

Clare Manley

RCN Chair of Congress Election 2026

This candidate has been nominated by the Mental Health Forum and has been verified as eligible to stand for election

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Qualities, skills and experience

I bring strong leadership, governance experience and practical understanding of RCN Congress. I have attended Congress all four qualifying years, including self-funding when needed. I believe Congress is the democratic heart of our profession. I haven't just attended, I've actively contributed, submitting agenda items that were accepted, speaking from the floor and supporting others, helping create space for members to be heard.

My time on the Agenda Committee and Congress Review Group have given me insight into Congress processes, agenda development and the importance of transparent, fair governance. I understand when structure matters and when flexibility helps members feel more included and confident. I am a voice for members who find Congress harder to access, advocating for their needs in pre-planning and supporting them on the floor.

I have served on the Students Committee (ex-officio), the Trade Union Committee (student seat) and the Newly Registered Nurses Network management team. These grounded me in member voice and taught me the importance of accessible leadership pathways and the value of nurturing confidence in others.

Through my role of Branch Chair and Steward, alongside my senior clinical leadership role in the NHS, I chair complex meetings, balance competing priorities and represent members with professionalism and integrity.

I'm known for being dependable and organised, but also warm, approachable and able to bring calm when things feel pressured. I facilitate respectful, inclusive debate where people feel safe to contribute, challenge and belong. I

lead with fairness, cultural awareness and accountability, with members at the centre.

Why should members elect you?

Congress matters to me. My consistent attendance, active involvement and willingness to invest personally in being there reflect how strongly I believe in its role as the voice of nursing. I care about Congress not only in how it runs, but how it feels, the sense of belonging, connection and shared purpose that members talk about long after they leave.

As a proud mental health nurse, I bring a calm, relational approach to leadership. My practice has always centred on listening, creating safety and helping people feel able to speak openly, values that translate directly into how I would chair Congress. At a time of change, I offer steady, experienced leadership alongside warmth, approachability and a genuine commitment to people.

My experience across Congress, the Agenda Committee and the Review Group means I understand the detail of how Congress works and the bigger picture of how it needs to evolve. I am ready to guide Congress through this next chapter while protecting what members value most.

I recognise my privilege and the responsibility that comes with it. I will use my position to amplify underrepresented voices, challenge barriers to participation and create space for others growth. I am committed to supporting accessible leadership pathways so future leaders reflect the diversity of our profession, not as an aspiration, but as a practical commitment.

I am loyal, dependable and motivated by people I represent. I will chair with fairness, integrity and passion, bringing the experience and energy needed for Congress's next chapter.

Curriculum Vitae

**Clinical Lead | Mental Health Nurse | Neurodiversity Specialist |
Governance | Leader**

Professional Profile

Compassionate and values-driven Mental Health Nurse and Clinical Lead with extensive experience across neurodiversity diagnostics, crisis mental health, perinatal mental health and community services.

Recognised for strong governance capability, chairing experience and a collaborative leadership style grounded in integrity, fairness and respect.

Brings a national profile in nursing advocacy through RCN leadership roles, Agenda Committee experience and professional influence via education, public speaking and digital engagement. Skilled in facilitating debate, managing complex discussions and ensuring inclusive participation in high-pressure environments.

Combines NHS clinical leadership with earlier senior roles in transformation, finance, safeguarding and organisational development — offering a unique blend of strategic insight, operational experience and member-centred leadership.

Key Strengths

- Governance & Chairing – Experienced committee chair with strong understanding of rules, procedures and fair process.
- Congress Expertise – Agenda Committee Member with deep knowledge of Congress operations, culture and member needs.
- Clinical Leadership – Lead a multi-professional neurodiversity diagnostic service with high-quality standards.
- Communication & Facilitation – Skilled at managing debate, navigating sensitive issues and maintaining respectful dialogue.
- Strategic Insight – Background in large-scale transformation, financial management and organisational leadership.
- EDI Commitment – Strong advocate for inclusive practice, trauma-informed care and equitable member participation.

Employment History

Clinical Lead – Adult Autism & ADHD Diagnostic Service - Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust | *September 2024 – Present*

- Lead a multi-professional diagnostic service for adults with neurodiverse conditions.
- Deliver ADOS-2, ADI-R, DIVA and specialist assessments; oversee report quality and clinical governance.
- Chair MDT discussions and supervise complex case decision-making.
- Lead quality improvement, redesign pathways and collaborate with ICB colleagues.
- Conduct clinical audits and present findings to influence service development.

In this role, I've focused on building a service that feels safe, consistent and genuinely supportive for the people who come through it. I stay fully hands-on clinically, carrying out specialist assessments and reviewing individuals with complex physical and mental health histories, which keeps my decision-making grounded in real practice and the realities people are living with. I lead the MDT for both Autism and ADHD pathways, bringing the team together around clear, transparent processes that help us make fair and consistent decisions. Over time, I've reshaped our referral and assessment pathways to make them smoother and easier to navigate, reducing waiting times and helping the team feel more confident in their work through supervision, quality assurance and reflective spaces. My aim has always

been to make sure people experience a compassionate, accessible and equitable assessment, and I continue to represent the service at system level to advocate for fairer, more joined-up pathways.

Clinical Director – Clarity ND Ltd. | August 2025 – Present

- Run a limited company contracting with other services to deliver Autism and ADHD assessments
- Deliver local coaching and support to adults, young people and families who have diagnoses or self-identify as neurodiverse
- Provide support to charity and non-profit organisations to help level the playing field and ensures everyone has the opportunity to thrive
- Promote accessible pathways and share clear, inclusive information through podcasts, blogs and social media

I have built a values-driven organisation focused on widening access to neurodiversity assessment, support and coaching. I deliver ADHD and Autism assessments for other organisations all with the same ethos. A big part of my work is helping people and families understand themselves better and feel more confident navigating the world around them. I work proactively to reduce the environmental, social and systemic barriers that can make everyday life harder for autistic and ADHD individuals, from overwhelming public spaces to challenges with travel and community participation. I support families to plan, problem-solve and build strategies that help them feel safer and more included in places that can otherwise feel inaccessible. I've developed strong partnerships with charities, community groups and non-profits so that people who face barriers to statutory services can still access high-quality, evidence-based assessment and support. Through podcasts, blogs and digital content, I've helped increase public understanding of neurodiversity and encouraged more inclusive, strengths-based approaches. My work aims to reduce stigma, build community confidence and empower families to thrive with greater autonomy.

Senior Mental Health Practitioner – Mental Health Liaison A&E - Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust | December 2020 – September 2024

- Delivered crisis assessments including S136, high-risk presentations and complex mental health needs.
- Led neurodiversity pathways within ED, developing tools and improving staff capability.
- Provided expert advice to police, ambulance and acute colleagues.
- Demonstrated resilience and calm leadership in pressured environments.

In the emergency department, I became a trusted clinical presence during some of the most pressured moments of care. Colleagues knew me for steady, thoughtful decision-making, clear risk formulation and a compassionate approach to people in crisis. I led the development of more neurodiversity-informed ways of working in ED, creating simple tools and practical training that helped staff feel more confident and reduced distress for autistic and ADHD patients at their most vulnerable. I worked closely with police, ambulance and acute teams to strengthen relationships and improve how we responded together to high-risk situations. My focus was always on creating a calmer, safer and more psychologically supportive environment, for patients, families and staff, throughout the pandemic and beyond.

Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Practitioner - Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust | May 2022 – July 2023

- Delivered trauma-informed assessments and interventions for women with moderate to severe mental illness.

- Led neurodiversity workstream, improving pathways and assessment quality.
- Worked across midwifery, health visiting, primary care and voluntary sectors.

In this role, I supported women and birthing people during an incredibly vulnerable time, often when they were experiencing sudden or severe changes in their mental health. Working as an independent, autonomous practitioner, I carried out trauma-informed assessments, offered compassionate crisis support and helped people make sense of what they were going through at a point when they often felt frightened or overwhelmed. I strengthened the team's ability to recognise and respond to neurodiversity in pregnancy and early parenthood, and I led improvements in assessment quality by embedding trauma-informed and attachment-aware practice across the pathway. I worked closely with midwifery, health visiting and primary care colleagues to improve early identification and continuity of care for those with complex needs. Alongside my clinical work, I contributed to service development through audit, reflective practice and cross-sector training, helping to ensure that perinatal mental health care remained compassionate, safe and inclusive for every family.

Community Mental Health Nurse - Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust | April 2020 – May 2022

- Care-coordinated adults with complex mental illness; delivered crisis management and medication oversight.
- Acted as duty worker and provided assessment for CMHT referrals.
- Six-month secondment as Deputy Manager, providing supervision and attending strategic meetings.

In this role, I provided steady, relationship-centred support to adults living with complex and often long-standing mental health difficulties. I worked independently and autonomously, managing a diverse caseload and supporting people through sudden deterioration, severe episodes of illness and periods of real vulnerability. I strengthened care coordination, improved crisis planning and helped people feel safer and more supported during times of instability. Alongside my clinical work, I took on a secondment as Deputy Manager, where I contributed to day-to-day operational leadership, offered supervision to colleagues and represented the team in strategic discussions. My focus throughout was on easing pressure, improving communication and ensuring that our documentation and risk management were clear, consistent and genuinely helpful for both staff and service users.

Head of School Business & Resources - Glossopdale Community College | January 2015 – February 2017

- Senior Leadership Team member responsible for finance, HR, estates, IT and operations.
- Managed £6m+ budget and led major capital project consolidating seven sites into one.
- Developed and delivered safeguarding, H&S and governance training.

Head of Programme Delivery – Customer Intelligence - The Guinness Partnership | January 2013 – January 2015

- Led customer experience transformation and complex change programmes.
- Managed cross-sector projects responding to national welfare reforms.

Programme Lead - BSkyB | October 2010 – December 2012

- Led business change across 12 national and international centres.
- Managed 300+ FTEs and a £2.5m programme budget.
- Delivered sustained improvements in staff and customer outcomes.

RCN Leadership & Governance

Agenda Committee Member, RCN - 2024–2025

I focused on making Congress feel fair, accessible and genuinely member-led. I've supported members through the whole journey, from shaping early ideas and refining submissions, to standing beside them on the Congress floor when they needed reassurance or guidance. I've been a consistent voice for those who find Congress harder to access, making sure their experiences are understood in the pre-planning stages and that the process works for them, not against them. My approach has always been grounded in integrity, clarity and respect, helping members feel confident that their contribution matters, whether they're a student speaking for the first time or long-standing activist. I've also helped strengthen Congress processes by drawing on my governance experience to support fair, consistent decision-making and psychologically safe debate, so that every member has the space to be heard.

Congress Review Group, RCN - 2024 – 2025

I have been a steady advocate for keeping Congress at the centre of member voice within the RCN. Throughout the review work, I focused on what matters most to members: feeling heard, feeling represented and feeling able to shape the direction of their college. I've consistently spoken up for protecting the spirit of Congress, the passion, the honesty and the sense of community that brings people back year after year. My priority has been making Congress easier to access and more inclusive, while ensuring that any changes support, rather than dilute, the experience that members value. I've worked to make sure the review honours the history of Congress, strengthens its future and keeps it as a place where members can come together, share their experiences and influence the conversations that matter to them.

Branch Chair, RCN Cheshire 2025 – Present

I lead a newly blended branch formed from two previously separate branches, bringing members together around a shared identity, purpose and culture. Under my guidance, the branch has become more active, confident and outward-facing, culminating in the successful submission and presentation of three items on the Congress agenda in 2026, a significant achievement for a newly merged branch. I not only authored and presented items myself, but also mentored and coached members to develop their own ideas, refine their submissions and build the confidence to speak on the national stage. This approach strengthened local activism, empowered new voices and ensured that our branch contributed meaningfully to national debate. I created an inclusive, welcoming environment where members felt supported to participate, challenge and lead, helping to establish the branch as a vibrant and engaged part of the RCN.

Branch Treasurer, RCN Cheshire - 2024–2025

I have ensured transparent, accountable financial management and strengthened member engagement through accessible reporting and open communication. I have supported the branch to deliver high-quality events, education sessions and member activities, ensuring resources are used effectively and equitably. My governance experience has contributed to a well-run, member-led branch that reflects local priorities and grassroots activism.

Branch Chair, RCN Cheshire East – 2021- 2023

I revitalised member participation, strengthened relationships with local stakeholders and ensured that branch meetings were inclusive, welcoming and professionally valuable. I facilitated complex discussions with fairness and neutrality, ensuring all members felt able to contribute. I also supported the development of new activists and created opportunities for early-career nurses to engage with the RCN.

Co-Chair & Curator, Newly Registered Nurses Network - 2020–2023

In this national role, I helped build one of the RCN's most vibrant communities, supporting thousands of early-career nurses through education, digital engagement and peer-led leadership. I curated content, facilitated national conversations and championed the voices of newly registered nurses at a time of unprecedented workforce pressure. The network's growth and influence during this period reflected a commitment to empowerment, professional identity and collective support.

RCN Student Ambassador - 2019–2020

Student Member, Trade Union Committee - 2018–2019

As a Student Ambassador and TUC student representative, I advocated for fair treatment, safe learning environments and improved support for student nurses across the UK. I contributed to national discussions on placement quality, financial hardship and professional identity, ensuring that student voices shaped RCN priorities. My work was recognised through multiple national awards, reflecting a sustained commitment to advocacy, equity and member empowerment.

Volunteering

- Chair, National Safeguarding Appeals Committee – Girlguiding UK - July 2021–Present
- Safeguarding & Inclusion Adviser – Girlguiding UK – September 2025 – present
- Trans Taskforce group member – Girlguiding UK September 2025 – present - *I am part of Girlguiding's Trans Taskforce, offering a supportive internal voice to challenge the EHRC advice and working to protect inclusive practice from within the organisation, ensuring that trans young people and volunteers continue to feel safe, welcome and valued.*
- District Commissioner – Girlguiding - March 2020–April 2025
- Unit Leader – Rainbows, Brownies, Guides & Rangers - 1994–Present
- Founder & Co-Host – Retaining the Passion Podcast - June 2020–July 2023
- Curator & Management Team – The Student Nurse Project - 2018–2020
- FNF Early Careers Subject Expert Group Member - June 2023–January 2025
- Youth and Panto Coordinator – Next Generation – Marple Carver Theatre – May 2025 to present

Across my volunteering roles, I have always focused on creating safe, inclusive and empowering spaces for people to grow. Through my long-standing commitment to Girlguiding, from leading units for Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers to serving as District Commissioner and Chair of the National Safeguarding Appeals Committee, I have supported children, young people and volunteers with compassion, fairness and a strong safeguarding ethos. My work as a Safeguarding & Inclusion Adviser continues this commitment, helping to shape environments where everyone feels they belong. Beyond Guiding, I've contributed to the nursing profession through roles such as co-hosting Retaining the Passion, curating The Student Nurse Project and supporting early-career nurses through the Florence Nightingale Foundation. I also give time to creative community work as Youth and Panto Coordinator at Marple Carver Theatre, helping young people build confidence and connection through performance.

Together, these roles reflect a lifelong dedication to service, inclusion and lifting up voices that might otherwise go unheard.

Education

- V300 Non-Medical Prescribing - University of Manchester (2026)
- PGDip Perinatal Mental Health (Merit) - Sheffield Hallam University (2024)
- BSc Nursing (Mental Health), First Class - Sheffield Hallam University (2020)
- BSc Health Related Studies - Oxford Brookes University (1998)

Professional Training

- ADOS-2 (2024)
- ADI-R (2024)
- DIVA (2024)
- Trauma-Informed Practice (2022)
- Birth Trauma (2022)
- Compassion-Focused Therapy (2022)
- Solihull Foundation (2021) Practice Supervisor (2021)
- FNF Green Leadership (2023)

Awards

- RCN Student Ambassador of the Year (2020)
- Student Nursing Times – MH Student Nurse of the Year (2020)
- Inspirational Student Award – Sheffield Hallam (2019)
- HWB Enterprise Award – Sheffield Hallam (2019)
- Hallam Award Platinum (2018)

