

RCN Forum Annual Report 2025

Forum Name & Introduction:

Education Forum

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, November 2024 = 11859, November 2025 = 12679 showing a 19% increase over 5 years

First choice members also demonstrates a gradual increase:

November 2021 = 4631, November 2022 = 4817, November 2023 = 4970. November 2024 = 5127, November 2025 = 5379 showing a 15% increase over the 5 years

The Education Forum has 2187 Facebook followers (1855 in 2024, 1855 in 2023, 1700 in 2022, 1530 in 2021).

The forum has 6 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 2025, due to the resignation Prof David Barrett and the completion of terms of Elissa Miller and Dr Rachael Major. The latter was eligible for a second term of office and was successful at interview in September. A large number of high-quality applications were received with 8 interviews conducted. Thus, all places are filled on the committee, and following the Winter election process, Dr Rachael Major has been re-elected as Forum Chair and Mr Paul Irving will continue in the role of Vice Forum Chair from January 2026.

Reflections on 2025 (Outputs and outcomes)

Three core areas were identified for the forum committee to address during 2025, at the strategy day in November 2024:

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

Visibility as a forum

Forum communications during previous years have remained focused on social media channels, and in-person engagement at the Forum conference and RCN Congress. However, this year, following feedback from members at the Education Forum Conference, email has been used more as a method of communication. This has included updates to the members, a survey around experiences and confidence of nurse educators in teaching clinical skills related to dark skin tones, a survey on the educator workforce, as well as asking for feedback from members on congress resolutions to inform Congress voting. Forum webpages have also been updated. Three new blogs have been written this year including one from Ally Middleton on how to write a conference abstract, another by Sarah Done on the RCN Congress and another from Paul Irving on the RCN Education Conference.

Committee members were visible and engaged at both the Forum conference and Congress. At the conference, committee members ran workshops to support new presenters. They also hosted a well-attended meet the committee event at the conference venue, the evening before the conference commenced. At Congress in Liverpool, committee members were very busy meeting members at the all-forum World Café event, the Forum stand, and regional events. They also supported a number of debate motions, including seconding a Matter for Resolution by the Student Committee “That this meeting of RCN Congress lobbies the governments of the four nations to commit to a review of the financial support available to nursing students”.

Sarah Done and Rachael Major lead an education, learning and wellbeing event with the Digital Forum “Artificial Intelligence as a learning tool: benefits, challenges and ethic,” Rachael Major led a neurodiversity panel discussion chaired by Ally Middleton and Elissa Miller contributed to an education, learning and wellbeing event with the Advanced Practice Forum on restorative clinical supervision.

Forum committee members have maintained wider organisational visibility of the forum through their contributions to wider RCN developments during 2025. The forum has also been represented in the RCN Professional Framework workstreams. 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> This year a workstream has progressed work on career frameworks, and a publicly available digital platform is now available 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. Forum steering committee members Professor David Barrett and Paul Irving have also raised the profile of the Forum at the Council of Deans for Health and committee members have presented at RCN branch and regional events, as well as at external venues.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity in nursing education

The committee have continued 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” and a learning and wellbeing event at RCN Congress 2024 “How well are we representing people with dark skin tones in clinical skills teaching?”. The aim of this was to explore current practice, share existing resources and gather feedback in relation to the experiences of others. Feedback gathered from attendees identified inconsistencies in approaches and the need for best practice guidelines and resources. The forum developed a survey to identify what evidence-based resources are being used to teach clinical skills in this area this year. Given the significance of the issues around ethnic health inequalities, diagnosis and treatments, the committee are continuing to take this forward as a workstream in the coming year and will present the results of the survey at the RCN Education Conference in Exeter.

Rachael Major has been working with the RCN Diabetes Forum who are developing resources to support neurodivergent patients with diabetes which were published this year. This builds on the work of the Forum and the Peer Support Network who developed Neurodiversity Guidance for managers, staff and students, which is being updated this year and should be published in 2026.

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 “the value of inclusive educational practice that creates a skilled, professional health and social

care workforce from Nursing Support Worker to Advanced Practitioners” which took place at Strathclyde University from 31st March-1st April 2025. Keynote speakers addressed workforce education across health and social care sectors and included:

Professor Nicola Ranger General Secretary and CEO RCN, Mark Richards Associate CNO Scotland, Professor Claire McGuinness Professional Advisor NMC (Scottish Government), Professor Jane Ball Director of the RCN Institute, Dr Agimol Pradeep Kings College Hospital NHS Trust and a panel discussion on neurodiversity in nursing lead by Dr Rachael Major. Final delegate attendance was 382 which was a little down from the record numbers of the previous year but abstract submissions were up by 4% at 243. Topic (32%) followed by networking (28%) were the main reasons behind delegate attendance. 87% scored keynote speakers as good or excellent. 86% stated that the conference exceeded or met expectations.

Feedback from the conference was used to plan the 2026 conference “Celebrating innovation and diversity in nursing education”, which aims to shine a spotlight on nurse-led innovations that are actively addressing these challenges and driving meaningful, sustainable change across health and social care education and practice. Engagement with this conference is looking promising with a 39.5% increase in abstract numbers submitted (339).

Following an emergency resolution by the forum at Congress 2024, and a series of listening events and surveys to members, the Forum Chair, Dr Rachael Major contributed to an RCN report “The Nurse Educator Workforce in Higher Education in England: Capacity, Challenges, and Trends” <https://www.rcn.org.uk/Professional-Development/PDFs/the-nurse-educator-workforce-in-higher-education-in-england> Further work in this area is planned for 2026. Ally Middleton has contributed to a working party following a Matter for Resolution at Congress 2024 by the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Branch “That this meeting of RCN Congress asks RCN Council to lobby governments to place a statutory duty on all employers to provide contractual, fully funded continuing professional development (CPD) to deliver safe and effective care.”

Plans for 2026:

- Visibility of Forum through Congress activity, the RCN Education Conference and communication with members.
- EDI agenda in nursing education, by supporting the development and signposting to resources to support clinical skills teaching that account for differences in presentation across ethnic groups.
- EDI agenda in nurse education through review of the RCN Neurodiversity guidance, in conjunction with the Peer Support Network
- Developing and supporting best practice in nursing education through the Annual RCN Education Forum National Conference and Exhibition, planned for 15th-16th April 2026 at Exeter University
- Developing and supporting best practice in nursing education through championing the role of nurse educators
- Developing and supporting best practice in nursing education through investigating the use of assistive technology in nurse education

Name of Forum Chair: Dr Rachael Major (Education Forum Chair)

Date Prepared: 30th November 2025