



History of Nursing Forum (HONF) RCN Forum Annual Report 2025

Introduction

The History of Nursing Forum's stated aim is to '*protect, preserve, share, inspire and cherish*' the rich heritage of the art and science of nursing. The forum supports and promotes the interests of members, in the history of nursing. We engage widely with the RCN membership and welcome any RCN member with a desire to explore the rich history of nursing. We also engage with other history of nursing entities across the UK and internationally.

Membership of the forum.

The forum currently has 2733 members, an increase of approximately 10% on last year. Of those, 671 are first choice members, an increase of approximately 13%. With the expansion of face to face and hybrid events there have been more opportunities to promote the forum and encourage engagement.

The forum was successful in recruiting three new committee members as well as a potential reserve. We have had a full committee throughout the year and have been able to draw upon the support of several former committee members for specific projects. We will be sad to lose Janet Hargreaves from the committee and thank her for her significant contributions over the years. We wish her well and look forward to hearing of her future successes and to seeing her in HONF activities. Watch out when we advertised vacancies in May 2026 to start in January 2027.

Dr Sarah Rogers was awarded a '*Commendation in the Forum Achievement Awards, 2025*' for her exceptional work in our Wikipedia project. Sarah continues to add significant content to the visibility of deceased nurses featured in Wikipedia. She has promoted the forum and the project by giving talks and is a constant source of support and advice to the wider group.

Reflections on 2025 (outputs and outcomes)

Throughout the year committee members continue to be active in supporting and promoting a general and specific interest in the history of nursing, as well as engaging in research and investigation, discussion and debate. We have well established links with

other nursing history groups, both nationally and internationally. Outlined below are some of the achievements of 2025 and an overview of the plans for 2026.

Nurses in Red, a Wikipedia Project

The forum has had another very successful year in expanding the number of nurses and women who are featured in Wikipedia articles. Within November alone there have been a record breaking 24 million public views of the group's content. The volunteers continue to be supported by Alice White (a Wikipedian volunteering her time and expertise) and Teresa our Professional Lead. There are monthly on-line support and advice group meetings and an active Teams group to access training videos and support documents, or to post messages between meetings. In early 2026 workshops will be run as part of the strategy to recruit more volunteer editors.

Oral History Project

The collection and archiving of oral histories remains a high priority for the forum, the RCN archives and the wider nursing communities. A successful bid to the Forums Coordinating Committee for funding was made in early 2025. Entitled *Unheard Voices; All nurses have a story to tell*. The project aimed to collect 20 interviews by December 2025, to date at least 16 have been recorded, deposited with the RCN Archive and professional transcriptions completed. The interviewees include former RCN Presidents, RCN Fellows, a range of educationalists and those with wide ranging clinical experience. We would very much like to increase the number of interviewers in 2026, as we want to ensure access to interviewers cross-UK.

Events and Exhibitions

The forum continues to work closely with the library and museum in the preparation and delivery of events and exhibitions in London and Scotland. We also have a working relationship with the RCN Nursing History Group in Northern Ireland.



This year a small history display area has been created at Ty Maeth (RCN Wales headquarters) The inaugural display being a celebration of 60 years since the Welsh headquarters opened. Ty Maeth was approached by the BBC for the loan of nursing related items to feature in the TV programme 'Bargain Hunt'.

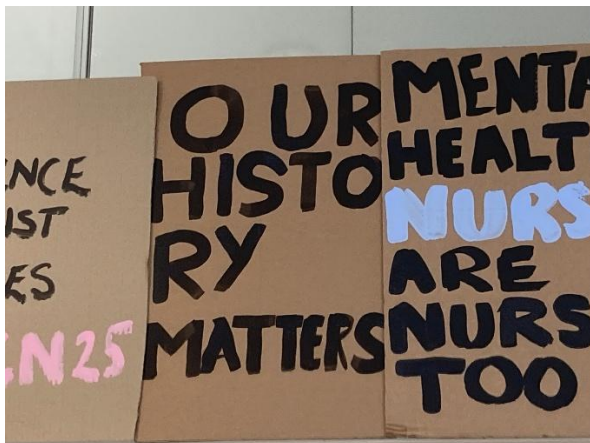
Items were identified and Dianne Yarwood was filmed on the set of Casualty filmed in Cardiff speaking about the items which related to the building of Ty Maeth.

Photo copyright Dianne Yarwood with Eric Knowles

The annual exhibitions created in collaboration with the RCN Museum team are now well established, with both professional and public engagement. The year began with [You Mean the World: Nursing in a Climate Crisis](#) which was presented in a variety of ways, including a family day aimed to teach young people about sustainability in healthcare. It moved to Edinburgh and will finally be available on-line.

In April in with collaboration with the Nursing in Justice and Forensic Health Care Forum and Exhibition entitled [Prison Nursing Unlocked](#) opened with a performance by Stephen Fry. The exhibition is currently available to view at RCN Headquarters.

The [Art of Nursing](#) exhibition in the main space was launched in June and includes some 200+ placards produced at Congress by members in the sign painting studio. This will remain in place for about two years.



Future activity is in the planning stage and includes a “Migration and Nursing” exhibition and event series and a later exhibition relating to ‘digital nursing’.

Tracing Nurses and British Library web archive.

Our valuable family history guide was updated by 3 members of the committee and we were able to add important information on Irish and Northern Irish sources. The revised version is accessed via the ‘Research Starters’ pages in RCN archive pages and links on our HONF page.

Following the cyber-attack on the British Library they are continuing to accept and collect our nominations for websites in our collaborative ‘Web Archive: Nursing Collection’. This year we have continued to identify nominations with a specific focus on midwifery related sources.. The British Library assure us the collection is secure, but sadly they continue to have issues in making it accessible since their cyber-attack.

Social media, Web pages, blogs and related communications.

The forum continues to have a small, but active presence in social media, Our Facebook group has a steady stream of history of nursing contributions from members around the country. We also have a BlueSky account where we share our news. We are currently reviewing our webpages to give clearer information on our activities and how to get involved. During the year, 14 blogs have been posted on our web pages we would encourage members to use our blogs to share information about their history of nursing activities!. We have now developed a strategy with the RCN communications team to ensure that appropriate items are considered for publication in our RCN Magazine.

Congress 2025

The forum's voting place was allocated to the forum chair. We would encourage active members of HONF to find out more about the role of a 'voting place' and to apply in the future. The forum was present at the 'meet the forums' event and 'get involved' area. Many people were happy to chat about the history of nursing and contacts for potential future collaboration were made. Planning is underway for 2026, with the preparation of a learning and development event.

The National HIV Story Trust Project.

The recruitment of RCN members to be interviewers for the project was completed at the end of 2024. At the beginning of 2025 two oral history training days were delivered on-line for the 10 people recruited. Regional and national directors were contacted to raise awareness of the project and help to identify members who had been engaged in caring for those affected by HIV/AIDS. Monthly support meetings were set up for the group and in excess of 25 interviews have been completed.

Photo copyright Dianne Yarwood



A very successful, face to face event to share these initial results was held on 27th November and plans are underway to continue the work in 2026. We will also be submitting an application for a learning event at Congress.

Plans for 2026

Throughout the report I have identified how various activity will continue to be taken forward next year. The allocation of roles and responsibilities was agreed at the annual strategy meeting and will be finally agreed at the meeting in December. Some highlights are listed below:

- Expand the HIV/AIDS project activity and bid for a 'development' slot at Congress.
- Continue to increase forum membership and to support and expand local engagement.
- Continue to expand the oral history collection

Conclusion

The activities and successes of the forum continue to be supported and encouraged by Teresa Doherty, Denise Alexis and the archive, library and museum staff. Without that support, such achievements would not have been possible. The committee offer their thanks and appreciation of that support.

I am handing over the role of Chair to Vari Drennan in January, whilst remaining on the committee.

Dianne Yarwood, Chair, History of Nursing Forum

4th December 2025