

## **RCN Forum Annual Report 2024**

### **District and Community Nurse Forum**

#### **Introduction:**

The main objectives for the RCN District and Community Nursing Forum facilitated by the Chair and the Steering Group, is to raise the profile of community nursing within the RCN and in the wider healthcare sector. We would like Community nursing to be valued, seen and celebrated on an equal footing as all the other nursing specialist roles.

The priorities for the Forum for 2023/ 2024 have been:

1. Continue to raise the profile of Community Nursing
2. To produce guidance for transitioning from child to adult services
3. To raise awareness of the concerns being raised by forum members e.g., definitions of being housebound and cost of transport issues.
4. To include the voice of IENs working within the community in any work done by the RCN
5. To introduce an expert reference group to support the Steering Group on specific pieces of work.

#### **Membership of the forum:**

The RCN District Nursing Forum has 7271 members, an increase of 105 members on last year but with only 4993 as their primary forum. This represents a decrease in the past 12 months. This is despite frequent calls via our social media outlets to ask members to ensure they put this forum as their primary choice. Increasing our membership needs to be a continue to be a focus in 2025.

**Facebook page:** We have a total of 7200 members of our Facebook page. This an increase of 100 members since our last report. We have noticed that there are lots of applications to join the group but often applicants do not answer the three questions required which reduces the number accepted. Our Facebook page is very active with lively exchanges about community nursing issues, requests for help with placements and with career progression.

**X Account:** We currently have 5,345 followers which is a significant increase on last year and have 1,509 following our account. The X account was a very lively and positive place sharing good practice in community care and celebrating community nurses. However, in November 2024 the RCN took the decision that the RCN will no longer use this platform, and we notified our followers that we would no longer be posting. We hope that a decision is made about an alternative social media space soon as this was an important way for the Forum to interact with community nurses and those working outside the hospital setting who are not members of the RCN.

#### **Steering Group Committee Membership:**

From January 2024 Gail Goddard was appointed Chair of the Steering Committee and Marysia Graffin has recently been appointed as Vice Chair commencing in January 2025.

In January 2024 two new steering Committee members joined the group – Charlene Smith and Marie Rogers. Charlene is a newly qualified community nurse who is particularly interested in supporting students and carers and Marie is a very experienced District Nurse in clinical practice who is very experienced in working in branch for the RCN.

One steering group member is due to leave at the end of this year Wendy Newnham who has completed 8 years as a member of the group. We thank Wendy for all her input and wish her well for the future. We hope that we will be able to call on her expertise and skills in the future to support the work of the Forum.

We received 6 eligible applicants for the vacancy at the recent forum appointments and we shortlisted 3 of them for interview. Unfortunately, one candidate had to withdraw as he secured employment by the RCN in Cornwall and one candidate had to withdraw due to a family bereavement and was not able to be interviewed. One candidate was interviewed and was successful and will be joining the Steering Committee in January 2025.

### **Reflections on 2024**

The Forum strategy Day was held in January 2024 and was attended by most of the Forum Steering Committee members – two attended online due to transport issues. One new member was unable to attend due to work commitments. The group agreed to work on 5 priorities during 2024.

### **Continuing to raise the profile of Community Nursing:**

Some of the Steering Committee members recorded a podcast supported by the RCN digital team talking about their careers so far to raise awareness of the different roles that are possible in the community. The podcast is available on the Forum page.

Members of the Steering Committee have been very active on X and Facebook stimulating debate about the issues that concern community nurses, supporting those looking to work in the community and also encouraging newly qualified nurses and students who are interested in working in the community. We have also started to make use of the Member Communication Centre (MCC) and have sent out several updates to members of the forum.

The Forum Steering Committee have also been working in partnership with the GPN Forum and NHSE community team to deliver monthly community nursing webinars. The webinars are held on the third Thursday of each month for an hour from 1-2pm. The subjects are relevant to community nursing such as diabetes, end of life care, catheter care and restorative clinical supervision. We have plans for these webinars to continue throughout next year. The webinars are open to everyone who work within the community. You do not have to be an RCN member to join and nurses across all four countries are very welcome to join. The agenda and link are sent out by NHSE via their networks and the Forum also share across their network and social media platforms. Recordings of the webinars are available on the forum webpage on the website and again everyone can access these.

We are also planning quarterly joint webinars with the GPN Forum – the first one is in January 2025 covering subjects that are relevant to both groups- the first will be about wound care.

In September the forum steering group ran a social media campaign encouraging community nurses to send in a short video with the theme of Care is where the Home is. We had quite a few videos sent in and managed to post something on most days in September. Unfortunately, many of the nurses who said they would like to be involved were not able to due to the pressure of work. We would like to try again next year but will start to advertise this much earlier in the year as September is a very busy month in community nursing. We did receive some very positive feedback about the campaign.

### **Producing guidance for transitioning from child to adult services:**

We have been approached by many members of the Forum asking for advice about information and guidance relevant to transitioning from children to adult services. It appears that this is very different across the four countries. Some areas have good practice, some have specialist transition teams, others do not have any support at all, and it is down to individual nurses to try to support families in this position. The Children & Young People, Staying Healthy Forum were very interested in working with us on this topic and we have had an initial meeting to scop what is needed and how we should proceed. It became apparent that there is a lot of guidance available, but it is very spread out and nurses do not know where to access it. There is also national guidance being formed. We agreed that more guidance was not needed but a reference point to signpost nurses to the correct information would be useful. It was agreed that the District and Community Nurse Forum would ask its members what information they felt that they

needed, and the Children & Young People, Staying Healthy Forum would ask their members what information they thought community adult nurses would need. This work was planned to take place in November however due to illness and other unforeseen circumstances it has not been possible to arrange to meet up to discuss so this has been postponed and will be part of next year's annual plan.

#### **Raising awareness of the concerns being raised by forum members.**

The overarching themes which have been raised by Forum members in the last year have been around definitions of housebound patients, rising costs of transport for community nurses and also the differences in areas of pay bandings. In some areas DNs holding the Specialist Practitioner Qualification are paid at a band 7 whereas in other areas DNs completing the same roles are paid at band 6. Which is not equitable or fair.

We submitted a Congress 2024 agenda item to discuss about housebound definitions and the impact that this has on the workload and caseloads of community nursing and also one to discuss the fact that many community nurses cannot afford to run a car and are supplementing their employer by paying for their car maintenance, fuel costs, parking costs and business insurance. It was felt that neither of these agenda items would be of interest to the wider nursing membership and so both were rejected.

The Forum Chair has met with representatives from the Queen's Nursing Institute, Association of District Nurse Education and the National District Nursing Network to discuss how best to highlight the need for the DN SPQ role to be paid at band 7 across all four nations. A further meeting is planned in Dec and conversations have also been commenced with the CNO and Paul Vaughan from NHSE.

#### **Including the voice of IENs working within the community in any work done by the RCN:**

At Congress 2024 the Forum collaborated with RCN Essex branch colleagues to present a learning event celebrating the career possibilities for IENs in both the community and Hospital settings. The event was very well attended, and the recording of the session has also been popular. As a result of the event, we now have links with many of the International Educated Nurses (IEN) diaspora groups and are in regular conversation with them. We look forward to the work of the International Academy to ensure that the specific challenges faced by IENs working in the community are heard.

#### **Introducing identified individuals to support the Steering Group on specific pieces of work:**

As a Forum we were very keen that we retained and made use of the vast experience of previous members of the Steering Group in the future. We have approached several very experienced community nurses and held a meeting to ask them if we could call on them in the future to ask for their advice about specific pieces of work that the forum is undertaking. They all agreed, and we have a mailing list that we can use to ask for advice, support and expertise but also, we are able to send information to them about the community nursing webinars so that the information is shared widely. Since we began this work the RCN has undertaken some work around this topic and we are aware that more guidance will be shared with the Forum chairs very soon which we will then adopt and inform our wider experts about.

#### **Congress 2024**

The majority of the Forum Steering Committee attended congress this year. We decided that we wanted as many forum members as possible to have the opportunity to attend Congress as a voting member. The Steering Committee all split the voting places with a forum member and then paid for the rest of the days so that they were there for most of the week. This enabled us to have extra Forum members to attend and have the experience. This was quite difficult to organise as applicants changed their mind and decided not to attend at the last minute, but we did have two young community nurses attend, and a nurse from Cornwall who went onto gain a role working for the RCN. All the voting members attended all of the voting sessions and took part in many of the debates. We also sent out a daily update from congress on our face book and X accounts detailing what had happened each day as well as tweeting throughout Congress. Please see section above about our learning event at Congress. The Forum also took part in the World Café and were available at the forum stand.

**Other Activity:**

- One committee member has been part of the judging panel for Community Nursing placement of the year at the Nursing Times Student Awards and attended the award ceremony to present the award.
- One committee member continues to be on the editorial board of the journal of community nursing and regularly writes about community nursing topics.
- The Chair has represented the Forum speaking at several QNI regional events and at the Association of District Nurse Educators annual conference.
- The steering group has recognised that many of the members of the Facebook page are asking for advice about interviews and interview technique, so we are planning a series of podcasts giving advice and suggestions for each band of community nursing.
- The Group has worked with the GPN forum to produce guidance for GPNs about emergency leg care which should be published in Jan 2025
- The group have worked with ICU specialists to produce guidelines for patients who wish to come home for imminent end of life care straight from ICU. This is awaiting ratification and will be available soon.

**Plans for 2025:**

Continue to raise the profile of community nursing.

Establish links with other forums.

Review the transition work.

Continue with the interview advice podcasts.

Written by Gail Goddard DN

Chair of District Nurse and Community Nursing Forum