Conference Information

RCN UK Joint Representatives' Autumn Conference 2026

1-2 October

Hilton Newcastle, Tyne Bridge

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Welcome letter

Dear colleague,

Welcome to Newcastle!

On behalf of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) and UK representative committees, we welcome you to the UK representatives' Autumn conference. We are coming together as a community of reps over the next two days, united in our desire to create fair, healthy workplaces where nursing staff have access to the learning and development they need.

A very special welcome to those of you attending for the first time. To support you on your first conference experience, regions and countries will be sat together on the same table so you can find each other easily. The UK reps committee members are on hand to offer support (look out for their different coloured badges) and should you have any questions, the team on the registration desk will be happy to help.

There are sensitive topics on the conference programme which may be difficult and emotionally charged for some. Please do seek support if you need it. There is written guidance available on tables offering practical advice on dealing with difficult feelings and emotions in the moment. It also details how individuals can access the RCN counselling service if needed. RCN staff trained as Mental Health First Aiders are also onsite if you need a listening ear. Staff on the registration desk can direct you to them.

RCN reps make a difference. Learning together and sharing experience enables us to go back to our workplaces with new ideas and actions to implement. Take the opportunity to visit the exhibition stands, talk to your UK rep committee members, pick up resources, ask questions and build connections with your fellow reps. You will receive a sheet where you can note down contacts, useful resources, actions and learning points to revisit after the conference.

The RCN believes in life-long learning and actively promotes the continuing professional development of nurses. For this reason, certificates of attendance are provided on arrival and the framework for reflection can be found on the reverse. You are encouraged to contribute attendance at RCN events towards your framework for reflection which can be included in your portfolio.

You will receive an email with a link to the online conference evaluation. We'd be grateful if you would complete this as soon as possible and within seven days of the conference. Your comments and feedback are invaluable in helping us plan future RCN conferences. We'd like to thank you for attending this conference and look forward to meeting you. With best wishes from your conference planning group.

RCN UK Joint Reps Planning Group

Programme at a glance

RCN UK JOINT REPRESENTATIVES AUTUMN CONFERENCE 2026

Newcastle Hilton, Tyne Bridge | 1-2 October | Programme

Purpose of the Conference

The RCN UK Joint Reps Conference is a great opportunity to meet other reps and Committee Members that you can share ideas with, learn from and find out what is happening in your area. This learning event is for all reps, regardless of experience.

Gain the skills, knowledge and contacts you need to be active in your rep role.

DAY ONE

12.00	**Registration, lunch, exhibition and networking** During this time there will be information stands and staff available to answer your questions. Members of your UK representative committees and the Trade Union Committee want to hear from you during the conference. Come and meet them, share your priorities as a rep, and let them know what support and resources you need in your rep role.
13.00	**Welcome and opening remarks from the Chair** Fiona Holley, Chair UK Learning Reps Committee
13.10	**Welcome to the Northern Region** Pat Fraser, Retired Member, Northern Region

13.20	**Know Your Worth Campaign Update** Colin Poolman, Director of RCN Scotland
14.20	**Know Your Rights: Employment Rights Act Update** Dominic Trendall, RCN Senior Public Affairs Adviser Seamus Colclough, RCN Senior Policy Adviser
15.05	**Break with exhibition viewing**
15.30	**Building power for meaningful change** Keynote Speaker: Louise Lewis, Membership and Equality Executive Officer, National Education Union
16.15	**Equity, Diversity & Inclusion** Deborah Shepherd, RCN Head of Employment Relations Disability & reasonable adjustments. An interactive session looking at the identification of disability under the Equality Act, and how to support members to secure reasonable adjustment in the workplace.
17.00	**Closing remarks from the Chair** Fiona Holley, Chair UK Learning Reps Committee
17.15-18.00	**Fringe (Optional) - *Rooms 6, 7 and 8*** **Know Your Worth – Band 5 Review England** Wesley Auden, RCN England Pay Terms and Conditions - Delivery Officer

	As the band 5 review programme gathers pace across England, this session will offer an opportunity to share experiences, discuss emerging themes and explore how collective action, strong partnership working and effective member engagement can help deliver a fair and credible process for band 5 nursing staff.
19.00	**Welcome drink – pick up your complimentary soft drink**
19.30	**President's address** Bejoy Sebastian, RCN President **Dinner served**
21.00-21.30	**End of dinner**

DAY TWO

9.00	**Opening remarks from the Chair** Vicky Brotherton, Chair of the UK Health & Safety Reps Committee
9.10	**Making facilities time work for you** Vicky Brotherton, Chair of the UK Health & Safety Reps Committee Fiona Holley, Chair of the UK Learning Reps Committee Phil Cole, Chair of the UK Stewards Committee Deborah Shepherd, RCN Head of Employment Relations, NHS Kim Sunley, RCN Head of Health Safety & Wellbeing Find out about the new resources launched at the conference to strengthen understanding of facilities time, support positive local discussions and provide practical tools that help reps and managers reach effective agreements. Put your questions to our panel.

9.40	**Recruiting the reps of the future** Activist Engagement Team with members leaders Growing the RCN. How we recruit active reps and support them to participate and win for members.
11.10	**Refreshment break**
11.40	**Building power in branches: branch blitz engagement planning** Leonore Newson, RCN South West Board member and RCN Steward Ella Hughes, RCN Lead for Activist Impact Gain insights into the Branch Review so far, then work together to co-develop targeted local engagement plans and consider how you can support successful implementation.
12.30	**Lunch and exhibition** Time for a lunch break which runs from 12.30-14.00. Visit the exhibition, meet your national committees and RCN staff to ask questions and pick up resources, then join a fringe event of your choice. **FRINGE EVENTS 13.00-13.50** Choose from the following fringe events (spaces are limited and offered on a first come first served basis): **Fringe 1 - *Room 1*** **The GEM Project** Understanding and promoting the career development opportunities of the global majority and ethnic minority (GEM) - what can reps do to empower our members? Ben Thomas, RCN Mental Health and Learning Disability Adviser (online) Eda Yazici, RCN Learning & Development Facilitator **Fringe 2 - *Room 2***

	RCN In-house Legal Services Find out more about the RCN in-house legal services, including how to submit a case with relevant documentation and managing member expectations. Nikki Sharpe, RCN Legal Officer Laura Calvert, RCN Senior Legal Officer **Fringe 3 - *Rooms 6, 7 and 8*** **From Pressure to Prevention: Tackling Work-Related Stress** Mike Hines, RCN Health, Safety and Wellbeing Senior National Officer Lynsey Mann, RCN Health, Safety and Wellbeing Senior National Officer
14.00	**Chair's welcome back** Phil Cole, Chair of the UK Stewards Committee
14.10	**Closing Address and Q&A** Professor Nicola Ranger, RCN General Secretary & Chief Executive Colin Poolman, Executive Director of RCN Scotland
14.50	**Closing remarks from the Chair** Phil Cole, Chair of the UK Stewards Committee
15.00	**Conference closes**

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.

Badges

For security purposes, participants must wear their badges at all times. Participants will not be admitted to the conference sessions without the appropriate badge.

Name, activist role and country/region will all be shown on badges. Allocated table numbers for the conference will also be indicated clearly.

To help make everyone feel welcome and included, a coloured sticker dot is included on badges to identify first time attendees.

Programme

Please refer to the programme for details of the times and locations of all conference sessions. Staff will be on hand to guide you as necessary.

Conference table plan

To support networking, a table plan will be produced so reps are seated with their own country or region.

The table plan will be in use for the conference sessions in the main hall but reps are free to sit on any table during the conference dinner.

Exhibition

There is an exhibition running alongside this event. These exhibitors have chosen to exhibit at this conference as they feel their products and/or services may be of interest to you. The exhibition also supports the conference, therefore please take the time to go and visit each exhibition stand during the exhibition viewing times.

Conference dinner

The conference dinner will be held at The Hilton Newcastle, Tyne Bridge on Thursday evening, starting with a networking welcome at 7pm. Delegates will be invited to sit down for dinner at 7.30pm.

On arrival for dinner please make your way to the RCN Registration desk and collect your voucher for a welcome mocktail.

If you have any specific dietary requirements, please inform us in advance so we can ensure your needs are catered for. For any queries, please see staff at the registration desk.

Reps Hub

Main hall sessions will be livestreamed and filmed so that sessions are available for all reps not attending in person to watch live or on demand at a convenient time.

Reps can log on to the Activists Learning Portal at https://learn.rcn.org.uk/ to access the recordings two weeks after the event.

Respect charter and code of conduct

By joining this event, all attendees agree to have read, understood and adhere to the RCN governance documents regarding respect and conduct at events.

Specific requirements

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

Electronic devices

Out of courtesy to others, delegates are requested to switch off or set to silent all electronic devices during conference sessions.

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.

Continuing Professional Development

The Royal College of Nursing believes in lifelong learning and actively promotes the continuing professional development of all nurses. Authorised Royal College of Nursing certificates of attendance have been issued to all participants. This event is also subject to the RCN Events quality assurance framework. You should log what you have learnt at this event using the Framework for Reflection guidelines on the back of your certificate and keep this document in your personal professional portfolio.

Free information at your fingertips

The Royal College of Nursing offers a number of FREE online resources with all the latest information and guidance on particular nursing practice issues such as: clinical guidelines, patient safety and eHealth.
Visit https://rcnlearn.rcn.org.uk/ for more information.

LV=

At LV=, our top priority is to do the right thing for our customers, colleagues, and communities.

We take great pride in our long-standing relationship with the RCN, and we are pleased to offer quality insurance products at discounted prices to all RCN members.

To find out more, visit LV.com/RCN

Quilter Financial Advisers

Quilter Financial Advisers are leading industry specialists in the NHS Pension Scheme as well as all aspects of retirement and general savings and financial planning. Whether you're confused about changes to your pension, understanding your Total Reward Statement, or you are buying a house, or need advice on inheritance tax and estate planning, Quilter Financial Advisers can help.

All RCN members are entitled to a free initial private consultation with a professional financial adviser so come and see us at our stand to find out more and book your free initial consultation.

PG Mutual

PG Mutual specialise in providing Income Protection Insurance to healthcare professionals should they be unable to work due to illness or injury. We understand the market inside out as we've been providing Income Protection for almost 100 years.

RCN members are entitled to a 20% discount on their first two years' Income Protection Plus premiums.
To find out more and to get a quote visit pgmutual.co.uk/RCN

Mental health guidance

RCN UK Joint Reps Conference, October 2026

Your mental health and signposts to support

As RCN reps, you will be hearing and dealing with distressing, traumatic and difficult conversations daily. Reflecting the challenges faced by nursing staff across the UK, the joint reps conference will often include sensitive topics on the programme and during Q&A which may be difficult and emotionally charged for some.

Your wellbeing is important, please do seek help any time you need it.

This guidance offers practical advice on dealing with difficult emotions and feelings in the moment. It also details how you can access the RCN counselling service if needed. There are signposts to more specialist support and organisations, some of which also provide emotional or counselling support, along with others that offer advice and advocacy.

Who can help if I am struggling with difficult feelings and emotions?

In the first instance speak to someone you can trust, a colleague, friend, or loved one.

If you need support at the conference, visit the registration desk – staff there will be able to signpost you to assistance. This includes access to Mental Health First Aiders at the conference if you need a listening ear. They will have a green spot on their badges and staff on the registration desk can help you find them.

How can I calm myself if needed?

Stop whatever you are doing - don't act immediately, wait.
Take a breath - slowly breath in and out a couple of times.
Scan your body - for tension, breath into the tension while allowing your muscles to relax
Observe - What am I thinking about? What am I reacting to? What am I feeling in my body?
Pull back - put in some perspective, see the bigger picture. Is this fact or opinion? How would someone else see this?
Practise what works - What's the best thing to do for me, for others, for this situation?

Where can I access counselling if needed?

As a member of the RCN, you are entitled to Single Session or Brief Therapy providing you haven't had a course of counselling with us in the last 6 months. And if you did, then we would still be happy to assess your situation and explore your options to access talking therapy elsewhere if appropriate.

To request this, please send an email to counselling@rcn.org.uk and quote 'RCN UK Reps Conference' in the subject and tell us in a few words what you would like support for.

RCN mental health and wellbeing resources

Working with stressed and distressed members can be one of the most difficult parts of the rep role. For you to be able to support members and represent their best interests you need to be aware of your own stress levels and take care of your own needs, accessing support as necessary.

Sometimes as a rep it can be easy to become focussed on your members' issues and challenges at the expense of your own self-care. Taking the time to think about how you are doing, and what support you might need in your role, can be time well spent.

There is a collection of resources on the RCN website to support you with your mental health and wellbeing:

Stress resource for reps | Royal College of Nursing

Managing stress | Royal College of Nursing

Counselling service | Royal College of Nursing

Specialist support and organisations

Listed below are signposts to other specialist support and organisations, some of which provide emotional or counselling support, along with others that offer advice and advocacy

The Survivors Trust

Free, confidential helpline for any survivor of sexual abuse anywhere in the UK or Ireland
Tel: 08088 010 818
Text Service: 07860 022 956
Email: helpline@thesurvivorstrust.org

Website: thesurvivorstrust.org

Bereavement Support

Service	Area covered	Contact Tel
Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide Helps those bereaved by suicide to support each other	England, Wales and Scotland	0300 111 5065
Cruse Bereavement Support	England, Wales, and Northern Ireland	0808 808 1677
	Scotland	0808 802 6161
	Isle of Man	01624 668191
Guernsey Bereavement Service	Guernsey	01481 257778
Community Bereavement Service	Jersey	01534 285144.

Domestic Abuse

Women's Aid - Home - Women's Aid
Support for Men - Support for men - Refuge

Racism and hate crime

The following organisations do not directly provide emotional or counselling support, but can offer advice, advocacy and signposting to further help.

Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS) advises and assists individuals on issues relating to equality and human rights across England, Scotland and Wales.
Phone: 0808 800 0082

The Monitoring Group is a UK organisation that provides support to victims of race and religious hate crime through the provision of information, advice, advocacy, and representation.

Stop Hate UK provides independent and confidential support to people affected by hate crime and discrimination based on identity.
Homepage - Stop Hate UK

Mind provides advice and support on a range of topics including types of mental health problems, legislation and details of local help and support in England and Wales.
Phone: 0300 123 3393 (weekdays 9am - 6pm)
Racism and mental health | Tips for everyday living | Mind

Liberate is an organisation providing a safe and inclusive space for people to meet across the Channel Islands, services include provision of mental health and wellbeing support.
Liberate | Equality, diversity and inclusion across the Channel Islands

Who should I contact if I need more immediate support?

If you or someone is at immediate risk of harm:

- Call 999
- Go to or ask someone to take you to your nearest Accident and Emergency department (A&E)
- Call your GP to set up an emergency appointment, when booking an appointment, you must advise the surgery that you are feeling suicidal.
- Also contact someone you trust once you have taken one of the above steps, if possible don't suffer on your own.

For non-emergency situations:

- Speak to your GP
- England, Wales and Scotland can also call NHS 111
- Northern Ireland call Lifeline 0808 808 8000
- Jersey: Mental health
- Guernsey: Mental Health - States of Guernsey
- Alderney: Mental Health – Island Medical Centre
- Isle of Man: Isle of Man Government - Mental Health Service
- For emotional support call the Samaritans on freephone 116 123 available 24/7

Who can I turn to if I was a victim of a crime and/or if I am unsure about reporting it?

Contact Victim Support who are dedicated to support people affected by crime and traumatic incidents.

- England and Wales: Home - Victim Support
- Northern Ireland: Victim Support NI | Supporting People Affected By Crime
- Scotland: Get support as a victim of crime | Victim Support Scotland
- Guernsey: Victim Support and Witness Service | Empower Justice Today - Get Support
- Jersey:Victims First Jersey
- Isle of Man: Victim Support Isle of Man

October 2026

Acknowledgement and thanks

UK Reps Committees

Region/Country	UK Health & Safety Reps Committee	UK Stewards Committee	UK Learning Reps Committee
East Midlands	Helen Inskip	Claire Amy	Maive Coley
Eastern	Vacant	Andi Blakesley	Tracey Risebrow
London	Nancy Ghansah	Vacant	Jane Connor
North West	Vacant	Bernadette Miller	Susan Mench
Northern	Andrew Mather	Vacant	Claire Reynolds
Northern Ireland	Roberta Hay	Amanda Smith	Janine Compston
Scotland	Martin MacGregor	Destiny Osunde	Murdo Macleod
South East	Giles Loch	Stephen Shouler	Fiona Holley
South West	Vicky Brotherton	Matthew Stuart	Chris Starnes
Wales	Helen Williams	Billy Nichols	Katherine Cabasan-Rose
West Midlands	Florence Rugara	Phil Cole	Anastesia Nzute
Yorkshire & the Humber	Kirsty Craven	Peter Davis	Vacant

UK Reps Committee Conference Planning Group

Fiona Holley	Chair UK Learning Reps Committee
Claire Reynolds	UK Learning Reps Committee
Andrew Mather	UK Health & Safety Reps Committee
Jackie Davies	Vice Chair Trade Union Committee
Billy Nichols	UK Stewards Committee
Denise Kelly	Chair Trade Union Committee
Vicky Brotherton	Chair UK Health & Safety Reps Committee
Deborah Shepherd	Head of Employment Relations
Phil Cole	Chair UK Stewards Committee

Nursing Activism Department

Harry Eccles	Head of Activist Engagement
Becki Winson	Lead for Activist Communities
George Woods	Associate Director
Jenny Lillywhite	Representative Support Officer
Karen Carberry	Head of Activist Learning and Development

Events Management Team and AV

Leane Brogan	Corporate Events Organiser
Millie Shepherd-Gill	Events and Marketing Administrator
Anna Gray	Events Manager
Will Levatino	IT Audio Visual Engineer
Will Tomlin	IT Audio Visual Engineer

R&B Group	https://rbgroup.co.uk/

Exhibitors

The Royal College of Nursing would like to thank the following for supporting this event.

Name and website
LV= https://www.lv.com/rcn?utm_source=rcn&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=lv-editorial&utm_content=get-a-quote
Quilter https://www.quilter.com/rcn/
PG Mutual https://www.pgmutual.co.uk/RCN/
RCN Library https://www.rcn.org.uk/library/
RCN Member Support Services https://www.rcn.org.uk/Get-Help/Member-support-services
RCN Changemakers https://www.rcn.org.uk/Log-In?returnUrl=%2Freps-hub%2Frep-changemaker
RCN Case Management https://learn.rcn.org.uk/course/view.php?id=333 For CMS training contact – liza.brogan@rcn.org.uk
RCN Governance https://www.rcn.org.uk/current-elections https://www.rcn.org.uk/Get-Involved/RCN-awards
UK Reps Committees https://www.rcn.org.uk/About-us/Our-governance/How-we-work/Our-structure/RCN-committees-and-groups
RCN Stewards

https://www.rcn.org.uk/Professional-Development/publications/rcn-stewards-role-descriptor-a4-leaflet-uk-pub-010-831

RCN Health and Safety Reps https://www.rcn.org.uk/Professional-Development/publications/rcn-safety-reps-role-descriptor-a4-leaflet-uk-pub-010-861
RCN Learning Reps https://www.rcn.org.uk/Professional-Development/publications/rcn-learning-reps-role-descriptor-a4-leaflet-uk-pub-010-860
Nursing Activism Department https://www.rcn.org.uk/Get-Involved/Organising-for-Change
IHSC Our work for members in independent health and social care | Royal College of Nursing (rcn.org.uk)

The RCN welcomes sponsorship from the health care industry to deliver educational initiatives and events for the nursing profession. Financial support is accepted where there is clear alignment in objectives and strong grounds that the collaboration will add value to the RCN's educational offer.

The RCN works to ensure that all commercial activity is ethical, mutually beneficial and complies with the Bribery Act and relevant codes of practice e.g. Association of British Pharmaceutical Industries and Association of British Healthcare Industries.

Sponsorship or exhibition led activity does not imply endorsement by the RCN of any products and services displayed by the sponsors or exhibitors at an RCN event.

Future RCN Events

Date	Event	Location
26 September	RCN and NaTHNaC 9th Joint Travel Health Conference	Online
6 October	RCN Retired Members' Conference	RCN HQ, London
15 October	RCN Fertility Nursing Conference	RCN HQ, London
17 November	RCN Nurse-Led Innovations and Quality Improvement Conference	RCN HQ, London
18 November	RCN Student Ambassador Conference	RCN HQ, London
23 November	RCN Nursing Support Workers' Conference	RCN HQ, London
27 November	RCN and SOM Occupational Health Nursing Conference	RCN HQ, London
8 December	RCN Women's Health Forum Conference	RCN HQ, London