

RCN Forum Annual Report 2024

Forum Name: RCN Fertility Nursing Forum

Introduction:

The Fertility Nursing Forum is dedicated to supporting the needs of nurses, midwives, registered nursing associates and health care support workers working in fertility care across the UK, in the NHS and the independent sector. We aim to provide nursing expertise to the RCN and help shape national policy, taking account of the requirements of all four countries across the UK.



Membership of the forum

Francesca Steyn (Chair), Anne Howard (Deputy Chair), Buki Fatuga, Niki Konsta, Natasha Witchell and Charlotte Galloway.

The Forum would also like to thank Jane Denton FRCN for her continued & valued support. The forum has 2 committee vacancies for posts in January 2025, 3 applications were received, 2 shortlisted and were interviewed and 2 successful candidates will take up post in January 2025. Francesca Steyn (Chair) will step down at the end of December 2024 after serving 2 terms on the committee.

Stephanie Pryor from the South of England and Sara Beveridge from Scotland are the new forum committee members and Anne Howard has been appointed as Chair of the forum from January 2025 and Buki Fatuga as Deputy Chair. This means that the committee has representation from London, Midlands, South England, the Northeast of England and Wales but no representation in Northern Ireland currently.

Forum members – 952 (November 2024)

Facebook group members – 629 Facebook members.

Supporting the Forum:

Carmel Bagness (Professional Lead for Midwifery & Woman Health) and Megan King (project coordinator)

Reflections in 2024:

Forum strategy day: In January our forum strategy day took place in person at RCN HQ, where the forum established a work plan which included:

- representation at stakeholder meetings,
- plans for the conference 2024
- agreement to work on the projects outlined below
- planning of our continued webinar series for fertility nurse education.

In addition, we also agreed to continue our work on blogs on fertility nursing topics and to review current publications that were scheduled for renewal this year. We also discussed RCN congress, attendance as a voting member and discussed the continuation of the work from our congress agenda item in 2023 'support for women's reproductive health in the workplace' Teleconferences have continued, and we met in person at the strategy day and plan to meet in person again at the RCN Fertility Nursing Conference scheduled for October 2024.

Forum projects:

- **Male factor fertility guidance**, published in 2023 was presented by Anne Howard at the annual Fertility 2025 conference in January in Edinburgh. The session gave an overview of the publication and the project that took place throughout the year to produce the guidance. <https://www.rcn.org.uk/Professional-Development/publications/rcn-male-factor-fertility-uk-pub-011-233>
- The forum has been working on **ultrasound guidelines for fertility nurses** throughout the year and this project has been led by Francesca Steyn. The project team included those with experience and knowledge in ultrasound across the sector and in collaboration with the Women's Health forum and the British Fertility Society. The project, having taken on board stakeholder feedback required further work and this has now been completed and published in October 2024 and is available for download at <https://www.rcn.org.uk/Professional-Development/publications/rcn-nurses-performing-ultrasound-scanning-in-fertility-care-uk-pub-011-259>
- The forum also commenced work on **Guidance for Advanced Practice in Fertility nursing care**, with a project group consisting of Fertility nurses practicing at an advanced level, forum committee members, representatives from the British Fertility Society (BFS), Senior Infertility Nurses Group (SING), International Federation of Fertility Societies (IFFS). The guidance will be published at the end of 2024.
- The forum commenced a project on '**surrogacy guidance for fertility nurses**' but unfortunately, due to time constraints and member availability – this project was placed on hold and a new FGGB bid will be submitted in 2025 to continue this work.
- In collaboration with Women's Health and Midwifery forums, a project is underway on **pregnancy loss guidance** to implement some of the recommendations that were highlighted in the government's pregnancy loss review released in 2023. This project will continue into 2025, and Niki Konsta is leading on this for the FNF.
- Buki Fatuga led on a project to create a **fact sheet and information on testing and screening** that is common for fertility nurses, to provide an update and overview of some of the testing requirements and investigations performed for fertility patients. This was created as a PDF and is on our fertility nursing forum webpage. <https://www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/Womens-health/Fertility-care-and-fertility-nursing>
- Our education webinars have continued this year and 4 have taken place that include fertility and mental health, complex case management and fertility care, recurrent miscarriage care and fertility and immunology.

- Francesca Steyn attended the **American Society of Reproductive Medicine annual congress** in Denver to present on the RCN fertility nursing competencies. This attendance was supported by the RCN and other publications from the forum were shared with the ASRM NPG (Nursing professionals' group) to support them with their own competency frameworks.

Fertility Nursing Conference 2024:

The forum held a successful annual conference in early October 2024 with over 80 delegates in attendance and a number of exhibitors. Topics included AI in the IVF lab, A panel on advanced nurse practice in fertility care, AI and virtual patient care and appropriate and correct sources of information and the HFEA. Feedback on the conference from delegates was very good and plans are in place to submit a proposal for a 2025 conference.



Representation 2024: The forum continues to represent the RCN in the following areas:

- Associated fertility societies meeting.
- Editorial board meeting for Human Fertility Journal – we decided to step down as stakeholders of this group in 2024 as we felt that the journal did not represent fertility nursing, and the committee felt that we did not have the capacity to support the journal at this time.
- HFEA (Human Fertilisation & Embryology Authority) Professional Stakeholders
- HFEA Consensus Working Group on Responsible Use of Treatment add-ons.
- British Fertility Society
- Senior Infertility Nurses Group
- NICE Guideline fertility treatment and assessment review – RCN are stakeholders. Francesca Steyn is part of the NICE guideline committee as the nurse member for Fertility problems: Assessment and treatment guideline.

Maintaining these relationships, ensures that the RCN are included in policy and process development and are contributing to key areas within the fertility sector.

Plans for 2025:

The forum utilises the RCN member communication centre (MCC) to reach out to the forum membership on fertility nursing matters and information. We also engage the membership via our Facebook page and ensure that our projects take on board the various regulatory and compliance requirements from the 4 nations within the UK.

The forum remains the largest representative group of fertility nurses and fertility nursing staff in the UK, and we are regularly invited to events and initiatives within the sector, to provide the fertility nursing voice.

The forum will enter 2025 under new leadership with Anne Howard (Chair) and Buki Fatuga (Vice Chair) and will plan the 2025 activity from the annual strategy day in January 2025.

Francesca Steyn, FNF Chair 12th November 2024