

Royal College  
of Nursing  
Scotland

# Making our voice heard: the RCN Scotland guide to influencing



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## RCN Scotland – the voice of nursing

RCN Scotland is the voice of nursing. We represent nurses, nursing students and health care support workers. We

promote excellence in practice and influence Scottish Government policies.

To do this, we need to get our messages across to a wide range of audiences, including politicians, the media and the general public, as well as RCN members and other nursing staff.

We are facing challenging issues, which will affect the delivery of high quality patient care and the future of nursing in Scotland. Together, we can make a real difference on the wards, in our communities, with health boards and with our Government and ensure we influence at all levels on behalf of nursing and for Scotland's patients.

*Making our voice heard: the RCN Scotland guide to influencing* has been put together as a step-by-step guide for branches and members who want to work with politicians and the media. It gives you all the information and ideas you need to get started and is a great resource for us all.

As Chair of RCN Scotland Board I will make myself available to all members so please do get in touch with me via the RCN Scotland communications team if you would like to discuss any aspect of RCN Scotland's influencing work. I look forward to working with you.

Michael Brown  
RCN Scotland Board Chair

P.S. Remember, too, that the RCN Scotland communications team is always there to give you support and advice, whenever you need it.



# Influencing Politicians

## Introduction to the Scottish Parliament and its powers

Elections to the Scottish Parliament usually take place every four years. The current session of Parliament, however, has a term of five years (2011-2016), with the next Scottish elections scheduled to take place on 5 May 2016, to avoid a potential clash with Westminster elections in 2015.

There are 129 Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) and as Scotland has a system of voting known as proportional representation, it is very difficult for one party to win an outright majority. Until 2011, this resulted in coalition and minority governments. In May 2011, however, the SNP won an outright majority, i.e., they won more seats than all the other parties combined.

The Scottish Parliament:

- is the law-making body for Scotland on devolved matters (see next column)
- examines the proposed laws and activities of the Scottish Government
- includes a number of committees, which have the potential to influence the policies of the Scottish Government and of health boards.

The First Minister is the leader of the party with the most MSPs at Holyrood, subject to a vote in the Parliament. The Scottish Government is made up of those MSPs selected by the First Minister to be cabinet secretaries and ministers.

The Scotland Act 1998 sets out which issues are reserved, i.e. decided at a UK level at Westminster in the Houses of Commons and Lords, and those issues for which power is devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

The list of issues devolved to the Scottish Parliament is due to change slightly subject to the successful passage of the Scotland Bill through Westminster in 2011. This will result in more powers being devolved to the Scottish Parliament but health will be largely unaffected.

### What the Scottish Parliament has law-making powers on

The Scottish Parliament has power over the following issues across Scotland:

- **all health policy** – apart from abortion, human fertilisation and embryology, genetics and vivisection

- agriculture, forestry and fishing
- education and training
- environment
- housing
- law and home affairs
- local government
- planning
- police and fire services
- social work
- some aspects of transport, including the Scottish road network and bus policy
- sport and the arts
- tourism and economic development

### What is decided at a UK-level

Westminster has power over the following issues in Scotland:

- common markets
- data protection
- employment legislation
- electricity, coal, gas and nuclear energy
- fiscal, economic and monetary system
- immigration and nationality
- social security
- some aspects of transport, including marine and air transport, transport safety and regulation, and driver and vehicle licensing and testing
- trade and industry, including competition and customer protection
- defence and national security
- foreign policy

Regulation of the registered nursing workforce is dealt with at a UK level. Pay and terms and conditions for NHS staff are largely agreed on a UK-wide basis, though some aspects of terms and conditions in Scotland are agreed through the Scottish Terms and Conditions Committee.

## Who do I contact and how?

As powers over health and other policies which affect nursing are under the control of the Scottish Parliament, RCN Scotland aims to influence MSPs and the Scottish Government on behalf of members.

Remember that the politician you are contacting will want to know what they can do to help you. Don't just highlight an issue: suggest a solution.

# 1997

Scotland votes to create a Scottish Parliament in a referendum

# 1998

The Scotland Act – to establish a Scottish Parliament - is successfully passed at Westminster

# 1999

The first elections to the new Scottish Parliament, resulting in Labour/Lib Dem coalition

# 2003

Scottish Parliament elections resulting in Labour/Lib Dem coalition

# 2007

Scottish Parliament elections resulting in minority SNP Government

# 2011

Scottish Parliament elections resulting in majority SNP Government

But before you start approaching politicians you have to think about what you want to influence and who you need to talk to, to achieve your goals.

### What's your message?

There are a huge range of issues which affect members locally that you may potentially wish to raise with decision makers, so it is important to select an issue that is of interest to a wider audience and one that may be possible to change with support from politicians and through the media. The RCN Scotland communications team has a wealth of evidence and experience to help you refine your messages and approach the most appropriate politicians.

Once you have decided what it is you want to achieve and who you need to influence, you need to consider what approach to take to influence the relevant politicians. Please refer to the political influencing protocol in Appendix 1 of this guide.

**Remember that the politician you are contacting will want to know what they can do to help you. Don't just highlight an issue: suggest a solution or some action for the politician to take.** For example, suggest that they ask your local health board some questions or that they raise your issue in Parliament or with the Scottish Government.

### Who to speak to?

You have eight MSPs who represent you in the Scottish Parliament: one constituency MSP and seven list MSPs for your region. Choose one or any of your MSPs to work with, depending on the issue.

Remember to be politically impartial. The RCN Scotland communications team can provide advice and contacts.

### Contacting your politician

MSPs are approachable and this can be done in a variety of ways. With email you can contact several people at once, with a concise and clear message. Ask colleagues to email or write letters as well. The more correspondence a politician receives, the more likely they are to take the issue seriously.

**Remember - a politician will always take more notice if a letter uses a personal example to highlight an issue.**

You could invite a local MSP to attend an RCN branch meeting or to come and meet colleagues. This should be done after discussing your proposal with the relevant people in your branch or at work. Please refer to the RCN Scotland protocol for dealing with politicians. You could also arrange a meeting in the MSP's constituency office or in the Scottish Parliament.

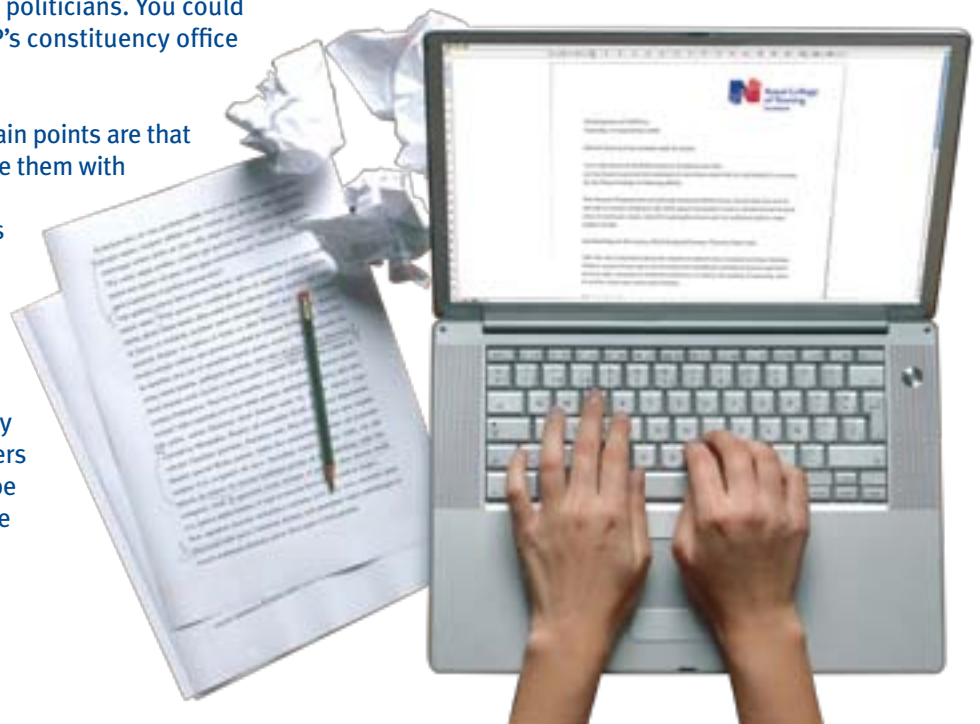
Be prepared - work out what the main points are that you want to get across and reinforce them with examples. Afterwards, write to the politician to reiterate the key points you raised and the action that you would like them to take.

An alternative to setting up a meeting is to attend the local surgery that all MSPs hold regularly to allow constituents to raise matters of concern with them. Details can be found in local newspapers or on the Scottish Parliament website: [www.scottish.parliament.uk](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk)

Be prepared - work out what the main points are that you want to get across and reinforce them with examples.

## Tips for lobbying politicians

- **Do your homework** - know who you are talking to and what you are asking them for.
- **Keep it simple** - stick to basic facts and straightforward comparisons and avoid using jargon.
- **Use a variety of methods** - don't rely on just a letter or a meeting - use various means to get your message across to a politician.
- **Follow up your contact** - if you agree to send them more information or do any other follow up work make sure you do.
- **Develop a network of allies** - use your contacts with other unions, interest groups, friends or relatives who are involved in politics or interested in your issue.
- **Keep in touch** - try and develop your relationship with your local MSP by keeping them informed of any relevant developments.





# The media

## Introduction to the media in Scotland

Media coverage is one of the most effective ways for RCN Scotland to raise the profile of nurses and nursing with national and local decision-makers, members and the general public.

People access the news in a variety of ways: through local and national radio, through television, through local and national newspapers and online. Newspapers are increasingly read online rather than in hard copy.

The main national radio station in Scotland is BBC Radio Scotland, with a morning news programme, *Good Morning Scotland*, that often influences the news that is reported in Scotland throughout the rest of the day. BBC and STV are the national TV stations which carry regular news bulletins throughout the day, with the main bulletins being broadcast around 6pm. STV also has regional coverage at various points during their bulletins.

The national newspapers' circulation figures are generally decreasing with *The Scotsman* standing at 42,581 and *The Herald* at 48,629 in August 2011 (Press Gazette, August 2011). These figures do not include online readerships.

Local radio stations and local newspapers are often a trusted source of information and are a particularly effective way of communicating with a large audience in a short space of time.

The RCN Scotland communications team works with both national and local media to promote RCN policies and campaigns. To make our voice stronger we need members to help highlight nursing issues in their local newspapers and radio. From time to time we also need members to give interviews to Scottish national media on a variety of issues, so if you feel strongly about an issue and think it's about time the RCN did something to highlight it, get in touch with the RCN Scotland communications team or sign up to Get informed, get involved on the RCN Scotland website [www.rcn.org.uk/scotland/gigi](http://www.rcn.org.uk/scotland/gigi)

Before you work with local or national media, please refer to the RCN Scotland media protocol, which is set out in Appendix 2 of this guide.

## Who do I contact and how?

If you would like to undertake work with local media you should contact the RCN Scotland communications team. They can provide you with advice and contacts and can also establish that your proposed work does not conflict with any other ongoing or planned RCN Scotland communications activity. Please refer to the RCN Scotland media protocol in Appendix 2.

## Getting coverage

There are a number of ways to get media coverage.

### Letters pages

Letters pages are the easiest way for members and branches to get their voice heard. After the front page and sports pages, they are one of the most widely-read pages in both national and local papers. You can use letters to respond to something you've read or bring up your own issues. A good letter will often spark off a debate among readers, and may be picked up as an idea for a feature elsewhere.

### Tips for letter writing

- **Be clear about what capacity you are writing in:** as an RCN Scotland representative or a nurse. Check the RCN Scotland media protocol.
- **Keep it short and focused (maximum 100 words).** Many papers have strict limits on the length of letters so keep your letter brief or the paper will shorten it for you.
- **Make references to the newspaper.** While some papers print general commentary, many will only print letters that refer to a previous article. Include a reference to the article (article title, page and date) in your opening sentence.
- **Include all your contact details.** Include name, daytime telephone number and address, even if you are submitting the letter by email. This is an editorial requirement.
- **Be timely.** Submit your letter as soon as possible after an article appears in the newspaper, in order to keep the issue alive.

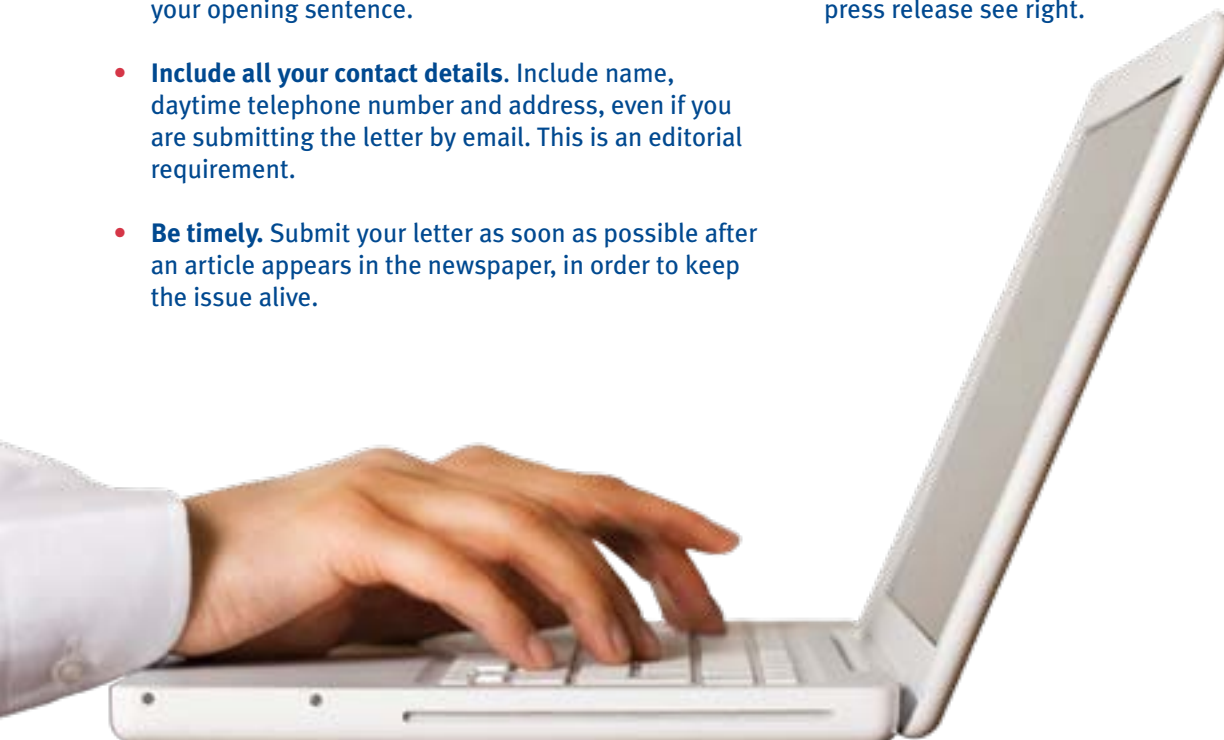
### Tips on style

- **Remember your code of conduct as a nurse, as an employee and as an RCN member.**
- **Never breach patient or colleague confidentiality.**
- **Increase your credibility by mentioning what makes you qualified to write in.** e.g. you are a nurse working in the community, you have dealt with violent or aggressive patients etc.
- **Try to tell readers something they're not likely to know.**
- **Keep personal grudges and name-calling out of letters.**
- **Avoid jargon and exaggeration.**
- **Don't assume your audience knows about the issue you are writing about.**
- **Use positive suggestions rather than negative commands.**

### News stories

As well as letter writing, you can also develop local news stories and issues for features. A news item is one linked to a one-off event or a new piece of information such as a forthcoming event, the opening/closing of a new facility or a local problem affecting nurses or patients in your area.

The best way to publicise a news story is by writing a press release. For an example of a national RCN Scotland press release see right.





**Sample press release**

**For immediate release, Tuesday 30 August 2011**

**Nursing leader responds to figures showing cuts to NHS workforce**

Figures released by ISD today reveal a rapid acceleration in the number of nursing posts being lost across NHS Scotland, with the number of nursing staff now at its lowest point since 2006.

Nurse numbers are expected to fall even further between now and March 2012 as additional figures released today by the Scottish Government show.

The ISD figures show a decrease of 485.7 whole time equivalent (WTE) nursing and midwifery posts in the first three months of this financial year, i.e., from 31 March 2011 to 30 June 2011. This compares to:

- a loss of 711.3 posts over the previous 6 months, i.e., from September 2010 to March 2011,
- and a loss of 550.2 posts over preceding year, i.e., from September 2009 to September 2010.

The projections from health boards show that a decrease of 988.1 WTE nursing and midwifery posts is expected in the financial year to 31 March 2012. However, the number of posts actually lost in the first three months of this financial year is already half of the projected total.

Theresa Fyffe, Director of Royal College of Nursing (RCN) Scotland, said:

“The rapid acceleration in the number of nursing posts being lost is bad news for patients. The Scottish Government and the NHS are now faced with a huge challenge – to find ways to deliver high quality services to more people with increasingly complex needs with an ever shrinking workforce.

“Pressure on health boards to balance books and make more and more savings has resulted in them chipping away at the workforce to save money on pay. It is now time for health boards to look more carefully at savings that could be made in other areas, such as sharing clinical and backroom services.

“As advances in the way treatment is provided are made, some health boards are saving money by cutting beds and therefore the staff needed to run these beds. But as demand hasn’t disappeared, where are these services now being provided? Where is the evidence of an increase in community services and the nurses needed to provide them, for example?”

**Theresa concluded:**

“Many health boards are doing their best to meet difficult challenges. But instead of overseeing thousands of disjointed cuts, the Scottish Government should step up to the plate and support health boards to make difficult regional and national decisions to manage demand and change services, while ensuring quality and efficiency”.



**Stage 1 – Key messages and your audience**

Before you begin writing, note down what it is you want to get across to the public and why. Think about the kind of language you should use to ensure that your audience, i.e. the general public, most of whom don’t work in healthcare, will understand. **Remember that your local press work must be in line with what RCN Scotland is saying on the issue.** The communications team can advise you if you need help or clarification.

**Stage 2 – Write press release**

A template press release onto which details can be written is available from the communications team. The example press release shown to the left demonstrates the standard approach taken to press releases.

**Stage 3 – Issue press release**

Email your press release to your local paper and/or local radio station. Contact details can be found in the paper or on its website. Follow up your email with a phone call to the paper to check it has been received and to see if the newspaper is likely to follow it up.

For further information and guidance, contact the RCN Scotland communications team.



## Features

Features cover all sorts of themes, are usually more in-depth than news stories and are often centred around a person or group of people with a shared experience. For example, a day in the life of a cancer nurse specialist would be a feature to highlight the kind of care that cancer nurse specialists offer to patients. If you have an idea for a feature, work out your key messages, who would take part, what local statistics are available on the subject and try to identify a good photo opportunity.

Once you have these in place, and after discussing with the RCN Scotland communications team, contact your local paper and ask to speak to the features editor. Give them a brief description of your proposal and take it from there.

## Online comment

More and more newspapers are now read online and most websites have a facility to allow readers to comment on articles online. If you want to comment on an article, this is one way of doing it, but your comment could easily get lost in the huge number of comments which are normally posted. If you do choose to do this, make sure you make clear if you are speaking as an RCN member, nurse or as an individual member of the public and remember your duties to your employer and patients.

If you feel the presenter is being provocative don't rise to the bait; it's not personal, it's their job to create 'good radio'. Take a moment and step back to think about the different ways you could reply.

## Radio phone-ins

Radio phone-ins are an excellent way to get your viewpoint aired. If possible listen to a previous edition of the programme to get an idea of the format, the presenter's approach and what type of caller gets through to go on the programme.

### Tips for phone-ins

- Remember to be clear as to whether you are calling in as a representative of RCN Scotland, as a nurse or as an individual. Refer to the RCN Scotland media protocol.
- Most radio stations only take calls from a land line and not a mobile phone. When you ring in, your call will be answered by a researcher who will want to know what you plan to say.
- Before making your call, write down what you would like to say. Try to stick to a maximum of three key points that you want to get across. Once you are on air use your notes to jog your memory, but don't read from a prepared script as it will appear stilted.
- Don't expect to be on the radio for very long so get your key messages over as soon as possible. Remember to speak clearly.
- The guidelines for letter writing are also applicable for questions in a phone-in. If you have a personal story and you are particularly affected then you're more likely to get on.
- If you feel the presenter is being provocative don't rise to the bait; it's not personal, it's their job to create 'good radio'. Take a moment and step back to think about the different ways you could reply.

Many TV and radio programmes also encourage viewers and listeners to email or text their opinions into programmes which are then read out later in the show. If you do this, do it as an individual, as a nurse or as an RCN member, after referring to the RCN Scotland protocol on dealing with the media. Details of email addresses and text numbers are given during the programme and are an easy way to raise the profile of an issue important to you without having to go live on air.

## Responding to enquiries

If you have done previous work with the media, a journalist you have spoken to before may contact you out of the blue and ask for an interview or comment on a story they are running. Don't feel pressured to give an instant response but ask for their number to call them back later, then speak to the RCN Scotland communications team to decide what the best response would be.

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## Preparing for interviews

You may be asked for an interview by your local radio or TV station after issuing a press release or if a relevant news story comes up. The RCN Scotland communications team is there to offer advice on how to prepare, what questions may be asked and to give background information.

### Interview tips – preparation

The communications team will help you consider:

- your key messages and the best way to convey them
- possible questions you might get asked and how you could deal with them

### Interview tips – being interviewed

- Interviews are usually short, so be brief and concise with your answers.
- If it is TV, look at the reporter and not the camera. Once the interview is over, don't move until you are told to.
- If you don't know the answer say so, don't make things up.
- If it is a recorded interview and you don't answer a question well, ask to do it again.
- Don't use jargon or try to read from notes.
- Don't get side tracked by the interviewer. Steer the interview back to your key points.
- Try to put a human face on your answers. Talk about personal experience when possible.
- Try to look relaxed and confident and don't make distracting movements with your hands.

Remember it is your interview – so take control.

RCN Scotland can arrange training for members interested in learning more about the media and how to carry out successful media interviews. Please get in touch if you are interested in this.





# Communicating with RCN Scotland members

## Introduction

RCN Scotland offers members a range of easy-to-access communication tools enabling you to keep in touch with what is happening in the RCN and the world of health. These tools also enable members to communicate with RCN members across the UK as well as wider audiences, including other healthcare colleagues and the wider public.

We keep in touch with our members through written publications, the RCN Scotland website and through a number of staff and member-led events.

## What can I gain from using RCN member communications?

Taking advantage of our wide range of communication tools is the best way for you, as an RCN member and as a healthcare professional, to keep in touch with your fellow members and colleagues from across the UK.

It's also a great way to promote a local event, highlight a national issue of concern or ask for help and advice.

We regularly review how we communicate with members. For more information or details on opportunities to get your message across, contact the RCN Scotland communications team. See Appendix 3 for contact details.

## Current RCN member communications

### RCN Bulletin

This publication is circulated monthly (from January 2012) to all members and is a great way to communicate with members in Scotland and across the UK. An online version is also available on the RCN website (membership login required). *RCN Bulletin* is sent out to all RCN members (over 400,000).

### How to get your news in

- *RCN Bulletin* can include stories of interest to members in Scotland and across the UK. We are keen for members to contact us with ideas or information of all kinds for inclusion in *RCN Bulletin*, and stories accompanied by good quality photos are particularly welcome.
- For more information or details on where to send stories for inclusion call the RCN Scotland communications team. See Appendix 3 for contact details.



**Events**

RCN Scotland organises a range of local, regional and national events specifically for our members. We also assist members in organising their own events by providing facilities and advice.

Each RCN branch also holds regular meetings to help you get involved in local issues.

**How to get your news in**

- To find out about upcoming RCN and national events, visit [www.rcn.org.uk](http://www.rcn.org.uk)
- If you would like an event listed in any RCN member communications, or if you would like advice on organising a local event, get in touch with the RCN Scotland communications team.

**Social networking**

Social networking and blogging websites like Twitter and Facebook are becoming an increasingly useful and popular way of sharing information. For example, you can now follow RCN Scotland on Twitter (@RCNScot) for immediate updates. For more information about how the RCN is using social networking, and to find out how we can help you share information with other RCN members, contact the RCN Scotland communications team on 0131 662 6173.

Please be aware that the RCN has strict guidelines about the use of the RCN’s name and logo on social networking sites.

**Activate**

*Activate* is the monthly newsletter which goes out to all RCN activists.

**How to get your news in**

- Most information in *Activate* is UK wide, though there can be space for short articles from Scotland. If you have any ideas or articles for *Activate*, contact the RCN Scotland communications team.
- Please try and send your ideas or articles to us four to six weeks in advance of publication.

**RCN Scotland website – [www.rcn.org.uk/scotland](http://www.rcn.org.uk/scotland)**

The RCN Scotland website is an effective way to communicate with an increasing number of people.

It gives instant access to information, including parliamentary and media updates, member support, professional issues, learning and development and more..

**How to get your news in**

If you have any comments on the RCN Scotland website or would like information included on it, contact the RCN Scotland communications team.



## Appendix 1

# RCN Scotland political influencing protocol

### Introduction

1. RCN Scotland engages with politicians in many different ways but always with the broad objective of influencing on behalf of nurses and nursing in Scotland. The organisation seeks to work equally with all political parties in the Scottish Parliament. RCN Scotland political influencing includes all MSPs, Scottish MPs, Scottish MEPs, the Scottish Government and local councillors, although the most substantial contact is with MSPs.
2. The reputation of RCN Scotland can be significantly influenced by the ways in which it handles contacts with politicians. Effective and appropriate engagement can enhance the standing of the organisation as well as secure the specific objectives underlying the engagement. Equally, a lack of consistency or co-ordination can result in a loss of reputation which could, in turn, adversely affect the standing of RCN Scotland both among politicians and within its own membership.
3. The purpose of this protocol is to help support members and staff to maximise the impact of their political influencing activity and to ensure that the good name and standing of RCN Scotland is secured and promoted.

### Political influencing

4. Political influencing activity can take many different forms and can be on issues of local and/or national significance. The form of activity and issue involved will determine the degree of support required from RCN Scotland communications and other relevant teams.

Political influencing may involve, for example:

- Contacting a politician to provide information, raise an issue and/or seek support;
- Meeting a politician formally in a scheduled face-to-face meeting;
- Meeting a politician informally, for example at a conference;
- Inviting a politician to attend (and/or to speak at) an event;
- Sitting on a Scottish Government steering group;
- Being a member of a cross party group;
- Providing evidence to a committee of the Scottish Parliament.

5. It is important to draw a distinction between the contact that a member might have with a politician on a private and individual basis on the one hand and, on the other, from engagement that derives from the member's RCN activism. This protocol relates solely and explicitly to the latter form of contact. In exceptional circumstances, political activity by a member on a private basis can unintentionally reflect upon the wider reputation of RCN Scotland. All members are asked to consider this when engaging in political activity on a private individual basis or on behalf of any other organisation and to be mindful of the impact, however unintentional, that such engagement may have upon the wider interests and reputation of RCN Scotland.
6. When political contact is undertaken on the basis of the individual's RCN membership or activism, by an individual member on behalf of an RCN Scotland branch, forum, network group or any other RCN entity, or collectively by an RCN Scotland branch, forum, network group or any other RCN entity, members are asked to observe the guidelines below.

### Members' protocol for political influencing on behalf of RCN Scotland

7. RCN Scotland members are asked to observe the following protocols before contacting politicians or undertaking political influencing in respect of their RCN membership:
  - Before any approach is made to a politician, members are asked to make contact with the RCN Scotland communications Adviser or Parliamentary and Media Officer in order to discuss the proposed activity. Given the pressure on the diaries of politicians, it is important that this contact is made as far in advance of the proposed influencing activity as possible.
  - The RCN Scotland communications team undertakes to provide timely and appropriate advice to the member(s).
  - This advice will encompass the most appropriate form of contact, ensuring that it is made with the appropriate politician(s) and is in line with RCN Scotland objectives. It will be at this point that it will be agreed if the politician to be contacted and/or the issue to be discussed are of national or local significance. This will determine the level of support required from the RCN Scotland communications team.

- For issues of national importance, member(s) and the RCN Scotland communications team will discuss and agree who should make contact and the form it should take.
  - In the (hopefully unlikely) event of the member(s) feeling unable or unwilling to accept the advice provided by the RCN Scotland communications team, they may make representations to the RCN Scotland Board Chair and the RCN Scotland Director jointly. Their decision will be final.
  - Any political influencing activity undertaken by RCN members in their capacity as RCN members must correlate with the objectives, policies and values of RCN Scotland.
  - When a member contacts a politician, it should be made clear if they are doing so on behalf of RCN Scotland or otherwise.
  - Members are asked to bear in mind that, even if they approach a politician on an entirely personal basis, that contact may unintentionally reflect upon the corporate reputation of RCN Scotland.
  - As a matter of courtesy and to reinforce the reputation and good standing of RCN Scotland, a letter of thanks should always be sent to the politician by the member(s) involved following the conclusion of the contact or lobbying activity.
- 9. Where a meeting with MSP(s) is organised by RCN Scotland, either routinely or to meet policy or communications objectives, it may not always be possible or expected that members are involved, if:**
- The meeting is specifically designed to build a relationship between the MSP(s) and RCN Scotland or is to 'get to know' the MSP(s).
  - There would be an expectation that the meeting would involve those with a specific remit or role within RCN Scotland.
  - The meeting is responding to, or at the request of, an individual MSP or Minister or is arranged at short notice, outwith the control of RCN Scotland.
  - There are only a limited number of seats 'at the table'.
  - The meeting is following up, or building on, priority agendas already agreed with membership.

*Agreed by RCN Scotland board, June 2009*

### **MSP meetings organised by RCN Scotland**

- 8. Where a meeting with MSP(s) is organised by RCN Scotland, either routinely or to meet policy or communications objectives, members may be involved as follows:**
- A meeting with an MSP on a nursing or clinical issue where member(s) have expertise or local knowledge.
  - A meeting which is being held in support of partnership working.
  - Evidence to a Parliamentary Committee that requires expertise from a practising nurse.
  - A meeting designed to provide background information on nursing or service issues locally/on the ground.
  - Collective Board engagement with the Minister(s) of the day or members of the Health Committee.

## Appendix 2

### RCN Scotland media protocol

#### Overview

This protocol includes:

- an introduction to the role of RCN Scotland communications team in managing and developing the media relations function;
- media types and activity;
- a reputational risk analysis;
- a protocol for members and staff when dealing with the media on behalf of RCN Scotland; and
- advice for members when dealing with the media in a professional or individual capacity.

#### 1. Introduction

One of the key functions of the RCN Scotland communications team is to provide expertise and advice on working with the media to members and to RCN Scotland staff.

RCN Scotland communications team's media objectives are to:

- position RCN Scotland in the media as the leading professional organisation and trade union representing nurses and nursing;
- increase awareness of the important role of nurses and nursing in health and social care and health promotion in the media;
- gain media coverage on priority areas for nursing and for RCN Scotland to enable RCN Scotland to present its position and help shape future policy on key issues;
- maximise positive coverage of nursing and of RCN Scotland;
- develop and manage positive relationships with journalists on key titles including the trade press and national and local written, broadcast and online media; and
- provide appropriate input, support and advice to RCN Scotland staff and members when engaging with the media.

Any members who are likely, on a regular basis, to engage with journalists (written, broadcast or online) are offered the opportunity to take part in media training.

#### 2. Media types and activity

Media can either be broadcast, which encompasses radio and TV, or written, which encompasses newspapers and the internet.

**Local media** is often a good source of news stories for the local populace, RCN Scotland members and local

politicians, while **national media** is often used by national politicians, other national organisations and the wider general public as a source of information.

Key **nursing** and health **magazine/journals** are a source of more detailed coverage of issues specific for their audiences and are often used by national journalists to source possible articles.

Media activity broadly falls into two categories: proactive and reactive.

#### Proactive

Proactive media work is when contact is initiated, in whatever form, with journalists, by:

- arranging meetings/briefings with key correspondents;
- issuing a press release;
- targeted work in the media on a specific, normally local, issue; or
- placing an article in a specialist journal.

Proactive media work will often form part of an overall communications strategy on an issue when, for example:

- RCN Scotland is calling on the Scottish Government or health boards to change nursing or health policy; or
- RCN Scotland wishes to reflect the nursing profession or the organisation's view on topical issues in the media.

Proactive media work is also undertaken to celebrate members' or the organisation's successes, for example, if a member wins an award or when we changed the direction of the development of community nursing in Scotland.

#### Reactive

Reactive media work is when the organisation decides to respond to a request from a journalist by:

- supplying a comment (written media);
- setting up an interview (broadcast and sometimes written media); or
- providing background information on a specific issue or topic to the journalist.

Such requests are generally requested at very short notice (can be less than an hour).

#### 3. Reputational risk analysis

The reputation of nursing and of RCN Scotland can be significantly influenced by the way in which it is portrayed in the media: a positive, consistent and coherent portrayal of nursing and the RCN can enhance our reputation with members and the public, while



inconsistent messaging can negatively affect how members and the public perceive nurses and nursing and result in a loss of reputation for the RCN. It can also impact our ability to recruit and retain members.

How we engage with the media, therefore, impacts our reputation and membership for the future.

The purpose of this protocol is to ensure that members and staff:

- know what is expected of them when dealing with the media; and
- feel supported and well-informed when dealing with the media and so ensure the good name and standing of RCN Scotland is secured and promoted.

#### **4. Protocol for media work on behalf of RCN Scotland**

RCN Scotland members and staff are asked to observe the following protocols before undertaking any work with the media, to minimise the risks outlined above.

Before agreeing to be interviewed, make a comment to, or write an article for, the media, members should be clear with the journalist the capacity in which they are being approached, i.e.:

- as a member (and therefore representing) the RCN;
- in their professional capacity as a practising nurse academic etc; or
- purely in a personal capacity.

##### **Dealing with the media as an RCN member/representing the RCN**

All staff and members should seek advice from the RCN Scotland communications team before undertaking media work, when they are doing so as a member of the RCN or representing the RCN, to ensure that all media contact supports the objectives of the organisation and is consistent with existing or planned media activity and/or other communications activity. This includes making statements, writing articles or being interviewed for nursing or health press, local media or national media.

- a. The RCN Scotland communications team undertakes to provide timely and appropriate advice to staff and members in advance of any media activity, including written briefings and key messages, as required.
- b. Members and staff undertaking media activity on behalf of RCN Scotland must adhere to RCN Scotland's position on the issue/topic, to ensure consistent messaging which reflects the RCN's priorities and objectives.
- c. If the RCN Scotland position cannot be agreed between the member and the communications team,

the RCN Scotland director, with the RCN Scotland board chair, will agree the position. RCN Scotland Associate Director(s) and the Vice Chair will deputise as necessary. Their decision will be final.

- d. Any contact with the national media\* (see next page) on behalf of the RCN or RCN Scotland or which mentions the RCN or uses the RCN Scotland logo, for example, press releases, articles or written comment, can only be issued by the communications team or with their prior approval.
- e. If members wish to undertake media activity on a local basis on behalf of the RCN or RCN Scotland, they should work with the communications team, who will facilitate this.
- f. If staff or members are approached directly by the media for a comment or interview on behalf of RCN Scotland or as a result of them representing RCN Scotland on a group or in a partnership capacity, the above apply.
- g. When a request for a comment or interview is received, communications will take the details and decide the most appropriate spokesperson, taking into account the nature of the request and the media (national or local) and timescales. Whenever practical and appropriate, Board members or members with the appropriate expertise will be approached.
- h. Interviews or quotes from members as part of an RCN Scotland's communication, for example, in a press release, increase the pick-up rate by the media and will be used where possible and when they support the content. Communications will always seek permission from the member before proceeding. Necessary permissions will also be sought from the member's employer as appropriate, either by the communications team or the member him/herself. This will be agreed with the member before proceeding.

##### **Dealing with the media in a professional capacity as a practising nurse/academic**

RCN Scotland may approach members to speak in their professional capacity as a practising nurse in the media, to provide context and/or add 'human interest' to an issue that RCN Scotland is highlighting proactively or where journalists are looking for a 'case study' on an issue to increase pick-up (reactive).

There are also occasions when broadcast media would like to interview a practising nurse for a story they are covering.

In all these instances it is essential for those taking part to ask permission from their employer to speak to the media, as the vast majority of employers have their own policies for dealing with the media to protect them reputationally.

If it would be helpful, a member of the RCN Scotland communications team can do this on behalf of members.

- If a member is planning media activity in their professional capacity, it would be helpful if they could let the communications team know in advance, as this might highlight other possible media opportunities, either locally or nationally.

#### **Dealing with the media in a purely personal capacity**

If speaking to the media in a purely personal capacity or as an individual, the implications of what is communicated to the media should still be considered, as they may have wider ramifications or implicitly reflect on RCN Scotland, the profession or the individual's role as a practising nurse. The RCN Scotland communications team will always provide advice for members in advance of any media activity in whatever capacity.

*\*national media includes national press (The Scotsman, The Herald, Daily Record, as well as Scottish editions of UK national press + Scotland on Sunday, Sunday Herald, Sunday Mail and Sunday Post); and BBC TV and radio and STV.*

*Agreed by RCN Scotland Board, December 2009*

## **Appendix 3**

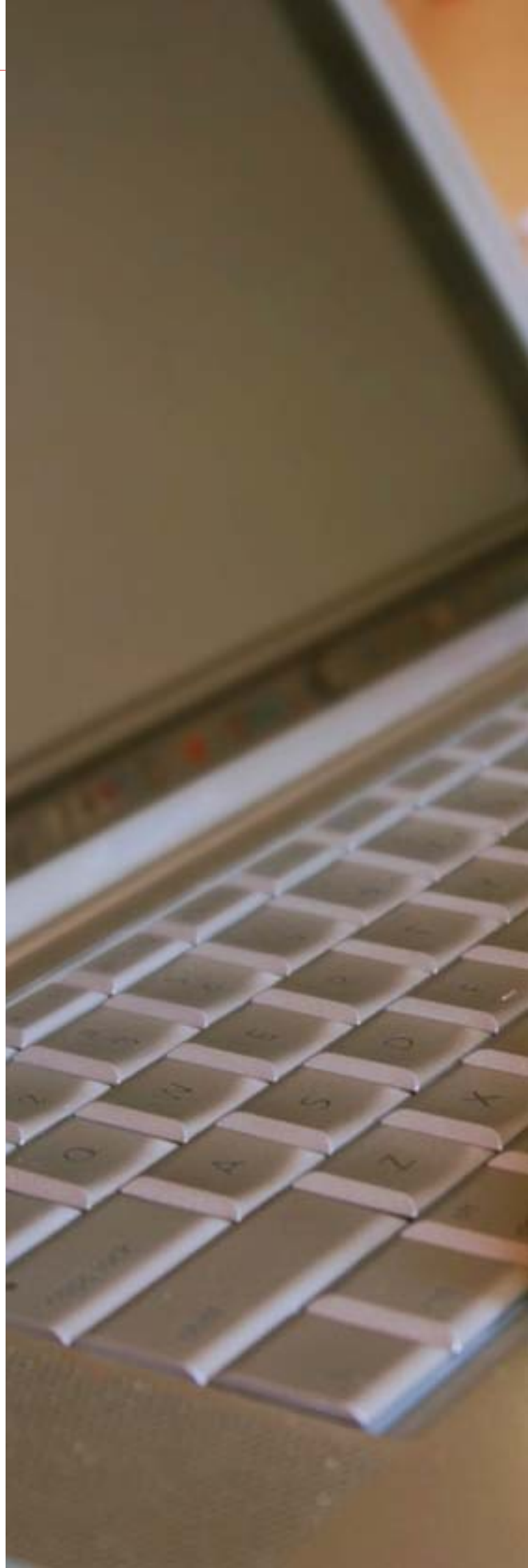
### **Contacts**

**Royal College of Nursing Scotland communications team**

Address: **42 South Oswald Road, Edinburgh EH9 2HH**

Telephone: **0131 662 6173**

Email: **[communications.scotland@rcn.org.uk](mailto:communications.scotland@rcn.org.uk)**



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Royal College  
of Nursing  
Scotland

If you would like further information on the issues raised in this handbook or would like to get more involved with the communications work of RCN Scotland, please call 0131 662 6173 or email [communications.scotland@rcn.org.uk](mailto:communications.scotland@rcn.org.uk)

Updated November 2011

RCN Scotland  
42 South Oswald Road  
Edinburgh  
EH9 2HH