

## RCN Forum Annual Report 2023

### **Forum Name:**

Education

### **Introduction:**

The forum is aimed at members who have an interest in or a remit for education, learning and professional development in nursing, including registered nurses, registered midwives, nursing associates, health care support workers, apprentices, and undergraduate students. Our members include those working in clinical practice, education, and training roles within service provider organisations across all health and social care sectors, as well as further and higher education. The forum is involved in influencing and shaping policy. The forum also supports education practice development, research, and innovation, and showcases this work through the annual RCN Education Forum Conference.

### **Membership of the forum**

Membership of the Education Forum continues to demonstrate a steady increase year on year:

November 2021 = 10661, November 2022 = 11018, November 2023 = 11337.

First choice members also demonstrates a gradual increase:

November 2021 = 4631, November 2022 = 4817, November 2023 = 4970.

The Education Forum has 1102 followers on X (formerly known as Twitter), and 1855 Facebook followers (1700 in 2022, 1530 in 2021).

The forum has 5 voting places at Congress which were again successfully filled this year by a combination of Committee and forum members. There is a committee membership of 7, with 3 vacancies at the end of 2023, due to completion of terms of office for Dr Sarah Burden (Chair), Professor Debbie Porteous, and Mrs Ally Middleton. The latter was eligible for a second term of office and was successful at interview in October 2023. A number of high-quality applications were received with 5 interviews conducted and two new committee members selected to commence January 2024. Thus, all places are filled on the committee and following the Winter election process, Dr Rachael Major will take on the role of Forum Chair from January 2024.

### **Reflections on 2023: (Outputs and outcomes)**

Three core areas were identified for the forum committee to address during 2023, at the strategy day in November 2022:

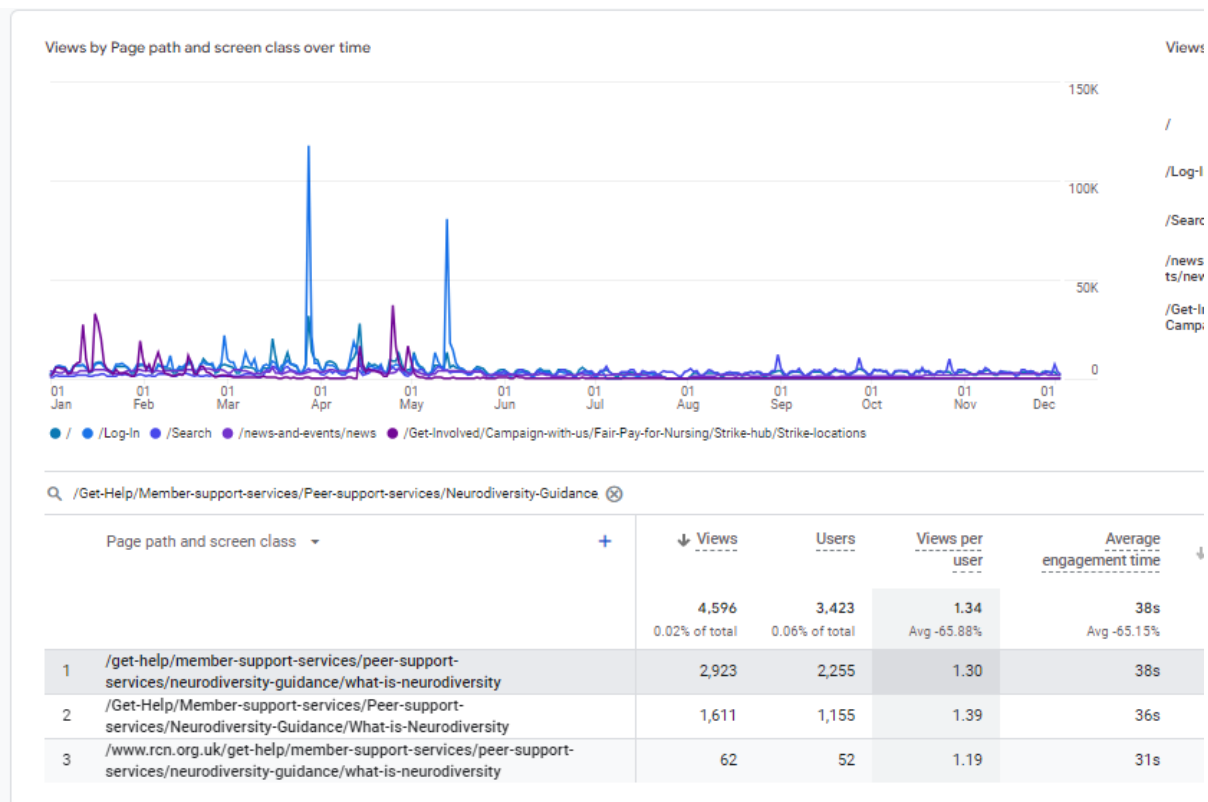
1. Forum visibility
2. Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity in nursing education
3. Developing and supporting best practice in nursing education

A review of the work is provided below. In producing this review, the committee would like to acknowledge the invaluable professional and personal support received from their Professional Lead Ruth Burey, who contributed so much to the development of the

committee over the past few years and the plans for 2023. Unfortunately, due to illness and her untimely death in Autumn 2023 she was unable to be as involved as planned in the committee’s work, but her wisdom, expertise and enthusiasm has remained at the core of the committee’s work across the year. The committee would also like to pay thanks to Christine McKenzie who has stepped in as Professional Lead for the year.

### Visibility as a forum

Forum communications during the year have remained focused on social media channels, and in-person engagement at the Forum conference and RCN Congress. The forum is awaiting the outcome of a wider RCN project looking at Forum member communications to inform future progress in this area. Forum webpages have been subject to an initial review and information updated. This is an ongoing piece of work. Committee team page updated and annual report and strategy day 2022 notes are now visible to members. A developing strength has been the visibility and use of the Neurodiversity guidance and webpages collaboratively developed by the forum and illustrated below.



Committee members were visible and engaged at both the Forum conference and Congress. At the conference Committee members ran workshops to support new presenters and first-time conference attendees. They also hosted a well-attended meet the committee event at the conference venue, the evening before conference commenced. At **Congress** in Brighton, Committee members were active in the all-forum World Café event, supported a number of debate motions and committee member Ally Middleton co-facilitated a Singing Workshop **“Singing for health- Singing in Solidarity.”** Singing has been used effectively as part of well-being strategies and has benefits in increasing staff morale. The development of vocal skill can literally enable a person to find their voice and enhance their personal confidence and

feeling of connectivity. The workshop gave a “taster” of the benefits of singing in a choir and demonstrated the amazing sound that can be achieved by people with no experience, forging a shared community singing in solidarity. Participants learnt a song of solidarity written for the event using words of nurses voicing their experiences. Rachael Major contributed to the Mona Gray Lecture and a Learning and well-being event in collaboration with the Children’s and Young People’s Forums, **“Exploring the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) standards for nursing – Does one size fit all?”**

Forum committee members have maintained wider organisational visibility of the forum through their contributions to wider RCN developments during 2023. Ongoing development and implementation of the RCN Education, Learning & Development Strategy, has seen committee members involved in the development and approval of the Quality Assurance policy and process which provides an infrastructure for annual review and commissioning of new content for RCN Learn <https://rcnlearn.rcn.org.uk/> . The forum has also been represented in the RCN Professional Framework workstream. To date this has developed a definition of nursing, a model of the nursing profession and levels of practice <https://www.rcn.org.uk/Professional-Development/Definition-and-Principles-of-Nursing> . Future work includes the development of career frameworks and a publicly available digital platform so that members and those considering nursing as a career can see the range of options available and how skills can be transferred across nursing roles and specialisms.

Finally, Ally Middleton represented the Forum at an RCN organised Student event in Sheffield to pre-reg student nurses. The event looked to raise the profile of the RCN with the student body, understand student concerns and feelings to inform future policy and practice.

### **Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity in nursing education**

Able led by Dr Rachael Major, Forum Deputy Chair, the Neurodiversity guidance project has continued to broaden its impact on practice and policy this year. The project completed late 2022 when the neurodiversity guidance document was completed and published and webpages were developed <https://www.rcn.org.uk/Get-Help/Member-support-services/Peer-support-services/Neurodiversity-Guidance> . The work has continued to be presented and promoted across a range of settings and organisations. Most notable during the year was work with NHS Education Scotland, initially delivered through a digital event <https://vimeo.com/794041496> . Some initial work to develop an RCN neurodiversity strategy has commenced. Information and guidance through the neurodiversity website has continued to be updated. An RCN working group has commenced reviewing questions on neurodiversity to be included within the demographic information that the RCN collects and seeking to lobby the NMC to do the same. Following on from this work, the committee invited Paula McGowan OBE to deliver a keynote speech at the forum Conference. Paula is the founder of the Oliver McGowan Campaign and through her activism and work with Health Education England has developed The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on learning disability and autism <https://www.olivermcgowan.org/> .

The committee have worked in partnership with Christine McKenzie, RCN Professional Lead, Learning & Development to develop a response and take forward matters outlined in a Congress resolution from 2022: “That this meeting of RCN Congress discusses inequalities in

the diagnosis and treatment of ethnically diverse people”

<https://www.rcn.org.uk/congress/congress-events/inequality> . To date this has resulted in the development and delivery of a workshop at the Forum Conference 2023 “the lived experience of students regarding ethnic diversity in clinical scenarios and skills teaching: responding to concerns – a case study”. This prompted significant discussion at the conference, which has continued across workstreams during the year. Given the significance of the issues around ethnic health inequalities, diagnosis and treatments, the committee are looking to take this forward as a significant workstream in the coming year.

### **Developing and supporting best practice in nursing education**

The core activity for the forum committee each year is the organisation and delivery of the Annual RCN Education Forum National Conference & Exhibition. For this year, the focus of the Conference was “Ambitions for Change: Investing in the health and social care workforce for the future,” which took place at the Birmingham Conference and Events Centre, 25-26 April 2023. Keynote speakers addressed workforce education across health and social care sectors and included: Deborah Sturdy CBE Chief Nurse for Adult Social Care DHSC. Professor Mark Radford CBE Deputy Chief Nursing Officer & National Director of Intensive Support, Former Chief Nurse of Health Education England. Paula McGowan OBE Founder of the Oliver McGowan Campaign. Professor Winifred Eboh, Professor of Nursing School of Health & Social Care, University of Essex (Dare to Care programme)

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/departments/health-and-social-care/dare-to-care> .

Final delegate attendance 380, with 70 on the waiting list. This was the largest delegates numbers for this conference to date. There was also an increase in non-member attendance in comparison with previous years (29% versus 15-20% previously). Topic (69%) followed by Networking (63%) were the main reasons behind delegate attendance. 82% scored speakers between 8 and 10/10. 87% stated that the conference exceeded or met expectations. 181 abstracts submitted – a 57% increase on 2022.

Feedback from this has informed planning for the 2024 conference “Future Insights: Enabling professional practice in health and social care nursing education”. The focus for the conference is as follows: “Education and training is pivotal to the development and retention of a professional workforce which can develop and deliver strategies, redesign services and co-produce care capable of addressing inequalities and improving health outcomes. Increasing demands for health and care services and the need to address workforce shortages and skills, in the context of ever-growing complexity of health needs and imperative for more integrated services, means that the need for high quality professional education and training has never been greater.” Engagement with this conference is looking promising with a significant increase in abstract numbers submitted (232).

### **Plans for 2024:**

- Visibility of Forum through Congress activity.
- EDI agenda in nursing education, through a Forum Governance Group (FGG) bid to support developing and signposting to resources to support clinical skills teaching that account for differences in presentation across ethnic groups.
- Developing and supporting best practice in nursing education through the Annual RCN Education Forum National Conference and Exhibition, planned for 23 & 24 April 2024 at York Racecourse.

**Date Prepared:** 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023

**By:** Dr Sarah Burden (Education Forum Chair).