

RCN Forum Annual Report 2025

Forum Name: Bladder and Bowel Forum

Introduction:

The RCN Bladder and Bowel forum has played a pivotal role in working with other organisations in lobbying for evidence-based Continence (Bladder and Bowel) care. We have contributed to National guidelines, research, commissioning documents, and the setting of national standards for continence service.

The Committee have continued to support National groups that have met both virtually and face to face this year, by representing the RCN on the projects helps to inform and shape future Bladder and Bowel pathways. Working collaboratively and in partnership with other interested groups to highlight the discrepancies in Bladder and Bowel across the United Kingdom and we have successfully recruited to vacancies within the steering group which reflects the membership across the UK to strengthen our offer.

Membership of the forum

Total number of forum members: 3808

First choice membership: 1452 which shows an increase in membership of **9.91%**.

Social Media Presence

The Forum has an active Facebook group which steadily increases' year on year with a membership of 924 and increase of **8.83%**.

X followers total 1767 which is a decrease from the previous year, however we have not been using X due to political issues and are trying to use Bluesky more.

Social media presence is crucial in engaging with members and the current staff shortages has highlighted the need for robust and an increased visibility via social media channels.

Committee membership – we are quorate as a committee. This year three committee members tenure came up for renewal, two decided to step down as end of term. We interviewed five candidates (one current committee member and four new applicants). The current committee member was successful as were two new members of the committee who have a wealth of experience and enthusiasm in Bladder & Bowel care. The current Chair will step down at the end of the year, the committee are delighted that the current Vice Chair will become Chair, and a very active member of the committee will become Vice Chair.

The RCN Bladder and Bowel Forum Steering Committee is made up of specialist nurses and continence care experts from across the UK who provide leadership, education, and advocacy to raise the profile of bladder and bowel health. By representing different regions, organising national conferences and training, influencing health policy, and including patient voices, the committee ensures a consistent UK-wide approach that supports both professionals and patients, improves standards of care, and promotes dignity for those living with bladder and bowel conditions.

Reflections on 2024: (Outputs and outcomes)

➤ Resources:

- The review of *Catheter Care - Guidance for Health Care Professionals* and *Bowel Care Management of lower bowel dysfunction, including digital rectal examination and digital removal of faeces* has now been completed and are waiting for publication and relaunch before the end of the year.
- The committee and our Paediatric link nurses are managing a project to develop a - *Daytime Urinary Incontinence in Children Guidance*
The resource has been agreed by FGG and will be published in the spring 2026.

➤ Congress 2025:

- The Forum worked jointly with The Spinal Injuries Association to present a Education, Learning and Development Programme Event –

“#ParalysedBowel campaign”. Two committee members were able to attend, both for the first time.

- The Bladder & Bowel forum also had a stand one lunchtime to explain the work of our forum; this was well attended and promoted the important work of the forum.

➤ **Webinars**

The forum held a lunchtime webinar this year in conjunction with the Unplanned Admissions Consensus Committee, to promote joint working in the development of an *NHS E-Learning Training Course: Fundamentals of Catheterisation Best Practice*. This attracted 135 delegates and many more have expressed interest in accessing the recording, <https://vimeo.com/1138527906/5e59cf7521?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci>.

Previous webinars hosted on the Bladder and Bowel forum webpage remain current and are still being accessed by members.

Contribution to Consultations/Policy development

The forum continues to work with the following organisation. The purpose is to bring together patients, professionals, charities, and policymakers so that continence care is not overlooked, but instead embedded into national health priorities, with consistent standards, better resources, and improved patient outcomes.

- NICE
- Patient Industry and Professionals forum (PIP's)
- NHS England. Excellence in Continence Care Programme Board
- The Urology Foundation
- EICC Programme Board National Bladder & Bowel Health Project
- Spinal Injury Association
- Bladder & Bowel UK
- Association of Continence Professionals
- Unplanned Admissions Consensus Committee
- All Party Parliamentary Group for Bladder and Bowel Continence Care

The RCN Bladder & Bowel Forum have joined with the Chairs of the other leading continence associations: The British Association of Urological Nurses (BAUN), Association for Continence Professionals (ACP) and The Pelvic, Obstetric and Gynaecological physiotherapy (POGP) to form The Continence Coalition. The aim of the group is to challenge the “intolerable in bladder and bowel care” which will include lobbying for a benchmark for national standard/loss of national agenda. Promote education- discussing the lack of undergraduate training and lack of postgraduate courses and look at service structure and delivery.

Current projects

All Party Parliamentary Group for Bladder and Bowel Continence Care

- Reinstated this year
- Committee attended a round table event with MP Sonia Kumar
- Engaged in meetings with parliamentary representatives

RCNi Summit on Nurse Leadership in AMR

- Held at RCN headquarters in London on November 17
- Forum invited to attend; one committee member participated
- Event included nurse leaders, AMS nurses, and specialists across healthcare
- Focused on challenges and solutions in nurse leadership and antimicrobial resistance

National Catheter Passport Development

- Committee working with Office of the Chief Nurse, NHS England
- Updating and developing the national catheter passport
- Aim to evolve into a digital passport, led by a group in Bristol
- Supported by a steering committee member

NHS E-Learning Training Course: Fundamentals of Catheterisation Best Practice

- Collaboration with the Unplanned Admissions Consensus Committee (UACC)
- Course launched at a joint webinar in November

New UK Project: Continence Assessment and Management Pathway

- Committee invited to join a national focus group
- Co-designing a pathway spanning acute and community care
- Opportunity to shape national best practice, improve patient outcomes, and contribute to a peer-reviewed publication

Strategy day took place on the 15th of November at RCN Head Quarters, with our two new committee members able to attend via Teams.

The annual forum committee meeting brings members together to reflect on achievements, address challenges, and set priorities for the year ahead. By actively engaging with the wider membership, the committee ensures its work remains relevant and responsive to the needs of bladder and bowel nurses. This combination of reflection, strategic planning, and member input strengthens the forum's role as a representative body, supporting professional development, advocacy, and a shared sense of community.

Plans for 2026

- To deliver a series of webinars on Demystifying Continence:
 - Demystifying Trial without Catheters
 - Demystifying Trans Anal Irrigation
 - Demystifying bowel medication
- Along with a webinar to launch the Daytime Urinary Incontinence in Children Guidance

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By: Fiona Le Ber Chair of the RCN Bladder and Bowel Forum Steering Committee