

Professional Nursing Committee Report to Members – February 2025

1. This report reflects work done by the Professional Nursing Committee since the last report and an update from our meeting on 6 February 2025.
2. On 16 January we held two in-person workshops. At the first, the Committee discussed the review of the Nursing Workforce Standards, the Professional Framework workstream on assistive and supportive roles, and we also reviewed progress against our 2024 work programme.
3. That afternoon, we held a workshop with the RCN UK Students Committee at which we briefed students on the role of PNC and demonstrated to them where being an active member of the College can take you. We also talked to them about the role of country/ regional Directors and how their offices work and spent some time building relationships between the relevant Students Committee and PNC members of each country/ region.
4. At our formal meeting on 6 February, we were delighted to be joined by Dr Kate Kirk who has recently been appointed as the final senior member of staff for the RCN Institute of Nursing Excellence. Kate took some time to introduce herself as the new Associate Director; Nursing Workforce and speak about her priorities in her new role.
5. Unfortunately we have had to say goodbye to our student member, Alisha Brown, since the last meeting following her resignation. We sincerely thank her for her contribution to the Committee to date as well as her leadership as Chair of the RCN UK Students Committee and before that as student member of the Trade Union Committee. We wish Alisha every success in the future.
6. The report of our February meeting follows below.

Review of Committee Terms of Reference

7. We carried out the annual review of our terms of reference and agreed that as they had only recently been updated, no amendments were required.

Chair and Vice Chair's Update

8. Colin Baker and I updated PNC on our recent activity as Chair and Vice Chair including my attendance at the January meeting of RCN Council where I was delighted to meet the new members and to start building positive working relationships. Together with the Chair of the Trade Union Committee, Denise Kelly, I also met separately with the new Chair and Vice Chair of Council.
9. While progress in relation to regulatory reform remains slow since the change in government, I updated the Committee on the RCN's work with Dawn Butler MP to submit a Ten Minute Rule Bill calling for an amendment to the Professional Qualifications Act 2022 to protect the title 'nurse' in law (#ProtectNurse). The Bill had its first reading in Parliament on 11 February.
10. The Vice Chair attended the induction for new Forum Steering Committee members on 5 December along with a member of the Trade Union Committee to speak about the professional and trade union work of the College and we have both participated in recent meetings to discuss the strategic review of Congress.

Finance Update

11. We welcomed the Chief Financial Officer, Gush Uppal, to our meeting to provide a helpful update on the RCN's current financial position and spending plans for the year ahead.
12. We were briefed on the need for investment in infrastructure to support the increase in membership as well as headcount which includes spending on the new HR and payroll system and carrying out updates to buildings.
13. Gush agreed to follow up on a request to review the way in which the funding for forum projects is managed, as part of the remaining actions arising from the review of the professional forums.

Acting Chief Nursing Officer's Update

14. The Committee received an update on the activities and current key priorities of Lynn Woolsey, acting Chief Nursing Officer.
15. We were briefed on recent developments with the RCN Institute and look forward to Professor Jane Ball, Director of the Institute, attending our next meeting in April to give a more in-depth update.
16. Following the international safe staffing summit in December 2023 and subsequent follow up event in 2024 where the RCN brought the four CNOs and other stakeholders together, we heard that there are plans to do this again in 2025 but with a wider agenda to include discussion on nursing education and social care.

17. Additionally, we were briefed on plans for the RCN to host a social care summit which will involve key players across the UK coming together to discuss and shape the College's thinking and plans in relation to social care.
18. We recognise that nursing education remains a key challenge for the profession and that the position continues to deteriorate across the UK, as evidenced by the closure of Cardiff University's nursing course.
19. We held a 'deep dive' on 18 March to consider the state of nursing education across the UK in more depth and inform the RCN response. We were joined by Dave Clarke, Associate Director for Education in the RCN Institute of Nursing Excellence, for a wide-ranging discussion on this complex and critical area of work, which is one of the agreed priority issues for the RCN and for our work programme this year.
20. We discussed the recently re-named King's Nursing Cadets Programme and noted that it is not self-funding. In order to strengthen and stabilise the programme going forward, there is an urgent need to review the costs involved and agree how it will be funded in the future. I was delighted to join the team for the visit of His Majesty King Charles to meet with the cadets in March, and we look forward to receiving a more in-depth update on the programme later in the year.
21. We previously discussed developments at the NMC since publication of the independent culture review and again shared concerns at the slow progress of improvement work in response to that review. We have invited Paul Rees MBE, interim Chief Executive and Registrar, to come to a future PNC meeting and hope that he is able to join us soon.

Nurse:Patient Ratios

22. We received an update from Dr Kate Kirk on the programme of work underway to enable the RCN to lead the UK campaign for safety critical registered nurse:patient ratios. We were briefed on the ongoing work to identify the ratios that already exist and build on the evidence base for ratios.
23. Following the international summit at the end of 2023, we were pleased to hear that learning is being harnessed from other countries globally where ratios are already well established.
24. Now that Kate has had the opportunity to review this significant programme of work we look forward to further updates and feedback from Kate and the steering committee, which I Co-Chair.

Nursing Workforce Standards

25. Following the workshop in January at which we looked at each of the individual Standards in detail, we reviewed an updated draft of the 2025 Nursing Workforce Standards.
26. We spent some time considering the proposed minimum uplift/headroom figure which had attracted some challenge during the revision of the Standards but ultimately agreed that 27% was a reasonable percentage for employers to strive towards based on expert views and the available evidence base.
27. Following minor amendment after the meeting, we received a final draft of the 2025 Nursing Workforce Standards and signed them off by email in March. We look forward to the launch of the revised Standards at Congress.

Assisted Dying

28. We received an update on progress of work following the resolution at RCN Congress in 2024 calling on the RCN to support the principles of assisted dying.
29. We discussed the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Private Members' Bill which is currently passing through the UK parliament and will be effective across England and Wales if implemented. We were also briefed on the position across the rest of the UK and the Crown dependencies.
30. RCN Chief Executive and General Secretary, Professor Nicola Ranger, has given evidence in person to the UK Bill Committee and the RCN has also submitted written evidence.
31. Guidance is in the process of being developed for members to support them in their practice, with input from the Pain and Palliative Care Forum. We agreed that strengthening the protection of nursing staff and safeguarding them from detriment regardless of the stance they take on assisted dying is essential.
32. We look forward to receiving an updated RCN position statement on assisted dying for review at our April meeting.

Corridor Care

33. We received an update on the RCN's work to eradicate corridor care and recognised the excellent work of the policy and comms teams in putting together the recent report 'on the frontline of the UK's corridor care crisis'. We were pleased to hear of the significant impact this had had through using members own words and raw testimonies.

34. We heard that the survey confirms corridor care is widespread across the UK and is being seen not just in hospitals but across mental health settings and in community nursing also. We also discussed the unseen consequences of corridor care including members of the public not wanting to go into hospital.
35. In coalition with 15 other organisations, the RCN is continuing to lobby for changes to the system including better investment in infrastructure and the workforce. Internally, discussion is taking place on how best to support our members and template letters have been made available on the website for members to raise concerns in their workplaces.

Committee Work Programme 2025

36. We discussed a first draft of the Committee's 2025 work programme which is aligned to the RCN's 5-Year Strategy and the work of the Institute of Nursing Excellence. Following discussion at the meeting, we will be finalising this when we next meet in April.

RCN's Humanitarian Framework

37. The RCN's draft humanitarian crises guidance was shared with us. This aims to provide the RCN and its members with guidance to inform determinations and decision making regarding appropriate, ethical, consistent and timely responses to global humanitarian crises.
38. The guidance has been drafted following the resolution proposed by PNC at Congress 2024; 'that this meeting of RCN Congress calls on RCN Council to update and implement a policy for responding to humanitarian crises'.
39. We emphasised the importance of ensuring the guidance is implemented consistently and that RCN members who offer assistance to nurses in conflict are appropriately supported to do so. Relationships between the RCN and global health/ partner organisations in other countries as well as the Global Health Unit in NHS England are also key.

Internationally Educated Nursing Staff – Policy Programme

40. We were briefed on the findings and key recommendations arising from the Internationally Educated Nurses (IEN) survey to seek PNC feedback on the recommended next steps for the RCN's IEN policy programme.

41. In September and October 2024, the RCN surveyed over 3,000 international nursing members. Almost 1 in 5 (19%) of survey respondents reported facing difficulties with the immigration system including uncertainty about the outcome of their application, high application fees, struggling with paperwork and documentation, delays in processing applications, and difficulty understanding visa requirements.
42. PNC agreed to the strengthening of several current policy positions related to immigration policy.
43. Following feedback from PNC the RCN's international policy team will shortly be publishing an external report highlighting the findings of the survey.

Mental Health Bill Update

44. PNC received a detailed update on the Mental Health Bill which aims to give people detained greater choice and autonomy, enhanced rights and support, and ensure everyone is treated with dignity and respect throughout treatment.
45. We were briefed on the background to the Bill and heard how the RCN has engaged throughout the process to raise the voice of nursing. We expect the Bill to take several years to fully implement with a new Code of Practice being drawn up following Royal Assent, as well as other elements of secondary legislation. 2027 is expected to be the earliest date for the initial implementation.
46. We discussed the parts of the Bill that the RCN fully supports as well as those where we have concerns. Whilst the proposals are largely positive, we recognise that there is anxiety amongst members that the increase in the threshold for detention under the Act, combined with the NHSE guidance on assertive engagement following recent high profile events in the community, will result in community mental health services coming under increasing and extreme pressure to safely manage significant risk in the community. We are hopeful that these services will fall within the scope of the proposed investment to support this transition.
47. It was highlighted that there was little reference in the Bill to the nursing workforce in mental health settings, and that this Bill, (alongside the NHS workforce plan) would provide lobbying activity related to nurse staffing in mental health services. This was supported by PNC.

RCN Forums

Forums and Networks Review Internal Audit Report

48. We noted the Forums and Networks Review internal audit report and the implementation plan to address the recommendations. The audit focused on the effectiveness of implementing the Review recommendations and identified two medium priority findings.

Forums and Networks Review Update

49. We received an update on implementation of all recommendations arising from the Forums and Networks Review.
50. We noted the significant progress made by the Nursing Department in delivering the recommendations within its remit. We agreed that the recommendations with wider implications for the RCN that remain incomplete should now be transferred to the relevant accountable bodies subject to a progress report bringing together the findings of the internal audit and an update on implementation of the recommendations being shared with members sooner rather than later.
51. We have requested an update on the outstanding recommendations in six months time at which point we will decide whether or not the Review can be marked as complete on the PNC work programme.

Disestablishment of Two CYP Forums

52. On the recommendation of the Forums Governance Group, PNC agreed the disestablishment of the CYP Staying Healthy Forum and the CYP Specialist Care Forum. This follows a review of all 5 CYP forum outputs and a survey of CYP forum members that was undertaken in 2024.
53. Particular issues were identified with the CYP Staying Healthy and Specialist Care Forums and it is evident that neither is meeting the minimum level of activity required to maintain its status as a professional forum. Both of these forums will be disestablished immediately after Congress and a rebranding of the remaining three CYP forums will follow to cover the full breadth of children and young people's nursing and health services. This is intended to strengthen the voice of CYP nurses within the RCN.

Principles for Engagement with Members Outside of the Forum Steering Committee

54. Following the recent approval of new terms of reference for the Forum Steering Committees, we agreed the 'Principles for Engagement with Members Outside of the Forum Steering Committee' which will be appended to the ToR and reviewed annually.

55. The principles will support Forum Steering Committees in ensuring their engagement with individuals outside of their committee is undertaken in a way that remains in line with the RCN's governance operating framework.

Professional Forums Annual Activity Report 2024

56. We noted the forums annual activity report for 2024 which provides an overview of some of the activity and outputs of the RCN's professional forums during the year. Individual reports for each forum have been published on their webpages.
57. PNC acknowledged the vast amount of work that has been carried out by the forums during the year and we agreed that there is a need to share and celebrate this more widely with members.

PNC Risk Register

58. We reviewed the two risks on the PNC risk register and agreed to defer a decision on the de-escalation of the Forums and Networks Review risk until after the progress review on the implementation of the outstanding recommendations in July 2025.

Credentialing Programme (Advanced Nursing Practice) Update

59. We were briefed on the proposal to stop RCN credentialing of advanced nursing practice. This is due to the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) committing to regulate advanced practice nursing.
60. The NMC is currently considering its approach to this and the RCN is very much part of those discussions which will include education standards, proficiencies and regulatory processes.
61. We will be considering this proposal again at our meeting in April, in the light of the likely timetable for NMC regulation, and the abolition of NHS England, with implications for the credentialling scheme run by the NHSE Centre for Advancing Practice.

Professional Framework

62. We received an updated draft definition of the Nursing Support Workforce by email ahead of the meeting and have fed in our comments for consideration in the development of the final definition.
63. We heard that the digital build of 'This is Nursing' on the RCN website to bring together the different elements of the Professional Framework has now been approved. We hope to receive a demonstration of the webpages shortly.

Next Meeting

64. The next formal PNC meeting takes place at RCN HQ and via MS Teams on 3 April 2025.

Rachel Hollis FRCN
Chair, Professional Nursing Committee
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Committee Membership 2025

Rachel Hollis (Yorkshire and the Humber – CHAIR)
Colin Baker (South West – VICE CHAIR)
Oladunni Akinbulumo (North West)
Aquiline Chivinge (East Midlands)
Mary Codling (South East)
Tracie Culpitt (Nursing Support Worker)
Donna Gallagher (Northern Ireland)
Martha Gill (Scotland)
Tim Grace (Northern)
Sonia Henry (London)
Raymond McMorro (West Midlands)
Carolyn Middleton (Wales)
Alison Paterson (Eastern)

Apologies for the February meeting were received from Raymond McMorro.

The student seat on the Committee is currently vacant.

Staff Attendance

Lynn Woolsey (Acting Chief Nursing Officer)
Lucy Muchina (Acting Deputy Chief Nursing Officer)
Caroline Clinker (Governance Adviser)
John Bryant (Head of Member Communications)
Antonia Borneo (Head of Policy and Public Affairs – UK & International)
Christine Callender (Head of Nursing Practice)
Amber Jabbal (Director of Policy)
Lena Johnson (Professional Lead: Nursing Workforce)
Stephen Jones (Head of Nursing Practice)
Dr Kate Kirk (Associate Director: Nursing Workforce)
Maxine Nunn (Performance, Risk and Assurance Manager)
Helen Tamburello (Senior Research and Innovation Analyst)
Gush Uppal (Chief Financial Officer)
Marcus Wootton (Associate Director: International)
Natalie Zara (Executive Director of Governance)