



Royal College
of Nursing

RCN STUDENT FESTIVAL 2025 PROGRAMME



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Line-up

The poster features a vibrant background with overlapping circles in shades of purple, blue, and pink. A yellow and black striped circle is in the top left. A string of white triangular bunting hangs across the top right. A large yellow flower graphic is in the bottom right corner. The text is arranged in two columns separated by a vertical dotted line.

RCN STUDENT FESTIVAL 2025

2025 LINE UP

08:30 Gates open! Grab your lanyard & fuel up with breakfast bites	13:30 Inspiring Excellence: <i>Unleashing Leadership Potential</i>
10:00 Main stage welcome	14:15 Break
10:15 Headline talk: Professor Gemma Stacey	14:30 Beyond the Bedside: <i>Exploring the diversity of career pathways in nursing</i>
10:45 Refreshments & explore the exhibition	15:15 Refreshments & explore the exhibition
11:00 Unlocking the potential of RCN Learn: <i>Empowering nursing students through continuous education</i>	16:00 Keynote encore: Sam Donohue
11:30 Nursing your finances: <i>Top tips & case studies for student nurses</i>	16:30 Panel discussion
12:00 Lunch from our street food trucks & explore the exhibition	17:15 Closing remarks
	17:30 Festival finale with food truck feast, DJ beats, & networking
	19:30 Event close

#RCNstudentfest

Food trucks



Dishes														
Veg Burrito	x	x												
Beef Burrito	x	x												
Chicken Burrito		x												
Veg Bowl	x													
Beef Bowl	x													
Chicken Bowl														
Veg Nachos	x													
Beef Nachos	x													
Chicken Nachos														
Cheesy Nachos							x							

PIZZA MENU

MARGHERITA (V) (Dairy, Gluten)

Mozzarella, Signature Tomato Sauce, Fresh Basil (optional)

PEPPERONI (Dairy, Gluten)

Authentic Italian Pepperoni, Mozzarella

BIANCA (V) (Dairy, Gluten)

Goats Cheese, Red Onion, Fresh Rosemary, Hot Honey,

Mozzarella, Garlic Base

VEGAN (V) (Gluten)

Peppers, Mushrooms, Red Onion, Vegan Cheese

GARLIC BREAD (VG) Gluten)

Homemade Vegan Garlic Spread, Fresh Rosemary, Sea Salt Flakes

Add Cheese +£2

Potential additions

Fries

Meatballs with arrabiata sauce

General information

Conference enquiries

Please ask staff on the registration desk if you have any specific requirements regarding access, lost property or have queries regarding your membership.

Specific requirements

Please ask at the registration/enquiries desk if you have any specific requirements (e.g. dietary, accessibility etc.)

Liability

The RCN will not accept any liability for loss or damage to personal effects which may arise as a result of attendance at this event.

Safety & Wellbeing Guide

Venue Overview

Address:

Notts County Football Club, Meadow Lane, Nottingham, NG2 3HJ

Access:

- The Nest entrance via Iremonger Road.
- Step-free and accessible routes available throughout the venue.
- Speak to a steward if you need assistance.

No smoking or vaping:

- Smoking and vaping are not permitted inside the venue.
- Designated smoking areas are available outside.
- Please ask a steward if you need help finding them.

Your Safety

- **Security & stewards:** On hand all day – look for high-vis vests.
- **Emergency exits:** Clearly marked – know your nearest exit.
- **Fire alarm:** Continuous alarm = evacuate calmly with staff guidance.

- **Lost property:** Bring items to the registration desk.

♥ Your Wellbeing

- **A quiet space:** The RCN Wellbeing room is available at Lawton's Bar for anyone needing some time out. Please see [video](#) on how to locate our [RCN Wellbeing room](#).
- **First aid:** Available – ask any steward for help.
- **Mental health first aiders:** Available – ask at the registration desk or at the RCN Wellbeing room located at Lawton's Bar.
- **Water stations:** Refill points are available throughout the venue – stay hydrated.
- **Toilets & accessible facilities:** Located at the Nest and Lawton's Bar.

🧠 Code of Conduct – [RCN Respect Charter](#)

We're committed to a respectful, inclusive and safe space for everyone.

By attending, you agree to:

- Be kind, respectful and professional.
- Treat everyone equally – no bullying, harassment or discrimination.
- Use inclusive and respectful language.
- Respect personal space and boundaries.
- Report any concerns to RCN staff or stewards.

📌 This event follows the [RCN Respect Charter](#). Breaches may result in removal from the event.

♿ Accessibility Support

- Fully accessible venue with step-free routes.
- Accessible toilets at the Nest and Lawton's Bar.
- Speak to the Info Desk if you need extra support.

Contacts

- **RCN registration desk:** Please visit registration desk for any information
- **Security or emergency help:** Speak to any steward
- **Serious emergency:** Call 999 and alert a steward immediately

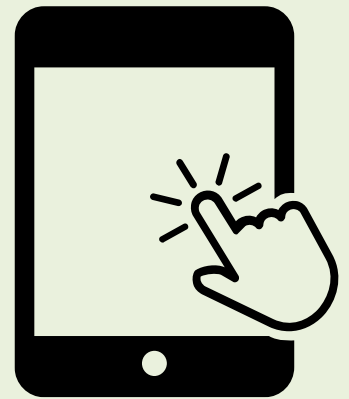
Look After Yourself and Each Other

We want you to enjoy the day, connect with others, and feel supported. If you need help at any point, just ask – we're here for you.






Competitions

Exclusive Competition

WIN 1 of 3 Amazon Fire tablets today!



How to play & win!

-  **Grab** your Festival Passport at the registration desk
-  **Explore** the exhibition and collect a sticker at each stand
-  **Complete** your name and email on the back
-  **Submit** your finished passport
-  **Winners will be drawn during the social event at 18:30.**

Session info

Welcome

Speaker: Natasha Green – RCN Student Nurse Committee Chair – Final Year Student Nurse-Adult Field – RCN/LEA/NNUH

Speaker: Amy Walker – RCN Students Committee, East Midlands representative

Keynote

Session abstract:

Discovering your "zone of genius" represents a transformative journey for pre-registration nursing students seeking to cultivate authentic leadership capabilities and find meaning in their professional practice. This concept—articulated by Hendricks (2021)—describes a state where you capitalize on innate abilities rather than solely learned skills, entering a state of "flow" characterized by ceaseless inspiration and distinguished work that exceeds conventional boundaries. My own leadership journey has taught me that identifying this zone means aligning your natural talents with professional responsibilities that generate passion and purpose. When I reflect on the features of my personal Ikigai—the Japanese concept representing the intersection of what you love, what you're good at, what the world needs, and what you can be paid for—I've found fulfillment through mentorship, co-production, research-driven change, broad collaboration, creating platforms for influence, and building capacity in others. For nursing students beginning your professional journey, authentic leadership emerges from self-awareness and is supported by key attributes I've found essential: vulnerability, humility, morality, trust, innovation, resilience, purpose, and a growth mindset. Cultivating these qualities early creates a foundation for navigating what I call the "shadow story" of leadership—those challenges of power dynamics, tested integrity, rigid institutional cultures, and maintaining perspective. Throughout my career bridging academia and practice, I've witnessed how the essence of practice-based leadership involves creating meaningful connections between theoretical knowledge and real-world application. As you develop your own professional identity, I encourage you to embrace opportunities that allow you to harness your unique talents while contributing to both personal satisfaction and broader societal impact through healthcare transformation. Your journey toward

finding your zone of genius will be personal and evolving, but it remains the foundation for becoming the kind of nurse leader who can navigate complex spaces with authenticity and purpose.

Learning outcomes:

1. Critically analyse their personal attributes, values and natural abilities to identify their unique "zone of genius," evaluating how these align with the four elements of Ikigai by completing a structured self-assessment tool.
2. Demonstrate understanding of authentic leadership in nursing by creating a personalized development plan that addresses at least three key leadership attributes (e.g., vulnerability, resilience, purpose) with specific actionable steps for growth.
3. Effectively evaluate potential leadership challenges in healthcare environments and formulate evidence-based strategies to maintain professional integrity while navigating complex institutional dynamics.

Speaker: Gemma Stacey – Associate Dean for Practice – Nottingham Trent University

Biography:

With a career spanning leadership, education, and impact-driven innovation, Gemma is a global voice on authentic leadership and workforce wellbeing. She's published 50+ journal articles, 7 books, and previously transformed the Florence Nightingale Foundation as Deputy CEO.

Unlocking the potential of RCN Learn: Empowering nursing students through continuous education

Session abstract:

This engaging session provides an overview of RCN Learn, the Royal College of Nursing's online platform designed to support you with your continuing professional development (CPD). The session will cover the wide range of resources available: learning materials, courses, publications and reliable information sources. The platform flexibility will be highlighted, showcasing on-demand learning. Attendees will have the opportunity to interact with the platform developers, to ask questions and provide feedback. Additionally, the session covers the RCNi Portfolio, a comprehensive tool to

assist you with revalidation requirements. The RCNi Portfolio offers a centralised location to store all your CPD documents, including evidence for the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC). This tool simplifies the management of CPD by organising evidence, tracking your progress and helping you to comply with revalidation requirements. Furthermore, you'll be invited to become involved with RCN Forums, which are specialised forums and networks, aligning to professional interests. You will also find out how to become an RCN Learning Representative, playing a crucial role in promoting CPD and supporting colleagues with their professional development.

Speaker: Donna Munro – Nursing Lead for Education / Professional Lead for Education for England

Biography:

Donna has been a Registered General Nurse for almost 24 years and has worked within healthcare education for the past 7 years, holding a Post-graduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and a Master's in Education. She has special interests in Continuing Professional Development, Communication Skills Training, Acute Oncology and Vicarious Traumatization. Donna is currently employed by the Royal College of Nursing as Nursing Lead for Education; a four nations role and as a Professional Lead for Education for England. Donna is currently involved in further developing RCN Learn; the Royal College of Nursing's online platform, designed to support you with your continuing professional development.

Speaker: Caroline Chalkley – Product Manager – RCN

Nursing Your Finances: Top tips and case studies

Speaker: Claire Cannings – Senior Welfare Adviser -RCN

Workshop A

Speaker: Patricia Hughes – Associate Director – RCN

Biography:

Patricia's career includes senior roles at St George's and UCLH. She's a dedicated advocate for equality and inclusion, founding the UCLH BAME Network and leading workforce diversity and international recruitment

initiatives at NHSE/I. Guided by her “lift as you climb” philosophy, Patricia supports and inspires colleagues from diverse backgrounds.

Speaker: Sheena Gohal – Head of Nursing Leadership – RCN

Learning outcomes:

1. Exploring leadership at all levels
2. Describe themselves as leaders
3. Finding your leadership voice

Biography:

Sheena is a mental health nurse and programme director of a postgraduate leadership course in London. She has previously served as a national advisor for NHS England and has held senior clinical and operational roles. With significant experience in transformational change and national policy across healthcare, Sheena has worked with diverse health and care stakeholders. Her teaching interests focus on developing compassionate leadership practices in healthcare services.

Workshop B

Session abstract:

The session will be an overview of the wide range of career options in nursing, and an opportunity to ask a panel of nurses from different backgrounds about their experiences. It will include group sessions where the students will explore how they can best research and prepare for interview, for roles in the IHSC sector

Speaker: Samantha Preston – Lead Nurse for Independent Health & Social Care – RCN East Midlands

Learning outcomes:

1. Learners will be able to research roles, prepare for interviews and understand the diversity of IHSC nursing roles with more knowledge and confidence following this break out session.

Biography:

My name is Sam Preston I am the Lead Nurse for Independent Health and Social Care for the East Midlands. My first role was as a care assistant in a care home. Seeing vulnerable people treated without dignity made me determined to shape and change people care journeys for the better. I

worked within the NHS and pharmaceutical industry and delivering training that changed clinical practice for the better. Returning to social care, as a practice development facilitator and then as a manager, I nursed through the pandemic, one of the most challenging and rewarding periods of my career. Now I'm privileged to represent our IHSC Members.

Speaker: Vicky Sandy-Davis - Lead Nurse Independent Health and Social Care - RCN

Speaker: Hayley Russell - Nurse / Lead Clinical Retention Support Midwife & Preceptorship Lead - George Eliot Hospital / Warwick Hospital

Biography:

Hayley is a dual-qualified Adult Nurse and Midwife with over 18 years of clinical practice. Still actively practicing, Hayley currently serves as the Lead Clinical Retention Support Midwife and the Preceptorship Lead for her trust. Her career reflects a wealth of knowledge, a diverse skillset, and extensive experience across both nursing and midwifery. Passionate about supporting newly qualified staff and enhancing workforce retention, Hayley plays a pivotal role in nurturing the next generation of healthcare professionals.

Speaker: Lindsay Cussons - Practice Nurse - The Health Surgery

Speaker: Harry Eccles - Head of Activist Engagement - RCN

Speaker: Marcus Wooton - BBC Set Nurse and International Nursing

Speaker: Kelly Haynes - Hospital Director - Priory Hospital Arnold

Speaker: Rebecca Smailus - Trainee Advanced Clinical Practitioner - HMP Leicester Healthcare

Speaker: Chloe Ryan - Active Care Group Neuro Rehab

Speaker: Kirsty Barratt - Senior Staff Nurse - Nottingham Citycare Partnership

Keynote – The Joy of Nursing

Session abstract:

This presentation will share the researcher's study on professional enjoyment of nursing. This qualitative study explored professional enjoyment of nursing using semi-structured interviews with 25 registered nurses in England. The purposive sample of nurses were recruited via

Twitter and included nurses with a range of tenure in the profession, age, roles, employment settings and from all four fields of nursing. Six themes were developed from the data using reflexive thematic data analysis. The study found that the experience of professional enjoyment of nursing was strongly associated with 'being a nurse', 'making a difference', from feeling valued and that the professional voice of nursing is heard. Professional enjoyment can be enhanced or diminished by others by workplace culture, leadership, civility and recognition of contribution. The study identified the positive and negative impact the Covid-19 pandemic had on nurses' professional enjoyment and discovered consequences of professional enjoyment on teams, nurse retention and patient experience. These findings have been presented as 4 statements of knowledge on professional enjoyment of nursing. The findings will be presented and discussed in the presentation in addition to recommendations on how the participants could consider the study within their own careers.

Speaker: Sam Donohue – Visiting Professor – University of Surrey

Learning outcomes:

1. Understand what nurses enjoy about nursing
2. Identify factors that enhance and diminish enjoyment of nursing
3. Explore the consequences of professional enjoyment on others

Biography:

Sam has just left the NMC following 3 1/2 years as an Assistant Director leading the national and regional outreach team for the NMC and for the last 5 months as Interim Executive Director of Professional Practice. Sam was previously Deputy Chief Nurse at an acute NHS Trust with a portfolio including quality improvement, patient experience, workforce, education and research. Sam has specialised in workforce design, developing new roles and pathways into nursing. This included being the Health Education England national lead for the development of the nursing associate role and the nurse apprenticeship pathway. Sam's research interest and doctoral research explored professional enjoyment in nursing and the factors that enhance and diminish enjoyment. This research has identified the impact and importance of enjoyment on nurses themselves, the teams and people they work with and their intention to remain in the profession. Sam is also a Visiting Professor at the University of Surrey.

Panel discussion

Speaker: Rachel Hadland – Acting Associate Director, Nursing, Policy & Professional Practice – RCN Wales Ty Maeth

Biography:

Rachel, the Education and Lifelong Learning Advisor at RCN Wales, engages with key stakeholders to influence educational and regulatory policy for nursing in Wales. With a strong academic background in health and social care education, she has held senior leadership roles, including as a director in a university in the Southwest. Her work has focused on inclusive practice learning, curriculum development, and strategic responses to challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic. A Mental Health Nurse by background, Rachel is committed to enhancing the student experience and shaping the future nursing workforce through collaborative leadership, policy development, and a passion for high-quality, inclusive education.

Speaker: Kendal Andreason – Professional Lead for Acute and Emergency Care and Defence Nursing

Biography:

Kendal began her career in the British Army's Royal Engineers where she led teams around the world. After seeing medics' incredible work in Afghanistan, she transferred to the Nursing Corps. She left the Army after 14 years of service, but remains an Army Reservist specialising in health security, protecting civilians, and preventing sexual violence.

She also delivers wilderness medicine courses for World Extreme Medicine. She has degrees in both Politics and Adult Nursing and an MSc in Global Health. She's completing another MSc in International Relations.

Speaker: Deborah Sturdy – Chief Nurse for Adult Social Care – DHSC

Biography:

With a career dedicated to workforce development and professional recognition, Deborah is a passionate advocate for improving care for older adults. She is the first nurse to receive the British Geriatrics Society President's Medal, holds both a CBE and an OBE, and is a Fellow of the RCN and QNI.

Speaker: Sam Harris – Regional Organiser - RCN

Closing remarks

Speaker: Paul Morris – RCN Regional Director, East Midlands

Biography:

Paul has a wealth of NHS experience, having worked across emergency care, public health, and acute medical settings. His broad clinical background supports his commitment to providing strong leadership and advocacy for nurses and healthcare professionals throughout the regions.

RCN Student Committee attendees:

Natasha Green – Eastern region

Amy Walker – East Midlands

Mary Birchard – South East region

Felix Adesanya – Council

Joshua Parker-Walsh – West Midlands

Allycn Omoniyi – Yorkshire & the Humber

Lorraine Greathead – North West

Exhibitors and member services

Independent Health & Social Care

Newly Registered Nurse network

Activism Academy

RCN Library

RCN Learn

RCN Financial Support

RCNXtra

RCN Wellbeing tools

RCN Careers Service

Upcoming RCN Student Events

RCN Student Ambassador Conference 2025 – 11 November 2025: [RCN Student Ambassador Conference 2025 | Royal College of Nursing](#)

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