

RCN History of Nursing Forum: Committee Charter 2026

'Protect, Preserve, Share, Cherish, Inspire' 2026

Forum purpose (vision):

- To engage and inspire RCN members across the UK with the history of nursing
- To support and promote general interest, research, and education in the history of nursing, midwifery, and health visiting
- To promote and develop the study of the history of nursing through discussion and debate
- To organise RCN History of Nursing events to promote the work of the forum and to disseminate research, study, and information
- To develop links with other history of nursing groups within the UK and internationally
- To protect, preserve, share, and cherish nursing's heritage
- To ensure the diversity of nursing is embedded in our activities
- To promote the RCN historic collections through collaboration with the RCN Archive, Library and Museum teams.

Forum Membership

RCN members can join more than one forum as listed here <https://www.rcn.org.uk/get-involved/forums>

Join via [Login to MyRCN](#) or call RCN Direct on 0345 772 6100 - option 1.

There are currently over 2,733 members of the RCN History of Nursing Forum, across the UK and from all areas of RCN membership including students, retired, full members, specialist nurses, activists, nurse associates and health care practitioners.

About Us

The History of Nursing Forum is open to RCN members who want to learn more about their history and to promote awareness within the profession. We believe the history of nursing is wider than the study of nurse training and practice; it encompasses the experiences of individuals and groups, movements and organisations, religion and war, culture and gender, politics, and social ideas. It can include family history and local history where these touch on nursing.

The Forum's regular activities include the co-creation of exhibitions and events with other RCN Forums and the Archive, Library and Museum teams; creating oral history interviews; writing articles for Wikipedia, the [RCN Magazine](#), blogs and other resources; supporting history of nursing forum groups in the regions; providing the family and local history guide [Tracing Nurses](#) and other activities. Members interested in becoming involved should contact the Forum via HONF@rcn.org.uk

The RCN has led many developments in the history of nursing within the UK and at an international level. Our historic collections reflect this, with RCN Archive, Library and Museum holding the largest nursing collection in Europe. Our oldest material dates from the 1600s though most of our printed and archival collections date from the 1870s with the rise of nursing schools. Focusing on English language materials the collections include the most comprehensive collection of nursing books, journals, PhD theses, pamphlets, rare books, grey literature, e-books, and e-journals as well as organisational and personal archives, audio-visual materials oral histories and objects. The collections hold material from across the UK and include

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items belonging to iconic nursing leaders such as Florence Nightingale, RCN co-founder Sarah Swift and Trevor Clay.

The History of Nursing Forum reports to the Forums Co-ordinating Committee (FCC); this positions the work of the forum within the decision making of the RCN and provides an opportunity to highlight the contribution that the history of nursing can make to contemporary nursing research, education, and practice. It promotes collaborative working across the forums.

The RCN Head of Archive & Records Management acts as Adviser to the forum which helps bring our members and our historic collections together, providing opportunities for collaborative projects in the network of history societies that flourish across the UK.

The forum works in partnership with external bodies and groups that lead on nursing history including:

- The [UK Association of History of Nursing](#) (UKAHN) a network for nursing historians, a number of whom are not eligible for RCN membership
- The [European Association of History of Nursing](#) (EAHN), the [American Association for the History of Nursing](#) (AAHN), and other international networks for nursing historians who are not eligible for RCN membership
- The [Florence Nightingale Museum](#) which leads on a number of nursing history projects.

How we support the RCN remit

- Provide history of nursing expertise and input to the RCN
- Ensure dissemination of relevant information to the nursing history community
- Support RCN activities
- Ensure public engagement with the History of Nursing Forum.

Forum deliverables

- Hold one Committee planning day per year.
- Hold regular Committee MS Teams meetings.
- HONF Webpages – actively contribute ten blogs per year.
- Provide story ideas [RCN Magazine](#) articles to RCN Communications team each year
- Report to RCN Forums Co-ordinating Committee (FCC) via the forum Chair
- In collaboration with other forums and RCN LAS co-research and deliver exhibitions in London, Edinburgh and online.

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- Organise events including members' and public events, both in conjunction with RCN Museum team and independently through local member groups. These events are online, physical or hybrid as appropriate.
- Engage with Congress at minimum, ensuring a voting representative attends and is visible. Where appropriate: proposing a resolution / helping at the Meet the Forums event and on the Forum stand / co-submitting a fringe event at Congress with another Forum, feedback Congress outcomes to members
- Deliver projects: as agreed by the committee below.

Forum success metrics:

- To increase membership numbers by 3% each year and numbers attending events/activities
- To identify historical interest/activities across the UK and build local forum activity
- To develop collaborative relationships with Forums interested in specialist history of nursing topics and deliver joint projects
- Deliver activities to agreed deadlines
- To improve member experience of forum activities by building on feedback from evaluations
- To create a pool of volunteers for forum activities outside of the main committee.

Key Activities

- Contribute to exhibition and events planning and prepare bids for 2026-2027 exhibitions
- Lead on the Annual History of Nursing Lecture with the Museum team
- Support the exhibition, *History of Migration* in HQ from 5th March 2026 (opening in Scotland tbc 2026/7)
- Support *Prison Nursing Unlocked* in Edinburgh from February 2026 – September 2026 (exact dates tbc)
- Support the development of a proposed subsequent exhibition on 'Pain' during 2026 (potentially opening autumn 2026)
- Support the [event](#) series produced in collaboration with the Library and Museum team
- Identify Congress item (resolution/item for discussion) Bid for Fringe event at Congress if appropriate [2026 a bid for and event for the HIVStory project will be submitted]
- Annual review of [Tracing Nurses](#) a guide for family history and local historians (October 2026)
- Continue HONF Oral Histories programme, building a UK online network (Teams) of interviewers, reopening interviews for general life stories of nurses alongside more focussed interviews of RCN Fellows and diversity. Submit bid to FCC for funding to support this.
 - Deliver the two-year [HIVStory Project](#) with HONF volunteer interviewers collecting stories of nursing patients with HIV-AIDs and disseminating stories with our partners the [National HIV](#)

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Story Trust (NHST)

- Support the Teams network for HONF Wikipedians 'Nurses in Red', encouraging members to learn how to research, write and edit history of nursing entries on Wikipedia; scope delivering a new cohort for spring 2026 with training session.
- Nominate websites to the [UK Web Archive](#) Nursing Collection.
 - Note: although the collection is publicly unavailable since the [The British Library](#) cyber-attack the collection itself is secure. The British Library web archivist continues to accept nominations. HONF maintain a list of our previous nominations which we use to identify additional nominations. HONF also maintain a [List of nursing organisations in the United Kingdom](#) on Wikipedia which reflects some of the nominations we have made. We will review and update our nominations list by December 2026.

Forum member roles and responsibilities

Name	Role	Specific responsibilities
Vari Drennan	Member +	Chair meetings Lead on annual planning Lead on any Congress bids activity Lead on reports to FCC and attend Forum Chairs Meeting Lead on project bids for FCC Member Contact Centre (MCC) Emails to Members Lead on Exhibitions and Events (inc attend E&E Strategic Group) Lead for Nurses in Red Wikipedia Lead for BlueSky Lead for UKAHN
Dianne Yarwood	Member +	Lead on Oral History Lead for RCN Magazines
Nicola Ring	Member +	Vice Chair Lead for Blogs (with Janet Hargreaves as support) 4Nations & Regions: Lead on initiating/maintaining contact with regional groups (asking for meeting information, blogs)
Liz Howard Thornton	Member +	Lead for HONF webpages
Sean Graffin	Member +	Lead for <i>Tracing Nurses</i> review Lead for British Library Web Archive Nursing Collection Lead for Facebook
Victoria Sweetmore	Member +	Lead for HIVStory Project tbc

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Teresa Doherty	Staff	Head of Archive & Records Management RCN Professional Lead for History of Nursing
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Country/Regional Leads (Attendees when appropriate at Committee Meetings, but not committee members)

Alison O Donnell	Forum member and Volunteer	HoNF RCN Scotland lead RCN Archives Volunteer Link with Queens Nursing Institute Scotland (QNIS) Oral History project volunteer RCN Foundation Monica Baly Award selection panel member
Glynis Meredith-Windle		Chair HoNF RCN London, East and South East Regions' HoN Group contact.
Margaret Graham	Forum member and Volunteer	RCN Northern Ireland History of Nursing Network Lead WW2 Nurses from the island of Ireland project contact
Claire Chatterton	Forum member and Volunteer	Northwest History of Nursing Lead

Forum operating guidelines:

Teams Meetings	To hold regularly (review at the Planning Meeting): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.5 hours meeting • members to rotate taking action notes which will be shared via the Teams folder within the week
Calendar	To refer to the calendar of events provided by the RCN and ensure key dates are updated in personal diaries Create a HONF list of dates for the year
Action plans	Each project lead to develop action plan for each project, keep updated and shared
Horizon scanning	All Committee members to bring to the Forum topics of potential future relevance for discussion and prioritisation as required
New committee members	Existing members to talk through charter with all new members, re-allocate roles and responsibilities as appropriate; find opportunity for face-to-face time including a social element for accelerated integration to the forum
Ways of working	To follow the RCN Respect Charter

Social Media

Facebook	Members can join the closed Facebook group and post messages https://www.facebook.com/groups/RCNHistoryofNursingForum
BlueSky	Please use and search for #HistNursing and #HistMed @RCNHistory

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Forum review and learning process:

- Fuller review at each annual strategy meeting, rotation of roles & responsibilities, updating of charter etc
- Review and use evaluations from RCN events produced by the RCN Events team or from RCN Museum

Monica Baly Grant

The RCN Foundation is responsible for the Monica Baly Grant. Details can be found on their website [RCN Foundation education grants](#). The History of Nursing Forum provides advisors to sit on the panel which reviews bursary applications and makes a recommendation to the Foundation as to each years' winner.

This is an annual award that gives financial assistance to undertake activities related to nursing history. These include undertaking courses, projects, research, and attending either a nursing history conference or study day to present a paper.

Please note the Monica Baly Grant is open to UK-registered nurses or UK-based nursing students. The closing date for applications is usually in summer each year; check their website for details. It provides a grant to fund a research project up to the value of £1,000.

Applications are encouraged to focus on the history of any aspect of nursing and are particularly welcomed in the following areas:

- Gaps in historical research, for example, BAME nurses/midwives, nurses/midwives with disabilities
- Areas of practice where the history is not as well documented, for example: prison nursing, school nursing, mental health and learning disability nursing.

The Monica Baly Grant will be opening again in 2026, dates to be confirmed.

About Monica Baly

The Monica Baly Fund was established through a gift from Dr Monica Baly's Will. Monica Baly entered nursing in the 1930s but always had a passion for history. On retirement, she combined these two interests to study the history of nursing. At the age of 70, she completed a PhD in Nursing and Social Change. Dr Baly's ongoing passion was reflected in her role as the first Chair of the RCN History of Nursing Society (our previous name).

Dr Baly established the Monica Baly Fund specifically to remove the stumbling block of lack of funds for registered nurses who might otherwise not be able to undertake history of nursing activities.