

# Continuing Professional Development in England

MEMBER BRIEFING



## What's the issue?

A nurse's education doesn't finish on graduation. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) builds a registered nurses' skills and competence to have a direct impact on the care they give, in addition to their aspirations, their career progression, and their earning potential.

With the current shortage of nurses in health and social care, access to CPD is vital. Staff shortages, stretched budgets and increasing patient and client demand, mean that professional development too often falls off the workplace agenda.

It is essential that the nursing profession is supported and enabled through CPD to stay up to date with the latest developments, continuing to update their skills and competences to meet changing future population health needs effectively and safely.

Nurses are reporting difficulty accessing and completing CPD. Nursing staff are reporting that even if sufficient funding were available for CPD, given the current pressures on the workforce, they are unlikely to be able to attend.

We also know that nurses working in the independent sector and care homes are much more likely than most other staff to have to complete the training in their own personal time, rather than during paid working hours.

## Why is this important?

Employers and governments have a fundamental role in ensuring access and availability of opportunities. Governments across the UK will generally allocate funding as part of their health service budgets.

Ongoing training and development for a registered nurse is not an optional extra, but a basic professional requirement, for which commitments for funding and protected employment time are required of UK governments and the health and care system.

CPD is additional to any mandatory or statutory training that an organisation may provide.

Because of its importance, CPD is also required for a nurse to meet

their Nursing and Midwifery Council revalidation requirements.

Employer and government funding supports the delivery of short courses, modules and programmes that meet the skill needs of the health and care workforce at national, regional and local levels. CPD training itself is then commissioned from different training providers.

Responsibility for this is delegated to health system bodies responsible for training of the health workforce.

The UK Government contribution to CPD in England is funded through Health Education England (HEE). **This budget for registered nurses has been reduced significantly in recent years, falling from £205m per year in 2015/16 to £83.5m in 2018/19.**

The UK Government recently announced a £1,000 budget for each registered nurse working in the NHS to contribute towards nurses' revalidation requirements over the course of three years. However, it is not clear how funding will be allocated to staff working in non NHS provided, publicly funded health and care services. This is a major disparity.

CPD funding for general practice nurses is included in wider general practice funding, leading to an inconsistent offer to general practice nurses and a fragmented approach to knowledge and skills development for them.

In the medical profession, many will have access to an annual study budget and study leave allowance enabling them to fund and attend external courses. Nurses are not afforded an equivalent framework, funding, access or protected training time, demonstrating a lack of recognition and support for the profession and for patient safety.

## What is the RCN calling for?

The recent announcement of an increase in HEE's CPD budget following years of cuts is a welcome start. However, it does not go nearly far enough and does not apply to all publicly funded services where nurses are working.

A substantial investment in nurses' CPD is required. The current amount of funding is not based on the changing needs of the health and care service. This budget is still far short of what is required to ensure CPD funding that meets current and future service and population need.

## What must the new Government do?

It is crucial that any new funding is equitable and effective. Therefore CPD funding in England must be based on the following:

- the next UK Government must develop a plan and funding model for nursing CPD that starts with an understanding about current and future workforce and service delivery needs in England
- all CPD funding from the UK Government must be for all nursing staff in England regardless of role and not just for staff in NHS provided services
- CPD must be easily accessible and there must be protected time for nurses to learn.

## As the RCN we are:

- proactively taking every opportunity we can to promote our members' interests to civil servants, ministers, MPs, and Peers
- working closely with colleagues in other Royal Colleges to produce a joint position statement on access to CPD.

## What can RCN members do?

- Become an e-campaigner so that you can participate in our campaigns and influencing work <https://www.rcn.org.uk/join-the-rcn/become-an-e-campaigner>
- Have you had issues accessing CPD? We are keen to hear about it. Email us at: [papa.ukintl.dept@rcn.org.uk](mailto:papa.ukintl.dept@rcn.org.uk)

## Want to provide feedback on this position?

Email us at: [papa.ukintl.dept@rcn.org.uk](mailto:papa.ukintl.dept@rcn.org.uk)

The RCN represents nurses and nursing, promotes  
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RCN Online  
[www.rcn.org.uk](http://www.rcn.org.uk)  
0345 772 6100

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