a white envelope with the RCN logo and Electoral Reform Services (ERS) logo (pictured below) on the front.

Please let your colleagues know so they can look out for them too and encourage as many members as possible to vote. If you need to request new papers, contact ERS on 020 8889 9203 or at customerservices@electoralreform.co.uk. Voting closes on Wednesday 14 November and the results will be announced soon after.



Fund your studies

The RCN Foundation autumn bursary schemes are now open for applications, with up to £5,000 available to support a wide variety of learning, development and research opportunities for nursing staff.

The deadline for applications is 5pm on Friday 19 October. For more information visit tinyurl.com/gszc2f8

Better partnerships

Our biennial equalities and inclusion event – Building Better Partnerships – is taking place at RCN headquarters in London on Thursday 1 November. The event includes a range of workshops, information stalls and other activities to develop skills and boost confidence.

Wendy Irwin, RCN Equalities Lead, said: “We’ll be launching the first part of our inclusion café which will provide practical tools to create accountability and foster positive culture change.”

To register visit: tinyurl.com/building-better-partnerships

New assaults law will help protect nursing staff

Thanks to campaigning by RCN members, the law in England and Wales has been strengthened to protect health care staff from assaults

As *Activate* went to press, the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Bill was due to be given royal assent and become law. This new law makes it a specific offence to assault health care staff and other emergency workers in England and Wales meaning tougher punishments for people who carry out such attacks.

Initially the scope of the bill was very narrow and nursing staff were only covered if they were working in A&E departments or urgent treatment centres. Last year, the RCN and other trade unions successfully lobbied to extend the definition of emergency worker to cover all nursing staff employed to deliver NHS-funded care, including those working in the independent sector providing NHS services. In April, the bill was extended further to cover sexual assault.

Kim Sunley, RCN National Officer, said: “Activists, especially our safety reps, have been crucial to the success of this bill. From submitting a Congress item in 2017 to discuss



the need for tougher criminal sanctions for people who assault health care workers to attending parliament and briefing MPs and Peers, our safety reps have been fully engaged in lobbying for this law.

“Thanks to their hard work, from now on anyone who wilfully assaults a health care worker will feel the full force of the law and can expect a tougher sentence if found guilty.”

The RCN is working with other organisations who have backed the bill to support the implementation of the law.

NHS pay in Wales

Voting on the NHS pay deal for Wales was due to close as

Activate went to press (14 September). Don't forget to check our website for the latest developments at rcn.org.uk/wales/get-involved/nursing-pay-in-wales

Nursing pay
Wales

You'll be listened to



Whatever the EGM outcome, you will see changes, says Maria Trewern, Chair of RCN Council

Since the last issue of *Activate*, the summer has been far from quiet in our College.

In July, when many in England received the new NHS pay deal, it became clear those not at the top of their band would have to wait until their increment date for the full 3% of the 2018/19 amount. The RCN had said all members would receive this straight away which was incorrect.

Janet Davies, as Chief Executive & General Secretary, apologised immediately and Council asked for an independent review on the RCN's processes around the deal. Shortly after, Council accepted the call for an Extraordinary General Meeting. Since then, Janet Davies has left by mutual agreement and I appointed an acting chief executive, Donna Kinnair, to work closely with Council to ensure member services are not affected.

The interim report of the independent review confirms the RCN's understanding and communication of the deal was not what members expected. A deeper analysis follows in the next few weeks and it will be published in full.

Whatever the EGM outcome, you will see changes. We have committed the College to take forward the review's recommendations, learn lessons and act on them. For some, frustrations are not limited to the pay deal - I'm determined to see members listened to and fully involved.

Before voting in the EGM on whether Council has your confidence, you can read more information, including the petitioners' statement and the interim report, on our website at rcn.org.uk/egm. The College is now heading in the right direction and I would like you to join with Council in taking this work forward.

ASK AN ADVISER



Working elsewhere



Can staff refuse to move?

Usually employers are allowed to move staff out of their normal working environment or ask them to temporarily work elsewhere. The employer must adhere to the person's contract and be sure of their competence levels.

If nursing staff are asked to move, they should consider the following:

- are they familiar with the equipment?
- what level of care is expected?
- what will the staff member be doing and who will be supporting them?

Registered nurses must follow the NMC code which states that nursing staff must recognise and work within the limits of their own competence. It's reasonable for someone to refuse to move if they're being asked to work in areas where they could be putting patients and their registration at risk.

However, it may be unreasonable to refuse if the employer has provided support and the contract of employment permits a move.

Find more advice at rcn.org.uk/get-help/rcn-advice/moving-staff

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



Arianne pictured centre

Renewed purpose

My organisation, Interserve Healthcare, signed a national learning agreement with the RCN in March. As part of that agreement, myself and four colleagues are undertaking training to become learning reps.

I can't wait to get stuck in. We've got lots of ideas about how we can support our colleagues and facilitate learning across our organisation. In fact, we can't believe how much potential there is for us to make a difference and how many invaluable resources there are available to us.

The thing that's struck me most is the impact taking on this role has had on me personally. I've been a nurse for more than 20 years. Today, I'm responsible for providing clinical assurance rather than caring for patients face-to-face. It's easy to get bogged down with large workloads, mundane tasks or day-to-day work. You just get on with it and do your job. Sometimes, you can forget why you became a nurse in the first place.

Taking on a more active role in the RCN has re-ignited that for me. It's given me a real push and desire to develop myself. In the independent sector, study days and other resources don't always seem readily available but becoming a learning rep has made me realise there is so much available through the RCN and I'm excited to share that with colleagues across my organisation.

Arianne Shephard, trainee learning rep

To read more about Arianne and her colleagues, visit rcn.org.uk/activate

Is it fair not to provide the right to appeal?

When someone is dismissed from employment they should usually be offered the right to appeal. So is it fair not to provide this? Rarely, decided the Employment Appeal Tribunal in a recent case.

Mr Afzal began employment with East London Pizza Ltd in October 2009. Mr Afzal, who was from Pakistan, had a time-limited right to work in the UK.

By 12 August 2016 he was required to apply for a permanent right to live and work in the UK. If the application was received in time, he was entitled to continue working while the application was processed.

Mr Afzal's employer asked him for evidence to show he'd submitted his application in time. Mr Afzal's application had been submitted in time but the email attachment he sent as evidence couldn't be opened so he was dismissed without any procedure or right of appeal. No appeal was offered on the basis there was nothing to appeal against.

Although the Employment Tribunal held the dismissal was fair, the Employment Appeal Tribunal held that in fact "in modern employment relations practice the provision of an appeal is virtually universal." It found that East London Pizza Ltd. had always been entitled to employ Mr Afzal and that an appeal would have established this and would have meant the dismissal could have been revoked.

This case is a reminder that even if a dismissal appears inevitable, the whole procedure including the right of appeal will be taken into account when determining the fairness of the dismissal.

Joanne Galbraith-Marten
RCN Head of Legal
(Employment)



Workplace safety inspections are well worth it



Safety rep Carolyn Venters shares her tips on how to approach workplace safety inspections

European Week for Safety and Health at Work (22-28 October) offers a great opportunity to highlight the importance of safety in the workplace. Safety reps are being encouraged to get involved by carrying out an inspection where they work.

If you've recently taken on the safety rep role and you're not sure where to start, or you're an old hand at inspections but feel a bit uninspired, then Carolyn Venters (pictured right) is here to help.

"Inspections can be time-consuming," admits Carolyn, the UK Safety Representatives Committee Member for Scotland. "But they bring many benefits and once you're in the right mindset it becomes a lot easier. You'll find yourself absent-mindedly checking bin lids or inspecting the roads for potholes on your way to work."

Carolyn explains that ideally a manager and safety rep will carry out an inspection together: "You're looking at a lot of different things so it's helpful to have two people and a manager may have a different perspective to you."

"You'll find yourself absent-mindedly checking bin lids or inspecting the roads for potholes"

So, what happens during an inspection?

"A lot," says Carolyn, who has been carrying out workplace inspections for four years. "You need to look at all of the processes in place and make sure staff are doing what they're meant to be doing. For example, risk assessments, sharps disposal, waste disposal, moving and handling. It's a long list."

Carolyn says that an important part of any inspection is talking to staff – you're not just there to observe and pass judgement: "Ask them what training they've had, do they know where the relevant paperwork is, are they worried about anything – it's also a chance for them to raise any concerns."

What do you do if you find a problem?

"Always raise it locally first," says Carolyn. "Speak to the local manager – they may be aware of the problem or you may be able to solve it together."

"If it's something they can't solve locally then they need to escalate it to their manager. You can take it to your health and safety committee if you need support or if you want to share learning more widely."

Do inspections really make a difference?

The answer is certainly yes in Carolyn's case. "My biggest win has been improving the safety for staff in my area who work night or twilight shifts," says Carolyn. "One of the items listed on our inspection checklist is 'safe access and exit'.

"The walk from our department to the carpark was not well-lit and some staff who worked half a night shift and left around 2am felt unsafe walking to their cars. I raised this with managers and I had to keep raising it at our health and safety committee meetings.

"Eventually through persistence the trust did make improvements. It was a big job as they had to dig up the road to put in new cabling but it's benefitted a lot of people and goes to show that you can make a difference."

What's Carolyn's advice to safety reps?

"Be persistent. Even if something isn't on the checklist, if you think it's a problem then raise it and keep raising it.

"Inspections do take a lot of time and it's difficult with staff shortages but they can also really help you. If you go to an area you don't know and carry out an inspection, then you're making contacts – with the staff there and with the managers you're doing the inspection with.

"If something does need to be sorted out, you know who to go to and they know you. It may mean you can get something sorted out more quickly in the future by just sending an email.

"And it works the other way too. I often get emails from managers asking for advice on a health and safety matter and it's great because it gives you a voice to bring about change."

Read the full story at rcn.org.uk/activate

"Be persistent. If you think it's a problem then raise it and keep raising it"

Keep your eyes open

Hazards that may cause slips, trips and falls are some of the main things that Carolyn and her colleagues are looking out for when carrying out an inspection. "It's not just about what you see on the day," says Carolyn. "We ask how the cleaning is carried out. For example, do staff clean one half of the corridor, let it dry and then clean the other half? Do all staff know where the signage for 'wet floors' is kept?"

"We want to be assured that if there is a hazard, staff know what to do and people won't hurt themselves."

Safety inspections go a long way to stopping accidents from happening but they can't always be prevented.

The Health and Safety Executive reported that between 2014/15 and 2016/17 slips, trips and falls accounted for 27% of the most common accidents in the health and social care sector across the UK. So, what support is available if something does go wrong?

RCN Law

RCN Law offers personal injury services for RCN members in England and Wales.

As an RCN member in England and Wales you can access free legal advice and representation for injuries sustained at work or outside of work, assault, stress, lifting and handling, and road traffic accidents.

This service is free regardless of whether your claim is successful. If it is successful, you will keep all of your compensation.

Visit rcn.org.uk/get-help/legal-help/personal-injury to find out more and to see what else RCN Law has to offer.

If you're an RCN member in Scotland or Northern Ireland you can access free personal injury services for injuries sustained at work by contacting RCN Direct on 0345 772 6100.

You can download the *RCN Safety Representatives Handbook* by logging into the RCN reps hub or find information about safety inspections at hse.gov.uk/involvement/inspections.htm



NOTICEBOARD

Get creative



Have you used our online design portal yet?

RCN reps can now access our Portal for Online Design – or POD as it's also known – to easily create RCN-branded posters for their workplace.

Whether you're making sure colleagues know who their reps are, holding an event to recruit new members or promoting an RCN campaign, POD can help! You can choose from a number of templates and then add your own branch logo and messaging. Once you've finished, print your poster or save it for later.

Donato Tallo, who is training to become an RCN steward, said: "I've spent some time experimenting with different templates. The system is intuitive and easy to use. It's a great resource to help reps create high quality, professional resources that reflect the RCN brand."

To find out more, log into the RCN reps hub and find the "Resources to promote the RCN" link in the section "Quick links for resources". Here, you'll also find branded PowerPoint and Word templates for reps to use.

RCN backs #letsremoveit

We're supporting an anti-bullying campaign which is helping to change the culture of health care

The #letsremoveit campaign, led by the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (RCSEd), offers online resources to help health care professionals understand more about bullying, undermining and harassment in the workplace.

Kim Sunley, RCN National Officer, who will be attending an event led by the RCSEd later this month, said: "The RCN is pleased to endorse the online resources that support this campaign and do our part to stamp out bullying for good."

"Bullying and harassment not only have a corrosive effect on the morale of individual staff, but directly impact safe and effective patient care."

The campaign's online resources will be particularly helpful to RCN reps for their



own learning and to signpost colleagues who need support.

To access them visit rcsed.ac.uk/bullying and don't forget to read RCN Direct's advice at rcn.org.uk/get-help/rcn-advice/bullying-and-harassment

Are you an RCN steward in the NHS?

A research project exploring the work, career and union experiences of NHS nurses is looking for RCN stewards to take part in interviews

The project is aiming to help trade unions understand how they can effectively represent and defend their members, especially women, and migrant and black and minority ethnic workers.

Interviews will last approximately one hour and can be arranged at a time and place to suit participants. The questions will be sent prior to the interview and names and workplaces will be anonymised in any publications.

For more information, or if you want to take part, contact the researchers at g.kirton@qmul.ac.uk or cecile.guillaume@roehampton.ac.uk

Tools of the trade



A report from the TUC has found that more than half of workers think it's likely they're being monitored at work. Read *I'll be watching you* at tinyurl.com/TUC-watching

Remploy's practical guide for employers on how to support people with disabilities at work covers 19 common disabilities from acquired brain injury to visual impairment. It's free to download at tinyurl.com/remploy-guide

A new podcast from NHS Employers explores the impact of Brexit and explains what employers can do to best support their EU staff. Listen to *Supporting EU staff in the NHS: Where are we and what's next?* at tinyurl.com/Brexit-NHS-support

NICE has published guidance on the diagnosis and management of Lyme disease. Read more at tinyurl.com/nice-lyme-disease