

RCN Forums: Review of Activities 2020

CORPORATE







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Introduction

2020 has been a challenging year for forum committees and the wider forum membership. At the beginning of the year, forums began planning and developed some clear objectives and expectations around the delivery of their activity, and then the COVID-19 pandemic struck. Many of the forums' activity plans were either postponed, cancelled, or had to be scaled back in terms of timeframe, as workplace pressures increased for members. However, despite all the challenges presented, the forums have achieved a considerable amount.

This report provides an overview of the range of work and levels of involvement that forum members have achieved during 2020. The content represents just some examples of the work developed and achieved by the forums and the extent of their engagement in the professional activity of the College.

Forum membership

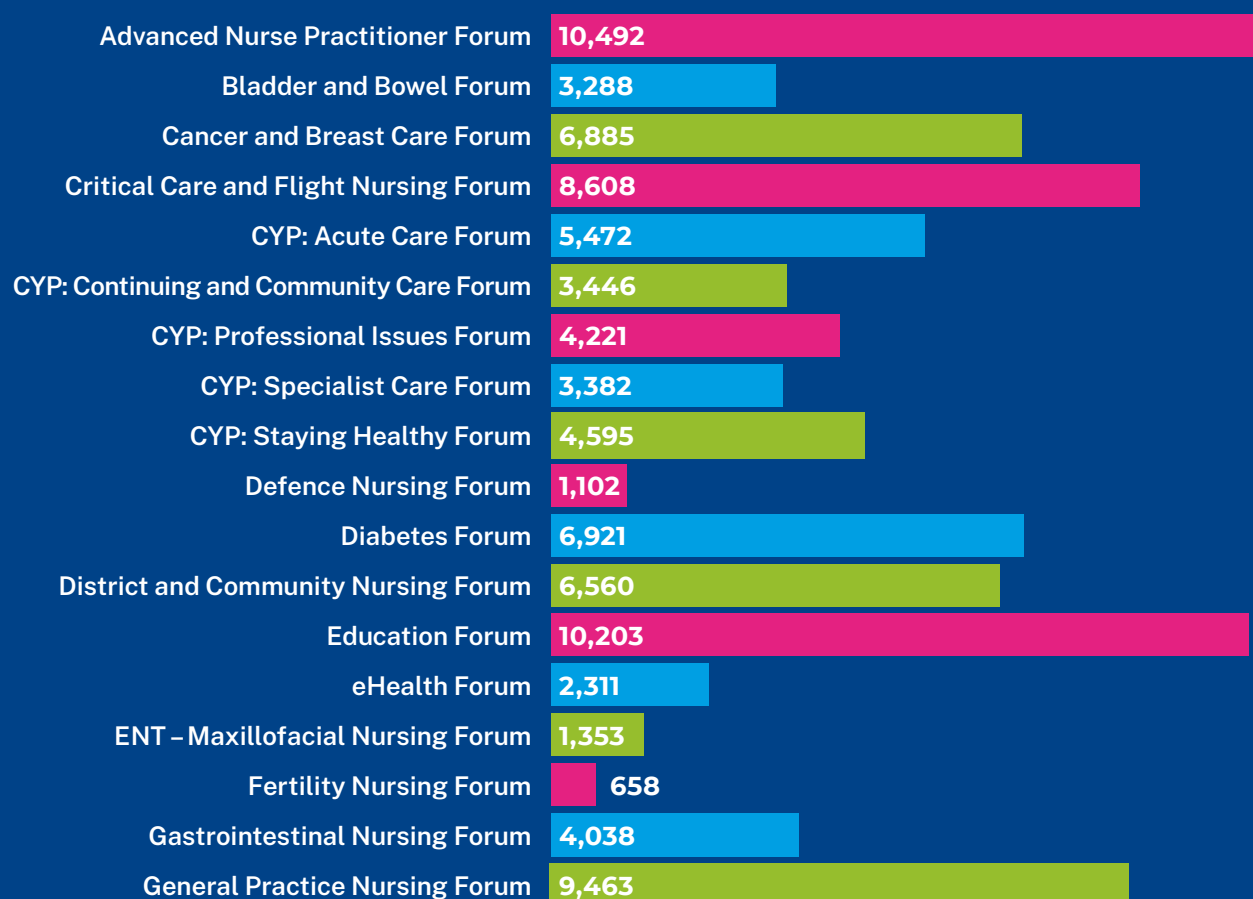
The RCN has 35 professional forums that consists of members from across a diverse range of nursing disciplines, speciality and service areas, with a total forum membership of approximately 196,600.

Members can register to join multiple forums but voting rights are limited to their first-choice forum. Many members belong to more than one forum, depending on their field(s) of practise.

During 2020, all the forums increased their membership – the level of increase ranged from 62 up to 943 new members during the year. Some of the notable increases are:

- **Mental Health** – 13,434 (an increase of 846)
- **Pain and Palliative** – 12,382 (an increase of 486)
- **Nurses in Management and Leadership** – 12,287 (an increase of 943)
- **Older Peoples** – 12,240 (an increase of 541)
- **Advanced Nurse Practitioner** – 10,492 (an increase of 684)

Forum membership figures as at the 31 December 2020



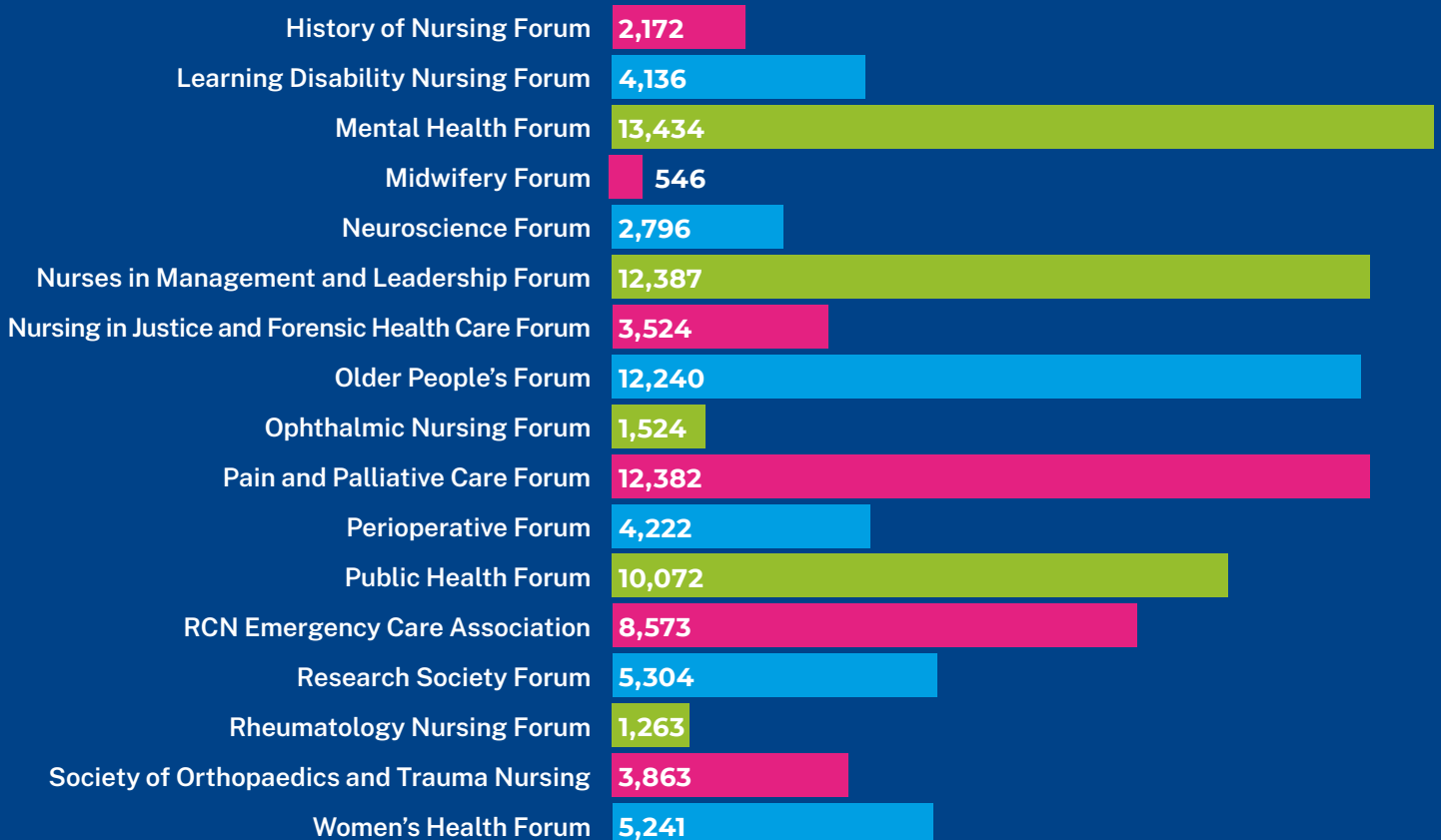
- **Education** – 10,203 (an increase of 735)
- **General Practice Nurse** – 9,463 (an increase of 672).

In 2020, we have seen an increase in interest by members wanting to be involved in becoming forum committee members; there were 147 applications for 66 vacancies.

This year, 58 committee members have been recruited, 12 of which are re-appointed members. At the end of 2020, there were three forums that collectively had eight vacancies:

- **Fertility** (three)
- **Cancer and Breast Care** (one)
- **Ear Nose and Throat** (four).

All forums, apart from Ear Nose and Throat are quorate. There were three newly elected forum chairs for Mental Health, Fertility Nursing and Children and Young People Acute Care. The chairs for Nursing in Justice and Forensic Health and General Practice Nursing forums were re-elected. There are currently no vacancies for forum chairs.



How the forums are governed

The Forums Governance Group (FGG)

The FGG is the regulatory mechanism for UK Forum activity. The FGG consists of seven members (five forum chairs, a member of the Support Workers Committee and the Chair of Professional Nursing Committee) and reports to RCN Council through the Professional Nursing Committee (PNC).

The main role and responsibilities of the FGG are:

- to ensure that the forums work within the agreed reporting and decision-making framework and that their work reflects the strategic objectives and priorities of the RCN
- to ensure that forum members are represented and/or participate in any priority work streams commissioned by the PNC and are invited to join the appropriate task and finish groups that the PNC set up
- to ensure that good governance, financial processes and practices are adhered to by the UK forums
- to represent the views of forum members in the decision-making process
- to report to the PNC on the activity of forums and make recommendations on any area within its remit where action or improvement is needed
- to conduct regular reviews of the effectiveness of forums governance and the working arrangements and to make recommendations to PNC where arrangements need strengthening or changing
- to agree changes to forums where necessary and oversee the process for establishing or disestablishing forums
- to oversee the selection processes for forum steering committees and chairs, to ensure that role descriptors for the chair, steering committee members and support staff are maintained and to ensure that induction, training and development arrangements for all steering committee members and staff supporting forums are in place
- to monitor and evaluate the performance of individual forums to ensure they comply with governance and financial stewardship guidance and deliver their annual work plans
- to allocate RCN funds to forum projects and ensure that these projects are managed and delivered in accordance with the agreed brief and timescale
- to advise on the organisation of agendas and programmes for meetings of the Forum Chairs' Committee and chairs' development days and to participate in the smooth running of these meetings.

In 2020, the FGG increased the number of annual meetings from three to four.



Forum steering group committee meetings

Of the 35 forums, 33 have been able to conduct their annual strategy day; most occurred face-to-face in the physical environment before the national lockdown in March. The forum steering committee annual strategy day provides forums with the opportunity to take stock of progress against past objectives and discuss and agree their plan of activity for the year ahead.

Due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, the committees had to change the way in which all activities were undertaken to a virtual way of working.

Moving to a virtual platform enabled forum members to meet more frequently without the added burden of cost and time. It has also enabled a greater reach and engagement with forum members who would otherwise have been unable to attend in the physical environment.

Forum chairs committee meetings

The forum chairs were able to meet face-to-face in February and then virtually in September for their biannual strategy day.

Monthly forum chairs 'catch up' meetings were introduced, led by the Chair of Chairs, during the early stage of the pandemic as a means of support and to provide Covid-19 specific information. The Chairs have continued these 'catch ups' throughout the year as they have helped to increase the ability to share information, build relationships and facilitate more collaborative working.

Forum communications

Our forums have continued to use a range of methods to communicate and engage with members. The forum webpages have continued to provide an array of clinical content and wider sources of information that may be of interest and relevant to members.

- The Nurses in Management and Leadership Forum has reviewed and updated its webpage to include key resources and reports that are more contemporary and provide clearer signposting to the forum activities.
- The Woman's Health Forum has made changes which include a wider range of topics relating to women's health, such as gynaecological concerns, fibroids and period poverty.
- The area of focus for the Public Health Forum has been on ensuring the clinical pages are updated to support colleagues with COVID-19 related information, such as vaccination clinics.

The use of social media has also been a dominant mode of communicating and engaging with the wider forum membership, mainly using Twitter and Facebook. Many forums have reported a notable increase in their social media profile and activity. As a result, there has been an increase in the number of Facebook members and Twitter followers. For example:

- the District and Community Nursing Forum has 6,550 Facebook members (an increase of over 400 members when compared to the same period in 2019) and over 3,200 Twitter followers (an increase of 800 followers during the year)
- the General Practice Nurse Forum has over 4,000 Twitter followers (compared to 2,775 in 2019). While the followers are primarily from the general practice nurse population, this year they have seen more interaction with medical colleagues working in primary care. This platform has provided the forum with the opportunity to contribute to and co-host Twitter chats on the experiences of working in the pandemic
- the Pain and Palliative Forum now has 1,900 Facebook members and 778 Twitter followers
- the Women's Health Forum now has 1,136 Facebook members and over 1,000 Twitter followers.

Many of the forums have written blogs, some for the first time, while others have run webinars to communicate messages about professional/clinical matters to encourage debate.

- The Gastrointestinal Nursing Forum started writing regular blogs on matters relating to this area of specialism, which are available on the forum webpage. The forum has noted an increase in interest and support from its members and as a result plan to continue to communicate in this way throughout 2021.
- The Society of Orthopaedic and Trauma Nursing Forum produced its first webinar on developing practise in trauma and orthopaedic nursing.
- The Children and Young People Forum for Specialist Care Forum wrote a blog which specifically highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people.
- The Nurses in Management and Leadership Forum delivered a number of blogs, webinars and podcasts throughout the year, including 'Why WRES, Why Now' and contributed to the RCN 'Nursing While Black' podcast series.

Dr Cecilia Akrisie Anim CBE - A Stranger in Paradise



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Nursing Whilst Black - Dr Cecilia Akrisie Anim CBE - A Stranger in Paradise



Leonie Brown - Rising Above Confines With Self Belief



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Nursing Whilst Black - Olga Leach-Walters - Use Your Voice: Speak Up and Be Heard



Forum achievements

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, forum members have continued to develop and progress the professional work of their forum throughout the year. Some of the work produced by the forums has been supported by FGG funding.

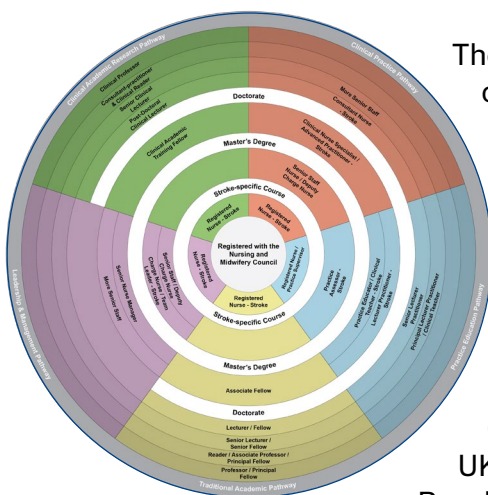
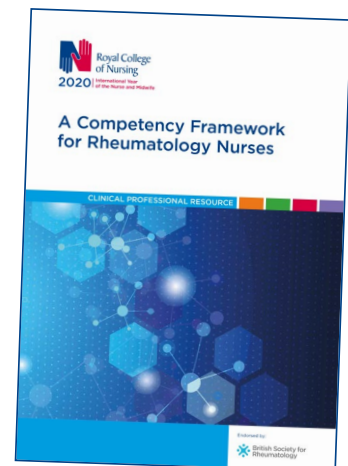
While the pandemic has curtailed some forum activities, it has meant that forum members have had to think differently about how they work. They have had to consider new ways of working and embrace technology to enable not only the ‘business as usual’ work to continue but also become more creative in the development and delivery of their projects through a virtual space.

The following information provides a small selection of some of the work undertaken and achieved in 2020.

Publications and resources

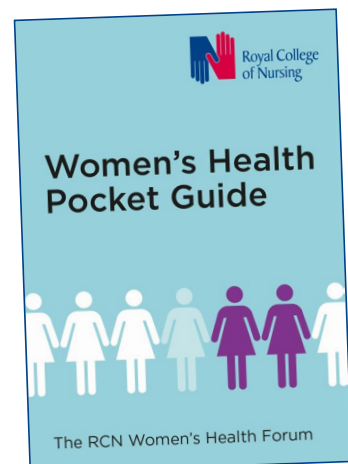
While many forums have been active in updating existing publications, we have also seen a number of new resources published during the year.

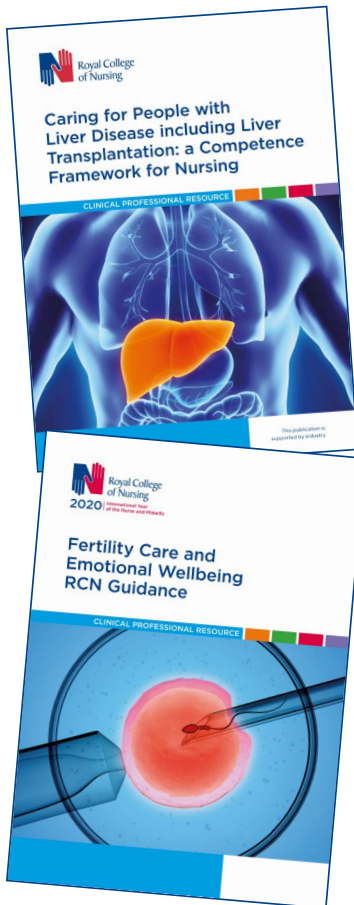
The *Competency Framework for Rheumatology Nurses* was launched in March. Subsequent FGG funding enabled the forum to develop templates to further support nurses with the use of the framework.



The Neuroscience Forum completed and launched the *UK Career Framework for Stroke Nurses* online resource on World Stroke Day in October, which was supported by a webinar. This was a highly collaborative piece of work that began in 2019 involving representatives from around the UK, Health Education England, the Queen Nurses Institute, the UK Stroke Forum and other Royal Colleges.

The Women’s Health Forum published the combined *Women’s Health Pocket Guides 1-3* online in October. An article on the website was subsequently published as part of the communication activities used to promote this resource.





The Gastrointestinal Forum published *Caring for People with Liver Disease including Liver Transplantation: a Competence Framework for Nursing*.

The Children and Young People Staying Healthy Forum undertook an extensive revision of the *Use of Digital Technology: Guidance for nurses working with Children and Young People* which is due for publication in 2021.

In March, the Fertility Forum published the *Fertility Care and Emotional Wellbeing* guidance aimed at improving the emotional support and mental wellbeing of patients undertaking fertility treatment.

The Bladder and Bowel Forum undertook a major review and update of the continence care resource which is now being hosted on the RCN learning management system (LMS) to enable ease of access and navigation for members whilst out in practice.

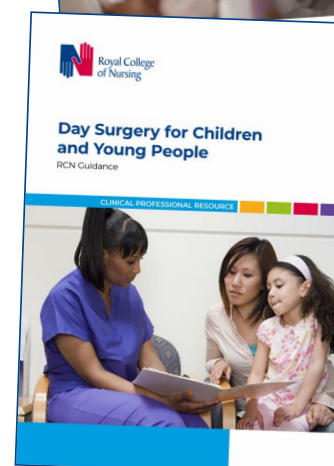
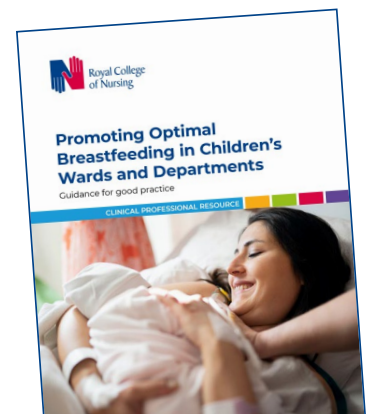
The Children and Young People Specialist Care Forum completed the review of the *Career, Education and Competence Framework for Neonatal Nursing in the UK* (due for publication in 2021) and *Promoting Optimal*

Breastfeeding in Children's Wards and Departments: Guidance for Good Practice which was published in January 2021.

The Cancer and Breast Care Nursing Forum completed *Breast Care Standards* and updated the *Career and Education Framework for Cancer Nursing*. Both these publications are due to be published in 2021.

The Children and Young People Acute Care Forum successfully produced two publications. *Maximising Nursing Skills in Children and Young People in Emergency Care Settings* and *Day Surgery for Children and Young People*. The publication of both these resources was supported through FGG funding.

We have also seen joint working between forums in the development of content for publications that cross specialist fields. A good example of this is the Bladder and Bowel, Midwifery and the Women's Health forums who have worked jointly to develop clinical guidance to support best practice on *Bowel and Bladder Care in Childbirth*, which was published in April 2021.

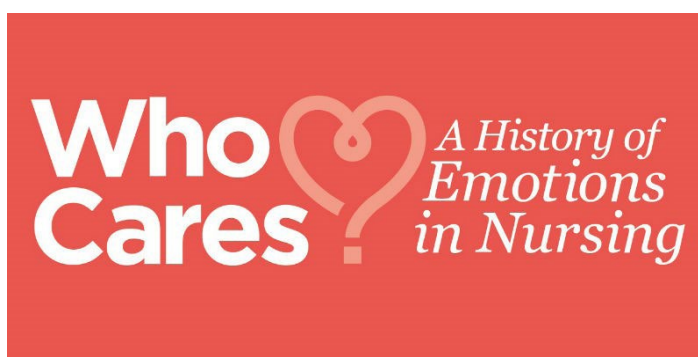


Exhibitions and events

There have been limited face-to-face exhibitions and events during the year because of the pandemic. Instead, many of the events that took place were through a virtual platform.

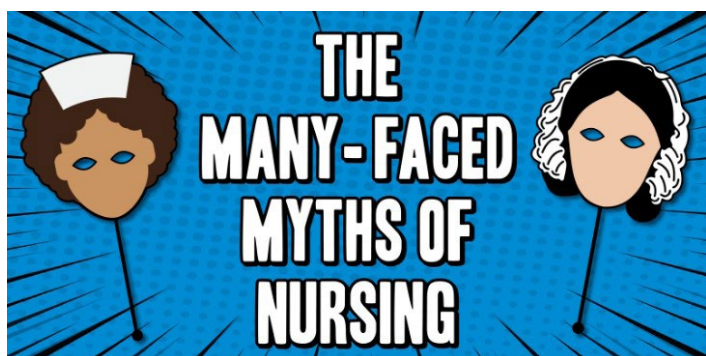
Prior to the national lockdown in March, the Learning Disability Nursing Forum held several regional events that were linked to the RCN 100 years of learning disability nursing. These events helped to increase awareness of the importance of learning disability nursing, particularly in light of our *Staffing for Safe and Effective Care* campaign.

In January, the *History of Emotions in Nursing* exhibition was launched at RCN headquarters in Cavendish Square. Running alongside and central to the exhibition was a specially commissioned stained-glass artwork, created by Rachel Milligan in collaboration with the History of Nursing Forum, RCN members and staff. The exhibition attracted more than 100 attendees and has since been made available to view online.



The History of Nursing Forum has been particularly active in running online events and exhibitions throughout the year. However, as the national restrictions were extended, many of the other forums soon stepped up the pace with the development of online events.

As part of the World Health Organization's International Year of the Nurse and Midwife, a number of events and exhibitions were scheduled to mark the bicentenary of Florence Nightingale's birthday. While many international and national events had to be cancelled, the History of Nursing Forum in collaboration with the Library and Archive Service successfully hosted several online events to celebrate nurses and nursing. These included *Emblems of Resilience*, *Nursing Before Nightingale* and *Nursing whilst Black*. Each of these events had in excess of 150 attendees.



In addition, an online exhibition on *The Many-Faced Myths of Nursing* was co-created. This looks at how nursing has been perceived in the 200 years since Florence Nightingale's birth. At the time of compiling this review, the exhibition had received 1,788 page views.

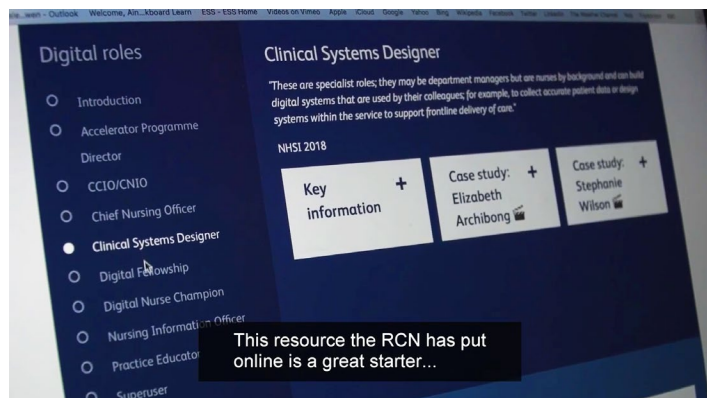
In February, the Pain and Palliative Care Forum, in collaboration with the Older Peoples' Forum, held a workshop on *Pain in Older People*. The event attracted over 100 attendees from a wide range of areas of nursing practise. The success of the event was demonstrated through the excellent evaluation and informal feedback.

The Ophthalmic Forum replaced its planned annual conference with a free webinar in December for members on COVID-19 experiences of an ophthalmic multidisciplinary team.

In October, the Older Peoples' Forum successfully delivered a symposium *Journey to Recovery Symposium for Care Home Staff*, in response to the pandemic and the impact it has had on care home communities.

In partnership with the Stephen Hawking Foundation, the Neuroscience Forum hosted and delivered the 4th annual Hawking Motor Neurone's Disease (MND) lecture to over 1,000 participants in November. This far exceeds the numbers that could have been accommodated at RCN headquarters. The lecture focused on respiratory care for people living with MND, with practical examples and emerging research in the field.

The eHealth Forum successfully completed and launched two online resources in July on digital roles and technological innovations in nursing and technology enabled services and the role of data in health and social care. This was in response to the work undertaken by the RCN in 2018 on the digital future of nursing. The resources have proved very popular; since its launch the roles and innovation resource has been accessed over 3,300 times. In 2021, the forum plans to build the resource further by adding more digital roles and innovations content to ensure the range and breadth of nursing and midwifery is reflected.



The Rheumatology Forum altered its annual workshop to produce a webinar with a question and answer session. This enabled the committee to engage with more than 130 members in a way that would not otherwise have been possible in the physical space.

The Research Society designed and led a national study on the impact of COVID-19 on the nursing and midwifery workforce. The survey focused on three time points; prior to COVID-19 peak, during the COVID-19 peak and in the period following the peak. The summary findings of the first two time points have informed national health and social care policy and have received national media coverage across mainstream and specialist media outlets.

In November, the Research Society hosted the online Winifred Raphael memorial lecture which attracted 150 attendees. The lecture was on the increased risk of COVID-19 on the Black, Asian and minority ethnic population and was highly commended by attendees.

Following the College's Parity of Esteem project that was completed at the end of 2019, the Mental Health Forum led on a co-produced Lived Experience project with support from FGG funding. The project aimed to promote inclusion and collaboration with people with mental health issues to ensure programmes are designed, and projects and campaigns are developed and delivered in a way that meets their needs.

As part of the centenary of registration year of events, a member from the Education Forum facilitated a panel debate on *The Value of Care: Women's Work and Emotional Labour* in January. The panel, which included historians, nurses and social scientists, explored why nursing remains undervalued and how this might be changed for future generations of health workers.

In collaboration with RCNi, members from the General Practice Nurses' Forum hosted four webinars in England and Scotland. The focus was on nursing careers in general practice, with a Q&A chat following the event. There were over 1,200 views for the events.

For the first time, an all forums collaborative approach to develop a supervision project was initiated. This is in recognition of the need for supportive interventions in the workplace for the wellbeing and retention of all members. While the project was initiated by the Research Society, the Mental Health Forum progressed the initial submission of the project for funding. The Research Society, Education, Nurses in Management and Leadership and eHealth forum leads have played a key role with the initial phase of the project development agreed by FGG. The initial phase included the literature review required in order to understand the evidence base. The design and function of a proposed technological solution will be dependent on the findings and recommendations of the literature review. This next phase will be taken forward for agreement and development in 2021.

#RCN2020 debates and events

It was not possible to hold Congress in 2020 due to the pandemic. Many of the topics for debate and fringe events were taken forward to form the online #RCN2020 series of events.



From September to November, many forum members were actively involved in the online events and these included:

- **Investing in yourself as a leader** – this was a webinar collaboration between the Nurses in Management and Leadership Forum and Defence Nursing Forum. It highlighted leadership as integral to the basis of good patient care and an important attribute at all levels of practice. The event attracted 211 attendees.

- **The Older People's Forum put on two events relating to care homes** – *The Unique Role of the Registered Nurse in Care Homes* and the concept of *Student Nurse Internship in Care Homes*. The events generated much debate and interest. The views put forward by members at these events has helped inform the submission of evidence and responses to key stakeholders.
- **Human Rights at the End of Life** – this was an event led by the Pain and Palliative Forum, in collaboration with Sue Ryder. The event, which generated some lively discussion, included issues of COVID-19 related restrictions on visits to hospices and care homes, with real life examples from practise. There were over 100 in attendance at the event.
- **The Future of the Nursing Profession** – this was led by the Mental Health Forum. Discussions focused on the changes that have taken place in the nursing profession, in terms of roles and practises, over the years and the opportunities that the future will bring.

Other forum-related activity

A forums audit was completed at the end of the summer. This was an internal audit with the main purpose being to ensure key controls are in place for the management of forums. While it highlighted some areas for improvement, there were more areas of good practice noted. The recommendations from the report are incorporated in the scope of the forums review that will be undertaken in 2021.

For the first time, an induction pack has been developed to support new forum committee members. A small group of committee members worked in collaboration with the Nursing Department to develop the pack and the induction day itself. The induction day included presentations from the Chairs of the Critical Care and Flight Nursing Forum and the Children and Young People Professional Issues Forum on what it means to be a forum committee member and some of the practical ways of working with and managing the forum. The feedback from the members that completed the evaluation and the informal comments that have been shared subsequently, indicate the induction package has been highly valued and provides the level of information required.

During the latter part of the year, work on the forum welcome journey began. This project aims to increase forum member engagement and retention. Three forum chairs have been involved in the development of this project and will engage their forums more widely in the pilot phase of the project due to start in April 2021.

Representation and contributions to consultations by forums

The RCN receives a significant number of invites to a range of meetings and events to represent nursing in particular areas or fields of practice. With a forum membership of over 196,000, much of the clinical expertise and specialist knowledge on a particular subject matter or area of nursing practice is likely to be found within the forum membership. As such, representing the RCN has been an important part of forum activity throughout the year; the opportunity to represent the RCN within their area of clinical expertise is something that members value.

During 2020, examples of some of the representations provided by forum members are:

- Children and Young People Community and Continuing Care Forum – Palliative and End-of-Life Care project group
- Midwifery Forum – Maternal Mental Health Alliance
- Public Health Forum – NHS Check Programme Initiative
- Women’s Health Forum – All Party Parliamentary Group on sexual and reproductive health
- Rheumatology Forum – Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Alliance
- Children and Young People Professional Issues Forum – Health and Social Care Select Committee on Children and Young People Issues
- Bladder and Bowel Forum – Excellence in Continence Care Programme Board (NHSE)
- Nursing in Justice and Forensics Forum – Cross party meeting on staffing in prisons (Wales)
- Learning Disability Forum – All England Plan for Learning Disability Nursing Working Group
- Diabetes Forum – All Party Parliamentary Group on changing the way we think about diabetes technology
- Children and Young People Staying Healthy Forum – NICE Self Harm Guidelines Development Committee.

These representations have provided the College with the opportunity to influence and shape improvements in clinical practice/programmes and the nursing agenda at a national level. They have also enabled the nursing voice to be present ‘at the table’ and be represented in the development and/or changes that affect the nursing profession.

Each year the College receives multiple requests from a range of organisations to comment on proposed changes or developments that may have a direct or indirect impact on nursing practise. This provides members with an opportunity to influence clinical standards or guidelines and policy changes. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), is by far one of the main organisations that seeks a view from the RCN.

In 2020, there were 66 requests to respond to consultations from NICE, compared to 130 in 2019 (a notable reduction due to the impact of COVID-19); 45 were clinical guidelines, 18 were quality standards and three related to the Quality and Outcome Framework (QOF) incentive programme used in primary care.

In addition to those from NICE, the College also received 78 clinical and professional consultations from other health organisations, which is a marked increase on the 37 requests received in 2019.

Over 50% of the consultations responded to and submitted included input and contribution from forum members.

The College processed more than 100 requests for endorsements (an increase of over 30% on the numbers received in 2019). Most of the requests for endorsements during the earlier part of the year were for resources related to coronavirus guidelines, information, or practice. During 2020, there has been an increase in the number of members who have become more engaged in this process from a variety of the forums.

Financial summary

At the beginning of 2020, FGG allocated £78,900 for forum project activities. A total of £68,178 from this budget was approved for new projects throughout 2020; £47,126 was phased to be spent in 2020 and £21,000 from the 2021 budget.

However, during the second and third quarters of the year, when a lot of project activity would normally be occurring, many of the projects were either postponed, cancelled, or the activity scaled back due to the pandemic. This had a significant impact on the amount that was spent from the 2020 budget and as a result at the end of 2020 there was £18,500 actual expenditure.

Thank you to our forum members

2020 has been a year of great turbulence and unpredictability. The pandemic has placed considerable demands on health and social care staff in a way that we would never have imagined at the beginning of the year. Despite all the challenges faced throughout the year, the forums have continued to engage in the professional activity of the College and have produced an enormous amount of work.

We are incredibly proud of our forums and would like to thank all forum members, steering committees and chairs for their leadership to ensure that there was member contribution, ongoing commitment and support throughout the year to further the professional work of the College.

Thank you for everything you have done and continue to do to support nurses and nursing.

Tara Bartley FRCN
Chair of Forum Governance Group

Sally Bassett
Chair of Forum Chairs

The RCN represents nurses and nursing, promotes
excellence in practice and shapes health policies

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