

# RCN Forum Annual Report 2025

## Forum Name: Defence Nursing Forum (DNF)

### Introduction

The forum represents RCN members who are currently employed or have previously worked in Defence Nursing inclusive of the whole force: Royal Navy, Army, the Royal Air Force, and Civil Service. Our primary objective is to advance the academic and professional growth of our members through collaboration with various RCN forums, teams, and wider Defence stakeholders. We strive to raise awareness of the positive impact of Defence Nursing within Defence and the broader nursing workforce. We provide Defence nursing expert advice and guidance to the RCN to support its mission of promoting safe, high-quality, person-centred nursing care across all settings.

### Membership of the forum

The Forum Steering Committee has diverse membership representing a variety of clinical specialties, the Army, RAF, and civil service. It currently does not represent the Royal Navy; however, the existing members are committed to being mindful of this when recruiting, representing, and planning activity.

The steering committee is made up of:

- Suzanne Turner, primary healthcare and civil service
- Lt Col Mark Cadman, Advanced Nurse Practitioner and Regular Army
- Major Danielle Cording, Occupational Health and Regular Army
- Major Nei Gilbert, Primary healthcare and Regular Army
- Flt Lt Rebecca Crisp, critical care and RAF

Unfortunately, Major James Cooper has had to stand down from the committee due to ongoing work commitments, he will be greatly missed as his input during his time in the role has been exceptional.

The Forum grew by 146 members over the last year and currently has 1274 members, with 616 members listing us as their first choice and allowing the forum to continue to retain one voting member at RNC Congress.

### Reflections on 2024 (outputs and outcomes)

The forum has continued developing as a steering committee, with a focus on providing informed support and guidance to its members. The Steering Committee met for its face-to-face strategy in March and virtual, monthly committee meetings have been continued with a standard agenda enabling feedback from all committee members and structuring discussions.

- **CNO Defence.** The steering committee met with the CNO defence in June 2024. This was a chance for the CNO to brief the committee on the ongoing changes to defence and allow them to ask questions and develop stronger ties with the defence medical management chain. The professional lead has continued to have regular meetings with the CNO.
- **RCN Congress.** The forum was represented by one member fulfilling its one voting member position over the course of RCN Congress. This member really enjoyed the Retired Members' Network presentation, was honoured to meet Claire Richardson and to meet up with the Defence Medical Services in the exhibition hall.
- **Social Media and Comms.** The forum continued to use Facebook communication to this year. The RCN DNF webpages have been kept up to date.

- **Representation and Conferences.** The steering committee attended and promoted the forum through attendance and presentation at Defence conferences/gathering such as the CNO Army Symposium.
- **Profession resource for new nurses to defence.** The Forum has successfully bid for funding to update and modernise a document that supports new nurses transitioning into defence.
- **Opening of the field of remembrance.** Two members of the steering committee accompanied the RCN president Bejoy Sebastian to the opening of the field of remembrance at Westminster abbey by her majesty Queen Camilla.
- **Webinars.** The forum has continued to host a series of well attended webinars on various topics affecting defence nurses. These have brought together experiences from forum members with expert external speakers and have been informative.
- **Support to Professional Lead.** The forum steering committee have provided SME advice to their professional lead on several workstreams and topics such as the Defence Functional Nursing Strategy, workforce issues, professional development pathways and more.

### **Plans for 2026**

1. Welcome two new committee members in Jan 26 becoming a full committee reflective our membership.
2. Continue the good work of integrating with Critical Care and Flight Nursing, Peri-Operative, and Emergency Care Forum in 2026.
3. Actively participate in RCN Congress 26.
4. Continue to engage with the incoming CNO defence to ensure clear communication between RCN members and the CoC. Advocating for the members whilst ensuring clear understanding of defence requirements.
5. Contribute to key Defence Nursing events such as the CNO Symposium for Royal Navy, Army, RAF throughout 26.
6. Promote the benefits of the RCN and the DNF with Defence Nursing students throughout the year.
7. Plan and continue to deliver regular webinar series on topics relevant to defence nurses.

**Date: 10 Dec 2025**

**Neil Gilbert, RCN Defence Nursing Forum Steering Committee Chairperson**