

Key Priorities for the Nursing Profession in RCN Eastern region

Our local community relies on its nursing staff – and not just in a pandemic. Their extraordinary work, even during more ordinary times, saves lives and leaves a great legacy on people’s health and wellbeing.

In the last year, their work has reversed the outdated stereotypes about nursing. Everybody has seen – day after day – the leadership, skill and dedication of those who choose to work in nursing.

They are the largest part of the country’s health workforce – working in hospitals, clinics, in social care, around our local areas, in people’s homes, schools and many other places. And the pandemic has revealed just how much the NHS, social care and other services need to pull together to keep our people safe and cared for.

When people vote in May’s elections, they will have the last year in mind. Nursing staff and those they care for will look to candidates to put the experience and needs of the profession at the heart of their pledges on how our local area and its services will rebuild and recover in the coming years.

It will require great investment and large-scale support from politicians. Our best work – from preventing ill health, right through to palliative care – has the greatest potential when those in power make it their priority too.

Speak up for Nursing

We’re calling on local election candidates to #speakupfornursing, our key priorities are:

Fair Pay for Nursing

The Fair Pay for Nursing campaign is about recognising the skill, responsibility and dedication nursing staff show every day. Nursing is vital to our country’s wellbeing and to the health and care system across the East of England. Nurses are highly skilled professionals who deserve fair pay that reflects the complexity and impact of what they do. All nursing staff working outside of the NHS in independent health and social care settings should also have fair pay, good employment terms and safe working conditions. Find out more about the [campaign](#) and how to get involved.

Safe staffing and the nursing workforce shortage

The region's health and care system already faced widespread nursing shortages before the additional pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic. We now know that many staff are considering leaving the profession once the pandemic is over. Staffing is a critical factor in patient safety, retention of staff and effective services in our community. [Find out more about safe staffing on our website.](#)

Social care

Integrated care systems are a new form of organisation – building on recent efforts to change the way our local health service and social care work together to deliver more effective care. Local authorities and mayors should work collaboratively with their local integrated care systems to ensure they deliver high-quality patient-centred care.

Public Health

Nursing staff play a vital role in protecting and promoting public health in the face of threats, from infection control to addiction services and smoking cessation. In the East of England, public health services are key to tackling health inequalities and supporting the health of our communities. Local authorities should prioritise public health, prevention and reduction of health inequalities; as well as help to ensure that funding for public health is protected.

COVID recovery

Nursing staff across the Eastern region have worked through an intensely challenging period, and many have gone above and beyond to tackle the pandemic. As the country moves out of lockdown, our members are reporting higher levels of stress and maintaining resilience is becoming increasingly difficult. To deliver safe and effective care, it is important that nursing staff both in hospital and working in the community have the time and support to recover and recuperate.

Equality and inclusion of the workforce

The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a light on the urgency of tackling inequalities in our society and the RCN is calling on employers and the health system as a whole to take clear and structured action to eradicate all forms of racism and discrimination. We want local authorities to ensure that their oversight and scrutiny functions provide a high level of internal challenge and assurance about all efforts to tackle discrimination across health and social care.

Rural Issues

Rural areas often face challenges in accessing health and social care services. It is important that local authorities ensure funding and service provision is distributed fairly to meet the needs of their whole population. It is vital that nursing staff working in rural areas have access to training, development and support to protect and care for our communities effectively. Local authorities should also work with partners across sectors to improve access to transport and mobile and digital services for nurses and the wider population.

The Royal College of Nursing is the largest professional body and trade union for nursing staff in the world. We represent 450,000 members who are registered nurses, midwives, students and nursing support workers. – 40,000 of these in the Eastern region.

For further information about the Royal College of Nursing's campaigns and to find out more about what matters to nursing staff in your area, please contact Regional Communications Manager Lyndsay Buckland on Lyndsay.buckland@rcn.org.uk or 01284 717733.